

# **Student Perception and Satisfaction of Internship Programs in Oversea Tourism Industry**

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## **Abstract**

Internship program in industry or better known as 'On the Job Training' (OJT) is obligatory in tourism vocational higher education. This program is profoundly rooted in "cooperative education" that provides learning process and experience to prepare students to face the outside world. Extensive internships are conducted in domestic and overseas tourism industry. This study investigates students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the internship program in the tourism industry abroad, students' satisfaction with internship programs in the tourism industry abroad, and how student perceptions about the internship program affect student satisfaction. This research is a quantitative descriptive. Primary data are obtained by distributing questionnaires, secondary data using literature study, documentation, field observations, and interviews. Primary data is processed using SPSS. Respondents are students of several tourism high schools in Jakarta who have completed an internship program in the tourism industry abroad. The finding served as a valuable reference for the vocational higher education curriculum to improve the quality of graduates to match the demands of the global tourism industry. Also, students' perception is valuable inputs to evaluate the learners' needs and lack and to monitor how the students' skills have been relevant to the industry needs to win the global work competition.

## **Keywords**

Perception, Internship Program, Tourism Industry, Internship satisfaction, Students

## **1. Introduction**

The tourism sector drives the economy and empowers people. This industry has increased foreign exchange earnings, regional income, regional development, and triggering the development of goods and services industries throughout Indonesia. The tourism industry, as one of the biggest foreign exchange earners, needs to be supported with quality infrastructure and human resources. In this case, tertiary tourism education is responsible for educating qualified human resources who can win the local and global tourism industry competition.

In order to provide quality education, tertiary tourism education has to adjust its curriculum in line with the industry needs. In this case, the Indonesian government has published the Indonesian National Qualification Framework (KKNI) in the form of Presidential Regulation Number 8 of 2012, and Law Number 12 of 2012 about Higher Education, and encourage all universities to adjust with these provisions. KKNI is a statement of the quality of human resources in Indonesia whose qualification is stated is in the learning outcome (achievement learning). Every tertiary education must have a curriculum that guarantees graduates have qualifications equivalent to the qualifications agreed in KKNI.

For Diploma IV or Bachelor programs in Indonesia, it is equivalent to level 6 KKNI with learning outcomes consisting of attitudes, knowledge, special skills, and general skills. So, every graduate of Diploma IV or Scholars is expected to have minimal learning outcomes in the field of appropriate attitudes with the noble character of the Indonesian people such as pious, upholding values humanity and code of ethics, acting as citizens, world citizen that values culture and diversity and has a personal character superior.

For learning outcomes in the field of knowledge, every graduate is expected to master theoretical concepts of hospitality management and tourism and apply the concept. Mastery of the concept will be followed by demands learning outcomes in specific and general skills so that the application is in accordance with the existing context. One course that can be used to give real and unique experience is an internship program or "on the job training" (OJT). The internship program is one of the mandatory courses in tourism colleges. This course provides opportunities for students

to experience the same to work in the tourism industry, and apply all of their knowledge and skills acquired during college. In this program, Educational Institutions will collaborate with the tourism industry, such as hotels, catering, and travel agents, to accept students for internships for a certain period of time. Program internships can always be held one to two semesters with diverse academic credits.

Recent research on the internship program mainly discussed the effect of internships on student career choices, and content analysis about student opinions about the internship program. The study of the effect of students' perceptions and expectations on satisfaction in apprenticeship programs is carried out in various countries such as Hong Kong and Korea. Limited research on perceptions of tourism college students in Indonesia about the internship program encourages researchers to discuss the topic. This research is relevant because the findings are used as recommendations for updating curriculum and technical implementation of the internship program in accordance with the demands and the latest development of the tourism industry so that it can be used to ensure achievements learning in accordance with KKNI or the Indonesian Qualification Framework (IQF).

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

The internship program is part of the curriculum in tertiary tourism education. This curriculum focuses on improving knowledge, skills, and attitudes held on and off-campus. This can be done by conducting an internship program in the domestic and tourism industry abroad. It is a learning experience for students to apply theory from college in the workforce and, at the same time, providing opportunities for students to develop their skills and expertise. (Davies in (Lam & Ching, 2007).

Internships can be defined as "*... a structured and career-relevant supervised professional work/learning experience, paid or unpaid, within an approved hospitality agency/organization/corporation, under the direct supervision of at least one practicing hospitality professional and one faculty member, for which a hospitality student can earn academic credit.*" (Zopiatis in (Zopiatis & Constanti, 2012)

The internship program is also stated as "industrial placement" or "professional placements (Mandilaras, 2004). He stated that the objective of this program as to 'to enhance students' knowledge ..., and their transferable skills and equip them for professional life'. In addition, Renganathan, Abdul Karim, and Chong in (Cheong, Yahya, Shen, & Yen, 2014) describe internship as: *... a chance for students to incorporate their on-the-job work experience and knowledge into their university education by being in a supervised and planned real-world professional work environment.*

In general, internships are seen as short-term practical work experience where students receive training and gain invaluable work experience in a particular field or career potential that interests them. This experience allows students to apply classroom theory in the real world of work, thus bridging the gap between theory and practice. The internship program is firmly rooted in cooperative education theory, which involves cooperation with external organizations. This education combines the process of activities teaching and learning in class with a period of training in the industry during a specific period. This work experience will be evaluated and included in the curriculum component. (Rise in (Leslie & Richardson, 2000)

An internship program or also known as a Supervised Work Experience or Work Placement has some benefits such as to get work experience, learn to be responsible for completing other tasks and supervision, to develop the skills and main attributes of graduates, to gain more in-depth experience and practical skills, to gain insight into management and management methods, to increase maturity and confidence, to learn to be involved in problem diagnosis and analysis, and to develop attitudes and standards in accordance with career goals

Regarding the crucial benefits of the internship, it is essential to investigate the Student Perceptions about the Internship Program. Student perception is measured using the Work Environment Scale (WES). It measures personal perceptions based on ten aspects of the work environment. The ten indicators are measured in three dimensions, as cited from (Billings, Andrew G, and Moos, 1982). The dimensions are relationship dimensions (involvement, peer cohesion, supervisor support), dimensions of personal growth or goal orientation (autonomy, task orientation, work pressure), and system maintenance and dimensions of change (clarity, Control, innovation, and physical comfort).

In addition, students' satisfaction with internships also becomes an essential subject to investigate. Student satisfaction with internships greatly influences career choices. The internship Satisfaction Scale is used to measure the level of student satisfaction, with the following indicators based on (Chen & Shen, 2012a). The indicators are satisfaction with educational institutions, satisfaction with the industrial world, and satisfaction with personal commitments.

Since very little research is devoted to investigating students' perception of training towards their satisfaction with the program. This study aims to investigate the following research questions:

1. What are students' perceptions of internships in the hospitality industry abroad?
2. What is the students' satisfaction with their internships in the hospitality industry abroad?
3. How does the students' perception affect their satisfaction with their internship in the hospitality industry abroad?

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Context and Participants**

The study utilized a sample of students that have been purposively selected. The selection is based on their internship experience. Those who have finished their internship in the hospitality industry abroad were selected. The students were from several tourism tertiary educations in Jakarta, Indonesia.

#### **3.2 Data Collecting, Instrument, and Analysis**

The data were collected in several ways, such as questionnaires and interviews for triangulation. Due to pandemic, the questionnaires were distributed through Google form. Then it was sent to some colleagues teaching in different tourism institution to be share to students. The students who were willing to be interviewed were then contacted for schedule, either online or offline. A list of questions was prepared to investigate the students' experience based on the variables. From the online questionnaires, seventy (70) students submitted, but only 63 responses were considered valid.

The questionnaires consist of three parts:

- a. Students personal details are mentioned in Demographic Data
- b. Students Perceptions are measured with the Work Environment Scale (WES) with three dimensions as cited by (Billings, Andrew G, and Moos, 1982)
- c. Students' Internship Satisfaction is measured with the Internship Satisfaction Scale (Chen & Shen, 2012b) with three major indicators.

Instruments were developed based on the scale, and have been checked for validity and reliability. The first instruments have been checked and tested for 30 participants, and some invalid items were dropped. The questionnaires use 4 Likert Scale with (1) strongly disagree and (4) strongly agree. The quantitative data were then analyzed with SPSS 22 for validity, reliability, and regressions. Qualitative data were transcribed for further analysis. Before further analysis, validity and reliability fo the items were tested. The r-table is 0.2441. The r-count of all items is more than r-table. Then, it can be concluded that all items are valid. The reliability is calculated with Cronbach Alpha; the results of all 58 items are 0.926. Since  $0.926 > 0.6$ , then it can be concluded that the items are reliable.

### **4. Findings and Discussion**

#### **4.1 Demographic Data**

This part reveals the participants' data, such as gender, age, and internship location. They will be presented in the chart below. From the data, it can be seen that the majority of the participants are female, with 65%. This is good news for women's participation to pursue experience and career abroad. These can be inferred that parents have undergone some shift of changes in the parental movement since they no longer prevent their daughters to undergo training abroad.

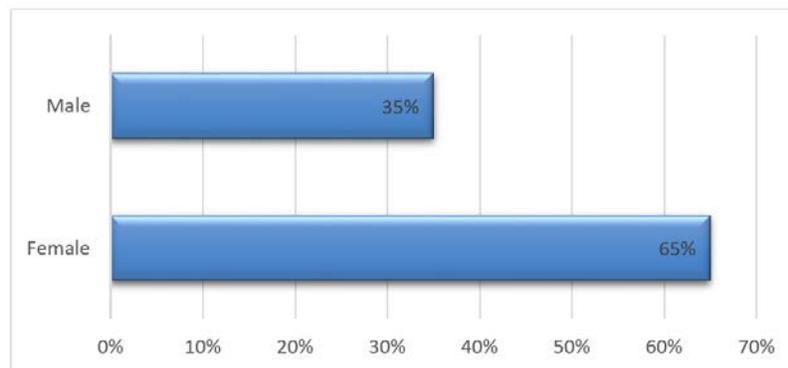


Figure 1. Gender

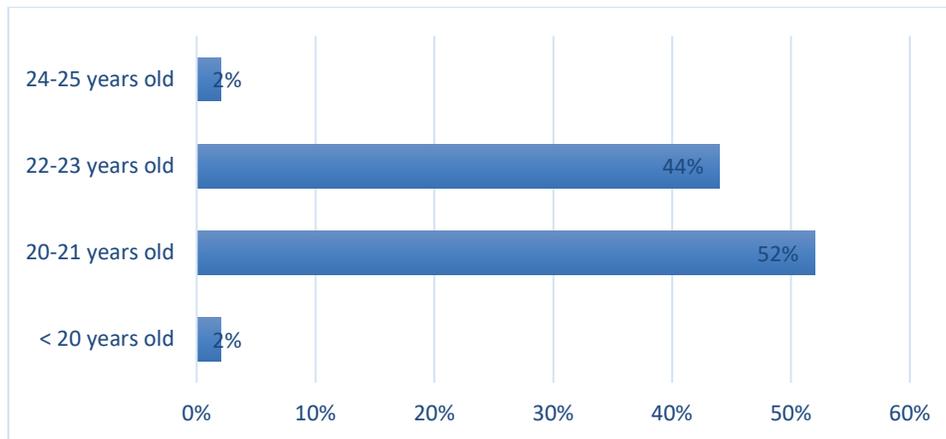


Figure 2. Age

The other demographic data is about the participants' age. As seen in the table below, the data shows that the majority of the participants come from 21-22 years old with 52%, and followed by 22-23 years old with 44%, the other 4% come from younger and older category. It can be inferred that the participants come from the school-aged students who mostly come to college at such ages. It is also essential to note that the younger the students get international experience, the better their understanding of the industry is. Therefore, they can be prepared for future employment right after graduation.

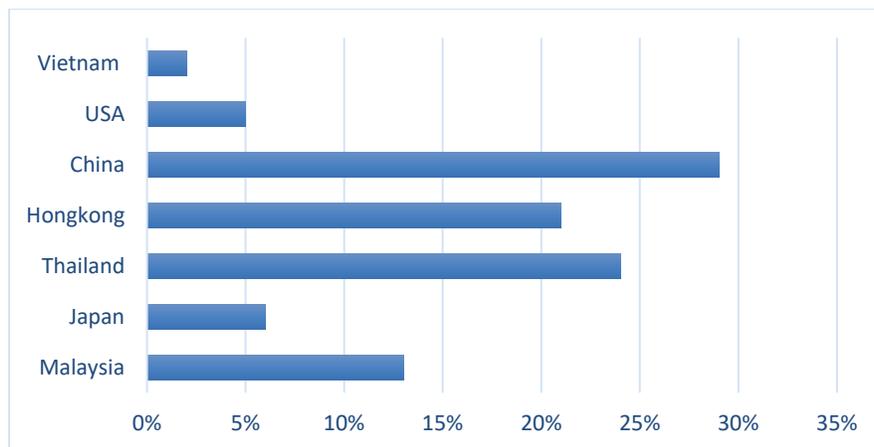


Figure 3. Internship Location

From the chart, it can be seen that there are seven countries to have an internship: Malaysia, Japan, Thailand, Hongkong, China, The USA, and Vietnam. The primary internship location is in China with 29%, followed by Thailand with 24%, Hongkong 21%, Malaysia 13%, Japan 6%, The USA 5%, and Vietnam with 2%. This means that the hospitality industry in those countries is developing rapidly, so they invite lots of trainees from other countries, including Indonesia. China is proven to have accepted 29%. This means that this country also welcomes foreign workers to be part of their hospitality team. This is relieving regarding the fact that the travel and hospitality both in and from China become lucrative. Regarding the ample chances to experience the hospitality industry in China, the campus shall equip the students with the Chinese language to facilitate the students to communicate in the workplace and understand the culture as well. Therefore, cross-culture communication also holds an essential role in making this experience success and can be used as a stepping stone for a future career in the international hospitality business. In fact, foreign language proficiencies not only crucial to provide excellent service in other countries but also for domestic work purposes as tourism welcomes and attracts international visitors throughout the year.

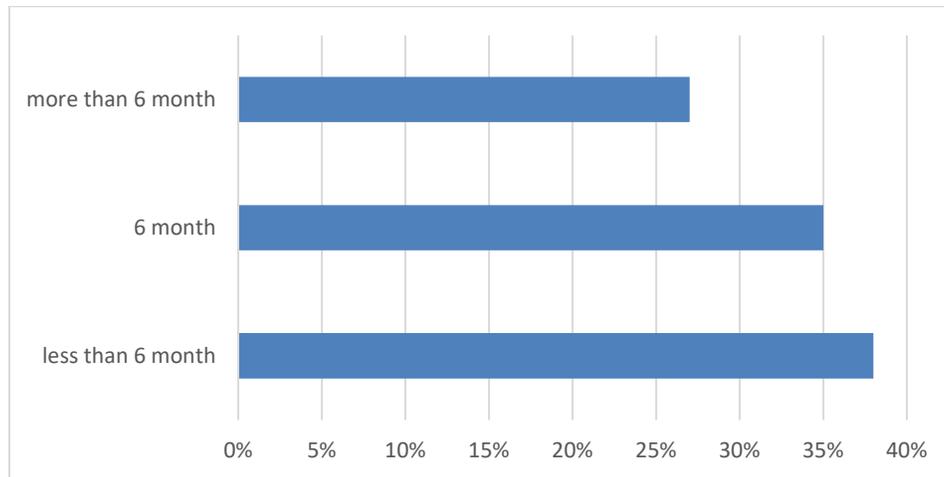


Figure 4. Length of Internship

From the duration, it can be classified into three categories: less than six months with 38%. This happened since the pandemic forced the industry to send the trainee home for safety reasons. The common practice is that the minimum length is six months. There was 35% in this category and more than six months with 27%. It is common in Japan to have an internship contract for two semesters. This enables the trainee with a broader chance to experience work placements in different departments. At the same time, the hotel can evaluate the trainee achievements for further employment. Some tourism schools put the second internship in the last semester to enable the students to go straight in contract with the industry.

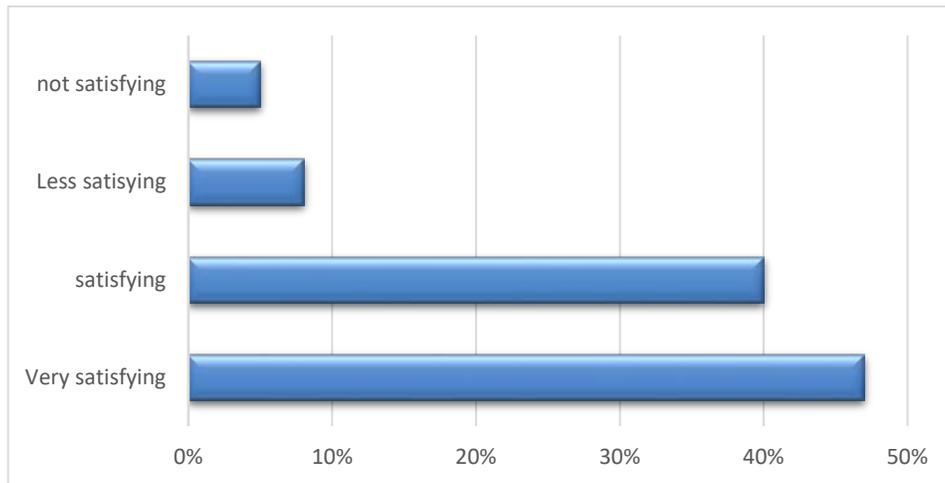


Figure 5. Compensation

When asked about their compensation when having internships, 47% of the participants mentioned that they are delighted with the remuneration system, 40% stated as to be satisfied, only 8% and 5% who contended to be less satisfied and not satisfied with the compensation. In fact, the interview reveals that some of the reasons of having an internship abroad are that most of the industry has an excellent internship system, they provide real responsibilities, and thus, the trainees got some benefits such as free meals, free dorms, service, and tips from the guests. In one hotel in Hong Kong, one trainee mentioned that they had the right to give compliments for the guests, the compliments are usually discount vouchers, and complimentary food, drinks, and souvenirs. This enhances the feeling of engagement since the trainee has full responsibility and right to keep the guests and maintain excellent service.

#### 4.2 Students' Perception of the Internship Program

Work Environment Scale (WES) is used to measure students' perception of the internship program abroad. This scale consists of three dimensions: (1) Relationship dimensions (involvement, peer cohesion, supervisor support), Dimensions of personal growth or goal orientation (autonomy, task orientation, work pressure), (3) System

maintenance, and dimensions of change (clarity, Control, innovation, and physical comfort). The descriptive statistics below shows the average mean of the sub-indicators.

Table 1. Average Mean for Work Environment Scale

No	Sub-indicator (WES)	Mean
1	Control	3.73
2	Physical Comfort	3.72
3	Peer Cohesion	3.68
4	Supervisor Support	3.67
5	Work Orientation	3.59
6	Clarity	3.59
7	Involvement	3.55
8	Innovation	3.52
9	Autonomy	3.33
10	Work pressure	2.42

The table shows that the highest mean is Control with 3.73. It means that the participants show its' highest agreement on two items in Control, such as obeying with the rules and regulations, and aware that the rule is made to keep everything in order. The second highest mean is Physical comfort. It shows that working in the hospitality industry makes the participants feel comfortable as the workspace and building are usually of luxurious items, and safety is highly prioritized. On the other hand, the lowest mean is work pressure with 2.42. It shows that the participants show their disagreement on two negatively worded statements, such as working on weekends and overtime assignments in the industry. This finding confirms that working in a hotel is not always related to long working hours and overtime work. The work schedule is arranged so well that no one has to work more than they have to.

### 4.3 Students' Satisfaction on Internship Program

The internship satisfaction scale (ISC) is used to measure this variable. The indicators comprise of 3 constructs:

(1) Satisfaction with educational institutions (internship program design, internship assignment, faculty support and consultation, performance evaluation), (2) Satisfaction with the industrial world (educational training & compensation and fair work environment), and (3) Satisfaction with personal commitments (dedication to work and dedication to learning) The detailed means of each sub-indicators are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 reveals that the highest score comes to dedication to learning with 3,68. This indicates that most participants agree that the fundamental reason for satisfaction is based on learning. The conducted the internship to get knowledge, skills, and experience in the international hospitality industry that serves as a valuable investment for their future career. Also, it is also interesting to know that the participants got satisfied with the compensation and the working environment. This finding is in line with the demographic data, which states as much as 87% of the participants claim the compensation to be either very satisfying and satisfying. What needs to be pointed out is that the lowest mean score comes to faculty support and consultation, which is in the lowest rank, 3,02. Although the mean score is still considered satisfying, the faculty role should be improved.

Table 2. Average Mean for Internship Satisfaction Scale

No	Sub indicator	Mean
1	Dedication to learning	3.68
2	Compensation and fair working environment	3.51
3	Dedication to work	3.38
4	Educational training	3.33
5	Internship Assignment	3.32
6	Performance evaluation	3.3
7	Internship Program Design	3.22
8	Faculty support and Consultation	3.02

#### 4.4 How does students' perception affect their satisfaction with the Internship Program?

To see the relation between variable X (students' perception) and variable Y (internship Satisfaction, a Pearson Correlation is used to calculate the degree of relation with the results as the following.

Table 3. Correlation among variables  
**Correlations**

		Students_perception	Internship_satisfaction
Students_perception	Pearson Correlation	1	.578**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	63	63
Internship_satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.578**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	63	63

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table shows that the significance value is 0.000. It means that the value is more than 0.05. then it can be concluded that there is a relation between variable X(students' perception) and variable Y( Internship satisfaction). To see the degree of relationship, it can be seen from the Pearson correlation value (0.578). It means that it has medium relation. It can be concluded that variable X has a positive relation with variable Y with a medium degree of correlation. To see the effect of the variables, a simple linear regression is used as the table below.

Table 4. Model Summary  
**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.578 <sup>a</sup>	.334	.323	8.085

a. Predictors: (Constant), Students\_perception

The table shows that the amount of correlation is shown by R. The value is 0.578. It means that variable X has correlated with variable Y; the amount of relation is shown by R square, 0.334. It shows that variable X has affected variable Y as much as 33,4%.

Table 5. Annova  
**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2002.561	1	2002.561	30.637	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	3987.185	61	65.364		
	Total	5989.746	62			

a. Dependent Variable: Internship\_satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Students\_perception

The table shows the F count is 30,637, with the significance level 0.000. Since 0.000<0.05, then the regression model can be used to predict the effect of variable X. In other words, students' perception of the internship program (X) is proven to have affected variable Y(students' internship satisfaction).

Table 6. Coefficient  
 Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	20.159	12.568		1.604	.114
	Students_perception	.636	.115	.578	5.535	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Internship\_satisfaction

It can be seen that Constant (a) is 20.159, and regression value for Students' perception (b) is 0.636. the regression equation is as follows:

$$Y = a + bX \rightarrow Y = 20.159 + 0.636X.$$

This equation means that (1) the consistent value for variable Y (students' internship satisfaction) is 20.159. The coefficient regression is 0.636, meaning that whenever there is an additional value of 1 in students' perception variable, then the value of internship satisfaction will increase as much as 0.636. Also, the coefficient regression is positive; it means that variable X affects variable Y positively.

From the coefficient table, the significance score is 0.000, which is less than 0.05 ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ). It means that variable X (students' perception) affects variable (Y) internship satisfaction. Besides, the table shows the t count is 5.53, while the t table is 1.999. It means that  $t \text{ count } 5.53 > t \text{ table } 1.999$ . This equation confirms that variable X affects variable Y.

## 5. Conclusion and Suggestion

The research funding and discussion have answered the research questions in terms of three areas below. First of all, students' perceptions of the internship program in the hospitality industry abroad certainly confirm that various stakeholders are involved in making an enjoyable internship working environment. The most crucial and essential one is the awareness that they had to obey the rules. Working in another country is profoundly affected by the cultures; some might experience culture shock and had to undergo a rough adaptation process either physically or mentally. In this situation, the trainee benefits a lot from the physical comfort of working in five-star hotels and other hospitality services when they have a chance to serve and get in touch with colleagues and guests from different cultures and backgrounds. The places and the person in the hospitality business have always offered positive vibes to support each other. In this case, peer cohesion and supervisor support handle their roles to make a pleasant working experience for the trainees.

They really have close engagement with the industry, which is proven with the responsibility they got from the management to be part of the excellent services. In addition, students' satisfaction comes in different dimensions. The study confirms that they were satisfied since they had a chance to maximize their learning, explore new skills, and make the most of their experience in the industry. They devoted the internship solely for learning, and not for sightseeing. In addition, the hospitality industry abroad seems very attractive for the lucrative compensation they offer. Service, tips, accommodation, free meals, and other facilities await. No wonder that the students got excited to apply and compete with other applicants in order to be accepted in the industry where they can do the best, contribute more for their work, and learning, and at the same time, they can grab a future job as well. Regarding the significant role of this program, the school should maximize its role to support and provide consultation on every prospective student who wants to have an internship in the industry abroad.

Last but not least, to see the relationship between the students' perception and satisfaction, a correlation test was performed, and it assured us how students' perception is related to their satisfaction. A simple linear regression was also performed to see how the X variable affects Y variable Y. From the coefficient table, the significance score is 0.000, which is less than 0.05 ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ). It means that variable X (students' perception) affects variable (Y) internship satisfaction. In addition, the table shows the t count is 5.53, while the t table is 1.999. It means that  $t \text{ count } 5.53 > t \text{ table } 1.999$ . This equation confirms that variable X affects variable Y.

The finding can serve as valuable input on how to arrange and develop a better internship program that can add to the graduate quality. In the near future, international working experience seems to be one of the critical elements of winning

the global competition since the program not only aims at improving the academic, skills, and attitude of professional hoteliers or other professions. However, at the same time, the trainee learns on how to adapt themselves in a new culture, new working experience, and eventually, they had learned how to conduct a cross-culture communication which is based on the cross-culture understanding, and believe it or not, those skills and experience will not be available in their campuses.

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