

## Elucidating Work-Based Learning Dissatisfaction and Graduates' Intention to Pursue Careers in the Hospitality Industry

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**Abstract:** Recently, undergraduate students have raised concerns regarding the quality of work-based learning programs. Thus, this study explores factors contributing to negative work-based learning experiences among hospitality undergraduate students. An in-depth semi-structured online interview was conducted with 21 hospitality undergraduate students to achieve the study's purpose. They were selected based on purposive sampling, in which only those who have completed their 12-month work-based learning in hospitality organizations were included in the study. Based on thematic data analysis, the study found that the student's relationship with coach and colleague, working conditions, module compliance, workplace readiness, and compensation are significant critical attributes contributing to students' negative work-based learning experience. The negative work-based learning experiences are exacerbated further by the challenging employment nature of the hospitality industry and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Generally, most participants interviewed have cited at least one negative experience related to their two-semester work-based learning program in the hospitality industry. However, although the participants had negative work-based learning experiences, they remained optimistic about career prospects in the hospitality industry. Most interviewed have the intention to pursue their careers in the hospitality industry. The study helps hospitality organizations identify the significant areas that could improve the work-based learning experience. Theoretically, this study provides insight into the mechanisms of negative work-based learning experiences formation and how they might affect students' intention to pursue hospitality careers. Several recommendations are put forward based on the study's limitations for future research endeavours.

**Keywords:** Work-based learning; hospitality industry; negative experience; internship; industrial training

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### Introduction

Pursuing an internship is a great way to advance significant professional knowledge and skills in the hospitality industry. It is usually regarded as a co-curricular activity that helps students improve their future job prospects and earnings while addressing employer talent demands. Many governments and higher learning institutions worldwide consider internships a cornerstone of their employability programs, making them required for graduation in some situations (Sharma *et al.*, 2021). Higher learning institutions' involvement in developing the existing workforce has increased through experiential learning, internships, and others. Kapareliotis *et al.* (2019)

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stated that internship programs are an excellent way for students to learn about the profession and gain confidence in their skills. Work-based learning is an example of an internship program requiring students to experience a natural working environment, usually within a year. It enhances learning by allowing students to observe how theory is applied in practice and by enhancing personal and transferable qualities such as communication, confidence, perseverance, and empowerment (Forsyth & Cowap, 2017).

Brundiers *et al.* (2010) indicated that providing students with the opportunity to work in a real-world setting allows them to apply theoretical information obtained throughout their undergraduate years to relevant real-world situations. This involves developing the student's independent learning capacity beyond memorizing facts or technical information (Ahmad *et al.*, 2020). The successful implementation of a work-based learning program depends strongly on the cooperation of the industry players, and they serve as role models and mentors that engages students with show-and-tell training which is the fundamental component of the work-based learning experience. The experience gained from a work-based learning program can enhance students' job prospects by enabling them to develop their job-related skills and beliefs, focus on their career choices, gain direct access to job sources, and even impress future employers. Baert *et al.* (2021) claimed that students who participate in internships are more likely to acquire jobs following graduation than those who do not. This happens because classroom inputs are frequently the same for all students, but each student's learning environment during internships differs. Karunaratne and Perera (2019) argued that classroom knowledge and experience vary from what they learned during industry internships. This is because workplace experience promotes unstructured or incidental learning, whereas universities provide formal, structured education that the teaching faculty frequently supervise. Thus, students are exposed to positive and negative experiences, which might affect their career decision (Kenny *et al.*, 2010).

Although work-based learning aims to equip students with the skills and knowledge necessary for employment and a better future career, it is without controversy. A recent newspaper publication by Sinar Harian (2021) reported that students expressed dissatisfaction with their internship program due to mistreatment, low allowance, and having to perform tasks beyond the prescribed internship program. In a worse scenario, these stressed them out and caused them to quit their internship program. A recent compilation of literature by Sharma *et al.* (2021) discovered that students' negative internship experiences might contribute to their unfavourable perceptions of a hospitality organization, making them hesitant to pursue careers in the hospitality industry. A review of the relevant literature revealed several gaps that need to be addressed. Most studies on work-based learning are based on a quantitative approach with a predetermined set of variables (e.g., Rahdiyanta *et al.*, 2019; Ali *et al.*, 2017). This limits our understanding of other vital factors such positivist studies might not capture. Other than that, limited studies have been conducted on work-based learning in Malaysian higher learning institutions. Among the few studies, Ahmad *et al.* (2020) merely wrote a conceptual paper that features the benefits of work-based learning programs to benefit students, organizations, and the nation, while an earlier study by Ismail *et al.* (2015) focused on reviewing prominent work-based learning models and their applications in Malaysian higher learning institutions.

Arguably, exploring factors that contribute to students' negative work-based learning experience and how they affect their interest in hospitality careers is yet to receive inclusive examination in the work-based learning body of knowledge. This might be due to the work-based learning program is still in its infancy stage in this part of the world. In line with the research gaps, the current paper aim:

1. To explore the attributes of students' negative work-based learning experiences, and
2. To determine how students' negative work-based learning experiences affect their intention to pursue careers in the hospitality industry.

This study is of great importance as students' negative work-based learning experience tends to drive them away from their intended career path (Wang *et al.*, 2014). Practically, the findings of this study can help industry players and hospitality higher-learning institutions improve the design and delivery of the work-based learning program. Theoretically, the study can serve as a framework for investigating successful work-based learning programs, which researchers can expand in the future.

## Literature Review

### *Work-Based Learning*

Lester and Costley (2010) defined work-based learning as a learning activity that occurs in the workplace or is directly related to working concerns. Most of this learning is not accredited or formally recognized, even though most of it has the potential to be. It includes learning at work as a natural component of professional development and problem-solving in response to specific workplace challenges resulting from workplace training, coaching, or pursuing work-related goals and interests. More recently, Garnett (2020) referred to work-based learning as a learning process that focuses university-level critical thinking on work to facilitate the recognition, acquisition, and application of individual and collective knowledge, skills, and abilities to achieve specific outcomes that are meaningful to the learner, their work, and the university. Ahmad *et al.* (2020) further state that work-based learning combines the practical and theoretical aspects of learning and has evolved into a platform for students to acquire new knowledge and skills.

Focusing on Malaysia, the Malaysian Qualifications Agency introduced the work-based learning program in 2016 to enhance hospitality and tourism education (Malaysian Qualifications Agency, 2013). Although the work-based learning concept is nothing new, it just recently gained importance due to a lack of skilled graduates in the hospitality and tourism industries, highlighted in the Malaysia Education Blueprint for Higher Education 2015-2025. Work-based learning prioritizes the discovery and application of classroom-learned knowledge in hospitality and tourism education, yielding benefits for students, higher education providers, and employers. This helps students establish and cultivate a positive industrial attitude as they acquire industry-relevant skills and knowledge, which is advantageous for them. Work-based learning also assists higher education providers in keeping up with industry trends and incorporating them into curricula. In contrast, the industry benefits from enthusiastic “work-ready” graduates, reducing recruitment and retention costs (Malaysian Qualifications Agency, 2016).

Despite the expansion of Malaysian hospitality education, skilled labor is still in short supply, especially in the post-COVID-19 pandemic (The Star Online, 2022). This is partly due to the low number of college graduates, students' unrealistic expectations of working life in the industry, and their desire for a different work environment than the hotel can provide (Fraser I, 2007). The work-based learning program is introduced to overcome such problems where undergraduate students must undertake a proportionate hybrid or mixed university and industry-based education. This is in line with the aspiration of the Malaysian Ministry of Education to increase the current 75 per cent graduate employability rate to more than 80 per cent by 2025 and introduce the 2u2i (two years university and two years industry) program.

### *Hospitality Industry*

Travel, tourism, and hospitality is the third largest industry in Malaysia and significant contributor to the national economy. The Malaysian Department of Statistics indicates that the service sector's Gross Domestic Product increased by 3.2% in the fourth quarter of 2021. The Malaysian Investment Development Authority (2017) further clarifies that Malaysia's service sector has grown due to various factors, making it an ideal location for international investment. These factors include a large English-speaking population, an educated workforce, high business and legal standards, a solid financial sector, an extensive infrastructure, significant resources, competitive costs, and liberal and transparent investment policies toward Asia-Pacific markets. The establishment of budget hotels (one to three stars) and four to five-star hotels, the expansion/modernization/renovation of existing hotels (one to five stars), the establishment of tourist projects and theme parks, their expansion and modernization, the provision of recreational camps, and the establishment of convention centers are also influential factors.

In line with the development of the hospitality industry, universities can be seen as a platform to supply workforce resources for the industry. Currently, workplace education is increasingly gaining momentum in

Malaysia. As such, work-based learning is an educational strategy that provides students with real-life work experiences where they can apply academic and technical skills and develop their employability. Most work-based learning programs are generally university-accredited courses, aiming at a win-win situation where both the student's and the industry's requirements for skilled and talented employees are met. Work-based learning strategies provide career awareness, career exploration opportunities, and career planning activities and help students attain competencies such as positive work attitudes and other employable skills (Molodchik *et al.*, 2020). Hence, an effective work-based learning design should be implemented to ensure the program's success. Work-based learning allows students to realize their level of competencies (or lack thereof) and provides insight into their strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, work-based learning is beneficial to institutions of higher learning, in collaboration with both organizations and students, to better understand the industries' needs and to modify educational programs to be more aligned with those requirements. Furthermore, organizations may gain access to a pool of candidates and adjust their training programs to align with their strategic goals (Rafatjou, 2019). Work-based learning is a cooperative program involving institutions of higher learning and various organizations to provide students with real-world and hands-on experience to facilitate the transition from school to the workplace.

### ***Negative Experience***

Previous research has generally identified several internship obstacles and the consequences of those obstacles. Chen *et al.* (2011) found that Taiwanese interns shared positive and negative experiences. They found that the interns had unrealistic expectations regarding the type of work they would be assigned. Interestingly, several students were dissatisfied with their work assignments because they did not have the necessary skills. The study concluded that interns' future career perspectives are influenced by their internship learning experiences. In a later study, Nduna (2012) stated that negative internship experiences could be attributed to an inappropriate work environment or a lack of ability to match students with the right company. Meanwhile, Pusiran *et al.* (2020) argued that there is frequently a lack of integration between the student intern and their supervisor, primarily if the intern is assigned low-skill, repetitive work rather than challenging duties such as industry-based issues projects with intellectual challenges in a real-world setting. More recently, Husain and Mahfoodh (2021) discovered five factors contributing to a negative internship experience: communication difficulties, unrelated work, payment (internship payment), inability to adapt to the work environment, and employer attitudes toward interns. Communication barriers between interns and supervisors or co-workers represent participants' worst experiences, and such barriers to communication may lead to miscommunication between interns and co-workers. Interns may have negative experiences when they discover they were performing tasks unrelated to their internship positions and were not compensated for their overtime. They might have trouble adjusting to the new, unfamiliar environment, which cannot be compared to classroom settings.

Previous studies have highlighted that students' perceptions and internship experiences can significantly impact their future careers. For example, Farmaki (2018) examined interns' internship expectations and evaluations of their internship experiences and how they relate to hospitality career goals in Cyprus. He discovered that students' career decision-making process is multi-faceted and complex and that a relationship of factors affects the connection between internship experiences and students' career intentions. The study concluded that students' nationality, gender, and type of degree specialization might have a mediation effect on bridging internship experience and intention to work in the hospitality industry. Likewise, Seyitolu (2019) conducted a qualitative study to explore how students perceive internships at a Turkish university. They found that internship experience comprises three main dimensions: benefits, challenges, and career perception. They established that students' perceptions of the level of benefits and challenges experienced during their internships significantly contribute to their future career selections. Students perceived image of the industry would be more positive if they felt satisfied and benefited from their internship experience and encountered fewer difficulties.

## Methodology

### *Research Design*

This study was based on an exploratory qualitative research design approach, enabling the researchers to understand better the phenomenon under investigation (Kyngas, 2020). It allows the selected participants to freely express their thoughts and feelings related to their work-based learning negative experiences. Merriam *et al.* (2007) stated that qualitative research's credibility depends on the similarity between the real-world scenario and condition and the participants' point of view. As O'Leary (2017) suggested, qualitative data analysis of the current study involved cycles of repeated analysis through a reduction process and continuous, rich interaction with the collected data. The researcher plays a crucial role in ensuring the validity of the research based on their observations and interview techniques.

### *Population and Sampling*

The target population of this study is final-year hospitality undergraduate students in Malaysian hospitality and tourism higher learning institutions who have completed their work-based learning program. This study employed a non-random purposive sampling method widely used in qualitative research to efficiently find and select information-rich samples or cases. It entails identifying and selecting individuals or groups who are knowledgeable about the phenomenon of interest (Etikan *et al.*, 2016). Since qualitative research aims to obtain rich information from a specific sample of participants, qualitative researchers typically work with small samples of people nested in their context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Thus, this study employed a sample size of 21 participants, all of whom had completed their hospitality work-based learning course.

### *Data Collection Procedure*

A semi-structured interview was chosen because it allows participants to express more natural perspectives and insights. Wahyuni (2012) asserted that interacting directly with relevant individuals is the best way to comprehend inner perspectives and collect reliable social data to understand real-world practices' current state. Similarly, Balushi (2018) stated that a semi-structured interview facilitates understanding themes of the lived daily world from the subjects' perspectives, with the interviewer interpreting the meaning of what elements can be derived from their collective contributions. Interviewees' ideas are communicated more effectively in an openly constructed interview than in a formal interview or questionnaire. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in March 2022, the interview was conducted online using Google Meet for safety and health reasons. It allows participants from across the country to join the interview sessions with less cost and effort. Semi-structured open-ended questions were used to collect qualitative data for this study. Each interview session lasted approximately between 30 and 45 minutes. All participants were asked for their consent prior to participating in the study. They were informed that audio equipment was used to record the interview sessions, and their responses would be kept private and confidential. The collected data was kept in the researcher's computer for further analysis. The study has obtained ethical research approval from the Ethics Research Committee, Universiti Teknologi MARA Pulau Pinang Branch, with reference number BEREC/04/2022 (UG/MR/41).

### *Data Analysis and Results*

Thematic analysis was applied to this study which involved finding, evaluating, and reporting significant patterns/themes in the qualitative data. It is a descriptive method for reducing data flexibly that connects with other data analysis methods (Rosenthal, 2016). This analysis is widely used because of the enormous variety of research questions and topics that can be addressed with this data analysis method (Bernard *et al.*, 2017).

Thematic analysis using transcribed interviews can probe deeper into the topic under investigation in ways quantitative research cannot while allowing for flexibility and interpretation when examining data. However, it must be done with extra care and transparency to ensure confidence in the findings (Rosenthal, 2016). In this study, two researchers were involved in reading transcripts independently and developing their coding, essential topics, and themes. The codes and themes were developed in response to the broad study topic, which focused on the factors and consequences of negative work-based learning experiences. Themes were created based on significant and coherent data patterns relevant to the study issue. Both researchers gathered to compare their findings and agree on themes and subthemes.

### Attributes of Work-Based Learning Negative Experience

To achieve the first research objective, the participants were asked about their negative work-based learning experiences. The qualitative analysis results identified and explored five themes related to negative work-based learning experiences. These entail relationships with coach and colleague, working conditions, module compliance, workplace readiness, and compensation. Generally, most participants interviewed have cited at least one negative experience related to their two-semester work-based learning program in the hospitality industry.

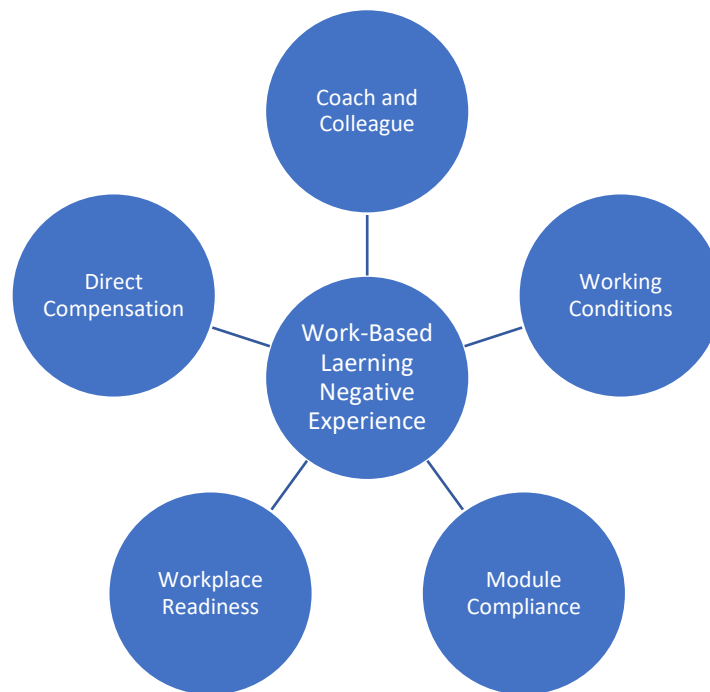


Figure 1. Attributes of Work-Based Learning Negative Experience

#### *Relationship with Coach and Colleague*

The most cited attribute of a negative work-based learning experience is students' relationship with their coaches and colleagues. As the core component of an organizational social support system, coaches and colleagues play a significant role in guiding students in the work-based learning program. They should be willing to share their skills, knowledge, and experience in helping students develop, grow, and reach their full potential. Good coach-student and colleague-student relationships are crucial to ensure a positive and comfortable workplace. However, this is not always the case. Some participants stated that they have tense relations with their coaches and colleagues. The data analysis further revealed three subthemes relating to students' unfavorable relationships with their coaches and colleagues. These include a lack of cooperation from colleagues, poor communication, and inappropriate colleague behavior. For instance, Participants 2, 3, 16, and 18 expressed:

“The staff like to report to the management about practical students. For example, when we were having a break, he thought we were hanging around doing nothing. I think they have a mental problem because they keep looking for our faults.” P2

“Interns are treated as if they are the permanent staff. The coach expected the intern to execute their tasks without supervision” P3

“There was one day when the staff did not do any work. He came in and then ate. Those of us who went on shift this morning until the afternoon was told by the GM to go back to the hotel to help with housekeeping because there were rooms that were not ready yet. I think he set a bad example for the interns.” P16

“The staff likes to pull faces with us although we have done nothing wrong. If we chat a little, then someone will report to the GM. So, a certain staff is not happy with us.” P18

### ***Working Conditions***

The second most cited theme is related to working conditions. Several participants highlighted the erratic working schedule, which drained them mentally and physically. Due to labor shortages, they were often asked to do overtime and transferred to another department not listed in their work-based learning module.

“Due to a staff shortage, the trainee was forced to work more than two shifts despite being promised to work only two.” P1

“Regarding the F&B department shifts, we have morning and afternoon. Then I have a shift in the morning, afternoon, and morning in the evening. He gave me a shift that made me not have enough rest. Then if I come back early from work and are not ready for the afternoon shift, I will be criticized by the department. It is a bit stressful there, I do not know how to talk to the management, but I will deal with it.” P3

“I was forced to work overtime at another department not listed in my work-based learning schedule.” P7

“There was one day when I wanted to take MC. I went home then someone said that if I wanted to take a paid MC, I must take MC from the clinic next to the hotel, MC from other clinics would not be accepted. I stay far from the hotel, so it is better to take MC near the clinic. Why go to the clinic near the hotel? I feel like my welfare is not taken care of.” P8

Some participants highlighted that the management relied too heavily on interns to deal with staffing issues. For example, Participants 18 and 4 mentioned that:

“Excessive reliance on intern and incompetent management to handle the staffing shortage” P18

“Use intern as a replacement staff to cover their job without discussing the department change with the intern.” P4

Interestingly, several participants have a more positive outlook about the harsh working condition in their organizations. For example, participant 6 mentioned:

“There are not many negatives, but I remember having to overwork because after joining WBL, there were not many workers at that time, so he used many people, we have energy, but it is okay to have experience, right? Overtime is paid, but it is like 5 ringgit per hour.” P6

### ***Work-Based Learning Module Compliance***

The third most cited theme is related to work-based learning module compliance. The participants indicated they had issues with how the management implemented the work-based learning module. The problem arose when the management did not follow the predetermined tasks stipulated in the work-based learning module or failed to adequately justify any sudden schedule changes. This was stated by Participants 2, 9, and 19:

“Hotel did not follow the module despite being reminded by the intern since they did not want to leave their comfort zone.” P2

“We got a job to supply meals every three days to an oil and gas company. Then there were not enough people in the kitchen. The chef asked the housekeeping manager to use the intern students, although there is no kitchen department in the module. Because I did not think about that, I thought at least I had a job, and this WBL was running, so I went into the kitchen to study. The housekeeping manager said okay, you go into the kitchen later. I will let you know if there is anything. Maybe you will be exchanged with someone else. So when I was at WBL, I was supposed to work in the housekeeping department. Instead, I worked in the kitchen department.” P9

“Another thing about changing departments, for example, we are at the F&B department, and suddenly supervisor told us to go help housekeeping in the afternoon. So, he does not follow the module.” P19

### ***Direct Compensation***

The fourth most cited theme is related to direct compensation. During the interview, a few participants expressed their disgruntle because they were underpaid during their work-based learning program. They highlighted that the compensation policy for interns is unclear and pointed out some grey areas that can be subjected to many possible interpretations. Participants P3, P12, and P18 voiced their unhappiness because they conducted several jobs without pay during that period.

“I felt I was poorly compensated for the overtime work.” P12

“I was forced to work extra without being paid or claim hours.” P3

“Our overtime was not paid; we have to claim hours. That thing feels like it does not bring any benefit to us because we cannot claim for 4 hours at once.” P18

### ***Workplace Readiness***

The fifth most cited theme is related to workplace readiness. According to the participants, there was no proper orientation or briefing about the tasks they were supposed to do. Moreover, their coaches assumed they had knowledge of the operational aspects and expected them to learn independently without much supervision. For instance, Participants 2, 13, and 20 cited that:

“They did not teach the intern properly because they expect we already understand everything.” P2

On the first day in the housekeeping department, they think I know everything, although I do not know anything. The first day he told me to make the bed, so I was slow because I did not know anything. So, I was mocked for being slow.” P13

“My first day at the F&B department, I had to do room service in the GM’s room, but according to the rules, women cannot do room service because it is quite dangerous. They did not brief me about the task and treated me as if I had been working there for a long time” P20



One participant mentioned that he expects to be guided based on the work-based learning module. However, his expectation falls short, as he stated:

“I was not guided properly through the modules we have. The student is not taught to fulfill what is in the module. When we are just starting, we expect that guidance. If we do not get it, we feel like we must do everything ourselves. So, it was frustrating for us.” P10

### ***Intention to Pursue Careers in the Hospitality Industry***

The second research objective of this study is to determine the consequences of negative work-based learning experiences on students' intention to pursue careers in the hospitality industry. After completing their studies, the participants were asked about their interest in working in the hospitality industry. Surprisingly, most were still passionate about pursuing careers in the hospitality industry despite their bad work-based learning experiences. Several participants mentioned they were willing to take on new challenges and wanted to know more about the hospitality industry. For example, Participants 10, 13, 15, 16, 19, and 15 expressed:

“Even though I am already familiar with the hotel sector, I am still curious to learn more.” P10

“So far, I am just going with the flow because until now, I am still working with the same hotel after the internship ended. Indeed, I think I will stay in this industry because I like meeting people.” P13

“I still want to continue working in the hospitality industry since I am interested in this field.” P16

“Maybe I will be okay in two or three years, but after that, I want to change to management, not operations, but the hospitality industry.” P19

“I am interested in working in hospitality because I have already taken this course, so I must continue it. Maybe I will change to another field in two or three years because I want to explore it again. This year I want to study again in FO or F&B. Maybe I will continue in the same service industry but maybe not in the hotel industry.” P15

Although most participants intend to work in the hospitality industry, a few participants expressed that they are still indecisive, and some have a terrible impression of the hospitality industry. For instance, participants 1 and 12 said that:

“I hesitate to continue working in the hotel industry due to overwork and low pay concerns.” P1

“I am not sure, but the interest to continue is there. The interest is sometimes there and sometimes not. My interest is more towards technology-related programs.” P12

## **Discussion**

This qualitative study explored the determinants and consequences of hospitality undergraduate students' negative work-based learning experiences. Based on thematic analysis, this study discovered five attributes related to negative work-based learning experiences: relationships with coach and colleague, working conditions, module compliance, workplace readiness, and compensation. The finding is similar to a study by Husain and Mahfoodh (2021), who found communication difficulties, unrelated work, payment (internship payment), lack of adaptation to the work environment, and employers' views toward interns as critical attributes of negative internship experiences.

To understand students' dissatisfaction with their relationships with coaches and colleagues at the workplace,

It is suggested that management should provide a medium or channel to gather student feedback. This form of communication is much more acceptable as it protects the anonymity of the students' identities who are worried about being reprimanded if they complain to the management. Also, an ice-breaking session should be held on the first day of work-based learning to make them feel comfortable and know each other better. Second, since most are mentally and physically exhausted because of rough working conditions, the management should discuss the problem with the students and try their best to care for their well-being. This prevents them from feeling they are being used and exploited for the organization's benefit. Third, regarding work-based learning module compliance, higher learning institutions should conduct a periodic spot check or audit to ensure the appointed coaches follow the training scope stipulated in the module. The management should seek consent from the higher learning institutions before making any changes or modifications to the scope of the work-based learning module. Fourth, an orientation session should be introduced to make the students feel welcome and familiar with the organization's policies and procedures. The higher learning institutions also should conduct a briefing session with the students before they embark on their work-based learning program. This ensures that they are mentally and physically prepared to face any challenges that may arise throughout their work-based learning journey. Lastly, adequate information on compensation policies should be informed to the students. The compensation policies should be fair to the students, specifying the wages policy for working beyond their predetermined work-based learning schedule. This avoids misunderstandings and discontent due to unpaid or late overtime payments.

Surprisingly, the finding revealed that most participants were still interested in pursuing careers in the hospitality industry despite their negative work-based learning experiences. They remain optimistic about building their careers in the hospitality industry. This shows that the students are resilient, persevering, and adaptable to the harsh working conditions in the hospitality industry. Perhaps, they have come to terms with the fact that their bad experiences are one of the most valuable lessons in understanding the dynamic and complex world of the hospitality industry.

## Conclusion

The study attempted to explore the causes and consequences of negative work-based learning experiences among hospitality undergraduate students. The significant critical finding of this study is that students' negative work-based learning experiences would be less likely to discourage them from pursuing their careers in the hospitality industry. Arguably, today's young generation is more resilient in overcoming obstacles and challenges in the workplace. This warrants further investigation, which can advance work-based learning literature, especially in the Eastern context. Although students' intention to pursue hospitality careers might not be connected to their work-based learning experiences, the relevant stakeholders should uphold the quality of the work-based learning program. Higher learning institutions and hospitality organizations should work together to ensure students can gain an enriching work-based learning experience. The study is without limitations; thus, the findings should be interpreted cautiously. First, the study is based on a qualitative research approach. Hence the results cannot be generalized to all hospitality undergraduate students participating in the work-based learning program. Future studies are encouraged to employ quantitative or mixed-method designs to support or validate the current findings of the qualitative data analysis. Second, the study only focused on undergraduate students from one hospitality higher-learning institution. Hence, future researchers might be interested in including hospitality students from different universities to identify similarities or contrasts in the negative work-based learning program experiences. Third, as the research setting is limited to Malaysia and performed during the post-COVID-19 pandemic era, future researchers should consider conducting a cross-comparison study from the standpoint of cross-cultural or cross-countries in a time when the hospitality industry is already back to normal. Lastly, besides collecting data solely from the students, future researchers should consider collecting data from the employers about the student's performance during work-based learning. This would provide a more holistic view that might help improve the work-based learning program in the long term.

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