Research Article
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SPM leavers' motivation factors continuing study in hospitality program: An exploratory study

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Proposed citation:

Abstract

Most students in Malaysia will continue their studies at a higher level after completing their SPM examination. Tertiary education is becoming increasingly crucial as Malaysia strives to become a developed country. Students frequently face difficulties when deciding whether to continue their studies or not. Their minds will be preoccupied with where to study and what field to learn. In reality, many students are hesitant to continue their education and begin working immediately upon completion of secondary school, even more so when they have developed diverse skills throughout their years in upper secondary school. This study explores the motivation factors that upper secondary vocational programs students to pursue further studies in hospitality programs. Understanding SPM leavers' intentions to continue their education in the hospitality sector is critical for higher education institutions and the hospitality industry. This study will contribute to a better understanding of what is going on in the minds of students considering pursuing their studies in hospitality programs. The industry's labour force requires more intellectual capital and competencies to satisfy growing demands. This study can generate ideas and insight into the acceptance and appeal of the upper secondary vocational program among secondary school students and recommend ways to improve the syllabus if necessary. This study may assist students in better comprehending the choices and benefits of continuing their education in hospitality programs.

Keywords:

High School Leavers; Hospitality Program; Tertiary Institutions; Continuance Intention;

1   Background of the Study

In Malaysia, most five-year-old children have begun preschool education preparation for school. These young children enter primary school after completing at least one year in preschool. Primary school education will begin when a child turns seven

in the current school year. These children must complete the first six years of primary and the remaining five years of secondary school. In two parts of secondary school, i.e., lower secondary (Form 1 to 3) and upper secondary (Form 4 to 5). While in upper secondary, students can choose to remain in academic secondary education or enroll in vocational or technical secondary (StudyMalaysia.com, 12 May, 2022).

The Malaysian Ministry of Education (MoE) has offered vocational courses in academic secondary schools since 2015 for those interested students who are not eligible to join vocational schools. Twelve upper secondary vocational (*Pendidikan Vokasional Menengah Atas*) programs are offered to students in academic schools to fulfil interested students who are not eligible to join vocational. One of the programs related to the hospitality industry is the food preparation subject (serving and catering courses). This program is designed to upskill or equip school leavers with vocational skills such as catering and serving to have greater potential to enter the industry. It also aims to produce school leavers who are well-versed in theory and skilled in the field they are venturing into. Eighty-four academic secondary schools offer food preparation subjects (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2015). Upon completing Form 5, the students will sit for the Malaysian Certificate of Education or *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM) examinations to qualify for the certificate. As these students enrolled in the upper secondary vocational program, they will also sit for the Final Assessment of Malaysian Skills Certification to qualify them to get Malaysian Skills Certification Level 2 (*Sijil Kemahiran Malaysia* Level 2- SKM2).

Most of the SPM school leavers will pursue tertiary education. Depending on their SPM results, they can enroll in certificate or diploma programs in tertiary institutions. The program's goal at the certificate level is to provide students with essential knowledge, basic technical and operational skills, and entrepreneurial skills to work more effectively and ethically in the hospitality and tourism industry. At the Diploma level, the program aims to provide students with more expertise, specialised skills, and entrepreneurial skills to carry out their work more efficiently and ethically while preparing for its social impact on the hospitality and tourism industry (MQA, 2013).

Tertiary institutions in Malaysia offer thousands of accredited programs, including hospitality and tourism, and have increased rapidly. Among the prominent public institutions offering the hospitality and tourism program is the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management (FHTM) at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), College Communities, and Polytechnic. Besides public institutions, private institutions such as Taylor University and Management and Science University (MSU) are among the most well-known institutions offering hospitality programs. Besides public and private universities, college communities and polytechnics also offer hospitality programs.

Although many tertiary institutions in Malaysia, the number of students enrolling in public higher learning institutions in 2019/2020 has decreased. In the 2018/2019 academic session, 182,722 candidates out of 351,288 SPM 2018 candidates secured a place in a public institution. However, in the 2019/2020 academic sessions, 347,982

candidates sat for the 2019 SPM, and only 182,536 were offered a place in a public institution (Ministry of Education, 2020). The number of students enrolled in public universities fluctuated between 2015 to 2019. Likewise, the number of participating students in 2019 declined in social sciences, business (hospitality and tourism programs, same group in business), and law programs.

Preliminary data collection was collected among the upper secondary vocational program from five secondary schools in Selangor that offered food preparation courses to strengthen the problem statement of why the lack of students continuing their studies in this hospitality program. The data summarised in Table 1 shows that the number of students continuing their studies between 2018 and 2019 decreased. Besides, most of these students are more likely to apply to other programs. Since Form 4, students have participated in various practical classes in the Upper Secondary Vocational Program, thus acquiring a wide range of skills. Some school leavers start working with these newly acquired skills after completing their SPM. SPM school leavers decided that working could be due to a lack of financial resources to cover tuition fees, or they could want to save up their funds before continuing their studies.

Table 1: Number of Students Enrolled in Hospitality Programs from Five schools in Selangor

Name of Schools	2018			2019		
	Total number of students	Number of students who further studies	Number of students enrolled in hospitality programs	Total number of students	Number of students who further studies	Number of students enrolled in hospitality programs
SMK USJ 8	25	20	18	23	18	15
SMK Taman Medan	25	19	15	25	20	13
SMK Subang Jaya	50	48	40	50	44	38
SMK Bukit Changgang	23	20	17	25	21	15
SMK Bandar Puchong Jaya (B)	50	36	30	50	40	24

In conjunction with these matters, a study must be undertaken to find factors that encourage individuals to pursue higher-level education and factors that motivate school leavers to pursue studies in hospitality programs. Many students are leaving the decision to choose programs or institutions in the hands of their parents, families, or friends. Students frequently choose programs based on the wishes and desires of their family members. Some are unsure about the course direction they have applied for but are willing to accept the course the family has planned for them. External factors like third parties' or social influenced students' decisions to pursue higher education. The third-party refers to parental or family, friends, and teachers' influence (Ismail et al., 2007; Jackling & Keneley, 2009; Kusumawati, 2013; Ng et al., 2011; Sia, 2010).

The students' negative perceptions will likely contribute to their learning limitations. For example, students must complete training in hospitality establishments as part of

the program's curriculum. Students as trainees may be required to wear hotel uniforms while working. Although wearing hotel uniforms is generally acceptable, many employees and trainees are displeased with the uniforms for specific departments. This concern is especially noticeable among female students (Syed Ariffin & Miswan, 2014). Many people did not believe wearing such a uniform would improve their work performance or efficiency; as a result, they believed the hotel was exploiting women (Rashid, 2011). Since attire 'revealing' or tight is prohibited in Islam, Muslim hospitality students may face conflicts between academic demands and religious duties. This matter will somehow affect the decision of future students to enrol in hospitality courses. They found it challenging to accept industry practices contrary to their religious beliefs. If students desire to work in the hotel sector after graduation, the limitations can reasonably be translated into a dilemma (Rashid, 2011; Syed Ariffin & Miswan, 2014).

Decision-making dilemmas are closely related to the learning theories they adopted in secondary school. These students may have indirectly learned three fundamental theories; cognitive learning theory, behaviourism learning theory, and constructivism learning theory, which may impact these students' decision-making abilities. In general, cognitive learning theory may influence these students to make decisions based on their learning. The behaviourism learning theory may influence them to make decisions that might gain wide approval from those around them. The constructivism learning theory may influence these students to decide based on their experiences. Making a decision is a cognitive process within the brain in which the students search for solutions to any decision or problem (Wang & Chiew, 2010). Generally, students who graduate from secondary school are often confronted with deciding on a career path (Latifah, 2015; Lee, 2009; Winson & Yazdanifard, 2021). Choosing which occupations, interests, and programs of study to pursue in education and the resulting pathways are often challenging for school leavers. One of the school leavers' crucial decisions is career preference, determining their potential goals. The decision to pursue higher education would long-term affect the students, such as good employment opportunities after completing their tertiary education (Agrey & Lampadan, 2014; Pitan & Olugbenga Adedeji, 2014).

The study's research objective (RO) is to explore the motivation factors that Upper Secondary Vocational programs students to pursue further studies in hospitality programs. In response to the problem statement and RO, three research questions (RQ) were formulated for this study: (1) What factors influence SPM leavers' intention to pursue higher education in hospitality programs? (2) Which factors influence SPM leavers intending to pursue higher education in hospitality programs? (3) How do SPM leavers motivate themselves to apply for hospitality programs at particular institutions?

2 Literature Review

2.1 Cognitive Learning Theory

The cognitive learning theory examines how people think, and it is a learning theory that focuses on perception and information processing (McSparron et al., 2019). Determining how people learn requires an understanding of mental processes. According to cognitive theory, learners can be impacted by both internal and external factors. Students are affected by cognitive learning theory because understanding their thought processes can improve their learning (WGU, 2021). For example, teachers can allow students to ask questions, fail, and think actively. These tactics can assist students in better understanding their cognitive processes and applying that information to more significant learning opportunities. Students will consider the things they want and wish to happen in their lives during the decision-making process. For example, they may believe they will pursue their studies in a field that interests them. Additionally, they will choose academic programs suited to their souls and institutions with a solid reputation to ensure their beliefs and desires are easily achieved.

2.1.1 Personal Interest

The students independently decide on their tertiary education (Svahnberg et al., 2008). Alcantara et al. (2014) investigated the elements influencing student motivation in hospitality and tourism programs. The findings revealed that self-actualisation was the primary motivator for students to enrol in these programs. Students aim to self-actualise by accumulating practical knowledge and experience rather than theoretical information. The second factor was that hospitality and tourism management was thought to provide a higher living level, as promised by the industry's potential.

Kim et al. (2008) stated that female students were more motivated than male students in four areas: self-actualisation, academic accomplishment, job opportunities, and international experience. This study was supported by Mohammad and Alsaleh (2013), that found that female students were motivated to study hospitality and tourism management because of career opportunities and a modern major. Still, male students were encouraged because of the ease with which they could learn.

2.1.2 Academic Programs

Malaysia's hospitality and tourism business is expanding, requiring more qualified professionals to satisfy industry expectations. As a result, more students should enrol in programs related to hospitality and tourism. Well-planned and designed core courses in the hospitality and tourism curriculum will give students vital skills and abilities. The curriculum design must maintain academic standards to match other business-related programs while considering the industry's needs to train future employees and managers (Dawson, 2014; Harper et al., 2005; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005). The curriculum design of hospitality and tourism programs must be given special attention, as these programs often provide courses in three areas: business core, hospitality core, and electives (Gursoy & Swanger, 2004, 2005; Scott et al., 2008; Swanger & Gursoy, 2007, 2010). Business core courses often cover business strategy, marketing,

accounting, finance, organisational behaviour, legal environment, business statistics, and economics (Scott et al., 2008; Smith & Cooper, 2000). The importance of course subjects in the hospitality curriculum evolved to fulfil business needs (Gursoy et al., 2012; Gursoy & Swanger, 2004). Beside business core, in hospitality and tourism core courses, internships or field experience are also important (Scott et al., 2008).

Curriculum design in Malaysia, including hospitality programs, must meet specific accreditation. The curriculum of the programs and the range of courses offered by the tertiary institutions are also essential factors that potential students consider (Ürer Erdil et al., 2021). To attract students, hospitality and tourism educators must first understand their needs and desires. Understanding students' interests might assist education providers in deciding how to structure a curriculum that would attract great candidates. For example, one way to achieve this is to investigate what inspires people to pursue this program. Therefore, academic hospitality programs must provide information to potential students who wish to apply to any hospitality programs. Students are expected to be more interested and eager to enrol in hospitality programs if exposed to what will be learned before applying. It is also critical to assess students' academic talents to select which varsity courses best suit their abilities. Before making any decisions, the school leavers must understand their interests, skill capabilities, and the SPM results, which must meet each program they apply for. Furthermore, with the various institutions' facilities and programs, people have become more selective in choosing their educational place. The institutions can educate school leavers with the required skills and employability soon after graduation (Bischoff et al., 2017; Jiang & Alexakis, 2017; Munisamy et al., 2014; Proboyo & Soedarsono, 2015; Yusuf et al., 2017).

2.1.3   Reputation

An institution's reputation is a more decisive influence on tertiary education selection. An institution's reputation fosters trust, leadership, and qualities applicable to strategic decision-making (Garvanova, 2020). The institution's academic excellence is related to the institution's reputation (Veloutsou et al., 2004). The tertiary institutions should be well-managed in standardising procedures for offering services ranging from recruitment to admissions, course registration procedures, tuition, and lookup points throughout the learning process (Khoi et al., 2019).

Students are attracted to institutions for their service quality and reputation. Students consider the programs offered and the reliability and reputation of a brand while choosing a higher institution (Fernandez, 2010; Munisamy et al., 2014). Overall, students preferred schools closer to home, were higher ranked, had more office/computer facilities, and offered outstanding monetary stipends (Mark et al., 2004). The institution's prestige lends legitimacy to the attained qualification, making it more straightforward for the graduate to get work. The world rankings and reputation of the university are also crucial elements in attracting students (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). As a result of the needs of the hospitality industry, thousands of universities worldwide currently offer hospitality programs; therefore, the institutions must be recognised the significance of curriculum in hospitality education since it enables

students to develop competencies and abilities in preparation for entering the field (Min et al., 2016; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005).

2.2 Behavioural Learning Theory

Interaction with the environment is learned through all behaviours (Fisher, 2011). It implies that external influences, rather than internal causes, impact and teach behaviour. The behavioural learning theory serves as the foundation for observable and quantifiable psychology. For example, teachers can use positive reinforcement in the classroom to assist pupils in better understanding a concept. Positive reinforcement increases students' likelihood of retaining information in the future, a direct result of behaviourism theory (WGU, 2021). Students will consider how those in their close surroundings will react to their decision when deciding. Undoubtedly, everyone wishes for a positive response to every decision made. In the same way, when it comes to decision-making in further study, the opinions of those in close surroundings, such as parents, friends, and teachers, significantly impact the final decision.

2.2.1 Social Influences

Social influences are expressed in various ways, including feelings, judgments, and actions. Social impacts are primarily attracted to or influenced by people close to them. Social influence comes from people near students, such as peer interactions, and has a social link with them, impacting students' program choices.

Respect for elders is deeply established in people's psyches, which explains why parents profoundly influence their children's decisions. Parents are the essential personal sources of information for making university decisions, and students should consult their parents about their university and program selections (Johnston, 2010; Kaneez & Medha, 2018; Radzol et al., 2017). Parental influence was one of the factors that played a significant role in deciding on further education. This information is based on the fact that some respondents still rely on their families for financial assistance. For example, students' program selection is influenced by their parents' aspirations significantly influences their decision to pursue a career in medical laboratory science because they typically give financial support (Ibrahim et al., 2017). How students are raised and the people they are exposed to significantly impact their day-to-day activities when making decisions (Winson & Yazdanifard, 2021). Most children enrol in courses to please their parents since they know they desire it. Students give in to their parents' demands out of fear of disappointing them. Chen and Liew (2015) mentioned that parents' expectations and guidance influence their children's decision to pursue a tertiary degree. Parental engagement can have a push or pull influence, and study has found detrimental consequences when parents choose a course that is utterly inappropriate for their child's personality.

Nevertheless, families, teachers, friends, and peers all had a role in influencing the decision to attend a higher education school (Dagang & de Mesa, 2017; Garwe, 2016; James & Denis, 2015; Lau, 2009). Students' relationships with their peers significantly impact their perceptions. The students' contact with peers of various interests, races,

and backgrounds could promote introspection, knowledge, and beliefs, leading to new ways of thinking about the world, peers, and eventually themselves (Yi-Hui, 2006). It is common for students to decide which courses to take based on their peers. However, they may change routes in the middle of the study, wasting time, and money. If they graduate, they may choose a career unrelated to their studies. Kiuru (2008) study demonstrated the significance of peer interaction in Finland when he said that the academic orientation characteristic of the peer group to which they belong might have a long-term impact on individual students' study programs. Students must understand that their decision should be based on their natural abilities and that they must have the confidence to follow the field of study that best suits them.

Besides that, most students chose a higher education institution based on a campus visit and communication with the institution's representatives, such as course advisors, staff, and graduate recommendations (Munisamy et al., 2014; Shah et al., 2013). High school teachers are also suitable types of interpersonal influence in enrolling in varsity courses (Hodges & Karpova, 2010). They can assist students in understanding their strengths and shortcomings, indicating their future success based on their abilities.

2.3 Constructivism Learning Theory

Constructivism as a learning theory is predicated on the idea that students generate knowledge based on prior experiences (WGU, 2021). Students combine what they are taught with their prior knowledge and experiences to create their world. This educational paradigm emphasises learning as an active process unique to each learner. Cognitivism and constructivism are seen to be related since both regard learning to be mental activity. However, the constructivism theory ties learning with creating meaning from one's experiences (Pourfarhad et al., 2018).

In order to make the best decision, students must consider the consequences of their choice. Students will draw on all the knowledge and experience they have gained to assist them in making decisions as they progress through school. Because of their early exposure to the industry, students will explore job opportunities that may become available to them in the future. Students can also estimate their financial ability based on family income and education fees.

2.3.1 Employment Opportunities

Employability is defined as having to meet the needs of employers and anticipate customer demands, and ability to obtain and manage jobs in the future (Dhaliwal & Misra, 2020). It is a set of skills and a collection of personal attributes that assist in obtaining employment and attracting employers who are also beneficial to the growth of the organisation and able to achieve success. Furthermore, employability is a significant aspect that influences future students' decision to enrol in an academic program and to attend a particular university (Jauhari, 2013; Nachmias et al., 2017). Institutions must prepare graduates with the necessary skills for employment, which may vary according to social demands (Ahmad et al., 2017).

Even though many students are still confused about their post-graduation plans, they consider enrolling in a program, believe in their employment opportunities, obtain a high-paying job, have a solid career path, and be more opportunities for future job progression (Gibbs & Slevitch, 2019; Kusumawati, 2013; Tas & Ergin, 2012). The fact that hospitality and tourism are among the most important industries and key sources of employment has been realised by countries worldwide. Reddy (2014) discovered that the primary motivator for students to pursue hospitality and tourism programs is career-related and the programs' attractiveness. Akış Roney and Öztin (2007) investigated the career attitudes of undergraduate tourism students in Turkey. Despite many tourism organisations' sophisticated human resource policies and processes, their findings revealed that students are willing to study tourism and work in the field after graduation. However, the career choices of hospitality and tourism students and their plans to work in the industry after graduation are significant concerns. Even though hospitality and tourism management schools prepare students for careers in business, the students do not always choose to work in the industry after graduation. Graduates may be unwilling to stay in the hospitality and tourism industry for the long haul, even if their first job, resulting in a higher-than-standard turnover rate. The implications are unfavourable; the industry may confront a severe scarcity of skilled people in the future, particularly at the management level (Chuang & Dellmann-Jenkins, 2010; King et al., 2003; Lo et al., 2014).

2.3.2 Financial Factors

When enrolling in tertiary education, each student must pay the tuition fees. Cost-conscious students prefer to apply to tertiary education that provides quality courses at a low cost (Ancheh et al., 2007; Fernandez, 2010). Previous studies claimed that cost-related issues become more important over time (Agrey & Lampadan, 2014; Joseph & Joseph, 2000; Ruslan et al., 2014; Shamsudin et al., 2019). Wagner and Fard (2009) concluded that administrators, marketers, and policymakers should focus on education costs to entice and promote their academic programs. A tertiary education institution focusing on lowering tuition costs will attract more potential students to apply.

Financial assistance is also reasonably provided to facilitate students to continue their education at a higher level. Financial assistance is monetary assistance provided by the government or private agencies to assist students in paying study expenses, including accommodation and board, reading materials and stationeries, and course supplies. Each student is understandably concerned about the fees they will have to pay. Some students may obtain an education loan, such as PTPTN, to help them pay their tuition fees, but not everyone is ready to go into debt and commit to making high loan repayments. Some institutions will offer scholarships, but the competition to get the scholarship is challenging. Only truly deserving students will be successful in getting the scholarships offered. Parents are worried that increasing education costs will stop their children from enrolling in higher education. Students will primarily select the institutions that provide high-quality courses at affordable fees and offer them financial assistance (Ahmad et al., 2021; Ismail et al., 2007; Mustafa et al., 2018; Nurlida et al., 2010; Padlee et al., 2010). Administrators, marketers, and policymakers should focus on education

costs (Wagner & Fard, 2009). Tertiary institutions focusing on reducing the cost of tuition fees can persuade more students to apply.

2.3.3 Religious Factor

The hospitality industry has struggled to maintain and attract high-quality staff worldwide (Qiu & Lam, 2004). Religious affiliation impacts one's life, particularly when deciding whether to pursue a particular work opportunity (Aizan et al., 2020). As a result, the industry is frequently regarded as a poor employment alternative; it is commonly considered a temporary solution until a proper permanent job is available (Atef & Al-Balushi, 2015; Brien, 2004). Furthermore, although the industry has a glamorous image due to working in airplanes and as tour guides, the reputation of the tourism industry is affected by unpleasant jobs in hotels and restaurants (Pender & Sharpley, 2004).

The unfavourable impressions that many service employees have of their professions affect the success of the hospitality business. Many service employees believe their work is insulting, demeaning, and embarrassing as they cater to customers' needs and desires. Personnel not taking pride in their professions are likelier to leave the sector. A more significant worry arises when these employees do not leave the industry and continue to deliver lousy service (Atef & Al Balushi, 2017). Employees who do not find joy in their professions are more likely to leave the sector. A more significant worry arises when these employees do not leave the industry and continue to deliver poor service (Atef & Al Balushi, 2017).

However, as Muslim countries become more aware of Muslim laws and religious needs, a worldwide trend of "Islamic hotels" (Shari'a-compliant) has emerged. Women's conservative clothing rules, signage indicating the direction of Mecca, women's and men's prayer rooms, Halal meals, and conventional television channels are all features of Islamic hotels. Furthermore, complete sharia compliance in financial management is necessary (Battour et al., 2011; Henderson, 2016; Stephenson, 2014).

Another topic to consider about women's employment is their work dress code. The worker's look is usually a significant consideration in the hospitality industry. There are no specific restrictions for women's attire; nonetheless, according to Islam, women's dress must include a hijab and cover their complete bodies except their hands and faces. Therefore, women should avoid clothing that accentuates their bodies' aesthetic features, such as overly tight or short clothing. Work environments that do not adhere to Islamic religious teachings prevent Muslim female employees from wearing hijabs throughout their working hours (Aizan et al., 2020).

The serving and selling of alcoholic beverages by Muslims in hotels is the next issue that has resulted in Muslim students rejecting hotel employment opportunities and deciding to further studies in hospitality programs. Aizan et al. (2020) found that the alcoholic beverages issues further reduced the number of potential Muslim workers in the hotel business. Ironically, most four- and five-star hotels and international hotels include alcoholic beverages on their restaurant's menu as revenue-generating items. This is a problem that affects food services and food production in general. For example,

an alcoholic beverage can be used as a component in dishes and as an additive to enhance the flavour of food (Rahman, 2011)

3   Methodology

A qualitative study was conducted using a cross-sectional technique. This study was conducted on upper secondary vocational program students (informants) who have completed their Form 5 studies and are applying for tertiary institutions. The reason was that these potential informants had experienced factors that might motivate them pursuing studies in hospitality programs. An informal interview using snowball sampling was used to obtain information. The willing informants were asked to propose other contacts who meet the study criteria and could be willing informants. Snowball sampling is common in qualitative research approaches based on networking and referral. The snowball sampling approach allows researchers to acquire access to the target demographic and invite potential informants to participate in research studies (Ghaljaie et al., 2017; Parker et al., 2019). Sample selection in qualitative research is usually based on fewer informants selected to achieve specific criteria (Hammersley, 2015; Wei et al., 2016). The initial number of informants interviewed is 12, and this number of informants increases because the information keeps growing. The number of informants was extended and stopped at 20 because the information was stagnant or saturated.

The questions were developed considering the factors that motivate upper secondary vocational program students to pursue their studies in hospitality. The informants were allowed to respond in Malay or English to feel comfortable responding to the question to ensure their responses could be accurate, honest, and unbiased for the study's findings. Questions were altered or adapted in response to the informants' intelligence, knowledge, or belief system. The Malay and English language were used in the interview. The informants were allowed to answer in both Malay and English language. All the data collected in Malay were translated into English and revised by hiring two English teachers from upper secondary schools. The first English teacher revised, and the second English teacher proofread.

The interviews were conducted using Whatsapp video calls and Google Meet due to movement control orders due to Covid-19. The voice recording was transcribed verbatim into the manuscript capturing both interviewer's and informants' words from the listening and transformed into ATLAS.ti software for further process. Expressions and pauses were clearly stated in text and voice forms. The ATLAS.ti software can comprehend various data types, such as audio, video, image, and written material (i.e., articles, books, survey data, and interview transcripts), and present them in infographic illustrations.

4   Findings

The demographic profiles are illustrated in Figure 1. Twenty informants aged 18 and 19 years old participated in this study. Informants 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 18,

19, and 20 were now applying for hospitality courses in public and private institutions. Meanwhile, informants 2, 3, 7, 12, 14, and 17 were working.
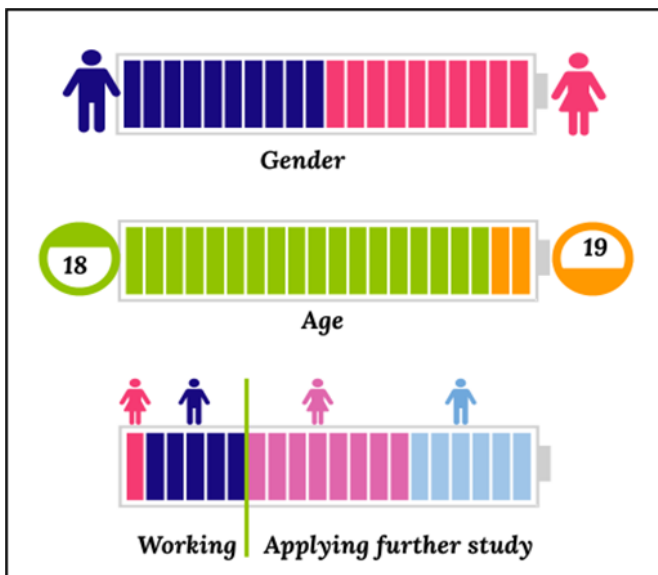

Figure 1: Demographic Profiles of Informants Based on Numbers

4.1 Intention to work instead of further study

The researcher will first outline about six working informants. Figure 2 shows the informants who work with the key factors.

Figure 2: Informants who choose to work with the Provided Key Factors

Among the questions asked were what job they were doing and why they did not pursue their studies. Opinions from the six informants are described.

"Oh, I have to work to support my family. I am the eldest in my family. Furthermore, many of my seniors become successful working in Pasta Panas." **(Informant 2)**

"Oh no, I think I cannot read books anymore. I am not interested in further study. I have to work and earn some money for my life and my family." **(Informant 3)**

"Hmmm, I want to work first. Later, if I have more money, I will further my studies. My life is quite challenging right now." **(Informant 7)**

"I am now working at the hotel, I learned a lot while working. I think it is more enjoyable working and learning, instead of studying in the class. Sitting in the class and just listening will damage my brain." **(Informant 12)**

"Hmm, I can't hold anymore sitting in the class. Many of my managers work from the bottom up, now they are managers. I want to be like them." **(Informant 14)**

*"Working as a rider gains more money. I have to save some money first before I think about further study. I also have to feed my family, my siblings are still young, they need me to feed them." **(Informant 17)***

Four informants mentioned that financial factors were why they chose to work instead of further study. Meanwhile, two informants answered that they were uninterested in studying and that working was more enjoyable.

4.2 Findings pertaining to individuals that encourage the students to further study

4.2.1 Social influences

Social influences are shown in many ways, such as how someone feels, thinks, and acts. People who are close to them are the ones who have the most impact on social issues. Social influence comes from people close to students who have a social connection with them. Families, teachers, friends, and peer interactions all played a role in deciding to go to college and affected students' program choices (Garwe, 2016; James & Denis, 2015; Lau, 2009). Opinions from all of the informants are described.

*"My friends and family encouraged me to keep studying. I will further study with my best friends." **(Informant 1)***

*"My teachers at school, friends, and family ask me to further study. My teacher always encouraged us to keep studying and expanding our knowledge so that we would not be easily fooled in the future." **(Informant 4)***

*"My teachers, friends, father, and relatives encouraged me to further study, because most of our families also further study after SPM." **(Informant 5)***

*"My parents encouraged me to further study. They said it is important for my future." **(Informant 6)***

*"My friends and parents encouraged me to further study." **(Informant 8)***

*"My family influenced me to continue studying because my sister also continued to study" **(Informant 9)***

*"My parents. My father has a Master, so he asked me to continue studying too" **(Informant 10)***

*"My parents and friends encouraged me to further study. My parents own a restaurant, I need to study how this business works so that I can expand the business one fine day." **(Informant 11)***

*"My parents and I, myself, want to further study. My father works as a chef. He said knowledge is important if I want to join this industry." **(Informant 13)***

*"My parents encouraged me to further study. Knowledge will be important in the future." **(Informant 15)***

*"My parents want me to study further. They warned that if I did not continue studying, I would be easily affected by negative influences." **(Informant 16)***

*"My family influenced me for further study. This hospitality industry is possible if we do not need to continue studying, but if we have the qualifications, it is easier for us to get promoted. This is what my father used to tell me." **(Informant 18)***

*"My parents were the ones that made a lot of noise, telling me to keep studying. They said they didn't want me to work since they could support me in continuing my studies. I really want to work if I follow my heart because I already know how to be a chef. I already learned a lot about cooking while in secondary school, hahhaaha." **(Informant 19)***

My parents were the most common answer among the 14 informants. None answered other than parents, families, teachers, and friends, demonstrating that social influences significantly impact how these students make decisions. The infographic in Figure 3 illustrates that social influences were the key factors of individuals who influenced the informants to further study.
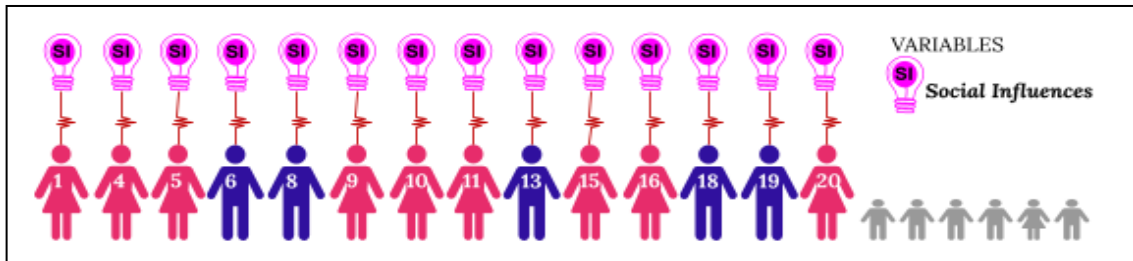

Figure 3: Informants who choose to Further Study with the Provided Key Factors

Question: "Who encourages you to further study?"

4.3 Findings pertaining to the individual that influences the students to choose the hospitality program

The informants were then asked who influenced them to pursue further education in the hospitality program. Students make their own decisions about where to go to college (Svahnberg et al., 2008). Many students face the ever-present challenge of relying on their parents while attempting to explore and discover their life paths. After conducting these interviews, it was discovered that these students could choose any course they wanted. Based on the information, the plausible reason is that the parents and families granted independent decisions because these students have been exposed to the hospitality industry while studying at secondary school. Parents and families play a crucial role in deciding which course to pursue. Parents and families are the persons closest to the students, and most students make decisions satisfying to them. The interview results can determine two significant points: personal interests and social influences, which are important considerations.

4.3.1 Personal Interest

Alcantara et al. (2014) examined what motivates students in hospitality and tourism programmes. The study found that informants were motivated to sign up for these programs to improve their lives. Students wanted to learn about real-world skills and experiences instead of theory to become self-actualised. The second reason was that hospitality and tourism management was an excellent way to make more money because of the industry's potential. The following answers were from the interviewees:

"My friends and I, myself, choose this course because I am interested in exploring this field. Actually, my friend was the one who persuaded me to pursue this hospitality course. We apply to the same college." (Informant 1)

"I choose it myself to get a good job in the future. Working in the hotel will be my desire since I know about this industry." (Informant 4)

"I have been interested in this course since secondary school. Furthermore, my counsellor teacher said this course has a lot of job opportunities." (Informant 5)

"I want to choose this course because I studied it during high school. During our visit to INTI Colleges, I found that this course is very interesting. It is not just sitting in the class but there are a lot of practical classes!" (Informant 6)

"I myself chose this field because I am interested in it. Everyone knows, hotel education is an attractive course to study, besides being known as a glamorous hotel student, hahaha." (Informant 8)

"I, myself. I want to get good jobs after I graduate. I believe with a qualification in hospitality, I can be more successful in my job later." (Informant 16)

"Of course, I choose this course myself. My dream is to be like Gordon Ramsay, the arrogant chef. Haha, just kidding, I just love cooking, I want to be an expert in the area." (Informant 18)

"My parents gave full authority to me to choose what I want. Since I've learned about this industry during secondary school, I think I just continue to further study in the same field. Furthermore, I want to come out to be a chef with qualification, so I can show my certificates in my own restaurant." (Informant 19)

"I, myself, choose this course. I don't have the strength to take a different path. It is safe to say that the subject that I majored on in secondary school has satisfied my deepest desires, and I am grateful to be engaged in this industry. Let's say, I have to be a cop all of a sudden would drive me insane sooner rather than later." (Informant 20)

4.3.2   Social Influences - Parents and families

Parents' and family expectations and beliefs affect the children's motivation significantly. Parents with high expectations for their children's learning believe in their abilities, expose them to new experiences, and encourage curiosity, perseverance, and problem-solving can help their children develop an inherent motivation to study. The following answers from the interviewees described it.

"My family asked me to choose this course since my sister is also now studying in the same course." (Informant 9)

"My parents influenced me to choose this hospitality course. They said it will become easier because I've learned it during secondary school." (Informant 10)

"My parents had a catering business. They asked me to choose this course. My mom said to learn more and more, so that no one can cheat or betray me." (Informant 11)

"My parents asked me to choose a culinary course. My father works in a hotel kitchen. He said the food industry will never go off since everyone need foods" (Informant 13)

"My parents. This industry offers a lot of jobs, they said" (Informant 15)

From the findings, nine out of 14 informants agreed that their interest in the hospitality industry led them to choose the hospitality program to study further. The answers showed that the informants had been exposed to the hospitality industry since secondary school, which was the biggest reason they generated interest in it.

It cannot be denied that social influences also play important roles in deciding which course to choose. Five out of 14 informants mentioned that people, such as parents and

families, influenced them to choose hospitality. Parents and families knew them very well, the closest to the informants. Trust and motivation provided by them to the informants may lead to a successful individual in the future. Figure 4 shows an infographic of the informants with the factor extracted from their respective answers.
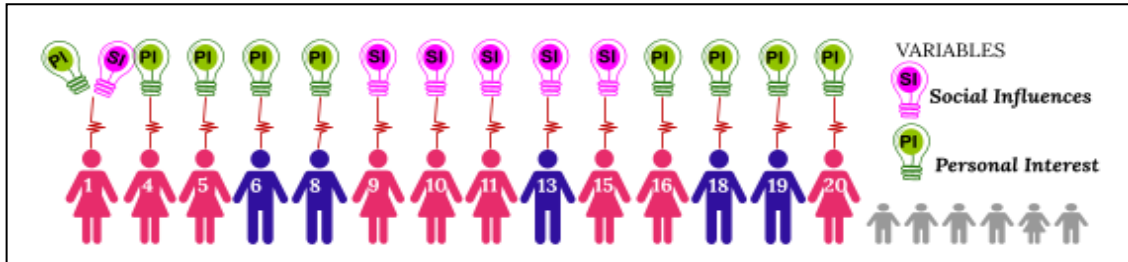

Figure 4: Informants who choose to Further Study with the Provided Key Factors

Question: "Who influences you to choose a hospitality program?"

4.4 Findings pertaining to the reasons why the students choose to pursue a hospitality program

During the selection process, each student will select a discipline they believe would benefit them in the future. For example, students may choose to study medicine because they wish to become doctors. In contrast, students may choose to study to become engineers or architects in the engineering field.

4.4.1 Job Opportunities

Similarly, students interested in pursuing a profession in the hospitality sector desire a successful career in the field. This was corroborated by the responses provided throughout the entire interview. The following answers were from the interviewees:

"This is a profitable line of business. The food industry will not vanish and become extinct." ***(Informant 1)***

*"I would like to know more about this course and build my career in this industry." **(Informant 8)***

*"There are numerous work prospects in this industry. I am confident that if I enter this industry, I will not be unemployed. Furthermore, during the school visit to Sunway University, I found that the facilities and equipment were very good, I want to apply there!" **(Informant 9)***

"This field enables me to work in various countries. I wish to travel to different countries." ***(Informant 10)***

*"Since my parents own a restaurant, I'd like to learn more so that I can continue to run it in the future." **(Informant 11)***

*"Because there are many job prospects in this industry. Selangor also has a large number of hotels. I enjoy working in areas where I can interact with a large number of people, such as front offices and restaurants." **(Informant 16)***

*"This hospitality industry gives the most income to Malaysia, which means that it offers a lot of jobs. If I become a chef, there will be a lot of kitchens I can choose, so there will be no chances of me being unemployed." **(Informant 18)***

*"I want to learn more and come out with a qualification, so that it will be easier for me to get jobs with better payments." **(Informant 19)***

4.4.2   Personal Interest

Personal interests are preferences that students have for a significant time and are expressed in several scenarios throughout their lives. In general, personal interest in an academic topic or activity is associated with academic achievement in that topic or activity in the past. As everyone might expect, a student sincerely interested in a topic or activity is likelier to devote more time and effort to it, work at it for longer, employ more intelligent learning tactics, and enjoy doing so. The following answers were from the interviewees:

"Because I learnt about hospitality in school and I want to try something new, and some people claim this hotel is really tiring, but for me, any work is tiring. In the end, you choose what you are interested in, not what others tell you, because we are the ones who have to deal with it, not others." (Informant 4)

"I am interested in this course and I want to gain more knowledge." (Informant 5)

"Because it's something I'm interested in and want to learn more about." (Informant 6)

"Because of my interest in hospitality, and because I enjoy watching Korean dramas about hotel life." (Informant 13)

"Because I am passionate about this industry. This is a dazzling field. Can dress up, wear gorgeous clothes, meet a lot of people, and communicate in English. Wow, so glamorous!" (Informant 15)

From the interviews, nine out of 14 informants stated that job opportunities were the primary reason they chose to continue their education in the hospitality program. Meanwhile, another five informants mentioned that their interests motivated them to pursue a career in hospitality. Figure 5 shows the infographic depicting the informants with the factors extracted from their answers.
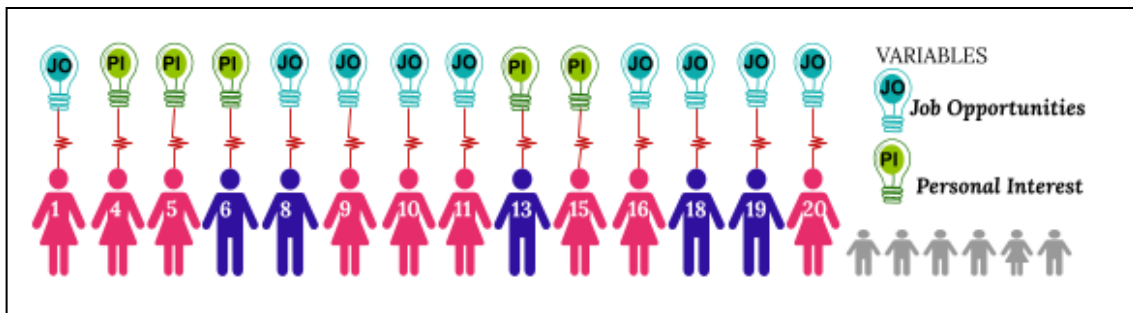

Figure 5: Informants who choose to Further Study with the Provided Key Factors

Question: "Why did you choose to further study in the hospitality program?"

4.5 Findings pertaining to the students' plans once they have completed their studies

Students who study in hospitality programs try to get the experience they need to get a job, such as by working in a hotel, exchanging ideas with other students, or taking specialized courses. Moreover, hospitality employees need a lot of education,

complicated skills, and specific knowledge. However, these interviews attempt to elicit information about their post-graduation plans.

4.5.1 Job Opportunities

As the students know, the hospitality industry provides a constantly changing job. Every day brings something new and different to the scene in this fast-paced setting. Employees are always on their feet and moving around, which allows them to think, feel, and react more effectively. There are numerous and diverse job opportunities accessible in the hospitality industry. The following answers from the interviewee described it.

*"I'm hoping to get a stable and well-paying job. Furthermore, I hope I can provide enough financial support for my mother while also assisting my brother and my sister, who have done a lot for me in terms of energy and financial support." **(Informant 1)***

*"My hope should be to find a good job and to be able to assist my family in any circumstances that may arise. My mom said the food industry will never go off since everyone needs food. I will not be jobless if I join this industry." **(Informant 4)***

*"I'm hopeful that I'll be able to improve upon my current way of life. In a monetary sense, of course. A good job and a solid salary would be nice." **(Informant 5)***

*"I hope that I will be able to make my mother and father proud of me. When I finished my studies, I didn't come away with a bunch of useless knowledge. I can put this knowledge to work in order to acquire a good job." **(Informant 6)***

*"I want to have a successful career and to be able to do something for my family so that they can live happily. If I got the chance, I want to be a teacher and teach my students about the hospitality industry" **(Informant 8)***

*"I am hopeful that I will get a good job as a result of the lessons I will learn later. Although it is true that many hotel employees do not require extensive education, I believe that knowledge is critical for me to advance and earn higher pay." **(Informant 9)***

*"In order to please my parents, I'd like to secure a halal job with a decent wage. I'll be able to help out my family in this way. By now, my parents had spent a lot of money paying all my expenses.." **(Informant 10)***

*"Helping my family succeed in business and achieving my personal goals are both important to me." **(Informant 11)***

*"I want to start working as soon as possible, preferably in an area that is similar to the one I have studied, so that I do not waste the time and money that my family has invested in me. Furthermore, hotel jobs are so glamorous like in the Korean movies." **(Informant 13)***

*"I want to work in the hospitality industry and earn a good salary. After that, I'd like to look after my parents. Those who have contributed to my success and deserve to be compensated for their sacrifices." **(Informant 15)***

*"I want to pursue a career in the hospitality industry and want to be a successful individual who is also beneficial to my family and society." **(Informant 16)***

*"Like I said before I want to be an expert in the area. I want to build my career as a chef. If I get a chance to be a celebrity chef, it will be better for me (laughing)." **(Informant 18)***

*"I want to become a chef with qualification, a chef whom everyone needs me in their kitchen. I want to create my own secret recipe and open my own restaurant when I have enough money." **(Informant 19)***

*"Before I get married, I want to be a pastry chef. After I have my own kids, I want to slow down and be a teacher that teaches cooking, hmm maybe I do it online because nowadays I saw many advertisements, teaching online cooking also can earn so much money." **(Informant 20)***

During the interviews, *"What is your plan after you completed your study?"* was asked to the 14 informants. All of the informants answered that they chose to work. The researcher expected some of them to say they wanted to continue their education at a higher level, from a diploma to a bachelor's degree. However, none of them responded other than to begin searching for jobs. All of the responses indicated that job opportunities were the key criteria the informants sought while furthering their education in the hospitality program. The infographic in Figure 6 clarifies the informants' answers with the factors extracted from the answers.
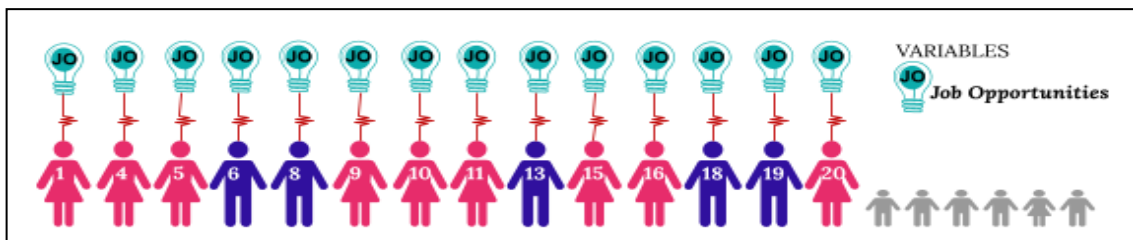

Figure 6: Informants who choose to Further Study with the Provided Key Factors

Question: "What is your plan after you complete your study?"

4.6 Findings pertaining to the problems the students face in further study

Every student aspires to be accepted into one of the world's top-ranking universities, but few are successful. Many even possess the talent and enthusiasm that will allow them to be accepted into the most prestigious institutions worldwide. However, due to the financial crisis, they cannot cope with the difficulties they are experiencing and decide to abandon their pursuit of higher education. The financial difficulty may directly impact a person's cognitive abilities because it will impair their concentration if they are preoccupied with other, more pressing matters.

4.6.1 Financial difficulties that prevent them from pursuing their studies

The lack of monetary funds is considered one of the most significant obstacles to higher education. Often, students lose hope and believe a lack of financial resources to be a challenge they will never be able to overcome. The following answers from the interviewees described it.

*"Oh, I have to work to support my family. I am the eldest in my family. Furthermore, many of my seniors become successful working in Pasta Panas" **(Informant 2)***

*"Oh no, I think I cannot read books anymore. I am not interested in further study. I have to work and earn some money for my life and my family" **(Informant 3)***

*"Hmmm, I want to work first. Later, if I have more money, I will further my studies. My life is quite challenging right now." **(Informant 7)***

*"I am now working at the hotel. I have to work because I need to earn money for my family. However, I learned a lot while working. I think it is more enjoyable working and learning, instead of studying in the class. Sitting in the class and just listening will damage my brain." **(Informant 12)***

*"Working as a rider gains more money. I have to save some money first before I think about further study. I also have to feed my family, my siblings are still young, they need me to feed them." **(Informant 17)***

4.6.2   Financial issues causing concern about not completing studies

Like many other types of stress, financial stress is a substantial source of anxiety among students and working adults. Students in higher education demand more funds to meet the costs of studying and living in universities since higher education in public and private institutions has continued to rise in recent years. Some students may experience financial difficulties in their daily lives due to limited financial resources and the escalating expense of higher education. The following answers from the interviewees described it.

*"Yes, there will be difficulties, such as money problems, but I have siblings who are concerned about one another and who are willing to provide a small amount of money to help me complete my studies." **(Informant 4)***

*"Since I'm not a rich person, I am sure I will be experiencing financial difficulties. I'm thinking about doing a part-time job while I'm studying in the future. I'm hoping I'll be able to pull it off. If I don't earn money, it will be tough for me to continue my studies later on." **(Informant 8)***

*"Yes, there are financial issues. My parents' restaurants have struggled to thrive since the pandemic. I feel embarrassed to ask for their money, but they are serious about supporting me to complete my studies. I'm at a loss on what to do next. I'm hoping that this financial issue can be handled until I finish my studies." **(Informant 11)***

*"So far, Alhamdulillah, there are no critical issues, only a few financial issues. That's it. Many people claim that this course is very costly. I'm hoping I'll be able to pay later." **(Informant 16)***

During the interviews, informants who chose to work were asked why they chose to work instead of further study. The informants who choose to further study are also being asked about any problems they face in further study. The answers showed that financial factors were the main problem eight out of 20 informants faced. The infographic in Figure 7 clarifies which informants with financial factors problems.
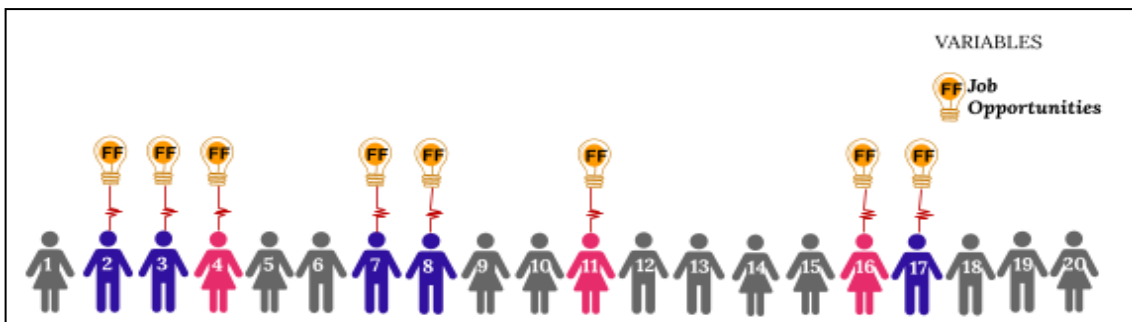

Figure 7: Informants who choose to Work and Further Study with the Provided Key Factors

Question: "Why do you choose to work instead of further study?"- working informants

"Is there anything you are having trouble with to continue your studies?" – further study informants?

5   Conclusion

5.1   Research Question 1: What factors influence SPM leavers' intention to pursue higher education in hospitality programs?

Four factors were extracted from the answers: social influences, job opportunities, interest, and financial factors.

5.1.1   Social Influences

It was found that many parents encouraged their children to continue studying, and this shows that parents understand the value of obtaining a quality education for their children. Education helps students become better citizens, obtain better-paying jobs, and distinguish between the good and the bad. Besides, it teaches them the value of hard work while assisting their personal growth and development.

Undeniably, educated parents have key influences on students' school performance. Parents with formal education backgrounds can help youngsters realise the importance of formal education for their future. Parents might teach kids about their past experiences as students and help them become who they are today. It would have been difficult for them to achieve their current lives without formal schooling. The interviewees' answers during the interview described it. Parents must encourage their children to succeed in school, especially those with formal education. Based on their school experiences, they will not place their children in similar conditions.

Friends are another factor that motivates students to study further. When students have friends accompanying them to school, they tend to love being there. Alternatively, when students do not have outstanding friends or are surrounded by horrible classmates, they will be lethargic to study and may even refuse to further study. This topic was described in the following sentence by one of the interviewees.

It was discovered that the students are interested in pursuing further education in the hospitality program. Parents trust their kids to choose what course they are interested in. It was found that these students obtained their interest in the hospitality programs since they were exposed to the hospitality industry during their upper secondary vocational program. Additionally, they attended trips to institutions such as Sunway University that offer hospitality programs. Indeed, several have worked in restaurants to assist the family business.

It was also discovered that teachers influenced their decision to continue their studies in the hospitality field. Teachers have a vital role in attracting children to learn in school. Excellent and dependable teachers attract students to come to school and learn. Students feel at ease with this teacher and can discuss and share their difficulties. As a result, they are eager to attend school and learn from a skilled teacher. Trust in the teacher encompasses everything, such as conversations, actions, and attitudes. So students can obey and believe in the teacher's words, encouraging them to continue studying in the hospitality field.

5.1.2 Job Opportunities

One of the most compelling reasons to pursue an education in hospitality is the abundance of job and career prospects available. Nine out of 14 informants answered that a wide range of job opportunities in the hospitality industry was why they chose the hospitality program to further their studies. During their secondary school courses, these students have had the opportunity to see and feel how the jobs are similar in appearance and feel.

Those interested in pursuing a degree in hospitality will receive a comprehensive education that will prepare them to work with people and provide excellent service. These are the people who are proactive and have demonstrated skills and abilities. They make excellent employees because they are well-organised, imaginative, and naturally hardworking. Students who want to work in tourism and hospitality should be outgoing, enjoy building relationships with others, be willing to sacrifice time to advance their careers, be service-oriented, and be able to work in teams.

5.1.3 Personal Interest

Five of the 14 students chose the hospitality program because of their interests. Furthermore, all students responded affirmatively to the question, *"Do you find these courses interesting?"* The benefits of learning about jobs and skills in the hospitality industry are more colourful than in most other professions, which is one of the reasons that many people choose to work in the hospitality industry. A career in the hospitality sector provides great freedom and mobility and the unique opportunity to meet, service, and connect with individuals from all walks of life. These students responded with various interesting answers and seemed to enjoy saying what was on their minds. Their enthusiasm for the hospitality industry prompted them to pursue their education in hospitality programs.

5.1.4 Financial Factors

At some point, every human will encounter difficulties in their daily lives. The option to continue studying is also a significant decision that should be carefully considered, even though these students have already been exposed to the hospitality industry in secondary school. What, on the other hand, is the actual issue for them? According to the interviews, financial difficulties are the primary reason they do not want to and are hesitant to continue their studies. Five out of six working informants mentioned that they have to work to earn money. Meanwhile, 4 out of 14 informants currently applying for the hospitality program hesitated to face financial problems during their studies.

Lack of funds is usually viewed as one of the significant impediments to higher education. Many students lose hope and assume that lacking funds is a challenge. Financial stress causes significant anxiety among students. Students in higher education need more cash to cover the rising costs of study and living while pursuing study. Due to limited funds and the rising cost of higher education, some students may face continuous financial challenges.

Table 2: Variables Extract from the Informants' Answers

INFORMANTS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1 Who encourage the students to further study?	SI			SI	SI	SI		SI	SI	SI	SI		SI		SI	SI		SI	SI	SI
2 Who influences the students to choose hospitality courses?	SI PI			PI	PI	PI		PI	SI	SI	SI		SI		SI	PI		PI	PI	PI
3 Why the students choose to pursue in hospitality program?	JO			PI	PI	PI		JO	JO	JO	JO		PI		PI	JO		JO	JO	JO
4 What is the students' plans once they've completed their studies?	JO			JO	JO	JO		JO	JO	JO	JO		JO		JO	JO		JO	JO	JO
5 Problems to further study		FF	FF	FF			FF	FF			FF	PI		PI		FF	FF			

SI - Social Influences	20		PI - Personal Interest	16		JO - Job Opportunities	23		FF - Financial Factors	8

Source: Informants' Answers from the Interviews

5.2 Research Question 2: Which factors significantly influence SPM leavers pursuing higher education in hospitality programs?

Job opportunities are a resounding yes. These 14 informants kept answering and mentioning many job opportunities they could join after completing their studies. These 14 students have been exposed to the profession of hospitality both in school and in their surroundings. There is no doubt that the hospitality industry provides countless job opportunities, including hotels, restaurants, and tourism industries, which offer various areas, including operations and administration.

A compelling incentive to pursue study in the hospitality program is that it provides good job and career options for anyone who wishes to work in the hospitality industry. Those who are energetic and possess leadership abilities make outstanding employees well-organised, imaginative, and naturally charismatic. There are far too many job opportunities in the hospitality industry. As prospective graduates in hospitality, they cannot work in any organisation to seek sustenance for themselves and their families. Furthermore, the hospitality business is rising after recovering from the pandemic's operational standstill.

5.3 Research question three: How do SPM leavers motivate themselves to apply for hospitality programs at particular institutions?

Based on the findings of 14 interviews, it was discovered that "Interest" is the key tendency that influences students to further their studies in the hospitality programme. It begins with an interest, followed by a desire to find steady employment when they complete their studies. An act must be accompanied by self-interest. The student's observations and experiences can help to spark their interest.

5.4 Significance of the Study

This study attempted to explore the factors that influence the intentions of SPM leavers, specifically those from the upper secondary vocational program, to continue

their education in the hospitality program after they graduate from secondary school. This study would help hospitality institutions improve their marketing strategy to entice more students to apply to their programmes. The institution could also provide more amenities like financial aid and lodging.

Exploring SPM graduates' intentions to continue their education in the hospitality program was essential because the industry's workforce needs more significant intellectual capital and competencies to satisfy rising demands. It was also necessary for students who have completed hospitality programs to have the expertise and competencies needed to maintain rapid advances within the hospitality industry. Institutions and businesses in the hospitality industry should work together to improve hospitality education programs' attractiveness and competitiveness and produce highly qualified employees.

Furthermore, as well as gaining new information and viewpoints regarding secondary school students' acceptance and interest in the upper secondary vocational program, the Ministry of Education can modify the course curriculum if necessary. The results of this study may aid students in deciding whether or not to pursue post-secondary education in the hospitality program. As a result, those young people have become lifelong learners rather than merely students till they graduate from secondary school.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

Due to the fact that this study does not include all areas of Malaysia, the conclusions drawn from it may differ if the study were expanded to include the entire country. This is because the sample population did not represent respondents from all over Malaysia. This study concentrated on three sampling locations: Selangor, Pahang, and Perak. As a result, the result may not accurately and reliably represent the fundamental research, jeopardising the result's accuracy and reliability.

This study's second issue was selecting a small sample of respondents. The respondents' age was between 18 and 19. Therefore, the findings are limited to students in this age range. Certain constructs considered significant in influencing students' intentions were omitted from this study unintentionally. This study examined only three variables: social influences, personal interest, job opportunities, and financial factors. As a result, this study may be omitted critical variables such as age, gender, and ethnic group.

5.6 Recommendations

Future researchers can increase the sample size of the study. Researchers can cover more significant geographical areas, such as responders from East Malaysia. Researchers should create a well-structured plan to obtain more reliable results, including which respondents to target and where to conduct the research. Furthermore, future researchers can target responders from other educational levels. They should broaden the study to include post-secondary, foundation, undergraduate, and

postgraduate students. Researchers can analyse students' intentions from various student groups by targeting different respondents. Future research studies should include more variables to test students' intentions. This is because, in addition to the four criteria, which are social influences, personal interest, job opportunities, and financial factors, other circumstances may influence one's intention to apply to hospitality programs.

5.7 Conclusions

This research explores the motivation factors that upper secondary vocational programs students to pursue further studies in hospitality programs.

5.7.1   Relationship between Social Influences and Students' Intention

Social interaction affects an individual's beliefs, attitudes, and decisions; thus, family members, teachers, and friends significantly influence students' intentions to further study (Huang, 2019). Furthermore, when it comes to encouraging kids to continue their education, parental support can significantly impact them. Thus, parents play a valuable role in the decision-making processes of their children.

5.7.2   Relationship between Job Opportunities and Students' Intention

Given the intense competition in today's labor market, potential employers are looking for high-quality graduates to fill their positions (Lucktong & Pandey, 2020). The belief that higher education is required to obtain a decent job may still be common among modern students and parents; as a result, variables that aid this objective will significantly impact preference for a higher education institution.

5.7.3   Relationship between Personal Interest and Students' Intention

Individuals may also have the explicit intention of experiencing interest when participating in a given activity. These motivations and objectives correspond to which activities are selected for their own sake because they are interesting and valuable. Many facets of students' future life are shaped by their decisions on which educational and career pathways to take, including their college majors 1. Individuals may choose particular activities over others because they believe they are consistent with their well-developed interests or passions (Durik et al., 2017; Vallerand, 2010).

5.7.4   Relationship between Financial Factors and Students' Intention

It was noticed that their family's suggestions more easily influence students because they rely on their parents' financial assistance. The need for finances is commonly regarded as a significant impediment to higher education (Iqbal et al., 2012). Many students lose hope and believe that a lack of funds is an insurmountable obstacle. Students experience significant worry as a result of financial stress. Students in tertiary institutions require extra funds to cover the rising education costs and living while studying. Some students may face ongoing financial difficulties due to limited funds and rising cost.

After reviewing all the factors, it is possible to infer that social influences, personal interest, job opportunities, and finances motivate students' intentions to study in

hospitality programs. The tertiary institution should concentrate on these four independent variables to boost students' intentions to continue their education.

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