



A Phenomenological Study: Tourism Students' Views on Hotel Internship Experiences in Indonesia

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pengalaman mahasiswa pariwisata yang magang di sebuah hotel di Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif, data dikumpulkan dari empat mahasiswa pariwisata yang terdaftar dalam program sarjana di sebuah perguruan tinggi negeri di bagian utara Indonesia dengan menggunakan wawancara semi struktur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa memperoleh pengetahuan baru, seperti upaya kolaborasi, manajemen waktu, keramahan, kebersihan dan ketertiban. Dalam upaya kolaborasi, mahasiswa dapat merancang lingkungan belajar yang lebih baik, dan kolaborasi antara pengawas guna meningkatkan kinerja mahasiswa. Mereka juga mempelajari apa itu laporan mingguan, cara menyusunnya, dan tugas terkait lainnya. Pada akhirnya, magang sangat penting karena memberi mahasiswa akses ke peluang kerja dan kemampuan baru yang mungkin tidak mereka miliki saat berada di ruangan kelas. Selain itu, penelitian ini akan bermanfaat bagi junior mereka yang akan melakukan magang di masa yang akan datang. Untuk penelitian selanjutnya, disarankan untuk meningkatkan pemahaman tentang bagaimana untuk bersosialisasi dalam hal pembelajaran, kinerja, dan pengalaman selama magang dengan partisipan yang banyak.

Kata Kunci: Studi fenomenologis, magang, hotel, pengalaman

Abstract

This study explored the lived experiences of tourism students interning in a hotel in Indonesia. Using a qualitative research design, the data was collected from four tourism students enrolled in an undergraduate degree program at a public college in northern Indonesia using semi-structured interviews. The study findings showed that students acquire new knowledge and have a good day off during their internship. During their internship, they gained new knowledge, such as collaboration effort, time management, hospitality, cleanliness, and order. In the collaboration effort, students can design a better learning environment, and the collaboration among supervisors raises students' achievement. In addition to receiving access to templates they may use immediately to write their reports and submit them to their college advisor, they would learn what a weekly report was, how to construct one, and other related information. Additionally, this study would be helpful for their juniors who will conduct internships in the future. Future studies might enhance the comprehension of how interns socialize and how it relates to their learning, performance, and fulfilling experiences during internships.

Keywords: Phenomenological study, internship, hotel, experience

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INTRODUCTION

An *internship* is a program that organizations and businesses use to provide on-the-job training which the students will receive varied workplace assistance through the curriculum (Sligo & Housel, 2019). Additionally, a professional learning opportunity known as an internship provides students with relevant, hands-on work connected to their area of study or career interest (Korte, 2019). A student can explore and enhance their career while learning new skills through an internship and give the business a chance to cultivate talent, bring fresh perspectives and vigor, and create a pipeline for future full-time workers (Anjum, 2020). Most students need work-based experiences in their profession to be competitive for jobs. Therefore, employers frequently seek out candidates with internship experience because the majority of typical college students have little work experience (Beard, 2007). As a result, the number of students looking for internships has increased as they try to boost their marketability for jobs even though it can be challenging to go from a student to a professional stage of life (Billett, 2004). When they enter the workforce, students must overcome various obstacles and students gain advantages like knowledge or professional connections in the workforce (Frenette, 2013).

In addition, an internship is a planned learning opportunity in the workplace that allow students to learn more about a potential career path and acquire valuable skills in a particular industry (Haung & Haung, 2004). Internships assist students in gaining practical experience, improving their social connections, inspiring further learning, and shaping their personalities in a way acceptable in society (Rothman, 2007). Through internship programs, students gain practical workplace, social and job skills, grow in their independence, and broaden their social networks, all of which contribute to meeting the demands of the corporate world in terms of practical skills and competence (Lam & Ching, 2006). The more students participate in internship programs throughout their college years and gain experience in natural work settings, the less likely they will choose to work in that sector when their studies are complete (Budd, 2015).

The previous research conducted by Ivana (2019) shows some traits that can help increase the perceived efficacy of internships based on the experiential education approach elements. The results reveal some characteristics contributing to a higher level of perceived internship effectiveness, underemployment status, and gender. Correspondingly, the research conducted by Chen & Hu (2011) aimed to examine Taiwanese college students' behavioral intentions. The favorable and unfavorable effects of the internship experience and their findings demonstrate the various impacts on satisfaction, willingness to return to the original internship organization, willingness to work, willingness to suggest the internship organization to other students, and capability to switch between departments. Additionally, the research conducted by Thilakerathne & Madurapperuma (2013) reveals that the internship has evolved into a crucial element of undergraduate degree programs, enabling students to transfer quickly from the campus setting to the workplace. Finally, the research conducted by Gautam (2017) concludes that most students are happy with the internship opportunity and want to work in the hotel sector. The study found a weak but significant association between satisfaction and the intention to change one's attitude.

In this study, the students interned in the hotel which it has fifty-five rooms and is rated as a three-star hotel. It has been operating for nine years. A restaurant, cafe, meeting room, and hall are among the amenities offered, and they have all been specially managed to benefit all visitors. The researchers interviewed the hotel manager and the manager showed us the average number of guests staying in the hotel, the number of guest complaints from August to December.

Table 1
Average number of guests and complaints

No	Month	Number of Guests	Complaints
1	August	483	108
2	September	460	96

3	October	453	90
4	November	525	115
5	December	630	140
Total	5 Months	2.551	549

From table 1 above, it is explained that in the last five months, the hotel has experienced an unstable and dominant growth in the number of guests staying. The number of guests decreased from August to October, while from November to December, the number of guests increased. However, along with the benchmark, the number of guests staying is strongly influenced by the quality of service and becomes a consideration with the high-season and low-season factors. In August, the number of guests was 483, and the number of guests who complained was 108 people. In September, the number of guests decreased to 460 people, with the number of guests who complained as many as 96 people. In October, the number of guests decreased to 453 people, with the number of guests who complained as many as 90 people.

In contrast, in November, the number of guests increased to a total of 525 people. As a result, the number of guests who complain has increased to as many as 115 people, and in December, the number of guests staying has increased to 630 people, with the number of guests complaining increased to 140 people. Along with the growth in the number of guests, it can be explained that from August to September, it is classified as a low season factor. This is because usually, guests use their daily time to work. At the same time, November to December is classified as a high season factor because these two months are dominantly used for guests to do holidays every month towards the end and at the end of the month.

However, the leading indicators that make the interest of guests to stay are decreasing based on the services provided, as Table 1.1 above, it is explained that the average number of guests staying each month always complains about service problems, and the number of guest complaints continues to increase. Therefore, the researchers were interested in finding out how the students were doing their internship in that hotel and investigated their views of interning there. This research would be helpful for their juniors who will conduct internships in the future.

METHODS

This section describes how the research was conducted, research design, data collection techniques, instrument development, and data analysis techniques. This section explains how the data was collected/generated and an explanation of how the data was analyzed.

Four undergraduate tourism majors had been chosen as the study's participants (one male and three female) and they were between the ages of 21 and 23. In addition, three-year students signed up for an internship program at a hotel in northern Indonesia that ran from November 2021 to January 2022. The names of all participants were changed to pseudonyms to safeguard their privacy during the research process.

Table 2
Participant characteristics

Pseudonym	Age (years old)	Gender	Working Experience
Ancia	23	Female	Waitress
Ashaun	22	Female	Waitress
Anan	22	Female	Waitress
Yushin	21	Male	Waiter

Before the research, we visited with the hotel's general manager and personnel and briefed them on the objectives, rationale, and methods. We requested permission from the participants to participate in the study after work because they stayed and spent most of their time at the hotel. To prevent any influence, we ensured that no one from the hotel personnel was there while we discussed online or onsite. We supplied the research

team with contact information and study details, including the study's objectives, methods, and procedures. Potential participants were informed of their involvement in the research and the value of active engagement in group discussions. Eventually, we gave them a thorough explanation to make the study simpler to grasp and see whether they had any trouble understanding. We provided study participants with printed information sheets outlining the research methodology and a verbal summary of the research process. Members of the research team received oral and written permission from participants and assisted them in understanding the information sheet.

Due to safety issues with COVID-19 and long distance, all sessions for this research were conducted virtually. A total of ten interviews sessions were held between November 2021 to January 2022. Considering the participant preferred Indonesian, the interviews were conducted in that language, and zoom software was used for every session with the participants' consent every Saturday night and audio recorded. In the initial interview, participant demographic data were gathered, the objective of the research process was explained, ethical concerns were discussed, and interview advice was given. The research team briefed the participants about the research project and advised them to choose one of the group members to serve as the discussion's leader to keep things moving. Each week between the second until the tenth sessions, we conducted individual semi structured interviews. Eventually, we invited everyone involved in this study to have a final onsite meeting during the last session to discuss any experience the participants may have had during the research. In order to foster a positive relationship between the research and the participants, we kept in touch with them.

First, we read all the data several times to understand and then we carefully read each statement, thought about what it had to say about the phenomenon, determined the themes and the proper words or phrases that best captured the themes' significance, and looked for similarities and contrasts when comparing the topics in each transcript and field note. Then, we collectively decided which themes most accurately captured the participants' experiences during internship program. Following the first analysis, we checked the results with each participant to ensure they concurred with our conclusions. Every participant concurred that the results were a reflection of their own experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results revealed found seven subthemes under the two themes (learning new things and abilities), which the participants chose as crucial subjects for discussion (see table 2).

Table 3

Theme and Subtheme	
Theme	Subtheme
Learning new things and abilities	Collaboration effort
	Time management
	Hospitality
	Cleanliness and order
Having a good day off	Quality time
	Weekly report
	Self-development

Learning new things and abilities

Collaboration effort

Initially, the participants faced communication difficulties with the supervisor. They felt pressure to understand the duties load given by the supervisor as the supervisor encouraged them to pursue working targets and served customers with high quality. In the following days, they wrote some notes about their daily duties to work adequately and sometimes asked their workmates in their division. As they encountered new partners,

including workers, customers, and members of the local community, communication posed the greatest barrier in carrying out their everyday tasks. When students encountered difficulty carrying out their duties while in the program, their supervisors would urge them to speak courteously and to be more forthcoming with them. Thus, participant developed their teamwork skills as a result of this communication procedure.

"I beat my pal to the finish line for the first time. I am not sure if I should be waiting for pals who are still working or if I should be observing them. I ultimately decided to assist since I think there is nothing wrong with assisting others. Sadly, my boss used to criticize me for working slowly in front of my fellow employees. Nevertheless, I continue to grow and adapt to problems when working in a team in a professional manner." (Yushin)

The primary aim of this study was to understand the experiences and perspectives of tourism students interning in a hotel. During their internship, they gained new knowledge, such as collaboration effort, time management, hospitality, and cleanliness and order. In the collaboration effort, students can design a better learning environment, and the collaboration among supervisors raises students' achievement (Silalahi & Sitorus, 2021). As a result, the team will work better together and solve problems through collaboration, encouraging more creativity, practical procedures, a more remarkable achievement, and enhanced communication (Laker & Powell, 2011).

Time management

Participants got rigorous training beginning with reporting to work every weekday at 7:00 am for the front office division and 8:00 am for the other divisions. As a result, the participant must get up at 6 am to take a shower, get dressed, and be ready to go. They first believed they were placed in the same division with the same shifts so they could work together at the hotel. However, they each performed their tasks differently and got to work approximately 30 minutes after eating the hotel's complimentary breakfast each morning.

"Because our primary responsibility is providing all of the meals for visitors and staff, including breakfast, lunch, and supper, I have to work carefully in the kitchen. Therefore, the hotel's reputation will suffer significantly if the team and I are late. In addition, sometimes, we collected in the washing room at 8:00 am to dry towels, bedsheets, bath mats, and other hotel items. Then, we get around 30 minutes for breakfast and 12:15 pm–1:00 pm for lunch. Finally, at 5.00 pm, we prepared to leave the warehouse by rearranging our utilized equipment." (Ashaun)

As learning new things, such as time management, is found in this research. Therefore, planning and exercising deliberate control over the amount of time spent on particular activities by the students while working in the hotel is the practice of time management, mainly to promote effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity (Jackson, 2017).

Hospitality

Participants received instruction on how to engage with customers and individuals while demonstrating hospitality in their service by using words like "welcome," "see you," "enjoy," and "thank you." They first struggled to incorporate hospitality in customer service since it was strange and forgettable. Fortunately, the boss and coworkers frequently reminded and encouraged them to practice hospitality.

"When offering services to visitors who will check-in and checkout, I occasionally fail to say "Welcome, good luck, and see you soon." After the second week, though, I grew accustomed to it and began to welcome visitors without thinking." (Ancia)

Furthermore, students directly practiced hospitality at the hotel. The term "hospitality" refers to the relationship between a host and guest in which the host accords the guest with some measure of kindness (Dixon & Jovanovska, 2022). This includes welcoming and entertaining guests, visitors, or strangers.

Cleanliness and order

Participants had to pay attention to cleanliness when performing housekeeping at the hotel and were given the opportunity to grow personally in terms of neatness and cleanliness. Despite the fact that their managers were always seeing them accomplish their tasks correctly, this turned out to be a great chance for them to learn on their own and use their creativity. Additionally, they worked and rendered services to guests in various hotel divisions, giving fresh expertise in terms of cleanliness and order, including setting up dining tables, kitchen layouts, and guest rooms.

"The boss would be irate if he discovered a hair on the bed. I was thus needed to install the bed and properly organize the guest's belongings in accordance with hotel standards. I used to get reminders from my boss to pay attention to how things are organized in the storage and guest room. I thus developed a greater attention to detail for cleanliness and order."(Anan)

For workplace safety, cleanliness and order are essential (Clayton & Thessin, 2016) and a lack of organization frequently causes accidents and occupational illnesses, and orderliness makes work easier (Ali & Muhammad, 2018). People may maintain their physical and emotional health with the help of cleanliness and order, which will make them feel good. By keeping the body, mind, and spirit tidy and at peace, cleanliness and order help develop excellent character (Celik & Yuce, 2019).

Having a good day off

Quality time

Participants concluded their task and socialized with the neighborhood. Additionally, they used to mingle and work together with the neighborhood throughout the afternoon to do environmental hygiene, which strengthened their bonds and compassion for one another. On the other hand, they experienced sadness on occasion. After all, they occasionally skipped church in order to finish their tasks at the internship. After all, Sundays are busy days. Additionally, because the hotel receives so many customers around major holidays like Christmas and New Year's, they were not permitted to see their family. They nonetheless took advantage of their day off because their hotel was near to the beach, where they played until the sun set each day.

"In the first week, I got the opportunity to do Sunday service. However, as of the second week, I was not given the day off on Sundays. Consequently, despite several attempts to address this with my supervisor, I was unable to worship. I was unable to find a solution, though. On weekends, he claimed, there were a lot of reservations made for hotel rooms." (Yushin)

The students required a break from learning and working during their internship in the hotel so that their brains might unwind. In addition, they required extra sleep because their entire sleeping and working schedule would be thrown off if they cannot fall asleep on one day of the week. The last benefit is that they have more time to see their relatives outside the city (Cheung & Tang, 2010).

Weekly report

Students had to finish their weekly reports on a day off and a weekly report provides a thorough overview of the student's work at the hotel, including projects they had finished, were currently working on, and plans. When there was no work schedule, participants worked on two mandatory reports they must do: weekly personal information and a group report that must be collected after the internship was complete. Participants should also meet online with their supervisor once a week. They had to take advantage of the holiday time to

meet with their dean and his staff, who monitored them on-site at least once. Students must submit a weekly report to their advisor called the weekly internship report. It is a document that contains a written record of the tasks completed by the interns each day. In addition, the interns should record their observations and inquiries from the program in this report. This weekly report is necessary since schools will utilize it to compile their reports on each student's performance.

"I was asked to participate in a study by a researcher who wanted to learn about my personal experiences working as an intern at a hotel. I'm also glad I know how to do interviews so I may use those skills later on when I conduct research utilizing interviews." (Yushin)

In addition to receiving access to templates they may use immediately to write their reports and submit them to their college advisor, they would learn what a weekly report was, how to construct one, and other related information. Additionally, setting aside a small amount of time each day on a day off to pick up new skills is a great way to enrich a student's life and help them become more well-rounded individuals (Resnik, 2012). Students will eventually master their learning ability and use the new skill as part of their repertoire for overcoming life's problems by studying small portions of what they are trying to learn during a day off (Bennett, Reid, & Rowley, 2017). In order for them to perform better in their future jobs and use all of their information, it helps them to attain higher professional competencies and excellence in their subject of interest (Kroon & Franco, 2021).

Self-development

Participants engaged in casual conversation about work assessments and occasionally humorous beachside anecdotes. They used to utilize stories to encourage self-improvement, such as teaching people how to prepare wonderful milk tea, fry potatoes, and cook fried rice. To learn how to carry food and beverages using trays and ironing bedsheet in accordance with hotel protocol. They learnt about the roles and responsibilities of the principal director, general manager, executive area manager, and human resource development within the hotel's organizational structure.

"I've improved as a quick and flexible room cleaner. Although I often work in rooms for about an hour at a time, now it only takes me about 30 minutes to finish, and I do it well and cleanly, making my supervisor pleased and like me a lot." (Yushin)

In order to improve their quality of life and personalities, students engage in self-development during their internships. As a person is constantly looking for methods to better, modify, and grow himself, self-development is the key to raising the quality of life (Polyiem & Nuangchalerm, 2022)

CONCLUSIONS

It is clear from this study that the internship is innovative in strengthening and growing students' learning skills and has an understanding of modern learning methodologies. The results might not apply to students at other universities or those majoring in different study subjects. Interviews with four tourism students at a single hotel were the only participants in this study. This process would be better understood with additional information from formal assessments and observational data. Although the study did not look at the students' personalities and motivations, the level of organizational and academic preparation for internships was a significant factor in determining the students' experiences. Future studies might enhance the comprehension of how interns socialize and how it relates to their learning, performance, and fulfilling experiences during internships.

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