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# The impact of internship experience on students' career intentions in hospitality education

Made Bintang Nadiva Prameswari

#### **ABSTRACT**

Hospitality, as a major segment of the tourism industry, relies heavily on effective human resource management to deliver service quality and sustain organizational competitiveness. Consequently, workforce demand in the hospitality sector must be supported by a pipeline of skilled and job-ready graduates, which can be strengthened through vocational education and structured internship programs. Bali Tourism Polytechnic (Politeknik Pariwisata Bali) implements an internship program known as Praktek Kerja Nyata (PKN) across all study programs, including Hospitality Administration. Internship participation is expected to enhance students' professional competencies and provide clearer insights into career options during and after their studies. This study examines the effect of internship experience on the career intention of Hospitality Administration students at Bali Tourism Polytechnic. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected through an online questionnaire measuring students' satisfaction with their internship experience and their career intention. The survey targeted students in semesters 4, 6, and 8 who had completed at least one internship placement. A simple random sampling technique yielded 253 valid responses. Data were analyzed using simple linear regression, t-tests, and the coefficient of determination. From a management perspective, the findings underscore the role of internship programs as a strategic human resource practice for shaping early career intentions in the hospitality industry. The results indicate that internship experience has a positive and statistically significant effect on students' career intention, explaining 45.8% of the variance. These findings highlight the managerial importance of well-designed internship programs for human resource development and workforce planning in the hospitality sector.

**Keywords:** Internship Programs, Career Intention, Human Resource Management, Hospitality Education, Workforce Development

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#### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is widely recognized as a major global tourism destination, and the continuous expansion of tourism destinations and related investments has positioned the tourism sector as a strategic pillar of national economic development. The sector contributes significantly to export earnings, job creation, business growth, and infrastructure development, making it a key driver of economic resilience (Mellu et al., 2018). According to the Ministry of Manpower, tourism-related activities encompass accommodation, food and beverage services, transportation, tourist attractions, souvenirs, travel agencies, and money exchange services. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism industry absorbed approximately 12.38 million workers in 2019, representing 9.5% of Indonesia's total workforce (WTTC, 2022). Although employment in tourism declined sharply to 8.0% in 2020 due to the pandemic, the sector showed signs of recovery in 2021, with employment increasing to 8.3%, underscoring its ongoing importance for national labor absorption (WTTC, 2022).

Among the various segments of tourism, the accommodation or hospitality industry plays a central role and is highly dependent on human resources to deliver service quality and ensure customer satisfaction. Hospitality organizations are labor intensive and rely heavily on employees' skills, attitudes, and behaviors to maintain competitiveness and service excellence (Bhalla & Dawra, 2019). As tourism demand grows, the need

for a qualified, adaptable, and competitive workforce becomes increasingly critical. This growing demand highlights the strategic importance of human resource development and workforce planning in hospitality management. Consequently, ensuring the availability of competent human resources is a pressing challenge for both industry practitioners and policymakers.

In response to these challenges, the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy has emphasized the development of superior and globally competitive human resources through the optimization of vocational tourism education and training. Vocational higher education institutions are expected to play a key role in bridging the gap between academic learning and industry requirements. According to Indonesia's Higher Education Law No. 12 of 2012, vocational education is designed to prepare students with high-level practical skills and professional competencies aligned with labor market needs. As such, vocational education is increasingly viewed as a strategic mechanism for strengthening human capital in service industries. This policy orientation places responsibility on vocational institutions to ensure that graduates are job-ready and capable of contributing effectively to organizational performance.

Bali Tourism Polytechnic (Politeknik Pariwisata Bali) is a vocational higher education institution under the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy that produces more than 600 graduates annually for the tourism industry. One of its primary missions is to develop competent, professional, and entrepreneurial human resources in tourism and hospitality. To achieve this objective, the institution integrates a mandatory internship program known as *Praktek Kerja Nyata* (PKN) into its curriculum. Within the Hospitality Administration program, students are required to complete two internship placements, including an operational internship in the fourth semester and a managerial internship in the seventh semester. These placements expose students to both frontline service roles and management-related functions such as human resources, sales and marketing, and finance, thereby providing comprehensive workplace learning experiences.

Internship programs are widely recognized as an effective form of workplace-based learning that enables students to acquire managerial and professional competencies through observation and hands-on practice (Tse, 2010). Such programs provide opportunities for students to develop technical skills, interpersonal abilities, and professional attitudes that are difficult to acquire solely through classroom instruction (Yiu & Law, 2012). In the hospitality context, internships allow students to experience real working conditions, understand organizational culture, and build professional networks within the industry (Self et al., 2016). Through these experiences, students gain clearer insights into job expectations and career pathways. As a result, internships often play a critical role in shaping students' perceptions of and intentions toward careers in hospitality.

However, internship experiences are not uniformly positive, and students may encounter both supportive and challenging workplace conditions. Evidence from internship evaluations at Bali Tourism Polytechnic indicates that while some students report positive experiences such as supportive supervision, skill development, and professional recognition, others face difficulties including excessive workloads, inadequate guidance, poor scheduling, limited facilities, and insufficient compensation. Such negative experiences may reduce satisfaction with internships and create unfavorable perceptions of the hospitality industry. Prior research suggests that negative internship experiences can discourage students from pursuing careers in tourism and hospitality and may lead them to seek alternative career paths (Chen & Shen, 2012). These mixed experiences highlight the importance of examining internship quality rather than assuming uniformly beneficial outcomes.

Previous studies have shown that students' satisfaction with internship experiences significantly influences their career intention in related industries. Research indicates that factors such as training quality, job characteristics, and workplace support play a crucial role in shaping students' willingness to pursue careers in the same field after graduation (Dahanayake et al., 2019; Koo et al., 2016). Conversely, dissatisfaction with job nature, compensation, and learning opportunities during internships has been found to negatively affect students' long-term career aspirations in hospitality (Kusluvan et al., 2003). Internship experience is therefore considered a critical signal that informs students' future career decisions (Chang & Busser, 2020). Despite these insights, much of the existing literature is concentrated in developed or Western contexts, limiting its generalizability to emerging economies.

Although prior research has examined the relationship between internship experiences and career intention, evidence from Indonesia, particularly within vocational hospitality education, remains limited and fragmented. Existing studies in this context often emphasize general internship outcomes or broad perceptions of the industry, without systematically assessing students' satisfaction across key internship quality dimensions (e.g., training, job characteristics, supervision, facilities, and co-worker support) and linking these evaluations to career intention. In addition, internship programs are rarely discussed from a human resource management perspective, where internships function as strategic tools for early talent development and workforce planning. To address these gaps, this study examines the effect of internship experience (as reflected in internship satisfaction) on the career intention of Hospitality Administration students at Bali Tourism Polytechnic. By focusing on a vocational hospitality setting in Indonesia, the study provides context-specific evidence on how internship quality shapes early career intentions and offers managerial insights for strengthening the hospitality talent pipeline

#### LITERATURE REVIEWS

#### **Internship and Internship Satisfaction**

Internship is widely implemented in vocational and higher education under various terms, such as industrial practice, on-the-job training, and work placement. In general, internship refers to field-based learning designed to introduce students to real work environments and develop work-related competencies (Effrisanti, 2015). In hospitality education, internship experience can be defined as supervised professional work conducted in hospitality organizations, either paid or unpaid, and recognized as part of academic requirements (Zopiatis & Theocharous, 2013). Internship programs also support students in understanding industry realities, gaining practical experience, and building workplace connections that may be useful for future employment (Self et al., 2016). Therefore, internship is not only an academic requirement but also a mechanism that supports students' transition from campus to professional work life.

Internship satisfaction refers to students' evaluations of whether their internship experiences meet their expectations. Satisfaction reflects the comparison between what individuals expect and what they actually experience during the internship (Rosyidah et al., 2020). Students tend to report higher satisfaction when internships provide meaningful learning opportunities, particularly when they can gain new knowledge and skills beyond what is learned in the classroom (D'Abate et al., 2009). Importantly, internship satisfaction can help predict career tendencies after graduation and influence students' willingness to remain in the industry (Chen et al., 2018). In hospitality, internship experiences shape students' overall perceptions of the industry and affect their intention to work in hotels after completing their studies (Hua Que et al., 2021).

#### Career, Intention, and Career Intention

Career may be viewed objectively as a sequence of positions held across an individual's working life and subjectively as an individual's perceived direction and meaning in work life (Cascio & Aguinis, 2014). Career formation often begins during late adolescence and early adulthood when individuals explore career options and develop intentions aligned with their education and personal goals (Iswahyuni, 2018). Intention refers to a person's desire or willingness to perform a behavior and is commonly treated as a psychological precursor to action (Jogiyanto, 2007). Intention is also shaped by attitudes toward the behavior and social influences, meaning that career-related decisions may reflect both personal preferences and external expectations (Chrismardani, 2016). As a result, career intention can be understood as a specific form of intention that focuses on career-related planning and commitment.

Career intention refers to an individual's intention to engage in actions related to career exploration and to pursue a particular occupational path. It includes plans to seek information, participate in career-related activities, and commit to a chosen field (Pratiwi et al., 2020). Educational experiences and workplace exposure influence career intention by helping individuals build relevant skills and develop realistic expectations about work (Kusluvan et al., 2003). In hospitality education, internship is a key experience that can shape career intention because students directly encounter job conditions, training quality, and workplace support. Prior empirical findings indicate that students' satisfaction with internship influences their intention to pursue careers in the same industry, particularly through the quality of training experiences and the nature of work assignments (Dahanayake et al., 2019). Accordingly, internship satisfaction is an important predictor of whether hospitality students are likely to pursue careers in the hospitality industry after graduation (Hua Que et al., 2021).

#### **METHODS**

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional design to examine the effect of internship experience on career intention among students in the Hospitality Administration program at Bali Tourism Polytechnic (Politeknik Pariwisata Bali), Indonesia. The study site was Bali Tourism Polytechnic, located in Badung Regency, Bali. Data were collected primarily through a structured questionnaire, producing quantitative data suitable for statistical analysis (Sugiyono, 2018). Secondary information, including institutional internship evaluation records and supporting documents, was also used to contextualize the study and describe internship implementation (Sugiyono, 2018).

The population comprised active Hospitality Administration students who had completed the compulsory internship program (*Praktek Kerja Nyata*, PKN) at least once. The population included 361 students across semesters 4 (124 students), 6 (118 students), and 8 (119 students). A probability sampling approach was applied using simple random sampling to provide equal selection opportunities for all eligible students (Darmanah, 2019). The minimum sample size was estimated using Slovin's formula with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, resulting in a minimum requirement of 190 respondents. The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Forms to students in semesters 4, 6, and 8, with respondent contacts facilitated through the program administration. A four-point Likert scale was used to measure responses, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree/very dissatisfied) to 4 (strongly agree/very satisfied) (Sugiyono, 2018).

The independent variable was internship experience, operationalized as students' satisfaction with internship implementation, measured across dimensions adapted from prior studies, including training program, nature of the job, supervision, facilities, and co-worker support (Dahanayake et al., 2019; Zopiatis & Theocharous, 2013). The dependent variable was career intention, defined as students' intention to pursue a career aligned with the internship industry, measured using indicators adopted from earlier work (Dahanayake et al., 2019; Pratiwi et al., 2020). Instrument quality was assessed through validity and reliability testing. Validity was evaluated using significance criteria (p < .05), while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with values above 0.60 considered acceptable (Ghozali, 2018; Janna & Herianto, 2021). Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25. Classical assumption tests were performed, including normality testing using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov procedure and heteroscedasticity assessment using scatterplot diagnostics (Ghozali, 2018). The research hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression, supported by t-tests for significance and the coefficient of determination (R²) to estimate the proportion of variance in career intention explained by internship experience (Ghozali, 2018).

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### Results

#### **Respondent Description**

A total of 253 Hospitality Administration students who had completed at least one internship participated in this study. The respondents were predominantly young adults, with most aged between 20 and 22 years, indicating that the sample largely consisted of students in the early stage of career exploration. Female students accounted for a slightly higher proportion of the sample (56.1%) compared to male students (43.9%). Almost all respondents completed their internship in the hotel sector (99.6%), with only a negligible proportion placed in restaurants, reflecting the hospitality-oriented focus of the academic program. Most internships were undertaken in five-star hotels, followed by four-star and three-star hotels, suggesting that students were primarily exposed to high-end service environments. Internship placements were concentrated in Front Office and Sales and Marketing departments, while smaller proportions were assigned to Human Resources, Food and Beverage, and Finance-related units. In terms of work conditions, most respondents reported working eight hours per day, although a substantial proportion experienced extended working hours of up to ten hours. Slightly less than half of the respondents reported experiencing job or departmental rotation during their internship, indicating varied exposure to different functional areas.

#### **Simple Linear Regression Results**

Simple linear regression analysis was employed to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The results of the simple linear regression analysis, conducted using SPSS version 25, are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. The results of the simple linear regression analysis

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>									
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	1	Sig.				
	В	Std. Error	Beta						
Constant	2.270	.808		2.809	.0005				
Internship	.141	.010	.677	14.576	.000				
a. Depen	a. Dependent Variable: Career Intention								

As shown in Table 1, the regression analysis yielded a constant value of 2.270 and a regression coefficient of 0.141 for the internship variable. Based on these values, the simple linear regression equation can be expressed as:

$$Y = 2.270 + 0.141X$$

where Y represents career intention and X represents internship experience. The constant indicates that when internship experience is held at zero, career intention remains at a baseline level of 2.270. The positive regression coefficient for internship suggests that a one-unit increase in internship experience is associated with an increase of 0.141 units in career intention. These results indicate a positive relationship between internship experience and career intention, meaning that improvements in internship experience are associated with higher levels of students' career intention.

#### T-test

The t-test was conducted to examine whether the independent variable has a statistically significant effect on the

dependent variable. The analysis was performed using SPSS version 25, with a significance level set at 0.05. A p-value below 0.05 indicates that the independent variable significantly influences the dependent variable, thereby supporting the research hypothesis. The results of the t-test are presented in Table 2.

**TABLE 2. T-test Results** 

Variable	t-value	Sig.	Evidence
Internship (X)	14.576	0.000	Significant
Alpha 0.05			

Based on Table 2, the hypothesis testing results indicate a significant effect of internship experience on career intention. The null hypothesis stated that internship has no significant effect on career intention, whereas the alternative hypothesis proposed a significant effect. Hypothesis testing was conducted using the t-test with a significance level of 0.05. The degrees of freedom were calculated as n-1 (df = 252), resulting in a critical t-value of 1.29. The results show a p-value of 0.000 and a calculated t-value of 14.572, which exceeds the critical value. These findings indicate that internship experience has a statistically significant and positive effect on career intention, leading to the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis.

#### **The Coefficient of Determination**

The coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) analysis was subsequently conducted to assess the proportion of variance in career intention explained by internship experience. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 4.15.

TABLE 3. Results Coefficient of Determination (R2) Results

Indirect Path	β	t-value	p-value
Burnout → Engagement → Turnover Intention	0.025	0.712	0.476
Work–Life Balance → Engagement → Turnover Intention	0.033	0.917	0.359

As shown in Table 3, the R<sup>2</sup> value is 0.458, indicating that internship experience explains 45.8% of the variance in career intention among Hospitality Administration students at Bali Tourism Polytechnic. The remaining 54.2% of the variance is attributable to other factors not examined in this study.

#### **Discussion**

The descriptive findings provide a nuanced picture of how internship experiences shape students' career intention in hospitality. Overall, students reported high satisfaction with several core aspects of their internship, particularly those related to learning opportunities, job exposure, and interpersonal support at the workplace. At the same time, the results highlight specific areas that may weaken the internship experience, especially the adequacy of facilities. Importantly, the regression results confirm that internship experience is positively associated with career intention, suggesting that improving internship quality is likely to strengthen students' willingness to pursue hospitality careers after graduation.

Within the internship construct, the training program dimension showed the strongest perceived performance on the indicator "training and work development received during the internship program," which obtained the highest mean score (3.66). This suggests that students generally agreed that training and development activities were implemented well and contributed to their satisfaction during the internship period. In contrast, the lowest mean within the training program dimension was found for "opportunities to work in other departments/divisions/sections" (3.23). This indicates that students perceived limited cross-departmental exposure, which may restrict broader skill acquisition. This interpretation is consistent with evidence that internship satisfaction increases when students have opportunities to learn new things that are not obtained in school (D'Abate, dkk). However, students also noted that rotation may not always increase satisfaction if it is inconsistent with their interests and expectations, implying that rotation needs to be purposeful and aligned with learning goals rather than implemented mechanically.

For the "nature of the job" dimension, respondents generally reported very high satisfaction, as reflected by mean values within the upper response range (3.26–4.00). The highest-rated indicator was "opportunity to use one's knowledge and skills" (3.72), indicating that internships were perceived as allowing meaningful application of academic competencies in practice. By contrast, the lowest-rated indicator in this dimension was "adequate working hours each day" (3.31), suggesting that workload and time demands may still be salient concerns, even when overall task experiences remain positive. This pattern aligns with the idea that an internship can be simultaneously developmental and demanding, particularly in operational hospitality contexts.

Students also reported high satisfaction with supervisory support. Specifically, they evaluated supervisor involvement, communication quality, fairness, and knowledge sharing positively, implying that supervisors played an active mentoring role. This is important because supervision quality can shape learning outcomes and the perceived professionalism of the internship experience. Likewise, the co-worker dimension was rated very

positively, indicating strong collaboration, friendly communication, and knowledge sharing among colleagues and peers. Collectively, these findings suggest that the social environment of internships was largely supportive and may have strengthened students' professional socialization into hospitality work settings.

In contrast, the facilities dimension emerged as the least favorable aspect of the internship experience. Of the six facility indicators, only "employee toilet/bathroom facilities" was rated as very satisfactory, while the remaining indicators, including "canteen/dining space," "food provided," "work uniform," "locker/rest area," and "health or labor insurance," were rated only as satisfactory, with the lowest mean observed for "food provided" (3.00). Compared to other dimensions, this domain also contained more responses indicating dissatisfaction, implying that physical and welfare-related resources may be insufficient in some placement sites. This matters because a supportive work environment contributes to better organizational decision-making and can increase job satisfaction (Badrolhisa, dkk., 2019). Prior survey evidence also suggests that individuals may prioritize working conditions in career decisions (Chong et al., 2013), and facilities are a central component of the physical work environment. From a practical perspective, improving facilities could enhance internship satisfaction and, indirectly, strengthen students' career intention in hospitality.

Regarding career intention, the highest-rated indicator was "after completing the internship, my thoughts and feelings changed positively regarding working in the industry" (3.65). This suggests that internships can reinforce positive perceptions of hospitality work and can shift students' attitudes toward the industry in a favorable direction. However, the lowest-rated indicator was "after graduation I will definitely work in the same industry" (3.29), indicating that students are not fully committed to remaining in the internship industry after graduation. Qualitative remarks further indicate that students remain open to opportunities in other industries if attractive alternatives emerge, even if hospitality remains a priority due to educational alignment and familiarity with job realities gained through internship. This interpretation is consistent with the view that internships help students understand the industry in real conditions (Self dkk, 2016), but understanding alone does not always guarantee long-term career commitment.

The statistical findings support the conclusion that internship experience positively predicts career intention among Hospitality Administration students at Bali Tourism Polytechnic. The estimated regression equation (Y = 2.270 + 0.141X) indicates that improvements in internship experience are associated with higher levels of career intention. This positive relationship is also statistically significant, as shown by the t-test results (p = 0.00 < 0.05; t = 14.572 > 1.29). Furthermore, the coefficient of determination indicates that internship explains 45.8% of the variance in career intention, suggesting a substantial practical contribution while also indicating that other determinants remain influential.

The remaining unexplained variance (54.2%) implies that career intention is shaped by multiple factors beyond internship experience. Prior work suggests that determinants such as work life balance, work environment, technical school experience, job openings, personal interest, lifestyle, external influencers, institutional advertising, self-efficacy, occupational aspirations, family, and career guidance may also influence students' hospitality career decisions (Widjaja, dkk., 2016; Korir dan Wafula, 2012; Qiu, dkk., 2017). These factors may interact with internship experiences, meaning that even highly satisfying internships may not fully translate into strong career commitment when external opportunities, personal preferences, or family considerations point elsewhere. Therefore, future research and program design should treat internship as a central but not exclusive pathway for shaping hospitality career intention.

#### **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION**

#### **Conclusions**

This study demonstrates that internship programs function as a strategic human resource mechanism that significantly influences the career intention of prospective hospitality employees. The findings indicate that internship experience has a positive and statistically significant effect on career intention among Hospitality Administration students at Politeknik Pariwisata Bali. The results of the regression analysis show that internships explain 45.8 percent of the variance in career intention, while the remaining 54.2 percent is attributable to other organizational and individual factors not examined in this study.

From a management perspective, these findings suggest that well designed internship programs contribute to early career alignment and future workforce commitment. Internships should therefore be viewed not merely as temporary training arrangements, but as an integral component of talent pipeline development in the hospitality industry. Organizations that invest in structured and supportive internship experiences are more likely to attract, prepare, and retain individuals who demonstrate stronger intentions to pursue long term careers in hospitality.

#### **Suggestion**

Based on the study findings, several managerial implications emerge that are relevant for hospitality organizations seeking to strengthen their future workforce. Internship programs should be designed as a structured talent pipeline, rather than treated as short term operational support. Planned cross departmental rotation is particularly

important, as limited exposure to multiple departments may restrict interns' understanding of career pathways within the organization. Close collaboration between Politeknik Pariwisata Bali and host organizations is therefore recommended to establish formal rotation schedules, for example every two months or in line with operational requirements. Such structured rotation can enhance skill versatility, clarify career prospects, and strengthen organizational attachment among interns. In addition, intern welfare should be viewed as a strategic employer branding tool. Providing adequate support facilities, including meal provision or allowances, appropriate uniforms, access to lockers or rest areas, and inclusion in employment insurance programs, can enhance interns' perceptions of organizational support. These practices signal management's commitment to employee wellbeing and can improve employer attractiveness, thereby reinforcing positive career intentions toward the hospitality sector. Furthermore, internships should be integrated into human resource planning processes, with interns treated as potential future employees rather than temporary labor. Managers can leverage internship performance evaluations and feedback as part of early talent identification and recruitment strategies, reducing recruitment uncertainty and training costs by converting high performing interns into full time employees. Finally, future research should adopt a stronger management perspective by examining additional determinants of career intention and retention, such as work life balance, work environment, organizational support, job availability, self efficacy, career aspirations, family influence, and external labor market conditions (Widjaja, dkk., 2016; Korir dan Wafula, 2012; Qiu, dkk., 2017), in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of early career decision making and long term workforce sustainability in hospitality organizations.

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