INTENTION TOWARDS PURSUING CAREER IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY AMONG HOSPITALITY GRADUATES IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The hospitality industry worldwide has been experiencing the problem of attracting and maintaining quality employees. If today's students are to grow into future effective practitioners, it is very essential to understand their perceptions of hospitality industry itself. Thus, this research aims to investigate the perceptions of undergraduate students in Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Puncak Alam Campus, Selangor, Malaysia towards pursuing their career in the hospitality industry. Hence, this study is conducted in order to identify the relationship between these four independent variables, which are career development, pay and benefits, peers influence, and academic advisors influence, and the dependent variable, which is hospitality student intention towards pursuing career in hospitality industry. This study employed quantitative method and a total of 248 students in Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management participated in this study. A set of self-administrated questionnaire distributed to each student and data collection took about 4 weeks in November, 2019. The questionnaire was analysed by using SPSS statistical tool and it was found that there is moderate relationship between those variables. The study highlights the importance of certain elements in influencing the students' perception and intention towards pursuing their career in the hospitality industry right after they graduate.

INTRODUCTION

The attraction and retention of youngsters in a highly competitive employment market has been one of the plenty obstacles faced by Malaysia in the hospitality industry nowadays (Zahari, Shariff, & Ismail, 2014). The lack of number as well as poor transfer of graduates into hospitality industry were found to be the most vital obstacle in Malaysia despite various issues relating to high staff turnover, job-hopping and shortage of supply. Attracting motivated and skilled personnel has proven to be one of the toughest challenges for the hospitality industry compared to other emerging sectors in the economy (El-Houshy, 2014). Hospitality industry is often criticized for offering low status and low paying jobs even though the industry is well known for its development that able to generate many employment opportunities. Hospitality industry has long been affiliated with negative image as well as lack of understanding on the opportunities offered (El-Houshy, 2014).

Most of the studies conducted suggest that graduates have negative expectations of their future career and also their career prospects (Wan & King, 2011). Majority of graduates believed that promotion chances in the industry were not adequate and it was also tough to find a stable job in this industry due to the seasonality factor (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000). Similarly, Richardson (2008) discovered that majority of the graduates affirmed that most jobs in the hospitality industry as well as the fringe benefits level

offered are low. There was also a lack of clear career path offered by the industry while the graduates also assumed that there was no fairness and equality in handling the promotions. As mentioned previously, the negative image created hindered the recruitment of quality personnel as most of them are concerned about the physical working conditions in the industry (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000).

Although it is proven that undergraduate student perceptions and attitudes towards the hospitality industry play a major role in ensuring them to pursue or stay in the industry, there is little evidence that indicate any studies has been conducted regarding this matter in this area, in our case which is faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Puncak Alam campus despite various studies conducted in other countries. Studying perceptions is crucial because it is s a physiological process through which everything in this world is interpreted and understood by an individual. This clearly shows how this study will come in handy for the hospitality industry as these perceptions contribute to shaping up the students' view on the industry, hence leading them to either stay or leave the industry. Therefore, in filling the knowledge gap, this study would like to investigate students' intention towards pursuing career in hospitality industry and the finding is hope to contribute to the current body of knowledge.

Despite some other research that have been conducted in this area, little focus has been given to peers and academic advisor influence that might influence fresh graduates to join the industry. Little empirical evidence has been reported on these two variables and empirical research needs to be carried out to identify the relationship between the studied variables. Therefore, the objectives of this research to examine the correlation of career development, pay and benefits, peers influence, and academic advisors influence related to the hospitality student intention towards pursuing career in the hospitality industry.

Relationship Between Career Development and Students' Intention

Farrell (2015) mentioned that the organization advantages were not linked with the numerical flexibility, however, are connected with purposeful flexibility and work-life stability action. It is used to determine that academic motives and time for entertainment were considerable factors of work-life balance issues. Thus, the study concludes that hotels want to undertake and develop extra organizational supports such as work help and care supports for personnel to achieve a better stability between work and life (Kong, Ding, & Zhao, 2014).

Enjoying possibilities for profession advancement, as properly as having a fulfilled and balanced life, appears to inspire university students greater than money itself. Hence, this finding indicates the importance of improving profession competencies.

Graduate's personnel are career-oriented, and advancement opportunities rely to them.

The findings of this study indicated that profession potential are essential predictors of career satisfaction, and also mediator between empowerment and satisfaction. To recruit the talent and make them happy, hotel managers must enhance the career competences of employees, and in turn, achieve the purpose of profession satisfaction. For example, managers may draw a clear image of profession development primarily based on the evaluation of the potential abilities of qualified younger employees. A clear profession ladder may additionally encourage personnel and increase their career satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Kong, Sun & Yan, 2016). It is anticipated that when student perceives good career development in hospitality industry, they will have greater intention to join the industry.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between the career development in the industry and the students' intention towards pursuing their career in hospitality industry.

Relationship Between Pay and Benefits and Students' Intention

The Chairman of Malaysia Association of Hotels (MAH) Sarawak Chapter, Keith Pointer said that hoteliers were unduly concerned in regards to the introduction of minimum wage due to the fact that they were already in compliance with the minimum wage (Borneo Post, 2012). He further elaborated that apart from the basic pay that might emerge as low, it was only one component of a worker's total salary. Pointer has also emphasized the fact that hoteliers gained a part of the service fee obtained from customers. Moreover, fringe benefits such as free or subsidized accommodation and meals are usually given to the hoteliers. Financial incentives which involve bonuses, commissions, and even profit sharing are also being provided by several organizations.

These pay and non-pay elements of remuneration form the "total reward system" that characterizes the compensation structure in the hospitality industry. Boella and Goss-Turner (2013) supported this statement by saying basic salary pay received by a worker who works in hospitality industry is not necessarily indicative of his total compensation, under this system. Free accommodation is exceptionally vital to a hotel employee. Joo-Ee (2015) said that in some circumstances, employees who work with minimum wage are better off with free accommodation compared to pay as a benefit in kind.

In the hospitality industry, the minimum wage level drive to an upward pressure on the general wage levels. Approximately, the Minimum Wages Order may influence up to 70% of hotel workers. Hence, if salaries are increased in accordance with the Minimum Wages Order, the wage gap between the rank and file, and

senior level staff will be remarkably eroded. Suhaili (2012) told that numerous hospitality operators are worried that the erosion in wage gap may cause the senior level employees to become unmotivated. To reflect the discrepancy between the former and the latter in terms of skills, experience, and responsibility in the workplace, employers had in the past granted wage increases in order to maintain wage gap between these two categories of employees (Joo-Ee, 2015).

Therefore, with the aforementioned discussion the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between the pay and benefits offered in the industry and the students' intention towards pursuing their career in hospitality industry.

Relationship Between Peers' Influence and Students' Intention

Peers influence can be described as the interaction of a young adult with his or her friends which favourably linked with career exploration. Positive peer attachment relationships will result in higher reports of career decision (Hellman, 2014). Friends are important for individual socialization as well as behavioural modification while such group includes same age group which is not necessary friends while its formation is dependent on multiple advice, factors including situation, an accident or association. The study revealed female students are eager and more depend on their friends when making some decision (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017).

This aspect of career development developed through the interactions with their friends who are interested in advancing student's future career. Peer relationships are motivated by cultural similarity-attraction; therefore, the students are affiliated with their friends. Peers are the crucial aspects of the socialization process and their influence and pressure have also been widely recognized in influencing the path of human lives. Sometimes peers decisions also become determining variables in the choice of a career (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). In schools, peer counselling is a phenomenon that was established to help students to overcome this problem. This is also supported by other studies where the researcher indicated that the peers bring an influence on individuals and their choices. However, Njeri, (2013) claims that although male and female students are positively influenced in equal measure by their friends' interest in computer science, boys do not seem to be adversely influenced by their friends (Mtemeri, 2017).

Students are likely to join high school with certain professions in mind but may shift to other careers due to their interaction with their peers who give them comprehensive career information. The result of the current study is consistent with previous studies such as Hashim and Embong (2015) in Malaysia that revealed that career behaviours are likely to be modified by peers. Students were seen reporting felt more relaxed and secure in creating decisions to be their friends (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017).

Thus, based on the argument, it is proposed that:

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between peers' influence and the students' intention towards pursuing their career in hospitality industry.

Relationship Between Academic Advisors' Influence and Students' Intention

The academic advisor acts like a person who guides and leads the students to the right track in deciding future career and it is found that they are potentially to influence a student's career choices. Previous studies discovered that engineering students still can make a decision of their future prospect without referring to academic advisor. However, there is dissimilarity between male and female and other aspects where a study done by Gaule and Piacentini (2018) indicate that a supportive advisor is vital for young students especially female in scientist context. Blaming the communicating method, Mustapha, Zaharim, Long, and Mohd (2013) stated that lecturing has an indirect impact on the students' career choices. In order to increase the effectiveness of career advising, there is a need for sufficient training, better time management and multiple communication tools (Chan, Chan, Chow, Choy, Ng, Wong, & Yu, 2019).

Interest and aspiration depend on the delivery of advising. Ignorance from an academic advisor about career counselling will bring negative impact. As a result, adolescents are faced with a growing pressure to make career decisions Participation of the current study underrated the influence of the teacher in schools and mentor in their career choices. Career counselling and advice influence career decision-making process depending on traditional counselling concepts. Effective career guidance provides the students a greater understanding into the issue that need to assist future faster. They have an ability to support students in seeking for job networks The types of employment that might be suitable to their interests, skill or aspirations should be discussed in a way to avoid problems. Students should choose the career while evaluating to own capabilities and their interest. The faculty also plays an important role in shaping a commitment towards career in hospitality industry (Lee, Lee, & Dopson, 2019). Therefore, the students can easily understand which careers are perfectly for them. Student interest should never be undermined in choosing a career path (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H4: There is a significant positive relationship between the academic advisors' influence and the students' intention towards pursuing their career in hospitality industry.
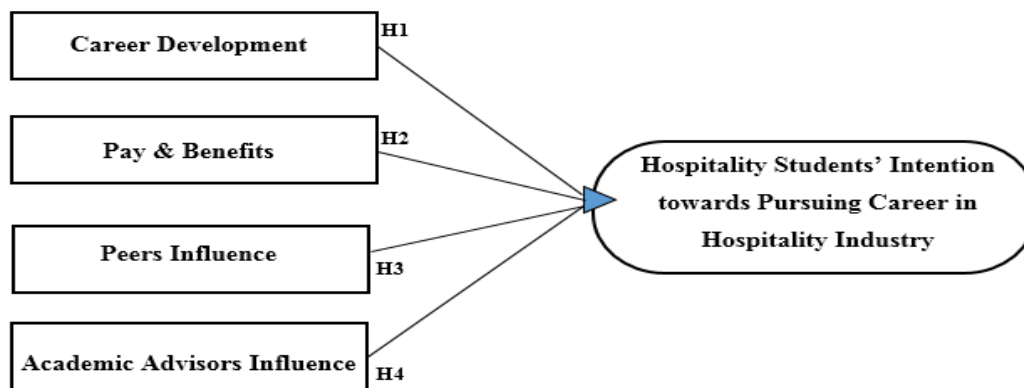
Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

METHOLODOGY

A descriptive research design using a quantitative approach through cross sectional study is deemed to be the most appropriate method to be employed in order to study the graduate's perceptions towards pursuing their career in the hospitality industry. The hallmarks of this technique are widely known for requiring a substantial amount of time, effort, and cost and restrict from gathering large amount of data. Taking into account of these constraints, a descriptive research design using quantitative approach will be used for this study as. Survey questionnaire will be used as it is quick and has the ability to reach more respondents with a relatively low cost. In other words, a survey consisting of self-administered questionnaire will be prepared to obtain the required information from the hospitality students.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE SIZE

The targeted population for this study is the second year until final year undergraduate students who enrolled hospitality management programmes in the campus. In selecting the targeted sample, a probability simple random sampling method is considered to be the most appropriate sampling technique to be used. Simple random sampling is the basic sampling technique where we select a group of subjects (a sample) for study from a larger group of a population. Each individual is chosen entirely by chance and each member of the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample.

Due to the limitation of time for this study, it was impossible to include all students in hospitality programmes in Malaysia. Therefore, this study only selected students from the faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Puncak Alam campus, Selangor, Malaysia that will act as a base for further research on this area henceforth. The current population of students studying in the faculty are 697 and based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) judgement, 248 respondents are needed to complete this study.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

With regards to the instruments, the survey questionnaire divided into six main sections. The questions were adapted from a survey that had been conducted by previous researchers. The questions were then reviewed and rephrased in order to meet the localized settings before the questionnaire is being distributed to the hospitality students.

The first section (Section A) is dealing with the respondents' demographic profiles. Their gender, age, program and working experience in hospitality industry, including internship, will be asked in this section. This information is needed to identify and measure to what extent do these variables have an impact on graduates' perceptions towards working in hospitality industry.

Throughout the second section until the sixth section (Section B – Section F), the range of questions will be developed to assess the factors respondents found significant when considering a career and how well they thought the hospitality industry provided them. Respondents will be asked to record their views based on the five-type Likert scale ranging from 1 being 'Strongly Disagree' to 5 being 'Strongly Agree'. It is worth to mention that the English language will be used in the instrument.

The validity and reliability of this questionnaire survey has been proven as it has been tested comprehensively by Richardson (2008, 2009, 2010).

DATA COLLECTION

Regarding the data collection process, their willingness to participate in the study will be acquired and if they agree to participate, the self-administered questionnaire will be distributed to them personally. The respondents will be asked to return the questionnaire within a week. Worth mentioning, the information about the researchers, the objectives and the purpose of the study will be stated in the questionnaire. The data collected will be coded and interpreted for the data analysis purpose. The duration for data collection period took about one month, starting from early November, 2019.

DATA ANALYSIS

All the data will be analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SSPS). Descriptive and inferential statistics will be used whenever appropriate with the research objectives, questions and hypotheses of the study. Internal consistency of the scale used (reliability) and validity of each item will be assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, as this test is arguable the most commonly accepted measure of reliability. Pearson's correlation coefficient will also be used as it is the test statistics that measures the statistical relationship between two continuous variables. It is known as the best method of measuring the relationship between variables of interest because it is based on the method of covariance.

RESPONSE RATE

A total of 250 questionnaires had been distributed to the respondents which consisted of Semester 3 to Semester 6 students from Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management.

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Career Development	5	0.880
Pay & Benefits	5	0.852
Peers Influence	5	0.894
Academic Advisors Influence	5	0.925
Students' Intention to Stay in Hospitality Industry	6	0.844

Table 1: Summary of alpha coefficient for each variables

Based on Table 1, the Cronbach's alpha indicated the reliability for each of the study variables. There are a total of 26 items that were tested. Table above shows the highest Cronbach's alpha is academic advisors influence (0.925) whereas the lowest Cronbach's alpha is students' intention to stay in hospitality industry (0.844). Research instruments should have a reliability coefficient or Cronbach's alpha of 0.7 or higher in order for them to achieve a good internal consistency (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). From the reliability test shown above, the Cronbach's alpha for each of the variables are mostly higher than 0.7, hence, the instruments used are proven to be reliable to be used in this study.

Variables	Categories	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	87	34.8
	Female	163	65.2
Age	18 – 20	12	4.8
	21 – 23	215	86.0
	24 – 26	23	9.2
	27 and above	0	0
Program	Hotel Management	110	44.0
	Tourism Management	65	26.0
	Food Service Management	46	18.4
	Culinary Arts and Gastronomy	29	11.6
Working Experience in Hospitality Industry (including internship)	3 – 6 months	138	55.2
	6 – 9 months	57	22.8
	9 months and above	55	22.0

Table 2: Respondents Profile

Table 2 shows the respondents' demographic analysis which consists of gender, age, program and working experience in the hospitality industry (including internship). The table summarizes the items into frequencies and percentage for each of them.

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS
Descriptive Analysis for Independent Variables

The following tables show the items used in the questionnaires and the descriptive analysis of Mean and Standard Deviation for each variables.

No.	Scale Items	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
1	I believe that hospitality industry offers opportunities for skills development.	4.11	0.745
2	I feel that I will receive extensive training in hospitality industry.	3.95	0.772
3	I am aware that continuous training is provided in hospitality industry.	4.01	0.750
4	I am certain that employees who do well on the job stand a fair chance of being promoted in hospitality industry.	4.04	0.752
5	I understand that long-term plans for my career development is offered in hospitality industry.	3.97	0.741

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis for Career Development

No.	Scale Items	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
1	I think the pay is acceptable for most jobs in the hospitality industry.	3.32	0.937
2	I believe that I have high chances in getting a salary raise in this industry.	3.50	0.813
3	I am certain that the level of extra benefits such as bonuses, holidays, healthcare and meals are sufficient in this industry.	3.58	0.885
4	I feel that non-monetary benefits such as sick leave, maternity leave and paternity leave is provided in this industry.	3.58	0.889
5	I am aware that employee initiative such as overtime in this industry is always compensated.	3.70	0.827

Table 4: Descriptive Analysis for Pay & Benefits

No.	Scale Items	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
1	My friends have influenced me to choose a career in hospitality industry.	3.03	1.047
2	My friends encouraged me to choose the career that I want.	3.28	1.073
3	My friends offered me proper advice on choosing career.	3.39	1.017
4	Information given by my friends regarding a career is always reliable.	3.36	1.010
5	The career that I chose is similar to the career chosen by my friends.	3.10	1.126

Table 5: Descriptive Analysis for Peers Influence

No.	Scale Items	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
1	My academic advisors were influential to the career that I want to pursue.	3.70	0.827
2	My academic advisors validated the career that I chose.	3.69	0.795
3	My academic advisors offered me a comprehensive career guidance.	3.76	0.835
4	Information given by my academic advisors regarding a career is always reliable.	3.84	0.817
5	Career programmes organized by my academic advisors influenced my career choices.	3.76	0.851

Table 6: Descriptive Analysis for Academic Advisors Influence

No.	Scale Items	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
1	I believe that hospitality industry is suitable for individuals with particular personality and skills.	4.03	0.714
2	I find jobs in the hospitality industry interesting.	4.00	0.750
3	I feel that it is easy to find a stable job in hospitality industry.	3.60	0.836
4	I am certain that most jobs in the hospitality industry are high skilled.	3.87	0.760
5	I feel that people who work in the hospitality industry are not valued in the society.	3.90	0.813
6	I understand that working in hospitality industry is regarded a respected career in Malaysia.	3.88	0.786

Table 7: Descriptive Analysis for Students' Intention to Stay in Hospitality Industry

PEARSON'S CORRELATION

In this section, the pearson's correlation coefficient analysis that is used in this study will be analysed. The purpose of the pearson's correlation analysis is to examine the relationship between pairs of variables (Pallant, 2007). The pearson's correlation analysis is

used in this study in order to identify the relationship and the strength between these variables, which are, career development, pay and benefits, peers influence, academic advisors influence and students' intention to stay in hospitality industry.

Variables	Students' Intention to Stay in Hospitality Industry
Career Development	0.471**
Pay & Benefits	0.477**
Peers Influence	0.355**
Academic Advisors Influence	0.496**
Students' Intention to Stay in Hospitality Industry	1

*N = 250
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

Table 8: Pearson's Correlation Matrix between Variables

Table 8 shows that each of the independent variables have a low positive correlation with the dependent variable. The output shows that a moderate positive relationship exists between career development and students' intention to stay in hospitality industry ($r = 0.471$, $p < 0.05$). A low positive relationship also exists between pay and benefits, and students' intention to stay in hospitality industry ($r = 0.477$, $p < 0.05$). Next, peers influence and students' intention to stay in hospitality industry also happened to have a low positive relationship ($r = 0.355$, $p < 0.05$). Lastly, a moderate positive relationship shows between the academic advisors influence variable and the students' intention to stay in hospitality industry ($r = 0.496$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, it can be concluded that all these variables have a little significant impact to the students' intention to either stay or leave the hospitality industry.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the Pearson's Correlation analysis that was conducted using the SPSS, it shows that all four of the independent variables, which are the career development, pay and benefits, peers influence, and academic advisors influence, have a moderate and low significant relationship with the students' intention to stay in the industry, which is the dependent variable. This clearly indicates these independent variables will moderately influence the students' intention towards pursuing their career in the hospitality industry.

These results are in line with Ezeuduji and Mbane's study (2017) that indicates career development is a major concern for these students before they decide to either stay or leave the industry. It was mentioned that when these students are given continuous chances for training and career development, they would feel valued by their employers and thus leading to the students' intention to stay in the hospitality industry. Similarly, a study done by Mtemeri (2017), where he concluded that peers might play a significant role in the students' intention towards pursuing their career in this industry. Peers advice and encouragement, as reflected by his study, are one of the crucial element in the students' intention towards pursuing their career in hospitality industry.

In order for the graduates to be able to succeed in the industry, it is a must for them to be equipped with an extensive and real-world view of the sector working condition and this task falls under the responsibility of the sector's higher education providers and from the industry explanation to future graduates. It could be a threat and lost for the hospitality industry when the graduates become less keen in pursuing a career in this sector, especially after all the experience gained while studying and working in this industry (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000).

The exposure that these graduates received towards the industry during their study or previous work experience can dictate a positive or negative image on industry's career prospect. Obviously positive experiences are able to project a positive image of the industry, while negative experiences as well as unfulfilled expectations could affect these graduates' intentions to work in the industry after their graduation in a negative manner.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researchers had encountered a number of limitations during the process of conducting the study. Firstly, the study was conducted only for students from Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Puncak Alam campus. It does not take into account other students' opinion and perception who are coming from other universities in Malaysia. Thus, the results obtained were merely the perceptions of the hospitality students in UiTM Puncak Alam only. The result might be different if the survey done throughout all hospitality colleges available in Malaysia.

Due to the fact that this study is focusing on hospitality students in this study area, the sample size of this study is proven to be one of the limitations. There was a limited sample size and also a lack coverage of geographical area to seek for wider range of data. Hence, the sample size chosen might not accurately represent all hospitality students in Malaysia. Apart from that, some of the students took so long to fill out their questionnaires. As a result, the researchers spent few weeks to obtain all 250 set of questionnaires back.

Next, the researchers also had faced a problem during the process of keying-in data into the SPSS software. This happened due to the fact that some of the respondents were not serious in filling out the questionnaires. This may lead to the results of the study findings. Besides that, the time, financial, as well as facilities, may have indirectly influenced the limitations faced by the researchers in carrying out this study.

Even though there were many limitations faced throughout the study, these does not affect the overall process of the study. These limitations can be used in order to lay a foundation for any potential future studies in gaining a better understanding of the students' perception towards hospitality industry.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The first recommendation is for any potential future researchers, they can perform their students in more locations in order to improve the validity and accuracy of the data. They can have a wider sample in Malaysia to distribute the questionnaire and hence, helps to generate a better and accurate results.

Next, there were 250 set of questionnaire being distributed to the respondents and this consumed a lot of costs and efforts. This high amount of respondents can be managed by sending them the questionnaires through internet since the internet is free and has been widely used by almost everyone in Malaysia. Therefore, the questionnaires can be distributed and collected much easier and faster.

Furthermore, other recommendation is that the next future research studies can be done by focusing on other related elements apart from the elements that were used in this study, which are the career development, pay and benefits, peers influence, and academic advisors influence. This is because only these mentioned elements were covered in this study as there many other related elements that can be used by the researchers.

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50