



## Work Performance, Habits, and Personality of Hospitality and Tourism Management Student Interns of a Philippine State College: An Industry Perspective

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### Abstract

Amidst changing landscape and fast-evolving hospitality and tourism sectors, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) mandates academic institutions to implement student internship programs and establish linkages with businesses and industries to capacitate students with actual workplace knowledge, skills, and attitude. However, it is unclear whether the student-interns are responsive to the actual needs of these industries. Thus, there is a need to constantly retool internship programs to respond to these changes and demands. Hence, this paper assessed the work performance, work habits, and work personality of hospitality and tourism management (HTM) student-interns of a public higher education institution from an industry perspective which can be used as a basis for crafting a responsive internship program. Employing a quantitative descriptive research method, this assessed HTM student interns of a state college in Northern Philippines across three areas of assessment, namely work performance, work habits, and work personality. A modified assessment form was used to gather data from the managers of 21 partner establishments which accommodated 144 HTM student interns for the period of 2014-2019. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Generally, as perceived by managers of partner establishments, the student-interns have performed 'good' in their work (M=3.2). Separately, they have performed 'good' in work performance in terms of quality (M=3.09), quantity (M=3.1), and knowledge (M=3.05). Additionally, they have performed 'very good' in terms of work habits (M=3.33) and work personality (M=3.32). This concluded that there is imbalance in the focus of student development the HTM students have fared better on personal-related development (work habits and work personality) as compared to professional-related development (work performance). Meanwhile, this recommends a review of the curriculum and instruction processes and other supplemental skills enhancement training for the students. Further studies are recommended to include perspectives of the students and the academe itself as well as internship experiences of students from other programs.

**Index Terms:** student internship, work performance, quality, quantity

### I. INTRODUCTION

Student internship serves as a bridge to connect theoretical knowledge with practical application apart from preparing students to the demands of the industry especially those requiring special knowledge, skills, and attitude. In the Philippines, the recent curriculum revision in higher education paved way for the reintegration of immersion and internship programs for most of the courses among higher education institutions (HEIs) especially in a fast-evolving hospitality and tourism management industries. Consequently, as the regulatory agency for higher education, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) through Memorandum Order No. 104, s. 2017 requires student internship in these twin programs as well as the establishment by HEIs of strong academic linkages with

business, industry, and other duly recognized government and non-government organizations including civil society organizations. Notably, this seeks to promote and provide students with competitive skills and attitudes for employment that will complement the anticipated quality services offered in the said industries (CHED M.O. No. 104, s. 2017).

Yet, in the face of the recent curriculum revision and changing conditions of the interlinked hospitality and tourism industries, it remains unclear whether the education under these circumstances are responding to the actual needs of their industries. Literature on student internship is primarily focused on the experiences of students in their internship practice (Busby & Gibson, 2009) and effectiveness of experiential learning (Azar, Albattat & Kamaruddin, 2020). Few studies have been undertaken to consider how students have fared in their work performances under the internship program. While some studies considered the performances of the students from their perspectives themselves (Breen, Walo & Dimmock, 2004), little have been known about how industry partners assessed them. This study sought to contribute to understanding this gap from the perspectives of industry partners as the market for this labor.

Nevertheless, hospitality schools and industry professionals have been working together to provide internship experiences that introduce students to different sectors of the hospitality industry. This allows exposure of students to the corporate culture and skills required by companies the student could eventually work with post-graduation (Lanz, 2017). But if industry professionals and students are to leverage one another's abilities and resources for a successful internship experience, understanding underlying desires and motivations is key.

The importance of internship in the wide perspective of employers seeks to match the skills and knowledge of the students in the field where they are supposed to be trained, as a possibility of getting employed. As observed from the market labor, there is a mismatch of skills in labor (Jasa & Corpuz, 2013; Gault, et al., 2010) especially in the Philippine labor market as job vacancies increase, the unemployment rate increases (Jasa & Corpuz, 2013) indicating that there is no equilibrium in the labor market. For one, a recent finding found that internship goals for companies and educational institutions did not necessarily align as supervisors were unsure how much work students could handle during an internship (Zehr & Korte, 2020).

Sumathi et al. (2012) state that there has been much concern about the mismatch of the quality of university graduates with that of industrial expectations. Many undergraduates churned out by our universities lack essential "job market readiness", which in turn, contributes to the increase in the number of unemployed graduates in the country. All of these have prompted the government to place more emphasis on university students' industrial internship programs during their studies. One of the functions of the internship is to align the skills of students to the agency/establishment where they should be for future employment. The theory behind matching the potential employees to respective employment data validated by research matters that internship is among the factors that can bridge potential employment. According to Caraig, G. (2018), local and international practical exposure for student trainees to gain related learning experiences and opportunities to become equipped with knowledge and skills and professionals of global standard. The on-the-job training (OJT) program aims to cater to quality, relevant, and responsive related learning experiences through carefully planned, progressive, and closely monitored actual work experiences required in a globally competitive labor market.

Internship, practicum or OJT externship, field exposure or experiential learning, or whatever it is denominated as referred to by others, builds on the principle that students learn by doing (Moreno & Mapa, 2014). The role of interns is to aid the establishment as they continue to grow and learn during their internship period. An internship program embedded in each curriculum of a course program aims to provide students with hands-on experience in all areas of job tasks and responsibilities. Students are given a chance to practice actual scenario theories learned in the classroom executed in the industry. To level, the expected performance, as well as anticipated quality service delivered by our interns, the hospitality and tourism industry, is accruing standardization of services by means of collating students' feedback from establishments to give attention to and improve the services of the hospitality and tourism interns. This is to consider the demand needed for skills per competencies required by the establishment according to the market demand for such skills and services. This internship training will capture the anticipated expectations of guests and would be able to parallel the level of standardization offered in the industry and those

skills learned in school.

Thus, there is a need to constantly retool internship programs to respond to these changes and demands. Hence, this paper assessed the work performances of hospitality and tourism management student-interns of a public higher education institution from the perspectives of partner establishments. The results of this study can be used as a basis for crafting a responsive internship program.

### **Research Objectives**

The study is anchored on the following objectives: (a) to determine and assess the level of work performance of the hospitality and tourism management student interns in the dimensions of quality, quantity, and knowledge; (b) to determine the level of work habits of hospitality and tourism management student interns; and (c) to determine and assess the level of work personalities of the hospitality and tourism management student interns.

## **II. METHODS**

Quantitative descriptive method was utilized in this study which involved 21 partner establishments in top hospitality and tourism destinations in the Philippines including the Cordillera Administrative Region in North Philippines and Region VII particularly Cebu City dubbed as the Queen of the South. These industry partners catered a total of 144 student interns of the hospitality and tourism programs of Mountain Province State Polytechnic College (MPSPC) for the period of 2014 to 2019 with 57 from the BS Hotel & Restaurant Management (BSHRM), 25 BS Tourism, and 62 Associate of Arts in Hotel & Restaurant Management (AAHRM).

Data was gathered from the managers of the different partner establishments. A survey questionnaire was used utilizing a modified assessment form, the contents of which were adopted from the internship evaluation form of the University of Baguio (UB). The questionnaire was presented and validated by experts in the College with a review undertaken by the Institutional Research Ethics Committee. Using a four-point Likert scale, the questionnaire determined five components: first, the level of quality of work performance of the student interns in terms of (a) ability to perform the assigned work well and (b) accuracy of work; second, the level of work performance of student interns in terms of (a) volume of work accomplished/output; third, level of knowledge of work performance in terms of (a) knowledge of the basic principles necessary for the accomplished assigned work, (b) extent of knowledge with regards to department operations, and (c) ability to follow instructions; fourth, level of work habits of student interns in terms of (a) punctuality, (b) attendance (physically present and on the spot), (c) department behavior (courteous and respectful towards supervisors/peers), and (d) time management (maximize the use of time); and fifth, level of work personality in terms of (a) interest and enthusiasm in the performance of work, (b) cooperation, and (c) grooming.

In collecting the data, permission was secured from the managers of these establishments through a letter. The questionnaire was floated through web mails and social media which were retrieved in the same way. The data was processed, tabulated, and presented through tables. Analysis of data was done using descriptive statistics particularly mean with a corresponding qualitative description of Not Performed (M=1.00-1.75), Minimal Performance (M=1.76-2.50), Good Performance (M=2.51-3.25), and Very Good Performance (M=3.26-4.00). Analysis was supplemented by the reports made in the Narrative Report, a terminal report submitted by the student interns to the institution, which included an evaluation sheet as secondary source of data and comments and suggestions of the managers of these establishments.

## **III. RESULTS**

The study was conducted to determine the level and assess the internship performance of the hospitality and tourism management students through the perspectives of 21 partner establishments which catered 144 student interns. This was done as a mechanism to determine if the knowledge, skills, and attitude of students being developed in the academe correspond to the demands of the industry. Furthermore, this considered three areas of assessment namely (a) work performance in terms of quality, quantity, and knowledge, (b) work habits, and (c)

work personality.

Generally, the hospitality and tourism student interns have ‘good performance’ across the areas of quality, quantity, and knowledge. In terms of work habits and work personality, they have displayed a ‘very good performance’ level. The following presents the findings across these areas of assessment.

### 3.1. Level of work performance of hospitality and tourism management (HTM) student interns

#### 3.1.1. Quality

Table 1 presents the mean result of the level of quality of work performance of the hospitality and tourism management interns showing that the students have generally performed ‘good’ (M = 3.09) in terms of ability to perform (M = 3.14) followed by accuracy of work (M = 3.04).

*Table 1. Level of quality of work performance of the HTM interns*

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Ability to perform	3.14	Good Performance
2. Accuracy of Work	3.04	Good Performance
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.09</b>	<b>Good Performance</b>

*Legend: 3.26-4.00 Very Good Performance 1.76-2.50 Minimal Performance*

*2.51-3.25 Good Performance 1.00-1.75 Not Performed*

#### 3.1.2. Quantity

In terms of quantity of work performance, Table 2 shows that the student interns have ‘good performance’ (M = 3.1) can accomplish voluminous tasks in each time frame with an acceptable outcome.

*Table 2. Level of quantity of work performance of HTM interns*

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Volume of work accomplished / output	3.1	Good Performance
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>Good Performance</b>

*Legend: 3.26-4.00 Very Good Performance 1.76-2.50 Minimal Performance*

*2.51-3.25 Good Performance 1.00-1.75 Not Performed*

#### 3.1.3. Knowledge

Table 3 demonstrates the level of knowledge of student interns on work performance where they have generally performed ‘good’ (M = 3.05) across the three indicators. Separately, they have better performed better when it comes to ‘ability to follow instructions’ (M = 3.11) having the highest mean followed by ‘knowledge on the basic principles necessary for the accomplishment of the assigned work’ (M = 3.03) and ‘extent of knowledge regarding department operations’ (M = 3.01).

*Table 3. Level of knowledge of work performance of HTM interns*

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Knowledge of the basic principles necessary for the accomplishment of assigned work	3.03	Good Performance
2. Extent of knowledge regarding department operations	3.01	Good Performance
3. Ability to follow instructions	3.11	Good Performance
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.05</b>	<b>Good Performance</b>

*Legend: 3.26-4.00 Very Good Performance 1.76-2.50 Minimal Performance*

*2.51-3.25 Good Performance 1.00-1.75 Not Performed*

### 3.2. Level of work habits of HTM interns

As to the level of work habits of hospitality and tourism management student interns, Table 4 presents that they have generally a **very good performance** ( $M = 3.33$ ) across four work habits. Across the individual indicators, the student interns have exemplified a ‘very good performance’ in terms of punctuality ( $M = 3.39$ ), attendance ( $M = 3.36$ ), and behavior ( $M = 3.37$ ) but have performed least in terms of time management ( $M = 3.20$ ).

Table 4. Level quantity of work habits of HTM interns

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Punctuality	3.39	Very Good Performance
2. Attendance (physical presence on the spot)	3.36	Very Good Performance
3. Department/ behavior (courteous and respectful towards supervisors/peers)	3.37	Very Good Performance
4. Time management (maximizes use of time)	3.20	Good Performance
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.33</b>	<b>Very Good Performance</b>

Legend: 3.26-4.00 Very Good Performance 1.76-2.50 Minimal Performance

2.51-3.25 Good Performance 1.00-1.75 Not Performed

### 3.3. Level of work personality of HTM interns

In terms of level of work personality of the hospitality and tourism management interns, Table 5 reveals a **‘very good’** ( $M = 3.32$ ) work personality encompassing three traits. Among these traits, the student interns exemplified the highest level of performance in grooming ( $M = 3.43$ ) followed by cooperation ( $M = 3.34$ ). Interest and enthusiasm in the performance of work was displayed as the lowest trait among the student interns with only an interpretation of **‘good’** ( $M = 3.20$ ).

Table 5. Level of work personality of the HTM interns

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Interest and enthusiasm in the performance of work	3.20	Good Performance
2. Cooperation	3.34	Very Good Performance
3. Grooming	3.43	Very Good Performance
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.32</b>	<b>Very Good Performance</b>

Legend: 3.26-4.00 Very Good Performance 1.76-2.50 Minimal Performance

2.51-3.25 Good Performance 1.00-1.75 Not Performed

## IV. DISCUSSION

Across the three areas of assessment, this study revealed that hospitality and tourism management students have demonstrated a higher level of performance in two areas specifically work habits and work personality which were generally rated as ‘very good performance’ while they have shown only ‘good performance’ in level of work performance across the three categories of quality, quantity, and knowledge. Interestingly, it is unexpected that the internship performance of the hospitality and tourism management students is more personally focused than professionally. This validates a widely common perception toward hospitality and tourism professionals as frontline service providers, and as such, are expected to be well-mannered, well-groomed, and possess good habits. But nevertheless, this should not validate a perception that student development should only focus on these aspects but one that is inclusive. In other words, the curriculum should put emphasis equally on professional, attitude, and personality development of the students. This finding is an eye opener for the institution to revisit and refocus the curriculum and instruction.

However, the findings of this study are limited to the perspectives of the industry partners. There is yet a need for

study from the perspectives of the student interns to validate these perceptions of the industry. For one, while from the viewpoint of the industry shows that the student interns have fairly performed, other factors might have contributed to this such as insufficient training in the academic institution, different work and cultural environment, and curriculum-related factors, among others.

#### **Level of work performance of HTM student interns**

Generally, the work performance of hospitality and tourism management student interns is perceived at a level of 'good performance' in terms of quality, quantity, and knowledge of the interns. This only shows that the students have acquired the basic and necessary professional skills to work in the industry such as knowledge and ability to perform and accomplish the amount of work including the technological and specialized expertise to carry out the same. In other words, the academic institution has provided relevant training and education to prepare the students across the hotel, restaurant, tourism, and other hospitality industries. This also manifests that the curriculum and instruction are responsive to the industry. The findings affirm other studies highlighting the importance of knowledge quality which is correlated with work performance (Lim, et al., 2013), accuracy of work (Berkeley, 2021), and productivity (Hanaysha, 2015). Accordingly, the benefits of knowledge creation and sharing cannot be fully realized unless the quality of knowledge is obtained (Lim, et al. 2013). A well-founded knowledge leads to accuracy and good productivity. Consequently, the higher level of employee productivity provides organizations with many advantages especially to its employees (Hanaysha, 2015). Nevertheless, the same is true with the quality of the curriculum and instruction as a training ground which eventually leads to good work performance.

Meanwhile, within the context of the industry, the work performance of the students indicates that the students can adapt in these diverse working environments that facilitate the training, growth, and development of the interns. It implies a healthy workplace where students are motivated to perform and accomplish their tasks.

#### **Level of work habits of HTM student interns**

As to their work habits, the hospitality and tourism students have generally displayed a 'very good performance' encompassing four indicators namely punctuality, attendance, behavior, and time management. While work habits are non-technical skills in job performance (Ilana, et al., 2017), these are behavioral, ethical, and practical elements that are applied by employees in contributing to job performance standards. A well-rounded work habit sets a good example in many areas promoting efficiency, productivity, reliability, and teamwork.

However, when considered individually, the student interns have performed less as to the indicator on time management as compared to the rest of the other factors. While this is not a strong conclusive indication of weak work habit, this indicates an area for improvement on the part of the students – the ability of the students to manage their and maximize the use of their time which may basically be learned and practiced inside the school.

Nonetheless, the high level of work habits is also an indication of a good level of training in the academic institution. This is reflective of the kind of training that they have received during their academic life.

#### **Level of work personality of HTM student interns**

When it comes to work personality, the student interns have displayed a very good level of work personality which covers the three indicators of grooming, cooperation, and interest and enthusiasm in the performance of work. In terms of grooming, this also validates the common perception towards workers in these industries who must exhibit good grooming and accommodating personality through their looks and personality. Interestingly, however, they have fared less in terms of interest and enthusiasm in the performance of their work, which might be accounted for by their cultural and rural backgrounds.

Nevertheless, this also reflects that the curriculum and instruction effectively integrated these traits, which is perceived by the industry as necessary in these kinds of work. For instance, in a corporate setting, professionals are all about personality, aura, appearance, charm, pride, and caring in nature. A certain lifestyle and personal commitment are required to shine above all others in the workplace. As jobs are highly demanding, skills are not enough to cut it through, personal outlooks should be off balance in being able to compete in the real setting of life.

Since hospitality and tourism features frontline services, workers in these sectors are ought to display a positive attitude and the kindness of personalities including appearance. Consequently, a positive attitude towards work may result in a cozy ambiance and a health working environment.

## V. CONCLUSION

Generally, while the student interns have demonstrated a good and high-level performance across the three areas of assessment, there is an 'imbalance' of student development as evidenced by the finding that hospitality and tourism management students have fared better on personal-related development such as work habits and work personality as compared to professional development particularly quality, quantity, and knowledge in work performance. Specifically, the curriculum and/or instruction and/or other training provided by the academic institution do not equally respond to the different internship traits demanded by the industry. However, from a general perspective, the result of the study is demonstrative that the existing curriculum and instruction processes, or professional development being received by the student interns, are still responsive to the needs of the industry.

Nevertheless, the findings contributed to better understanding the internship program by considering the industry as the end-beneficiary of the education and training. Thus, there is a need to consider the perspectives of the industry when crafting a curriculum. This also highlights the importance of exposing the students to the industry not only during the final internship phase but also during the teaching-learning process.

However, since the findings of the study are limited to the perspectives of partner establishments, the same shall only apply within the context of the industry.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

While personal outlook is highly required for professionals in the hospitality and tourism industries, their professional capability is equally demanded. Thus, the academic institution may consider reviewing the curriculum and instruction processes to pour the same level of commitment in this aspect of student development. Other relevant seminars, training, and intervention activities for the hospitality and tourism programs may be conducted to supplement the curriculum and instruction that are not otherwise included, especially the recent trends and current issues. This includes inviting industry practitioners to share their experiences and expertise.

Moreover, the academic institution may consider conducting student immersion and industry visitation during their educational training for the students to be familiarized, exposed, and get a clearer understanding of work arounds in the industry. Strengthening and solidifying internship partnerships with business and the industry as a network for student engagements may also be considered.

Methodologically, future studies may triangulate these findings with the perspectives of those of the students and the academic institution. An in-depth exploration as to internship experiences of the student interns to surface factors affecting their performance, habits, and personality being exhibited. Other studies on internship experiences of students from other programs may also be conducted to compare varied experiences in the industry.

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