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The Impact of Internship Supervisor Involvement and Coworkers' Interaction on Student Perceptions towards Career Development

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the multifaceted influences of internship supervisor involvement, coworker interactions, and students' prior skill sets on hospitality students' engagement with their internship experience and their perceptions of the hospitality industry as a career path. Drawing on findings from a series of qualitative interviews with hospitality and tourism management students who completed a minimum of three months' internship, the research highlights that supervisor involvement and coworker interaction play a pivotal role in shaping interns' emotional experiences and motivation. Consistent positive interactions are associated with stronger supervisor-intern relationships and increased interns' commitment to the industry. Beyond various types of involvement of supervisors during the internship period, the quality of social interactions with coworkers also helps reducing students' job stress and hence contributes to student satisfaction. Students value being accepted as part of the team and appreciate supportive coworker relationships, which promote a sense of belonging and facilitate professional networking opportunities vital for future employment. These social dynamics complement the supervisor's role by providing emotional support and practical guidance in the workplace especially when students face challenging tasks. Overall, the interplay between engaged supervision and positive coworker interaction help creating a supportive and enriching internship environment. This environment not only elevates student satisfaction but also positively shapes their perceptions and intentions to pursue long-term careers in hospitality. The findings suggest that hospitality education programs and industry partners should emphasize integrated approaches that foster supervisor-coworker-intern relationships and prioritize skill-building to enhance internship outcomes and address workforce challenges in the sector. A framework is proposed for hospitality and tourism institutes to enrich their internship programmes in nurturing future talent for the industry.

Keywords: engagement; hospitality; job stress; tourism; satisfaction