



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**EXPLORING THE SUPERVISORS' PERCEPTION ON INTERNS'
READINESS TO WORK AND EMPLOYABILITY PROSPECT:
A CASE STUDY IN OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY**

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(Human Resource Development)**

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**EXPLORING THE SUPERVISORS' PERCEPTION ON INTERNS' READINESS TO
WORK AND EMPLOYABILITY PROSPECT: A CASE STUDY IN OIL AND GAS
INDUSTRY**

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This project is submitted
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ABSTRACT

TOPIC: EXPLORING THE SUPERVISORS' PERCEPTION ON INTERNS' READINESS TO WORK AND EMPLOYABILITY PROSPECT: A CASE STUDY IN OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Ahmad Izzat Zairimi Bin Kamarudin

This study aims to explore the supervisors' perception on interns' readiness to work and employability prospect in oil and gas industry. More specifically, this study determined the supervisors' perception on their experience in handling interns, identify skills expected by supervisors on interns, find out the positive experience of hiring interns perceived by supervisor and figure out the extent of intern employability readiness as perceived by supervisor. A case study design was adopted and interview was used as instrument to collect data. Purposive sampling is used to get the most suitable informants for this study. The findings of this study revealed that interns with low motivation, negative attitude, low communication skill and lack of time management were the challenges faced by supervisor. The findings also showed positive attitude, communication skill, digital skill and problem solving as skills expected by supervisors. In addition, this finding stated saving cost, decrease workload and time, access future employee, learn new knowledge and increase company value as benefits of hiring interns. Moreover, this finding exposed willing to learn, teamwork and problem solving as value needed to have by interns. Lastly, the findings from this was important for interns, supervisors and university in helping to produce quality of interns as preparation before going to work in industry.

Keywords: Interns, Supervisors, Employability, Internship, Work Readiness

ABSTRAK

TOPIK: MENEROKA PERSEPSI PENYELIA TERHADAP KESEDIAN PELATIH UNTUK BEKERJA DAN PROSPEK PEKERJAAN DI KALANGAN PELATIH KHUSUSNYA DALAM INDUSTRI MINYAK DAN GAS

Ahmad Izzat Zairimi Bin Kamarudin

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneroka persepsi penyelia terhadap kesediaan pelatih untuk bekerja dan prospek pekerjaan di kalangan pelatih khususnya dalam industri minyak dan gas. Lebih khusus lagi, kajian ini mengenalpasti persepsi penyelia terhadap pengalaman negatif yang dialami oleh penyelia di dalam mengendalikan pelatih, mengenal pasti kemahiran yang diharapkan oleh penyelia di tempat latihan, mengetahui pengalaman positif pengambilan pelatih yang dirasakan oleh penyelia dan mengetahui sejauh mana kesediaan pelatih untuk bekerja. Kajian kes digunakan di dalam kajian ini dan temubual digunakan sebagai instrumen untuk mendapatkan data. Persampelan bertujuan telah digunakan untuk mendapatkan informan yang paling sesuai untuk kajian ini. Dapatan kajian ini telah mendedahkan pelatih dengan motivasi yang rendah, sikap negatif, kemahiran komunikasi yang rendah dan masalah pengurusan masa sebagai cabaran yang dihadapi oleh penyelia. Dapatan kajian juga menunjukkan sifat positif, kemahiran komunikasi, kemahiran digital dan penyelesaian masalah sebagai kemahiran yang dijangkakan oleh penyelia. Sebagai tambahan, dapatan kajian ini membuktikan penjimatan kos, mengurangkan beban kerja dan masa, mengakses pekerja masa depan, belajar pengetahuan baru dan meningkatkan nilai syarikat sebagai faedah pengambilan pelatih. Lebih-lebih lagi, kajian ini mendedahkan kesanggupan untuk belajar, kerja berpasukan dan penyelesaian masalah sebagai nilai yang perlu dimiliki oleh pelatih. Akhir sekali, dapatan kajian ini penting bagi pelatih, penyelia dan universiti dalam membantu menghasilkan kualiti pelatih sebagai persediaan sebelum bekerja di industri.

Kata kunci: Pelatih, Penyelia, Kebolehpekerjaan, Latihan, Kesediaan Kerja

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of Study

The oil and gas industry were established and started over a century ago in Malaysia. This has flourished for years to become one of the region's most competitive owners of oil and gas reserves and without unexpected becoming suddenly one of the world's largest producer of liquefied natural gas (LNG). This sector provides a bulk of the workforce, playing a crucial part of social development and economic in Malaysia. According to a report generated by Department of Statistic Malaysia (2016), in 2014, the oil and gas mining industry posted a total of 17,350 employees, an increase of 6.1% from 16,355 in 2013. HR practitioners in this sector done few strategies to recruit employees by using several ways such as internal recruiting, employee referrals, outsourcing and internet job boards. Practitioners also cooperate with universities to give the opportunity students show their potential through internship.

Nowadays, internship placement at organization whether government sector or private sector has increases due to recruitment of university for undergraduate students undergoes internship program before completing their study. Internship program was introducing to give an opportunity to the undergraduate students for gaining hands on experience and to furnish students with a smooth transition from academia to workplace (Mohaidin, Supar, Ibrahim, & Jaafar Sidik, 2016). In addition, interns learnt the job relate with skills and knowledge together with employer workplace skills as internships is a medium of transition experience from the university to the industry (Maertz Jr, Stoeberl, & Marks, 2013).

Internship program is one of learning process and requires students transferring information from classroom transition to job placement training (OJT). Learning processes occur whereby students obtain new knowledge from past experience and practical reflection at the internship placement. It supported by using experiential theory of learning which postulates that learning is conceived as a process by which knowledge is generated and acquired through experience. As stated by Kapareliotis, Voutsina and Patsiotis (2019), students are given the opportunity to apply what they have been taught to the actual workplace in the conventional classroom setting and to obtain a realistic view of the challenges. Besides, internship provides wide opportunity for interns looking career prospect in their desired specific area after graduated. Employability prospect can be measured in depth on perception of interns and supervisor.

In viewpoint of intern's perception, they are expected to gain experience and prepare themselves to assist them suit with real work environment in future and being hiring by host organization. Survey conducted by Zhao and Liden (2011) 60 per cent of internships were found to be job offers by host organizations. In addition, interns perceived internship could enhance their future career prospect Wan, Yang, Cheng and Su (2012) as preparation before entering real work environment. However, on what extent readiness of intern to work and employability prospect can be measure is still questionable. Exploring the viewpoint of supervisor's perception on interns undergoes internship at oil and gas sector are rare to done by previous researcher. Therefore, this study will explore the readiness of intern to work and employability prospect perceived by supervisor.

1.1 Problem of Statement

Generally, interns and supervisor always have different perception and expectation for internship. Interns who wish to be hired are more likely to benefit from self-promotion and gratification, which increases employment opportunities (Zhao & Liden, 2011). Before the internship begin companies expect interns to be well prepared to decrease learning and supervision costs as

they start the internship (Hurst & Good, 2010). At the same time, supervisor also perceived intern could communicate well and can include a wide variety of people. Additionally, employers perceived in order to hire the interns, communication skills were important (Mohaidin, Supar, Ibrahim, & Jaafar Sidik, 2016).

However, organizations faced problems and challenges on quality of trainees causes effect to the recruitment through internship. As example, the shortage of practical skills and practical knowledge for university graduates is a major challenge facing employers (Liviu & Andreea, 2013). Furthermore, employers noticed that it was difficult for trainees to express their ideas and prepare technical reports (Sawani, Abdillah, Rahmat, Noyem, & Sirat, 2016). At the same time, Graduates Survey findings show unemployment due to lack of work marketability skills (Esa, Selamat, Padil, & Jamaludin, 2014). In addition, most engineering students have good technical skills, but they do not have the same level in soft skills (Esa, Selamat, Padil, & Jamaludin, 2014). It really shows that intern should really prepare with skills needed by companies. Therefore, this study will identify skills expected by supervisor on interns.

Furthermore, in the current of organization selected for this study, minor critics were observed portraying to the intern's attitudes as challenge in handling interns. Supervisor perceived intern's attendance is not satisfied and can't complete their task in a specific time given. Previous research proved poor attitudes not only affect the effectiveness of internship, also kill supervisor's enthusiasm (Ma, Xiong, Huang, Zhang, & Xiong, 2017). However, same research stated students' attitudes are a prime factor in internship assessment and positive attitudes are the key to gain more knowledge during the process. Not only that, Esa et al (2014) said that supervisor have other challenge in handling intern's skill as most engineering students have good technical skills, but they do not have the same level in soft skills. Whereas, there are few skills such as report writing, taking minutes, some understanding of leadership skill and some level of facilitation skills expected from agencies of attachment to be knowledgeable by interns (Shaketange, Kanyimba, & Brown, 2017).

Furthermore, supervisor also faces challenges on the motivation of interns (Nasrin, Soroor & Soodabeh, 2012). Interns supposedly assist supervisor in organization instead give a burden. Although much research has been conducted on challenges handling intern, it still not being study and yet to be explored in depth in Malaysia. Therefore, this study aims to explore challenges handling interns in organization.

In addition, recently an issue regarding unpaid interns has become one of the vital discussions in the national level. According to The Sun Daily (2019), Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman as Minister of Youth and Sports pointed out that currently, many government agencies do not pay allowances to their interns with payments by the private sector also done only on a voluntarily basis. Therefore, there would have a mandatory for employers providing allowance to interns during undergoes practical training in industry. As stated in the same news, the Ministry believes that by giving allowances to interns, the financial burdens among them will be reduced (Amar Shah, 2019). However, even this suggestion will be implemented, is it enough for students to ready with internship placement? How ready is the interns to join the workplace is still questionable.

According to a study of A Review of Hospitality Internship: Different Perspectives of Students, Employers, and Educators (2012) suggested by having a comprehension of supervisors' desires, students may begin the internships with a superior thought of what to envision and a more clear comprehension of the encounters they can anticipate. Moreover, findings in business sector, research suggested intern should have an initiative in performing work given, analytical skills and accepting criticism (Mohaidin, Supar, Ibrahim, & Jaafar Sidik, 2016). These are few studies discuss on intern's readiness perceived by supervisors and employers. However, previous research conducted more focusing in other sector such as IT and hospitality. Very limited study was in oil and gas sector. Therefore, this study will explore supervisors' perception on intern's readiness particular in oil and gas sector.

Moreover, whether we realize or not statistic of unemployment rate increase time by time. According to The Star Online (2019), the chief of statistician, Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin declared since a year ago, the number of unemployed persons was increase of 2.2% with 516,200 persons in total. It means that number of job offer is low whereas total graduate student is high. Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) mentioned in range of 2010 to 2017, the number of graduates who entered the workforce exceed the number of jobs created for them (Trinna,2019). Therefore, students perceived internship is one of medium to get job opportunity. On the other hand, students aim to be absorbed by organization through internship. Participation in internship program has experienced fast development in the course of recent decades, to a point where today, numerous students and industry have associations view internship as the favoured section point into a range of professional career (Rose, Teo & Cornell, 2014). For many interns and employers, the preferred route towards permanent employment is to turn successful interns into full-time employees at the end of the internship program (Hurts et al., 2012). Students feel this is one of the benefits being hiring as interns. Meanwhile, there is less research describe on benefits of hiring interns. In context of oil & gas, researcher eager to know perception of manager by hiring interns. Therefore, this study examined the benefit of hiring interns perceived by manager.

On the other hand, previous research revealed that some prompt input on regions to improve can be gained by making more opportunity for connection and commitment with undergraduates who are not who are not only preparing to go for their industrial attachment but also students who have returned from the internship (Renganathan, Abdul Karim, & Li, 2012) . Additionally, a realistic and organized internship program must be created by both university and host organization to optimize the future learning experience for the intern (Cheong, Yahya, Shen, & Yen, 2014). Subsequently, Kapareliotis et al. (2019) suggest companies could work closely with universities or other academic institutions to improve or update their future human capital skills to address the growing need for a globalized workplace. Employees, industries, students and universities should

play important role undermining student's readiness to be great employability prospect. Even though, much research has been written about areas need to be improve, there still has been much concern on the contradiction between quality of university graduates with that industrial expectations. Therefore, in order to produce quality future employee, one of the objectives of this is study is to identify areas to be improve by university and interns for internship as perceived by the supervisor.

1.2 Objectives

In this study, research objectives are split into two sections that are general objective and specific objective.

1.2.1 General Objective

To explore supervisors' perception on interns' readiness to work and employability prospect in oil and gas industry.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives:

- 1) To identify supervisors' negative experience in handling interns.
- 2) To identify skills expected by supervisors on interns.
- 3) To find out the positive experiences of hiring interns perceived by supervisors.
- 4) To figure out extent of intern employability readiness perceived by supervisors

1.3 Research Question

- 1) What are the supervisors' negative experience in handling interns?
- 2) What are the skills expected by supervisors on interns?
- 3) What are the positive experiences of hiring interns perceived by supervisors?
- 4) What are the extend of intern employability readiness perceived by supervisors?

1.4 Significance of Study

This study could provide a good preparation on skills expected by supervisors towards interns in workplace to measure their readiness to work after graduate. Moreover, this study could also clarify justification made by supervisor on employability prospect among interns. The findings from

this research can be used as beneficial guideline by interns before undergoes internship at the research area.

Besides, this research can be used as a good source information by provides specific organization especially in oil and gas sector before selecting and recruiting interns.

Furthermore, this research also provides constructive knowledge for the organization in handling interns in workplace so that interns could learn something new during internship.

Meanwhile, this research could also give benefit to universities to improve academic syllabus. Universities might strengthen the relevance of certain subjects being teaching in curriculum since could also enhance their student's knowledge and skill in classroom session. Lastly, universities manage developing stronger link and cooperation with organization in order to produce potential great employee in future.

1.5 Limitation of the Study

There were some limitations in this research. First, this study is qualitative analysis because it relies only on the researcher 's judgment and strongly depends on the perception of the researcher. Next, researcher faced difficulties in collecting response from the supervisors. The informant maybe a bit rushing as they have a lot of work to do. Besides, informants not responding honestly during the interview session in order to avoid any misunderstanding issue and information might be private and confidential. In addition, since the interview conducted in the organization, so there were some distractions such as urgent meeting and emergency incident that need informant's action. Thus, these are of limitations that may affect this study.

1.6 Definition of term

In this context, the related terms in this research has been given definition operational and conceptually.

1.6.1 Employability:

Employability, or the capacity to get and hold an occupation either in the present association

(i.e., inward employability) or with an alternate boss (i.e., outside employability), is viewed as a significant pointer of profession achievement (Vanhercke, Cuyper, Peeters, & Witte, 2014). In this study, employability is defined as ability for interns to obtain employment based on skills needed by employer in organization.

1.6.2 Internship:

Internship is described as 'industrial training,' 'work placement' or 'practical,' short-term on-the-job learning experiences designed to allow students to apply the knowledge learned in the classroom to a specific, skilled work environment. (Szadvari, 2008). In this study, internship defines as a short period of industrial training within 3 months to 6 months at oil and gas sector.

1.6.3 Work Readiness:

According to Meuter, Bitner, Ostrom and Brown (2005), the idea of 'work readiness' is similar to the 'business readiness' conceptual structure used in the marketing literature. In this study, work readiness is defined as preparation of interns adapt with working environment of their specialize before being hired as employee.

1.6.4 Technical Skill:

Technical skills refer to an activity 's understanding and effectiveness, particularly those involving methods , processes, procedures and techniques (Yaakub, Radzi, & Sudan, 2018). In this study, technical skill is defined as knowledge of using tools in process area and analyze data in certain disciplines.

1.6.5 Soft Skill:

Soft Skill is an umbrella term covering different ingrained instincts, for example, correspondence and relational abilities, enthusiastic insight, initiative characteristics, group abilities, exchange aptitudes, time and stress manners and business etiquettes (Deepa & Seth, 2013). In this study, soft skill is defined as personality traits in terms of attitudes and

behaviours displayed in communication among interns.

1.6.6 Supervisor:

Supervisor is someone who helps, guides, directs, and supervises the people that he/she manages (Ryan & Gottfried, 2012). In this study, supervisor is defined as someone that supervise intern in company during internship period.

1.6.7 Intern:

According to Hughes & Lagomarsine (2015), the new internal meaning can be traced back to the concept of a trainee. In this study, intern is defined as undergraduate student that undergoes internship in oil & gas sector.

1.7 Summary

This chapter discussed on the background of study, statement of problem, research objectives, significance of study, limitations of study and the last is interpretation of functional and conceptual terms. The second chapter of this research will concentrate in discussing literature relevant to the research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the previous study related to supervisor's perception on intern's readiness to work and employability prospect in oil and gas industry. This discussion covers issues, past findings and theory related to the study.

2.1 Concept of Internship

The term of internship has been applied first around in the 1920s to medical students. Government and business eventually adopted the term internship and began offering co-op programs on college campuses in the 1960s. While there is no specific concept of internship, it may be argued that an internship is "generally" defined as a short-term practical work experience in which students obtain knowledge and valuable experience in a particular field or career. (Zopiatis, 2007). It supported by (Szadvari et al.,2008) by referring internships as 'industrial training,' 'work placement' or 'practical' are on - the-job short- term learning experiences designed to enable students to apply the knowledge gained in the classroom to a real-world, professional work environment. According to Taylor Research Group (2014), throughout the 20th century, internship as we know it today – students employed in jobs to obtain experience in the so-called world of work–has arisen as other areas incorporated regulated, realistic experience in educational curricula. Moreover, in many universities around the world, internships have been implemented because it is commonly understood that they will help prepare students for jobs (Ivana, 2019). Hence, there are a lot of purpose on reason internship have been implemented since along ago.

The goal of the internship program is to allow undergraduate students to gain practical experience and to ensure a smooth transition from the academic world to the working environment (Mohaidin et al., 2017). In other hand, Shenoy (2017) stated in The Higher Education Review, Practice aims may be split into primary and secondary targets. The primary objective is to acquire

practical and related experience in order to recognize the ethical practice of the business with the relevant occupation, whereas the secondary objective is to obtain appropriate academic credits from universities and to obtain references from colleagues during the internship. Furthermore, such programs offer students the opportunity to obtain professional experience in the industry while pursuing their university experience (Ruhanita, Zakiah, Rosiati, & Aini, 2014).

Generally, the structure of internship depends on university's strategy plan to mould a quality programmes that give an effectiveness for students' profession. On top of that, Hassan (2018) mentioned in Internship Framework Guidelines for Malaysian Public Higher Education Institutes, it is recommended that students complete their internship in the final year of their studies, most accept that it should be versatile and may differ depending on the needs of universities and industry. However, he claimed the suggested period ranges from 3 to 8 months for non-technical and general courses as well as during the semester break or one semester off. Subsequently, internships can be done independently as well after completion of studies or may be also part of an educational program that is meant to earn academic credits (Shenoy et al., 2017). Meanwhile, an article in New Straight Times reported by (Rozana,2018), Associate Professor Dr Tengku Nor Rizan Tengku Mohd Maasum of UKM's Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, who oversees the faculty's internship/industrial training, said students go for internship in the final semester of the third year.

2.2 Concept of Employability

The concepts of "employability" vary widely, but employers generally define employability around notions of "behavioural skills" and graduate capability demonstrates a variety of performance and organizational capabilities (Jackling & Natoli, 2015). As Tomlinson (2008) in *British Journal of Sociology Education*, it represents in part the evolving organizational demands of employers and is also a way of "legitimizing recruitment decisions as large numbers of students with similar educational profiles compete for highly sought-after jobs and employment".

Accordingly, while it is easy enough to give 'employability' a straightforward dictionary definition such as 'the value or standard of being employable,' it is a much more nuanced method to arrive at a working definition. It may be understandable that employability has tended to be primarily a function of the person (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). Employability's definitions have evolved from an interest in specialized skills to a broader perspective of graduate abilities that combine non-exclusive, transferable, delicate skills and basic skills linked to subject-specific learning and skills (Seng, 2018). Employability, or the ability to obtain and retain a job either within the current company (i.e. internal employability) or with another employer (i.e. external employability), is seen as a significant measure of career progress (Vanhercke et al., 2014).

In Malaysia, the highest unemployment has recorded in 1997 during economic crisis with rate of 2.5%. However, according to MIDF Research report in September 2019, number of unemployed rebounded by 1% yoy from -0.9% yoy recorded in the previous month. Overall, the economy of Malaysia remains in full employment, as the unemployment rate remains low at 3.3 per cent. Employers in majority government and private sector expect to offer employability with proficiency in English. Private companies consisting of multinational corporations and foreign branches employ students who are majoring in English communication or experienced in English (Seng, 2018). Malaysia recognizes the high importance of English yet public university graduates experience challenges in speaking, writing, reading and listening in English for work-related requirements. It