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## Article

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## Hospitality Employment Perceptions among Non-Hospitality Management Students and their Implications for Subsequent Job Hire in the Industry

John J. Sanga<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

*This paper analyses the implications for hiring non-hospitality students in the hospitality industry. Specifically, it focuses on their perceptions and intentions. It also examines the role industry exposure plays in shaping the students' perceptions and intentions towards hospitality employment. The data was collected from final year students studying business management programmes at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. Results show that in general, business management students negatively perceive the tourism industry and associated career prospects. On the other hand, the nature of work, pay and benefits and physical work conditions were found to be insignificant and powerful predictors of students' intentions take up hospitality employment. Results also provide evidence of differences in students' intentions to embrace the hospitality employment based on their industry exposure as students having high industry exposure had more favorable intentions towards hospitality employment than those with low industry exposures. The study findings have major implications for managers of hospitality organizations in terms of gaining knowledge on the applicants' perceptions and attitudes towards the industry during the hiring process, which might help to control employee turnover. The study findings also contribute to our understanding of students' perceptions of hospitality employment by detailing the implications they have for hiring practices of hospitality organizations.*

**Key words:** business management students, perceptions, intentions, industry exposure, and hospitality employment.

### INTRODUCTION

Tourism is globally one of the fastest-growing industries with great potential for making a significant contribution to economic growth in many countries through creation of jobs and generation of more income in general (Amissah, Opoku Mensah, Mensah, & Gamor, 2019). As a business activity, tourism covers all activities aimed to provide goods and services for people who travel to and from a given destination and stay at least overnight away from home for purposes other than employment and taking up permanent residence (Reisinger, 2001). One of the areas in which the industry contributes substantially is employment. Employment has been expanding and evolving overtime with the current global direct employment standing at above 10 percent of the total global employment (WTTC, 2019). In fact, the industry has helped to ease the challenge of high youth unemployment rate many developing countries face. In Tanzania, tourism is one of the major providers of decent jobs (URT, 2016) as it accounts for 605,000 jobs in direct employment, which represents 6.3 percent of total employment in 2019 and rise further by 6.2% in 2028 (ILO, 2020).

Tourism is an amalgamation of services such as hospitality, transportation, entertainment, attractions and direct business. As a process of receiving and entertaining travelers with concern

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for their well-being and satisfaction, hospitality services constitute a major segment (Reisinger, 2001). Hospitality consists of accommodation services (lodges, hotels, motels, resorts, etc.,) and catering services (food and beverages). According to Reisinger (2001), hospitality provide the base from which tourists can engage in any activities at the destination. A person travelling to another place to spend a night or more there needs a place to stay and eat. Implicitly, the tourism industry cannot sustain itself without adequate quality hospitality services. Blomme, Van Rheede, and Tromp (2009) contend that the expected comfort of stay, quality of food, and kindness and friendliness of hospitality staff are major determinants of tourists' selection of a destination.

Hospitality is one of the labour-intensive industries, whose growth and prosperity depend upon continued availability and retention of well-trained, skilled, and enthusiastic personnel (Richardson, 2010). Despite the expansion of hospitality education at different levels, organizations have been facing difficulties in attracting and retaining highly-educated candidates (Amissah et al., 2019; Anderson & Sanga, 2019; Brown, Bosselman, & Thomas, 2016; WTTC, 2015). Paradoxically, this problem is apparent even in developing countries with high rates of unemployment (Amissah et al., 2019; Anderson, 2015). The shortage of qualified tourism and hospitality management professionals has forced some hospitality organizations to hire graduates from other fields not directly connected to the industry (Anderson, 2015), a resourcing strategy that could solve retention problems as indicated in the literature reviewed (Aruna & Anitha, 2015; Mwasaru & Kazungu, 2015).

Negative attitudes towards hospitality employment among existing and potential employees constitute one of the major causes of employee turnover in the hospitality industry (Amissah et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2016). Indeed, many people leave the industry because of a discrepancy between the pre-employment expectations and the actuality in their jobs (Daskin, 2016; Grobelna & Marciszewska, 2016). Hospitality employment is alleged to have some inherent negative attributes that deter students and graduates from developing careers in the industry (Baum et al., 2016; Stone, Padron, Wray, & Olson, 2017). In consequence, there has been growing interest in the past three decades in understanding the role graduates' attitudes play in their decisions to commit to the industry, primarily focusing on the students' perceptions and intentions pertaining to the hospitality industry (Akin & Deniz, 2005; Amissah et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2016; Kuslivan & Kuslivan, 2000; Richardson, 2010). Investigating factors shaping students' perceptions and intentions to take up employment in the hospitality industry is crucial to create insights that can enable managers of hospitality organizations to make appropriate choices during the selection process and create a working environment that maximizes the retention of graduates joining the industry.

Despite the effort that has been made thus far to understand students' perceptions of and attitude towards the hospitality employment most of it has focused on hospitality management students. In fact, research involving students from other fields of study such as business management is limited. In emerging tourist destinations such as Tanzania, where hospitality education is not well-developed (Anderson & Sanga, 2019), sourcing graduates from fields other than hospitality to meet staffing needs in hospitality organizations has been substantial. Notably, from the literature the focus for most previous studies has been more on the implications of the students' attitudes for education providers than for employers (Aruna & Anitha, 2015; Mwasaru & Kazungu, 2015). Neglecting non-hospitality management students in this research agenda is a flaw, as these could be one of the sources of increased turnover in the hospitality industry. For instance, because of the generic nature of the knowledge and skills they acquire in their specializations, business

management students have wide career choices upon their graduation, which might complicate their perceptions and intentions to take up employment in the hospitality industry.

After all, extensive research on the perceptions of the hospitality industry conducted using samples drawn from hospitality management students has produced mixed results. Whereas one stream of the findings suggests that students have unfavorable attitudes towards the industry (Amissah et al., 2019; Daskin, 2016; Jiang & Tribe, 2009; Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000), another stream has established that most of the graduates find hospitality to be an interesting career option (Grobelna & Dolot, 2018; Richardson & Butler, 2012). The mixed results suggest that there are other factors that interact with students' perceptions to determine their intentions of whether to work in the hospitality industry. One of these factors, as indicated by the work-integrative learning perspective, is the industry's exposure or experience. The learning through work help to combine theoretical knowledge with workplace application (Freudenberg, Brimble, & Cameron, 2011) the work-integrated learning perspective suggests that combining studies with industrial experience improves students' acquisition of skills and attitudes (Grobelna & Dolot, 2018).

As such, the current study contributes to efforts aimed to address the research shortcomings stated above by examining the perceptions and intentions of university business management students in relation to the hospitality employment and the implications they have for hiring practices in the hospitality industry. Moreover, the study also sought to determine whether there is any significant difference in the students' intentions between those with high industry exposure and those with low exposure. Specifically, the study was aimed to: (i) examine business management students' perceptions of hospitality employment and the likelihood that they would commit to hospitality careers upon graduation; and (ii) determine whether there was a difference in intentions among students based on industry exposure. Results provide a basis for drawing implications for hiring and retention practices in the industry which could help practitioners to formulate appropriate strategies for selection of new employees and create a conducive work environment to meet the graduates' expectations.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The influence of a person's perception of his/her work attitudes and behavior can be well-explained using Holland's Person-Environment fit model. The notion of Person-Environment (PE) fit is grounded in the interactionist behavioral theory (Lewin, 1951) which postulates that attitudes and behavior are a function of the person and the environment (Lee & Jang, 2017). According to the interaction theory, neither personal characteristics nor environmental attributes can singly adequately explain the variance in attitudes and behavior, but the interaction of the two can (Ajzen, Czasch, & Flood, 2009; Bednarska, 2016). The notion of PE fit describes the importance of compatibility between individuals' values and organizations' expectations of the employee. In other words, every person has a work environment within which he/she is most compatible. On the one hand, a good fit between an individual's vocational interests, work values, and cognitive abilities and work environmental characteristics increases his or her satisfaction and the likelihood that he/she would remain with the organization in the long-term (Lee & Jang, 2017). On the other hand, a poor fit can lead to negative work outcomes, including lower job satisfaction and organizational commitment which might result in a higher turnover rate (Lee & Jang, 2017).

The PE fit model appears useful in explaining the students' perceptions and intentions on getting employed in specific industries (Bednarska, 2016). It suggests that personal values and needs play

a critical role in students' career choices. Students with certain values are more likely to choose career paths that suit their value orientations. As Schneider (1987)'s study established, an individual's attraction to and remaining in an organization are determined by his/her perception of the similarity between her/his values and needs and the work environment. According to (Bednarska, 2016), the PE fit also encompasses the degree to which individual needs are fulfilled by rewards in a work environment and the extent to which work environmental needs are satiated by individual capabilities.

The literature reviewed suggests that congruence between a person and the environment is critical in attracting and retaining qualified graduates (Bednarska, 2016; Lee & Jang, 2017). When there is a congruence between their personal abilities and needs and job demands and supplies, students are likely to be attracted to developing careers in a particular industry (Bednarska, 2016). Based on the person-environment fit principle, graduates can be satisfied with and adjust most easily to jobs that match with their career-relevant characteristics. Students can also be attracted to and commit themselves to hospitality jobs when their abilities and personal needs match what the hospitality work environment expects from them and the supplies it can provide.

#### *Students' perceptions and intentions to work in the hospitality industry*

Career research studies on hospitality management students have produced mixed results with some studies indicating that most students are interested in developing their career in the hospitality industry (Brown et al., 2016; Grobelna, 2012; Stone et al., 2017; Tuzunkan, 2018). For example, studying how undergraduate event management students perceive a career in events management in the US, Stone et al. (2017) established that students were positive about most of the assessed career factors in the event management including interaction with others, an enjoyable job, responsibility, excitement, and transferable skills. In another study involving final-year students in of various hotel management colleges in India Pol and Patil (2015) found that the majority of students were willing to work in hotel related.

Still, there are other studies which report that the proportion of employees with higher educational qualifications is low in the hospitality industry compared to other industries because a substantial number of graduates leave the industry for alternative employment due to low job satisfaction (Amissah et al., 2019; Daskin, 2016; Huang & Lo, 2014; Richardson & Thomas, 2012). For instance, in a study of attitudes of undergraduate tourism and hospitality students to employment in the industry in Cyprus, Daskin (2016) found that more than 40 percent of the students were unwilling to work in the industry. A similar study in Ghana by Amissah et al. (2019) established that students' attitudes were generally unfavorable to the industry.

Overall, hospitality employment is characterized by unappealing image, which results from unsocial and long working hours, irregular work schedules, low job security and lack of career advancement opportunities (Baum et al., 2016; Grobelna & Marciszewska, 2016). Jiang and Tribe (2009) assert that by its nature hospitality employment does not encourage graduates to remain in the industry. Consequently, hospitality organizations contend with a chronic problem of failing to retain the best employees (Brown, Thomas, & Bosselman, 2015; Wan, Wong, & Kong, 2014). Thus, the understanding of the factors shaping the students' attitudes towards the industry would be a good starting point for finding solutions towards employee turnover in the industry.

Many different factors have been applicable in assessing the perceptions of tourism and hospitality employment among the existing and potential employees and their relationship with intentions to join the industry for employment. These include reward systems, nature of work, personal needs,

supervision and relationships with their supervisors and among themselves (Jiang & Tribe, 2009; Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Lundberg, Gudmundson, & Andersson, 2009). For example, in their studies, Akin and Deniz (2005), Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000) and Richardson and Thomas (2012) used the of work, social status, industry-person congeniality, physical working conditions, pay and benefits, promotion, co-workers and managers to assess the students' expectations from the tourism industry. In another study, Pol and Patil (2015) used promotion opportunities, respect, career development, good money and secure future to examine the students' perceptions of tourism employment. The variables, nature of work, social status, promotion opportunities and salary expectations were also employed by Wan et al. (2014) in their examination of the effects of students' perceptions on the tourism and hospitality industries.

#### *Role of students' industry exposure*

The mixed results have been one of the major reasons driving increased research interest in students' perceptions of and attitudes to hospitality careers in the past three decades. Various studies have suggested that there are some circumstances that shape students' perceptions and, hence, their commitment to the industry (Jiang & Tribe, 2009; Kim & Park, 2013; Richardson & Butler, 2012). Ajzen et al. (2009) suggest that the attitude-behaviour relationship is moderated by factors within that person, the situation in which the behaviour is performed, or characteristics of the attitude itself (p. 18). Generally, graduates have exhibited different attitudes towards a hospitality career in different context and settings.

One of the situations that may shape students' perceptions and intentions pertaining to the hospitality employment, as indicated by the literature reviewed, is industrial exposure. Industrial exposure encompasses acts, information, and skills students acquire through their interaction with people working in the industry (Grobelna, 2012). This industrial exposure can be gained through different ways including interacting with family members and friends working in the industry, visiting the industry, undertaking internships as part of their programmes, listening to guest lecturers from the industry and consuming products from the industry (Brown et al., 2015; Grobelna & Marciszewska, 2016; Lin & Anantharajah, 2019). Students, who are quite familiar with the industry's work conditions, are expected to commit to working in the industry more than those who are not. This view is supported by Jackson and Wilton (2017), who assert that more of the students' career decisions are based on real-world experiences and internship than on what they are taught in class. As Lin and Anantharajah (2019) observe, gaining industry exposure can familiarize students with the employment conditions and culture and encourage them to develop interest and commitment to careers in the industry. Joining the industry without industry exposure, on the other hand, might make students feel that they were over-qualified for the tasks assigned to them, hence be dissatisfied with the job.

The link between industrial exposure and students' hospitality employment intention is conceived from the work-integrated learning perspective, which advocates for learning through work. Work-integrated learning a process which combines theoretical knowledge with workplace application in real industry settings (Freudenberg et al., 2011). As Anderson and Sanga (2019) contend, work-integrated learning fosters partnership between students and employers, thereby enhancing positive work attitudes among students, attributes which facilitate their finding a post-graduation work placement. Grobelna and Dolot (2018) contend that industry experience helps students to develop realistic views on their future jobs and on making proper job decision.

Empirical studies that have examined the role industry exposure plays in cultivating the relationship between students' perceptions and intentions are scarce in the mainstream literature. However, several studies found a difference between students with industry exposure and those without it. For instance, in their study of hospitality students' attitudes towards careers in that industry in Taiwan, Huang and Lo (2014) found that work experience improved the students' attitudes towards working in the restaurant industry. In another study on tourism and hospitality students by Grobelna and Marciszewska (2016) that was conducted in Poland found that students with work experience in the industry reported having a good understanding of the nature of work more than others. Thus, this study examined the role of industry exposure in influencing students' perceptions or their intentions regarding hospitality employment. In the current study, students were expected to offer different in perceptions and intentions towards hospitality employment based on their industry exposure.

## RESEARCH METHODS

To achieve the research objectives, the study employed a cross-sectional case study research design. Data were collected from the Business School of the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) in Tanzania. The UDSM is the oldest and largest university in Tanzania with a variety of academic programmes offered at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. In fact, the university serves as a model institution to many other universities—both public and private, from which they adopt academic programmes and administrative systems. Thus, the UDSM's business management students were somewhat representative of students in many other universities in Tanzania, particularly the public ones.

### *Participants*

The study involved all the 405 (out of the 564) final-year undergraduate business management students (2018/2019) who had their e-mail addresses indicated in the students' list. In terms of gender, 40.8 percent of the respondents were females. The respondents' age ranged from 20 to 31 years with a mean age of 23 years. Their distribution in academic programmes was as follows: Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting – 45%, Bachelor of Commerce in Finance – 25%, Bachelor of Commerce in Human Resource Management – 7%, Bachelor of Commerce in Marketing – 11%, Bachelor of Commerce in Tourism and Hospitality Management – 5%, and Bachelor Business Administration – 7%. The sample distribution is proportional to business management students' enrolment in the UDSM Business School both in terms of gender and academic programmes.

### *Data Collection*

Data were collected using a survey questionnaire developed by adapting a multi-item attitude scale developed by Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000), which has also been applied widely in previous studies (Bahceleri & Sucuoglu, 2015; Richardson, 2010; Wan et al., 2014). As *Table 1* illustrates, in addition to demographic information, the instrument had 32 items, 23 items of which described employment conditions, divided into five dimensions (nature of work – 5 items, physical work conditions – 5 items, pay and benefits – 5 items, career prospects – 4 items and co-worker relationship – 4 items). The sample item for employment conditions was “It is a widespread belief that pay is low for most jobs in hospitality and tourism”. For the five (5) items on intentions, the statement “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in the hospitality industry” was the sample item. To measure the students' industry exposure, the respondents were required to either agree or disagree with four (4) statements of familiarity with hospitality industry. In this

regard, the sample item was “I have good knowledge of the hospitality industry because of my engagement in practical training or internship within the industry.”

All the variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire was e-mailed to the respondents who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study by filling out and sending it back to the researcher electronically. E-mailing the questionnaire facilitated the reaching of a big number of respondents within a short time; moreover, all the students had access to and used the internet. Of the 405 e-mails sent out, there were 245 received responses with well-completed questionnaires, a response rate of 60.4 percent.

#### *Procedures for Data Analysis*

Descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to determine sample characteristics and the influence of the students’ perceptions of the hospitality employment attributes on their intentions to assume hospitality employment. T-test was conducted to determine the students’ perceptions and intentions based on their industry exposure. Multiple regression analysis was run hierarchically while controlling for the influence of industry exposure and students’ demographic variables. The testing of the assumptions for multivariate analysis (normality, linearity, outliers, homogeneity and multicollinearity) was conducted but no serious violations emerged. In conducting the T-test, data on the students’ industry exposure Likert scale scores were converted into two categorical groups of low exposure (1 – 3) and high exposure (4 – 5).

## RESULTS

#### *Descriptive Statistics*

This study focused mainly on examining the influence of students’ perceptions of hospitality employment on their career intentions in the industry and whether their intentions varied based on their industry exposure. The average of the 5-point Likert-type scale was computed to obtain scores for each employment attribute. The mean scores and standard deviations are as shown in *Table 1*. *Table 1* shows that the mean scores ranged from 2.72 (SD = 0.83) for “career prospects” to 3.20 (SD = 0.80) for “co-worker relationship.” These scores suggest that most of the students have unfavorable perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry. The mean score of career intention was 3.12 (SD = 0.74), which is slightly above the neutral point on the 5-point Likert scale, implying that students are generally not committed to working in the industry on long-term basis.

**Table 1: Means, Correlations, and Composite Reliability Coefficients**

Factor	# of Items	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Nature of Work	5	2.75	0.60	<b>0.81</b>					
Physical Work Condition	5	3.08	0.93	.530**	<b>0.75</b>				
Pay and Benefits	5	2.80	0.77	.498**	.537**	<b>0.90</b>			
Career Prospects	4	2.72	0.83	.479**	.451**	.471**	<b>0.83</b>		
Co-Worker Relationship	4	3.20	0.80	.405**	.386**	.480**	.580**	<b>0.83</b>	
Intention to Employment	5	3.12	0.74	.580**	.543**	.533**	.680**	.490**	<b>0.84</b>

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Bolded along the diagonal are composite reliability coefficients

N = 245



The correlation coefficients, reliability coefficients presented in *Table 1* show that all the study measures had acceptable reliability and reasonable correlations to allow for regression analysis. Pallant (2010) suggests, regression analysis requires independent variables to have strong relationship with the dependent variable ( $r \geq 0.3$ ) and some relationship among themselves but which is not too high ( $r < 0.7$ ). As *Table 1* shows, all the correlation coefficients indicate that this condition was met and hence regression could be conducted given that the other assumptions were also met.

*Students' perceptions of hospitality employment and their likelihood of work in industry*

Results on students' perceptions and intentions towards hospitality employment are summarized in *Table 2*. On a scale of 1 to 5, 4-5 indicate positive perceptions, 1-2 indicate negative perceptions, and 3 indicates neutrality or being non-committal. Overall, students reported unfavorable views on different attributes of employment in the hospitality industry. Specifically, the respondents classified the *nature of work* in the hospitality industry as unfavorable. As *Table 2* further illustrates, the percentage of the respondents reporting dissatisfaction (38.2%) with the nature of work in the hospitality industry was higher than that of those citing satisfaction (26.7%) with 35.1 percent of the respondents being undecided.

Respondents largely perceived the pay and benefits in the tourism industry rather negatively. Many of the respondents (40%) disagreed with the statement that pay and benefits were high enough for employees to maintain a normal life for most of the hospitality jobs. Only 29 percent concurred with the statement. Another 30.5 percent of the respondents were non-committal. Regarding *career prospects*, the results show that business management students did not perceive career prospects in the hospitality industry favorably. Another 37.1 percent indicated non-satisfaction with the career prospects compared to 28 percent of those who agreed that the industry provided opportunities for career advancement.

On the positive side, physical work conditions and co-worker relationship were evaluated positively by a large proportion of the business management students compared to those who did so negatively. Specifically, the percentage of favorably he respondents expressing satisfaction with the *physical working conditions* in the hospitality industry (36.5) was somewhat higher than that of those who reported dissatisfaction (35.1) with 28.1 percent of the respondents indicating that they were undecided (see *Table 2*). In general, the respondents had positive views on co-worker relationship. A significant proportion of the respondents (35.5%) described co-worker relationship as being good compared to those who indicated otherwise (29.8%) with 34.7 percent who were indifferent. These findings are consistent with the mean values presented in *Table 1*.

**Table 2: Perceptions and intentions of business management students regarding hospitality employment**

Construct	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Indifferent (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
nature of work	2.9	37.3	34.1	26.3	0.4
physical work condition	1.1	34.0	28.3	34.4	2.2
pay and benefits	1.2	34.3	33.5	28.6	2.4
career prospects	5.7	31.4	35.0	26.4	1.6
co-worker relationship	0.8	29.0	34.7	31.2	4.3
Intention to work in the industry	0.5	30.8	36.1	31.1	1.5

	Low Exposure		High Exposure	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Industry exposure	140	57.1	105	42.9

Regarding whether students expected to work in the hospitality industry upon their graduation, the respondents were almost evenly distributed. Whereas 32.6 percent of respondents indicated willingness to work in the industry, 31.3 percent unequivocally indicated that they would not do so. Additionally, a significant proportion of business management students were undecided on whether they would develop their career in the hospitality industry upon graduation. Combining these results with the mean value of students' intentions presented in *Table 1* shows that, generally the business management students' perceptions and intentions when it comes to hospitality employment were unfavorable.

Furthermore, *Table 2* shows that 42.4 percent of the respondents reported that they had good experience in the hospitality industry during practical training or internship, conversations with relatives or close friends working in the hospitality industry, being a customer of services of hospitality goods and services, and attending hospitality-related lectures, seminars and conferences.

#### *Influence of students' perceptions on hospitality industry employment intentions*

Standard regression analysis was used to determine how well the employment attributes predicted students' intentions to work in the hospitality industry and which one among the attributes was the best predictor of students' intentions. Prior to conducting regression analysis, assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity were checked to ensure that there was no violation. Summated values of students' perceptions of the five employment attributes were regressed against the summated values of career intentions while controlling for the effects of industry exposure, academic programme, age and gender.

**Table 3: Regression Coefficients of the Influence Hospitality Employment Attributes on Students' Intentions**

#### **ANOVA**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R Square
Regression	2486.820	9	276.313	74.003	.000 <sup>b</sup>	.584
Residual	877.449	235	3.734			
Total	3364.269	244				

#### **Coefficients**

Model	Independent Variables	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)		0.983	.326
	Nature of Work	.226	4.080	.000
	Pay and Benefits	.153	2.864	.005
	Physical Work Condition	.125	2.124	.035
	Career Prospects	.389	7.005	.000
	Co-worker Relationship	.022	0.424	.672
	Industry Exposure	.241	6.009	.000
	Gender	-.010	-0.248	.804

Age	-.022	-0.460	.646
Academic Programme	.169	3.435	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Intension to Hospitality Employment

As *Table 3* illustrates, four of the five hospitality employment attributes had statistically significant and positive bearing on students' intentions to work in the industry. These are nature of work ( $\beta = 0.226, p < .001$ ), pay and benefits ( $\beta = 0.153, p < .001$ ), physical work conditions ( $\beta = 0.125, p < .01$ ), and career prospects ( $\beta = 0.389, p < .001$ ). On the other hand, co-worker relationships did not have a significant effect on their intentions to work in the hospitality industry ( $\beta = -0.022, p = .672$ ). The statistically significant attributes included career prospects ( $\beta = 0.389, p < .001$ ), and nature of work ( $\beta = 0.216, p < .001$ ). These two attributes appear to be the strongest predictors of students' intentions to working in the hospitality industry.

The total variance in students' intentions to work in the tourism and hospitality industry explained by the perceived hospitality employment factors was 58.4% ( $R\text{-squared} = 0.584, p < .001$ ). The statistically significant regression coefficients for the four hospitality employment factors indicate that the higher the level of perceived hospitality employment factors, the higher the students' intention to work in the tourism industry.

*Comparison of Students' Perceptions and Intentions regarding Hospitality Employment based on Industry Exposure*

An independent-sample t-test was conducted to compare the intentions to develop a career in the hospitality industry for students with high and those with low industry exposure. This test established a statistically significant difference as the p-score (2-tailed) is less than 0.05 (Pallant, 2010). In fact, results show a significant difference in the mean scores of intentions for students with high and those with low industry exposure as indicated in *Table 4*. The findings further indicate that students also differ significantly in their perceptions of employment attributes with those having high industry exposure exhibiting more favorable views than those with low industry exposure.

**Table 4: Comparison of Students' Perception of and Intentions for hospitality employment based on Industry Exposure**

Variables	Low Exposure		High Exposure		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				Effect Size (ETA)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	
Intention to Employment	12.04	2.03	17.92	2.62	5.6	.018	19.7	243	.000	5.881	2.56
Nature of Work	12.61	2.32	15.30	3.11	9.4	.002	7.7	243	.000	2.698	0.96
Physical Work Conditions	12.01	4.12	15.89	4.45	2.9	.089	6.9	214	.000	3.871	0.90
Pay and Benefits	12.43	2.68	16.10	4.16	28.2	.000	8.3	243	.000	3.676	1.02
Career Prospects	11.44	3.40	16.46	3.33	.05	.811	11.5	227	.000	5.021	1.49

Co-worker Relationship	10.09	2.68	12.69	3.25	5.4	.021	6.8	243	.000	2.600	0.86
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Effect sizes were also computed to compare quantitatively the mean-score results as recommended by McLeod (2019). Effect sizes measure the magnitude of differences between group means. As *Table 4* illustrates, the sizes of the difference computed using Cohen's *d* coefficient were large for all the employment attributes (nature of work -  $t = 7.76$ ;  $d = 0.96$ ;  $p < .001$ ; Physical Work Conditions -  $t = 6.94$ ;  $d = 0.90$ ;  $p < .001$ ; Pay and Benefits -  $t = 8.38$ ;  $d = 1.02$ ;  $p < .001$ ; and Career Prospects -  $t = 17.59$ ;  $d = 1.49$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and intentions towards hospitality employment ( $t = 19.77$ ;  $d = 2.56$ ;  $p < .001$ ). All the Cohen's *d* coefficients were above the recommended  $d \geq 0.80$  for large effect (McLeod, 2019).

These findings suggest that industry exposure affects students' intentions regarding hospitality employment. Specifically, the findings imply that students with industry exposure have positive attitudes towards the hospitality employment as compared to those without it.

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION FOR HIRING PRACTICES

This study investigated the undergraduate business management students' perceptions of different employment attributes and their intentions regarding working in the hospitality industry using a reliable and valid attitude scale. One important result emerging from the study was that, generally, students had negative views on hospitality employment. Generally, results indicate that business management students perceived the hospitality employment unfavorably. In fact, for most employment attributes the proportion of respondents perceiving hospitality employment negatively was higher than that of those who were in favor of it. These findings are congruent with some of the studies around the world that established negative attitudes towards tourism and hospitality careers among tourism and hospitality management students (Amissah et al., 2019; Daskin, 2016; Huang & Lo, 2014; Jiang & Tribe, 2009; Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Richardson & Thomas, 2012). However, the findings of this study contrast with the results from studies on tourism and hospitality management students by Brown et al. (2016), Stone et al. (2017), Tuzunkan (2018), and Wijesundara (2015), which found students to have keen interest in getting employed in the industry. Results also show that more than one-third of students (33.1%) were uncertain about whether to commit to the industry or not. This result, however, has to be taken cautiously because these students might turn out to be behind turnover once employed in the industry upon graduation. Arguably, business management students have a negative impression of the hospitality industry with only a little proportion of the students having favorable attitudes.

The findings further show that four out of five hospitality employment factors (nature of work, career prospects, pay and benefits and physical work conditions) positively influence students' intentions to work in the hospitality industry. The results of this study are, to a large extent, in line with the findings of previous studies (Harkison, Poulston, & Ginny Kim, 2011; Kim & Park, 2013; Richardson, 2010; Tuzunkan, 2018; Wan et al., 2014; Wijesundara, 2015), which established that students' perceptions of employment factors such as nature of work, physical work conditions, pay and benefits, co-worker relationship, and career prospects were significant predictors of their hospitality employment intentions. Being aware of different factors on which students' and employees' perceptions are based is important for managers of hospitality organizations to identify candidates likely to enter and stay in hospitality workforce. In accordance with the interactionist behavioral theory, a positive fit between a job applicant and the organization can benefit both the employee and the organization in the long-run.

Moreover, the study found that students differed in their perceptions and intentions pertaining to hospitality employment based on their industry exposure. Students with high industry exposure are attracted more to hospitality employment than those lacking such industrial experience. This study supports the findings by Walsh, Chang, and Tse (2015) and Jackson and Wilton (2017), which established that industry exposure is a vital determinant of the students' perceptions of and attitudes to the tourism and hospitality industry. The findings are contrary to those of studies by Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000) as well as Akin and Deniz (2005), which found that students' industry experience has a negative impact on their perceptions of and attitude to the hospitality industry.

Yet, business management graduates are employed in hospitality organizations in good numbers. Three major implications for hospitality organizations emerge from this study's findings. First, the findings highlight the importance for managers of hospitality organizations to gain an understanding of the perceptions and experience with the industry of candidates examined for jobs prior to employing them. Doing so could enable them to select suitable and committed candidates (graduates) at the entry point, hence reduce the chances of turnover. In assessing candidates' perceptions, especially those of fresh graduates, the study found that employment factors such as nature of work, career prospects, physical work environment and pay and benefits are crucial, hence deserving consideration.

Second, hospitality managers should strive towards improving the industry's work conditions to retain the best students once they join the industry and competing favorably with organizations in other sectors for the same pool of graduates. Since they cannot relatively offer lucrative jobs, they should focus on providing intrinsic rewards that offer enough excitement to attract students to the industry. The selection process should also include comprehensive orientation programmes to clarify expectations among newly-employed staff.

Overall, the results from the study show that industry exposure is significant in influencing students' hospitality employment intentions. Students with high industry exposure do have a higher intention scores than those with low industry exposure. Implicitly, managers of hospitality organizations should include, in their selection process questions that test candidates' experience or familiarity with the industry especially for non-hospitality professional candidates because, normally, these have alternative career options in the labour market. On their side, educators should develop platforms to provide students with opportunities to get acclimatized with the industry so that they could find working in the industry in long-term attractive. As such, ways should be found for students to associate with hospitality organizations for them to become interested in working in the industry. Moreover, managers of hospitality organizations can facilitate the students' industry exposure by taking them in for internship, organizing hospitality employment workshops, and offering professional lectures in academic and training institutions on voluntary basis.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study findings confirm results from previous studies which suggest that students have generally negative perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry, which negatively affects their interest in working in the industry as indicated by the below-average scores of their intention to work in the industry. Moreover, they echo the theoretical perspective that person-environment fit determines individual attitude and behavior. In effect, business management students do not find a match between what they believe and need out of employment and what hospitality can

provide which influences their decisions on whether they should join the industry or not. Results also provide evidence that the nature of work, pay and benefits, physical work conditions and career prospects are major employment attributes that prompt students to develop their perceptions of the hospitality industry. The findings also reveal that industry exposure plays a significant role in shaping the students' perceptions of and hospitality employment intentions. In fact, the higher their industry exposure favorable is students' perceptions, the more they are attracted to developing a career in the hospitality industry.

The current study has extended the line of inquiry by involving business management students from an African country context which has been under-researched (Amissah et al., 2019; Kamoche, Siebers, Mamman, & Newenham-Kahindi, 2015). Indeed, most empirical evidence on the effects of students' perceptions of hospitality employment has been largely confined to students studying tourism and hospitality management programmes and have been conducted, mostly, in developed Western and Asian countries. As stated earlier, the study had a systematic examination of students' perceptions of and attitude to tourism employment using a sample drawn from business management students in an African country. Moreover, it focused on the employers as opposed to the common practice among researchers of students' attitudes who focus on educators. Thus, the insights generated in this study could help managers of hospitality organizations to select the best and committed candidates to work in the industry. Overall, the findings of the current study provide insights into the role students' perceptions and industry exposure in shaping their hospitality employment intentions using a sample of business management students from a Tanzanian premier public university.

#### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Like in many other research studies, this study had some limitations which might have limited the generalizability of its findings. First, participants came from only one institution, the UDSM. Thus, the study findings may not be generalizable to all students or graduates in the country without qualification. As such, future studies should engage more universities and students in different programmes. Second, as most of the students had no industry exposure, which might raise doubts on their perceptions of the hospitality industry and employment, our main aim was to determine whether industry exposure improved the students' perceptions, which has been positively confirmed.

Third, the current study employed cross-sectional case study design in the examination of the determinants of the students' intentions regarding the hospitality employment, which might have not fully established a cause and effect relationships between the study variables. Thus, conducting a longitudinal study of students' perceptions of and intentions on the hospitality employment from the entry point through to graduation and beyond could lead to appropriate conclusions being drawn on the effects of students' perceptions of their career intentions. Fourth, it was expected based on the Interactionist Behavioral Theory (Lewin, 1951) and findings from previous studies that as part of employment attributes, co-worker relationship would influence students' intention to work in the hospitality industry. However, this study's results indicate co-worker relationship was an insignificant predictor of students' intentions. Future studies should explore on why co-worker relationship does influence students' intentions towards hospitality employment including finding out whether there are any intervening factors in this relationship. which postulates that attitudes and behavior are a function of the person and the environment (Lee & Jang, 2017).

Finally, students' perception of hospitality employment factors and industry exposure explain only a portion of their attitude towards hospitality employment. Impliedly, there must be other factors that might also affect their attitudes to hospitality employment. Other factors might include, students' personal values, social status, emotional intelligence, tourism service orientation, and peer influence. Future studies should, hence, incorporate these factors in the examination of students' perceptions.

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