

The Effect of Career Interest on Hospitality Career Choice among Diploma IV Hotel Management Students at Universitas Negeri Padang

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how career interest shapes hospitality career choice among students in the 2022 cohort of the Diploma IV Hotel Management Program at Universitas Negeri Padang. A quantitative causal-associative design was applied, involving 100 respondents selected through simple random sampling from a population of 133 students. Data were collected using a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed through simple linear regression with SPSS 27. The results show that students reported a strong level of career interest, with a mean score of 4.26 and a respondent achievement rate (TCR) of 85.19%, while hospitality career choice was also rated highly, with a mean score of 4.27 and a TCR of 85.44%. Regression analysis indicated that career interest had a positive and significant influence on hospitality career choice, as reflected in the equation $Y = 5.373 + 1.119X$, with $t = 33.382$ and $p < 0.001$. Career interest explained 91.9% of the variance in career choice ($R^2 = 0.919$), although this strong explanatory value should be interpreted carefully because both constructs are closely related and the respondents came from a relatively homogeneous vocational education background. The findings support the relevance of Social Cognitive Career Theory in explaining students' career direction in hospitality education and suggest that career interest needs to be strengthened through practice-based learning, internship experience, industry exposure, and structured career guidance so that students can translate their interest into realistic and informed career choices in the hospitality sector.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The hotel industry is an important component of Indonesia's tourism ecosystem and operates in an increasingly competitive environment that demands adaptive operational, service, and marketing capabilities [1]. Recent studies in the Journal of Multidimensional Management illustrate the breadth of managerial issues within hospitality, including destination-facility development [2], pricing and service quality [3], employee motivation and organizational culture [4], digital promotion [5], and hotel guests' brand-switching behavior [6]. These diverse functions create multiple career pathways for hotel-management graduates, but they also require students to develop career plans that are clear and aligned with the competencies acquired through vocational education.

University study is a critical period in which students translate personal interests, competencies, and employment opportunities into concrete career choices. Career interest reflects an individual's attraction to and internal motivation toward a particular field [7], whereas career choice develops through self-assessment, information seeking, comparison of alternatives, and decision-making [8]. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) explains that interests emerge from self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations and subsequently shape career goals and choices [9], [10]. In hospitality education, students with stronger interest in the field are also more likely to pursue careers in the hospitality industry [11].

Strong interest, however, does not necessarily lead directly to a firm career choice. A preliminary survey was conducted at the beginning of the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, before the

main survey, using a brief questionnaire based on indicators of career interest and career choice, supplemented by an initial interview with one alumnus. Thirty-one students, representing 23.3% of the population, participated as exploratory respondents to identify the initial pattern rather than to test the hypothesis. The results showed high career interest (80.09%), while career choice remained in the moderate category (58.87%). Specifically, 9.7% of students had no clear career direction, 19.4% were still uncertain about working in hospitality, 16.1% considered the field inconsistent with their interests or abilities, 50% had not developed a well-defined career plan, and 29% lacked family support. The alumni interview further suggested that employment opportunities and a mismatch between expectations and industry realities may lead graduates to pursue careers outside hospitality.

These initial findings reveal a more specific problem than students' general attraction to the industry: interest is not always translated into a definite career decision. Previous research has identified factors that encourage hospitality students to pursue industry careers [11], yet evidence from Indonesian vocational hotel-management students, particularly a cohort approaching graduation, remains limited. This study therefore examines the effect of Career Interest on Career Choice among 2022-cohort students in the D4 Hotel Management Program at Universitas Negeri Padang. Its contribution lies in testing SCCT within vocational hospitality education and providing an empirical basis for more targeted internships, career guidance, and industry partnerships.

2. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative causal-associative survey design to examine the effect of Career Interest (X) on Career Choice (Y) [16]. The research was conducted in the D4 Hotel Management Program, Department of Tourism, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, Universitas Negeri Padang, during the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year.

The population comprised 133 students from the 2022 cohort. Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error produced a minimum sample size of 99.81, which was rounded to 100 respondents. Simple random sampling was implemented using a sampling frame containing all active students; each student was assigned a number, and 100 numbers were selected randomly without replacement. Primary data were collected through a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, while secondary data were obtained from relevant books and scholarly articles.

The instrument contained 33 statements: 15 items measuring Career Interest and 18 items measuring Career Choice. A pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents. The critical r -value of 0.361 was determined using $df = n - 2 = 28$ at the 5% significance level; all items were valid because their corrected item-total correlation values exceeded this threshold. Reliability was also satisfactory, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.825 for Career Interest and 0.874 for Career Choice, both above the minimum criterion of 0.70.

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 27 through descriptive statistics and the respondent achievement rate (TCR), the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test, a linearity test, the Glejser heteroscedasticity test, simple linear regression, the t -test, the F -test, and the coefficient of determination. Residuals were considered normally distributed when $p > 0.05$; the relationship was considered linear when the Deviation from Linearity value exceeded 0.05; and heteroscedasticity was considered absent when the Glejser significance value exceeded 0.05. The hypothesis was supported when $p < 0.05$, and R Square was used to determine the proportion of variance in Career Choice explained by Career Interest.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Respondent Characteristics

The survey involved 100 students from the 2022 cohort of the D4 Hotel Management Program at Universitas Negeri Padang and was conducted from June to July 2026. The respondents were 75% female and 25% male. Because the demographic instrument recorded only gender, information on internship experience, preferred hotel department, and intended occupational field was unavailable; this limitation should be considered when interpreting the respondent profile.

3.1.2. Description of Career Interest and Career Choice

The 15 Career Interest (X) items produced a total mean score of 63.88, a median of 65.00, and a standard deviation of 5.07. Overall, the variable was classified as Very Good, with an item mean of 4.26 and a TCR of 85.19%. Fourteen items were classified as Very Good. Interest in the occupational field

recorded the highest achievement rate (88.00%), while preference for hospitality over other fields recorded the lowest TCR (83.00%) and was classified as Good.

Career Choice (Y) was also classified as Very Good, with an item mean of 4.27 and a TCR of 85.44%. Understanding the industry's need for professional employees recorded the highest TCR (88.40%), while consideration of the distance between home and the workplace recorded the lowest TCR (82.60%).

Table 1. Respondent Achievement Rates for the Study Variables

Variable	Number of Items	Mean Score	TCR (%)	Category
Career Interest (X)	15	4.26	85.19	Very Good
Career Choice (Y)	18	4.27	85.44	Very Good

Source: SPSS 27 output, 2026.

3.1.3. Assumption Tests

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test produced an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.129 (> 0.05), indicating that the residuals were normally distributed. The Deviation from Linearity value of 0.372 (> 0.05) confirmed a linear relationship between Career Interest and Career Choice. The Glejser test yielded a significance value of 0.973 (> 0.05), indicating no evidence of heteroscedasticity and suggesting that the residual variance was constant.

3.1.4. Hypothesis Testing

Simple linear regression produced the equation $Y = 5.373 + 1.119X$. The constant of 5.373 represents the predicted Career Choice score when Career Interest is mathematically equal to zero. The coefficient of 1.119 indicates that each one-point increase in Career Interest is associated with an average increase of 1.119 points in Career Choice. The positive coefficient shows that stronger interest in hospitality is accompanied by greater certainty in students' career choices.

Table 2. Regression, t-Test, F-Test, and Coefficient of Determination Results

Parameter	Value
Constant (a)	5.373
Regression coefficient (b)	1.119
t-value (Sig.)	33.382 (< 0.001)
F-value (Sig.)	1,114.383 (< 0.001)
R	0.959
R Square	0.919

Source: SPSS 27 output, 2026.

The t-value of 33.382 with $p < 0.001$ indicates that Career Interest had a positive and significant effect on Career Choice; therefore, the research hypothesis was supported. The F-value of 1,114.383 ($p < 0.001$) confirms that the regression model was statistically significant. The correlation coefficient ($R = 0.959$) indicates a very strong relationship, while $R \text{ Square} = 0.919$ means that Career Interest explained 91.9% of the variance in Career Choice, with the remaining 8.1% associated with other factors. This unusually high R Square should be interpreted cautiously because the two constructs are conceptually related, were measured using the same questionnaire, and were assessed within a relatively homogeneous vocational cohort. Further research should therefore evaluate discriminant validity and potential common method bias using more diverse samples and data sources.

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1. Students' Career Interest in Hospitality

The Career Interest TCR of 85.19% shows that students had a strong interest in hospitality occupations. In a D4 program, this interest is shaped not only by abstract perceptions of the profession but also by practical classes, service simulations, industry visits, and internships that expose students to actual workplace demands. Direct experience enables students to evaluate the fit between their abilities and professional activities, consistent with the view that career interest develops through perceptions of and motivation toward a field of work [7]. Nevertheless, the lower TCR for preference for hospitality over other fields indicates that this interest was not entirely exclusive. The program should therefore ensure

that practical learning and internships provide a realistic understanding of hospitality careers rather than only short-term operational experience [11].

3.2.2. Maturity of Students' Career Choices

Career Choice achieved a TCR of 85.44%, indicating that most students had developed relatively mature career plans as they approached graduation. This finding is consistent with the view that career decisions emerge through information seeking and comparison of alternatives [8]. Strong awareness of the industry's demand for professional employees suggests that industry exposure helped students recognize employment opportunities. However, the lower scores for the fit between personal abilities and occupational demands, as well as for work-location considerations, show that decision maturity was not uniform across all dimensions. Career guidance should therefore help students assess competency fit, preferred location, working-hour expectations, and career mobility before making final decisions [14], [15].

3.2.3. Effect of Career Interest on Career Choice

The positive effect of Career Interest on Career Choice supports the mechanism proposed by SCCT: strong interest encourages students to form goals, seek opportunities, and undertake career actions aligned with the field [9], [10]. This relationship is plausible among D4 Hotel Management students because their education is dominated by practical learning and industry exposure. The more positively students experience service delivery, room operations, food and beverage functions, and managerial activities, the more readily they can envision themselves working in hospitality. This finding is consistent with evidence that career interest increases hospitality students' likelihood of choosing an industry career [11]. However, the 91.9% contribution should not be interpreted as evidence that career choice is determined by interest alone. The magnitude may also reflect overlap between the indicators, measurement at the same time and from the same source, and respondent homogeneity. Family support, self-efficacy, internship experience, working conditions, and labor-market opportunities should therefore be examined in a broader model.

In practical terms, the D4 Hotel Management Program and the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality at Universitas Negeri Padang should connect efforts to strengthen interest with measurable career decisions. Relevant initiatives include early interest mapping, internship placement aligned with students' preferred fields, post-internship reflection sessions, mentoring by alumni and industry practitioners, and accessible information on career pathways and working conditions. Exposure to organizational culture and employee management is also important because the work environment may shape individuals' commitment to hospitality organizations [4]. Program effectiveness should be evaluated through improvements in career-plan clarity, job-application readiness, and the alignment of graduate placements with students' interests and competencies.

4. CONCLUSION

Career Interest among 2022-cohort students in the D4 Hotel Management Program at Universitas Negeri Padang was classified as Very Good (mean = 4.26; TCR = 85.19%), as was Career Choice (mean = 4.27; TCR = 85.44%). Regression analysis showed that Career Interest had a positive and significant effect on Career Choice, expressed by $Y = 5.373 + 1.119X$ ($t = 33.382$; $p < 0.001$), with R Square = 0.919. Career Interest therefore explained 91.9% of the variance in Career Choice, while the remaining 8.1% was associated with factors outside the model.

Students should strengthen their career decisions through internships, exploration of occupational information, and reflection on the alignment between their competencies and industry requirements. The program should provide structured interest mapping, career guidance, alumni mentoring, and industry-engagement activities. Future studies should include self-efficacy, internship quality, family support, perceptions of working conditions, and labor-market opportunities, while collecting more comprehensive respondent characteristics. Longitudinal designs, additional data sources, and discriminant-validity testing are also needed to determine whether the very strong relationship remains consistent across cohorts and measurement methods.

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