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Research Article

Identifying issues and challenges in industrial training among Psychology undergraduates

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Abstract

Among the initiatives to provide effective all-encompassing learning experience is by including internship or industrial training programmes for undergraduates. While it is expected to equip students with important work-related skills, it too could result in negative impacts if it is not being properly managed. This article presents the findings of a study which identified issues and challenges faced by Psychology undergraduates in Malaysia while completing their industrial training. Using qualitative research design, the study gathered information from nine participants who responded to standardized open-ended interviews. 11 major themes, categorised in three different issues and challenges have been identified, namely departmental-related, workplace/organisational-related and personal-related matters. The findings are expected to help scope the underlying issues and challenges of industrial training programme in local universities. The findings can inform the context of each problem which can be further understood and acknowledged by university officials, useful for them to design necessary interventions such as workshops to discuss the ways to improve industrial training system for university students.

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Psikoloji öğrencilerinin endüstriyel eğitimde yaşadıkları sorunların ve zorlukların belirlenmesi

Öz

Etkili ve kapsayıcı bir öğrenme deneyimi sağlama girişimleri arasında lisans öğrencileri için staj veya endüstriyel eğitim programları yer almaktadır. Öğrencilerin meslekle ilgili önemli becerilerle donatılmaları beklenirken, sürecin düzgün yönetilmemesi de olumsuz etkilere neden olabilir. Bu makalede, Malezya'daki Psikoloji lisans öğrencilerinin endüstriyel eğitimlerini tamamlarken karşılaştıkları sorunları ve zorlukları belirleyen bir çalışmanın bulguları sunulmaktadır. Nitel araştırma deseni kullanılarak, standart açık uçlu görüşmelere cevap veren 9 katılımcıdan bilgi toplanmıştır. Bölümle ilgili, işyeri/örgütsel, ve kişisel olmak üzere 3 farklı kategoride 11 ana tema belirlenmiştir. Bulguların, yerel üniversitelerde endüstriyel eğitim programının altında yatan sorunları ve zorlukları ortaya koyması beklenmektedir. Bu çalışmanın sonuçları, üniversite görevlileri tarafından endüstriyel eğitim sistemini geliştirmenin yollarını tartışmak için çalıştaylar gibi gerekli organizasyonları tasarımlarında faydalı olacak şekilde, üniversite yetkilileri tarafından daha iyi anlaşılabilir ve kabul edilebilir sorunların bağlamına ışık tutabilir.

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Introduction

The primary aim of any educational institution is to provide effective all-encompassing platform for students to have meaningful learning experience. A holistic degree programme entails curriculum which equip students with competencies that enable them to fare well after graduation, especially in the world of work. Among the initiatives is the provision of industrial training programme for undergraduates which involves experiential learning in the real work settings. It is a learning opportunity for students to convert the knowledge gained in classes into practice, an avenue that prepares themselves to become competent workforce in the future (Omar et al., 2008). Stated another way, industrial training helps substantiate students' knowledge and skills with desired abilities. In ensuring effective implementation of industrial training for students in an academic programme, higher education provider should be looking at the best way to attain the industrial training outcomes. Though industrial training has brought in many desired outcomes, its effectiveness could be further improved if its implementations at all levels could be assessed. In this regard, past studies such as by Collins (2002) and Renganathan et al. (2012) found that industrial training or internship formed essential component of education as it exposed students to necessary experiences and professionalism. They also found issues and challenges that students encountered during attachment in placement organisation, and even before it. A bad industrial training experience could decelerate students' progress and interest in completing their attachment; or easily turn them away from the industry in which they were trained for (Fox, 2001). If such scenario persists without being judiciously addressed, the expected outcomes of industrial training are difficult to attain. Hence, there should be effort to address the phenomenon, underscoring the essentiality to identify problems, needs, and expectations of students who undergo industrial training (Ko, 2008).

In relation to the above, there have been numerous studies that identified the issues and challenges of industrial training or internship programmes in educational institutions, but most of them were conducted outside Malaysia, e.g. by Effah et al. (2014) at a polytechnic in Ghana, and Bukaliya (2012) in Zimbabwe Open University. The limited past research in Malaysia studied industrial training among students of University of Malaya and University of Kuala Lumpur (Pillai & Yussof, 2007; Sasila & Mahmood, 2017; Sinnasamy & Nasir, 2015). The findings highlight issues related to the process to acquire job related skills by the students, not so much on personal or organisational challenges they faced. Based on the available literature, only a few studies underlined the issues and challenges of industrial training, focusing on students' or stakeholders' perceptions towards industrial training (Akomaning et al., 2011; Renganathan et al., 2012), students' practicum performance (Jamil et al., 2013) and students' generic skills development throughout their internship experience (Rodzalan & Saat, 2012). Despite the complaints concerning difficulties that the students face when undergoing industrial training, there has been less research conducted to identify issues and challenges faced by undergraduates in Malaysian universities. Narayanan et al. (2010), and Wan et al. (2013) who studied the effectiveness of Industrial Training programme found some issues and challenges of industrial trainings coordinated by universities around the world. Nevertheless, there is yet enough information from the perspective of Malaysian universities.

Industrial training in any placement organisation may not always provide learning situations for interns. There have been issues and challenges of industrial training programme reported by students across the globe, including Malaysia. The following are the issues faced by students undergoing industrial training programme, as identified by past research.

Issues with duration of industrial training

Bukaliya (2012) found that the majority of students in Zimbabwe Open University reported that internship duration is deemed short and conducted concurrently with other course works. Such situation caused the students to have insufficient time to apply knowledge into practices, for they have to give priorities of completing other courses. Renganathan et al. (2012) found that a small percentage of students from a university in Malaysia reported low ability to apply theoretical knowledge into practices and low opportunities to attain business insightfulness during industrial training placement.

Issues with supervision

Limited supervision by academics or instructors in university has been found to cause ineffective management of industrial training. This happens before and during the placement of industrial training. Students in a Malaysian university reported that they received insufficient information by university industrial training coordinators before they went to placement organisation (Sasila & Mahmood, 2017). Students in a Turkish university reported that their academic supervisors could only have short site visits to assess their work, causing less opportunity for them to show their job performance, and in turn, decrease their motivation to apply knowledge or accomplish task in the organisation (Collins, 2002).

Besides the issues with university supervisors, students also face problems with site supervisor, such that has been reported by Effah et al. (2014) on students of a polytechnic in Ghana. The poor supervision by site supervisors lead them to hold an impression that industrial training programme is burdensome, yet do not yield much benefit to them. Students in an Estonian University reported that they did not receive adequate performance feedback from site supervisor, let alone the guidance to improve work performance (Pill & Pilli, 2013).

Issues regarding the nature of job in placement organisation

The nature of job in placement organisation, which relate to working hours, financial allowance, and work engagement have been found to be important aspects of industrial training students. Although students from a liberal arts college in the north eastern of United States reported that the rigidity of working hours and absence of allowance have no significant impact on their level of satisfaction, these factors were still taken into account before they decided to accept the offer for placement (D'abate et al., 2009). Students in Northern Taiwan universities reported their inability to engage in the work accomplished by employees in the placement organisation, hence have less chance to learn industrial techniques during industrial training. This hampers the objective of exposing students to necessary work techniques, professional skills and industry experiences which are vital for their future careers (Ko, 2008).

Issues regarding relationship with employees at placement organisation

The positive attitudes and cooperation of co-workers at placement organisation have been found to play important roles in nurturing learning among students during industrial training (Ko, 2008). On the contrary, their prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviours may hamper the students' process. The latter has been reported by a group of tourism students in Turkey whose workplace social experiences had been deteriorated by unqualified co-workers at their placement organisation (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000).

The above review provides brief account on the issues and challenges with regard to industrial training programme experienced by university students around the world. In providing adequate information that could be used to design effective interventions towards improving industrial training experience for Psychology undergraduates, this study was conducted to identify the types of issues and challenges faced by Psychology undergraduates in Malaysia when undergoing industrial training.

Methodology

Research design

Information from the participants was gathered using qualitative research design, a method suitable in providing textual descriptions of a research issue instead of numerical, enabling the researchers to uncover the meaning of participants' experiences, hence answer the research questions (Merriam, 1998). It adopted the Standardized Open-Ended Interview method to attain the participants' responses. The wordings and term arrangements of a standardized open-ended interview question was immensely structured as it was broken down into specific aspects of industrial training enabling participants to fully express their viewpoints and experiences (Turner III, 2010); and in turn provide rich open-ended responses for the research (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

Participants

Nine Psychology undergraduates (first degree university students), aged 22- to 26-years old, who have completed their industrial training have been selected to participate in this study. The recruitment process adopted two sampling methods which, the first one, is convenience sampling, a type of non-probability or non-random sampling where the target participants met certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate for the purpose of the study (Dörnyei, 2007). Another method is the snowball sampling where the next participant was attained through one of the participants (a locator) who started a snowball by contacting respondents personally known by the participant, or acquaintances that fitted the research criterias (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). They were one male and eight female Psychology undergraduates in which three of the participants were international students (Turkey, Egypt, Yemen) while the others were Malaysian students.

Data collection procedure

The participants were firstly approached through the 'WhatsApp' application and once they have agreed to partake in this study, a face-to-face meeting was arranged for the interview

purpose. At the meeting, the participants were provided with informed consent form which describes the research study; its possible risks; the benefits of participation in the study; the participants' rights as well as protection of confidentiality (Grundmeyer, 2012). The standardized open-ended interview began after the researcher and participants reached a mutual understanding on the interview protocol. The interviews that took place within the university compound itself have been audio-recorded, allowing the researchers to have complete transcripts for all interviews (Merriam, 1998; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The researcher spent around 10 to 15 minutes with each participant. Recruitment of participants and interviews of participants have concluded after data saturation point was reached, in that information received from the participants has become redundant (Merriam, 1998).

Interview protocol

All the participants received an identical set of questions which covered three aspects of industrial training experience. Based on a study by Mihail (2006), the protocol was developed to encompass the three aspects which require the participants to provide information on their experience of industrial training. The identical set of questions as adopted in Mihail (2006) that have been responded by the participants in this study were as follows:

1. Assess your industrial training experience during the recruitment phase.
2. Assess your industrial training experience during the entry process (induction, supervising & trainings).
3. Assess your industrial training experience during the completion phase.

Data analysis

The issues and challenges of industrial training among the participants that have been found were carefully derived, extrapolated, and scoped into different themes. A thematic analysis was applied to do the analyses as it could provide a robust, systematic framework for coding the qualitative data. The codings have been used to identify patterns across the dataset, analysed in relation to the three research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2014). The analysed data would be readily accessible, even to those who are not part of academic communities.

The analyses of the information gathered from the nine participants were made by perusing the transcripts, which have been reviewed by the researchers for several times to detect the "recurring regularities" (Grundmeyer, 2012; Merriam, 1998). Quotes and phrases from the transcripts that were significant to this study have been highlighted (Grundmeyer, 2012). The constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was also used in this process whereby the transcripts have been scrutinized back and forth until the related categories emerged, and were seen as consistent, yet distinct (Grundmeyer, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Next, a table has been developed to place the particular data expressed by each participant under the respective category and to carefully generate the suitable themes in relation to the research question of this study. Finally, the categories have been integrated and refined into solidified themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and the themes were further elaborated. The finalized themes are reported in the findings section.

Findings

The objective of this study was to identify the issues and challenges of industrial training among IIUM Psychology Undergraduates. Based on the procedures that have been conducted by the researcher, participants' experiences and thoughts have provided meaningful insights in answering the three research questions. 11 themes of findings have been identified, described under three categories of issues and challenges, namely issues with university, placement organisation, and personal management.

Issues with the university

The issues with university appear to be attributed to a number of areas that involve preparation to undergo industrial training. The issues reported by the participants are presented below:

Lack of guideline on the ways to secure industrial training placement

Participant 6 claimed that most students have vague knowledge about the types of places or organisations that they could apply to do industrial training. The participant said that the preparation for industrial training, including to find a place to do industrial training was already a bit vague for them, that students did not really get help when searching for placement organisation. Participant 5 said: "Well from my experience, actually university didn't really prepare us enough because my friends and I did not really know what to do in securing a place for industrial training. So, we ended up going to counselling unit and asked them about what should we do, about how to write our resume".

Lack of exposure to related field/work settings

Seven out of nine participants reported lack of exposure to the work settings in terms of job related to the field of Psychology. In fact, they were not sure if the tasks they were doing were part of the job related to the field. Participant 1 reported that many of the students felt that they were exposed to more skills when doing community project in the university, instead of being exposed to the skills while undergoing the industrial training. Their work they deal with at the placement organisation do not really reflect psychology-related work.

Participant 3 expected that there should be a dedicated course which equip students with psychological work setting. It was so hard for some students to find placement organisation because of the limited areas of knowledge in Psychology that they have acquired. They found that all the placement organisations they approached need counselling. Not taking certain courses, especially Counselling Psychology, had made them being rejected by the organisations.

Another participant claimed that the University courses did not adequately prepare her to carry out tasks at the placement organisation. Some basic psychology skills, such as Counselling Psychology, were conducted without including the skills part. She is of the view that some courses should be made as pre-requisites to industrial training programme. The absence of such requirement will create difficulties for the student to fare well at the placement organisation for they do not have the skills to apply when given specific tasks. Participant 7 who underwent industrial training in another country reported the same, hence chose to apply

for placement outside Malaysia as she wanted to be given more practices on Psychology-related job skills there.

Insufficient inputs received from internship coordinators during industrial training

Six out of the nine participants reported that the university did not adequately help students to perform well at work settings. The other lamented that the department did not provide clear framework for the job which should be accomplished by Psychology students, causing many organisations to be unprepared to accept Psychology students. They are unsure of the area of work activities which could be performed by Psychology students at their organisations. They were also not told over the options of placement organisation that they could apply for, or places that would accept them. Finding a placement organisation was a personal search, with the help of seniors who have completed industrial training.

Participants reported that they received little to no inputs on the nature of work to be accomplished, from the coordinators throughout their industrial training period. Participant 7 reported that despite having a good academic supervisor, she did not receive many feedbacks or comments, making her and other students to feel a bit worried on how to accomplish task upon getting the assignment at work. Participant 8 reported that her supervisor did not really keep in touch with her so she would only need to submit the weekly activity logbook. Despite the submission, the supervisor still did not reply to her, or provide any feedback on the ways to improve the activity logbook, let alone the assigned work that she accomplished. That said, the students did not learn much on the ways to change, develop or improve their work skills. She described the department to be 'quite messed-up' and reported that, "the department doesn't really focus on industrial training students. They just gave information through *WhatsApp* group, although some of the information was sometimes misleading. The information is like scattered. It's not very organized".

The participants expected that there should be (a) good link between University and potential placement organisations, informing them of the nature of industrial training for Psychology students; and (b) provision of more insights for students so as to help them doing effective seeking process for industrial training organisation. As mentioned by Participant 5, "I feel the university can get, or the department can get more involved in helping Psychology students in particular, during their hunting for placement".

Overwhelming number of required completion hours

One participant reported that the number of industrial training hours that students have to complete is overwhelming. Some students had difficulties to meet the hours because some of the placement organisations have different structure or schedule of working-hours. In effect, some could not complete the required industrial training hours at the end of the three-month duration. Participant 1 said "I got swamped by the end of the internship because I did not complete my hours. I was working according to the centre hours which was not enough according to the time requirement set by our department".

Issues with placement organisation

Performance of unrelated tasks

The inability to practice or apply psychology knowledge and skill is another issue reported by the participants. Participant 1 said “we don’t get to practice what we have learned. Even if you’re working in a private clinic or in hospital, it is rare for you to get the chance to apply Psychological principles”. Some participants reported their involvement with officers who conducted Psychology-related programmes, assisting the team with general tasks, like creating posters, assisting the running of programmes and facilitating discussion. Nevertheless, many reported that they were involved in limited extent of psychology-related tasks. Participant 6 lamented that many industrial training students were not being trained to do psychology related task for most of the tasks are related to clerical work, and administrative job.

Four out of nine of the participants complained about having to carry out many tasks at the placement organisation, most of them are unrelated to their field of study. A participant reported, she had to do administrative work instead of being given ‘meaningful’ tasks. The tasks were not related to the field of psychology at all. She felt that she was wasting time when she was actually finishing someone else’s work. The management of placement organisation did not take the student’s background into consideration, but would assign the students to do any tasks (e.g. photocopying documents, checking letters) just because they are attached there for industrial training.

Lack of professionalism among employees in placement organisations

Another issue is the unprofessional behaviours or lack of work ethic shown by employees at the participants’ placement organisations. Among other things, three out of the nine participants reported that (i) They were not informed of the expected time to start work, other than the official work office time stated in the industrial training offer letter. Participant 2 told that she was scolded for being late although she came half an hour before the time stipulated in the letter. Besides, (ii) they encounter many incidents when employees spend time to gossip among each other, backbiting their own colleagues for some mistake a person did, instead of approaching the person to personally give advice. A participant reported that some participants (iii) found some employees revealing confidential information about their clients, including the clients for counselling session. They found (iv) lack of integrity among some staff, such as clocking-in early but leaving for breakfast afterwards, only to come back hours later, even at 11 am. They will go out again for lunch after that, only to set bad example for the industrial training students.

Unreasonable demands by the placement organisations

Participant 6 reported that his organisation was being unreasonably demanding to industrial training students, such as requiring them to (i) send resume by hand during the entry stage; (ii) be in the office or at the site by six o’clock in the morning, (iii) do all clerical works, and (iv) handle various tasks on event management instead of employing a clerk. Participant 5 was of the view that some organisations agreed to accept industrial training student just because they could have cheap labour, “so they can have many helpers to do their work in the

organisation, not really to train the students but to use the students”. Participant 2 added, “I feel like I’m just doing the part time job there, as a clerk without receiving allowance”.

Challenging workplace environment

Four of the participants appeared to have issues with their workplace environment. Participant 1 reported that there were too many industrial training students in one organisation, causing some to be left behind when jobs were being assigned among the industrial training students. For small organisations, they have to make decision independently without having to consult any external parties, causing some mistakes in the decisions they made. Students also complained of non-conducive work environment, somewhat that made them feel unwelcomed at the workplace. A male student reported that he would easily get bored at work because the job assigned to him is something easy or light. He viewed industrial training as an experience which is not academically contributive. For international students, language barrier is a challenge for them. They had to work with employees whose English proficiency was not good. Participant 3 was unable to accomplish many tasks as she faced challenges with the language. She mentioned that, “I learned about Counselling, like CBT (*Cognitive Behavioural Therapy*), I have session with the drug addicts. My supervisor taught me about CBT. I learn this all from him but in *Bahasa Melayu*. So it’s difficult because they used terminologies which are different from what we learnt at the University”.

Difficulties with site supervisor

Almost all participants in this study had issues with their site supervisor. Participant 5 said that she did not receive adequate training because there was no work instruction from supervisor who was absent from office (due to annual leave or sick leave, or site supervisor, or late coming to work). Supervisors did not give much attention to student because they were highly busy, being too occupied with actual work rather than supervising students. Another participant reported that her supervisor was unfriendly, tend to show negative pattern of relationship with students.

Some supervisors expected undergraduates undergoing industrial training to accomplish tasks which could only be assigned to Psychology graduates. Participant 4 reported that her supervisor expected students to already have the knowledge on clinical session, despite the fact that they have not taken the subject. The supervisor then took the effort to teach the student, teaching him about the area of Clinical Psychology, and basic skills in clinical session.

Issues with personal management

Individual setbacks

Participant’s individual self is the source of complications while completing their industrial training programme. Some participants reported that individual personality traits, e.g. anxiety, and shyness caused their delay in securing industrial training placement. Students with such traits prefer sending email to calling the organisation by phone when applying for the placement. Besides, language barrier also caused difficulties to international students whose native language is different from that of the employees in the placement organisation, like Arabic or Malay. This is the case for an international student in Malaysia, and a Turkish

student in Turkey-Syria border. Besides the language barrier, another issue is personal management. Participant 9 struggled with self-discipline, such as having problem waking up early in the morning. She also experienced sickness during practical training, requiring her to go to the hospital a couple of times, resulting in additional number of industrial training days to make up for.

Location of placement organisation

Three out of nine participants went through complicated experience related to their workplace location. Participant 5 reported that, “So, for the recruitment at first, since I live in a small town, it was actually quite hard for me to find a placement for my internship, because there was not many choice”. She ended up completing her industrial training at a government organisation, in which, she did not fully enjoy. Participant 7, being an international student, also encountered an issue to secure a placement in Malaysia. She stated that “As I see for international student, it was not easy to find internship place because many companies request for applicants who understand and speak Malay language”. Thus, she preferred to look for internship places in Turkey and managed to complete her industrial training there. On the other hand, participant 9 claimed that her workplace is quite far away from her home, which therefore, led to her lateness of coming to work. She reported, “So, maybe due to distance, I spent much time commuting rather than spending time in the office. I would have like four more hours or something in my day to commute”. In addition, she also stated that she did not have much time to do anything else during her industrial training experience due to her obligation to wake up earlier than usual.

Discussion

This study found 11 major themes of issues and challenges faced by Psychology undergraduates when undergoing industrial training programme. The responses provided by the participants have, to a good extent, answered the research questions, hence described the participants’ issues and challenges. Their responses have also indicated their views on the weaknesses with their industrial training; and assessment on whether their industrial training experience helps improve their academic performance and personal skills. This section discusses issues and challenges in comparison with some of the findings from past literature; and extrapolates the strength and weaknesses of industrial training from the participants’ responses.

The issues and challenges reported by the participants are related to the roles of the university, characteristics of placement organisation, and students’ personal management. In terms of issues with the university, it was found that the students reported lack of guideline on the ways to secure industrial training placement, lack of exposure to the Psychology related field or work settings that are suitable for them to apply for industrial training, and insufficient inputs received from the University internship coordinators during industrial training. This is what Sasila and Mahmood (2017) found in their studies amongst students of Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL). The students claimed that the internship coordinators provide insufficient information preceding their practical training.

The other issue is on the overwhelming number of hours required by the university for the students to spend in the placement organisation, contrary to the findings by Collins (2002) and Bukaliya (2012). Collins reported the majority of students in a Turkish university found that their placement organisations have provided a combination of academic knowledge as well as “practical experience. Similarly, Bukaliya found that most students from the Zimbabwe Open University considered the internship duration as short and that they must struggle in completing it which was taken concurrently with other courses.

The issues which are linked to placement organisation involve the students’ performance of unrelated tasks. The same phenomenon was discovered by Sasila and Mahmood (2017) who found that students of UniKL believed that the task given to them during their industrial training was not related with their field. Besides, participants in this study also reported the lack of professionalism among employees at placement organisations, as well as unreasonable work demands imposed by placement organisations on industrial training students. This was the opposite to Bukaliya’s (2012) finding that industrial training students viewed their placement organisation to have helped them in understanding theories learnt in classroom, and enhanced their knowledge which are relevant to their particular area of study. The participants in this study indicated that their placement organisation did not allow them to apply any psychological concepts learned at the university. Similar findings was reported by Renganathan et al. (2012) who found small percentage of 247 students in Malaysia rated low on their ability to apply theoretical knowledge to their practices at placement organisation.

Participants also reported difficulties with their site supervisors, somewhat similar with the experience of students from Kumasi Polytechnic who reported poor supervision from their supervisors in placement organisation (Effah et al., 2014). Likewise was the case with the findings by Pill and Pilli (2013) who found that several students from University of Tartu, Estonia claimed that their placement supervisor did not provide feedbacks on students’ performance or the feedback was not adequate. Despite not being academically contributing, industrial training supervisor did not provide enough information for improvement of their work skills. On the contrary, students in Taiwanese universities have gained positive impact from their placement, in that they have formed good relationship with co-workers and learn industrial techniques during industrial training (Ko, 2008).

In terms of personal management, the participants reported their individual setbacks that hinder satisfactory attainment of the industrial training. The inability to apply or utilize psychology knowledge at workplace appears to be one of the major issues or challenges faced by the participants . The students reported that they would easily get bored due to the easy or light nature of job assigned to them. This was just the opposite to Bukaliya’s (2012) finding that the students in his study reported that industrial training was beneficial in that it boosted their motivational levels among the participating students. Another challenge is the participants’ difficulty to commute to the location of placement organisation. This is contrary to the finding by D’abate et al. (2009) who reported that desirable location does not have significant relationship with the internship satisfaction among university students in northeastern of United States. For them, securing a placement for industrial training is more important, because there were not many organisations to choose from.

With regard to the strength of industrial training, this study found that the industrial training requires students to spend adequate duration of time for them to complete their training, that is three months. In some institutions, industrial training is done concurrently with other coursework. Nevertheless, the latter is somewhat not desired by some students, for they have to divide their time and attention to coursework and practical work, such that was the concern by students in Zimbabwe (Bukaliya, 2012). This study found that industrial training helps them to understand theories they learnt in classroom, and enhance their learning and understanding of issues relevant to their particular area of study.

In terms of weaknesses of industrial training, some participants in this study reported their lack of opportunity to apply the learnt knowledge at their placement organisation. This is due to the different nature learning processes. Despite this experience, the participants viewed industrial training as a unit that they have to fulfil in order to graduate, somewhat similar to the views of the Turkish students who enrolled in industrial training just in order to pass and graduate from a degree programme (Collins, 2002). Another weakness is with the role of the University in developing good foundational knowledge; or providing enough exposure for students on the nature and expectation of industrial training. This has affected their motivation to passionately carry on with the training, different from what was found by Bukaliya (2012) in his study among Zimbabwe undergraduates. Participants in this study expected the coordinators to provide sufficient information preceding their practical training. In terms of the roles of supervisors, it was found that their roles in helping the students to acquire related competencies should be addressed. Besides providing direct supervision, their behaviours or work behaviours should bring impacts on the students' learning, especially on the areas that pertain to work ethics, such as attendance to work. The roles of academic supervisors also require improvement so as to ensure their students' work at placement organisation are in tandem with the learning outcome of the industrial training programme.

Conclusion

This study has identified 11 major themes of issues and challenges encountered by Psychology undergraduates who undergo industrial training. The responses could be the bases to formulate interventions in improving their industrial training programme. In brief, the issues and challenges of industrial training programme include lack of exposure/preparation for industrial training among students; their inability to apply learnt knowledge at work; the duration of industrial training; issues with supervisors; the efficiency of coordinating system; and relationship between students and co-workers at workplace.

Like any other research, this study also has some limitations. Firstly, limited number of participants. The findings do not represent the whole population of Psychology undergraduates as there were only nine participants used in this study. Secondly, three of the participants were international students, leading to different forms of challenges in terms of cultural or language barrier in Malaysia. Future research should gather responses from more participants instead of only nine students.

Recommendations and Suggestions

The above findings inform for some interventions to be introduced. The university should provide clear information of internship on well-structured document. Besides, university should also compile frequently asked questions on issues or challenges during their industrial training so that the answers could provide basic guidelines to students. University should also design seamless coordination system between department, students, and placement organisation as well as provide guidelines to industrial training students, so that they are guided to showcasing desirable work behaviors when undergoing industrial training. The job description or roles of academic and placement supervisors should also be provided so as to inform them of their tasks, duties and responsibilities, especially in providing feedbacks, comments, knowledge and skills to industrial training students. It is also suggested that the scope of research is to be extended by studying the perspectives of placement organisations and the university as well.

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