Developing an Inclusiveness Educational Hospitality Framework for Sustainable Tourism in Pulau Langkawi: A Stakeholder-Centred Approach

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop an Inclusiveness Educational Hospitality Framework that supports sustainable tourism in Pulau Langkawi through a stakeholder-centred approach. Inclusive education plays a crucial role in ensuring equitable access to hospitality training for students with diverse needs, particularly those enrolled in Special Education Program Integration (PPKI). The proposed framework connects the Langkawi Tourism Academy (LTA), District Education Office (PPD), and The Westin Langkawi Resort & Spa, establishing a comprehensive structure for technical learning, on-the-job training (OJT), and industry-aligned competency development. A cross-sectional quantitative design was used to examine the influence of OJT, training effectiveness, and training content on work group inclusion. Data were collected through a validated questionnaire incorporating established measurement items and analysed using SmartPLS to assess the measurement and structural models. Findings demonstrate adequate reliability and convergent validity, providing evidence that inclusiveness-driven training contributes to students' belongingness and workplace adaptability. This research offers practical implications for hospitality education providers by promoting structured collaboration between institutions and industry to enhance accessibility, skill readiness, and social inclusion. The framework supports national efforts to strengthen the hospitality talent pipeline while advancing Malaysia's sustainable tourism and inclusive development agenda.

Keywords: Inclusive Hospitality Education, On-the-Job Training (OJT), Work Group Inclusion, Sustainable Tourism, Training Effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is a transformative approach that seeks to provide equitable learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their diverse backgrounds and needs. Rooted in the principles of social justice and equality, inclusive education aims to dismantle barriers to learning and participation, ensuring that every student can thrive in a shared educational environment. This approach is not merely about integrating students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms; it is about creating a culture of acceptance and belonging where diversity is celebrated, and individual differences are acknowledged and valued [1] [2] [3]. By fostering an inclusive environment, educators can help build a society that values diversity and promotes equity, ultimately contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outlined by the United Nations.

The execution of inclusive education involves an extensive redesign of educational systems, including modifications in policies, procedures, and institutional cultures. This transformation implies adopting modular pedagogies that accommodate diverse learning styles and capacities, alongside cultivating partnerships among educators, students, families, and communities [2]. Educators are essential in this process, as they have to

constantly participate in self-reflection and professional development to improve their skills in addressing various student populations [2]. Notwithstanding the challenges, including limited resources, insufficient educator training, and prevalent societal prejudices, the advantages of inclusive education are significant. It not only enhances children's well-being and achievement but also elevates educators' efficacy and job satisfaction.

Inclusive education is a dynamic and developing notion that extends traditional schooling and embraces family and community education. This initiative is fundamental to a comprehensive strategy aimed at building an inclusive society that affords every individual the opportunity to thrive [4]. The successful implementation of inclusive education depends on the establishment of an inclusive culture within educational institutions, involving a dedication to continuous reflection, adaptation, and collaboration. By embracing inclusive strategies, educators can establish learning communities where every student, regardless of their skills or problems, has the opportunity to achieve success and contribute to a more just and equitable society.

Inclusiveness Education in Hospitality

Inclusive education in hospitality is a comprehensive approach that aims to create equitable learning environments for all students, including those with disabilities. This practice involves adapting teaching methods, curricula, and institutional policies to meet diverse needs and promote a culture of inclusiveness. In hospitality education, inclusiveness is crucial for preparing students to work in a diverse industry. It requires the integration of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) principles into the curriculum, ensuring that all students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities, have access to meaningful educational experiences [1] [5]. This strategy not only helps students who have disabilities but also improves the overall quality of the educational environment for all students by promoting an environment of inclusion and empowerment.

The hospitality industry employs several different approaches in order to successfully implement inclusive education. Firstly, it requires the development of inclusive leadership within educational institutions. Inclusive leaders in hospitality education should be caring, respectful, and committed to fair treatment and employee development [6]. They serve a vital function in fostering social inclusion and establishing an environment in which all students feel appreciated and supported. In addition, diversity training is necessary for both students and staff to comprehend and accept the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The implementation of effective diversity training has the potential to reduce biases and enhance attitudes towards inclusiveness [6] [7]. Furthermore, the use of technology can enhance inclusiveness by providing accessible learning tools and platforms for students with special needs [8].

Inclusive education in the hospitality sector in Malaysia aims to integrate students with special needs into mainstream educational settings, ensuring they receive the same opportunities as their peers. This approach aligns with broader educational reforms and international mandates that emphasize the importance of inclusive practices. The Malaysian Inclusive Education Program, for instance, has been instrumental in providing students with special educational needs the chance to learn alongside their peers in mainstream classrooms. This initiative requires significant cooperation and commitment from teachers, who must be well-prepared in terms of teaching skills, resources, and action plans to effectively support these students [9] [10]. The readiness of teachers in Malaysia to implement inclusive education has been positively assessed, indicating a high level of preparedness in various aspects necessary for teaching students with learning disabilities.

In the context of hospitality education, inclusive practices are essential for creating a diverse and equitable learning environment. The hospitality and tourism education sector in Malaysia has been working towards integrating inclusive education principles to better prepare graduates for the industry. This includes efforts by institutions like the Malaysia Centre of Tourism and Hospitality Education (MyCenTHE), which aims to increase the number of skilled graduates in the hospitality sector [11]. The focus on inclusive education within hospitality programs ensures that all students, regardless of their abilities, have access to quality education and the opportunity to develop the necessary skills for the industry. This approach not only benefits students with special needs but also enriches the learning experience for all students by promoting diversity and inclusion [12]

However, the implementation of inclusive education in Malaysia faces several challenges. These include the need for better teacher training, enhanced curriculum, and robust support systems to address the academic, social, and emotional needs of students with special needs [13]. Additionally, there are practical issues related to the interpretation and implementation of inclusive policies at the community and school levels, which can hinder the effectiveness of these initiatives. Despite these challenges, the commitment to inclusive education in Malaysia's hospitality sector reflects a broader effort to create a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape, ultimately benefiting the industry and society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

On-the-job training (OJT)

On-the-job training (OJT) in the hospitality industry is crucial for enhancing job performance, employee satisfaction, and overall business efficiency. Studies have shown that effective OJT methods, such as job shadowing, significantly impact training satisfaction among part-time hotel employees, which in turn influences their job commitment and satisfaction [14]. Additionally, OJT programs are effective in preparing students for future careers by providing real-life workplace experiences, as evidenced by the positive feedback from students in the Business Administration and Accountancy Departments of the University of Saint Louis [15]. These programs not only equip students with the necessary skills but also ensure they are ready to face the challenges of the hospitality industry.

Inclusiveness programs in the hospitality sector are gaining attention due to their potential to address labor shortages and enhance workplace diversity. Research highlights the importance of inclusive leadership in promoting a sense of belonging and uniqueness among employees, which leads to positive work outcomes such as thriving at work and increased intention to stay [16]. Furthermore, the implementation of disability inclusiveness programs in hotels has been explored, revealing a perception gap between managers and frontline employees regarding disability employment. Addressing these gaps and minimizing barriers can lead to more effective disability inclusion programs[17]. The rise of online employee review sites also provides insights into the diversity practices of hospitality organizations, showing that inconsistencies in inclusive cues can affect job seekers' perceptions and application intentions [18]

The integration of inclusiveness into OJT programs can further enhance employee engagement and satisfaction. Studies have shown that customer service training, which is a form of OJT, positively affects employee engagement and mediates the relationship between service orientation and employee engagement [19]. This indicates that well-structured training programs that incorporate inclusiveness can foster a more engaged and satisfied workforce. Additionally, the inclusion of emotional competence training in hospitality curricula has been found to increase student satisfaction and their intention to stay in the industry, suggesting that such training can reduce the need for extensive on-the-job training for employers [20]. Overall, the combination of OJT and inclusiveness programs can create a more supportive and effective work environment in the hospitality industry.

The relationship between on-the-job training (OJT) and work group inclusion is multifaceted, involving various dimensions of workplace dynamics and employee development. On-the-job training is a critical component in enhancing employees' skills and knowledge, which in turn can foster a sense of inclusion within work groups. The literature suggests that OJT not only improves job performance and satisfaction but also plays a significant role in promoting a supportive and inclusive organizational culture. For instance, a study highlights that OJT, along with induction training, significantly enhances employee job performance, with organizational culture acting as a mediator in this relationship [21]. This indicates that a supportive organizational culture, bolstered by effective training programs, can create an environment where employees feel valued and included.

Moreover, the impact of OJT on job satisfaction and organizational commitment further underscores its role in fostering work group inclusion. Research conducted in the Royal Malaysia Air Force demonstrates a significant relationship between job training (both on- and off-the-job) and job satisfaction [22]. Employees who receive adequate training feel more secure, satisfied, and motivated, which can lead to a stronger sense of

belonging and inclusion within their work groups. Similarly, another study focusing on the German labor market found that further training positively impacts job satisfaction, which is crucial for organizational commitment and, by extension, work group inclusion [23]. These findings suggest that when employees perceive their training as effective and beneficial, they are more likely to feel included and committed to their work groups.

Additionally, the broader implications of OJT on workplace dynamics and employee benefits also contribute to work group inclusion. For example, a study in Vietnam found that while OJT had an insignificant effect on wages, it significantly improved employee working conditions, particularly for young workers [24]. Improved working conditions can enhance employees' sense of inclusion and well-being within their work groups. Furthermore, the conceptual framework of work group inclusion, which includes belongingness and uniqueness, suggests that OJT can help employees feel valued and able to express themselves authentically within their groups [24]. This collective experience of inclusion is positively associated with group performance, indicating that effective OJT can enhance both individual and group outcomes.

In conclusion, the literature provides robust evidence that on-the-job training is integral to fostering work group inclusion. By enhancing job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and working conditions, OJT helps create a supportive and inclusive work environment. The positive effects of OJT on employee performance and the mediating role of organizational culture further highlight its importance in promoting a sense of belonging and inclusion within work groups. Therefore, organizations should prioritize effective OJT programs to cultivate an inclusive and high-performing workforce. Hence, the hypothesis H1 is developed whereby On-the-job training (OJT) has a significant relationship with Work Group Inclusion

Training Effectiveness (TF)

The effectiveness of training programs in the hospitality industry, particularly those aimed at inclusiveness, is a multifaceted topic that encompasses various determinants, methodologies, and outcomes. Training competitive professionals in the hospitality industry is increasingly important due to the growing competition and global expansion of tourism. Key determinants of effective training programs include student support, industry connections, and innovative educational programs. These factors significantly impact the quality and effectiveness of training, with student support being the most influential [25]

Additionally, the integration of mobile applications and modern technologies in training programs has shown to enhance the quality of training by providing new opportunities for collaboration and innovative work experiences, although it also presents challenges such as reduced oral communication and potential data security risks [26]. Training methods and their impact on employee satisfaction and job commitment are critical in the hospitality industry. On-the-job training and job shadowing have been identified as effective methods that enhance training satisfaction and subsequently improve job commitment [26]. Moreover, training programs that focus on service quality and customer satisfaction are essential for retaining customers and ensuring high service standards.

However, these programs must address human-related issues such as employee attitudes and confidence, which can significantly affect the training outcomes [27]. The role of post-training self-efficacy is also crucial, as it mediates the relationship between training acquisition and the intention to apply learned skills, highlighting the importance of designing training programs that build confidence and competence [28]. Inclusiveness in training programs is vital for fostering a diverse and equitable work environment in the hospitality industry. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) attributes are essential for creating inclusive learning environments, yet there is often a gap between the perceived importance and actual implementation of these attributes [29]. Effective DEI training programs should address these gaps and focus on the specific needs of diverse student bodies. Additionally, training programs that prepare employees for multicultural work environments are crucial, as they help develop adaptive skills and mindsets necessary for integrating inclusively in diverse settings. The inclusion of sustainability training during internships also plays a significant role in shaping future industry leaders who are conscious of sustainable practices, thereby contributing to the long-term positive impact on the industry [30].

The relationship between training effectiveness (TF) and work group inclusion is a multifaceted topic that has been explored through various lenses in the literature. Training effectiveness is often measured by its impact on knowledge, skills, and job performance, and it is influenced by trainee characteristics, training design, and contextual factors [31]. One significant aspect of training effectiveness is its role in fostering an inclusive work environment. Studies have shown that effective training can enhance employees' understanding of diversity and inclusion, thereby promoting a more inclusive workplace. For instance, diversity training that focuses on awareness and skill development has been found to increase employees' competency in managing diversity and fostering an inclusive mindset [32]. This suggests that training programs designed with a focus on diversity and inclusion can significantly contribute to creating a more inclusive work environment.

Moreover, the effectiveness of training in promoting work group inclusion is also linked to the structure and dynamics of the work groups themselves. Research indicates that the composition of work groups, including the ratio of newly recruited workers to those who are consistently part of the group, as well as the balance between engineering, technical, and operational workers, can impact the effectiveness of both individual and collective improvements [32]. This implies that training programs need to consider the specific characteristics and needs of different work groups to be effective. Additionally, the collective experience of inclusion within a work group, which refers to the degree to which members feel valued, engaged, and able to express themselves authentically, is positively associated with group performance. This relationship is further enhanced by the diversity of the group's membership, suggesting that diverse and inclusive work groups are likely to benefit more from effective training programs [32].

In summary, the relationship between training effectiveness and work group inclusion is complex and influenced by various factors, including the design and focus of training programs, the structure and dynamics of work groups, and the roles of leadership and social exchanges within the work environment. Effective training programs that incorporate elements of diversity and inclusion can significantly enhance employees' understanding and competency in managing diversity, thereby promoting a more inclusive workplace. Additionally, the composition and collective experience of inclusion within work groups, as well as the role of leadership, are crucial factors that can impact the effectiveness of training programs in promoting work group inclusion. Based on this statement, the hypothesis states that Training Effectiveness (TF) has a significant relationship to the Work Group Inclusion

Training Content (TC)

The relationship between training content and various outcomes in the hospitality industry is multifaceted and significant. Training content, particularly when it is well-designed and effectively implemented, has been shown to enhance service quality, employee engagement, and overall organizational performance. For instance, studies have demonstrated that perceived benefits and support for training among employees are positively correlated with improved service quality [33]. Additionally, the design and implementation of training programs, including both internal and external factors, significantly impact training effectiveness, with external factors such as organizational training climate playing a crucial role. Moreover, training content that focuses on both technical and emotional competencies has been found to increase competencies among hospitality undergraduates, suggesting the importance of a comprehensive approach to training.

Furthermore, specific types of training, such as customer service training, have been shown to positively affect employee engagement and service orientation, which in turn enhances overall service quality and customer satisfaction. Moreover, the content of training programs must align with the evolving needs of the industry. For instance, foreign language training and digital skills are increasingly important due to the global nature of hospitality services [33]. Effective training programs that incorporate these elements can significantly improve employees' professional competencies and their ability to meet industry standards. Furthermore, diversity training is essential for fostering an inclusive workplace culture, which is critical in the hospitality sector

To understand the relationship between training content and workgroup inclusion, it is essential to explore how training programs are designed and implemented to foster inclusive environments within workgroups. Training content that is relevant and tailored to the specific needs of the organization and its employees can significantly impact the perception and reality of inclusion within workgroups. For instance, training programs that arise

from real work scenarios and involve collaboration among employees can enhance the relevance and effectiveness of the training, thereby promoting a sense of inclusion [34]. Additionally, training that addresses diversity and inclusion explicitly, such as through social justice education or equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) curricula, can help reduce discrimination and foster a more inclusive work environment [35] [36] [37].

The effectiveness of training content in promoting workgroup inclusion is also influenced by the psychological climate of the organization and the support from leaders and coworkers. An inclusive psychological climate, where leaders and coworkers actively support inclusion, can enhance the impact of training programs on workgroup inclusion [38] [39]. When employees perceive that their leaders and peers are committed to inclusion, they are more likely to believe in the effectiveness of the training and feel optimistic about the achievability of inclusion within their workgroups [39]. This supportive environment can lead to increased trust in the organization and a stronger identification with the organization, further reinforcing the positive effects of inclusive training content [38]

Moreover, the design and delivery of training content play a crucial role in its success. Training programs that incorporate diverse learning modalities, case studies, and practical examples can be more engaging and effective in promoting inclusion [40]. For example, training that includes stories and experiences shared by employees can make the content more relatable and impactful. Additionally, training that emphasizes the importance of diversity and inclusion, and provides strategies for addressing implicit and explicit biases, can help create a more inclusive workgroup environment [40].
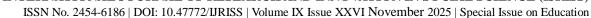
The relevance of the training content to the employees' work and the perceived utility of the training are also critical factors that influence the transfer of training to the workplace and its impact on workgroup inclusion. In summary, the relationship between training content and workgroup inclusion is multifaceted and influenced by various factors, including the relevance and design of the training, the psychological climate of the organization, and the support from leaders and coworkers. Training programs that are tailored to the specific needs of the organization, involve collaboration among employees, and address diversity and inclusion explicitly can significantly enhance workgroup inclusion.

Summary table between On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Traditional Classroom Training

Aspect	On-the-Job Training (OJT)	Traditional Classroom training
Learning Approach	Learning by doing, immediate role start	Structured, intensive pre-role training
Effectiveness	Highly effective, meets training objectives	Effective but less so than OJT
Resource Investment	Lower initial investment, higher risk of shirking	Higher initial investment, reduces shirking
Technology Integration	Limited use of advanced technology	Limited adoption of computer-based training
Employee Satisfaction	High, improves job commitment	Moderate, depends on structure and delivery
Emerging Trends	VR-based training	Blended learning recommended

In conclusion, while OJT is highly valued for its practical benefits and effectiveness in the hotel industry, traditional classroom training remains prevalent due to its structured approach. Emerging technologies like VR and blended learning methods are poised to enhance training outcomes further.

The illustration above illustrates the development of the Hospitality Inclusiveness Program (HIP) framework. Three primary organisations are associated with the Langkawi Tourism Academy (LTA): the District Education Office (PPD) and the hotel industry partner, The Westin Langkawi Resort & Spa.

Langkawi Tourism Academy (LTA)

LTA, as a technical and vocational education institution, is responsible with the planning, coordination, and delivery of training modules that adhere to industry requirements. The LTA plays a significant role in overseeing student performance during the program in collaboration with the Langkawi PPD.

The Westin Langkawi Resort & SPA

As a principal industry collaborator, functioning as a designated site for program deployment and offering facilities that facilitate students in obtaining practical work experience within the sanitation, public area, and stewarding departments

District Education Office (PPD)

Known as a PPD Langkawi is responsible for choosing and supervising the participation of secondary schools that have a Special Education Program Integration (PPKI) within this initiative. They facilitate the involvement of those who are appropriate and assess the program's efficacy in achieving its objectives.

METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional study gathered quantitative data on respondents on the on-the-job training (OJT), Training effectiveness (TF), Training content (TC), towards Work group inclusion. For the purpose of determining the optimal sample size for the research project, the G*Power software was chosen. A total of four (4) predictors were predetermined to be used. The questionnaire comprised two sections: Section A addresses demographic information, whilst Section B pertains to exploring the on-the-job training, training effectiveness, training content and Work Group inclusion. The instrument had been developed following a comprehensive literature review. We leveraged established construct items from previous studies to ensure optimum item reliability and validity. All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = 'strongly disagree' to 5 = 'strongly agree').

Prior to data collection, the instrument and items underwent validation and pre-testing. A pre-test is a procedure that will require responses and feedback from a small set of respondents from the population. For face validity, the constructs and the items were checked and examined by three faculty members who were experts in the field. The procedure was performed as a strategy to ensure each item represents the meaning of the construct, to indicate the research content was related to the dimensions and variables, and to ensure no bias on this research initiative was presented. To examine the measurement and structural models, we followed the Anderson and Gerbing (1988) guideline and used SmartPLS version 4 for partial least square (PLS) modelling. The method is highly appropriate for theory building, hypothesis testing, and predicting the determinants (Hair et al., 2017). PLS modelling is an acceptable method that can accommodate a smaller sample size without a normality assumption (Chin et al., 2003).

The measurement items were tested for both convergent and discriminant validity. The results of the reliability, convergent validity analyses are presented. The indicator loadings, composite reliability (CR) , and average variance extracted (AVE) assessed the convergent validity. The loadings for all reflective items exceeded the recommended value of 0.600. The CR values exceeded the minimum value of 0.700, and the AVE exceeded 0.500 for all constructs (Hair et al., 2017). Thus, some evidence indicates an adequate convergent validity of the measurement model

A self-reported questionnaire was developed, incorporating items whose validity and reliability had been established in the literature. Work group inclusion will be measured using 10 items adapted from the study by [41]. Respondents will be asked by 2 subdomains regarding the belongingness and uniqueness. The participation is from secondary schools that attend have a Special Education Program Integration (PPKI).
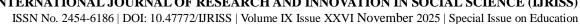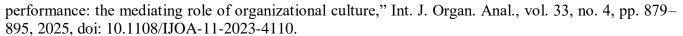
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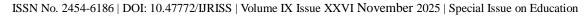
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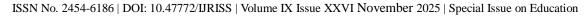
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