

**EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AND STUDENTS' SELF-PERCEIVED
COMPETENCE FOR CAREERS IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY**

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COMPETENCE FOR CAREERS IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ii
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
ACADEMIC ABSTRACT	x
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Background.....	1
Theoretical Framework.....	3
Need for the Study	4
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Purpose of the Study	5
Research Objectives.....	6
Definition of Terms.....	6
Assumptions.....	9
Limitations of the Study.....	9
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	11
Introduction.....	11
Hospitality Curriculum and Employability skills	11
The Needs for Employability Skills in Hospitality Program.....	12
Employability skills	13
The Study of Leadership.....	16
Leadership Traits	19
Leadership Skills.....	19

Leadership Styles	22
Situational Leadership	23
Hersey and Blanchard's Theory.....	24
Contingency Theory.....	25
Leader-Member Exchange Theory	25
Normative Decision Model.....	26
Path-Goal Leadership Theory	26
Transformational and Transactional Leadership	28
Charismatic Leadership	29
Communication and Conflict Management Skills.....	30
The Role of Internships in Leadership Skills Development	32
Management Challenges in the 21 st Century	32
III. METHODOLOGY	36
Introduction.....	36
Research Objectives.....	36
Population and Sample Selection.....	37
Data Collection	37
Instrumentation	37
Validity and Reliability of the Instrument	38
Administration of the Data Collection Instrument.....	40
Data Analysis	40
Scoring and Scoring Interpretation	41
Response Rate.....	41

	Non-Participant Issues	42
IV.	FINDINGS	43
	Introduction.....	43
	Findings Associated with Objective One.....	43
	Findings Associated with Objective Two	45
	Findings Associated with Objective Three	49
	Findings Associated with Objective Four.....	58
V.	SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATION	61
	Summary	61
	Research Objectives.....	61
	Limitation of the Study	62
	Data Collection	62
	Research Design, Population and Sample Selection.....	62
	Instrumentation	62
	Validity and Reliability of Instrument	64
	Administration of Data Collection Instrument	64
	Data Analysis	64
	Summary of Findings.....	65
	Summary of Findings Related to Objective 1	65
	Summary of Findings Related to Objective 2.....	65
	Summary of Findings Related to Objective 3.....	66
	Summary of Findings Related to Objective 4.....	66
	Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations	67

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations Related to	
Objective 1	67
Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations Related to	
Objective 2	67
Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations Related to	
Objective 3	68
Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations Related to	
Objective 4	69
Additional Recommendations	70
REFERENCES	72
APPENDIX	
A. Employability Skills Questionnaire	83
B. Letter to Faculty for Permission to Recruit Students	94
C. Student Recruitment Script	96
VITA	98

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Important Employability Skills needed by Graduates	14
2. Overview of Behavior Taxonomies	23
3. Summary of Situational Approach Theories	28
4. Charismatic Leaders' Personality, Behavior and Effects on Followers	30
5. Sex and Academic Performance of Respondents	44
6. Additional Characteristics of Respondents	45
7. Students' Competence in Performing Employability	46
8. Environment from which Students' Competence was Developed	50
9. Correlation Coefficient between Employability Skills and Work Experience.....	59
10. Correlation Coefficient between Employability Skills and Sex	60
11. Correlation Coefficient between Employability Skills and Internship	60

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AND STUDENTS' SELF-PERCEIVED COMPETENCE FOR CAREERS IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive correlational study employs employability skills instrument to assess the self-perceived level of competence at performing some basic skills needed for careers in the hospitality industry. A total of Eighty five (85) HRM students participated in this study. Sixty seven (67) surveys were usable and provided a usable response rate of 78.82%. The result of the study indicated that the respondents (HRM seniors from University of Missouri-Columbia) have developed between moderate and major competence to serve as productive employees in the workplace “equally from program and non-program.”

In terms of curriculum improvement, the result of this study indicated that the respondents are doing fine with problem solving skills. However, curriculum improvement is needed to include materials that would improve the students' knowledge and understanding of the political implications of their decisions and interpersonal skills or human relation skills.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

The responsibilities of entry-level managers in the hospitality industry are continuously changing. Obtaining and keeping a management job in a restaurant or hotel requires that a person have the ability to change. Successful managers have the enthusiasm to respond to the changing needs and challenges of their organization (Woods & King, 2002). Some of these challenges are due to the changes affecting the hospitality industry today. Consequently, the curriculum and the methods used to prepare entry-level managers in this field should also be design to fit the demands of today's industry. According to Nebel and Stearn (1977), hospitality managers should be able to provide effective leadership to employees. Similarly, in the book, titled *10 things employers want you to learn in college: The know-how you need to succeed*, Coplin (2003) indicated that employers like to hire potential leaders who are skilled at stimulating people to take rational initiatives. Leadership skills are not the only skills needed by employers. In fact, leadership skills are some of the employability skills most desired by employers. According to Peddle (2000), employers question the success of higher education programs in developing employability skills of graduates. Employability skills are skills that are basic and generic in nature, but very valuable in assisting every person entering the workforce. Some people refer to employability skills as “core skills,” “key skills,” “transferable skills,” “general skills,” “non-technical skills,” and/or “soft skills” (Hofstrand, 1996; Robinson, 2006).

Are undergraduate hospitality education programs preparing students to be able to practice the employability skills needed by employers effectively? If not, can these programs be improved or changed to meet the demands of the employers? These are important questions that administrators and hospitality educators must answer in the near future, hopefully before the retirement of the baby boomers when the demand for effective leaders and managers in the hospitality industry will be at high demand.

One of the first studies, if not the first study questioning undergraduate hospitality education programs and curriculum was Lewis' (1982) seminar study. Findings from this study indicated that hospitality education programs need to change to meet the needs of both the industry and students. Since that study, some hospitality educators and administrators were prompted to find out if their programs were preparing society-ready hospitality graduates. Some studies showed that hospitality recruiters preferred to hire business school graduates rather than hospitality program graduates for managerial positions (Goodman & Sprague, 1991; Lefever, 1989). A study by Rowe (1993) regarding hospitality education program planning indicated that hospitality education programs are not meeting the demands of the industry. Lewis' 1993 study of hospitality management programs found that few changes had been made in the decade since his earlier study on the subject. This finding was another clear indication that hospitality education programs need continuing curriculum changes to meet the demands of the industry.

Since Lewis' (1993) latter study, numerous studies (Christou, 2002; Christou & Eaton, 2000; Hsu, 1995; Okeiyi, Finley & Postel, 1994) have been conducted to investigate competencies needed by hospitality management graduates to be society-

ready. Most of these studies focused on the perceptions of the industry leaders, graduates of the program and hospitality program educators. A review of the literature found no studies describing the level of competence of society-ready HRM students as perceived by the students themselves. Knowing students' self-perceived level of preparedness in various employability skills would enable hospitality educators to identify competencies to be given priority in their curriculum and program planning.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was the social cognitive development theories (Bandura, 1986). According to Bandura's social cognitive theory, students' feelings regarding their ability to perform academic tasks (self-efficacy beliefs) predict their ability to achieve the tasks. Social cognitive theorist such as Bandura also asserted that both reinforcement and punishment influence learning and behavior in several ways. One of the ways is how "expectation about probable future consequences affect how people cognitively process new information" (Ormrod, 2003, p. 335). According to this theory:

When we believe that we will be reinforced for learning something, we are more likely to pay attention to it and mentally process it in an effective fashion. When we don't expect to be reinforced for learning it, we are far less likely to think about or process it in any moderate way (Ormrod, p. 337).

Bearing that theory in mind, it can be asserted that students learn many things that they never express because there is no reinforcement for expressing them. Reflecting on this theory, it could be argued that on one hand many of the employability skills that are not typical technical skills could be undermined by students if they are not directly tested

or evaluated on those skills, if their grades are not affected by those skills (extrinsic reinforcement), and/or if they are not intrinsically motivated to master those skills for future use. On the other hand, students could be very competent in performing some employability skills if they are tested or evaluated on those skills, if their grades are affected by those skills (extrinsic reinforcement), and/or if they are intrinsically motivated to master those skills for future use.

Need for the Study

Due to fast paced changes in the hospitality industry, with great emphasis on employability skills that interest employers, there is a need to determine the level of competence that graduating senior students in hospitality management programs possess before moving on to workplace. Do they possess the ability to practice the leadership and human relations skills required of hotel and restaurant management graduates? Have academic programs adequately incorporated the desired employability skills into the curriculum so that graduates can adapt to the complex nature of their functions? Could hospitality management students enrolled in the programs be assured that the knowledge, skills and abilities they learn will make them employable hospitality leaders? Since the level of preparedness of hospitality management graduates' employability skills could affect their employment, the importance of knowing if the programs are providing the necessary employability skills required by employers is critical.

Statement of the Problem

The interest of employers on improved employability skills of graduates has been well documented by many studies. Breiter and Clements (1996) found leadership competency to be the most critical competency deserving a high level of attention in

hospitality management curricula for the 21st Century. Many other studies, both in the past and recent years, also indicated the importance of leadership skills in hospitality management functions (Andelt, Barrett, & Bosshamer 1997; Arnaldo, 1981; Ley, 1980; Shortt, 1989; Tas, 1988; Tas, LeBrecque & Clayton, 1996). In addition to leadership skills, the ability to supervise, coordinate, manage conflict, have a clear vision, be creative, innovate, adapt to change, motivate, lifelong learner are some other employability skills important to motivate (Brashears, 1995; Evers, Rush, & Berdrow, 1998; Rainbird, 2000).

Important questions have emerged concerning the competence in performing employability skills of hospitality management graduates. Do hospitality education programs adequately prepare their students to be society-ready? If not, can the program be improved or changed to meet the demands of the employers? In a study of employability skills needed by graduates of the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (CAFNR) at the University of Missouri-Columbia, Robinson (2006) addressed questions such as this on a broad scale. His work did not focus upon the hospitality management program at that institution nor did it consider the perceptions of undergraduate students within the investigation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the self-perceived employability skills for careers in the hospitality industry of senior students in the Hotel and Restaurant Management (HRM) program at University of Missouri-Columbia (MU).

Research Objectives

The following objectives were formulated to accomplish the purpose of this study:

1. Describe demographic characteristics of senior students majoring in Hotel and Restaurant Management at the University of Missouri-Columbia including: age, sex, academic performance, internship, work experiences, and involvement in departmental, college and/or university organizations or activities.
2. Describe the students' self-perceived level of competence at performing employability skills necessary for careers in the hospitality industry.
3. Describe what environment (those associated with higher educational experience or those not associated with higher educational experience) students perceived they developed competence in employability skills needed for careers in the hospitality industry.
4. Describe relationships between HRM student characteristics and self-perceived competence in employability skills needed in the hospitality industry.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are operationally defined as they apply to this study:

Competency: “Those activities and skills judged essential to perform the duties of a specific position” (Tas, 1988, p. 41).

Curricula: Curricula is the plural of curriculum, see the definition of curriculum.

Curriculum: Gaff, Ratcliff and Associates (1997) defined curriculum as “all required classroom work and electives at the university level. Also included is work experience... it can also refer to the educational plan of an institution, school, college, or a department, or to a program or course” (p. 7).

Employability: Brown, Hesketh, and Williams (2003), defined employability as “the relative chance of acquiring and maintaining different kinds of employment” (p. 111).

Employability skills: Overtom (2000), defined employability skills as “transferable core skill groups that represent essential functional and enabling knowledge, skills and attitudes required by the 21st century workplace... necessary for career success at all levels of employment and for all levels of education” (p. 2).

Entry-level Manager: Entry-level manager is a management position given to individuals that have attained the necessary theoretical basis for performing a management function.

Hospitality curriculum: McGrath (1993) defined hospitality curriculum as courses, sequence of courses and topics, and other requirements needed for a BS degree in a hospitality administration program (as cited in Assante, 2005).

Hospitality Education: Hospitality education is an educational program comprised of hospitality specific program plans and curriculum, designed for students who intend to work in the industry.

Hospitality Educator: McGrath (as cited in Assante, 2005) defined hospitality educator as “a person who is a member of a program or department that grants a baccalaureate degree in the hospitality management field”.

Hospitality Industry: Buergermeister (1983) defined hospitality industry as “businesses that operate to meet lodging, vacation, business, and recreational needs of visitors and resident population. The industry includes hotels, restaurant, bars, and any business that offer food or shelter for profit to people away from home” (p. 40).

Hospitality Program: Hospitality administration (management) program is comprised of a planned hospitality curriculum structure offered at a college or university that grants baccalaureate degree in the hospitality field (Assante, 2005; 1993; Miranda, 1999).

Leadership: There are many definitions of leadership. However, the operational definition for this study is that leadership can be defined as a process that requires appropriate styles to influence the activities of an organized team towards the achievement of a specified goal (Northouse, 2004; Stogdill, 1950).

Skill: Skill can be defined as a present, observable competence to perform a learned behavior regarding the relationship between mental activity and bodily movements (Maxine, 1997).

Undergraduate Curriculum: According to Gaff, Ratcliff and Associates (1997), undergraduate curriculum is “the formal academic experience of students pursuing a baccalaureate degree, Such curriculum is formalized into courses or programs of study including workshops, seminars, colloquia, lecture series, laboratory work, internships, and field experience” (p. 6).

Upper-Level Manager: Upper-level manager is a management position given to individuals with previous management and leadership experience coupled with the attainment of the necessary theoretical basis for performing management and leadership functions.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made concerning this study:

- Respondents provided correct information based on their candid perception of the program’s curriculum.
- The curriculum of the HRM program at MU is embedded with employability skills necessary in the workplace.

Limitations of the Study

The research subjects were senior students in the HRM program at MU. A convenient sample of these subjects was utilized in the data collection. This demographic profile may not represent the average student in the hospitality education program. Even if the students included in this study represent the average students in the HRM program at MU, programs and curricula vary from one institution to another. Since the study was

only based on data collected from one institution, the findings of this research should not be generalized beyond this group of students at this institution.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess the self-perceived employability skills for careers in the hospitality industry of senior students in the Hotel and Restaurant Management (HRM) program at University of Missouri-Columbia (MU). This study also assessed the environment from which the students developed their level of competence. The content of this chapter is based on a review of literature pertaining to employability skills. The literature reviewed contributes to the development of a conceptual framework and a theoretical basis to address the research questions and objectives outlined in the first chapter. The review begins with brief definition of employability skills, followed by a discussion of employability skills that are important to employers in the hospitality industry including leadership skills, communication skills, and conflict management skills. The main goal of this chapter was to provide historical information about the advent of employability skills gap issues, examine the trends regarding these issues, their relationship to academic programs in hospitality management and to explore solutions to questions related to this issue.

Hospitality Curriculum and Employability Skills

Farkas (1993) indicated that curriculum update must be a continuing process, with educators remaining up-to-date with the changes and leading the changes. According to Purcell (1993), when writing curriculum, changes that have taken place in the past should be considered as well as changes that are likely to happen. According to Brand III (2005),

“One certainty is that continuous efforts must be made to revise and update curriculum to ensure it is meeting student needs in the ever-changing workforce.”

The message from these studies is that educators should reassess their curriculum to ensure that their curriculum is adequately developing students’ necessary employability skills (Purcell, 1993; Walo, 2000). Reflecting on the above assertions, it can be argued that curriculum should be reviewed periodically to keep up with changes and trends, in order not to be passing old and outdated knowledge and irrelevant competencies onto the students (Farkas, 1993; Purcell, 1993; Walo, 2000). Several studies (Miranda, 1999; Dittman, 1993) indicate that most existing hospitality programs are still focused towards producing technically oriented students with marginal attention given to management or employability skills for entry-level positions with little or no emphasis on upper-level management skills.

Breiter and Clements (1996) indicated that human resources skills, conceptual skills and planning skills would be the key focus of future hospitality curricula. They contended that these skills are more important than technical skills with regards to hospitality industry of the future. Pavesic (1991) also contended that customer service skills, communication skills, analytical skills and problem solving skills are the essential element of general hospitality curriculum. He indicated that employers usually train their employees on the necessary technical skills.

The Needs for Employability Skills in Hospitality Program

Breiter and Clements (1996) and Pavesic (1991) emphasized the importance of upper-level leadership skills such as human resources skills, conceptual skills, communication skills, analytical skills, problem solving skills and planning skills as the

key focus of future hospitality curricula. They contended that these skills are more important than technical skills, which are usually acquired through specific organizational training at various places of employment. Similarly, literatures that encouraged the development of employability skills indicated that leadership skills, critical thinking skills, communication skills, problem solving skills, creative and flexible-thinking, and human resources management skills are necessary for career success (Gustin, 2001; Kay & Russette, 2000; Moscardo, 1997; Tas et al., 1996). The importance of leadership skills can not be over emphasized among the employability skills, according to Mumford, Scott, Gaddis, and Strange (2002) “leadership, at least certain types of leadership, is apparently related to creativity and innovation in “real-world” setting.” They also contended “the influence tactics used by leaders apparently affect people’s willingness to engage in, and the likely success of, creative ventures” (p. 707). Robinson (2006) identified 67 employability skills that were perceived important by educators, employers and employees in entry-level positions for employment success (see Table 1). These employability skills, which include leadership skills, are discussed in a latter section of this review.

Employability skills

Employability skills are defined as “transferable core skill groups that represent essential functional and enabling knowledge, skills and attitudes required by the 21st century workplace... necessary for career success at all levels of employment and for all levels of education” (Overtoom, 2000, p. 2). Robinson (2006) indicated that leadership skills, communication skills and conflict management skills are some of the employability skills desired by employers. These groups of skills are explored below.

Table 1

Important Employability Skills Needed by Graduates

Employability skill
Ability to work independently
Adapting to situations of change
Allocating time efficiently
Applying information to new or broader contexts
Assessing long-term effect of decisions
Assigning and delegating responsibility
Combining relevant information from a number of sources
Communicating ideas verbally to groups
Conceptualizing a future for the company
Contributing to group problem solving
Conveying information one-to-one
Coordinating the work of peers
Coordinating the work of subordinates
Delegating work to peers
Delegating work to subordinates
Empathizing with others
Establishing good rapport with subordinates
Establishing the critical events to be completed
Functioning at an optional level of performance
Functioning well in stressful situations
Gaining new knowledge from everyday experiences
Gaining new knowledge in areas outside the immediate job
Giving direction and guidance to others
Identify problems
Identifying essential components of the problem
Identifying political implications of the decision to be made
Identifying potential negative outcomes when considering a risky venture
Identifying sources of conflict among people

Table 1 (Continued)

Important Employability Skills Needed by Graduates (n = 67)

Employability skill
Initiating change to enhance productivity
Integrating information into more general contexts
Integrating strategic considerations in the plans
Keeping up-to-date on developments in the field
Keeping up-to-date with external realities related to your company's success
Knowing ethical implications of decisions
Listening attentively
Maintaining a high energy level
Maintaining a positive attitude
Making decisions in a short time period
Making decisions on the basis of thorough analysis of the situation
Making effective business presentations
Making impromptu presentation
Managing and overseeing several tasks at once
Meeting deadlines
Monitoring progress against the plan
Monitoring progress toward objectives in risky ventures
Prioritizing problems
Providing innovative paths for the company to follow for future development
Providing novel solutions to problems
Recognizing alternative routes in meeting objectives
Recognizing the effects of decisions to be made
Reconceptualizing your role in response to changing corporate realities
Relating well with supervisors
Resolving conflicts
Responding positively to constructive criticism
Responding to others' comments during a conversation

Table 1 (Continued)

Important Employability Skills Needed by Graduates (n = 67)

Employability skill
Revising plans to include new information
Setting priorities
Solving problems
Sorting out the relevant data to solve the problem
Supervising the work of others
Taking reasonable job-related risks
Understanding the needs of others
Using proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation
Writing external business communication
Writing internal business communication
Writing reports

Note. Adapted from “Graduates’ and employers’ perceptions of entry-level employability skills needed by Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources graduates,” by J.S. Robinson, 2006, unpublished doctoral dissertation, p. 74-75.

The Study of Leadership

There are many definitions of leadership. The following definitions, listed in chronological order, were adapted from Pittaway, Carmouche and Chell (1998, p. 409) and other literatures.

a) “Leadership may be considered as the process (act) of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts towards goal achievement” (Stogdill, 1950).

b) According to Hemphill & Coon, (1957, p. 7) “Leadership...is the behavior of an individual when he is directing the activities of the group towards a shared goal” (as cited in Pittaway et al., 1998).

c) Leadership is “a particular type of power relationship characterized by a group member’s perception that another group member has the right to prescribe behavior patterns for the former regarding his (her) activity as a group member” (Janda, 1960, p.358).

d) Leadership is “interpersonal influence, exercised in a situation and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of specified goal or goals” (Tannenbaum, Weschler & Massarik, 1961, p. 24).

e) Leadership is “the influential increment over and above mechanical compliance with the routine directives of the organization” (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p. 528).

f) “Leadership is a process of influence between a leader and those who are followers” (Hollander, 1978).

g) According to Raunch and Behling (1984, p. 46), Leadership is “the process of influencing the activities of an organized group toward goal achievement” (as cited in Pittaway et al., 1998).

h) Leadership is “the process of persuasion or example by which an individual or leadership team induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader and his or her followers” (Gardner, 1990, p. 1).

i) Leadership is “an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (Rost, 1991, p. 102).

j) Leadership is “the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations” (Kouzes & Posner, 1997).

k) “Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2004, p. 3).

All the definitions listed above can be classified into different schemes (Bass, 1990) as described below:

Focus of group process: Refers to leadership definitions that view leaders as the center of group (followers) change and activity towards the accomplishment of shared goal or goals.

Personality perspective: Refers to leadership definitions that view the leaders as individuals possessing some special traits or characteristics that enable them to influence their followers to accomplish specified goal or goals.

Act of behavior: Refers to leadership definitions that view the leaders as individuals who have a way of doing things to influence their followers to accomplish shared goal or goals.

In addition, many writers defined leadership as an influential relationship existing between leaders and followers. In fact, influence seems to be one of the major parts of all of the leadership definitions (Northouse, 2004). Another major part of the definitions of leadership is goal achievement. No matter what scheme of leadership definition is adapted, it often involves an influential relationship between leaders and followers toward the achievement of specified goals. However, this description did not address how the followers would, could or should be influenced to achieve the specified goal or goals. This uncertainty is the basis for the various ways that leadership has been conceptualized over the years. Some writers believe that leadership influence is based on special traits or inborn gift that the leaders possessed (Bass, 1990; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Lord, DeVader, & Alliger, 1986; Nadler & Tushman, 1989; Stogdill, 1948; Stogdill, 1974; Zaleznik, 1977), some others believe that leadership influence is

based on learnable skills and/or styles that leaders employed in different situations (Bass; Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs & Fleishman, 2002; Stogdill, 1974; Yammarino, 2002), and others believe that leadership is the combination of trait, skills and styles (Stogdill, 1974).

Leadership Traits

The trait approach was the first attempt to study leadership in the 20th century (Northouse, 2004). This approach focused on the special leadership traits or personalities that make a great leader effective and the impact of those personalities on followers (Hsu, Hsu, Huang, Leong & Li, 2003; Northouse; Worsfold, 1989). According to Worsfold, the assumption of this approach was that “if the personality correlates of effective leadership could be identified, then appropriate methods could be used to select effective leaders” (p. 146). Some of the common leadership traits include intelligence, self-confidence, dependability, determination, energy, integrity, dominance, talent and sociability (Northouse; Hsu et al.). Northouse indicated that people who recognize the trait approach convey statements referring to people as born leaders or natural leaders. He further contended that some additional attributes used by such people to identify leaders include personality features such as extroversion and physical features such as height.

Leadership Skills

The skill approach to leadership states that knowledge and abilities are major attributes of effective leadership (Bass, 1990; Katz, 1955; Mumford et al., 2000; Yammarino, 2000). According to Katz, effective administration depends on three basic skills: technical, human, and conceptual skills. The term technical skills refers to some

sort of proficiency and knowledge about a specific work or activity that requires some specialized competencies, and the ability to use certain tools and techniques (Katz, 1955).

The term human skills, also known as interpersonal skills, refers to having knowledge about people and being able to work with them (Katz, 1955). Human skills are popularly known as people skills, or the abilities of a leader to work amicably and effectively with Followers, peers, and superiors towards the accomplishment of organization's goals (Northouse, 2004). Leaders with human skills are usually more sensitive to the needs of others when making decisions. In another words, they are very concerned about keeping good relationships with those they work with. According to Northouse, "human skill is the capacity to get along with others as you go about your work" (p 37).

Northouse (2004) described conceptual skill as "the abilities to work with ideas and concepts. Whereas technical skills deal with things and human skills deal with people, conceptual skills involve the ability to work with ideas" (p. 38). He contended that conceptual skills are very important to management and they are central to creating a vision and strategic plan for an organization. According to Yukl (1989) conceptual skills are "general analytical ability, logical thinking, proficiency in concept formation and conceptualization of complex and ambiguous relationships, creativity in idea generation and problem solving, ability to analyze events and perceive trends, anticipate changes, and recognize opportunities and potential problems" (p. 191).

According to Katz (1955), the three basic skills described above are needed by managers to accomplish their daily activities or functions. The relative importance of each of the basic skills depends on the organizational context, and the leadership situation

or manager's position in the organizational chart. Since top or upper-level management is more involved in strategic decisions, conceptual skills are more important to upper-level managers than at middle or lower or entry-level managers (Yukl, 1989). These skills are very essential for logical thinking, general analytical ability and creativity in idea generation and problem solving, anticipating changes, analyzing events and perceiving trends and recognizing opportunities and potential problems. The need for conceptual skills increases as managers' move from entry-level management to upper-level management (Yukl).

Unlike conceptual skills, technical skills such as accounting, finance, marketing and business law, are more important to entry-level managers. They are necessary for providing the appropriate followers' training (Northouse, 2004; Yukl, 1989).

Unlike the conceptual skills and technical skills that are more important to the upper level management and lower level management respectively, human relation skills are very important for all levels of management. These skills are needed for establishing effective interpersonal relationship with followers, peers, superiors, and outsiders (Katz, 1955; Northouse, 2004; Yukl, 1989). Human relation skills allow a leader or manager to work cooperatively with employees towards the achievement of the organizational goals (Katz; Northouse; Yukl).

Unlike the upper level managers and lower level managers, whose roles are more focused on conceptual skills and technical skills respectively, the role of middle managers is focused on supplementing existing structure and developing ways to implement the strategic decisions, and goals made at the higher levels (Yukl, 1989). This role seems to require both conceptual and technical skills in addition to high human

relation skills that are required by all management levels. However, the amount of conceptual and technical skills required for the middle management positions might not be as much as those required for the upper level management and lower level management (Katz, 1955; Northouse, 2004).

Leadership Styles

Leadership style theories focus on the behavior of the leader toward employees. Leadership style theories assert that leadership is composed of two major leader behaviors: relationship behaviors and task behaviors (Northouse, 2004). Task behaviors refer to behaviors of leaders who are more concerned about assisting followers to accomplish their goals. Relationship behaviors refer to behaviors of leaders who are more concerned about the feelings of followers. According to Yukl (1989) one of the problems in research dealing with leadership behavior is that “the past four decades have witnessed the appearance of a bewildering variety of behavior concepts pertaining to managers and leaders. Sometimes different terms have been used to refer to the same type of behavior” (p. 92). Yukl classified a variety of behaviors into taxonomies (see Table 2).

Missing from Table 2, are some other leadership behaviors or styles that significantly depend on situational variables that affect the relationship between the leader and the followers. Some writers refer to these approaches as contingency approach (Hsu et al., 2003) while other writers refer to these approaches as situational leadership models (Yukl, 1989). Still others classified them separately (Northouse, 2004).

Table 2

Overview of Behavior Taxonomies

Authors and dates	Number of categories	Primary purpose	Approach for developing
Fleishman (1953)	2	Identify effective leader behavior	Factor analysis
Stogdill (1963)	12	Identify effective leader behavior	Theoretical-deductive
Mahoney, Jerdee, & Carrol (1963, 1965)	8	Describe position requirements	Theoretical-deductive
Bower & Seashore (1966)	4	Identify effective leader behavior	Theoretical-deductive
Mintzberg (1973)	10	Classify observed activities	Judgmental classification
House & Mitchell (1974)	4	Identify effective leader behavior	Theoretical-deductive
Morse & Wagner (1978)	6	Identify effective manager behavior	Factor analysis
Yukl & Nemeroff (1979)	15	Identify effective manager behavior	Factor analysis
Luthans & Lockwood (1984)	12	Classify observed behavior	Judgmental classification
Page (1985)	10	Describe position requirements	Factor analysis
Yukl	14	Identify effective manager behavior	Factor analysis

Note. Adapted from “Effective Leadership Behavior,” by G. A. Yukl, 1989, *Leadership in organization*, p. 93.

Situational Leadership

Situational leadership theory contends that the behavior of the leader depends on situational variables that affect the relationship between the leader and the followers (Hsu et al., 2003; Northouse, 2004; Yukl, 1989). Five different variations of the situational approach include Hersey and Blanchard’s Situational Leadership Theory; Fiedler’s Contingency Theory; Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX); Normative Decision model; and, Path-Goal Leadership Theory (PGL).

Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory

This theory focuses on the appropriate adaptation of leaders to various situations (Hersey & Blanchard, 1993). The major emphasis behind the theory is that to be an effective leader requires the adaptation of the leader to different situations. Situational leadership theory emphasizes that leadership has supportive components, relationship-oriented behavior, and directive components, task-oriented behavior, which must be applied to appropriate situations. Therefore, an effective leader must be able to assess the competencies and commitments of his or her employees to determine what leadership styles are needed in that particular situation to perform the given task (Fernandez & Vecchio, 1997). In Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory, leadership styles are classified into four categories (Hersey & Blanchard). Telling or directing, is the first style. This approach is highly task-oriented with low emphasis on relationship or supportive behaviors. A leader who uses this style usually directs followers with close supervision about what and how tasks are to be done. The second style is known as the selling or coaching style. This approach is also highly task-oriented, but it also places a high emphasis on relationship development or supportive behaviors. Leaders who use the selling style dialogue with followers when making decisions. The third style is known as the participating or supporting style. This approach is low task-oriented with a high emphasis on relationship development or supportive behaviors. Followers having the opportunity to share ideas or participate in decision-making characterize this approach. The fourth style is known as delegating. This approach uses low task-oriented and low relationship oriented behaviors. Leaders who have enough faith in their followers to make and implement decisions characterize this approach. Some of the strengths of the

situational approach to leadership include the fact that it is easily understandable, allegedly flexible, intuitively sensible, very practicable, easily applied in a variety of settings, and extensively use in leadership training and development programs (Northouse, 2004).

Contingency Theory

Contingency theory is a leader-match theory that emphasizes matching a leader with a situation, but does not challenge the leader to fit every situation (Fiedler 1967; Fiedler & Garcia, 1987). It is known as contingency because it suggests that how well the leadership style fits the context affects leadership effectiveness (Fiedler; Fiedler & Garcia). Leadership style within the structure of contingency theory is either task motivated or relationship motivated (Fiedler; Fiedler & Garcia). According to Northouse (2004), Fiedler's Contingency Theory is the most popular and most widely used contingency theory. It is based on the premise that different situation require different leadership style or behavior. Here, the term situation refers to leader-member relationship, position of power, and task structure. The theory is also predictive; using the Least Preferred Coworker (LPC) scale to determine the most appropriate leadership style for an organization depending on the leader-member relationship, position power, and task structure in the organization (Northouse).

Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX)

LMX is another situational approach that focuses on the interaction between leaders and followers to create a good working relationship (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). One unique characteristic of LMX is that it conceptualized leadership as a process that requires the interaction between leaders and followers (Northouse, 2004). LMX theory is

effective when leaders create good relationship with their followers toward the achievement of the organization's goals (Northouse). The evaluation of LMX theory is based on a brief questionnaire that focuses on the level of respect, obligation, and trust the leaders and the followers have for one another, and urge leaders and followers to report on their working relationship (Northouse). One of the major strengths of LMX theory is that it signifies the importance of effective communication between leaders and followers (Graen & Uhl-Bien; Northouse).

Normative Decision Model

The normative decision model is another form of situational approach. The normative model presents rules for engaging followers in participative decision-making in different situations by examining "the effects of different decision procedures on two intervening variables-decision quality and decision acceptance-which jointly influence group performance" (Yukl, 1989, p. 121). Basically, this approach to leadership focuses on certain steps leaders undertakes before deciding just how much involvement followers should have in the decision making process.

Path-Goal Leadership Theory (PGL)

PGL is unlike contingency theory, which matches leaders to a situation appropriate to the leader. It is also in contrast to situational leadership theory, which focuses on leaders' adaptation to leader-member relationship, position of power, and task structure. Instead, PGL emphasizes the relationship between the leader's styles, the characteristics of the followers and the work setting (Northouse, 2004; Hsu et al., 2003). The major tenet of this theory is that it focuses on how leaders influence followers to enhance employee performance while promoting employee satisfaction. Another way to

view path-goal theory is that it focuses on how leaders can help followers accomplish their tasks by utilizing specific behaviors that best fit the followers' characteristics and the task characteristics (Northouse). Followers' characteristics refer to "needs for affiliation, preference for structure, desires for control, and self-perceived level of task ability" (Northouse, p. 127). Task characteristics refer to clarity of task including well-stated procedures and goals, well defined authority system, and strong group norms (Northouse). One mainstay of path-goal theory is to encourage leaders to make the most of different leadership styles to assist followers in overcoming impediment due to either the followers' context or ability.

House and Mitchell examined four Path-Goal Leadership styles: directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented (as cited in Northouse, 2004). The premise of path-goal theory is based on the prediction that subordinates who need affiliation would prefer a supportive leader because supportive leaders would be friendlier and probably more concerned about his or her followers. This type of leadership style is a source of satisfaction to such followers. Unlike the follower who needs affiliation, an authoritarian follower prefers a directive leadership approach because directive leaders are characterized by clarity of task, standards, rules and regulations. This type of leadership style satisfies this follower since such followers like clarity of task and structure. Participative leadership style is effective when followers are self-directed and are in need for control, and achievement-oriented leadership style should be employed for success on challenging tasks. Theoretically, PGL indicates that different followers' situation require different leadership styles (Northouse). Table 3 shows a summary of the situational approach theories described above.

Table 3

Summary of Situational Approach Theories

Theory	Number of styles	Situational variable	Leader style (behavior)
Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory	4	Followers maturity	Directing, Coaching, Supporting, Delegating
Contingency Theory	3	Leader-member relationship, Position of power, Task structure	Low LPC, Middle LPC, High LPC
Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX)	Communication Procedure	Interaction between leaders and followers	Communication Procedure
Normative Decision Model	Decision procedure	Decision quality Decision acceptance	Decision procedure
Path-Goal Leadership Theory (PGL)	4	Employee characteristics, Task characteristics,	Directive, Supportive, Participative, Achievement-Oriented

Transformational and Transactional Leadership

According to Northouse (2004), transformational leadership refers to a process that influences changes and transforms individuals (followers). It is characterized by its regard for emotions, ethics, values, standards, long-term goals, assessment of followers motives, satisfying their needs and respecting them as human beings. Transformational leadership seems to integrate visionary and charismatic leadership (Northouse; Yukl, 1989). The popularity of transformational leadership was greatly associated with a classic work of James MacGregor Burns, a political sociologist (Northouse). According to

Northouse, Burns distinguished transformational leadership from transactional leadership. He contended that transactional leadership is characterized by the exchanges or promises that occur between leaders and their followers. For example (Northouse) stated that “politicians who win votes by promising no new taxes are demonstrating transactional leadership. Similarly, managers who offer promotions to employees who surpass their goals are exhibiting transactional leadership” (p. 170). Unlike transactional leadership, transformational leadership is characterized by “the process whereby an individual engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower” (Northouse, p. 170). This type of leader is known for his or her attention to the needs and values of his or her followers, and tries to help them achieve their prospective goals.

Charismatic Leadership

According to Yukl (1989), charismatic leaders are leaders with high self-confidence and are convinced of their beliefs and ideas. Yukl contended that the behaviors charismatic leaders are intended to convince their followers that the leader is competent and they can articulate ideological goals that appeal to followers’ aspirations, values, and ideals. The charismatic leader usually initiates a good behavioral example for their followers to ensue and is able to “communicate high expectations about follower performance while simultaneously expressing confidence in followers” (Yukl, p. 206). Table 4 summarizes the personality, behaviors, and effects on followers of charismatic leaders.

Table 4

Charismatic Leaders' Personality, Behaviors and Effects on Followers

Personal characteristics	Behaviors	Effects on followers
Dominant	Set strong role model	Trust in leaders' ideology
Desire to influence	Shows competence	Belief similarity between leader and follower
Confident	Articulates goals	Unquestioning acceptance
Strong values	Communicates high expectations	Affection toward leader
	Expresses confidence	Obedience
	Arouses motives	Identification with leader
		Emotional involvement
		Heightened goals
		Increased confidence

Note. Adapted from "Leadership Theory and Practice," by P. G. Northouse, 2004, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Communication and Conflict Management Skills

According to Woods and King (2002), "effective communication is the lubricant that allows organizations to smoothly and productively operate" (p.191). They further contended "the payoff for effective communication in hotels and restaurants is that managers and employees who develop strong communication skills are usually strong performers on the job" (p.191). Employers are looking for employees who are good communicators (Coplin, 2003). Communication skills, which include listening skills, prominently top the list of qualities employers seek for entry-level jobs including executive and blue-collar positions as well (McKay, 2005; Woods & King).

Communication skills include oral communication skills, written communication skills, listening skills, face-to-face communication skills and the ability to resolve conflicts positively (Woods & King, 2002). Evers, Rush and Berdrow (1998) defined oral communication as “the ability to present information verbally to others either one-to-one or in groups” (p. 85). They defined written communication as “effective transfer of written information, whether formally or informally” (p. 82). According to Coplin (2003), both written and oral communication skills are intended to promote mutual understanding among two or more people. Face-to-face communication skills involve the use of non-verbal communication skills such as eye contact, facial expression, yes-nodding, head movement, hand signals, physical stance, hand gesture, etc (Evers et al.; Rampersad, 2001). All the above non-verbal communication skills help to clarify the transfer of information from the communicator to the audience.

In the hospitality industry, managers are constantly communicating. Communication skills are used for leading, interviewing, recruiting, training, coaching, motivating, evaluating, counseling, interacting with guests, and for many other functions of an active manager (Woods & King, 2002).

Conflict management is an employability skill that requires effective communication skills. Conflict management is the ability to resolve conflicts between oneself and others, and/or the ability to resolve conflicts between other people (Evers et al., 1998). Resolving conflicts require good communication skills (Wood & King, 2002). Resolving conflicts or providing feedback to others is an important function of every manager. A manager who is bad with feedback often creates unintended conflicts within the organization. Most employees like to hear good news. Managers who communicate

acceptable behaviors clearly and positively reinforce them can reduce conflicts since “their employees do the right things more often than not” (Wood & King, p. 197).

The Role of Internship in Employability Skills Development

Students, educators and employers agree that an internship experience, which provides students with practical work experience and management competencies, is important for the success of hospitality management graduates (Tas, 1988; Walo, 2000). Internships provide students the advantage to practice theoretical concepts learned in the classroom, examine career choices, know more about the industries’ skill requirements, and most importantly, develop hands-on workplace skills (Tas; Nelson & Dobson, 2001; Petrillose & Montgomery, 1998; Walo, 2000).

Many researchers also contended that internship helps students develop their employability competencies including leadership skills, human resources skills, oral and written communication skills, problem solving skills, interpersonal communication skills, teamwork, decision-making skills, and planning skills (Knight, 1984; Lebruto & Murray, 1994; Mariampolski, Spears & Vaden, 1980; McMullin, 1998; Walo, 2001). Similarly, in the assessment of the contribution of internship in developing Australian tourism and hospitality students’ management competencies, Walo (2001) indicated that students’ post-internship mean scores were higher than the same students’ pre-internship mean scores for 23 of the 24 management competencies studied.

Management Challenges in the 21st Century

Breiter and Clements (1996), in their study of higher education curriculum for hospitality management programs in the 21st Century, indicated that leadership competency is the most critical competency deserving high level of attention in

hospitality management curriculum in the future. Many studies indicated that employers desired employees with employee-centered leadership competencies, especially in the areas of problem solving and teamwork (Andelt, Barrett & Bosshamer 1997; Kay & Russette 2000). Brown and Fritz (1993) indicated that today's students need better leadership preparation to succeed in the workplace.

Hospitality education program plan and curricula were a debatable issue over two decades ago, a decade ago, and it's still debatable now. The over 20 years of hospitality industry's complaint about educators not meeting the needs of the hospitality industry in terms of employability competencies, have lead to various suggestions ranging from curricula reform to mergers with other programs (Goodman & Sprague, 1991, Lewis, 1993). Clark and Arbel (1993) suggested that across-the-board reform of the hospitality education programs curricula are necessary for desired results to be accomplished, if curriculum reform is employed. Ashley et al. (1995) set a major direction for this issue when the following question was asked: Should hospitality management education programs focus on general management skills or specific skills? They contended that teaching traditional skills is not enough to prepare hospitality education students to be society-ready graduates. They suggested that hospitality education programs must include in its curricula, the skills needed to quickly adapt to changes (Ashley et al.). Some of the these employability skills include problem solving skills, communication skills, critical thinking skills, team work, interpersonal skills and much more (Billing, 2003; Schmidt, 1999). Employers are readily urging higher educators to incorporate employability skills into students' learning experiences (Atkins, 1999; Hewitt, 2005).

Strategic administrative changes during the past 20 years has lead to a new structure in the hospitality industry which allows entry-level and upper management to take care of customers faster and more efficiently. However, According to Lecours, (1993), these changes also require entry-level managers to conduct additional leadership functions (as cited in Miranda, 1999). Recruiters are now looking beyond the functions of entry-level management positions when hiring, to include elevated requirements for leadership progression within the organization (Cousin, 1992). According to Enz, Renaghan, and Geller (1993), hospitality education should adhere to leadership role, providing society-ready graduates that are able to conduct business affairs and resolve management issues in the industry. Since leadership skills is very important to the industry leaders, the preparation and development of hospitality undergraduates' leadership skills for entry-level management positions in a rapidly growing and changing industry must be of vital interest to the hospitality educators as well as the industry leaders. As the demands of the shareholders and patrons increase in an era of rapidly growing and changing hospitality industry, managers must maintain appropriate employability skills, which include some leadership skills and styles that would enable success.

Leadership skill is not the only employability skill that is deficient among college graduates. According to Brown, Hesketh and Williams (2003), employers urge college graduates to be more social and creative in the workplace. Andelt et al. (1997) indicated that communication skills such as the ability to listen and speak clearly are also very important to employers. Some other employability skills important to employers include the ability to supervise, coordinate, manage conflict, have a clear vision, be creative,

innovate, adapt to change, lifelong learner, and motivate (Brashears, 1995; Evers et al., 1998; Rainbird, 2000). Since employability skills is very important to industry leaders, this study intend to investigate the self-perceived level of competence at performing employability skills necessary for careers in the hospitality industry.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess the self-perceived employability skills for careers in the hospitality industry of senior students in the Hotel and Restaurant Management (HRM) program at University of Missouri-Columbia (MU) in terms of selected student characteristics. This chapter described how the research was designed and carried out including the variables, research instrument, population and sample selection, validity and reliability, data collection, data analysis and response rate. The design used for this study is a descriptive-correlational research design.

Research Objectives

The following objectives were formulated to accomplish the purpose of this study:

1. Describe demographic characteristics of senior students majoring in HRM at MU including: age, sex, academic performance, internship, work experiences, and involvement in departmental, college and/or university organizations or activities.
2. Describe the students' self-perceived level of competence at performing employability skills necessary for careers in the hospitality industry.
3. Describe what environment (those associated with higher educational experience or those not associated with higher educational experience) the students perceived they developed competence in employability skills needed for careers in the hospitality industry.

4. Describe relationships between HRM student characteristics and self-perceived competence in employability skills needed in the hospitality industry.

Population and Sample Selection

The target population for this study was students in the HRM program at the MU who were classified as seniors during the Fall 2006 semester ($N = 123$). The sample selection for this study was a convenient sample of the senior students present in the three classes where the questionnaire was directly administered. Due to time constraint, a convenient sample was used because data could be gathered in a short period of time from individuals that are available rather than selecting from the entire population.

Data Collection

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire consisting of two parts (see Appendix A). Part I was adapted from the instrument used by Robinson (2006) in a study of the employability skills needed by graduates of the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (CAFNR) at MU. Part I included items to solicit information about the perceptions of the senior students regarding their level of competence at performing 67 employability skills. A four-point Likert-type scale with the following response choices was used in this part of the instrument: 0 = no competence, 1= minor competence, 2= moderate competence, 3 = major competence.

Part I of the questionnaire also assessed the environment from which students developed their level of competence. The response choices for this part of the instrument ranged from “Program” to “Non-program.” “Program” referred to activities, events and

experiences that are part of the educational program in HRM at MU. “Non-program” referred to activities, events and experiences that are not part of the educational program in HRM at the MU. The specific response scale for this part of the instrument was as follows:

- 5 = Almost exclusively from the HRM program.
- 4 = Mostly from the HRM program.
- 3 = Equally from the HRM program and from sources other than those associated with the HRM program.
- 2 = Mostly from sources other than those associated with the HRM program.
- 1 = Almost exclusively from sources other than those associated with the HRM program.

Part II of the instrument solicited information about the selected personal and academic characteristics of the participants. Those characteristics included: age, sex, grade point average, hours of internship experience and months of work experience in the hospitality industry and involvement in student organizations.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Validity refers to the ability of a survey instrument (questionnaire) to measure what it claims to measure (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002). Reliability indicates the extent to which data are free from errors but capitulate consistent results (Ary et al. , 2002; Harris & Ogbonna, 2001). The employability skill instrument used for this study was a comprehensive construct that was based on two different types of validity, face validity and content validity (Robinson, 2006). The face validity indicates that the questionnaire is pleasing to the eye and applicable for its intended use (Ary et al.).

Content validity indicates that the items in questionnaire represent the objective of the instrument (Gall, Gall, & Borg 2003).

Panel of experts established the face and content validity of the adapted instrument and a pilot study was used to establish the reliability of the instrument (Robinson, 2006). The common measure of reliability is the Cronbach's alpha and the usual criterion is a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .70 (Harris & Ogbonna, 2001). A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .70 and above indicates a high degree of internal consistency among the data collected (Harris & Ogbonna; Hsu et al., 2003).

According to Robinson (2006), a Cronbach's alpha of .94 was found from the pilot test of the portion of his instrument used to assess competency in performing the employability skills. Since this research used that portion of Robinson's instrument without any modifications, a repeat assessment of reliability was not necessary.

The section of the questionnaire used to assess the environment from which students developed their level of competence was created for this study. Therefore, the reliability of this portion of the instrument had to be determined. A pilot test of the questionnaire was administered to twenty-eight students classified as juniors and seniors from a different university who were not part of the frame for this study. This group of respondents was instructed to respond to questionnaire items and indicate their concerns regarding any of the items. In addition, data were analyzed to measure the reliability of the instrument. Input from the pilot study indicated that questionnaire was clear and easy to follow. A Cronbach's alpha of .90 was found from the pilot test, indicating that the instrument was reliable with a high degree of internal consistency. Because of these positive results, no modifications were made to the instrument.

After the study was completed, Cronbach's alpha was applied to this portion of the instrument. An alpha of .99 was found at that time.

Administration of the Data Collection Instrument

A faculty member from the HRM at MU directly administered the research questionnaires. Questionnaire responses were placed in an envelope for collection by the researcher. Selection error, which might occur when a recipient is contacted via two addresses or location was avoided by giving and receiving one questionnaire from each senior students present at the time of data collection (Ary et al., 2002). Data were collected from three different classes of senior students. Each class was visited once and only the senior students present at the time of visitation were surveyed. The data were collected within a period of one week solely based on voluntary allocation of faculty members' class time to survey the students. Sixty-seven usable responses were collected.

Data Analysis

Collected data were processed by means of quantitative research methods. Prior to data analysis, pre-analysis data screening was performed to ensure the accuracy of the data and to deal with missing and incomplete data. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 14.0 for Windows, a product of SPSS, Inc. Frequency was used to screen the data for any irregularities. Pearson product moment and point biserial correlation coefficients were used to describe the relationships between the variables. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the demographic profiles of senior students, self-perceived competence at performing the employability skills and the environment where the competence was developed. The mean, or arithmetic average, is the "most widely used measure of central tendency, it is the sum of all the values in

distribution divided by the number of cases” (Ary et al, p. 128). The standard deviation basically indicates the variability between the values in distribution that provided the mean.

Scoring and Scoring Interpretation

The scoring and interpretation of the students’ level of competence at performing 67 employability skills was based on means. Means for this part of the study were interpreted using the following scale: 0.00-0.49 = No competence, 0.50-1.49 = Minor competence, 1.50-2.49 = Moderate competence and 2.50-3.00 = Major competence. Means were also used to identify the environment from which the senior students developed their level of competence. Those means were interpreted using the following scale: 1.00-1.49 = Almost exclusively from sources other than those associated with the HRM program, 1.50-2.49 = Mostly from sources other than those associated with the HRM program, 2.50-3.49 = Equally from the HRM program and from sources other than those associated with the HRM program, 3.50-4.49 = Mostly from the HRM program, and 4.50-5.00 = Almost exclusively from the HRM program. Correlation coefficients were used to determine the relationships between variables. Interpretations of the correlation coefficients were based on Davis’ (1983) conventions for interpreting correlation associations. Those conventions are as follows: .70 or higher = Very strong association, .50-.69 = Substantial association, .30-.49 = Moderate association, .10-.29 = Low association and .01-.09 = Negligible association.

Response Rate

The target population for this study was senior students in the HRM program at MU ($N = 123$). The sample selection for this study was a convenient sample of senior

students in the three classes where the questionnaire was directly administered. Sixty-seven usable responses were collected, resulting in a usable response rate of 54.47%.

Non-Participant Issue

Out of 123 seniors anticipated for this study, 67 usable responses were collected. Non-participation or non-response error could constitute a threat to external validity in a generalizable study (Miller & Smith, 1983). However, since this study was based on a convenient sample, which is not generalizable, the non-participants (non-respondents) were ignored (Miller & Smith).

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess the self-perceived employability skills for careers in the hospitality industry of senior students in the Hotel and Restaurant Management (HRM) program at University of Missouri-Columbia (MU). The study also assessed the environment in which students developed their level of competence. This chapter is a presentation of the findings of this study including descriptive statistics, demographic information and correlations between selected student characteristics and their competency level at performing some employability skills.

Findings Associated with Objective One

The first objective was to describe demographic characteristics of senior students majoring in HRM at MU including: age, sex, academic performance, internship, work experiences and involvement in departmental, college and/or university organizations or activities. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the selected demographic characteristics. Academic performance and sex were both analyzed as a nominal data. Therefore, they were reported using frequency and percentage. Age, hours of internship, months or work experience and the numbers of organizations the students were involved in were all analyzed as an interval data. Therefore, they were reported using mean and standard deviation.

Tables 5 and 6 present the demographic data of the respondents. More than half (53.73%) of the respondents were male. Forty-two (62.69%) students reported a cumulative grade point average (GPA) in the range from 2.50-2.99. Fifteen (22.39%)

students of the respondents had a GPA in the range from 3.00-3.49 and five (7.46%) of the respondents had a GPA in the range from 3.49-4.00. Five students reported that they had a GPR below 2.49. These data are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5

Sex and Academic Performance of Respondents (n=67)

Characteristic	<i>f</i>	%
Sex Distribution		
Male	36	53.73
Female	31	46.27
Academic performance (GPA)		
3.50 - 4.00	5	7.46
3.00 - 3.49	15	22.39
2.50 - 2.99	42	62.69
2.00 - 2.49	4	5.97
Below 2.00	1	1.49

Table 6 summarizes additional demographic information about the respondents. The mean age of the respondents was 22.13 years with a standard deviation of 0.76. More than one-fourth (17, 25.45%) were members of two students organizations, 7.5% were members of three students organizations and 4.5% were members of four students organizations. The mean number of organizations the students belonged to was 1.19 with a standard deviation of 1.13.

Table 6

Additional Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	SD
Age	67	22.13	0.76
Number of Organization	67	1.19	1.13
Internship Hours Completed	38	546.32	393.82
Work Experience in Months	65	32.65	28.51

Respondents were asked about their experience in the hospitality industry.

Twenty-nine of the respondents reported no internship hours. The maximum internship hours reported was 1,500 hours. The mean internship hours of those respondents who indicated that they had completed an internship was 546.32 hours with a standard deviation of 393.82. The median numbers of hours was 600.00 and the mode was 600.00. More than one-third of the students (23, 34.35%) belonged to no student organizations at the time this study was conducted. More than one-fourth (19, 28.45%) were members of one student organization. The respondents' work experience in the hospitality industry ranged from zero months to 120 months. The mean number of months of work experience was 32.65 with a standard deviation of 28.51.

Findings Associated with Objective Two

The second objective was to describe the students' self-perceived level of competence at performing the employability skills necessary for careers in the hospitality industry. Table 7 presents the mean and the standard deviation of the respondents' self-perceived level of competence at performing 67 employability skills. The rating scale for

Table 7

Students' Competence in Performing Employability Skills (n =67)

Rank	Employability skill	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	Ability to work independently	2.84	0.37
2	Giving direction and guidance to others	2.75	0.44
3	Gaining new knowledge from everyday experiences	2.75	0.44
4	Maintaining a positive attitude	2.75	0.50
5	Supervising the work of others	2.73	0.45
6	Coordinating the work of peers	2.73	0.45
7	Establishing good rapport with subordinates	2.73	0.45
8	Relating well with supervisors	2.72	0.55
9	Functioning at an optimal level of performance	2.72	0.45
10	Delegating work to subordinates	2.72	0.49
11	Setting priorities	2.71	0.49
12	Working well with fellow employees	2.71	0.60
13	Meeting deadlines	2.70	0.46
14	Responding to others' comments during a conversation	2.70	0.55
15	Communicating ideas verbally to groups	2.69	0.50
16	Managing and overseeing several tasks at once	2.69	0.47
17	Assigning and delegating responsibility	2.69	0.50
18	Resolving conflicts	2.69	0.53
19	Coordinating the work of subordinates	2.67	0.50
20	Identify problems	2.66	0.54
21	Conveying information one-to-one	2.65	0.54
22	Empathizing with others	2.65	0.54
23	Providing novel solutions to problems	2.64	0.48
24	Knowing ethical implications of decisions	2.64	0.51
25	Delegating work to peers	2.64	0.51
26	Allocating time efficiently	2.64	0.54
27	Responding positively to constructive criticism	2.64	0.54
28	Solving problems	2.63	0.49
29	Keeping up-to-date with external realities related to your company's success	2.61	0.52
30	Identifying sources of conflict among people	2.61	0.55
31	Maintaining a high energy level	2.61	0.55
32	Monitoring progress against the plan	2.61	0.52
33	Understanding the needs of others	2.61	0.55
34	Contributing to group problem solving	2.61	0.60
35	Listening attentively	2.61	0.60
36	Establishing the critical events to be completed	2.60	0.58
37	Providing innovative paths for the company to follow for future development	2.60	0.55

Table 7 (Continued)

Students' Competence in Performing Employability Skills (n =67)

Rank	Employability skill	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
38	Prioritizing problems	2.60	0.58
39	Adapting to situations of change	2.59	0.53
40	Combining relevant information from a number of sources	2.58	0.53
41	Integrating information into more general contexts	2.58	0.58
42	Functioning well in stressful situations	2.58	0.65
43	Recognizing alternative routes in meeting objectives	2.58	0.56
44	Writing reports	2.58	0.61
45	Reconceptualizing your role in response to changing corporate realities	2.57	0.58
46	Revising plans to include new information	2.57	0.61
47	Recognizing the effects of decisions to be made	2.56	0.59
48	Using proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation	2.56	0.59
49	Assessing long-term effect of decisions	2.55	0.50
50	Taking reasonable job-related risks	2.54	0.56
51	Sorting out the relevant data to solve the problem	2.54	0.56
52	Making decisions in a short time period	2.54	0.61
53	Initiating change to enhance productivity	2.53	0.56
54	Making effective business presentations	2.51	0.59
55	Applying information to new or broader contexts	2.51	0.59
56	Gaining new knowledge in areas outside the immediate job	2.49	0.59
57	Making decisions on the basis of thorough analysis of the situation	2.46	0.59
58	Keeping up-to-date on developments in the field	2.46	0.64
59	Writing external business communication	2.45	0.61
60	Identifying essential components of the problem	2.43	0.56
61	Conceptualizing a future for the company	2.43	0.56
62	Identifying potential negative outcomes when considering a risky venture	2.42	0.56
63	Writing internal business communication	2.42	0.58
64	Monitoring progress toward objectives in risky ventures	2.42	0.61
65	Making impromptu presentation	2.34	0.69
66	Integrating strategic considerations in the plans	2.33	0.64
67	Identifying political implications of the decision to be made	2.18	0.76

Note. Scale: 0 = No Competence, 1 = Minor Competence, 2 = Moderate Competence, 3 = Major Competence.

level of competence was: 0 = no competence, 1= minor competence, 2= moderate competence, 3 = major competence. The mean for each of the skills included in this study was above 2.00 indicating that, on average, the respondents' perceived themselves to have at least a moderate level of competence at performing all the employability skills. In addition, fifty-five of the employability skills had a mean of greater than 2.50 indicating that the respondents' perceived themselves to have major competence in more than 82% of the employability skills.

The most highly rated skills were "ability to work independently" ($M = 2.84$), "giving direction and guidance to others" ($M = 2.75$), "gaining new knowledge from everyday experiences" ($M = 2.75$), "maintaining a positive attitude" ($M = 2.75$), "supervising the work of others" ($M = 2.73$), "coordinating the work of peers" ($M = 2.73$), "establishing good rapport with subordinates" ($M = 2.73$), "relating well with supervisors" ($M = 2.72$), "functioning at an optimal level of performance" ($M = 2.72$), "delegating work to subordinates" ($M = 2.72$), "working well with fellow employees" ($M = 2.71$), and "setting priorities" ($M = 2.71$). The lowest rated skills included: "identifying political implications of the decision to be made" ($M = 2.18$), "integrating strategic considerations in the plans" ($M = 2.33$), "making impromptu presentation" ($M = 2.34$), "monitoring progress toward objectives in risky ventures" ($M = 2.42$), "writing internal business communication" ($M = 2.42$), "identifying potential negative outcomes when considering a risky venture" ($M = 2.42$), "conceptualizing a future for the company" ($M = 2.43$), "identifying essential components of the problem" ($M = 2.43$), "writing external business communication" ($M = 2.45$), "keeping up-to-date on developments in the field" ($M = 2.46$), "making decisions on the basis of thorough

analysis of the situation” ($M = 2.46$), and “gaining new knowledge in areas outside the immediate job” ($M = 2.49$).

Findings Associated with Objective Three

The third objective was to describe the environments from which the students perceived that they developed their competence in employability skills needed for careers in the hospitality industry. Environments associated with the HRM program at MU were differentiated from those not associated with the program. Respondents were asked to indicate from what environment they developed each of the 67 employability skills.

“Program” included experiences such as all coursework in college, laboratory experiences, internships, departmental, college and university sponsored organizations, field trips, and guest speakers. “Non-program” included experiences from work, family, and other occurrences that are not part of the HRM program. The rating scale for this portion of the study was: 1 = almost exclusive from non-program, 2 = mostly from non-program, 3 = equally from the program and non-program, 4 = mostly from program and 5 = almost exclusive from program.

Table 8 displays data associated with this objective. In the table, data reported in the category labeled “From program” was calculated by combining the data associated with the response choice “almost exclusively from program” with those data associated with the response choice “mostly from program.” Similarly, data reported in the category labeled “From non-program” was calculated by combining data from the response choice “almost exclusively from non-program” with data from the response choice “mostly from non-program.”

Table 8

Environment From Which Students' Competence was Developed (n = 67)

Environment where competence was developed									
Rank	Employability skill	From non-program		Equally from program and non-program		From program		M	SD
		f	%	f	%	f	%		
1	Writing internal business communication	5	7.46	23	34.33	38	56.72	3.70	0.98
2	Making effective business presentations	10	15.15	20	30.30	36	54.55	3.70	1.11
3	Writing reports	9	13.43	20	29.85	38	56.72	3.66	1.07
4	Writing external business communication	8	11.94	19	28.36	40	59.70	3.61	0.97
5	Keeping up-to-date on developments in the field	9	13.43	21	31.34	37	55.22	3.61	1.09
6	Monitoring progress against the plan	5	7.58	30	45.45	31	46.97	3.55	0.90
7	Assessing long-term effect of decisions	6	9.38	26	40.63	32	50.00	3.52	0.87
8	Integrating strategic considerations in the plans	7	10.94	25	39.06	32	50.00	3.48	0.93
9	Establishing the critical events to be completed	7	10.45	27	40.30	33	49.25	3.48	0.91

Table 8 (Continued)

Environment From Which Students' Competence was Developed (n = 67)

Environment where competence was developed										
Rank	Employability skill	From non-program		Equally from program and non-program		From program		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%			
10	Contributing to group problem solving	10	15.15	21	31.82	35	53.03	3.47	1.06	
11	Sorting out the relevant data to solve the problem	8	11.94	27	40.30	32	47.76	3.46	0.94	
12	Revising plans to include new information	8	11.94	31	46.27	28	41.79	3.46	1.00	
13	Combining relevant information from a number of sources	13	19.40	26	38.81	29	43.28	3.45	1.05	
14	Providing innovative paths for the company to follow for future development	2	2.99	34	50.75	27	40.30	3.45	0.89	
15	Making decisions on the basis of thorough analysis of the situation	7	10.45	34	50.75	26	38.81	3.42	0.91	
16	Identifying essential components of the problem	5	7.46	32	47.76	30	44.78	3.40	0.74	
17	Initiating change to enhance productivity	8	11.94	33	49.25	26	38.81	3.39	0.90	
18	Applying information to new or broader contexts	8	11.94	33	49.25	26	38.81	3.39	0.95	

Table 8 (Continued)

Environment From Which Students' Competence was Developed (n = 67)

Environment where competence was developed											
Rank	Employability skill	From non-program		Equally from program and non-program		From program		<i>f</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%				
19	Integrating information into more general contexts	8	11.94	35	52.24	24	35.82	24	35.82	3.37	0.97
20	Making impromptu presentation	13	19.70	25	37.88	28	42.42	28	42.42	3.35	1.07
21	Meeting deadlines	13	19.40	27	40.30	27	40.30	27	40.30	3.33	1.06
22	Coordinating the work of subordinates	13	19.40	26	38.81	28	41.79	28	41.79	3.33	0.96
23	Communicating ideas verbally to groups	13	20.00	23	35.38	29	44.62	29	44.62	3.32	1.16
24	Solving problems	9	13.64	31	46.97	26	39.39	26	39.39	3.32	0.95
25	Recognizing the effects of decisions to be made	10	15.15	29	43.94	27	40.91	27	40.91	3.32	0.91
26	Monitoring progress toward objectives in risky ventures	12	17.91	29	43.28	26	38.81	26	38.81	3.31	0.99
27	Assigning and delegating responsibility	14	21.21	26	39.39	26	39.39	26	39.39	3.30	1.08

Table 8 (Continued)

Environment From Which Students' Competence was Developed (n = 67)

Environment where competence was developed									
Rank	Employability skill	From non-program		Equally from program and non-program		From program		M	SD
		f	%	f	%	f	%		
28	Conceptualizing a future for the company	10	14.93	32	47.76	25	37.31	3.30	0.87
29	Managing and overseeing several tasks at once	12	17.91	30	44.78	25	37.31	3.28	1.01
30	Gaining new knowledge in areas outside the immediate job	13	19.40	27	40.30	27	40.30	3.27	1.04
31	Making decisions in a short time period	14	20.90	25	37.31	28	41.79	3.27	1.01
32	Identifying political implications of the decision to be made	12	18.18	28	42.42	26	39.39	3.26	0.97
33	Coordinating the work of peers	14	20.90	27	40.30	26	38.81	3.25	0.93
34	Providing novel solutions to problems	11	16.42	32	47.76	24	35.82	3.25	0.96
35	Using proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation	13	19.40	30	44.78	24	35.82	3.25	1.11
36	Delegating work to subordinates	15	22.39	28	41.79	24	35.82	3.25	1.03

Table 8 (Continued)

Environment From Which Students' Competence was Developed (n = 67)

Environment where competence was developed									
Rank	Employability skill	From non-program		Equally from program and non-program		From program		M	SD
		f	%	f	%	f	%		
37	Knowing ethical implications of decisions	14	20.90	27	40.30	26	38.81	3.25	1.06
38	Recognizing alternative routes in meeting objectives	10	14.93	35	52.24	22	32.84	3.24	0.84
39	Giving direction and guidance to others	12	17.91	29	43.28	26	38.81	3.24	0.89
40	Delegating work to peers	15	22.73	29	43.94	22	33.33	3.21	0.97
41	Identifying potential negative outcomes when considering a risky venture	14	20.90	31	46.27	22	32.84	3.21	0.98
42	Reconceptualizing your role in response to changing corporate realities	16	23.88	29	43.28	22	32.84	3.21	0.99
43	Allocating time efficiently	14	20.90	27	40.30	26	38.81	3.21	1.14
44	Conveying information one-to-one	17	25.37	25	37.31	26	38.81	3.21	1.11
45	Prioritizing problems	8	12.12	36	54.55	22	33.33	3.20	0.81

Table 8 (Continued)

Environment From Which Students' Competence was Developed (n = 67)

Environment where competence was developed											
Rank	Employability skill	From non-program		Equally from program and non-program		From program		<i>f</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%				
46	Supervising the work of others	15	22.39	21	31.34	27	40.30	3.19	1.16		
47	Taking reasonable job-related risks	12	18.18	32	48.48	22	33.33	3.18	0.93		
48	Identify problems	10	15.15	35	53.03	21	31.82	3.18	0.88		
49	Setting priorities	15	22.73	27	40.91	24	36.36	3.18	0.99		
50	Keeping up-to-date with external realities related to your company's success	14	20.90	31	46.27	22	32.84	3.18	0.98		
51	Adapting to situations of change	17	25.37	28	41.79	22	32.84	3.13	0.97		
52	Responding positively to constructive criticism	19	28.36	24	35.82	24	35.82	3.07	1.13		
53	Functioning at an optional level of performance	19	28.36	26	38.81	22	32.84	3.04	1.12		
54	Ability to work independently	17	25.37	29	43.28	21	31.34	3.04	1.16		

Table 8 (Continued)

Environment From Which Students' Competence was Developed (n = 67)

Environment where competence was developed											
Rank	Employability skill	From non-program		Equally from program and non-program		From program		<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
		<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>				
55	Listening attentively	17	25.37	28	41.79	22	32.84	22	32.84	3.03	1.17
56	Responding to others' comments during a conversation	18	26.87	28	41.79	21	31.34	21	31.34	3.03	1.17
57	Maintaining a positive attitude	22	32.84	22	32.84	23	34.33	23	34.33	2.99	1.15
58	Functioning well in stressful situations	22	32.84	23	34.33	22	32.84	22	32.84	2.99	1.20
59	Establishing good rapport with subordinates	21	31.34	25	37.31	21	31.34	21	31.34	2.99	1.15
60	Identifying sources of conflict among people	22	32.84	26	38.81	19	28.36	19	28.36	2.97	1.10
61	Relating well with supervisors	20	30.30	28	42.42	18	27.27	18	27.27	2.97	1.07
62	Resolving conflicts	22	32.84	25	37.31	20	29.85	20	29.85	2.96	1.07
63	Working well with fellow employees	25	37.31	21	31.34	21	31.34	21	31.34	2.94	1.23

Table 7 (Continued)

Environment From Which Students' Competence was Developed (n = 67)

Environment where competence was developed									
Rank	Employability skill	From non-program		Equally from program and non-program		From program		M	SD
		f	%	f	%	f	%		
64	Gaining new knowledge from everyday experiences	21	31.34	27	40.30	19	28.36	2.94	1.15
65	Understanding the needs of others	23	34.33	25	37.31	19	28.36	2.91	1.24
66	Maintaining a high energy level	21	31.34	25	37.31	21	31.34	2.90	1.14
67	Empathizing with others	24	36.36	25	37.88	17	25.76	2.80	1.11

Note. Scale: 1 and 2 = Non-program, 3 = Equally from program and non-program, 4 and 5 = Program. The following limits are used to interpret means: 1.00 – 2.49 = Non-program, 2.50 – 3.49 = Equally from program and non-program, 3.50 – 5.00 = Program.

The mean of the environments was used as the basis for describing where competence was developed. The categories for classifying the means were: 1-2.49 = from non-program, 2.50-3.49 = equally from program and non-program, and 3.50-5.00 = from program. The respondents indicated that they developed their level of competence in nearly 90% (60) of the employability skills “equally from program and non-program” environments. “From the program” was cited as the environment where 10.45% (7) of the employability skills were developed and none of the employability skills were within the range of “from non-program” environments.

The employability skills in the “from the program” category included: “writing internal business communication” ($M=3.70$), “making effective business presentations” ($M=3.70$), “writing reports” ($M=3.66$), “writing external business communication” ($M=3.61$), “keeping up-to-date on developments in the field” ($M=3.61$), “monitoring progress against the plan” ($M=3.55$), and “assessing long-term effect of decisions” ($M=3.52$). The remaining employability skills were classified as being developed “equally from program and non-program” environments.

Findings Associated with Objective Four

The fourth objective sought to describe relationships between the respondents’ personal and student characteristics and their self-perceived competence in performing employability skills needed in the hospitality industry. Interpretations of the correlation coefficients were based on Davis’ (1983) conventions for interpreting correlation associations. Those conventions are as follows: 1.0–.70 = very strong association, .50–.69 = substantial association, .30–.49 = moderate association, .10–.29 = low association and .01–.09 = negligible association. Most of the 67 employability skills had

only negligible association with each of the student characteristics. Those employability skills with a more substantial relationship with the student characteristics are discussed below.

There was a moderate, positive correlation ($r = .36$) between age of the student and self-perceived competence at the skill of “meeting deadlines.” In addition, there was moderate correlation ($r = .30$) between GPA and “applying information to new or broader contexts.”

As displayed in Table 9, the skills moderately associated with the amount of the students’ work experience included: “using proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation” ($r = .33$) and “functioning at an optimal level of performance” ($r = .30$).

Table 9

Correlation Coefficient between Employability Skills and Work Experience (n = 67)

Employability Skills	<i>r</i>
Using proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation	.33
Functioning at an optimal level of performance	.30

Table 10 shows the employability skills that had moderate association with respondents’ sex, which included: “Listening attentively” ($r_{pb} = .38$), “prioritizing problems” ($r_{pb} = .31$) and “responding to others' comments during a conversation” ($r_{pb} = .31$) each had a moderate correlation with sex.

Five employability skills had moderate positive relationship with respondents’ hours of internship (see Table 11). The five employability skills were: “making effective business presentations” ($r_{pb} = .35$), “delegating work to peers” ($r_{pb} = .34$) “conveying

information one-to-one” ($r_{pb} = .32$), “working well with fellow employees” ($r_{pb} = .31$), and “establishing good rapport with subordinates” ($r_{pb} = .31$).

Table 10

Point Biserial Correlation Coefficient between Employability Skills and Sex (n = 67)

Employability Skills	r_{pb}
Listening attentively	.38
Prioritizing problems	.31
Responding to others' comments during a conversation	.31

Note. Sex code: Male = 1, Female = 2.

Table 11

Point Biserial Correlation Coefficient between Employability Skills and Internships

(n = 67)

Employability Skills	r_{pb}
Making effective business presentations	.35
Delegating work to peers	.34
Conveying information one-to-one	.32
Working well with fellow employees	.31
Establishing good rapport with subordinates	.31

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to assess the self-perceived employability skills for careers in the hospitality industry of senior students in the Hotel and Restaurant Management (HRM) program at University of Missouri-Columbia (MU) in terms of selected student characteristics. This chapter is a summary of this study, including conclusions drawn from the findings, implications and recommendations for practice and further research.

Research Objectives

The following objectives were formulated to accomplish the purpose of this study:

1. Describe demographic characteristics of senior students majoring in HRM at MU including: age, sex, academic performance, internship, work experiences, and involvement in departmental, college and/or university organizations or activities.
2. Determine the students' self-perceived level of competence at performing employability skills necessary for careers in the hospitality industry.
3. Determine what environment (those associated with higher educational experience or those not associated with higher educational experience) the students perceived they developed competence in employability skills needed for careers in the hospitality industry.

4. Describe relationships between HRM student characteristics and self-perceived competence in employability skills needed in the hospitality industry.

Limitations of the Study

The focus of this research was the HRM program at MU. Data were collected from senior students in that program and no precautions taken account for non-response error. The findings of this study should not be generalized beyond this group of students in this program.

Research Design, Population and Sample Selection

The design used for this study was descriptive correlational in nature. The population for this study was senior students in the HRM program at MU ($N = 123$). The sample selection for this study was a convenient sample of the senior students present in the three classes where the questionnaire was directly administered.

Data Collection

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study consisted of two parts (see Appendix A). Part I was adapted from one used by Robinson (2006) in a study of employability skills needed by graduates of the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (CAFNR) at MU. Part I measured the perceptions of the senior students' level of competence at performing 67 employability skills on a four-point Likert-type scale. The response scale for this column is as follows: 0 = no competence, 1 = minor competence, 2 = moderate competence, 3 = major competence.

Part I of the questionnaire also assessed the environment in which students developed their level of competence. The response choices for this part of the instrument ranged from “Program” to “Non-program.” “Program” referred to activities, events and experiences that are part of the educational program in HRM at MU. “Non-program” referred to activities, events and experiences that are not part of the educational program in HRM at MUa. The specific response scale for this part of the instrument was as follows:

- 5 = Almost exclusively from the educational program for HRM students.
- 4 = Mostly from the educational program for HRM students.
- 3 = Equally from the educational program for HRM students and sources other than those associated with the HRM program.
- 2 = Mostly from sources other than those associated with the HRM academic program.
- 1 = Almost exclusively from sources other than those associated with the HRM academic program.

Part II of the questionnaire assessed selected demographic characteristics of the participants. Those characteristics included: age, sex, grade point average, hours of internship experience and months of work experience in the hospitality industry and involvement in student organizations.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The employability skill instrument used for this study was a comprehensive construct that was based on two different types of validity: face validity and content validity (Robinson, 2006). Face and content validity of the adapted instrument were established by panel of expert and a pilot study was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. A Cronbach's alpha of .90 was found from the pilot test, indicating that the instrument was reliable with a high degree of internal consistency. A Cronbach's alpha of .99 was found after the study was completed.

Administration of the Data Collection Instrument

The research questionnaires were directly administered by a faculty member from the HRM program at MU. Questionnaire responses were placed in an envelope for collection by the researcher. Selection error was avoided by making sure none of the students submitted two questionnaires (Ary et al., 2002). Data were collected from three different classes with varied proportion of senior students. The instrument was administered to each class once and only the senior students present at the time of administration were able to participate in the survey.

Data Analysis

Collected data were processed by means of quantitative research methods. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 14.0 for Windows, a product of SPSS, Inc. Frequency was used to screen the data for any irregularities. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze most of the results. Pearson Product Moment and Point Biserial correlation coefficients were used to describe the relationships between and among the variables.

Summary of Findings

Summary of Findings Related to Objective One

The first objective was to describe demographic characteristics of senior students majoring in HRM at MU including: age, sex, academic performance, internship experience, work experience, and involvement in departmental, college and/or university organizations or activities. The total number of seniors enrolled at the time of this study was 123 students. The convenient sample was composed of sixty-seven usable responses. Thus, 54.47% of HRM seniors participated in the study.

The age of the respondents ranged from 21-24 years. Males composed 53.73% of the respondent group. Almost two-thirds (62.69%) of the respondents had a GPA ranging from 2.50-2.99. Thirty-eight of the 67 students surveyed had completed an internship. The mean number of internship hours for those who had completed an internship was 546.32. The average work experience in the hospitality industry for the respondents was 32.65 months. The average membership in students' organization was 1.19.

Summary of Findings Related to Objective Two

The second objective sought to describe the students' self-perceived level of competence at performing the employability skills necessary for careers in the hospitality industry. Data suggested that respondents' level of competence at performing employability skills necessary for careers in the hospitality industry was between moderate competence and major competence for all the employability skills. Fifty-five of the employability had a mean competence of greater than 2.50, indicating that the respondents' perceived themselves to be on the level of major competence in 82% of the employability skills. The employability skill with the highest mean was "ability to work

independently” ($M = 2.84$), while “identifying political implications of the decision to be made” ($M = 2.18$) had the lowest mean.

Summary of Findings Related to Objective Three

The third objective was to describe the environment in which students perceived they developed competence in employability skills needed for careers in the hospitality industry. The mean of the environments was used as the basis for describing where competence was developed. A mean of 1-2.49 = from non-program, 2.50-3.49 = equally from program and non-program and 3.50-5.00 = from program. The respondents indicated that they developed their level of competence in 89.55% (60) of the employability skills “equally from program and non-program” environments. “From the program” was cited as the environment where 10.45% (7) of the employability skills were developed and none of the employability skills mean falls within the range of non-program, indicating that none of the employability skills in average were perceived to be developed “from non-program” environments.

Summary of Findings Related to Objective Four

The fourth objective of the research was to describe the relationship between the selected characteristics of the students and their self-perceived competence in the employability skills needed in the hospitality industry. Age and GPA each had moderate relationships with only one of the employability skills. Work experience, sex, and internship had moderate relationships with two, three and five of the employability skills respectively.

Conclusions, Implications and Implications

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations Related to Objective One

The profile of the average respondent to this study was: Male, between 22 – 23 years of age with a grade point average between 2.50 – 2.99 (on a 4.00 scale). The average respondent has work experience in the hospitality industry, has completed an internship and belongs to at least one student organization. When this profile was compared to all the seniors in HRM department at the time of this study (information from University of Missouri-Columbia College of Agriculture Food and Natural Resources dean's office) the only difference was the composition of the sex of the students. The population of HRM seniors has 69.11% male students.

Profiles of students in each stage of matriculation in the HRM program should be determined. Such information would be valuable in program planning for courses, work experiences and internship experiences. It is curious that the percentage male students attending the classes on the day that these data were collected is so different than the percentage of males in the population. Perhaps class attendance practices of male HRM students should be investigated.

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations Related to Objective Two

Respondents consider themselves to have a high degree of competence in all of the employability skills. At the very least, it can be concluded that these students have confidence in their abilities related to employability skills. Further research should be conducted to determine what aspects of the program or non-program experiences are contributing most to the development of these skills. It would also be of value for

research to be conducted focusing on the employability skills the students considered themselves to have the lowest competence.

Unlike Robinson's (2006) study, which indicated that supervisors perceived problem solving as the skill area that is in greatest need of curriculum attention, the results of this study suggest that these HRM seniors are competent in problem solving skills. The findings also indicated that respondents have a high level of competence with regards to leadership, management, and/or supervisory skills needed for professionals in the hospitality industry. The HRM program at MU was designed to develop effective managers and supervisors. It may be implied that the program is indeed meeting that purpose. On the other hand, it might also be of value to compare students' self-perceived competence with personality assessments such as the Myers-Briggs Typology Inventory. Such a study might shed light on whether perceptions of competence might be based upon confidence rather than true competence.

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations Related to Objective Three

This group of seniors believes that components of the HRM program such as classes, internships and student organizations and experiences outside of the HRM help to develop their employability skills. Compared to non-program environments, they gain more of their competence in these skills from the HRM program. Interestingly, most of the employability skills that were perceived to be developed almost exclusively from program were related to communication skills and problem solving skills. Perhaps the integration of writing intensive course requirements has contributed to students crediting the HRM program helping them develop their communication skills. Students crediting the program for developing their problem solving skills is in agreement with Walo (2001)

who stated that such skills can be developed from coursework, work experience and/or internship.

Faculty and other people involved in developing the various aspects of the HRM program at MU should be encouraged that their efforts to develop their students' employability skills are having a positive impact. As they strive to continue to improve their program, they should consider ways to address students' knowledge and understanding of the political implications of their decisions as well as their interpersonal and human relation skills.

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations Related to Objective Four

Older students are better at meeting deadlines and students with higher grade point averages perceived themselves to have higher competence in applying information to new or broader contexts. Students with work experience perceived themselves to have higher competence in using proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation and functioning at an optimal level of performance. Female students perceived themselves to be better at prioritizing problems, listening attentively and responding to others' comments during a conversation. Students with internship experience believe they have higher competence in conveying information one-to-one, making effective business presentations, working well with fellow employee, establishing good rapport with subordinates and delegating work to peers.

These conclusions are consistent with studies contending that internship experiences help students develop their leadership skills, human resources skills, oral and written communication skills, problem solving skills, interpersonal communication skills, teamwork, decision-making skills, and planning skills (Knight, 1984; LeBruto & Murray,

1994; Mariampolski et al., 1980; McMullin, 1998; Walo, 2001). These conclusions reinforce the value of internships for students who aspire to work in the hospitality industry. It is apparent that these structured, supervised experiences develop important employability skills that will benefit the students in the future. In addition, students should be encouraged to gain work experience in the hospitality industry before they graduate. The employability skills developed in students with such experiences are also important academic skills that will help them be successful students.

HRM seniors who participated in this study have acquired relevant competencies to serve as productive employees in the workplace; however, it is not clear what aspects of the HRM program have impacted the development of this competence. Research should be conducted to link the benefits of specific classes, laboratories, programs, internships and student organizational activities contribute to the development of employability skills and technical skills.

Additional Recommendations

Research similar to this should be conducted in this and other academic programs. While this research provides a foundation for assessing employability of HRM students and where that competence was developed, the findings of this particular study cannot be generalized. So, a replication of this study should be conducted using a sample from which the results can be generalized. In addition similar studies should be conducted in HRM programs at other institutions so that comparisons of various programs and differences among those programs can be made.

Robinson's study involved the collection of information related to employability skills from employers. Such research specifically focusing on the hospitality industry

would be valuable. Finally, a longitudinal study describing correlations between students' level of competence and their job performance and job satisfaction would provide important information to curriculum planners and employers of HRM graduates.

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APPENDIX A

Employability Skills Questionnaire

Survey of Employability Skills of HRM Students at MU



College of
Agriculture
Food and
Natural
Resources

Department of Hotel and Restaurant Management

Purpose

Thank you for your participation in this important research. With your participation, we can continue to meet the needs of HRM students at MU as they prepare to enter careers in the hospitality industry. Your participation in this study is voluntary. While your input is very valuable to us and is needed to ensure the quality of the project, you are not required to participate. Be assured, your responses will remain confidential. There is nothing on this questionnaire that will associate you with the responses you provide.

This instrument has two parts and instructions are provided to inform you how to mark your responses.

PART I – EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS ASSESSMENT

Please provide two responses for each of the employability skills listed below by circling one response in each of the two columns that indicate your response.

In the **LEFT column**, indicate your perceived level of competence at performing the corresponding employability skills. The response scale for this column is as follows:

Level of Competence

- 3 = High Competence
- 2 = Moderate Competence
- 1 = Low Competence
- 0 = No Competence

In the **RIGHT column**, indicate in what environment you developed your level of competence in the corresponding employability skills. The response choices range from activities, events and experiences that are part of the educational program in HRM at the University of Missouri to activities, events and experiences that are not a part of the educational program in HRM at the University of Missouri. So, “program” includes experiences like all coursework in college; laboratory experiences; internships; departmental, college and university sponsored organizations; field trips; and guest speakers. “Non program” includes experiences from work, family, and other occurrences that are not part of the HRM program. The response scale for this column is as follows:

Environment Where Competence was Developed

- 5 = Almost exclusively from the educational program for HRM students.
- 4 = Mostly from the educational program for HRM students.
- 3 = Equally from the educational program for HRM students and sources other than those associated with the HRM program.
- 2 = Mostly from sources other than those associated with the HRM academic program.
- 1 = Almost exclusively from sources other than those associated with the HRM academic program.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Item	Your Competence in Employability Skill				Environment Where Competence was Developed				
	No competence	Minor competence	Moderate competence	High competence	Almost exclusively non-program	Mostly non-program	Equally from program and non-program	Mostly from program	Almost exclusively from program.
#. Facilitating a panel discussion.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5

On the item above, the respondent perceived him/herself to have high competence in facilitating a panel discussion and that he/she developed that competence through the HRM program and non-program sources equally.

Item	Your Competence in Performing Employability Skill				Environment Where Competence was Developed				
	No competence	Minor competence	Moderate competence	High competence	Almost exclusively non-program	Mostly non-program	Equally from program and non-program	Mostly from program	Almost exclusively from program.
Circle your responses									
1. Identify problems.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
2. Prioritizing problems.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
3. Solving problems.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
4. Contributing to group problem solving.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
5. Identifying essential components of the problem.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
6. Sorting out the relevant data to solve the problem.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
7. Making decisions in a short time period.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
8. Assessing long-term effects of decisions.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
9. Making decisions on the basis of thorough analysis of the situation.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
10. Identifying political implications of the decision to be made.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
11. Knowing ethical implications of decisions.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
12. Recognizing the effects of decisions made.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
13. Establishing the critical events to be completed.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
14. Assigning/delegating responsibility.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
15. Monitoring progress against the plan.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
16. Integrating strategic considerations in the plans made.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
17. Revising plans to include new information.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
18. Setting priorities.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
19. Allocating time efficiently.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
20. Managing/overseeing several tasks at once.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5

Item	Your Competence in Performing Employability Skill				Environment Where Competence was Developed				
	No competence	Minor competence	Moderate competence	High competence	Almost exclusively non-program	Mostly non-program	Equally from program and non-program	Mostly from program	Almost exclusively from program.
Circle your responses									
21. Meeting deadlines.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
22. Taking reasonable job-related risks.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
23. Identifying potential negative outcomes when considering a risky venture.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
24. Monitoring progress toward objectives in risky ventures.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
25. Recognizing alternative routes in meeting objectives.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
26. Conveying information one-to-one.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
27. Communicating ideas verbally to groups.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
28. Making effective business presentations.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
29. Making impromptu presentations.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
30. Writing reports.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
31. Writing external business communication.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
32. Writing internal business communication.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
33. Using proper grammar, spelling, & punctuation.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
34. Listening attentively.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
35. Responding to others' comments during a conversation.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
36. Working well with fellow employees.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
37. Relating well with supervisors.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
38. Establishing good rapport with subordinates.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
39. Empathizing with others.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
40. Understanding the needs of others.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5

Item	Your Competence in Performing Employability Skill				Environment Where Competence was Developed				
	No competence	Minor competence	Moderate competence	High competence	Almost exclusively non-program	Mostly non-program	Equally from program and non-program	Mostly from program	Almost exclusively from program.
Circle your responses									
41. Identifying sources of conflict among people.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
42. Resolving conflicts.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
43. Supervising the work of others.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
44. Giving direction and guidance to others.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
45. Delegating work to peers.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
46. Delegating work to subordinates.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
47. Coordinating the work of peers.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
48. Coordinating the work of subordinates.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
49. Providing novel solutions to problems.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
50. Adapting to situations of change.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
51. Initiating change to enhance productivity.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
52. Keeping up-to-date with external realities related to your company's success.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
53. Reconceptualizing your role in response to changing corporate realities.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
54. Conceptualizing a future for the company.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
55. Providing innovative paths for the company to follow for future development.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
56. Combining relevant information from a number of sources.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
57. Applying information to new or broader contexts.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
58. Integrating information into more general contexts.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5

Item	Your Competence in Performing Employability Skill				Environment Where Competence was Developed				
	No competence	Minor competence	Moderate competence	High competence	Almost exclusively non-program	Mostly non-program	Equally from program and non-program	Mostly from program	Almost exclusively from program.
59. Keeping up-to-date on developments in the field.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
60. Gaining new knowledge in areas outside the immediate job.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
61. Gaining new knowledge from everyday experiences.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
62. Maintaining a high energy level.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
63. Functioning at an optimal level of performance.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
64. Responding positively to constructive criticism.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
65. Maintaining a positive attitude.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
66. Functioning well in stressful situations.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
67. Ability to work independently.	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5

Please continue on the next page



PART II – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Please fill in the blank unless directed otherwise.

68. How old are you? _____
69. What is your sex? (circle one) MALE FEMALE
70. How many HOURS of internship have you COMPLETED? _____
71. How many student organizations are you a member of? _____
72. Are you currently employed in the hospitality industry? (circle one) YES NO
73. How many total MONTHS of work experience in the hospitality industry do you have? _____
74. What is your classification (circle one)
- a. Freshman
 - b. Sophomore
 - c. Junior
 - d. Senior
 - e. Graduate student
75. What is your current, overall grade point average (circle one)
- a. 3.50 – 4.00
 - b. 3.00 – 3.49
 - c. 2.50 – 2.99
 - d. 2.00 – 2.49
 - e. Below 2.00

Thank you!

We appreciate your participation!

APPENDIX B

Letter to Faculty for Permission to Recruit Students



October 16, 2006

Dear <<Salutation>><<Last Name>>:

My name is Godwin-Charles Ogbeide, I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri-Columbia in Agricultural Education with emphasis on leadership, and college teaching in hospitality management. Your assistance is needed towards the data collection for my research study of the employability skills and self-perceived competencies for careers in the hospitality industry. Your assistance will ensure that the subjects for the study are appropriately recruited and selected for the study. I am requesting for only the last ten to fifteen minutes of your class period since the questionnaire will only take that much time to complete.

Attached to this letter is a copy of the questionnaire modified for the study. The questionnaire is made up of some employability skills adapted from a study conducted by Robinson (2006), the employability skills were identified as relevant for businesses and organizations that employ MU CAFNR graduates. I am conducting a follow up of this study focusing on careers related to the hospitality industry.

I shall contact you very soon to determine the best day and time to meet the students and administer the questionnaire. I sincerely appreciate your willingness to grant me ten to fifteen minutes of your time to meet with the students. If you have any questions about the study or the questionnaire, please feel free to contact me (573)864-9923, or Dr. Rob Terry (Jr.) (573)884-7375, advising chair.

Sincerely,

Godwin-Charles Ogbeide

APPENDIX C

Student Recruitment Script

October 16, 2006

Dear <<Salutation>><<Last Name>>:

My name is Godwin-Charles Ogbeide, I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri-Columbia in Agricultural Education with emphasis on leadership, and college teaching in hospitality management. Your assistance is needed to complete my study to assess senior students' self-perceived competence in some employability skills for careers in the hospitality industry. I am conducting this study under the Guidance of Hotel and Restaurant Management and Agricultural Education faculty.

This questionnaire will take you about ten to fifteen minutes to complete. Your participation will help ensure an accurate determination of the employability skills needed by professionals in the hospitality industry. Through this information educators can enhance their ability to prepare world-class hospitality professionals by means of the identification of competencies that need additional improvement.

I sincerely appreciate your willingness to participate in this study. If you agree to participate in this study, please sign and date the consent form attached to the questionnaires, fill out the questionnaire, and insert them in the provided envelop. An extra copy of the Informed Consent Letter with Consent Form is provided for you to keep for your record purposes.

Sincerely,



Godwin-Charles Ogbeide

VITA

Godwin-Charles A. Ogbeide was born June 10, 1969 in Lagos, Nigeria. After attending public school in Lagos, he migrated to United State of America (U.S.) where he received the following degrees: B.S. in Biology from Lincoln University (1994); B.S. in Food Science and Human Nutrition from University of Missouri-Columbia (1996); Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Columbia College (1998); M.S. in Food Science with emphasis in Hotel and Restaurant Administration from University of Missouri-Columbia (2005); Ph.D. in Agricultural Education with emphasis in Leadership and College teaching in hospitality management from University of Missouri-Columbia (2006). He is married to former Bukola (Bukky) Fadeyi of Lagos, Nigeria.

He has over 20 years of hotel and restaurant work experience. He has taught as a graduate teaching assistant, and served as research assistant at the Department of Hotel and Restaurant Management, University of Missouri-Columbia (2005-2006). He has also served as graduate assistant at Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, University of Missouri-Columbia (2003-2004). He started a faculty position as Assistant Professor of Hotel/Restaurant Administration and Culinology with the Department of Business and Public Affairs at Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall, Minnesota (Fall 2006).

Research Conference Papers and Presentations

Ogbeide, G.C.A. (2006). Does sex or self-other agreement on leadership styles improve performance? . *International Council On Hotel, Restaurant & Institutional Education Annual Conference & Exposition (I-CHRIE)*, Washington, DC.

Ogbeide, G.C.A., Groves, J., & Cho, S. (2006). Leadership styles of managers and Subordinates' perceptions. *11th Annual Graduate Education & Graduate Research Conference in Hospitality & Tourism*, Seattle, WA.

Ogbeide, G.C.A., & Cho, S. (2005). A case study of a chain restaurant training motivation and outcomes. Proceedings of the *Second Great Lakes Hospitality and Tourism Educators Conference*, Indianapolis, IN.

Ogbeide, G.C.A., Groves, J., & Cho, S. (2005). Leadership styles of on-site foodservice managers and subordinates' perceptions. Proceedings of the *Second Great Lakes Hospitality and Tourism Educators Conference*, Indianapolis, IN.

Research Conference Posters

Ogbeide, G.C.A. (2005). Leadership styles of full service restaurant general managers and unit profitability. *International Council on Hotel, Restaurant & Institutional Education Annual Conference & Exposition (I-CHRIE)*, Las Vegas, NV.

Strid, M.B., Reich, P.L., and Ogbeide, G.C.A. (2004). Managerial challenges in the implementation and operation of revenue management systems. *10th Annual Graduate Education & Graduate Research Conference in Hospitality & Tourism*, Myrtle beach, SC.

Other Research Projects

Ogbeide, G.C.A. (2005). *Restaurant managers' leadership training program*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri-Columbia Department of Agricultural Education

Ogbeide, G.C.A., Kuto, B., Strid, M.B., Reich, P.L., and Tieman, M. (2004). *Managerial challenges in the use of revenue management systems*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri-Columbia Department of Hotel and Restaurant Management.

Ogbeide, G.C.A. (2004). *Teaching through modality strength*. Columbia , MO :

University of Missouri-Columbia Department of Educational Leadership and
Policy Analysis.

Ogbeide, G.C.A. (2003). *Reflection and Analysis of Tenure Policy*. Columbia, MO:

University of Missouri-Columbia Department of Educational Leadership and
Policy Analysis.