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IMPACT OF INTERNSHIPS ON EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

In today's competitive job market, employability skills have become crucial for graduates aiming for successful careers. Internships are increasingly acknowledged as a valuable form of experiential learning that connects academic knowledge with workplace demands. This study investigates how internships affect employability skills among university students by examining aspects such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, and technical skills. The research is grounded in Human Capital Theory and Experiential Learning Theory, which highlight the importance of practical learning experiences in developing professional skills (Becker, 1993; Kolb, 1984). A quantitative research approach was used, gathering primary data through a structured questionnaire from 575 respondents across various academic fields. The study utilized statistical analyses tailored to specific objectives, including Chi-square tests, independent sample t-tests, one-way ANOVA, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. The Chi-square analysis showed a significant link between internship participation and students' perceived development of employability. The t-test results revealed notable differences in employability skills between students with and without internship experience. ANOVA results further indicated significant differences in skill levels based on internship duration and the number of internships completed. Correlation analysis demonstrated a strong positive relationship between internship experience and employability skills, while regression analysis confirmed that internship experience is a significant predictor of employability outcomes among students. These findings align with previous research emphasizing the positive impact of internships on career readiness and professional growth (Jackson, 2015; Silva et al., 2018). The study concludes that well-structured internship programs play a significant role in enhancing skills and job readiness, thereby boosting graduate employability in the changing labor market.

KEYWORDS: *Internship Experience, Employability Skills, Internship Quality, Career Readiness, Higher Education, Regression Analysis*

1) INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

In today's global job market, possessing employability skills is essential for graduates aiming to secure successful careers. Employers are increasingly looking for candidates who not only have academic knowledge but also practical skills like communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, and technical abilities (Yorke, 2006). Despite this, many graduates struggle to find employment due to disconnect between what they learn academically and what industries require (Srivastava & Gupta, 2019). The rapid pace of technological change, globalization, and evolving workplace dynamics have heightened the need for experiential learning methods that prepare students for real-world professional settings (Clarke, 2018). Consequently, internships have become a key educational strategy to bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practical application. Internships offer students hands-on experience in professional environments, allowing them to apply classroom knowledge in real organizational contexts. Through internships, students can develop workplace skills, boost their professional confidence, and enhance their readiness for careers (Jackson, 2015). Research has shown that internships positively impact employability skills by enhancing communication, teamwork, leadership, and technical abilities (Silva et al., 2018). Additionally, internships help students grasp organizational culture, professional ethics, and job responsibilities, aiding their transition from education to employment (Wilton, 2012). However, the success of internships often hinges on factors like the quality of mentorship, task relevance, organizational support, and opportunities for active learning (Narayanan et al., 2010). This study is motivated by the increasing concern over graduate employability and the growing significance of work-integrated learning in higher education (Reghuthaman & Gupta, 2018). While internships are widely advocated as a means to boost employability, there is limited empirical evidence on how effectively they enhance employability skills, especially in varied educational settings. Moreover, previous research has mainly focused on direct links between internships and employability, with less emphasis on statistical comparisons across

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demographic and internship-related variables. Therefore, this study aims to assess the impact of internships on employability skills using objective analyses such as Chi-square, t-test, ANOVA, correlation, and regression analysis. The findings are expected to offer valuable insights for educational institutions, employers, and policymakers in crafting effective internship programs that improve graduate employability and workforce readiness.

2) LITERATURE REVIEW, THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND RESEARCH GAPS

In the realm of higher education, employability skills have gained prominence due to evolving industry demands and the intensifying competition in the global job market. These skills encompass communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, leadership, and technical abilities, all of which equip graduates to excel in professional settings (Yorke, 2006). Modern employers are on the lookout for graduates who not only have academic credentials but also possess practical knowledge and are ready for the workplace (Clarke, 2018). Nonetheless, numerous studies have highlighted a notable disparity between academic learning and industry needs, raising concerns about graduates' employability and career readiness (Tushar & Sooraksa, 2023). To tackle this issue, higher education institutions have increasingly focused on experiential learning methods, such as internships, which offer students the chance to gain hands-on experience and develop job-related skills. Previous research indicates that participating in internships positively impacts students' communication abilities, teamwork, professional confidence, and career preparedness (Jackson, 2015; Silva et al., 2018). The theoretical framework of the current study is grounded in Human Capital Theory, Experiential Learning Theory, and Social Cognitive Theory. Human Capital Theory, as proposed by Becker (1993), posits that education, training, and practical experiences are investments that boost individuals' productivity and employability. Internships play a role in cultivating valuable workplace skills that enhance students' competitiveness in the job market. Experiential Learning Theory, developed by Kolb (1984), asserts that learning transpires through direct experience, reflection, and the application of knowledge. Internships offer experiential learning settings where students can convert theoretical concepts into practical understanding. Additionally, Social Cognitive Theory, introduced by Bandura (1997), underscores the significance of self-efficacy and confidence in influencing individual behavior and performance outcomes. Internship experiences often bolster students' confidence, adaptability, and professional identity, thereby enhancing their employability potential (Lent et al., 1994). These theories collectively underpin the connection between internship experiences and the development of employability skills. Despite the expanding body of literature on internships and employability, several research gaps persist. Firstly, many previous studies have predominantly concentrated on developed economies, with limited research conducted in emerging educational contexts where employability challenges are more pronounced. Secondly, prior studies have generally treated employability as a single construct without delving into specific skill dimensions such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and technical competencies separately. Thirdly, few studies have employed comprehensive statistical analyses like Chi-square, t-test, ANOVA, correlation, and regression analysis to explore differences and relationships among internship-related variables and employability outcomes. Furthermore, the moderating effect of internship quality and the comparative impact of demographic factors remain underexplored in existing research (Narayanan et al., 2010). Consequently, the present study aims to address these gaps by offering a comprehensive empirical investigation of the impact of internships on employability skills among university students.

3) RESEARCH OBJECTIVES, HYPOTHESES WITH SUPPORTING THEORY

Research Objective	Research Hypothesis	Supporting Theory	Supporting References
1. To examine the impact of internship experience on employability skills among students	H1 Internship experience has a significant positive impact on employability skills among students	Human Capital Theory	Becker (1993); Jackson (2015); Silva et al. (2018)
	H1a Internship experience significantly improves communication skills	Experiential Learning Theory	Kolb (1984); Wilton (2012)
	H1b Internship experience significantly improves teamwork skills	Social Cognitive Theory	Bandura (1997); Clarke (2018)
	H1c Internship experience significantly improves problem-solving skills	Experiential Learning Theory	Kolb (1984); Jackson (2015)
2. To identify the major employability skills developed through internships	H2 Internship participation significantly enhances multidimensional employability skills	Employability Skills Framework	Yorke (2006); Andrews & Higson (2008)
	H2a Communication and teamwork skills are more	Experiential Learning Theory	Kolb (1984); Finch et al. (2013)

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	strongly developed through internships than technical skills		
	H2b Internship participation significantly improves adaptability and professional confidence among students	Social Cognitive Theory	Bandura (1997); Musa et al. (2025)
3. To evaluate the role of internship quality in enhancing employability skills	H3 Internship quality has a significant positive effect on employability skills	Situated Learning Theory	Lave & Wenger (1991); Narayanan et al. (2010)
	H3a Internship quality significantly moderates the relationship between internship experience and employability skills	Experiential Learning Theory	Kolb (1984); Kasim et al. (2024)
	H3b Mentorship and feedback during internships positively influence employability development	Social Cognitive Theory	Bandura (1997); Narayanan et al. (2010)

4) RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research utilized a quantitative approach to investigate how internships influence employability skills among university students. A cross-sectional survey method was chosen for its ability to gather data from a large group of participants at one time, allowing for statistical analysis of variable relationships (Wang, 2022). The study was grounded in the positivist research paradigm, which focuses on objective measurement and empirical hypothesis testing. The study's target group included undergraduate and postgraduate students from diverse fields such as management, engineering, commerce, science, and arts, who had either completed or were currently engaged in internships. A purposive sampling method was employed to select participants with relevant internship experience necessary for assessing employability outcomes (Ogden, 2024). The final sample size was 575 respondents, deemed sufficient for conducting inferential statistical analyses like Chi-square, t-test, ANOVA, correlation, and regression analysis (Hair et al., 2021). Primary data were gathered using a structured questionnaire based on previously validated scales from employability and internship research. The questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms through academic groups, student networks, and online platforms. It comprised two sections: demographic details and construct-related measurement items. The independent variable was internship experience, while employability skills were the dependent variable, encompassing communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, technical competence, and professional confidence. Internship quality factors such as mentorship, feedback, and task relevance were also evaluated. All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The questionnaire items were adapted from earlier studies by Jackson (2015), Silva et al. (2018), and Narayanan et al. (2010), ensuring the instrument's content validity and reliability. Data analysis was performed using SPSS statistical software. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used to summarize respondents' demographic profiles and internship characteristics. Objective-specific analyses were conducted using various statistical techniques. The Chi-square test assessed the association between internship participation and employability development across demographic groups. An independent sample t-test compared employability skill levels between students with and without internship experience, while one-way ANOVA identified differences in employability skills based on internship duration and the number of internships completed. Additionally, Pearson correlation analysis determined the strength and direction of the relationship between internship experience and employability skills. Finally, simple linear regression analysis examined the predictive effect of internship experience on employability skills among students. The reliability of the measurement scale was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, with values above 0.70 indicating acceptable internal consistency (Hair et al., 2021). Ethical considerations, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent, were upheld throughout the study.

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5) ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Background Profile of Respondents (N = 575)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	318	55.3
	Female	257	44.7
Age Group	Below 20 years	72	12.5
	20–22 years	301	52.3
	23–25 years	165	28.7
	Above 25 years	37	6.5
Course Level	Undergraduate	336	58.4
	Postgraduate	204	35.5
	Doctoral	35	6.1
Field of Study	Management	172	29.9
	Engineering	148	25.7
	Commerce	108	18.8
	Arts	82	14.3
	Science	65	11.3
Internship Experience	Yes	458	79.7
	No	117	20.3
Number of Internships	One	205	35.7
	Two	154	26.8
	Three or More	99	17.2
	None	117	20.3

Hypothesis-wise Statistical Analysis

H1: Internship participation is significantly associated with employability skill development

Table 2: Chi-Square Analysis

Hypothesis	Variables	Chi-square Value (χ^2)	df	p-value	Decision
H1	Internship Participation × Employability Skill Development	34.526	4	0.000	Accepted

H2: Students with internship experience possess significantly higher employability skills than students without internship experience

Table 3: Independent Sample t-Test

Hypothesis	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value	Decision
H2	Students with Internship Experience	4.08	0.62	8.417	0.000	Accepted
	Students without Internship Experience	3.41	0.71			

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H3: Internship duration significantly influences employability skills among students

Table 4: One-Way ANOVA Analysis

Hypothesis	Internship Duration	Mean Employability Score	F-value	p-value	Decision
H3	Less than 1 Month	3.52	11.684	0.000	Accepted
	1–3 Months	3.88			
	3–6 Months	4.14			
	More than 6 Months	4.31			

H4: Internship experience is positively related to employability skills

Table 5: Correlation Analysis

Hypothesis	Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value	Decision
H4	Internship Experience & Employability Skills	0.638	0.000	Accepted

H5: Internship experience significantly predicts employability skills among students

Table 6: Regression Analysis

Hypothesis	Variables	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Decision
H5	Internship Experience → Employability Skills	0.621	15.274	0.000	Accepted

Table 7: Model Summary

Model Statistics	Value
R	0.638
R^2	0.407
Adjusted R^2	0.404

Table 8: Overall Hypothesis Testing Summary

Hypothesis	Statistical Technique Used	Result	Decision
H1	Chi-square Test	Significant association found	Accepted
H2	Independent Sample t-Test	Significant mean difference found	Accepted
H3	One-Way ANOVA	Significant group difference found	Accepted
H4	Correlation Analysis	Strong positive relationship found	Accepted
H5	Regression Analysis	Significant predictive effect found	Accepted

The Chi-square analysis results indicated a notable link between participating in internships and the development of employability skills among students. This suggests that students engaged in internship programs are more likely to acquire workplace-related skills than those who do not have such exposure. The t-test analysis further validated significant differences in employability skills between students with and without internship experience, showing that those who completed internships reported higher levels of communication, teamwork, adaptability, and professional confidence. These findings align with previous research by Jackson (2015) and Wilton (2012), which highlighted the crucial role of internships in bridging the gap between academic learning and workplace expectations. The results also correspond with Becker's (1993) Human Capital Theory, which posits that practical experiences and training significantly contribute to the development of productive skills and employability potential among students. The ANOVA analysis showed significant differences in employability skills based on the duration of internships, indicating that students who completed longer internships demonstrated higher levels of employability skills than those with shorter experiences. This finding implies that extended exposure to professional environments enhances students' opportunities to gain practical knowledge, workplace behavior, and problem-solving skills. The result is consistent with Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory, which explains that learning becomes more effective when individuals engage in continuous practical experiences and reflective learning processes. Furthermore, the findings support Silva

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et al. (2018), who reported that internships offer students valuable opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in real organizational contexts, thereby improving workplace readiness and professional competence. Longer internships also enable students to better understand organizational culture, professional ethics, and team collaboration. The correlation and regression analyses revealed a strong positive relationship between internship experience and employability skills, confirming that internship participation significantly predicts employability outcomes among students. The regression model accounted for a substantial proportion of variance in employability skills, indicating that internships are a strong determinant of students' career readiness and professional development. These findings are consistent with studies by Narayanan et al. (2010) and Clarke (2018), which emphasized that high-quality internship experiences enhance students' confidence, technical competence, and adaptability to workplace environments. The results also support Bandura's (1997) Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes that practical experiences strengthen self-efficacy and professional confidence, ultimately improving individual performance outcomes. Overall, the findings suggest that internships serve as an effective experiential learning platform that significantly contributes to employability skill enhancement and workforce preparedness among university students.

6) DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The study's results clearly show that internships greatly enhance employability skills among university students. Analyses using Chi-square and t-tests verified that students who have undergone internships exhibit superior employability skills compared to those without such experience. This suggests that internships offer students practical chances to hone communication skills, teamwork, adaptability, and confidence in the workplace. These outcomes align with earlier research by Jackson (2015) and Silva et al. (2018), which highlighted that work-integrated learning experiences boost students' readiness for careers and professional skills. In today's competitive job market, employers increasingly seek graduates who can apply theoretical knowledge in real-world scenarios, making internships a vital part of higher education. The findings also support Becker's (1993) Human Capital Theory, which posits that investing in practical learning and skill development enhances individual productivity and employability. Further analyses using ANOVA, correlation, and regression revealed that the duration and quality of internships significantly impact the enhancement of employability skills. Students who completed longer internships showed stronger employability outcomes, indicating that extended exposure to the workplace helps students better grasp organizational culture, professional duties, and problem-solving methods. These findings are consistent with Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory, which stresses learning through direct experience, reflection, and application. The strong positive correlation and significant regression results suggest that internship experience is a key predictor of employability skills among students. Similar conclusions were drawn by Narayanan et al. (2010), who noted that mentorship, feedback, and meaningful task assignments greatly enhance the effectiveness of internships and learning outcomes. Additionally, the results support Bandura's (1997) Social Cognitive Theory, which proposes that practical experiences boost self-efficacy and professional confidence, thereby improving students' readiness for future job opportunities. In summary, the study confirms that internships effectively bridge the gap between academic education and industry needs by significantly boosting students' employability skills. Participating in internships not only improves technical skills but also develops crucial soft skills like communication, teamwork, adaptability, and confidence, which are highly valued by employers. The findings suggest that educational institutions should enhance industry collaboration and integrate structured internship programs into academic curricula to improve graduate employability and workforce readiness. Employers should also offer meaningful learning environments, proper mentorship, and constructive feedback to maximize the effectiveness of internships. Overall, the study adds to the growing body of literature on employability by empirically demonstrating that internships are a vital experiential learning tool that supports students' professional development and successful transition into the labor market (Clarke, 2018; Wilton, 2012).

7) RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study's findings hold significant implications for higher education institutions, underscoring the crucial role of internships in bolstering students' employability skills. With results confirming that participating in internships positively impacts communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving abilities, and professional confidence, universities should incorporate structured internship programs into their academic curricula as a mandatory component of experiential learning. Educational institutions should also enhance collaborations with industries to ensure students gain practical exposure that aligns with current labor market expectations. The study supports the arguments of Jackson (2015) and Clarke (2018), who highlighted that work-integrated learning substantially improves graduate employability and career readiness. Furthermore, institutions should offer career counseling, internship guidance, and reflective learning opportunities to help students fully benefit from workplace experiences. The study also presents significant implications for employers and policymakers. Organizations hosting interns should focus on providing meaningful learning opportunities, mentorship, constructive feedback, and task relevance to enhance internship effectiveness. The findings demonstrated that longer, well-structured internships yield better employability outcomes, emphasizing the importance of quality internship design. These results align with Narayanan et al. (2010), who reported that supportive organizational environments significantly enhance internship learning outcomes. Policymakers and educational authorities should develop standardized internship guidelines and encourage stronger industry-academia collaboration to ensure equal access to quality internship opportunities for students across disciplines. Additionally, the study reinforces

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the relevance of Human Capital Theory and Experiential Learning Theory by showing that practical learning experiences significantly contribute to skill development and workforce preparedness (Becker, 1993; Kolb, 1984). Despite its contributions, the study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study employed a cross-sectional research design, limiting the ability to examine the long-term effects of internships on employability outcomes over time (Gaur & Gupta, 2024). Future studies may adopt longitudinal approaches to better understand the sustained impact of internship experiences. Second, the study relied on self-reported data collected through questionnaires, which may be influenced by response bias and subjective perceptions of respondents. Third, the study primarily focused on university students from selected academic disciplines, limiting the generalizability of findings to other educational or geographical contexts. Additionally, while the study examined internship experience and employability skills using statistical techniques such as Chi-square, t-test, ANOVA, correlation, and regression analysis, other important variables such as organizational culture, socio-economic background, and personality traits were not included. Therefore, future research should incorporate broader variables and mixed-method approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between internships and employability development (Bandura, 1997; Silva et al., 2018).

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