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Students Perspective towards Internship at Higher Education Institutes in Oman

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Abstract:

Internship is becoming a vital component in the curricula of Higher Education institutes. In this research paper a study on satisfaction of students with internship in a Higher Education Institute has been done. It is important to understand the various aspects that are important and contributes to the satisfaction of interns. The broad factors studied are job characteristics and work environment characteristics and their impact on general satisfaction and behavioral intentions of interns. The results indicate the no correlation between the job characteristics and satisfaction and a strong degree of correlation between work environment and satisfaction. These findings can be useful to all the stakeholders studying internship satisfaction and its behavioral implications.

Keywords: Internship, Job Characteristics, Work Environment, Behavioral Intent, Internship Satisfaction

1. Introduction

An internship is one of the important type of “experiential learning”, and is defined as “A structured, student-centered, integrated curriculum-based educational experience utilizing practical applications and active involvement that extends beyond the traditional classroom setting” (Beard, 2007). Many higher education institutes have a mandatory credit point for internship programme which requires students to have firsthand experience in actual work environment. Through internship programs students career prospects can be improved (Teed & Bhattacharya 2002; Burnett 2003, Thorpe-Dulgarian 2008)

1.1. Job Characteristics

The characteristics of the job are a set of variables concerned with "what an employee does at work. The factors that describe job characteristics skill variety (i.e., how varied the activities are that are needed to complete a task), task identity (i.e., the extent to which a job is done from start to finish and having a noticeable outcome), task significance (i.e., the degree to which a job has impact on other people in the organization or in society), autonomy (i.e., the amount of freedom employees are given in choosing the order of their tasks and how they will complete them), and feedback (i.e., the amount of information employees are given about the effectiveness of their work outcome) are taken in the instrument (Abate & Wenzel, 2009)

1.2. Work Environment Characteristics

The literature review suggests that characteristics of the more general work environment (Steers & Porter, 1991), not just the work itself, need to be considered as predictors of internship satisfaction. These issues differ from job characteristics in that they come from more affect-based characteristics of the environment in which the employee is engaged. From the literature review it has been seen that there exists significant relationships between the quality of a supervisor's supportiveness and job satisfaction for full-time employees. Career development opportunities, supervisory support, co-worker support in the work environment may be important predictors of internship satisfaction. (Abate & Wenzel, 2009)

1.3. Behavioral Intention

Behavioral Intention have a significant positive influence on "satisfaction with experiences," "willingness to return to the original unit," and "willingness to recommend to other people to engage in the industry where I did my internship. The internship does not only help students to cultivate a professional spirit of service, but also assist them in obtaining employment at the workplace in the future, and arouse their interest in expertise in the industry. In addition, customers' affirmation for students during the internship further makes them feel a sense of accomplishment. (Chen, Hu, Wang, & Chen, 2011)

2. Literature Review

The study "Internships: Is There a Common Vision?" examined the findings that emerge from the data (stakeholder interviews, observations, and internship documents) to make meaning of what makes up the common area(s) of the internship experience for stakeholders (students, employers, and university department) of an undergraduate internship program at a Midwest Mid-Size Regional University. (Allen & Central, 2010)

In the report "To Benefit or not to Benefit: Mutually induces consideration as a test for the legality of unpaid internships". In the of career progression a student first he tries to get into the best college and then tries to get best unpaid internship and then aims to get the best paid job. This pattern, however, has raised some basic issues. This has become a weakness for students from the middle and lower class as they can't afford to take unpaid internships, which increases and effect socioeconomic and sometimes racial inequality. Also it's when interns are not paid, they are not treated as classified employees who cannot claim for legal protection under the case of work harassment or discrimination. Another weakness is that employer's are firing full-time employees and replacing them with teams of unpaid interns. Despite these concerns, unpaid internships persist, and as of today, there is little to no case law about them. (As, For, Legality, & Internships, n.d.)

Benefits of internship have been demonstrated in "Internships as a strategic tool for small Business: A conceptual study". Positive effect of internship has been shown to the student interns, the educational institutions those students attend and the business entities that provide the internship experience. It is proposed in the research that academic internships can contribute to the fulfillment of these critical needs and examine that potentiality through three lenses: a strategic, a resource-based view, and a cognitive psychological perspective. It offers a synoptic vision of the potential benefits that can serve as a guide for the owners/managers of these entities in search of strategic improvement for their organizations and a model that can be used to clarify the message about the strategic value of internships to small firms. (Degrauel & Koutroumanis, 2012)

In the study " student perception of the value of internships in business education " it is studied that Internship is widely sought by students of higher education in business as it connects the students and the competitive business world. In this study a strong statistical correlation between the perceived value of the internship and the student's demographic profile, the structure of the internship, and the connection to the student's career plans has been shown . (Hergert, 2009)

In the study "Perceived Effectiveness of Business Internship: Student expectation, experience & personality trait" . this study empirically examines perceived effectiveness of business internships, students' academic preparation, and internship placement. The findings of this study suggest that students overall find themselves academically prepared for business internships, students find internship to be very effective means of preparing them to enter into the real business world where they different skills..(Moghaddam, 2011)

Internship is said to have enhanced different skills of the students which they learnt theoretically in the class room. A study of internship in tourism education and training, examines the effectiveness of internship in tourism education and training. A major challenge identified in the implementation of internship for students was how to find industrial placement for the teeming tourism and hospitality students to ensure that they acquired the appropriate on-the-job skills. The study concludes that innovative ways should be found to ensure that sufficient periods of internship are undertaken by tourism students to give them hands-on training for ready employment with industry after graduation.(Owusu-mintah & Kissi, 2012)

In "Trends in industry supervisors feedback on business communication internship" a study is undertaken to explore expectations of industry insiders and identify the performance of the interns in relation to the expectations in different performance areas. It was found that student interns tend to meet the expectations of their supervisors in areas like, writing skills, and oral communication skills. However these skills require increased attention in the ways students are prepared for their internships and post-graduation employment.(Sapp & Zhang, 2009)

Internship is also said to influence the behavioral intentions of the college students. Effect of internship experiences on behavioral intention of college students is studied. The internship experiences can be converted into positive and negative experiences, each containing five major aspects; Sensory experiences, affective experiences, creative cognitive experiences, physical experiences and relational experiences. Each of these has different effect on satisfaction with experiences, willingness to work. (Chen & Chen) Study "The Role of Emotional Expression and Mentoring in Internship Learning" examines the practical role of interns in nurturing positive internship experiences and how such experiences may bring about beneficial outcomes for both interns and the organization where internship is taken up. The results of the study, indicate that emotional sharing is positively related to both learning and mentoring, while emotional masking is negatively related to learning. In addition, intern social activity is positively related to mentoring. The study also indicated that the levels of learning and mentoring received are significantly related to intern job satisfaction, affective commitment to the internship sponsor, and a positive attitude toward the industry they interned with as a potential future career. (Weitz, 2011)

3. Research Hypothesis

- *Hypothesis 1:* Job characteristics are positively related to internship satisfaction.
- *Hypothesis 2:* Work environment characteristics are positively related to internship satisfaction.
- *Hypothesis 3:* Internship satisfaction influences the behavioral Intention of the student

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Research Objectives

- To study the general satisfaction of at Internship.
- To study the relationship between Internship Satisfaction and job Characteristics
- To study the relationship between Internship Satisfaction and work environment
- To give suggestion based on the data analysis in the research undertaken

4.2. Sample

Sample size of 32 PG students (MBA students) was taken in this research study. These students are presently in 4th semester. They have done Internship as part of the requirement of completion of MBA degree. These students have done internship either in Oman or in India.

4.3. Data Collection Method

The instrument used for the survey was structured questionnaire comprising of 32 questions. Those 32 questions were divided into three sections of job Characteristics, Work environment, and Behavioral Intentions. Each section is explained as below:

5. Data Analysis

The procedures used to analyse the data for the purposes of addressing and answering the research objectives and hypotheses are as:

- Preliminary Data Screening based on univariate statistical analysis.
- Cronbach alpha for test of reliability
- Correlation analysis to explain the association amongst select variables.

5.1. Reliability Analysis Scale (Alpha)

N of Cases = 30.0

N of Items = 32

Alpha = .7680

As per above data it is evident that overall alpha is .7680, which is high and indicates strong internal consistency among thirty two efficiency items.

5.2. Profile of the respondents

Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	18	56.3	56.3	56.3
	Female	14	43.8	43.8	100.0
Total		32	100.0	100.0	

Table 1: Gender

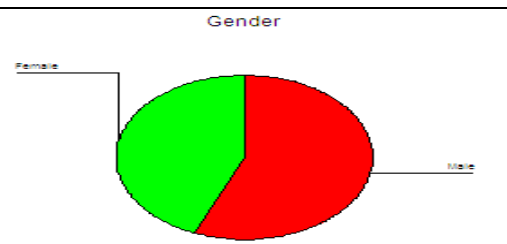


Figure 1

Table 1 shows that there were 18 male students and 14 female students who had done internship and responded to various questions on the internship satisfaction .

Specialization					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Marketing	10	31.3	31.3	31.3
	Finance	22	68.8	68.8	100.0
Total		32	100.0	100.0	

Table 2

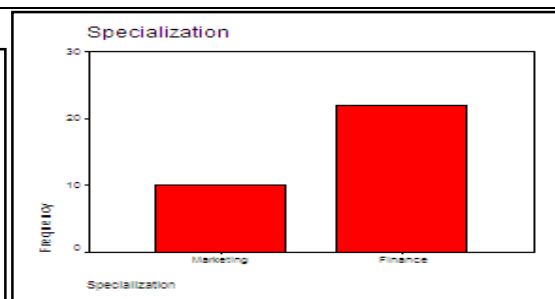


Figure 2

Table 2 shows the specialization distribution of the respondents .69% of the respondents were from Finance specialization and 31 % from marketing specialization.

Duration					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4 weeks to 6 weeks	16	50.0	50.0	50.0
	6 weeks to 8 weeks	16	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	32	100.0	100.0	

Table 3

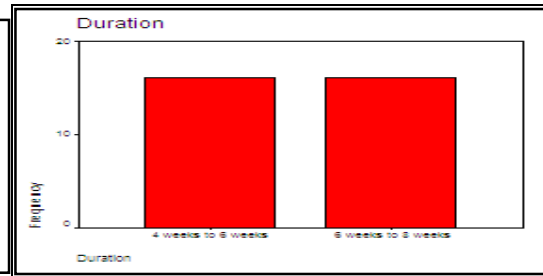


Figure 3

Table 3 shows the duration of the internship. The students can take up to 8 weeks of the internship during their summer break. As shown above in the table 50% of the respondents completed the internship study in 4weeks to 6 Weeks’ time while other 50% had done completed in 6 to 8 Weeks’ time.

Country					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	India	10	31.3	31.3	31.3
	Oman	22	68.8	68.8	100.0
	Total	32	100.0	100.0	

Table 4

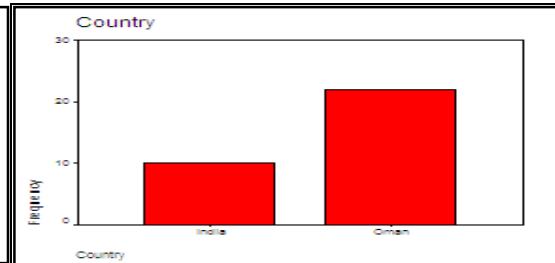


Figure 4

As shown in Table.4 69 % of the respondents had don their internship in Oman while other 31% had done it in India.

5.3. Hypothesis Testing

5.3.1. Hypothesis 1

- H_1 : Job characteristics are positively related to internship satisfaction.

Correlations			
SATISFACTION	Pearson Correlation	1	.089
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-	.630
	N	32	32
JOB CHARATERISTICS	Pearson Correlation	.089	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.630	-
	N	32	32

Table 5: Table showing correlation between Job Characteristics and Internship satisfaction

According to the statistical values exhibited in Table 5, it is quite evident that the hypothesis H_{01} gets rejected ($r=0.089$, $p=0.630$). This leads us to a conclusion that there is no correlation between job characteristics and internship satisfaction.

5.3.2. Hypothesis 2

- H_2 : Work environment characteristics are positively related to internship satisfaction.

Correlations			
		SATIS	WORKENV
SATIS	Pearson Correlation	1	.683**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	32	32
WORKENV	Pearson Correlation	.683**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	32	32

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6: Table showing correlation between Work environment and Internship satisfaction

According to the statistical values exhibited in Table 6, it is quite evident that the hypothesis H_{02} can't be rejected ($r=0.683$, $p=0.001$). This leads us to a conclusion work environment characteristics are correlated to satisfaction with internship. Moreover, a moderate value of the coefficient of correlation ($r=0.683$, $p=0.001$) indicates a moderate, although significant correlation between the said variables.

5.3.3. Hypothesis 3

- H_3 : Internship satisfaction influences the behavioral Intention of the student

Correlations			
		SATIS	BEHAVE
SATIS	Pearson Correlation	1	.342
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.056
	N	32	32
BEHAVE	Pearson Correlation	.342	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.056	.
	N	32	32

Table 7: Table showing correlation between Internship satisfaction and Behavioral Intention

According to the statistical values exhibited in Table 7, it is quite evident that the hypothesis H_{03} gets rejected ($r=0.341$, $p=0.342$). This leads us to a conclusion that there is no correlation between behavioral intentions and internship satisfaction.

6. Conclusion

Many studies have been undertaken on benefits and challenges of internship. Different types of internship s also field of interest amongst the researchers. In one of the study legality and indirectly exploiting the talents of the students has been studied. In literature review studies related to benefits of internship have also been mentioned .These studies have found that it not only helps the students in getting the experience on hands it also benefits the higher education institute and the organization where intern does the internship. Internship has helped improving different skills of the interns like communication skills writing skills etc.

Karl Pearson's correlation was used to study the correlation between Job characteristics and General Satisfaction and test has shown that there is no correlation between Job characteristics and General Satisfaction. On the other hand there exists significant correlation between Work environment and Intern satisfaction at 0.01 level of significance. In the study it was also seen that there is no correlation between Internship Satisfaction and behavioral Intention

Based on the above conclusions it can be suggested that to make internship or Industry participation in Academics more effective the Interns should be communicated and proper orientation should be provided to get the maximum benefits. Interns should be mentored. Students should select appropriate organization fit for them. Institute gets benefit when their best & brighter students have opportunities to complete excellent internship because such opportunities creates interest amongst the school students who are aspiring to work on higher corporate ladder. These prospects look up to the institute as means of full filling their dreams of joining corporate world and being successful in their career. This also generates positive image in the industry and influence the organization to select the institute during Campus placement.

From this study it can be stated that there exists need to plan for better off-campus internship and create appropriate models for internship which will help students with more effective future career planning

7. Future Research Directions

Extending the analysis to include a variety of colleges and universities could help to control for differences in the nature of the internships. In addition, future researchers might consider expanding the findings to examine other disciplines for similarities and differences regarding internships, relative to students.

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