

The Potential Benefits and Challenges on Satisfaction of Internship: A Special Reference with Eastern University, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Internships are an increasingly popular element of higher education in business and provide many potential benefits to students. The objective of the study is exploring potential benefit and challenges of internship of undergraduate students who completed their intern from the Faculty of Commerce and Management, Eastern University, Sri Lanka recently in fulfilling the requirements of industrial attachment. The research study employed structured questionnaires for 100 respondents through census study. The results indicate moderate level of perceived satisfaction from the majority of the students regarding internship programme. Further there is a positive relationship between satisfaction of intern and benefit and a negative relationship between satisfaction of intern and challenges. The overall results indicate the challenges of intern mostly impact on the job satisfaction rather than benefit. Therefore satisfaction of intern is moderate level. These findings can be useful to all the stakeholders studying internship satisfaction and its behavioral implications.

Keywords: Benefit, Challenges, Intern, satisfaction, undergraduates

Introduction

Internships is “to provide a planned transition from the classroom to the job” (Coco, 2000) and “prepare students with realistic expectations of their future careers and to provide them with opportunities to polish career skills and to gain on-the-job experience” (Paulins, 2008). Most higher education institutions in this country offer internships for their undergraduates to provide a smooth transition from the academic world to the working environment. Internships have taken on an increasingly important role in business education over the past decade (Tackett *et al.*, 2001). It provides many advantages to students ranging from gaining experience and obtaining career-related direction to networking (Lubbers, 2008) institutions offering. There is a lack of empirical research on the effective implementation of internships.

Internship programs benefit through increased cooperation and rapport with the industry (English and Koeppen, 1993). Employers also benefit from these programs, as internships can provide them with inexpensive help, new ideas and potential future employees (Rothman, 2007; Cannon and Arnold, 1998). Therefore, internships benefit students, institutions and employers (Cook *et al.*, 2004; Lam and Ching, 2007). Students may not know how to use the knowledge gained from a specific subject, and knowledge that is not used is forgotten. Internships provide students with opportunities to practice

what they have learned in the classroom, gain a greater understanding of the industries' requirements, test career choices, and develop important hands-on workplace skills (Walo, 2001).

Additionally, the internship can be regarded as a complement to their education. Hence, it is essential that the internship process be revealed as part of students' education and experiences. Educationalists and policy makers in the higher educational institutes have recently paid a closer attention to the concept of holistic education systems that focus at making a competent and versatile graduate. Incorporating an industrial internship programme in the degree curricular has been a vital requirement towards ensuring a holistic education system. Most of the educational scientists have emphasized the importance of letting the undergraduates to gain industrial exposure as a strategy to securing employability soon after their graduation.

Studies have attributed several gains to internship programs around the world. Frazier (2010) viewed such benefits as interns being offered the opportunities to attain practical experience in their areas of interest providing valued skills and augmenting their professional resume as well as increasing their marketability.

Hendrikse (2013) indicated that the benefits of completing an internship include gaining valuable work experience, having an edge in the job market, an opportunity to decide if this is the right career choice and it is a valuable way to build confidence and gain experience.

Previous studies found number of benefits as well as challenge faced by the undergraduates during their internship period. Therefore, this study confers the potential benefits and challenges on satisfaction of internship of the undergraduates of faculty of Commerce and Management, Eastern University, Sri Lanka.

Problem Statement and Objective of the Study

Both academic and professional higher education institutes pay more attention on the industrial internship programme because of dynamic and highly competitive industry seeks a competent and versatile graduate. Student internship programme is widely used technique in order to blend students' theoretical knowledge with the real life working experiences. Internship programmes provide not only significant benefits to students in terms of career preparation and income, but also to strengthen their self-confidence and self-satisfaction in the lifelong learning process. Also they felt a number of challenges militated against the effectiveness of the programmes. Therefore, these studies try to seek the potential benefits and challenges on satisfaction of internship of the undergraduates from faculty of Commerce and Management, Eastern University, Sri Lanka.

To find the answer for the research problem this research focuses on to identify the level of job satisfaction intern and, further to investigate the impact of benefits and challenges among the undergraduates of Eastern University, Sri Lanka.

In furtherance to the stated objectives the study aims to generate responses to the following questions:

- Identify the level of job satisfaction among the undergraduates.
- Identify the relationship and impact of benefit and challenges on satisfaction among the undergraduates.
- Analyze whether there is a difference in job satisfaction between male and female undergraduates.

Literature Review

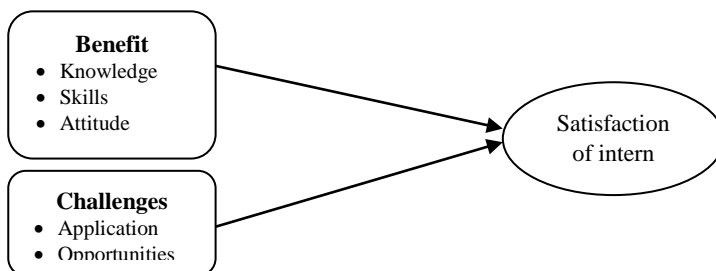
Coco (2000), for instance, identifies five benefits: 1) ability to relate classroom concepts to practical applications, 2) improved knowledge of industry career paths, 3) crystallization of interests and career ambitions, 4) reduced shock upon entering the workplace, and 5) faster advancement. Maskooki, Rama, and Raghunandan (1998) identify (1) experience integrating material from the classroom to the workplace, (2) introduction to available careers, (3) developing good work habits, and (4) increased chances of finding employment.

Fallows and Stevens (2000) stated that the most important benefit of a work related programme is that it builds employability skills of students into the higher education curriculum. Work related programs are perceived as components of undergraduate study across a host of academic disciplines, and although the terminology used to describe these programs differs, the underlying component is student involvement in a practical placement. Gault et al., (2010) advocated that internships are viable opportunities for incorporating work-inclined experiences into undergraduate curriculum through increased participation. It is evident that real-world experience and academic programs are inseparable. Internship would offer students opportunities not only to develop work skills but also understand how the real-workplace functions.

Research conducted in an agronomy department according to Herring et al., (1990), several benefits to students were linked with internship amongst which were the provisions of depth to undergraduate learning, self-confidence development, enhancement of problem solving skills as well as encouraged expertise. However, the investigation revealed lack of faculty control of the internship experience.

Wolf (2002) claims that the policy emphasis on education and skills as the main driver of economic growth overstates the importance of human capital investments and that a major function of education is as a sorting device and to some extent a social discriminator. In making policy about education and training it is clearly important to understand these potential economic returns to education and training to the individual, firms and the wider economy. Rothman, (2007), Cannon and Arnold (1998) Employers have not been left out of the benefits as internships can provide them with inexpensive help, new ideas and potential future employees. According to Tackett *et al* (2001), internships have taken on an increasingly important role in education over the past decade since they present students with many advantages, ranging from gaining experience and obtaining career-related direction to networking with other students from various institutions as they at the organization providing the internship (Lubbers, 2008).

Conceptual Framework



Source: (Mehmet et al, 2013 and Monaliza et.al, 2014) with some modification

Based on literature survey above conceptual framework has been developed. This conceptual framework establishes link between dependent and independent variables.

Methodology and Data

Data and Sampling

This study used structured questionnaire to collect data from the total population and 100 undergraduates that represents the total population using census study. The Questionnaires distributed to whole population of the final year undergraduates in the faculty of Commerce and Management Eastern University who completed their internship programme recently in private as well as government sector .The Likert Scale Method is used ascribing quantitative value to qualitative data, to make it amenable to statistical analysis.

Method of Data Presentation and Data Analysis

Univariate analysis

Univariate analysis is carried out for evaluating the attributes of dimensions and variables individually based on the response in the questionnaires. For this purpose, mean values and standard deviation of the dimensions and variables are taken into consideration. Therefore, this study initially evaluates individual characteristics of variables. Assessing the levels of dimensions and variables individually is the objective of this study with the following criteria.

Table 1. Evaluation criteria for mean values

<i>Range</i>	<i>Degree</i>
$1.0 \leq X \leq 2.5$	<i>Low level</i>
$2.5 < X \leq 3.5$	<i>Moderate level</i>
$3.5 < X \leq 5.0$	<i>High level</i>

Bivariate analysis

Bivariate analysis used to measure the magnitude and direction of the relationship between Benefit and Job satisfaction of intern and challenges and Job satisfaction of intern. Correlation can be categories based on possible ranges in relation to appropriate decision attributes in a corresponding way. The significance level of the correlation coefficient is considered to explore the meaningful linear relationship.

Results

Demographic Characteristics

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics

Gender	Percentage (%)
Male	64
Female	36

Source: Survey Data

According the table - 02 most students are male. Among the total 100 population 64% represent male and only 36% female.

Overall Measures of Independent Variables (Objective 01)

Table 3. Level satisfaction of intern

Description	Level of satisfaction of intern among the undergraduates
Mean	2.91
Standard Deviation (SD)	0.231
Minimum	1.00
Maximum	5.00
Decision Attribute	Moderate level

Source: Survey Data

From the analysis the job satisfaction among the undergraduates on internship program has mean value of 2.91 and SD is 0.231. This results show the job satisfaction among the undergraduates is moderate level because the mean range is between ($2.5 < X \leq 3.5$).

Identify the relationship and impact of benefit and challenges on satisfaction among the undergraduates. (Objective-02)

Table 4. Correlation between satisfactions of intern and independent variables

	Job satisfaction	
	Pearson Correlation: r	Sig. (2 tailed)
Knowledge	0.414	0.000
Skills	0.329	0.005
Attitude	0.310	0.009
Personality	0.320	0.004
Application	-0.698	0.001
Opportunities	-0.453	0.002

Source: Survey Data

Knowledge

The correlation analysis is initially carried out to explore the relationship of satisfaction of intern with Knowledge, if it exists, Results indicate that there is statistically significant moderate positive relationship ($r = 0.414$, $p < 0.01$) between satisfaction of intern and knowledge (see Table 4).

Skills

The correlation analysis is initially carried out to explore the relationship of satisfaction of intern with Skills, if it exists, Results indicate that there is statistically significant moderate positive relationship ($r = 0.329$, $p < 0.01$) between satisfaction of intern and skills (see Table 4).

Attitude

The correlation analysis is initially carried out to explore the relationship of satisfaction of intern with Attitude, if it exists, Results indicate that there is statistically significant

moderate positive relationship ($r = 0.310$, $p < 0.01$) between satisfaction of intern and Attitude (see Table 4).

Personality

The correlation analysis is initially carried out to explore the relationship satisfaction of intern with Personality, if it exists, Results indicate that there is statistically significant moderate positive relationship ($r = 0.320$, $p < 0.01$) between satisfaction of intern and Personality (see Table 4).

Application

The correlation analysis is initially carried out to explore the relationship satisfaction of intern with Application, if it exists, Results indicate that there is statistically significant high negative relationship ($r = -0.698$, $p < 0.01$) between satisfaction of intern and Application,(see Table 4).

Opportunities

The correlation analysis is initially carried out to explore the relationship satisfaction of intern with Application, if it exists, Results indicate that there is statistically significant moderate negative relationship ($r = -0.453$, $p < 0.01$) between Job satisfaction and Opportunities, (see Table 4).

This study results show there is the positive relationship between satisfactions of intern and benefits, as well as negative relationship between satisfaction of intern and challenges, if the benefit increases the satisfaction of intern will increase or otherwise benefits decrease the satisfaction of intern will decrease. And also there is negative relationship between satisfaction of intern and challenges that's mean the challenges increase satisfaction of intern will decrease or challenges decrease satisfaction of intern will increase.

Table 5. Simple regression analysis on satisfaction of intern

Variables	R ²	Sig
Benefit	0.36	0.002
challenges	0.62	0.000

Source: Survey Data

Regression analysis indicates that the independent variable, Benefit, (significantly, significant level 0.01) explains 36% of the variability of the dependent variable, such as satisfaction of intern in the population.

As well as the results show that the independent variable, challenges, (significantly, significant level 0.01) explains 62% of the variability of the dependent variable, such as satisfaction of intern in the population (See Table 7).

As per overall results indicate the challenges mostly impact the job satisfaction in internship program because the 62% of challenges impact the job satisfaction.

Table 6. Multiple regression analysis on satisfaction of intern

R ²	Sig
0.74	0.000

Source: Survey Data

The model indicates that about (adjusted R²) 74%% variation of satisfaction of intern in internship (see Table 6) can be explained by challenges and benefits.

Analyze whether there is a difference in satisfaction between male and female undergraduates

Table 7. Independent sample t-test

T	Sig
0.450	0.655

Source: Survey Data

The results show sig value is more than 0.05($t=0.655$) there is enough evidence to conclude that there is no difference in satisfaction of intern between male and female undergraduates. (See table 07)

Conclusion

Internship program has become a very important component in educational programs in the undergraduates who are study in university, they get advantages as well as faced so many challenges during the intern. Therefore this study was aimed at exploring potential benefit and challenges faced by Faculty of Commerce and Management students at the Eastern University, Sri Lanka. According to the results showed the satisfaction of intern is moderate level, because the satisfaction of intern has mean value 2.91and standard deviation 0.231.

Secondary Objective of this research findings results show there is the positive relationship between satisfaction of intern and benefits, as well as negative relationship between satisfaction of intern and challenges, and also the results show that the independent variable, challenges, (significantly, significant level 0.01) explains 62% of the variability of the dependent variable, such as satisfaction of intern in the population for this reasons the satisfaction of intern is moderate level because mostly challenges impact of the satisfaction of intern more than the benefit. Because the students are treated like full time staff, working hours are longer than originally advertised like this reasons students are faced challenges than benefits that's the reasons the satisfaction of intern is moderate level.

Final objective of this study there is no difference in job satisfaction between male and female undergraduates.

Recommendation

- Based on the conclusion following suggestions are forwarded to students as well as marketers who provide the intern opportunity.
- The university should look for practicum places for the students as stated in the guiding module that the university had organizations they had understanding with.
- There is need for effective collaboration between the training institution and the institutions offering the practicum
- There is need to provide sample portfolios for those about to undergo the practicum program; and prospective employers must guarantee to pay and employ the interns.

- Supervision of interns should improve with more visits to the sites of internship and those programs where Program Coordinators do not visit interns should re-visit their regulations and make site visits to their interns.
- The internship duration should be increases
- Legislation should be enacted to protect interns against exploitation by unscrupulous employers.

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