

Evaluating the Impact of Student Internships on Hospitality Management Education

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Abstract. This study addresses the gap in evaluating the effectiveness of the Student Internship Program (SIP), a structured industry-based training initiative designed to bridge academic learning and real-world practice in Hospitality Management. Aiming to assess the program's impact, the study utilized a descriptive survey design and gathered data from 41 third-year Hospitality Management students who completed a three-month internship during the academic year 2023–2024. Effectiveness was measured using a structured questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale, focusing on three key domains: personal development, environmental adaptation, and decision-making skills. Results indicate that the SIP enhances students' professional growth, boosts confidence, and provides industry-relevant experience. The findings underscore the vital role of internships in workforce preparation and suggest the need for continuous program improvement to align with evolving industry demands and support student success.

Keywords: Career readiness; Experiential learning; Hospitality management education; Program effectiveness; Student internship program.

1.0 Introduction

In today's competitive and skills-driven labor market, the value of a college degree increasingly depends on a graduate's ability to translate theoretical knowledge into practical, real-world competencies. This is especially true in Hospitality Management, where employers seek not only technical know-how but also adaptability, critical thinking, and strong interpersonal skills. One key strategy to bridge the gap between academic instruction and industry demands is the student internship program. In the Philippine context, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) underscores the importance of internships through Memorandum Order No. 104, Series of 2017, which mandates the integration of academic learning with hands-on training in recognized Host Training Establishments (HTEs)—companies or institutions authorized to provide workplace immersion. These programs aim to equip students with relevant skills, values, and professional experiences that transcend traditional classroom learning.

Globally and locally, research supports internships' role in enhancing hard and soft skills. For example, Dikti (2020) and Hadiyanto et al. (2020) highlighted that internship programs are most effective when deliberately structured within the academic curriculum and aligned with course objectives. Similarly, Careerlabs (2023) emphasized that successful internships promote self-reflection, teamwork, and critical self-evaluation, contributing significantly to a student's preparedness for future employment.

Despite the well-established benefits of internships, there remains a gap in evaluating how effectively specific

local internship programs meet these expectations, particularly within public higher education institutions in the Philippines. While studies have examined internship models in other countries or private institutions, less is known about the real-world outcomes of internship programs offered by state universities, especially in regions such as Negros Oriental.

This study addresses that gap by investigating the effectiveness of the Student Internship Program (SIP) in Hospitality Management at a state university in Central Visayas, focusing on how well it prepares students for the demands of the hospitality industry. Specifically, the study examines skills development, professional readiness, alignment with academic content, and student satisfaction. Using a descriptive research design, data were collected from third-year students who completed a three-month internship during the academic year 2023–2024, alongside evaluations from employers and faculty coordinators. This study's purpose is to provide a comprehensive assessment of the SIP's strengths and areas for improvement. Its significance lies in identifying whether the internship program meets industry standards and offering evidence-based recommendations for enhancing curriculum design. Ultimately, this research seeks to bridge the gap between academic training and professional readiness, ensuring that graduates of the Hospitality Management program are competent, confident, and prepared to succeed in their chosen careers.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive, survey-based, cross-sectional research design to assess the effectiveness of the Student Internship Program (SIP) in Hospitality Management as a basis for curriculum enhancement. It aimed to describe the experiences and perceptions of third-year students who completed a three-month internship during the academic year 2023–2024. A structured questionnaire was used to gather data from 41 selected students through purposive sampling. The questionnaire focused on three key areas: personal development, environmental adaptation, and decision-making. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics—frequency, percentage, and mean. Frequency and percentage were used to summarize participant responses and identify dominant trends, while the mean scores helped determine the overall perceived effectiveness of each dimension of the internship program.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in a state university in Central Visayas, Philippines, specifically within the Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management program. The university offers internship opportunities through its Student Internship Program (SIP), which aims to provide students with practical training in various hospitality-related establishments. The research focused on third-year Hospitality Management students who completed their internships during the academic year 2023–2024. The university's name is not disclosed for confidentiality and data privacy purposes.

2.3 Research Participants

The participants of the study were 41 third-year Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management (BSHM) students from a state university in Negros Oriental who completed their Student Internship Program (SIP) during the academic year 2023–2024. The study utilized purposive sampling, a non-probability technique where participants are selected based on specific criteria relevant to the study. In this case, participants were chosen because of their direct involvement in the internship program and ability to provide informed insights into its effectiveness (Palinkas et al., 2015). The sample size of 41 was determined based on the total number of eligible students who completed the internship during the academic year and voluntarily agreed to participate in the study.

2.4 Research Instrument

The primary instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher and anchored in David Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, which emphasizes learning through concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. The questionnaire assessed the effectiveness of the Student Internship Program (SIP) across three dimensions: personal development, environmental adaptation, and decision-making. A 4-point Likert scale was used to measure responses: 4 – Very Effective, 3 – Effective, 2 – Less Effective, and 1 – Not Effective. To ensure content validity, the instrument was evaluated by a panel of three experts in education and hospitality. Their feedback guided the revision and refinement of questionnaire items. A pilot test was also conducted with 10 students (not part of the final sample) to check for the instrument's clarity, reliability, and coherence.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection occurred during the second semester of the academic year 2023–2024. The researcher distributed the structured questionnaire in person during class sessions to ensure accessibility and high response rates. Before distribution, participants were informed about the study's purpose and procedures, and informed consent was obtained. To encourage honest and unbiased responses, participants were assured of the anonymity of their answers, and questionnaires were submitted anonymously. Completing the questionnaire took approximately 15–20 minutes, after which responses were collected immediately and coded for analysis.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

This study followed ethical guidelines to ensure the protection of participants. Informed consent was obtained, participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained. Data were anonymized, securely stored, and will be deleted after one year. The researcher ensured transparency and upheld ethical standards throughout the research process, including proper citations.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Effectiveness of the Student Internship Program Based on Personal Factors

The findings presented in Table 1 suggest that the Student Internship Program (SIP) in Hospitality Management has been highly effective in influencing personal factors related to student engagement, learning, and development. The overall mean score of 3.42 indicates that students generally found the SIP to be very effective in enhancing their professional competencies and fostering personal growth, which aligns with research highlighting the value of internships in bridging the gap between academic theory and industry practice (Kolb, 1984; Hernandez et al., 2018).

Table 1. *Effectiveness of the Student Internship Program (SIP) in Hospitality Management: Personal Factors*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
I am pretty good and happy with the Student Internship Program (SIP).	3.51	Very Effective
I am always interested to learn and complete my SIP in industry/corporation.	3.56	Very Effective
I am provided with a lot of valuable hands-on experience during my Student Internship Program in industry/corporation.	3.29	Very Effective
I have developed and improved my skills in Hospitality Management	3.44	Very Effective
I felt supported by my internship coordinator/supervisor.	3.29	Very Effective
Factor Average	3.42	Very Effective

The results show that the program was particularly effective in boosting student motivation (3.56) and satisfaction (3.51). These findings echo the conclusions of Abbasi (2022) and Duffy and Lee (2019), who found that engagement and satisfaction significantly enhance learning and skill development. Additionally, while students rated hands-on experience and supervisor support positively (3.29), there is potential for improvement in task diversity and mentorship structure.

3.2 Effectiveness of the Student Internship Program Based on Environmental Factors

Table 2 illustrates that environmental factors significantly contributed to the perceived effectiveness of the Student Internship Program in Hospitality Management, with a factor average of 3.35, interpreted as very effective. The highest-rated statement, "It improves my personal growth, growing my circle of friends through meeting new people," scored 3.70, reflecting the internship's strong role in enhancing students' interpersonal development.

Table 2. *Effectiveness of the Student Internship Program (SIP) in Hospitality Management: Environmental Factors*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
The internship provided me with opportunities to network with industry professionals.	3.19	Effective
Learning experience operates all levels of human society from individuals to organizations.	3.14	Effective
It improves my personal growth, growing my circle of friends through meeting new people.	3.70	Very Effective
I was able to meet different cultures and ways of thinking.	3.27	Very Effective
I can apply what I've learned in my internships and projects.	3.44	Very Effective
Factor Average	3.35	Very Effective

Students acknowledged growth in social and cultural awareness and improved application of academic knowledge. These results are consistent with findings from Yoo et al. (2021), Kim and Jeon (2022), and Zopiatis et al. (2021), who emphasized the importance of cultural competency and networking in hospitality education.

3.3 Effectiveness of the Student Internship Program Based on Decision-Making Factors

The findings in Table 3 reveal that the decision-making factors in the Student Internship Program (SIP) were perceived as very effective, with a factor average of 3.56. The highest indicator, “It encourages us to pursue this career” (3.68), highlights how internship experiences influence students’ motivation and confidence in choosing hospitality as a long-term profession.

Table 3. *Effectiveness of the Student Internship Program (SIP) in Hospitality Management: Decision-Making Factors*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
My understanding of the hospitality sector has become stronger as a result of my hands-on experience.	3.46	Effective
It encourages us to pursue this career.	3.68	Effective
Those experience can process human adaptation and help us retain information and apply it in all areas of our life.	3.56	Very Effective
Through internship I can solve existing challenges based on my exl learn new skills while also discovering and growing my career path.perience.	3.46	Very Effective
I learn new skills while also discovering and growing my career path.	3.66	Very Effective
Factor Average	3.56	Very Effective

These results reflect the SIP’s significant contribution to career clarity and decision-making, supporting the studies of Memon et al. (2023), Chen and Huang (2022), and Lo and Au (2022), who emphasize that practical exposure enhances motivation, problem-solving skills, and long-term readiness for the hospitality workforce.

3.4 Correlation Analysis between Student Demographics and Perceived Effectiveness of the SIP

Table 4 presents the correlation analysis showing that age, gender, internship location, and academic status have no statistically significant relationship with personal, environmental, or decision-making factors. All p-values exceeded the standard alpha level of 0.05, indicating no meaningful influence of these demographic variables on students' perceptions.

Table 4. *Test of Significant Relationship between the Perceived Factors that Contribute to the Effectiveness of the Student Internship Program (SIP) in Hospitality Management of Negros Oriental and the Profile Variable*

Variables		Correlation value	p	Strength of Relationship	Remarks	Decision Rule
Personal Factors	Age	.03	.827	Positive Negligible Correlation	Not Significant	Failed to Reject Null
	Gender	-.02	.870	Negative Negligible Correlation	Not Significant	Failed to Reject Null
	Internship Location	-.05	.717	Negative Negligible Correlation	Not Significant	Failed to Reject Null
	Academic Status	.20	.208	Positive Negligible Correlation	Not Significant	Failed to Reject Null
Environmental Factors	Age	.07	.656	Positive Negligible Correlation	Not Significant	Failed to Reject Null
	Gender	.02	.875	Negative Negligible Correlation	Not Significant	Failed to Reject Null
	Internship Location	.03	.846	Positive Negligible Correlation	Not Significant	Failed to Reject Null
	Academic Status	.23	.144	Positive Slight Correlation	Not Significant	Failed to Reject Null
Decision-Making Factors	Age	-.04	.797	Negative Negligible Correlation	Not Significant	Failed to Reject Null
	Gender	-.02	.175	Negative Slight Correlation	Not Significant	Failed to Reject Null
	Internship Location	.09	.543	Positive Negligible Correlation	Not Significant	Failed to Reject Null

Academic Status	.07	.632	Positive Negligible Correlation	Not Significant	Failed to Reject Null
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The correlation values, ranging from -0.058 to 0.232, indicate negligible to slight relationships. For example, academic status and decision-making factors yielded the highest correlation ($r = 0.232$) but were not statistically significant ($p = 0.144$). These results align with studies by Suhartanto et al. (2022) and Nguyen et al. (2023), which conclude that program quality, mentorship, and hands-on experience are stronger influencers of internship success than demographic characteristics.

4.0 Conclusion

This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of the Student Internship Program (SIP) in Hospitality Management based on personal, environmental, and decision-making factors. The findings reveal that the program was effective across all three dimensions, particularly in enhancing student motivation, fostering personal growth, and aiding career decision-making.

A key contribution of this study lies in demonstrating how structured internship programs significantly support student development in hospitality education, regardless of demographic differences such as age, gender, internship location, or academic status. These findings underscore the value of experiential learning and its potential to standardize positive outcomes across diverse student profiles.

By highlighting the importance of real-world experience, mentorship, and exposure to workplace culture, the study offers practical insights for academic institutions and industry partners to enhance the design and implementation of internship programs. Strengthening these elements can produce more skilled, confident, and career-ready graduates.

To guide future practice, it is recommended that internship programs continue to prioritize hands-on experience and mentorship quality. Institutions may consider regular evaluations and feedback mechanisms to ensure alignment with student needs and industry expectations.

Future research may expand this study by exploring similar internship programs in other disciplines or institutions, enabling comparative analysis and further refinement of best practices in experiential learning. Simplifying internship structures for clarity and accessibility, especially for students from underrepresented groups, could also be a valuable area of inquiry.

In sum, this study reinforces the crucial role of internship programs in bridging the gap between academic learning and industry practice. It provides a foundation for continuous improvement in hospitality education.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

Serdan Mendoza Devero Jr. is responsible for the manuscript's conception, design, encoding, analysis, writing, or revision.

6.0 Funding

This study received no specific grant from any funding agency.

7.0 Conflict of Interests

No conflict of interest.

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