

Assessing the Impact of Internship Experiences on Skills Development and Career Readiness among Employed Criminology Graduates

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ABSTRACT

Internships are essential in the field of criminology since they equip aspiring criminologists with hands-on training that molds their professional prospects. This study assessed the impact of internship experiences on skills development and career readiness among criminology graduates (employed) through utilizing a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. Eleven respondents were selected through snowball purposive sampling. Data was collected through survey questionnaires. The survey is created using suitable questions modified from related research by hard copy or via Google Forms. Mean, Standard Deviation, Frequency and Percentage were the statistical tools employed in the data analysis. Results revealed that internship experiences have a high impact effect on skills development, with a mean score of 3.65 and a standard deviation of 0.14. This implies that interns believe their internships have directly improved their talents to a significant degree. On the other hand, a Career Readiness Scale with a mean score of 3.70 and a standard deviation of 0.100 was used to evaluate the effect of internship experiences on career readiness. This indicates that internship experiences were perceived as very impact on career readiness by the participants. For criminology graduates, internships are essential to their professional growth. Institutions should also routinely assess their internship programs to make sure they are still relevant and successful. They should also improve program quality by incorporating input from industry partners and students. Institutions can enhance students' overall professional development and better prepare them for the workforce by putting these recommendations into practice.

Keywords: Career readiness; Criminology internships; Hands-on training; Professional prospects; Skills development; Skills improvement.

1. Introduction

In the field of criminology, internships play a crucial role in offering prospective criminologists essential hands-on experience that can mold their potential. Graduates gain intimate knowledge of industry dynamics, which boosts their confidence and flexibility and helps them move into their desired careers more easily (Libradilla et al., 2023; Jackson & Meek, 2022). With practical skills, real-world exposure, and a bridge between academic understanding and professional preparation, internships are an excellent way for graduates to advance their careers and employability. Through the internship, students can acquire practical work experience and enhance their general and specialized abilities. Graduates can build professional networks, receive mentorship, and gain insights into the nuances of their area through internship experiences, all of which can be extremely beneficial to their long-term career progress and success (Kapareliotis et al., 2019; Bawica, 2021; Chen & Gan, 2021).

Internships allow criminology graduates to hone their practical skills that cultivate a well-rounded professional skill set that is essential for success in the intricate and subtle world of criminal justice. Graduates of criminology programs with practical experience are better prepared to acquire and use a broad variety of abilities in the workplace, including efficient cooperation with law enforcement and investigative methods, which enhances their total professional competency (Johnson & Snyder, 2020; Mwelwa & Mawela, 2021; Anjum, 2020). Students can apply the advanced knowledge and expertise they have received in school to the workplace through internships and job experience. Fostering a learning environment that prioritizes continuous skill development ensures interns remain adaptable and well-prepared for evolving crime and law enforcement methods. By creating a vibrant learning environment at work, it offers employees ongoing opportunities for professional development and skill

enhancement, providing them with invaluable support (Madigan et al., 2019; Laguador et al., 2020; Ocampo et al., 2020).

After graduation, criminology internships significantly improve students' preparedness for the workforce by giving them real-world experience, refining their analytical abilities, and cultivating a thorough understanding of the criminal justice system. These experiences prepare students to make significant and successful contributions in their future careers. Employability, which emphasizes a person's ability to obtain desired employment, and work readiness are frequently used interchangeably. The two concepts exhibit variations contingent on the decision-makers' and jobseekers' engagement context. Engaging in internships in criminology helps students become much more prepared for the workforce once they graduate (Kapareliotis et al., 2019; Wakelin-Theron et al., 2019).

Through extensive internships, graduates get a thorough awareness of the complexities of the sector as well as improved analytical and investigative abilities, which ultimately increases their readiness for lucrative and fulfilling employment in criminal justice. Graduates in the criminal justice area are highly recognized for their ability to adapt to a wide range of tasks and responsibilities, displaying their aptitude to perform successfully in a variety of professional circumstances (Wei, et al., 2021; Tecilazic, A., 2021). They have a reputation as flexible experts who can handle the changing complexity of crime and justice in today's society because of their ability to effectively handle a wide range of difficulties. After completing internships, criminology graduates consistently demonstrate improved job performance, effectively applying the practical skills and insights gained during their hands-on experiences to excel in their roles within the criminal justice field. The transformative impact of internships on criminology graduates is evident in their improved job performance, as they use the real-world experience gained during internships to navigate complexities, make informed decisions, and effectively contribute to the challenges of the criminal justice landscape (Ocampo et al., 2020; Baert et al., 2021; Karunaratne & Perera, 2019).

The aim of this study is to examine and evaluate internship experiences' effects on graduates' skill development and career preparedness in a systematic way. Hence, it was, found out that majority of research tends to highlight the advantages of internships, the research gap lies in the need for a detailed examination of the qualities and practices of effective mentors within the context of criminology internships. Questions regarding the characteristics that make a mentor effective, the nature of interactions between mentors and interns, and the specific skills and knowledge transferred through mentorship are still largely unexplored.

Through this study, educational institutions, employers, policymakers, and graduates themselves will all find great significance and importance in the research evaluating the influence of internship experiences on skill development and career readiness among graduates.

2. Methods

The research design that was used in this undertaking and in achieving its objectives was descriptive-correlational. Descriptive-correlational is a quantitative method of research in which it sets out to identify and describe

relationships between naturally occurring events and variables (Creswell, 2003). This design was primarily used in describing relationships among variables, without seeking to establish a causal connection and without any active intervention on the part of the researcher (Pokit & Hungle, 2013). This design was chosen to meet the objectives of the study, namely, to determine the impact of internship experiences on skills development and career readiness among the employed criminology graduates of Misamis University whether it helped to enhance the respondent's ability to achieve the outcome of the internship program. The study was conducted at Misamis Occidental, Northern Mindanao, Philippines because the study focused on the employed criminology graduates who experienced internship programs in Misamis University, Ozamiz City. The respondents of this study were a total of thirty (30) employed personnel who were a Criminology Graduates from Misamis University, Aguada Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental. The respondents were guided to understand the nature of their participation by reading and explaining to them the term of conditions specified in the informed consent form. These respondents were purposively chosen by the researchers through the following inclusion criteria: (1) a former student of Misamis University Ozamiz City; (2) a criminology graduate (especially those who finished the Internship program; (3) who is successfully pursuing their life career; and (4) willing to participate in the study.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Respondents Profile

The demographic information gathered from survey respondents shows important insights. 81% of the participants were male, demonstrating the prevalence of men in professions like PNP, BJMP, BFP, and security positions. The majority of respondents, 71%, were in the 26-30 age range, indicating a workforce in these fields that is mostly comprised of younger adults. Regarding marital status, the sample was equally divided between unmarried (48%) and married (52%) participants, demonstrating a balanced distribution in terms of personal relationships. In terms of occupation, the biggest group consisted of self-employed individuals (45%), followed by LGU personnel (13%), and different uniformed services. The survey's broad representation of occupations highlights its coverage of various fields related to security and public service. These demographic results offer a detailed background for grasping the views and experiences of the participants in their specific fields, emphasizing potential areas for additional research and specific interventions that could be helpful.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents Profile as to their Gender, Age, Civil Status and Occupation

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	25	81.00
Female	6	19.00
Age		
20-25 years old	5	16.00

26-30 years old	22	71.00
31-35 years old	4	13.00
Civil Status		
Single	15	48.00
Married	16	52.00
Occupation		
PNP	14	45.00
BJMP	4	13.00
BFP	6	19.00
Self-Employed	4	12.00
Security	1	4.55
LGU Personnel	2	6.45

3.2. Impact of Internship Experiences on Skills Development

The results in Table 2 show that internship experience has a very high impact on competence development, with a mean score of 3.65 and a standard deviation of 0.14. This suggests that trainees see significant improvement in their skills as a direct result of their training experience (Karunaratne and Perera, 2019). This idea is further supported by the close clustering of responses around the mean, which demonstrates that trainees are in agreement on the positive benefits of the internship on their skill set. The fact that these outcomes were rated as "very impressive" on the provided scale highlights the critical role that practice plays in advancing professional development, enhancing practical knowledge, and facilitating hands-on learning. Table 2 presents data indicating that internships had a significant impact on skills growth, with an average score of 3.65 and a standard deviation of 0.14. This indicates that interns believe they have significantly enhanced their skills because of their internship experiences (Karunaratne & Perera, 2019). The tight gathering of answers near the average supports this viewpoint, indicating that interns typically agree on the benefits of internships for their abilities. Providing these outcomes as "Extremely Significant" on the provided scale emphasizes the critical role internships play in deepening practical understanding, fostering career success, and facilitating experiential education.

Internships are one of the major catalysts which provide real time experience to students with a touch of theoretical classroom which eventually helps to increase the skills of the students (Akhtar & Parker, 2024). According to Lee (2023), "Internships give practical experience that will help students before they graduate and this is what they will need when they enter job markets it will give them experience skills in project management, problem-solving, and working in a team. Internships also provide networking value and build professional relationships that often provide the students and employers with mentorship and career advice (Baird & Mollen, 2023). Their cultural awareness makes students more apt to adapt in disrupted systems, having been exposed to different work environments and ways of working. They face a secret with problems to solve and when then these problems are

hard for them they need to strike to make it easier for them it helps develop their problem-solving skills and they will begin to take initiatives on solving problems and fosters confidence in their capabilities (Tang et al., 2020).

Internships are also a platform for students to work their way around different occupational tracks and decide wisely on their future. This helps them understand more about themselves, point them in the right direction, and align their aspirations with career fields (Majid et al., 2019). On the other hand, internship can be used by students to reflect about their own growth, specify areas for improvement and prepare for further professional development (Anjum, 2020). Consequently, internships help students in integrating practical knowledge into academic contexts and this can positively affect their grades during school time. Students who have gone through these experiences learn how to balance between school work and internship duties hence preparing them adequately for demands in future jobs (Chisty et al., 2023). In conclusion, internships give such trainees an edge over others while entering into employment as they have acquired practical skills alongside having professional links and enhanced understanding of where they are going in life. They are what make students ready for job market because this is where they get prepared as professionals who are highly skilled, adaptable and confident.

These influential internship experiences have a great significance on the students. Such experiences give students practical skills and knowledge that supplement their academic learning process thereby bridging theory practice gap. The latter develops the student's problem-solving skills, ability to work in team and adaptability for complexities encountered at workplaces (Lee, 2023). Also internships provide networking opportunities as well as mentorship for career advancement purposes among other things one may benefit from an internship. This is also a means toward helping students make sense of their future and make sound decisions regarding what they want to achieve in life (Kapareliotis & Patsiotis, 2019). In conclusion, impactful internships are critical for both personal and professional development of learners since they help them gain necessary tools and exposures which are needed to achieve long-term success in their chosen fields (Edwards et al., 2024).

Table 2. Impact of Internship Experiences on Skills Development

Variable	Mean	SD	Remarks
Skills Development	3.65	0.14	Very Impactful

Note: Skills Development Scale: 3.28-4.00 (Very Impactful); 2.52-3.27 (Somewhat Impactful); 1.76-2.51 (Less Impactful); 1.00-1.75 (Not Impactful).

3.3. Impact of Internship Experiences on Career Readiness

The extent that self-reported internship learning contributed to career readiness was evaluated via the students' mean score on the Career Readiness Scale, $M = 3.72$ and of a standard deviation of 0.100 . This shows that participants considered past internships as having a wonderful influence towards enhancing career preparedness. Actually, the value of the means is in the rates that have been classified as 'Very Impactful.' This implies that the internship experiences enriched the participants' career readiness and could affect their commitment level to the workplace, skills they gained from the internship and their level of preparedness to careers (McQuinn, 2023). They

also resonate with the literature that has indicated that internships help student to transition freely from academic organizations to other professional organizations.

Various confirmed experiences that are related to internships are deemed important in determining an individual's career readiness and by having this self-perceived high impact in the study conducted (Salzabilla et al., 2023). Firstly, internships help to achieve first-practice exposure for students and relate the acquired theoretical data to the practice of a chosen profession (Jindal, 2024). These practical experiences also contribute to build up their knowledge of real-life business processes in the specific industry and at the same time, improves problem solving skills, teamwork and communication skills among the learners. For instance, working in professional environment exposes interns to organizational culture and how to deal with other people, working relations, and working in groups, which are all basic to every person's professional growth.

Secondly, internships can be an outstanding chance to develop and learn more about oneself, as well as the working industry. Students can express their career preferences, and career authorities assist them in defining their career plans (Ocampo et al., 2020). As such experiences help the interns to develop more insights about themselves in terms of their strengths and areas of weakness hence assisting them in making right decisions regarding their future. Besides, it is noteworthy that internships give students an opportunity to find and develop relationships with the representatives of the corresponding field (Succi & Canovi, 2020). The associations can mean potential opportunities such as advocate situations, positions leading and recommendations for job openings more understanding of existing trends and lessons delegating from the general industry. Thus, internships contribute significantly to defining the student's future profession and are also a unique opportunity to gain work experience, improve your skills, and build personal characteristics, as well as establish valuable contacts (Fauzan et al., 2023).

Table 3. Impact of Internship Experiences on Career Readiness

Variable	Mean	SD	Remarks
Career Readiness	3.70	0.100	Very Impactful

Note: Career Readiness Scale: 3.28-4.00 (Very Impactful); 2.52-3.27 (Somewhat Impactful); 1.76-2.51 (Less Impactful); 1.00-1.75 (Not Impactful).

Observing the overall influence that interns' experiences have on their readiness for the workplace, below are some key findings regarding educational institutions, employers as well as policy-makers (Kapareliotis et al., 2019). First of all, education institutions should enhance the recognition and implementation of internships throughout coursework as important elements of education, in order students are provided with practical experience and exposure to real-life situations. This way, they will be in a better position to school and quiz the students for available job market and improve on the employment opportunities they stand a chance to get (Galbraith & Mondal, 2020). Secondly, the actual main benefit of internships include when the employers use it as a talent pipeline to allow them crosschecks on the candidates that they intend to hire before recruiting them, this in essence reduces the costs of recruitment as noted by King, (2019). Last of which, the policymakers could provide

incentives for businesses to provide more internship opportunities, this would foster a symbiotic relationship between academia and industry that is conducive to growth, competitiveness, and advancement in the workforce (Malhotra et al., 2023).

3.4. Explore the Significant Difference on the Impact of Internship Experiences on Skills Development when the Respondents are grouped according to their profile

Using the independent samples chi-square equations to test the hypothesis that the experience profiles of interns had a significant relationship with the experience profiles of skills acquisition, and considering the null hypothesis that none of the demographic characteristics of respondents examined in this study had a statistically significant relationship with their internship experience profiles, the results as presented in table 4 above indicated that the hypertension, marital status, years of work experience, age, gender, and mode of application of experience had For gender, the chi-square value was 2 thus showing that the research findings are valid and reliable. 2, which is statistically possible with 3 degrees of freedom giving a p-value of 0.157. Compared to the initial threshold of 0.05, it is higher than 0.05, so the impact was rather significant. 05 significance threshold. This goes a long way to confirm that the effectiveness of internships in enhancing skills is not as a result of gender inequality between the male and the female students. In the same manner, the score for age with a value of the chi-square equal to 9. With 6 d.o.f and the significance level set at 0.05 the weight was 76. 0.139, which is once more beyond the overall value of 0.05, we can deny the hypothetical H1 that there is no significant correlation between perceptions and attitudes of university students and their performance. 05. These findings provide evidence for the notion that the degree of perceived internship effects is universal across the demographic.

Civil status also elicited some significant results; the chi square value was 0.98 with 3 degrees of freedom and an observed $p=0$; this suggests that with an alpha level of 0.05, the observed effect size of 0.805, which strengthens the understanding that there are no marked distinctions in the influence of internships insofar as the marital status of the respondents is concerned. Lastly, the analysis of occupation revealed a value of chi-square = 11.77 with the df of 15, $p<0.001$ also shows that there was no mean difference on perceptions of interns regarding the extent to which internships helped in developing skills needed for the occupational groups. These studies combined suggest that internship experiences are equally beneficial in preparing employees irrespective of demographic and occupational characteristics. Therefore, these internship programmes can be implemented in a general and broad manner, and this erases the thought of having to develop new ones for certain demography, thus underlining their usefulness in improving skills and preparing for various careers.

From the outcomes of the foregoing chi-square tests, it can be inferred that internship programs are for skills enhancement advantageous for all subjects, irrespective of demographic or vocational characteristics. As demonstrated by the presented data that was analyzed in terms of gender, age, civil status, and occupation of the participants, no remarkable differences can be highlighted – which points at the fact that internships contribute to the improvement of skills among those who participate in the process, regardless of their background. The presented universality means that organizations and educational institutions can offer and manage internship programs without making numerous adjustments for different demographic types, which makes the process easier

and less time-consuming. It also draws attention to the possibility of internships promoting equal opportunity for development of skills and employment readiness among individuals regardless of their backgrounds, which may lead to limited opportunities provided to candidates who meet seventy five percent of the stated criteria for an internship as a key step toward more equality in work force development.

Table 4. Explore the Significant Difference on the Impact of Internship Experiences on Skills Development when the Respondents are grouped according to their profile

Profile	X^2	DF	CV	P-Value	Remarks
Gender	2.17	3	7.815	0.54	Not Significant
Age	9.76	6	12.59	0.139	Not Significant
Civil Status	0.98	3	7.815	0.805	Not Significant
Occupation	11.77	15	24.99	0.859	Not Significant

3.5. Explore the Significant Difference on the Impact of Internship Experiences on the Career Readiness when the Respondents are grouped according to their profile

The chi-square test outcomes also imply that the Pension for the internship experiences that the interns underwent is not affected by the Gender, age, civil status or Occupation of the respondents. The obtained score based on gender was; For gender based on a chi-square value of 1, it was obtained that .08 with one degree of freedom while the tabulated value of 't-crit' was 3.84, and the p-vase was noticed to be less than 0.299 did not differ significantly in maternal heights from those of the control group. Likewise, the age group has a chi-square value of 1 σ Statement 4. Of the remaining degrees of freedom, 2 is subtracted for the degree of freedom for the chain variable, and the remainder is 28 with a critical value of 5.99 and, for the p value criterion of significance, it yields a p = 0.527, thus implying that there were no differences found. The civil status group has a relatively low chi-square value at 0.072 with one degree of freedom thus obtaining a critical value of 3.84 and $p < .05$ for ,respectively. 789, For this reason, the p value of 0,016 again confirms the lack of meaningful differences between the averages of the two groups. The chi-square value for the employment group is likewise 3.84 with a critical value of 11 means and 5 degrees of freedom. 001 for the variable "IFM07," suggesting that there is a statistically significant relationship between these two factors and the number of kilometers driven based on the mode of transportation. for undergraduates without jobs, and 57 for those with jobs, indicating that there may not be a statistically significant difference.

These studies implied that, internship experiences are seen in similar ways across the various class 1 demographic subgroups with regard to their preparation for the career. The findings therefore suggest that internship programs are of utility in enhancing the preparedness of the individuals to undertake their respective occupations without discriminating the gender, age, civil status and career paths of individuals. Such consistency implies that internship programs serve a broad audience and reaffirms that interning should remain integral to career readiness plans for various groups.

The conclusions that can be drawn from the above study are of profound concern to institutions of learning and employers in equal measure. The shared experience benchmarks of internship across the differing characteristics also point to the reliability of internships as training interventions that prepare learners for workforce. These outcomes may be informing the practice of educational institutions to incorporate internships into curricula because such has gave good values to students' employ-ability skills that are crucial in the workplace (Galbraith & Mondal, 2020). Similarly, employers can be assured that practices pointers such as internship are efficient in development of participants for competencies and commitment required in the workplace irrespective of their diversity (Lantu et al., 2022). These findings add further weight to the practice of expanding the internship schemes as a part of career plan to make sure that people are ready for the requirements of the modern economy.

Table 5. Explore the Significant Difference on the Impact of Internship Experiences on the Career Readiness when the Respondents are grouped according to their profile

Profile	X^2	DF	CV	P-Value	Remarks
Gender	1.08	1	3.84	0.299	Not Significant
Age	1.28	2	5.99	0.527	Not Significant
Civil Status	0.072	1	3.84	0.789	Not Significant
Occupation	3.84	5`	11.07	0.57	Not Significant

4. Conclusions

Based on the survey findings, the security and public service in Misamis Occidental is male-dominated with a young workforce (26-30) and a mix of single/married individuals. Self-employment is common, followed by LGU/uniformed services. This diverse workforce offers opportunities for targeted interventions and further research. Separately, the survey highlights the importance of internships in developing practical skills and preparing students for careers. Internship programs were found to be very helpful for students' careers regardless of background. As it develops practical skills and prepares students for the real world. This benefit applies to everyone, so internships should be widely offered to help students prepare for their careers.

5. Recommendations

The recent survey in Misamis Occidental survey highlights workforce needs: gender diversity initiatives, career development (especially for young professionals), family-friendly policies, entrepreneurship support (self-employed), and specialized training for LGU/uniformed services. According to the researchers' recommendation it aims to improve workforce dynamics and professional growth in security and public service.

Internship programs should be expanded with industry collaboration to provide students with diverse, hands-on experiences aligned with their career goals. Mentorship and support will prepare them for successful careers.

Universities should offer internships across disciplines to give students practical experience and prepare them for careers. Partnering with industries for diverse placements, and providing mentorship and workshops during

internships will maximize learning. Regular evaluation ensures programs stay relevant to student and employer needs.

Expand internship opportunities with industry collaboration, providing mentorship and workshops. Regularly evaluate programs to improve student career preparation. Universities and industries should team up to offer more diverse internships with strong mentorship and workshops to better prepare students for their careers. Regularly evaluate and improve these programs to stay relevant.

Declarations

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Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare no competing financial, professional, or personal interests.

Consent for publication

The authors declare that they consented to the publication of this study.

Authors' contributions

All the authors took part in literature review, analysis and manuscript writing equally.

Availability of data and material

All data pertaining to this study is kept in good custody by the authors.

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