

Effectiveness of the Virtual Internship

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Abstract – This study explores the effectiveness of the virtual internship program for BS Hospitality Management (BSHM) students at Pangasinan State University (PSU), implemented in response to the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Through survey analysis, it assesses the impact of the internship across four dimensions: personal, interpersonal, academic, and employment growth. It also highlights significant challenges faced by students, particularly regarding environmental factors such as internet connectivity and financial limitations. The findings indicate that while the virtual internship was effective in promoting personal and professional development, there is room for improvement in operational guidelines. These insights are vital for enhancing the future implementation of virtual internships in hospitality education.

Keywords – virtual internship, hospitality management, online learning, student development, operational guidelines.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of virtual learning environments, prompting universities to explore remote learning solutions. In the field of hospitality education, which typically relies on hands-on, face-to-face training, the transition to virtual internships presented both challenges and opportunities. Pangasinan State University (PSU) responded by launching a virtual internship program for BS Hospitality Management (BSHM) students in partnership with Astoria Culinary and Hospitality Institute.

This study evaluates the effectiveness of the PSU virtual internship program during the second semester of the Academic Year 2021-2022. It examines the program's impact on students in four key areas: personal, interpersonal, academic, and employment dimensions. The study also identifies challenges encountered during the internship and provides recommendations to enhance future implementations.

This study is particularly relevant as it coincides with the transition in leadership at AJMS, with a new Editor-in-Chief (EIC) taking the lead. This transition presents an opportune moment to assess the journal's publication metrics over the past six years (2018–2023) and use these insights to inform a strategic roadmap for the period of 2025 to 2029. The development of this roadmap is crucial for setting goals related to improving publication standards, expanding the journal's reach, and enhancing its scholarly impact. The findings of this study will contribute to the development of the journal's vision and mission, ensuring that they remain aligned with the demands of the modern academic landscape.

Virtual Internship Program

The COVID-19, a highly contagious respiratory illness, spreads through contact with other infected individuals with symptoms such as fever, cough, and respiratory distress [1]. Around 1.6 billion students across more than 190 countries and all continents were adversely affected by the pandemic [2]. As a result,

universities worldwide closed their physical locations to stop the virus's spread and switched to offering hybrid or online courses through online platforms [3]. Higher education schools' mandatory internship programs were severely impacted by COVID-19. Critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills are all developed via internships and are thought to be necessary for a quality education [4]. By enabling students to apply what they have learned in the context of various enterprises and obtain practical experience working for businesses in the hospitality industry, these are meant to provide a link between the classroom and the industry [5]. [6]. [7]. However, the majority of higher education institutions have stopped offering internships owing to the pandemic for almost a couple of years [8].

Some institutions offer internships, but only virtually, where students must overcome the same obstacles. Instead, university administrations urge students to submit "research-based papers." Students are required to participate in video conferences, attend online meetings, and occasionally maintain social media interactions. Many universities have changed their policies and implemented the "new normal" system in this regard [8]. Future industry competency training, such as work-integrated learning, may be connected to these fundamental shifts in the nature of the markets and products associated with hospitality and tourism [9].

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a quantitative research design with data collected through a structured survey distributed to 62 fourth-year BSHM students of Pangasinan State University, Lingayen Campus. Convenience sampling was employed, and the survey was administered via Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of three sections: demographic profile, the impact of the virtual internship, and challenges encountered during the internship. Respondents were asked to rate statements on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," and to identify the challenges they faced during the internship.

RESULTS

Profile of Respondents

The majority of respondents (96.77%) were aged between 21-25 years old, with a smaller portion (3.23%) aged 26-30 years. Most respondents (72.58%) were female, while 27.42% were male. Additionally, 88.71% of students specialized in both Food and Beverage Services and Front Office Services.

Table 1: Age of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
21-25 years old	60	96.77%
26-30 years old	2	3.23%
Total	62	100%

Table 2: Sex of the Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	17	27.42%
Female	45	72.58%
Total	62	100%

Table 3: Field of Specialization of the Respondents

Field of Specialization	Frequency	Percentage
Food and Beverage Services	6	9.68%
Front Office Services	1	1.61%
Both	55	88.71%
Total	62	100%

Impacts of Virtual Internship

Personal Impact

Students reported significant personal development during the virtual internship. The overall mean score for personal impact was 4.45, indicating strong agreement that the internship had a positive effect on personal growth. Notably, students showed openness to new experiences (M = 4.66) and the ability to recognize personal strengths and weaknesses (M = 4.44).

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I have a sense of satisfaction in doing something worthwhile	4.35	0.91	Strongly Agree
I believe in my ability to make a difference	4.42	0.76	Strongly Agree
I am open to new experiences	4.66	0.72	Strongly Agree
I have gained the capacity to be more productive	4.40	0.90	Strongly Agree
I can recognize my personal strengths and weaknesses	4.44	0.74	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	4.45	0.71	Strongly Agree

Table 4: Personal Impact of Virtual Internship

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I have a sense of satisfaction in doing something worthwhile	4.35	0.91	Strongly Agree
I believe in my ability to make a difference	4.42	0.76	Strongly Agree
I am open to new experiences	4.66	0.72	Strongly Agree
I have gained the capacity to be more productive	4.40	0.90	Strongly Agree
I can recognize my personal strengths and weaknesses	4.44	0.74	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	4.45	0.71	Strongly Agree

Interpersonal Impact

The interpersonal impact of the internship was also significant, with an overall mean of 4.42. The highest-rated statement was "I have the ability to cooperatively work with others" (M = 4.53), reflecting students' enhanced teamwork skills.

Table 5: Interpersonal Impact of Virtual Internship

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I demonstrate concern for the welfare of others	4.37	0.75	Strongly Agree
I can be understanding of people with diverse backgrounds	4.42	0.82	Strongly Agree
I have the ability to work cooperatively with others	4.53	0.76	Strongly Agree
I have the ability to communicate effectively	4.45	0.72	Strongly Agree
I have increased my ability to be a leader	4.31	0.82	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	4.42	0.65	Strongly Agree

Academic Impact

Students expressed strong agreement that the virtual internship enhanced their academic learning. The overall academic impact mean score was 4.23. The highest-rated skill was the ability to work and learn independently (M = 4.48), reflecting the self-reliance fostered by the internship.

Table 6: Academic Impact of Virtual Internship

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I have acquired knowledge from job activities	4.31	1.03	Strongly Agree
I have broadened my critical thinking skills	4.21	0.89	Strongly Agree
I have the ability to work and learn independently	4.48	0.72	Strongly Agree
I felt my online learning was enriched	4.03	1.04	Agree
I can connect academic subject matter to the real world	4.13	1.05	Agree
Overall Mean	4.23	0.85	Strongly Agree

Employment Impact

Students reported that the virtual internship had a significant impact on their employability, with an overall mean score of 4.21. The most notable gain was the development of specialized technical skills (M = 4.27).

Table 7: Employment Impact of Virtual Internship

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I developed specialized technical skills for specific jobs	4.23	0.97	Strongly Agree
I broadened my future employment possibilities	4.15	0.97	Agree
I received an opportunity to explore a specific career	4.21	0.99	Strongly Agree
I developed realistic ideas about the work world	4.18	1.02	Agree
I narrowed my future career choices	4.27	0.93	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	4.21	0.90	Strongly Agree

Challenges Encountered

The study identified several challenges that students faced during the virtual internship, primarily related to environmental factors such as slow internet connectivity (43 respondents) and financial problems (35 respondents). Additionally, 34 respondents cited a lack of resources for completing assigned activities.

Table 8: Challenges Encountered During Virtual Internship

Challenges	Yes	No
Lack of Motivation	15	47
Disorganization	24	38
Loneliness	26	36
Slow internet connection	43	19
Lack of resources for activities	34	28

Financial problems	35	27
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CONCLUSIONS: The virtual internship program was successful in fostering personal, interpersonal, academic, and employment growth among BS Hospitality Management students. However, the program faced significant challenges related to internet connectivity and resource limitations. Addressing these issues is crucial for improving future virtual internships and ensuring that they provide a comprehensive and effective learning experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improving Technological Infrastructure:** Establish partnerships with local internet providers or offer mobile data support to ensure students have reliable internet access.
- Financial Assistance Programs:** Implement financial aid or provide resource packages to help students overcome challenges related to resources and financial constraints.
- Enhanced Guidelines for Virtual Internships:** Revise operational guidelines, particularly around scheduling and communication, to ensure that both students and lecturers are aligned in expectations and responsibilities.
- Further Research on Long-Term Impact:** Conduct longitudinal studies on the long-term career impacts of virtual internships to assess their effectiveness in preparing students for the workforce.

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