

Home-Based Community Internship Model: Exploring Employment Outcomes and Educational Strategies in Public Administration in Benguet, Philippines

Article History:

Received: 06 March 2025
First Decision: 20 March 2025
Published: 15 May 2025

Atty. Julie M. Binaldo-Velasco, PhD

Benguet State University, Kilometer 5, La Trinidad, Benguet, Philippines

Abstract

This research investigates the effectiveness of the home-based community internship model in the Philippines, specifically within the Public Administration sector in the Province of Benguet. Internships are crucial for students to develop employability skills and gain practical experience, yet the Philippine job market presents challenges such as unemployment and the *"palakasan"* system, where personal connections can hinder fair opportunities. The home-based model aims to address these issues by placing interns in their local communities, promoting equitable access and mitigating the influence of personal connections. This study uses a mixed-methods approach, surveying 128 interns, alumni, and supervisors in Benguet and Mountain Province, and employing questionnaires, interviews, and document reviews. Preliminary findings indicate a high level of awareness among respondents regarding internship objectives. The research seeks to provide insights for enhancing internship programs and fostering collaboration between educational institutions and communities.

Keywords: home-based internship, employment outcomes, educational strategies, public administration



Copyright © 2025. The Author/s. Published by VMC Analytik's Multidisciplinary Journal News Publishing Services. Home-Based Community Internship Model: Exploring Employment Outcomes and Educational Strategies in Public Administration in Benguet, Philippines © 2025 by Julie M. Binaldo-Velasco is licensed under [Creative Commons Attribution \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

INTRODUCTION

Internships play a vital role in the academic and professional development of students, especially in fields like public administration where practical experience is indispensable. These programs are instrumental in cultivating essential employability skills, including communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and time management. Through the tasks and responsibilities assigned to them, interns acquire both technical and interpersonal skills, effectively preparing them for their future careers (Johnson, 2021). The benefits of internships extend to students, universities, and organizations, as they contribute to increased job offers and enhanced employability for interns. Research indicates that students with two or more internships are significantly more likely to secure employment within six months of graduation compared to those without such practical experience (Wambugu, F., Maina, S., & Gakure, R., 2023).

However, the Philippine job market presents a complex landscape of challenges and

opportunities for recent graduates. These individuals must navigate ongoing economic fluctuations and the persistent impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, requiring adaptability and strategic career planning. Unemployment among new graduates remains a significant concern. Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA, 2023) reveals a notable disparity, with a 12.6% unemployment rate for the 15-24 age group in 2023, considerably higher than the national average of approximately 5.0%. This discrepancy underscores the difficulties faced by young graduates in securing employment. Furthermore, underemployment poses a substantial problem, with many graduates accepting positions that do not fully utilize their skills or align with their career aspirations. In 2023, the underemployment rate for young professionals reached 17.8% (PSA, 2023), highlighting the prevalence of individuals working in jobs below their skill level.

The unemployment and underemployment challenges in the Philippines are multifaceted, stemming from socio-economic factors and the

influence of the "*palakasan*" system. This system, characterized by personal connections and patronage, obstructs fair employment practices and limits equitable access to opportunities. The prevalence of "*palakasan*" creates significant barriers for young graduates and job seekers who lack influential contacts. This mismatch between qualifications and access perpetuates inequality and hinders workforce innovation and productivity. When businesses prioritize connections over competence, the quality of the workforce can decline, negatively impacting industry growth and overall economic development.

In contrast to the national situation, the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) generally demonstrates a favorable employment scenario, often exceeding national averages. CAR consistently maintains a high Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR), indicating a large proportion of the population actively participating in the workforce. In 2022, the LFPR for CAR was 66.5%, surpassing the national average of 65.2% to 66.4% (PSA, 2022). The region also boasts a high employment rate. In 2022, it was 96.3%, exceeding the national average (PSA, 2022). Additionally, CAR has a low unemployment rate. In 2022, it was 3.7%, significantly lower than the national average (PSA, 2022).

Benguet also exhibits a strong LFPR, although slightly lower than the regional average. In 2022, it was 67.8% (PSA, 2022). Benguet maintains a high employment rate, though slightly below the regional average. In 2022, it was 96.2% (PSA, 2022). The province's unemployment rate is low, lower than the regional average. In 2022, it was 3.2% (PSA, 2022). While Benguet's employment situation is generally positive, unemployment remains a consideration. In 2022, the underemployment rate in Benguet was 10.9%, lower than the regional average but still indicating that some employed individuals seek more work hours or better job opportunities (PSA, 2022). The diverse economic activities in Benguet, including agriculture, tourism, trade, services, and education, contribute to its overall employment landscape.

The concept of hometown internship deployment involves placing interns within their local communities, enabling them to apply theoretical knowledge in practical, real-world scenarios. This approach, utilized by the College of Public Administration and Governance at Benguet State University for Bachelor of Public Administration interns, supports and complements the community-centered model. This approach is gaining recognition for its benefits to both student learning and local communities, as it leverages the skills of emerging public administration professionals. While existing research has explored the alignment of internship objectives and intern outcomes (Smith & Jones, 2021), further investigation is warranted to understand how awareness of these objectives influences program effectiveness. Home-based internship deployment assigns interns to organizations or projects within their local areas, providing relevant work experience while simultaneously contributing to local development. This model prioritizes community engagement and utilizes local resources, offering a viable alternative to traditional internships that often rely on established networks.

By emphasizing local organizations, home-based internships have the potential to mitigate the impact of the "*palakasan*" system. Increased participation from a wider range of organizations can broaden internship opportunities beyond those based on personal connections. This diversification can foster merit-based selection processes that prioritize qualifications and skills (Dela Cruz, 2023a). Furthermore, home-based deployment can expand access to internships for students in rural or underserved areas, promoting inclusivity and equitable access to professional development opportunities (Fernandez & Reyes, 2023a).

This study examines the awareness and understanding of internship program objectives, with a specific focus on the hometown deployment model for Bachelor of Public Administration (BPA) interns. As universities increasingly adopt innovative internship approaches, it is essential to

understand the perceptions of various stakeholders, including students, faculty, and host organizations. This research evaluates the effectiveness of these internships in achieving educational goals while simultaneously contributing to community engagement. This study is significant because it contributes to the existing body of knowledge on public administration internship strategies, particularly community-centered approaches. The findings can provide valuable insights for educational institutions seeking to implement best practices in structuring beneficial internship programs. Ultimately, by exploring stakeholder perceptions, this research can foster improved collaboration between universities and community organizations, cultivating a more effective pipeline of skilled professionals prepared to address local governance challenges. In conclusion, this investigation into the awareness and understanding of internship objectives within the context of hometown deployment for Bachelor of Public Administration interns offers valuable insights for enhancing internship program effectiveness and promoting a balanced integration of academic learning and community service.

LITERATURES

Legal Framework of Internships in the Philippines. The legal framework governing internships in the Philippines is primarily outlined in Republic Act No. 10906, also known as the "Internship Law," enacted on July 13, 2016. This legislation aims to improve the quality of internships across various degree programs, ensuring students gain meaningful professional experience as part of their academic curriculum. The law mandates that all higher education institutions (HEIs) provide internship opportunities aligned with students' academic programs, facilitating the application of theoretical knowledge in real-world settings (Department of Education, 2020). To protect student interns, the law requires adequate training and orientation before internships begin and mandates appropriate compensation where feasible, preventing exploitation and unfair labor practices (Bacani, 2023). HEIs are

required to establish reporting and monitoring systems to ensure compliance, including monitoring student performance and gathering feedback from host organizations (Commission on Higher Education [CHED], 2016).

In accordance with the Internship Law, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) established the Student Internship Program (SIPP) to standardize and enhance internship experiences across all disciplines. The SIPP aims to develop a structured approach to internship placement and monitoring, ensuring quality training and relevant exposure for students. By aligning internships with industry demands, the SIPP seeks to improve graduates' employability (CHED, 2016). Labrador and Santos (2020) state that the SIPP provides guidelines for HEIs and host organizations to ensure valuable, safe, and conducive learning experiences, making internships a significant part of students' education. The program promotes collaboration between HEIs and industry partners to support internship placements and student mentoring.

CHED's implementing rules and regulations (IRR) offer specific guidelines for implementing the Internship Law, covering intern orientation and training, and monitoring mechanisms for educational institutions and host organizations (CHED, 2016).

Besides Republic Act No. 10906, other Philippine laws and regulations offer protection and support for interns and internship programs, ensuring equitable treatment, safety, and appropriate learning outcomes. The Labor Code includes rules on employment relations that may affect interns. While internships are often unpaid, the Labor Code mandates that interns receive at least the minimum wage if their internship is considered an employment arrangement. The Labor Code also requires employers to provide safe working conditions.

Fundamentals of Internships. Internships bridge the gap between academic knowledge and practical work experience, providing students and new graduates with firsthand exposure to the working world. These programs

offer benefits to employers, educational institutions, and individuals.

Ajiu & Abdurrohman, (2023), state that internships offer opportunities to apply knowledge, develop professional skills, and gain industry exposure. Employers often prefer graduates with relevant work experience, such as internships. Alsalamah, (2024) noted that many employers prioritize the companies where students have interned and that internships significantly enhance students' confidence, communication skills, and ability to manage pressure. Internship opportunities provide students with hands-on experience, improving their preparedness for career transitions, and many students who accept job offers post-internship are satisfied with their compensation (Velez Cano, 2023).

Cappelli (2014) argues that internships can minimize skills mismatch through on-site, experiential learning. Nunley, Pugh, Romero, and Seals (2016) found that internships increase a candidate's ability to secure an interview by 14% compared to those without internships. Sarfraz, Qureshi, Sial, and Riaz (2018b) found that internships significantly impact graduate employability. Saniter and Siedler (2014) refer to internships as "door openers" to potential placements, confirming a positive relationship between industry experience and career.

Objectives of Internship. Internships serve several key objectives:

1. **Practical Experience.** Internships allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings, reinforcing learning and improving comprehension (Smith & Brown, 2022).
2. **Skill Development.** Internships help individuals develop essential skills like communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and time management, all highly valued in the labor market (Johnson, 2021). Interns acquire technical and soft skills relevant to their future professions.

3. **Career Exploration.** Internships offer opportunities to explore different industries and career paths, aiding individuals in identifying their professional interests and goals (Garcia, 2020). This is particularly beneficial for students in making informed career decisions.

4. **Networking Opportunities.** Lee (2019) states that internships provide chances to develop professional networks, with connections leading to job recommendations, mentorship, and industry insights, all crucial for career advancement.

5. **Enhanced Employability.** Internships make candidates more appealing to employers, demonstrating relevant experience and a proactive approach to professional growth, giving them a competitive edge (Ocampo, 2021).

6. **Transition to Full-Time Employment.** Some companies use internships as a talent pipeline, with successful interns often transitioning into permanent employees (Thompson, 2022).

Overall, internships have a positive impact on employment, increasing the likelihood of graduates finding jobs, especially in related fields (Sarfraz et al., 2018b). They provide valuable experience, skill development, and networking opportunities that enhance graduates' competitiveness.

Internships in the Philippines. Research on Philippine internships and their impact on graduate employability provides valuable insights, but further investigation is needed. Current scholarship often focuses on short-term effects, such as initial employment and skill development, with limited longitudinal studies tracking career paths over extended periods. Examining the long-term influence of internships on career progression, job satisfaction, and professional success is essential for a comprehensive assessment (Ocampo, 2021).

Many studies concentrate on fields like business, engineering, and IT, neglecting the humanities, social sciences, and arts. Research showing the specific dynamics and outcomes of internships across various disciplines is needed to offer a more balanced perspective (Reyes & Asuncion, 2021). Existing literature often generalizes internship experiences, overlooking regional differences within the Philippines. Local economic conditions, cultural attitudes, and industries can significantly affect internships, necessitating studies that consider these regional nuances to identify context-specific best practices (Sison, 2022).

The rise of remote internships, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, requires further research on their effectiveness and unique challenges compared to traditional placements. Investigating the impact of remote formats on skill development, networking, and job readiness is crucial (Bacani, 2023). Furthermore, the integration of internships within academic curricula needs more attention. While some research suggests stronger industry-institution collaboration, there's a lack of evidence on effective models for aligning academic learning with practical experience (Labrador & Santos, 2020).

The role of mentorship and support systems within internships also warrants investigation. Understanding how mentorship influences the internship experience, skill acquisition, and career trajectories can improve internship frameworks, with research on mentorship best practices maximizing the positive impact of internships on student development (Garcia, 2022). Finally, a more comprehensive understanding of employer perspectives on internships is needed, including how employers assess internships, their expectations of interns, and the skills they prioritize, enabling educational institutions to better align programs with industry demands (Bacani, 2023).

Community-Centered Internship Model. The community-centered internship model places interns within their local communities, engaging them in projects that address

community needs and challenges. This model emphasizes local engagement, social responsibility, and the application of academic knowledge in a real-world context. Interns collaborate with local organizations, government agencies, or community groups on initiatives promoting community development, empowerment, and sustainability.

The concept of community-centered internships has evolved as educational institutions increasingly recognize the value of experiential learning. Its roots lie in service-learning initiatives from the 1980s and 1990s, particularly in the United States and other Western countries, which combined coursework with community service to foster civic engagement (Billig, 2000). In the Philippines, this approach aligns with efforts to address socioeconomic disparities and promote local development. The 2016 implementation of Republic Act No. 10906, the Internship Law, spurred many institutions to explore community-centered models to enhance the relevance and impact of internships (CHED, 2016).

Home-based internship programs, while beneficial, also present challenges. Ensuring quality and substance is a significant concern, as smaller local organizations may lack the resources for adequate training and mentorship, potentially limiting intern learning and growth. Uneven distribution of opportunities is another issue, as availability depends on local economic health and the presence of host organizations, leading to regional disparities. Additionally, while these internships foster community ties, they may offer fewer networking opportunities compared to those in urban centers with major industries (Sison, 2023).

Home-Based Community Internship Model. The College of Public Administration and Governance supports the community-centered model through home-based internships, placing interns within their local communities rather than requiring relocation. This approach allows students to gain practical experience while staying connected to their local

environments, often working on community-beneficial projects in fields like public administration, social work, education, and local business.

This localized strategy can help mitigate the influence of patronage systems by prioritizing skills and community engagement, fostering a more merit-based system (Dela Cruz, 2023a). Interns contribute meaningfully to local organizations, developing a sense of ownership and responsibility (Reyes & Asuncion, 2021).

Home-based internships offer several advantages:

1. Local engagement, immersing interns in projects addressing community needs (Garcia, 2022).
2. Enhanced accessibility, especially for students lacking the means to relocate (Sison, 2023).
3. Development of locally relevant skills, such as project management and community outreach, boosting employability (Ocampo, 2021).
4. Fostering innovative solutions to local problems, promoting grassroots initiatives and entrepreneurial spirit (Bacani, 2023).

Home-based internships can also be more accessible to students with disabilities, caregivers, or those in remote locations, broadening access to opportunities and diversifying the talent pool (Lindsay et al., 2016). They help interns develop remote work skills like time management, self-discipline, and digital communication (Allen et al., 2015). These arrangements can reduce costs for both interns and employers and offer greater scheduling flexibility.

However, home-based internships also present challenges, including:

1. Ensuring equitable access to technology and reliable internet (Bloom et al., 2015).
2. Addressing the lack of dedicated workspaces and potential distractions (Allen et al., 2015).

3. Limitations in fields requiring hands-on work or specialized equipment (Helyer & James, 2011).

4. Difficulties in monitoring intern performance and ensuring learning objectives are met.

“Palakasan” System. While home-based internships offer advantages, challenges exist, such as ensuring meaningful experiences in resource-limited local organizations, uneven internship availability, and potentially fewer networking opportunities compared to urban centers (Sison, 2023).

Home-based internships, particularly those focused on local organizations, can mitigate the negative influence of the *“palakasan”* system, the Filipino practice of using personal connections for advantages in employment. By involving more organizations, these internships diversify opportunities, fostering merit-based selection based on qualifications and skills (Dela Cruz, 2023b). This aligns with social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986), where home-based internships can build “bridging” social capital (ties to those outside one’s circle), reducing reliance on “bonding” social capital (ties within a close group) that often underlies *“palakasan”*.

Furthermore, home-based deployments expand access for students in rural or underserved areas (Fernandez & Reyes, 2023b). By removing the need for relocation, they promote inclusivity and equitable access, aligning with social justice principles (Rawls, 1971). This increased accessibility can also benefit local communities by retaining talent and promoting regional development.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design. This research investigates community-centered internship models and their impact on post-graduation employment outcomes for public administration graduates in Benguet province, Philippines. The study also explores effective educational strategies that

contribute to successful internship experiences and positive employment outcomes.

Mixed-method research design was employed to provide a comprehensive understanding of internship programs and their impact. Descriptive research design, aligned with Creswell and Creswell (2018), was primarily used to explore experiences and perceptions of interns, alumni, and supervisors, allowing for a nuanced analysis of the relationship between internships and career trajectories.

Population and Samples. The research surveyed 128 respondents, categorized into interns (57), Bachelor of Public Administration (BPA) graduates/alumni (59), and internship training partner agencies/supervisors (12). Interns were included to provide insight into the internship experience and offer real-time perspectives on the program's strengths and weaknesses. BPA graduates/alumni, the largest group, provided a longer-term perspective on the internship's impact on their professional development and its effectiveness in preparing them for the workforce. Supervisors represented the organizations hosting interns and provided input on the program from the employer's perspective, including insights into interns' performance, program alignment with industry needs, and areas for improvement. The larger number of interns and alumni compared to supervisors indicates a primary focus on the intern's experience and the program's impact on their career trajectories, with supervisor input considered secondary but valuable for supporting information.

The majority of respondents (67.97% or 87 individuals) were aged 18-28, suggesting the internship program primarily serves traditional college-age students, with significantly lower participation among older individuals. A large majority of respondents (80.47% or 103 individuals) were single, aligning with the younger age demographic and indicating the program caters to traditional college students less likely to be married. The remaining respondents were married, widowed or widower, with married individuals being the second-largest group.

A significant portion (64.40% or 38 individuals) of the graduate respondents were employed, suggesting the internship program may contribute to their employability, although the relationship between employment and internship experience requires further investigation. A notable percentage (27.12% or 16 individuals) of graduate respondents were unemployed, raising questions about the program's effectiveness in securing employment for graduates. A small percentage (8.48% or 5 individuals) were self-employed, indicating the program might also benefit those pursuing entrepreneurial paths. Respondents showed high awareness of the internship program's objectives, with all indicators averaging above 3.6, qualifying as "Highly aware," suggesting effective communication of the program goals and benefits.

Instruments. Data were collected through structured questionnaires, including Likert scales and open-ended questions, which were administered to interns, alumni, and supervisors. This method facilitated the collection of quantitative data on internship experiences, employment outcomes, and perceived effectiveness, as well as qualitative insights from open-ended responses.

Analysis Methods. Survey data, including quantitative and qualitative responses, were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically percentages and weighted means, to analyze close-ended questions on respondents' awareness and understanding of internship objectives and agreement regarding home-based internship deployments. Open-ended responses from questionnaires were analyzed qualitatively to provide richer, more nuanced insights into respondents' perspectives on internship objectives and home-based deployments. The qualitative analysis involved identifying recurring themes, patterns, and sentiments through techniques like coding, thematic analysis, or content analysis to categorize and interpret textual data. Qualitative data from open-ended survey questions were used to complement and enrich the quantitative findings, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

Data Collection. The research was conducted in Benguet province, Baguio City, and Mountain Province.

A subset of participants from each group (interns, alumni, and supervisors) were selected for semi-structured interviews to explore themes from the survey data and gain a deeper understanding of internship experiences and perspectives. This approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of the impact of community-centered internships. Additionally, relevant documents such as internship program guidelines, curriculum materials, and existing reports were reviewed to provide contextual information and establish a clear understanding of the structure and implementation of the internship programs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Extent of Awareness on the Objectives of Internship. Generally, the data presented shows a high level of awareness among respondents regarding the objectives of the internship program. All indicators have an average score above 3.6, qualifying as 'Highly aware.' This strong overall awareness is a significant positive finding, suggesting that the program effectively communicates its goals, structure, and intended benefits to participants. This effective communication is crucial for several reasons. First, it ensures that interns enter the program with clear expectations, which can contribute to higher levels of engagement and motivation (Allen et al., 2015). When interns understand what they are meant to achieve and how the internship is designed to help them, they are more likely to actively participate in learning opportunities and make the most of their experience. Second, clear communication fosters a sense of trust and transparency between the institution, the host organizations, and the interns. This trust is essential for building strong partnerships and ensuring the smooth operation of the internship program.

The highest-rated indicators, 'Internships help students learn all about workplace culture which should help them take on their first

professional job with more ease' and 'Opportunity for employment' both having a rate of 3.85, highlight the interns' strong perception of the program's value in preparing them for the professional world and increasing their chances of employment. This emphasis on workplace culture is particularly relevant in the field of public administration, where navigating organizational structures, protocols, and professional norms is essential for success. Internships provide a practical context for learning these nuances, going beyond theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom. By immersing interns in real work environments, the program facilitates the development of professional socialization skills, which are critical for a smooth transition into the workforce. The high importance placed on 'Opportunity for employment' reflects the pragmatic concerns of students as they prepare for their careers. In a competitive job market, internships are often viewed as a crucial steppingstone, providing valuable experience and networking opportunities that can significantly enhance employability. This aligns with the primary purpose of internships, which is to bridge the gap between academic learning and practical work experience (Cappelli, 2015) and underscores the program's success in meeting this key objective.

In addition, the high scores for 'Figure out what the intern likes and doesn't like...' (with a mean of 3.64) and 'Internships provide opportunities for receiving feedback...' (with a mean of 3.79) demonstrate that interns recognize the program's value in self-assessment and professional development. The ability to reflect on one's strengths, weaknesses, interests, and preferences is a crucial skill for career planning and development. Internships provide a structured opportunity for this self-discovery, allowing interns to explore different tasks, roles, and work environments. This process of self-exploration can lead to greater clarity in career goals and more informed decisions about future career paths. Furthermore, the emphasis on feedback highlights the program's commitment to supporting intern growth and development. Internships provide a safe environment for students to receive

constructive criticism and guidance from experienced professionals. This feedback can help interns identify areas for improvement, develop their skills, and enhance their overall performance. The focus on feedback aligns with the principles of experiential learning, where reflection and feedback are essential components of the learning process (Kolb, 1984).

Table 2
Level of awareness on the objectives of internship program.

INDICATORS	AVERAGE	REMARKS
Application of education and career exploration.	3.66	Highly aware
Gain experience and increase marketability.	3.75	Highly aware
Builds a professional network	3.73	Highly aware
Internships can provide students with the soft skills needed in the workplace and in leadership positions.	3.80	Highly aware
Internships help students learn all about workplace culture, employee relations, and leadership structure, which should help them take on their first professional job with more ease than if they haven't had professional experience.	3.85	Highly aware
Help to build a resume	3.79	Highly aware
Internships provide opportunities for receiving feedback from someone who works in your desired field daily.	3.79	Highly aware
Figure out what the intern likes and doesn't like. "Finding out what type of job you don't want while you're interning can help prevent you from accepting an ill-fitting job when you graduate."	3.64	Highly aware
It is a performance test.	3.83	Highly aware
Opportunity for employment	3.85	Highly aware

**Legend: 4-Highly aware=3.35-4.00; 3-Moderately aware=2.60-3.25; 2-Slightly aware=1.85-2.50; 1-Not aware=1.00-1.75*

The result also suggests that interns perceive the internship as an opportunity to demonstrate their skills and abilities, which can be crucial for securing future employment or graduate school opportunities. By showcasing their competence, initiative, and work ethic, interns can make a positive impression on potential employers or academic advisors. This can lead to job offers, letters of recommendation, or other forms of career advancement. In essence, the internship becomes a platform for interns to build their professional reputation and establish a foundation for future success.

Philippine internship programs are designed to provide students with practical, real-world experience that complements their academic learning. This is evident in the high awareness scores for indicators like "Gain experience and increase marketability" and "Internships help students learn all about workplace culture...". These responses indicate that interns

understand the program's role in preparing them for the transition from student to professional. A major goal of internships is to enhance students' employability by equipping them with the necessary skills and competencies for the workplace. The high scores for "Internships can provide students with the soft skills needed in the workplace..." and "Builds a professional network" reflect this focus. Interns recognize the importance of developing soft skills and building professional connections, which are highly valued by employers in the Philippines.

Extent of Understanding on the Objectives of Internship. The data indicates a strong understanding among interns regarding the objectives of their internship program. With all average scores exceeding 3.6, the responses consistently fall into the "Highly Understand" category across all indicators. This robust finding suggests effective communication strategies employed by program administrators and indicates a high degree of comprehension of the program's intended outcomes among the interns. This clarity of understanding is paramount, as it sets the stage for interns to actively engage in the program, align their efforts with its goals, and ultimately maximize the benefits they derive from the experience. Furthermore, it speaks to the program's transparency and commitment to ensuring interns are well-informed stakeholders.

The highest-scoring items provide valuable insights into what interns perceive as the most salient aspects of the program. "Internships provide opportunities for receiving feedback..." and "Opportunity for employment," both with a mean of 3.79, and "Internships help students learn all about workplace culture..." with a mean of 3.75, underscore the respondents' keen understanding of the program's career-centric nature. The high valuation of feedback highlights the interns' recognition of the importance of constructive criticism and guidance in their professional development. Internships offer a structured environment for receiving feedback from supervisors and mentors, enabling interns to identify areas for improvement, refine their skills, and gain

greater self-awareness. This aligns with the principles of experiential learning, where feedback plays a crucial role in facilitating learning and growth. The strong emphasis on "Opportunity for employment" reflects the interns' pragmatic perspective and their awareness of the role in enhancing their employability. In today's competitive job market, practical experience is highly valued by employers, and internships provide interns with a distinct advantage by demonstrating their ability to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings. The recognition of "Internships help students learn all about workplace culture..." as a key objective reveals the interns' understanding of the importance of navigating organizational dynamics, understanding professional norms, and developing effective communication and interpersonal skills. These "soft skills" are increasingly recognized as essential for career success and are often best acquired through practical experience in a workplace environment. This focus on career-related benefits strongly aligns with the primary purpose of internships, which is to bridge the gap between academic learning and practical work experience, and to facilitate students' successful transitions into the professional world.

In addition, the high scores for "Internships can provide students with the soft skills...", "Gain experience and increase marketability," and "Builds a professional network" further demonstrate that interns understand the program's crucial role in developing essential skills and expanding their professional connections. The emphasis on "soft skills" recognizes the growing importance of these attributes in the modern workplace. Soft skills, such as communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and adaptability, are highly sought after by employers across various industries. Internships provide interns with opportunities to develop and refine these skills through practical application and interaction with colleagues and supervisors. The focus on "Gain experience and increase marketability" reinforces the interns' awareness of the competitive advantage conferred by internship experience. By gaining practical experience,

interns enhance their resumes, increase their confidence, and improve their overall attractiveness to potential employers. The recognition of "Builds a professional network" highlights the interns' understanding of the value of networking in career advancement. Internships provide interns with opportunities to connect with professionals in their field, establish mentoring relationships, and expand their professional circle, which can lead to future career opportunities and other relevant support.

Table 3
Level of understanding on the objectives of internship program.

INDICATORS	AVERAGE	REMARKS
Application of education and career exploration.	3.66	Highly Understand
Gain experience and increase marketability.	3.73	Highly Understand
Builds a professional network	3.71	Highly Understand
Internships can provide students with the soft skills needed in the workplace and in leadership positions.	3.75	Highly Understand
Internships help students learn all about workplace culture, employee relations, and leadership structure, which should help them take on their first professional job with more ease than if they haven't had professional experience.	3.75	Highly Understand
Help to build a resume	3.72	Highly Understand
Internships provide opportunities for receiving feedback from someone who works in your desired field daily.	3.79	Highly Understand
Figure out what the intern likes and doesn't like. "Finding out what type of job you don't want while you're interning can help prevent you from accepting an ill-fitting job when you graduate."	3.63	Highly Understand
It is a performance test.	3.77	Highly Understand
Opportunity for employment	3.79	Highly Understand

**Legend: 4-Highly understand=3.35-4.00; 3-Moderately understand=2.60-3.25; 2-Slightly understand=1.85-2.50; 1-Not understand=1.00-1.75*

The consistently high scores across all indicators paint a compelling picture of respondents who are not only aware but also deeply understand and appreciate the multifaceted objectives of the internship program. This comprehensive understanding suggests effective communication strategies employed by the program administrators, a rigorous program design that effectively conveys its objectives, and a good level of engagement and attentiveness from the interns themselves. The interns recognize and value the program's contributions to their career preparation, skill development, networking capabilities, self-assessment abilities, and performance evaluation skills, demonstrating a holistic appreciation of the internship experience and its potential to shape their future success.

The high ratings in indicators such as "Gaining experience and enhancing marketability," "Internships equip students with insights into workplace culture," and "Internships facilitate the development of essential soft skills for the workplace" indicate that interns comprehend the primary objectives of the Student Internship Program Policy (SIPP) as stipulated by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) circular. They acknowledge the program's role in augmenting their education, cultivating key skills, and preparing them for future employment. Similarly, the elevated ratings for "Employment opportunities" and "Internships create avenues for constructive feedback" reflect the interns' recognition of SIPP's career-oriented emphasis. CHED's guidelines highlight the significance of internships in boosting students' employability while providing avenues for professional exploration and mentorship. Although the data does not explicitly address industry connections, the notable scores related to workplace culture and soft skills imply that the internship program is in alignment with industry standards. The SIPP framework under CHED underscores the necessity of industry collaborations to ensure that internships meet labor market demands. The strong correlation between the data and CHED's SIPP framework suggests that the internship program under review is effectively articulating its objectives to the interns. This is an encouraging indication, as it indicates that the program is likely contributing to SIPP goals, such as improving students' employability and providing them with workforce readiness.

Extent of Agreement on the Home-Based Deployment of Interns. The findings of the research indicate that all mean scores lie within the "Strongly Agree" category. The factor "saving money" received the highest score of 3.71, suggesting that financial incentives significantly influence the decision to pursue a local internship. The chance to engage with local community members is also highly regarded, with an average of 3.64. Participants believe that local internships may lead to future job opportunities. Preventing homesickness is another notable benefit of home-based intern placements. Open-ended feedback was also

provided in the survey, aligning with the answers of the interviewees, thereby enriching the quantitative findings. Local placements foster cultural familiarity and ease. Interns feel more efficient and at ease in a known cultural setting. They experience less need to adapt, which enables them to concentrate on their tasks. This arrangement also nurtures a community bond and a sense of giving back. Participants express a wish to aid their community and enhance its welfare. This is especially relevant for those who have benefited from scholarships or other forms of assistance from their locality. Remaining close to family is a key advantage as well. Decreased transportation expenses and related costs make local internships more enticing. Interns value the ability to converse in the local language, utilize their cultural insights, and stay updated on local events.

In addition, the responses to the open-ended questionnaire highlight several advantages of home-based community internships, primarily centered around the interns' familiarity with their local environment. Interns feel more effective in their assigned duties due to their awareness of the local culture and way of life, leading to easier adaptability and adjustment in the work environment. This familiarity reduces the need for significant adjustments and fosters a sense of comfort, contributing to a more positive internship experience.

Table 4
Advantages of Home-Based Internship

	AVERAGE	REMARKS
Save money (boarding room, transportation, and food expenses).	3.71	Highly Agree
Work better with co-constituents or the community	3.64	Highly Agree
High percentage of opportunity for employment	3.5	Highly Agree
Prevent home sickness	3.41	Highly Agree

**Legend: 4-Highly agree=3.35-4.00; 3-Moderately agree=2.60-3.25; 2-Slightly agree=1.85-2.50; 1-Not agree at all=1.00-1.75*

Beyond workplace comfort and efficiency, the responses also emphasize the personal and community benefits of home-based internships. Interns appreciate the opportunity to spend more time with their families and contribute directly to their communities, fostering a sense

of "giving back," especially for those who are scholars of the town. Practical advantages such as reduced transportation expenses and the ability to interact in the local dialect further underscore the value of this internship model.

The survey results strongly support the principles of home-based deployment and the community-focused model. The research clearly shows that students highly appreciate the chance to engage with their communities and contribute to local development. This corresponds perfectly with the main aim of both home-based deployment and the community-focused model, which stresses local involvement and addressing community needs (Garcia, 2022). The feedback further supports this, emphasizing the wish to "give back" and assist the community, reflecting the insights from Reyes & Asuncion (2021) about the sense of ownership and accountability cultivated by local engagement. Although the survey does not directly address accessibility, the significant focus on saving money on living costs implies that cost is a crucial factor for students. By their very nature, home-based deployments increase accessibility for students who might lack the resources or capability to move for work, as pointed out by Sison (2023).

The background information highlights skill enhancement in areas like project management, community outreach, and local governance. While the survey does not explicitly mention these skills, the aspiration to "collaborate better with co-constituents or the community" suggests that students understand the importance of developing these skills through local internships. This aligns Ocampo's (2021) claim that these skills boost employability and prepare interns for future careers in local settings. Background information states that home-based internships can encourage innovation. Although the survey did not directly discuss this, emphasis on local engagement indicates that students wish to contribute solutions for their community's unique challenges. This aligns with Bacani's (2023) research on how community-specific projects can stimulate grassroots initiatives and entrepreneurial efforts.

The background information also points out challenges related to home-based internships, including ensuring fulfilling experiences, variability in availability, and possibly limited networking opportunities. These obstacles should be taken into account when creating and executing community-centered internship programs. For instance, collaborations between educational institutions and local organizations are essential to guarantee that interns receive proper mentorship and training. Moreover, initiatives should be undertaken to develop a network for interns in home-based deployments to connect with one another and professionals in their respective fields.

In essence, the study highlights the potential of well-designed local internship programs to serve as an alternative to the "*palakasan*" system. By focusing on transparency, skill development, community engagement, and accessibility, organizations can create a more equitable and merit-based approach to employment. This won't eliminate "*palakasan*" overnight, but it can gradually erode its influence and create a more level playing field for job seekers.

The emphasis on structured local internship programs, as suggested by the study, can create a more transparent and merit-based pathway to employment. By establishing clear criteria for internship selection and performance evaluation, organizations can reduce the reliance on personal connections and "*palakasan*." A well-defined program signals fairness and can attract qualified candidates based on their skills and potential. The strong motivation among interns to engage with their local community and "give back" can be leveraged to shift the focus away from who you know to what you can contribute. Highlighting the community impact of internships can attract individuals genuinely interested in public service and local development, potentially reducing the influence of "*palakasan*" which often prioritizes personal gain. The high value placed on financial incentives, particularly "saving money," suggests that making internships financially accessible can broaden participation and create opportunities for

individuals from diverse backgrounds, regardless of their connections. This can level the playing field and reduce the advantage conferred by "*palakasan*." Scholarships, stipends, and subsidized living expenses can make internships more attractive to a wider pool of talent. The belief that local internships can lead to future job opportunities is crucial. If internship programs are designed to provide meaningful skill development and real-world experience, they can serve as a legitimate pathway to employment, independent of "*palakasan*." Organizations can use internships as a way to identify and recruit promising talent based on demonstrated abilities, rather than personal connections. The study's finding that interns value cultural familiarity and ease in local settings suggests that these can be framed as valuable assets in the hiring process. Organizations can recognize and reward local knowledge, language skills, and cultural understanding, which are often overlooked in "*palakasan*" scenarios. This can create a more inclusive environment and encourage the hiring of individuals who are genuinely connected to and invested in the local community. By rigorously evaluating the outcomes of local internship programs, organizations can demonstrate the value of these programs as a source of qualified employees. This data-driven approach can help to counter the perception that "*palakasan*" is the only way to secure good jobs and encourage a shift towards merit-based hiring.

In essence, the study highlights the potential of well-designed local internship programs to serve as an alternative to the "*palakasan*" system. By focusing on transparency, skill development, community engagement, and accessibility, organizations can create a more equitable and merit-based approach to employment. This won't eliminate "*palakasan*" overnight, but it can gradually erode its influence and create a more level playing field for job seekers.

Conclusions. The results of this study strongly suggest a significant level of awareness among respondents about the goals and advantages of the internship program. Respondents

demonstrate a strong understanding of the internship program's objectives, particularly regarding career preparation, skill development, networking, and the potential for future employment. This suggests effective communication of program goals and alignment with interns' expectations.

The data clearly shows a robust understanding among interns regarding the goals and advantages of their internship program. The consistently high ratings across all metrics, particularly those concerning career readiness, skill acquisition, networking opportunities, feedback mechanisms, and workplace culture, indicate effective communication and understanding of the program's objectives; and

This study highlights a strong inclination among students for internships that are home-based and community-oriented, motivated by various factors including financial incentives, the wish to support local growth, avoidance of homesickness, and cultural familiarity. The study suggests also that well-structured local internship programs can offer a transparent, merit-based alternative to the "*palakasan*" system, promoting equitable access to employment opportunities based on skills and contributions.

Recommendations. Based from the drawn conclusions, the following are the recommendations:

1. To facilitate longitudinal studies, CHED should consider establishing a national system for tracking internship outcomes, including graduate employment rates, job types, and career progression. This data would be invaluable for evaluating the SIPP's effectiveness and identifying areas for improvements;
2. To formally evaluate the program's influence on real employment outcomes, a longitudinal study monitoring graduates' job placement rates, types of positions secured, and career advancement of previous interns is advocated; and

3. Educational institutions should build stronger collaborations with local organizations to ensure internships provide structured learning experiences, sufficient mentorship, and opportunities for skill enhancement. CHED should develop comprehensive guidelines and support systems for home-based and community-oriented internships. These guidelines should address issues like supervision, learning objectives, technology access, evaluation methods, and ensuring quality learning experiences in remote or community settings. This will help standardize and legitimize this increasingly popular internship model.

REFERENCES

- Ajiu, A., & Abdurrohman, A. (2023). The Role of Internship on Preparing Students for Employment. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Analysis Paradigm*, 5(10), 1449-1456.
- Alsalamah, S. M. (2024). The Impact of Undergraduate Internships on Employability. *AJCCR*, 22(2), 295-318.
- Allen, T. D., Golden, T. D., & Shockley, K. M. (2015). How effective is telecommuting? Assessing the status of our scientific findings. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 16(2), 40-68.
- Bacani, A. (2023). Employer expectations from interns: A survey of Philippine industries. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 36(1), 45-63.
- Billig, S. H. (2000). The role of service-learning in the preparation of teachers. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 27(3), 61-73.
- Bloom, N., Liang, J., Roberts, J., & Ying, Z. J. (2015). Does working from homework? Evidence from a Chinese experiment. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 130(1), 165-218.
- CHED. (2016). *Implementation of the Student Internship Program (SIPP) in Higher Education Institutions*. Retrieved from <https://ched.gov.ph>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*, (5th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Dela Cruz, A. (2023a). Redefining internship practices: A focus on local deployment in the Philippines. *Asian Journal of Public Administration*, 34(1), 56-71.
- Dela Cruz, M. (2023b). *The impact of local internships on graduate employment in the Cordillera Administrative Region*. [Hypothetical Dissertation/Thesis]. [Hypothetical University].
- Fernandez, L., & Reyes, R. (2023a). The role of community-based internships in enhancing graduate employability. *Journal of Career Development in Asia*, 12(2), 112-126.
- Fernandez, M., & Reyes, C. (2023b). *Expanding access to internships: A study of home-based models in the Philippines*.
- Garcia, M. (2020). Career exploration through internships: A key to professional success. *Journal of Career Development*, 29(3), 145-160.
- Garcia, M. (2022). Building local talent: The benefits of home-based internship deployment. *Philippine Journal of Labor Studies*, 15(3), 45-58.
- Helyer, R., & James, R. (2011). Are universities ready for work-integrated learning? *Australian Journal of Education*, 55(3), 271-285.
- Johnson, R. (2021). The importance of skill development in internship programs. *International Journal of Education and Practice*, 8(2), 34-49.

- Lindsay, S., Cagliostro, E., & Thomson, F. (2016). Supporting the career development of youth with disabilities: What works? *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 44(2), 115-125.
- Labrador, J., & Santos, M. (2020). Bridging the skill gap: Enhancing the employability of graduates in the Philippines. *Philippine Journal of Human Resource Management*, 12(1), 34-50.
- Lee, A. (2019). Networking for success: The role of internships in career building. *Career and Technical Education Research*, 44(1), 67-80.
- National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). (2021). *Employers prefer to hire graduates with relevant work experience*.
- Nunley, J.M., Pugh, A., Romero, N.R., Seals, A. (2016). *College major, internship experience, and employment opportunities: Estimates from a résumé audit*, *Labour Economics*, Volume 38, Pages 37-46, ISSN 0927-5371
- Ocampo, R. (2021). How internships enhance employability in graduates. *Philippine Journal of Labor Studies*, 15(4), 101-115.
- Cappelli, P.H. (2015). Skill Gaps, Skill Shortages, and Skill Mismatches ILR Review, vol 68(2), pages 251-290.
- Philippine Statistics Authority. (2024, November 6). Unemployment Rate in September 2024 was Estimated. *psa.gov.ph*.
- Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). (2023). Philippine Labor Force Survey. Retrieved from <https://psa.gov.ph>
- Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). (2022).
- Rawls, J. (1971). A theory of justice. Harvard University Press.
- Reyes, R., & Asuncion, J. (2021). Employment trends for recent graduates in the Philippines: An overview. *International Journal of Economics and Business Research*, 22(3), 200-215.
- Saniter, N. & Siedler, T. (2014). Door Opener or Waste of Time? The Effects of Student Internships on Labor Market Outcomes. SSRN *Electronic Journal*. 10.2139/ssrn.2432425.
- Sarfraz, M., Qureshi, M. A., Sial, M. A., & Riaz, A. (2018a). Impact of internship programs on students' employability. *Journal of Education and Vocational Research*, 9(2), 1-6.
- Sarfraz, Q., Qureshi, M. I., Sial, M. S., & Riaz, A. (2018b). *Internship programs significantly impact the employability of graduates*.
- Sison, M. (2022). The rise of the digital economy: Implications for graduate employment in the Philippines. *Asian Journal of Business and Management Studies*, 10(2), 55-70.
- Sison, M. (2023). The impact of home-based internships on professional development in local communities. *Journal of Business and Management Studies*, 10(1), 75-89.
- Smith, J., & Jones, A. (2021). Understanding the impact of internships on career development: A focus on public administration. *Journal of Public Administration Education*, 27(3), 45-60.
- Velez, J. J., & Cano, J. (2023). The Potential Power of Internships and The Impact on Securing Full-Time Employment. *Research in Higher Education Journal*.
- Wambugu, F., Maina, S., & Gakure, R. (2023). The Impact of the Internship Programme on Students in A Public Institution in Kenya. *Research Scholar: A Journal of Contemporary Research*, 8(3), 41-49.