

Determinants of Internship Satisfaction among Hotel Management Students

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Abstract

This study examines the factors influencing internship satisfaction among the students of the Bachelor of Hotel Management (BHM) in Nepal, focusing on individual factors, job characteristics, organisational environment, and contextual conditions. Findings show that students' academic preparedness and self-motivation are fundamental to positive internship experiences. Among these, job characteristics such as task autonomy, skill variety, and feedback have the greatest impact on satisfaction. The organisational environment, including supervisor support and workplace culture, also affects satisfaction but varies depending on the internship setting. Contextual factors like location convenience and accommodation, especially for international internships, present notable challenges. The results underscore the complex nature of internship satisfaction, requiring alignment between student capabilities, well-structured job roles, supportive organisational climates, and manageable logistical arrangements. Job characteristics are identified as the most influential determinant, while contextual factors show inconsistent effects. These findings offer practical insights for curriculum developers and industry partners aiming to enhance internship experiences and better prepare hospitality students in Nepal for their professional careers.

Keywords: contextual conditions, individual factors, internship satisfaction, job characteristics, organisational environment

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry, characterised by its dynamic nature and reliance on human capital, requires professionals equipped with both technical competencies and interpersonal (soft) skills (Baum, 2007; Zhu et al., 2022). Internship programmes serve as a critical pedagogical bridge between theoretical instruction and practical application, offering students experiential learning that is instrumental in shaping their professional aspirations (Ruhanen et al., 2013). Empirical evidence suggests that the quality of internship experiences has a substantial impact on students' career trajectories, with higher levels of satisfaction correlating positively with a stronger intention to remain in the industry post-graduation (Giousmpasoglou et al., 2021). Despite their potential benefits, many internship programmes in the

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hospitality sector suffer from a lack of structure, leading to student dissatisfaction due to factors such as inadequate mentorship, unmanageable workloads, and a disconnect between academic preparation and workplace realities (Richardson, 2009; Thapa, 2022). Given the persistent issue of employee turnover in hospitality, identifying and addressing the factors that influence internship satisfaction is crucial. Such insights can inform curriculum development and organisational practices, fostering both student engagement and long-term retention in the sector (Zopiatis et al., 2014).

Despite the growing emphasis on experiential learning in hospitality education, there remains a fragmented understanding of the multifaceted factors that influence students' satisfaction with internship experiences and their subsequent career intentions. Existing literature has predominantly focused on structural issues such as inadequate collaboration between academic institutions and the hospitality industry, as well as substandard working conditions in internship placements (Hussien & La Lopa, 2018). However, recent scholarly discourse advocates for a more nuanced examination of the interpersonal and organisational dynamics particularly mentorship quality, job autonomy, and organisational culture mediate student experiences during internships (Giousmpasoglou et al., 2021; Thapa, 2022).

The objective of this study is to examine the multidimensional factors influencing internship satisfaction within the hospitality education context. Specifically, the study seeks to investigate the combined impact of individual, institutional, contextual and organisational determinants on students' internship experiences. The individual dimension encompasses personal attributes and readiness for professional engagement, while the institutional dimension pertains to the alignment of academic programmes and the extent of institutional support. The organisational dimension reflects workplace conditions and the quality of supervisory relationships encountered during internships. By integrating these variables into a unified analytical framework, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the determinants of internship satisfaction, thereby informing targeted strategies to enhance the effectiveness and relevance of internship programmes in hospitality education.

The implications of this research are significant for both academic and industry stakeholders. By elucidating the interplay of key determinants of satisfaction, the study aims to offer evidence-based recommendations for designing more structured, supportive, and pedagogically sound internship programmes. Such interventions are critical not only for enhancing student learning and well-being but also for improving retention and reducing turnover in the hospitality workforce a sector historically plagued by high attrition rates (Baum, 2007). Thus, this study endeavours to contribute to the refinement of internship practices that support sustainable human resource development within the hospitality industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is grounded in two well-established theoretical models Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964) and Job Characteristics Theory (JCT) (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) which jointly offer a comprehensive perspective on the underlying factors influencing internship satisfaction among hospitality students. These theories provide a dual lens for analysing how individual experiences, institutional practices, and organisational structures interact to shape the outcomes of internship programmes.

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory posits that social behaviour is the result of an exchange process where individuals seek to maximise benefits while minimising costs (Blau, 1964). In the context of hospitality internships, this exchange involves students contributing their time, effort, and academic knowledge in return for professional development opportunities, mentorship, and workplace learning. The quality of this reciprocal relationship significantly influences student satisfaction. When students perceive that their contributions are met with adequate support and meaningful learning experiences, they are more likely to exhibit higher levels of engagement and career commitment (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Conversely, perceived inequity such as lack of proper supervision, exploitative workloads, or misalignment with career goals can lead to dissatisfaction and disengagement (Emerson, 1976). This framework is particularly relevant in the hospitality sector, where student interns frequently depend on mentors and supervisors to facilitate their integration into the professional environment (Giousmpasoglou et al., 2021).

Job Characteristics Theory: Job Characteristics Theory offers a motivational approach to understanding job satisfaction. Hackman and Oldham (1976) argue that five core job dimensions—skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback—contribute to three critical psychological states: experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results. These, in turn, affect outcomes such as job satisfaction, motivation, and performance. In the context of hospitality internships, providing students with a variety of tasks, well-defined roles, opportunities for meaningful contributions, autonomy in performing their duties, and consistent feedback significantly contributes to enhanced satisfaction and improved learning experiences (Hussien & La Lopa, 2018). Conversely, internships that lack structure or fail to incorporate these dimensions often result in limited learning and diminished motivation.

By integrating Social Exchange Theory and Job Characteristics Theory, this study adopts a multidimensional approach to understanding internship satisfaction. SET emphasises the interpersonal and relational context, while JCT focuses on the design and intrinsic motivational potential of internship roles. Together, these theories provide a robust conceptual framework to examine how organisational,

institutional, and individual-level factors contribute to the overall quality of internship experiences in the hospitality sector.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies suggest that students who possess higher levels of self-efficacy and initiative are more likely to seek feedback and adapt effectively in workplace settings, resulting in enhanced learning satisfaction (Hussien & La Lopa, 2018). In parallel, job characteristics grounded in Job Characteristics Theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) encompass five core dimensions: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. These characteristics contribute to intrinsic motivation and learning effectiveness, particularly when interns are given meaningful, autonomous tasks with adequate performance feedback (Humphrey et al., 2007).

Prior research has extensively examined the determinants of internship satisfaction within hospitality education, with growing consensus around the significance of individual, structural, and contextual dimensions. Individual factors refer to student specific attributes that influence their engagement and outcomes during internships. These include academic preparedness, self-efficacy, proactive learning behaviours, and attitudinal disposition (Bandura, 1997; Giousmpasoglou et al., 2021; Sihombing, 2021). Similarly, Kunwar and Khatri Thapa (2016) conducted an in-depth study on the hospitality internship experiences at Gokarna Forest Resort in Nepal. Their findings revealed that internships substantially shaped students' career perceptions reinforcing aspirations when positive but discouraging industry involvement when negative. Interns reported gaining practical, hands-on knowledge that bridged the gap between academic learning and real-world operations, enhancing their employment readiness. However, the study also identified significant limitations, such as the prevalence of repetitive, low-responsibility tasks and inadequate supervisory support.

A key factor influencing internship experiences is the organisational environment, encompassing supervisor support, collegial relationships, well-structured learning opportunities, and the broader cultural climate within the host organisation (Asimah, 2020). Research demonstrates that supportive and inclusive environments foster a stronger sense of belonging and enhance perceived value from internships (Asimah, 2020). Finally, contextual factors such as geographic location, schedule flexibility, financial support, and accommodation provided by the organisation have been found to significantly influence students' satisfaction levels (Thapa, 2022; Hussien & La Lopa, 2018). These external variables shape the logistical feasibility of the internship and affect overall perceptions of fairness and comfort. Collectively, these four independent variables offer a multidimensional lens through which internship satisfaction can be understood and optimised in the hospitality sector.

Individual characteristics such as academic preparedness, self-efficacy, motivation, and proactive behaviour have been consistently associated with positive internship

outcomes. [Sihombing \(2021\)](#) found that students who perceive internships as valuable and demonstrate initiative are more likely to gain satisfaction from their practical experience. This is supported by [Giousmpasoglou and Marinakou \(2023\)](#), who emphasised that individual learning orientation significantly contributes to professional development and internship satisfaction among hospitality students.

The design of internship roles plays a pivotal role in shaping student satisfaction. Drawing on [Hackman and Oldham's \(1976\)](#) Job Characteristics Theory, recent empirical studies have confirmed the importance of core job dimensions such as autonomy, skill variety, and task significance. [Lin et al. \(2022\)](#), in a study of Taiwan's dual vocational education system, reported that job autonomy and feedback were strong predictors of student learning satisfaction and intent to continue in the hospitality sector. Furthermore, [Hussien and La Lopa \(2018\)](#) found that feedback, autonomy, university supervisor support, academic preparedness, flexible working hours, student initiative, internship location, and skill variety are key factors influencing hospitality students' internship satisfaction.

Organisational support structures especially supervisory support, team inclusion, and structured mentoring have a direct influence on internship satisfaction. [Asimah et al. \(2021\)](#) found that both supervisor and co-worker support significantly enhanced hospitality interns' satisfaction levels in Ghanaian hotels. Their findings reinforce that a nurturing organisational culture fosters psychological safety and motivation among interns. [Thapa \(2022\)](#) conducted a quantitative study among hospitality students in Nepal and found that perceived supervisor support significantly influenced internship satisfaction. The study revealed that mentoring, feedback, and emotional encouragement from supervisors enhanced students' overall internship experiences. These findings highlight the critical role of supervisory engagement in fostering learning effectiveness and satisfaction within the Nepali hospitality education context.

Contextual variables such as the geographical location of the internship, schedule flexibility, and living conditions contribute to the interns' overall experience. [Hussien and La Lopa \(2018\)](#) highlighted that poor accommodation and inflexible working hours often result in dissatisfaction, regardless of the quality of work tasks. Similarly, [Thapa \(2022\)](#) observed that contextual misalignment can dilute learning outcomes, particularly in Nepal's hospitality education sector.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative, descriptive and causal comparative research design to examine how individual factors, job characteristics, organisational environment, and contextual variables influence internship satisfaction among hospitality students in Nepal. The causal-comparative design was appropriate for exploring the effects of independent variables on dependent variable without

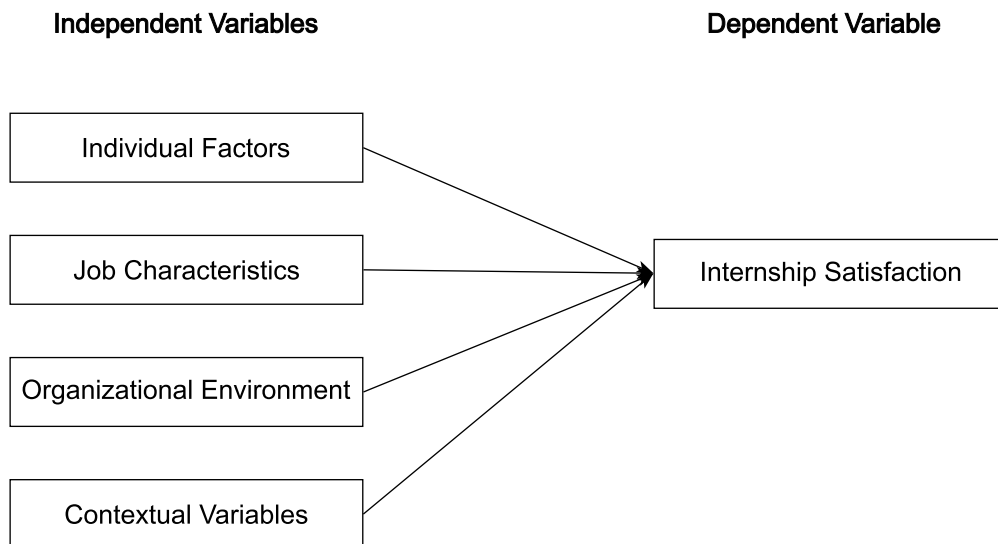


Figure 1. *Research Framework*

Note: Adopted and Modified from Hussien & La Lopa (2018)

manipulating any conditions. A non-probability convenience sampling of 195 final-year students was selected. Convenience sampling was used due to the ease of accessing hospitality students who had recently completed internships. This method allowed the researcher to collect data quickly and efficiently within time and resource constraints. It was practical for reaching participants from specific colleges willing to respond. However, this approach limits the generalisability of the findings, as the sample may not represent the broader population of hospitality students of Tribhuvan University as the research may have issues of selection bias, and the results should be interpreted with caution, acknowledging that they may not fully reflect experiences across all institutions or regions. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on already tested scales. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure responses. The questionnaire was shared through Google Forms and sent to participants online for easy access and wider reach. For the data analysis Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for reliability analysis, under descriptive analysis mean and standard deviation was calculated and for inferential statistics Pearson Correlation and Multiple Linear Regression was performed.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting internship satisfaction among hospitality management students in Nepal. A total of 195 respondents participated in the study, comprising 52.8% male and 47.2% female students, reflecting a balanced gender representation.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Category	F	%
Gender	Male	103	52.8
	Female	92	47.2
Stipend	Below 30,000	57	29.2
	30,000 – 50,000	73	37.4
	50,000 – 80,000	17	8.7
	Above 80,000	48	24.6
College	NATHM	72	36.9
	Nesfield	40	20.5
	Golden Gate	19	9.7
	NCCS	33	16.9
	NCTTM	11	5.6
	Saraswati Multiple Campus	12	6.2
Internship Department	Padmakanya Multiple Campus	8	4.1
	Food Production	62	31.8
	Front Office	42	21.5
	Housekeeping	31	15.9
	Food and Beverage	41	21
Internship Location	Others	19	9.7
	Nepal	22	11.3
	UAE	60	30.8
	Bahrain	13	6.7
	France	14	7.2
	America	16	8.2
	Thailand	3	1.5
	Qatar	29	14.9
Received Training Before Internship?	Others	38	19.5
	Yes	85	43.6
	No	110	56.4

n=195

Note. Field Survey, 2025

Descriptive analysis revealed that individual factors received the highest mean score ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.71$), indicating that students felt academically prepared, confident, and motivated. Organisational environment ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.76$) and job characteristics ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.71$) were moderately rated, while contextual factors ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.89$) showed the most variability, suggesting inconsistent experiences in terms of location, schedule flexibility, and logistical support.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	SD	CV
Individual Factors	4.09	0.70	17.23
Job Characteristics	3.45	0.71	20.58
Organisational Environment	3.88	0.75	19.53
Contextual Factors	3.42	0.88	25.85
Internship satisfaction	3.27	0.79	24.27

Note. Field Survey, 2025

Table 3
Correlational Analysis

Variables	IS	IF	JC	OE	CF
IS	1				
IF	0.394**	1			
JC	0.518**	0.336**	1		
OE	0.404**	0.638**	0.501**	1	
CF	0.469**	0.325**	0.638**	0.584**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Note. Field Survey, 2025

All variables have an acceptable level of reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha values mostly above 0.7, while Job Characteristics (0.657) and Internship Satisfaction (0.669) remain moderately reliable for exploratory purposes. Pearson correlation analysis confirmed significant positive relationships between all independent variables and internship satisfaction ($p < 0.001$). Among them, job characteristics had the strongest correlation ($r = 0.518$), followed by contextual factors ($r = 0.436$), individual factors ($r = 0.394$), and organisational environment ($r = 0.336$). These results underscore the combined influence of personal readiness, job design, and environmental support on satisfaction.

The regression analysis revealed that the model significantly predicts internship satisfaction ($R = 0.587$, $R^2 = 0.344$, $F = 24.957$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that 34.4% of the variance is explained by the predictors. Among the variables, job characteristics ($B = 0.361$, $p = 0.001$) had the strongest positive influence, followed by individual factors ($B = 0.267$, $p = 0.002$) and contextual factors ($B = 0.182$, $p = 0.016$). However, organisational environment ($B = -0.029$, $p = 0.760$) was not statistically significant. These findings highlight the importance of individual, job-related, and contextual factors in enhancing internship satisfaction.

Table 4
Regression Analysis

Model Summary				
R	0.587			
R Square	0.344			
F Value	24.957			
P-Value	0.01			
Predictors	Unstandardised Coefficients (B)	Standardised Coefficients (Beta)	t-value	P-Value
IF	0.267	0.237	3.09	0.002
JC	0.361	0.323	4.132	0.001
OE	-0.029	-0.028	-0.306	0.76
CF	0.182	0.203	2.427	0.016

Note. Field Survey, 2025

Discussion

The findings of this study reaffirm that internship satisfaction in the hospitality sector is influenced by a complex interplay of personal, structural, and contextual factors. The strong role of job characteristics supports (p-value 0.001) previous research by [Hackman and Oldham \(1976\)](#), which emphasised that features such as autonomy, skill variety, and feedback enhance interns' motivation and engagement. Similarly, the importance of individual factors (p-value 0.002) aligns with [Sihombing \(2021\)](#), who noted that academic preparedness and self-initiative positively shape students' ability to adapt and perform during internships. However, this study diverges slightly from [Asimah et al. \(2021\)](#), who emphasised the dominant role of organisational environment (p-value 0.76); here, its influence was present but less pronounced, possibly due to variability in mentorship quality or supervisor engagement in the local context. The insignificance of organisational factors in internship satisfaction among BHM students may stem from limited exposure to internal policies during short internship durations, which restricts their ability to evaluate organisational systems ([Casado, 1992](#)).

Furthermore, the significance of contextual factors (0.016) often overlooked in prior models is consistent with [Thapa's \(2022\)](#) research in Nepal, suggesting that logistical aspects like location, housing, and schedule flexibility directly shape interns' lived experiences. Overall, these findings suggest that improving internship satisfaction requires a holistic approach one that not only prepares students and structures roles effectively but also addresses practical realities and ensures consistent institutional support throughout the internship experience.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study concludes that internship satisfaction in the hospitality industry is shaped by a multidimensional interaction of individual attributes, job characteristics, organisational environment, and contextual conditions. The findings confirm that students who are academically prepared and exhibit strong self-initiative are more likely to perceive their internships positively. Furthermore, structured and engaging job roles with autonomy, feedback, and task clarity significantly enhance satisfaction, aligning with existing literature emphasising the role of job design. Although the organisational environment, including supervisor and peer support, contributed to satisfaction, its influence appeared less consistent, possibly due to variations in mentorship practices across the establishment.

Notably, contextual factors such as work location, schedule flexibility, and access to accommodation emerged as critical, often overlooked, contributors to the overall internship experience. This indicated that the findings strongly align with Job Characteristics Theory (JCT) because the most significant factor was job characteristics, which directly supports the theory's core argument about task design, autonomy, and feedback enhancing satisfaction. However, Social Exchange Theory (SET) is not fully supported in this study since the organisational environment (which reflects supervision, mentorship, and workplace relationships) was found to have no significant impact on internship satisfaction.

These findings imply that educational institutions should better align internship placements with students' academic readiness and career goals, while employers should design roles that are both meaningful and supportive. Collaborative planning, structured supervision, and attention to logistical needs can significantly enhance the value of internship programmes. For future research, it is recommended to explore longitudinal effects of satisfaction on career outcomes and to include qualitative methods to gain deeper insights into students' live internship experiences across diverse contexts.

Funding

The author declared having received no external funding for this study.

Conflict of interest

The author declared having no conflict of interest in this research.

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