

## AN ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTIVENESS OF REMOTE WORK MODE IN JOB INTERNSHIPS

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### ABSTRACT

The present aims to identify the effectiveness of the internships which have been done through remote mode. It aims to know the performance and learning of the management intern when he is working from home. Besides secondary data, the primary data has been collected with the help of questionnaires consisting of close-ended questions. The respondents are the people from corporate who were company mentors for the students, who have done internship programs in management. The trend of remote internships grew exponentially during COVID 19 lockdowns and has continued to exist. The authors felt it necessary to examine the effectiveness across domains and management disciplines. The single cross sectional descriptive research design has been used. For reliability tests Cronbach's Alpha and for data analysis one-way MANOVA have been used. The software SPSS 26 has been utilized for the same. The study validates the effectiveness of remote or virtual internships in management varies from specialization to specialization.

**Keywords:** Internship, Remote work, Performance, Learning, Experiential Learning, Hybrid Work

### Introduction

In any management program internship plays a decisive role in designing the skillset of the student by offering exposure to the real time challenges and practices in the industry. It helps students to explore their inclinations and related careers. The regular or off-site internships have been proved to be the best platforms to make the students industry ready. In the recent past when pandemic hit the entire system, the management program curriculum did not remain untouched. During Covid-19 restrictions, the face-to-face classroom setting has been substituted by an online classroom setting, and on campus internships have been switched to online or remote internships. In no time the benefits of remote internships started getting visibility, due to the flexibility of working hours and benefit of handling other tasks along with remote internship. There were many management graduates who managed to complete multiple online internships during the period of two years. (Järvelä, 2016)

The Twenty first century digital transformation has redefined the business environment. Virtual and networked organizations have been recognized as a part of this competitive world. An important enabler of this reality is the range of virtual platforms and the scale of collaboration from sole proprietor units to business partners and supply chains. The experiences however differ as far as virtual and onsite collaboration is concerned (Dekker 2008). The digital transformation has significantly supported the learning process for the budding managers as well as practitioners. In the case of students who need experiential learning along with academics lack the required experience in online working. Remote internships fill in this gap to an extent. Remote internships have emerged as an opportunity for learners to gain practical experience as we adapt ourselves to the post COVID world. (Cohen, 1994).

According to van Dorp (2008), remote internships is defined as "field-driven assignments designated to students by third parties, i.e., public or private organizations in which students work for the most part off-site and on flexible hours, herewith utilizing generic and/ or specific information and communication tools".

The flexibility of working hours and remote components are diverse components in comparison to physical or onsite internships. One of the important impacts of the 'remote' component is it has erased geographical boundaries and time zones making huge opportunities available for the learners. These options meet the requirements and are a match with characteristics of Open and Distance Teaching Universities in comparison to mainstream conventional universities, according to van Dorp and Herrero (2008)

### Review of Literature

Technological advancement has restructured the method of teaching and learning significantly. This continued technological development and the constraints caused by Pandemic Covid-19 has given rise to acceptance of

technology in every walk of life. The time has taught us how to continue the learning and perform well even through remote mode of work.

Franks. (2012) in their study, found the idea of a virtual internship to be completely suitable when we focus on digital set up, information and systems in digital curation. They found that, in diverse settings., the virtual internship has a capacity of sharing expertise internationally,

Oner, (2020) in their research, examined the use of a virtual internship (an epistemic game) for developing preservice teachers' technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK).

It aims to capture the vital qualities of teacher knowledge which is needed to be integrated with technology and used in teaching. In essence, virtual internships are computer-based professional practicum simulation games where participants act out the part of a professional, collaborate on real-world projects, and apply complicated professional thinking. It was found in the study that participants 'representations gradually became more complex due to the number of pedagogical considerations and the strength of connections between pedagogical considerations, content, and technology.

Ghamdi, (2022). studied the evaluation of the virtual internship program for KAU IT students during the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 summer. It was found that the students were gratified with their virtual internship. The study considered factors such as: live interface, information and knowledge, the ease of achieving tasks, work experience and soft skills. It was found that virtual internship is an opportunity for the students to be skilled online with real enterprises. Metzger,(2022) in his paper presents a number of concrete proposals that will lessen the difficulties and increase the benefits of remote internships, making them a realistic and appealing choice even after the pandemic. Utilize the technology that is accessible.

Hruska, (2022) in their research found virtual ecology internship programmes can create more accessible opportunities and be just as valuable as in-person opportunities, despite being different from what many researchers and students imagine when they think of internships. This is especially true when research programmes and advisors develop virtual internships with intention and planning.

### **Research Gap and Problem Statement**

The review of literature has shown that numerous studies were conducted to identify and assess the performance of interns, their learning, and their performance during virtual internship. In most cases Virtual internship has been acknowledged to be great in the Information & Technology sector.

The research gap is observed in case of to study effectiveness of the remote / virtual internship for management students.

Accordingly, in the present study the research questions are framed as:

Is remote internship effective in all management functional areas?

The objective of the study is to know about the performance and learning of the summer intern when he is working from home. The focus of this research is analyzing the viability and effectiveness of remote working mode for job internships in different domains of management.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To identify the learning of the intern when he is working from home.
2. To recognize the performance of the intern when he is working from home.
3. To check whether performance of interns differs with their domains/specializations.

### **Research Methodology**

In this descriptive research, the primary as well as secondary data has been used. The data collection has been done in the month of November 2022- February 2023. The questionnaire with close ended questions has been designed to conduct online surveys. The questionnaire included different sections: such as demographic profile, details about interns, Specialization areas of interns, Technology related issues, Performance Characteristics – Ability to Learn, reading/writing /computation skills, Basic skills, Professional skills. The data was collected from fifty-three respondents, who were the company mentors for the interns. The interns were pursuing PGDM/MBA program therefore their internship was in functional areas of management such as Finance/Marketing/Operations & Supply chain Management / Human Resource Management etc. Firstly, convenience sampling was used, then snowball sampling was used to elicit information from corporates about their experience of remote internship and learning of interns.

The respondents' opinions were determined using a five-point and seven-point Likert-type scale. MANOVA has been used to analyze data in one way, according to Cronbach's Alpha. The same has been done using SPSS software. The present study is limited to remote internships for management students.

**Data Analysis**

**Reliability Analysis**

Reliability Analysis has been done with the help of Cronbach's alpha. As a rule, 0.70 or more represents satisfactory reliability of the items measured.

Performance Characteristics	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
Ability to Learn	.780	.753	5
Reading/Writing/Computation Skills	.864	.871	3
Basic Skills	.866	.867	4
Professional Skills	.941	.944	5

Table. No.1 Reliability Statistics

As all the constructs considered under the specified dimensions have Cronbach's Alpha values above.70, this means that all the constructs are statistically dependable and valid.

**Descriptive Analysis**

The questionnaire comprised eighteen questions, which were divided into five sub-sections. The data analysis has been presented section-wise.

**Demographic Profile**

There were fifty-three practicing managers from Industry who shared their opinion by filling in the questionnaire. They have guided the interns during pandemic and post pandemic. The focus was only on remote internships and learning and performance of the interns. The spread of interns across industries is seen in the graph below. The top two industries were Software and Consulting and Banking and Financial Services where students have completed their internship through remote mode.

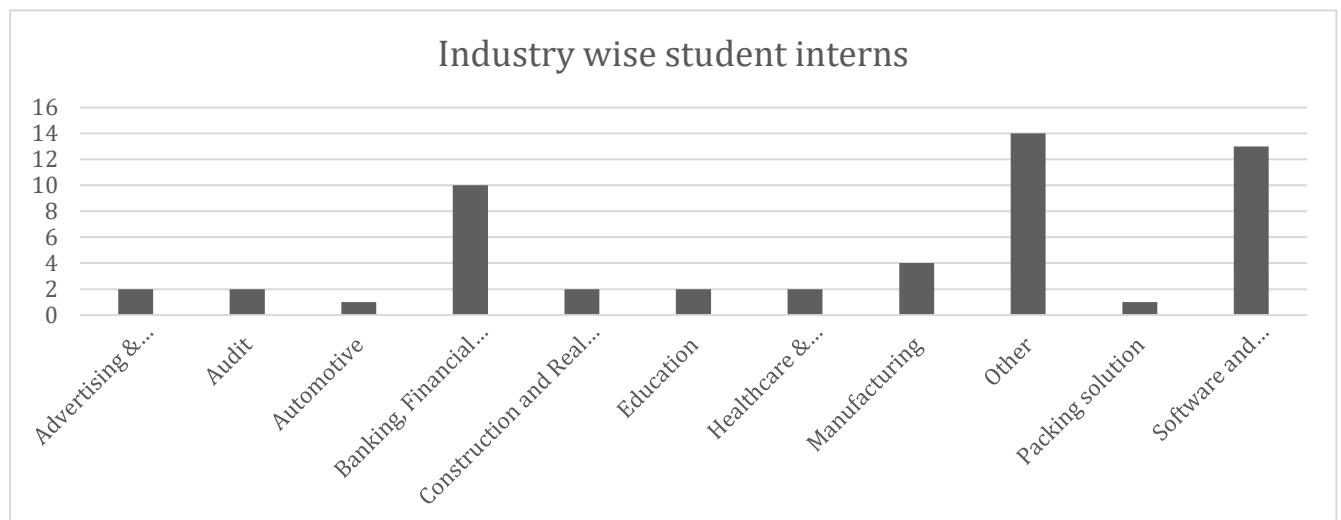


Figure 1: Industry wise student interns

Most interns have done their internship in marketing and finance followed by HR, Operations & Supply Chain Management, and IT & Systems.

The majority (85%) of the company mentors had up to five interns reporting to them. The data showed equal distribution of male and female interns taken collectively across mentors.

In the present study the Performance Characteristics includes - Ability to Learn, reading/writing /computation skills, Basic skills, Professional skills. The assessment was conducted using a seven-point Likert scale, with scores ranging from Strongly Agree (score of 7) to Strongly Disagree (score of 1).

#### Ability To Learn

To identify the main purpose of undergoing internship the questions have been asked about the ability of the intern to learn through online mode. Most respondents reported that they disagree with the statement that interns have attended the training and induction program diligently (Mean Score 2.45). With the mean score 6.15 majority of respondents agreed that interns have asked pertinent and purposeful questions during online interactions with company mentors. The mean score of 6.04 supported the agreement of respondents in case of Intern's initiative to learn more about the company and its offerings, to learn more about the area of internship and in their openness to new experiences and assignments. It shows that corporations have acknowledged the possibility of a proficient level of learning through remote mode of internship.

#### Reading/writing /computation skills

The purpose of an internship is to develop the basic skills to communicate at work. To check the status of development of reading skills, writing skills and computation skills during remote internship, questions have been asked to respondents. The mean scores 5.92, 5.81 and 5.51 respectively have shown agreement of the respondents about the constructs: intern read and comprehended and followed the instructions, communicate ideas and concepts clearly and Work with software/ application-based procedures appropriate for the assigned duties.

#### Basic Skills

The basic skills include a good understanding of the use of basic technology in business, reporting to the company mentors at planned time, exhibiting positive and constructive attitude and managing to accomplish all the tasks given by mentor as per timelines. The mean scores are 5.62, 5.77, 5.42 and 5.81 respectively which shows agreement to somewhat agreement of the company mentors about the basic skills development of the students during remote internship.

#### Professional Skills

The most significant aim of the internship is to teach management students professional skills such as breaking down the task and prioritizing the work, demo of analytical capacity, capable of achieving targets while working from home, and exhibiting professional behavior and attitude. The mean scores of these constructs are 5.77, 5.42, 5.30 and 5.38 respectively which has not shown an incredibly positive scenario of effective professional skills learning of the interns during the internship through remote mode.

#### Inferential statistics

An attempt has been made to explore the association among some selected variables. For inferential statistical analysis, the one-way MANOVA at 5% level of significance along with 95% level of confidence has been used with the help of SPSS 26.

$H_0$  = There is no statistically significant difference in the performance characteristics of interns during remote internship based on their specialization.

<b>Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices</b>	
Box's M	46.261
F	1.216
df1	30
df2	2064.822
Sig.	.195
Evaluates the null hypothesis that the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables are equal across groups.	
a. Design: Intercept + Specialization	

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power <sup>ed</sup>
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.978	416.337 <sup>b</sup>	5.00	46.00	.000	.978	2081.685	1.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.022	416.337 <sup>b</sup>	5.00	46.00	.000	.978	2081.685	1.000
	Hotelling's Trace	45.254	416.337 <sup>b</sup>	5.00	46.00	.000	.978	2081.685	1.000
	Roy's Largest Root	45.254	416.337 <sup>b</sup>	5.00	46.00	.000	.978	2081.685	1.000
Specialization	Pillai's Trace	.361	2.069	10.0	94.00	.035	.180	20.692	.867
	Wilks' Lambda	.659	2.137	10.0	92.00	.029	.188	21.370	.879
	Hotelling's Trace	.489	2.201	10.0	90.00	.025	.197	22.010	.889
	Roy's Largest Root	.419	3.938 <sup>c</sup>	5.00	47.00	.005	.295	19.689	.919

Table No. 3 Multivariate Tests

a. Design: Intercept + Specialization

b. Exact statistic

c. The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

d. Computed using alpha = .05

The **Sig.** Value is calculated as 0.195 in Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices which is more than 0.05. It indicates the covariance matrices are equal for the groups. The multivariate test table shows that Wilks' Lambda,  $F=2.137$ , with the Sig. Value  $p(0.000) < 0.05$ . It denotes that there is a significant difference in the performance characteristics of interns during remote internship based on their specialization.

Having  $p$  values for all dependent variables  $> 0.05$ , the Levene's test validates the statistically significant difference in performance characteristics of the interns who underwent remote/virtual internship based on their area of specialization.

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Demonstrates an analytical capacity	Based on Mean	.043	2	50	.958
	Based on Median	.005	2	50	.995
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.005	2	45.794	.995
	Based on trimmed mean	.032	2	50	.968
Asked pertinent and purposeful questions during online interactions	Based on Mean	6.225	2	50	.004
	Based on Median	1.660	2	50	.200
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.660	2	34.753	.205
	Based on trimmed mean	5.082	2	50	.010
Communicate ideas and concepts clearly	Based on Mean	7.475	2	50	.001
	Based on Median	5.117	2	50	.010
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	5.117	2	33.980	.011
	Based on trimmed mean	7.599	2	50	.001
Exhibits professional behavior and attitude	Based on Mean	.154	2	50	.857
	Based on Median	.212	2	50	.809
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.212	2	45.740	.809

	Based on trimmed mean	.131	2	50	.877
Capable of achieving targets while working from home	Based on Mean	1.529	2	50	.227
	Based on Median	1.435	2	50	.248
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.435	2	47.331	.248
	Based on trimmed mean	1.491	2	50	.235
Evaluates the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.					
a. Design: Intercept + Specialization					

Table No. 4 Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

### Findings and Conclusions

It is found that the remote internship has been a wonderful opportunity to gain experience and adapt the industrial practices and it has been proved to be a savior for management program students during pandemic. The study validates the effectiveness of remote or virtual internships in management varies from specialization to specialization. Sometimes, in HR/ Finance it can be effective but may not be holding the same merit when it comes to marketing or logistics & supply chain Management. Basic skills can be learned easily through virtual internships but when it comes to learning professional skills, remote internships have not been equally successful in upskilling the budding managers in all domains.

If the role of the intern and task to be assigned to him by the company are predefined and aligned with the benefits of working from home sphere, then this remote internship can benefit students manifold. Students can do multiple internships during their management program and make themselves more equipped to face the challenges of the industry and secure their dream jobs.

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