

The Impact of Internship Experience on Job Readiness among youth: a mediating model of Psychological Capital

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ABSTRACT

In the age of technology and Fierce competition, every company wants its employees to be the best at their work, be well aware of the tasks, responsibilities, and skills required. With today's tough job market, it's important for freshers to understand their roles beforehand, and internships really come to the rescue here. This research examines the impact of internships on job readiness. As the job market becomes increasingly competitive, fresh graduates need to possess not only academic knowledge but also practical skills and workplace awareness. But the impact of Internship Experience on Job Readiness differs from person to person, which indicates the existence of another variable that mediates the relationship between Internship Experience and Job Readiness. This paper aims to study the impact of Internship Experience on Job Readiness with a mediating role of Psychological Capital. The findings indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between the concerned variables. The results shows that Internship Experience directly and indirectly via Psychological Capital impacts Job Readiness. Thus, it helps in bridging the gap between theoretical learning and real-world application.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's world of cut-throat and destructive competition, every company wants to be the best in all aspects, whether in increasing its sales, performance, or having a well-qualified and efficient workforce. The company wants its employees to be exceptionally good and well-informed about the roles and responsibilities they need to fulfil. The need arises for a young adult enrolled in any educational institution. It becomes essential for every student or fresher to become mindful and pre-aware of their skills and abilities. As per the India Skill Report 2026, the employability in India stands at 56.35 (Khetarpal, 2025; George, 2025), which shows that there is still improvement required by the institutions or government to ensure the youth are actually competent and ready for employment. These reports indicate that the youth still lack the required skills and competencies for the actual workplace.

Internships act as a rescuer in this case, which helps the students gain work experience and learning the skills required. Schambach & Dirks (2002) stated that Internships are a structured employment programmes that mix academic knowledge with work experience and expand the learning of the students for their professional development. Internship programmes have become an essential component of higher education (Gault et al., 2000). It helps students in easing the transition from college to the real world of work (Beard & Morton, 1998) and is considered the biggest contributor to their learning (Bhattacharya & Neelam, 2018; Karns, 2005) by giving them a chance to learn from a real workplace environment (Ambrose & Poklop, 2015; Barnett, 2012; Eyler, 2009). It increases the possibility of employability for the graduates (Alharethi et al., 2025; Nugroho et al., 2024). The term "internship" denotes a professional learning experience that offers meaningful, practical work related to a student's field of study or career interest. An internship is a short-term, temporary job, usually lasting 2-4 months, though sometimes 6 months. These internships are offered by various companies all over the world, either online or offline, to students or freshers, known as interns, to gain real-world experience. The term "intern" was first applied to medical students in the 1920s, initially referring to young medical trainees gaining practical experience under supervision (Cooper, 2021). This temporary employment provides work experience (Helyer & Lee, 2014), which is usually demanded by large employers and recruiters (Schambach & Dirks, 2002; Fliers, 2014; Helyer & Lee, 2014).

The internship experience helps in developing skills like communication, time management, self-confidence, and self-motivation (Gill and Lashine, 2003; Dennis, 1996), by providing them with practical learning experiences and helping in their professional development (Ansari, 2025). There are many benefits of an internship, including awareness of the skills required, increased motivation, and high retention (Schambach & Dirks, 2002), but it cannot always promise to increase the competitiveness of the individual (Dalimunthe et al., 2023). Internships are a significant way to gauge employability (Shoenfelt et al., 2012; Bott et al., 2006; Carducci et al., 1987), but not every graduate equally benefits from them. According to The Economic Survey 2024-25, only 8.25% of graduates have the skills needed in the workplace, and align with the qualifications. Hence, job readiness becomes a matter of greatest importance for educational institutions to increase employability (Tomlinson, 2017; Mason et al., 2009; McCowan, 2015). These reports raise concerns about the readiness and the ability required of the graduates in the workplace.

Job readiness helps individuals face real workplace problems by increasing the required skills and capabilities. Job readiness is the skills, abilities, and knowledge Makki et al., 2015) that help graduates in achieving success. According to Suyanto & Kurniawan (2019), it is influenced by internal as well as external factors. The external factors consist of society, family, school, and environment (Suyanto & Ependi, 2019), whereas internal factors encompass intelligence, skills, talents, interests, motivation, experience, attitudes, and skills (Budhiman et al., 2019). According to Hillage and Pollard (1998), Skills, knowledge, Understanding, and personal attributes are the key elements, which Pool Dacre and Sewell (2007) further expanded by adding job satisfaction as an aspect to measure job readiness. India has witnessed a 25% rise in internship opportunities in 2024 compared to the previous year, according to the Annual Internship Trends Report (The Indian Express, 2024). These internships help in bridging the gap between academic knowledge and real-world experience, as educational institutions give academic & theoretical knowledge only, but the knowledge of using these theories in the real world and making candidates ready for the real job can only be gained by internships. Job readiness refers to employability skills such as critical thinking and preparation for workplace communication, which helps graduates by increasing their chances of employability (Fitri & Khalid, 2024). However, the level of benefit gained through internship differs from individual to individual, which indicates the existence of another variable that mediates the relationship between internship experience and job readiness.

Psychological capital is a logical variable that fills this gap. The real workplace environment demands skills and knowledge, along with psychological resources (Nida Nafees & Musaddiq Jahan, 2017), to face challenges and pressure (Luthans & Youssef, 2007). Psychological capital is comprised of self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience (Luthans & Youssef, 2007; Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007), which can be improved through training (Martínez et al., 2021). Self-efficacy represents a positive attitude with the ability to use appropriate resources to accomplish a task (Bandura, 1997; Stajkovic and Luthans, 1998b) regardless of difficulties and challenges (Nolzen, 2018). Hope indicates belief and confidence in achieving the goal with the ability to change the approach for success (Snyder et al., 1991). According to Bandura & Locke (2003) and Seligman (1998), optimism is a positive projection of present and future success, which inspires individuals to be responsible, boosts their commitment, and motivates them to deal with tough situations effectively (Nolzen, 2018). Coutu (2002) and Masten (2001) define resilience as the ability to revert to success when facing issues and hardships by helping individuals to understand and accept the reality as it is (Nolzen, 2018).

Calvo and García (2021) mentioned that Psychological capital increases the perceived employability among undergraduate students, leading to less stress and burnout (Vanno et al., 2014), and improves academic outcomes and performance (Datu and Valdez, 2016; Datu et al., 2018; Martínez et al., 2021). High psychological capital among graduates helps in making them prepared for the actual workplace by increasing work readiness (Mashigo, 2014:129; Dewi et al., 2021). However, some researches show an insignificant impact of psychological capital on work readiness (Wijayanti, 2019).

These differences show a need for research by testing internship experience, job readiness, and psychological capital. Studies, particularly on youth in the context of psychological capital, are still limited. Although there is evidence supporting the benefits and positive impact of internships on students, their impact on job readiness remains unexplored, with the mediating impact of psychological capital. In this regard, internships will only be beneficial when candidates or interns get a permanent job with the help of skills and competencies learned during an internship. Nevertheless, a large body of research remains unfilled regarding the methodological application for analysing the impact of an internship on job readiness.

Hence, the study aims to study the impact of Internship Experience on Job Readiness with a mediating role of psychological capital among the youth, which will help in developing effective strategies for enhancing employability and job readiness.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW / THEORITICAL PERSPECTIVE AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.(A) LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.1 Internship Experience towards Job Readiness

The real workplace demands core competencies for success that graduates must be able to demonstrate (Binks, 1996; Johnson, 2000; Okay and Sahin, 2010). These core competencies are acquired with the help of temporary employment, known as an internship, given to the interns after multiple rounds of assessment, with or without a stipend, to bring their theoretical knowledge into reality (Bhattacharya & Neelam, 2018). The internship experience helps in developing skills like communication, time management, self-confidence, and self-motivation (Gill and Lashine, 2003; Dennis, 1996), by providing them with practical learning experiences and helping in their professional development (Ansari, 2025). The advantageous role of internships can be seen in providing experiential learning and setting realistic career goals for work (Cook, 2004; Barnett, 2012). This immersive nature of an internship helps youth in increasing role clarity, becoming more realistic, and performing better, thus increasing their job readiness. Several researchers have found a positive impact of internship experience on job readiness (Fatni & Satrya, 2023; Khwarizmi, 2022; Anggraeni et al., 2024; Martiwi et al., 2025) by reducing the gap between skills developed in the classroom and real-world employability Bhattacharya and Neelam, 2018. It is one of the traits that shows the quality of the worker and their readiness for being employed and earning a livelihood (Ristiani & Lusianingrum, 2022), which is based on skills, knowledge, and attitudes that help in achieving organizational goals (Othman et al., 2022; Makki et al., 2015). According to Vrchota et al. (2020), Moore & Morton (2017), employability skills, abilities, knowledge, and work experience, such as critical thinking and preparation for workplace communication, comprise job readiness, which is gained through internships, training, and other technical skills (Oktapiani & Alfarizi, 2025). This helps in increasing self-confidence and makes graduates capable of being employed (Perera et al., 2020; Fitri & Khalid, 2024).

The capability of using tools and techniques in the intended industry or work, and the graduates who are matching their skills with the job requirements, are seen as job-ready (Cavanagh et al., 2015b). Research shows that students with internship experience demonstrate high job readiness and are more prepared to work with significant and positive impact (Anggraeni et al., 2024; Nasution et al., 2024; Afriyulaniza, 2019; Kapareliotis et al., 2019), as the skills are learned from practice and the real world (Chaplin, 2002).

2.1.2 Internship Experience towards Psychological Capital

Psychological capital is a concept built from positive psychology (Peterson, 2006; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) that aims to represent an individual's psychological capacity and improve performance (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). It has a positive impact on job performance and career success (Luthans & Youssef, 2004) with increased job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Larson & Luthans, 2006). Psychological capital has a positive relationship with an individual's job performance (Abbas et al., 2014; Liu, 2013; Luthans et al., 2010; Luthans & Youssef, 2004), playing a positive role in increasing their work output (Avey et al., 2011).

Internships provide real workplace experience, thus helping in a deep understanding of the workplace and increasing the commitment and flexibility towards their organisation (Bennett et al., 2008; English & Koeppen, 1993; Garavan & Murphy, 2001). These internship programmes also help in increasing the psychological resources like self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience. Jaya (2025) has found that there is a positive impact of internship experience on self-efficacy, which in turn helps in increasing work readiness. It also increases resilience by increasing their ability to respond positively to setbacks (Goodenough et al., 2020; Kusumaningtyas et al., 2020) as well as other resources like hope and optimism (Pianda et al., 2025). Thus, internship experience boosts psychological capital.

2.1.3 Psychological Capital towards Job Readiness

Individuals with a high level of psychological capital are more ready to face the real workplace environment, and this helps in dealing with real challenges (Mashigo, 2014:129; Dewi et al., 2021). According to Masole & van Dyk (2016), psychological capital predicts work readiness as they can effectively manage real work-life situations and maintain a positive work environment. According to Ayala Calvo & Manzano García (2021), Bakari & Khoso (2017), Baluku et al. (2021), and Li et al. (2021), psychological capital helps in increasing the chances of employability by enhancing the skills required for it (Knight & Yorke, 2004), and thus it impacts the readiness to face a real workplace environment (Benati & Fischer, 2021; Masole & van Dyk, 2016) and become job-ready (Luthans et al., 2007). This states that there is a positive relationship between a high level of psychological capital and job readiness among individuals.

2.1.4 Psychological Capital as a Mediator of Internship Experience towards Job Readiness

Internship experience alone cannot make an individual competent enough to face the challenges and pressure of the workplace if they lack confidence, resilience, and a positive outlook (Nabilla et al., 2025); thus, psychological capital acts as a mediator between internship experience and job readiness. The real world of work demands psychological resources and does not rely only on skills and knowledge (Nida Nafees & Musaddiq Jahan, 2017). Psychological capital connects the internship experience with job readiness (Nabilla et al., 2025). Chandhika and Sarawati (2019:185) also showed that internships and a high level of psychological capital contribute towards work readiness.

In sum, internship experience significantly impacts job readiness with a moderating role of psychological capital. There is a growing demand for real work-life experience, and the focus is increasing on practical education to develop future talent. Therefore, the relationship between internship experience, psychological capital, and job readiness still needs deep investigation.

2.(B) HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.2.1 Internship Experience and Job Readiness

Internship experience helps in increasing the Job Readiness (Fatni & Satrya, 2023; Khwarizmi, 2022; Anggraeni et al., 2024; Martiwi et al., 2025), by providing the real workplace experience (Schambach & Dirks, 2002; Eyler, 1993; Griffin & Coelho, 2019). Thus, there is a positive impact of Internship Experience on Job Readiness

H1: Internship Experience has a positive impact on Job Readiness

2.2.2 Internship Experience and Psychological Capital

Internship Experience helps in enhancing the positive psychological capital resources, which include hope, optimism (Pianda et al., 2025), self-efficacy (Jaya, 2025), and resilience (Goodenough et al., 2020; Kusumaningtyas et al., 2020). So, there is a positive impact of Internship Experience on Psychological Capital.

H2: Internship Experience has a positive impact on Psychological Capital

2.2.3 Psychological Capital and Job Readiness

Psychological Capital helps individuals in effectively managing the real work-life situations (Mashigo, 2014:129; Dewi et al., 2021) and influences the Job readiness to face the real world of work (Masole & van Dyk, 2016; Luthans et al., 2007; Benati & Fischer, 2021). In this way, Psychological capital foresees Job Readiness (Masole & van Dyk, 2016) and has a positive relationship with them.

H3: Psychological Capital has a positive impact on Job Readiness.

2.2.4 Psychological Capital as a Mediator of Internship Experience towards Job Readiness.

Psychological Capital links the internship Experience with Job Readiness by boosting confidence, resilience, and a positive attitude (Nabilla et al., 2025). Thus, it acts as a mediator between Internship Experience and Job Readiness and influences Job Readiness (Chandhika and Sarawati, 2019:185).

H4: Psychological Capital positively mediates the relationship between Internship Experience and Job Readiness.

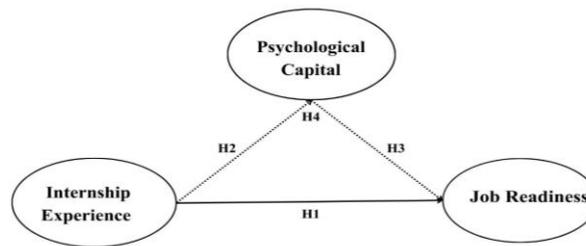


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY/ METHOD

3.1 Study Sample and Procedure: To gain an empirical understanding of the impact of Internship Experience on Job Readiness with a mediating role of Psychological Capital, primary data is collected through individuals who have completed at least one internship with the help of a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire aims to collect a final sample of 200 individuals by employing a non-probability sampling method. The structured questionnaire was made with the help of Google Form, which comprises all the variables (Internship Experience, Job Readiness, and Psychological Capital), and data is collected through online platforms.

3.2 Measures: The measurement items of the research constructs were adopted from pre-validated scales in the literature. A five-point Likert scale with anchors of 1 = “Strongly Disagree”, 2 = “Disagree”, 3 = “Neutral”, 4 = “Agree”, 5 = “Strongly Agree” was used to measure all constructs.

3.2.1 Internship Experience: The Internship Experience is measured by adopting the scale of **Gupta et al. (2010)**, using a 5-point Likert scale.

3.2.2 Job Readiness: Job Readiness is measured by adopting the measurement scale of **Pool and Sewell (2007)** according to the indicators of Job Readiness taken from (Ristiani & Lusianingrum, 2022) by using a 5-point Likert scale.

3.2.3 Psychological Capita: **Yu et al. (2012)** used the Chinese adaptation of the PsyCap questionnaire, which was utilised in the study to measure Psychological Capital.

3.3 Statistical Analysis: In this study, firstly, the Regression analysis is used to measure the impact of Internship Experience on Job Readiness. The Cronbach alpha method is used to find the reliability and internal consistency. Structured Equation Modeling on AMOS 21.0 was used to test the direct effect of Internship Experience on Job Readiness, via Psychological capital (PsyCap), and the total indirect effect of Internship Experience on Job Readiness, with PsyCap included.

4. Results/ Findings and Discussions

4.1 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach’s Alpha for all the variables is above the cutoff value of 0.70, which indicates that the data is reliable in nature, as shown in **Table 1**.

Reliability Statistics		
Variables	Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Internship Experience	6	.913
Psychological Capital	4	.908
Job Readiness	4	.928

Table 1. Source: Author’s own work

4.2 Regression Analysis: Simple Linear regression analysis is used to study the impact of Internship Experience (Independent Variable) on Job Readiness (Dependent Variable) provided in **Table 2**. The “R” column represents the quality of the prediction of Job Readiness (Dependent Variable). The value of R in the study is 0.797, which indicates a moderate level of prediction.

Model Summary ^b										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.797 ^a	.635	.633	1.90302	.635	344.289	1	198	.000	2.025
a. Predictors: (Constant), IE										
b. Dependent Variable: JR										

Table 2. Source: Author’s own work

4.3 Mediation Analysis: The analysis is done using AMOS to find the direct relationship between the variables provided in **Table 3**. It is evident that the Internship Experience (IE) has a significant and positive impact on Job Readiness (JR) (Standardized estimate (E) = .301, $p < .001$) and Psychological Capital(PC) (Standardized estimate (E) = .490, $p < .001$). These results support *H1* and *H2*. The relationship between Psychological Capital (PC) and Job Readiness (JR) is also found to be significant and positive, with a Standardized estimate (E) = .438 and $p < .001$. Therefore, it supports *H3*.

Regression Weights/ Regression Coefficient and its Significance							
			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
PC	<---	IE	.490	.030	16.393	***	
JR	<---	IE	.301	.037	8.037	***	
JR	<---	PC	.438	.058	7.556	***	

Table 3. Source: Author's own work

The study investigated the total effect of the Internship Experience (IE) and Psychological Capital (PC) on Job Readiness (JR) with the help of AMOS, presented in **Table 4**. As per the results, Internship Experience (IE) and Psychological Capital (PC) collectively impact Job Readiness (JR) with a 0.515 value. Out of this total effect, the direct effect of Internship Experience (IE) on Job Readiness (JR) is .301 (**Table 5**) & the indirect effect of Internship Experience (IE) and Psychological Capital (PC) is .214 (**Table 6**).

Total Effects		
	IE	PC
PC	.490	.000
JR	.515	.438

Table 4. Source: Author's own work

Direct Effects		
	IE	PC
PC	.490	.000
JR	.301	.438

Table 5. Source: Author's own work

Indirect Effects		
	IE	PC
PC	.000	.000
JR	.214	.000

Table 6. Source: Author's own work

With the indirect effect of Internship Experience (IE) on Job Readiness (JR) through Psychological Capital (PC), the lower bound confidence interval is .163, and the upper bound confidence interval is .305, as shown in **Table 7** & **Table 8**. Since there is no zero between .163 & .305, which means there is a significant indirect effect.

Indirect Effects - Lower Bounds (BC)		
	IE	PC
PC	.000	.000
JR	.163	.000

Table 7. Source: Author's own work

Indirect Effects - Upper Bounds (BC)		
	IE	PC
PC	.000	.000
JR	.305	.000

Table 8. Source: Author's own work

The value of .003 at the intersection of Internship Experience (IE) and Job Readiness (JR) shows the two-tailed significance. As the value of .003 is less than 0.05, as presented in **Table 9**, which concluded that Psychological Capital (PC) mediates the relationship between Internship Experience (IE) and Job Readiness (JR).

Indirect Effects - Two-Tailed Significance (BC)		
	IE	PC
PC
JR	.003	...

Table 9. Source: Author's own work

The study assessed the mediating role of Psychological Capital in the relationship between Internship Experience and Job Readiness. The model is presented in **Figure 2**, which shows the relationship between these variables. The results revealed that the significant indirect effect of Internship Experience on Job Readiness was positive (0.214) and significant ($p = .003$), supporting H1. In addition, the direct effect of Internship Experience on Job Readiness in the presence of Psychological Capital was also found significant and positive (Standardized estimate (E) = .301, $p < .001$). Hence, Psychological Capital partially mediated the relationship between Internship Experience and Job Readiness. The mediation analysis summary is presented in **Table 10**.

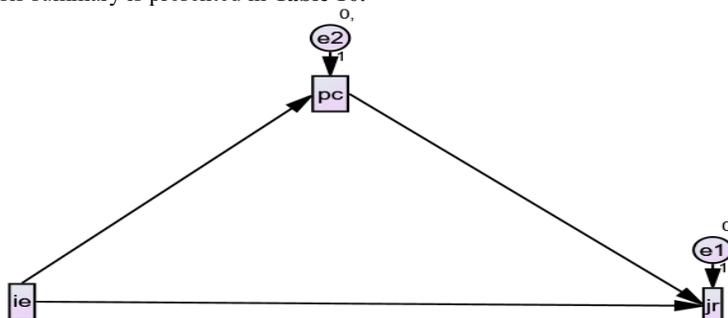


Figure 2. Model

Source: Author's own work

Relationship	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval		P-Value	Conclusion
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Internship Experience --> Psychological Capita -> Job Readiness	.301	.214	.163	.305	.003	Partial Mediation

Table 10. Source: Author's own work

5. Conclusion

The study examined the impact of Internship Experience on Job Readiness and found that there is a significant positive impact of internship experience on Job Readiness. These results support *Hypothesis 1* and posit that the higher the internship experience, the more it will help in increasing the job readiness among individuals by helping in acquiring the required qualities and skills necessary for succeeding in the real workplace. These findings align with the existing literature highlighting the positive effect of Internship Experience on Job Readiness (Fatmi & Satrya, 2023; Khwarizmi, 2022; Anggraeni et al., 2024; Martiwi et al., 2025). The study also hypothesized that the Internship Experience impacts Psychological Capital and Psychological Capital impacts Job Readiness through *Hypotheses 2 & 3*, and thus, we investigated this relationship between them and found that there is a significant positive impact of Internship Experience on Psychological Capital and a significant positive impact of Psychological Capital on Job Readiness. This confirms that Internship Experience helps in increasing the Psychological Capital among individuals by developing a positive attitude and motivating them towards the workplace, thus supporting the employability of individuals. The results supporting the positive impact of Internship Experience on Psychological Capital support *Hypotheses 2* and align with the existing literature, which states that the internship Experience has a positive impact on psychological capital and its components (Pianda et al., 2025; Jaya, 2025; Goodenough et al., 2020; Kusumaningtyas et al., 2020). The significant positive impact of Psychological Capital on Job Readiness supports *Hypotheses 3* and aligns with existing literature (Masole & van Dyk, 2016; Luthans et al., 2007; Benati & Fischer, 2021). It confirms that Psychological Capital helps in increasing job readiness by helping individuals in being more competent and effective to deal with real workplace challenges, thus making them job-ready and helping them in their career development.

6. Practical Implications and Future Direction

The study provides noteworthy practical implications for educational institutions, organizations, and students. Firstly, it underscores the importance of designing internship programmes that not just provide technical skills, but also help in developing the Psychological Capital in the students to make them job-ready. It signals to focus on Psychological Capital development programmes along with Internships, as it mediates the relationship between Internship Experience and Job Readiness. Secondly, the organisations should realise their significant role in providing a supportive internship environment. This will help not only in experiential learning, but also in developing Psychological Capital for a positive outlook towards the job. Lastly, it encourages the students to actively engage in Internship programmes and develop their Psychological Capital. This will help in increasing the Job readiness among the students and for their successful work life.

Further studies can explore additional variables as mediators, like career adaptability, learning engagement, to study the relationship between Internship Experience and Job Readiness and explore it more deeply. Longitudinal studies can be done to study the impact on Psychological Capital and Job Readiness over time because of Internship Experience. This will increase the generalizability.

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