

The Effect of Internship Quality Toward Self-Perceived Employability Through the Mediation of Reduced Career-Entry Worries: Evidence from Final Year Students of Universitas Indonesia

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Abstract: *Competition in the world of work is getting tougher over time which triggers a sense of worry and lack of confidence to enter the world of work for young people who do not have work experience, particularly fresh graduates. It is theorized in this paper that, by participating in internship, students can increase their self-perceived employability, thereby reducing their career-entry worries. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to analyze the effect of internship quality on self-perceived employability through the mediation of reduced career-entry worries for final year students at Universitas Indonesia. This study administered online surveys (with 209 respondents) and in-depth interviews (with 3 source persons). The results show that internship quality has a positive influence on self-perceived employability and reduced career-entry worries. Further, self-perceived employability also positively affects reduced career-entry worries and reduced career-entry worries mediate the effect between internship quality and self-perceived employability. This study recommends that universities in Indonesia can implement a compulsory internship program for its students equally.*

Keywords: *Reduced career-entry worries, final year student, internship quality, self-perceived employability*

1. Introduction

In this modern era, technology is rapidly advancing, driving the demand for enhanced effectiveness and efficiency in daily work. Thus, technological advancements have impacted the job market, creating challenges in finding work due to high demands, automation replacing workers, job scarcity, and employers struggling to find qualified candidates (Kominfo, 2019; Susianto, 2017). Moreover, the difficulty of starting a career today is exacerbated by the economic crisis due to Covid-19 (Reidy, 2020) and also the high qualifications required by companies (Cappelli, 2012). This very high competition between job seekers is evidenced by data from the Statistics Indonesia (BPS) regarding the number of open unemployment based on Tertiary education in February 2021.

BPS provides data on the number of open unemployment in Indonesia with a total of 8,746,000 people in February 2021. Through the data listed, university graduates are in fifth place with a total unemployment of 999,543 people (see graphic 1) (BPS, 2021). Data suggests that higher education no longer guarantees employment, as supported by a report from the International Labor Organization's World Employment and Social Outlook. The report highlights that higher education is no longer the primary determinant for securing a job (Yoon et al., 2017). The rise in unemployment among university graduates stems from insufficient work experience that falls short of company standards and inadequate competence among undergraduate graduates (Nadziri, 2018, Priyono, 2015). In addition, one of the things

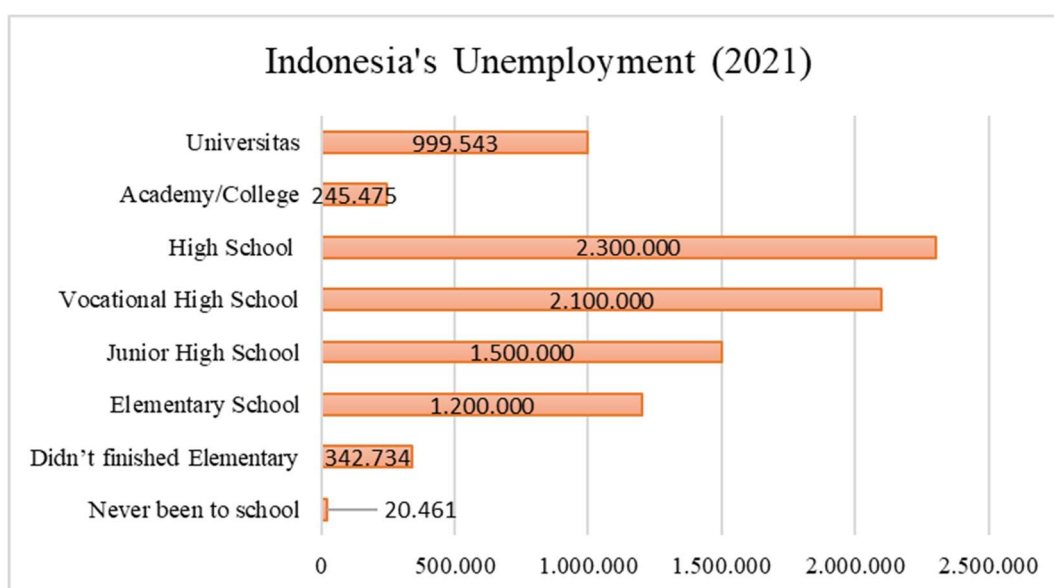
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that makes it difficult for individuals to get a job is the limited employment opportunities in Indonesia. Based on a statement from the Executive Director of CORE Indonesia, Indonesia's youth unemployment rate is the highest in Southeast Asia with a rate of 20% in 2020 (CNN Indonesia, 2021)

Recent research explains that feelings of worry about facing the world of work due to lack of confidence, not feeling competent, uncertainty, cause fear and anxiety in final year students to get a job after graduation. (Nevid, et.al., 2005; Saidah, 2013; Hurlock, 2011; Ebner et al., 2021). An important role that is effective in increasing self-perceived employability and reducing career-entry worries is work experience through internships (Ebner et al., 2021). Cappelli (2012) states that companies have high standards for hiring their employees and have no desire to train employees who do not have

experience. Therefore, the problem in finding a job is not a lack of education, but work experience that has not been obtained. Internship activities will be very useful in increasing knowledge, skills, and abilities as well as reducing worries in dealing with a world of work full of uncertainty.

However, the problem is, the quality of the internship carried out by each student will be different, not all types of internship experiences can reduce career-entry worries and increase self-perceived employability (Ebner et al., 2021). In responding to the problems above, The Directorate General of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture, propose the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program to accelerate and make more engaged the ecosystems of higher education institutions with the business and industrial world (DUDI).



Graphic 1.

Open Unemployment by Education Completed (as per February 2021)

Source: Statistics Indonesia (BPS), 2021

Universitas Indonesia (UI), a renowned higher educational institution and ranked in 237 worldwide by QS World University Rankings (topuniversities, 2023), actively promotes the MBKM program and considers internship activities as a crucial component within it. The objective of MBKM UI is to enhance graduates' competencies,

encompassing both soft and hard skills, to better equip students for the ever-evolving job market. The program aims to prepare graduates as future leaders with outstanding abilities and a strong character.

According to the Universitas Indonesia Employer Study (ESUI) conducted in 2019,

employers express high levels of satisfaction with UI student graduates, with 65% reporting satisfaction and 22% reporting very high satisfaction. UI graduates are known for their adaptability, learning ability, quick comprehension, and proactive nature. However, UI graduates also, are perceived to have weaknesses in practical knowledge, loyalty, readiness for the job market, and leadership skills from the employers' perspective (Fikawati, 2019). This indicates that while UI students possess strong theoretical foundations, they may still lack practical experience.

Based on the explanation above, this study aims to analyze how internship quality has an influence to increase self-perceived employability and reduce career-entry worries in UI's student in response to accommodate the MKBM program by the government.

2. Literature Review/ Hypotheses Development

Internship Quality

The internship is both a capstone of educational endeavor and a beginning experience in meeting the demands of a new position and new role in educational leadership (Martin, et.al., 2017, p.20). Internship or field work practice is a training method that occurs in the workplace and is generally in the form of technical skills training and is more focused on increasing productivity appropriately. The high quality of internship activities will enable students to develop skills related to the career they will pursue, such as communication skills (Maskooki et al., 1998), self-discipline, time management, and problem-solving skills (Molseed et al., 2003), which will increase students' confidence in their abilities.

Internship activities at UI are off-campus learning activities that are tied to a company or agency to gain work experience, either obligatory or voluntary. Based on Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower,

internships are part of a job training system that is held in an integrated manner between training in training institutions and working directly under the guidance and supervision of instructors or more experienced workers/laborers, in the process of producing goods and services / or services in the company, in order to master certain skills or expertise. Internship activities are carried out on the basis of an agreement between the participant and the entrepreneur which is made in writing.

Self-Perceived Employability

Employability is a person's ability to identify and realize his career opportunities (Fugate et al.'s 2004, p. 23). On the other hand, in a book entitled "Managing Careers into the 21st Century" published by Arnold (1997), stated that employability is a career decision that is carried out by a person according to his wishes. Through the definition and the link between employability and one's psychological condition. Self-perceived employability is defined as an individual's feeling in order to survive with the job he already has or to be able to compete in the labor market so that he can get the job he wants (Rothwell and Arnold, 2007). In line with this opinion, Rothwell et.al (2008) state that Self-perceived employability is an individual's perceived ability (perceived ability) to get a job on an ongoing basis in accordance with his qualifications.

Rothwell (2008) with three internal dimensions, namely My University, My Study Field, and Self Belief. The My university dimension relates to students' perceptions of the reputation and existence of their university. The second dimension, My Study Field, refers to the status and credibility of the majors taken by students in their education. And finally, the Self- belief dimension, this dimension refers to study engagement and academic performance that is carried out with students' confidence in their own skills and abilities.

Reduced Career-entry Worries

Reduced Career-entry Worries are defined as students' disbelief that they will be able to develop themselves to become professionals after graduation in order to have a successful career (Ebner et al., 2021). The worry of not finding a decent job after graduation is the definition of worrying about entering a career. The term "decent" refers to jobs that match the graduate's skills, degree, and financial need. Conceptually, Reduced Career-entry Worries describe worries about a failed future career and that one will not be able to find a suitable job.

Fears of potential future work-related negativity make career-entry worries similar

to other future-directed concerns in the workplace, such as: fear of becoming unemployed while experiencing job insecurity (De Witte, 2005). To this extent, job insecurity and Reduced Career-entry Worries are comparable, as they are both future-oriented job concerns with a high uncertainty component (Ebner et al., 2021). This suggests that Reduced Career-entry Worries act as an explanatory factor in the relationship between internship quality and employability (Ebner et al., 2021). Comparing employee insecurity about keeping a job (job insecurity), with graduate students' worries about not finding suitable jobs after their education.

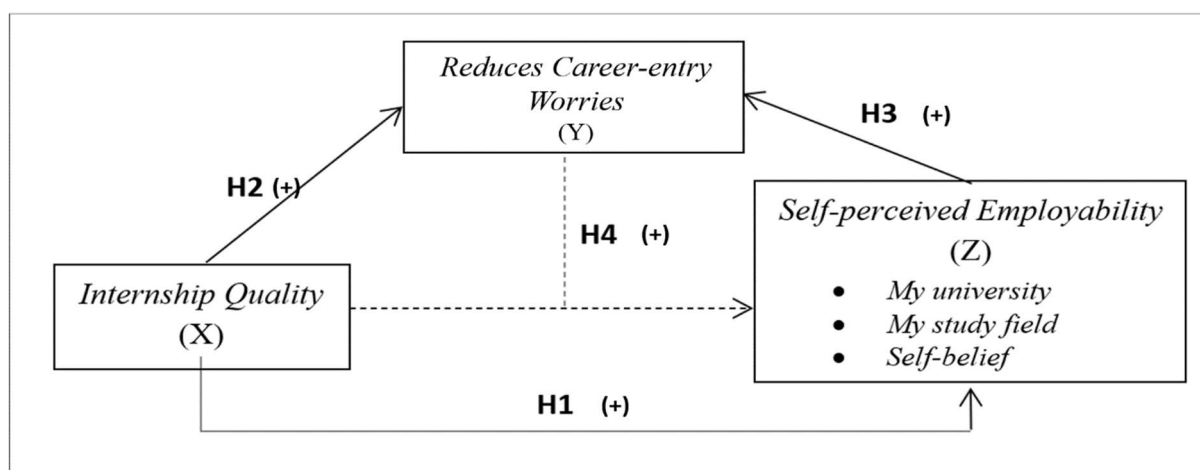


Figure 1.
Research Framework

Hypothesis Development

Based on research conducted by Gamboa et al (2021), indicators to measure Internship Quality are support from supervisors, feedback and training from supervisors, and experience study. That way, a positive internship quality can improve students' abilities and skills at work. In addition, based on research conducted by Rothwell et al (2008), the perceived ability of individuals (perceived ability) to get a job on an ongoing basis in accordance with their qualifications can be measured by three internal dimensions, namely My university, My study field and Self-belief. Between Internship Quality and Self-perceived Employability are two related things. Work experience gained

through internships will teach many things related to qualifications and social skills needed at work.

The quality of the internship activities that are carried out can reduce anxiety in entering the career world. Internships play a crucial role in this regard (Ebner et al., 2021). A good quality internship will give students a sense of satisfaction so that they can have more confidence in their abilities. This can certainly reduce a person's anxiety in entering the world of work because they already know more about the world of work through the internship experience, they undergo. (Ebner et al., 2021).

With a sense that creates positive things about themselves in their ability to work, this can reduce the worry about entering the world of work that will soon be faced by final year students (Ebner et al., 2021). That way, the assumption of a student's work ability or career can determine the high and low feelings of worry in him related to the world of work.

In Reduced Career-entry Worries, based on research conducted by Ebner, et.al (2021) showed that job insecurity plays a mediating role in affective well-being and work relations, so that job insecurity and Reduced Career-entry Worries are comparable, because both are future-oriented job worries with a high uncertainty component. This suggests that Reduced Career-entry Worries act as an explanatory factor in the

relationship between internship quality and employability. Reduced Career-entry Worries play a role in determining self-perceived employability so that these worries must be reduced. Work experience in the form of internships is a great way to take control of an uncertain future career (Ebner et al., 2021). So, there are four hypotheses to be measure which are:

H1. Internship Quality has a positive influence on self-perceived employability.

H2. Internship Quality has a positive influence on Reduced Career-entry Worries.

H3. Self-Perceived Employability has a positive influence on Reduced Career-entry Worries

H4. Internship Quality has a positive influence on Self-perceived Employability through the mediation of Reduced Career-entry Worries.

Table 1.
Operational Concepts

Variabel	Dimensions	Indicators
<i>Internship Quality</i>		Students get good support from supervisors at the internship place.
		Students receive complete training from supervisors
		Students get good feedback about work, abilities and skills from supervisors
		Students gain experiences that hone their skills and abilities from internships
<i>Self-perceived Employability</i>	<i>My university</i>	Students believe that companies want to hire graduates from their universities.
		Students believe that their university status is an important asset in their job search.
		Students believe that companies specifically target their universities to recruit individuals from the field of study being studied
		Students believe their university has an outstanding reputation in the field of study they study
	<i>My Study Field</i>	Degree that will be held Students have a specific career focus that is highly coveted by the company
		The field of study chosen by students has a high social status
	<i>Self-belief</i>	Students believe they can get jobs that are relevant to their skills and experience
		Students are confident that they will be successful in their job interviews and selections
		Students believe that they have the abilities and skills the company is looking for

Reduced Career-entry Worries

Students' worries in entering the world of work are reduced
Students' worries about the work that will be undertaken after graduating from university are reduced
Students' worries related to the difficulty of getting a job are now reduced
Students' worries about not being able to get a decent job in the future are reduced
Students' worries about not being able to get a job quickly after graduation are reduced
Students' worries about not being able to have a secure job in the future are reduced
Concerns related to students not being able to have a guaranteed career in the future are reduced

Source: Processed by Researcher (2021)

3. Methodology

The research approach used in this study itself is a quantitative approach. Judging by the research objectives, this research is included in explanatory research, namely research whose purpose is to prove a hypothesis (Djamba and Neuman, 2014). This study is categorized as pure research, focusing on exploring the advantages of the research. Its objective is to address research inquiries related to the impact of Internship quality on individuals' perception of employability, with Reduced Career-entry Worries serving as a mediating factor. In terms of time, this research is classified as a cross-sectional study. The study was conducted within a specific time frame, specifically from October 2021 to November 2021.

In this study, a mixed method technique was employed for data collection, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The quantitative aspect is evident through the primary data collection instrument utilized, which involved distributing online surveys to final year students at Universitas Indonesia who have completed or are currently engaged in internship activities. In this study, the questionnaire was conducted online using Google Form. The researchers sent the questionnaire to UI students in their final semester of study via email and WhatsApp Messenger. The assumption was

that these students had already completed an internship previously. Additionally, qualitative data collection techniques were employed, including conducting in-depth interviews to enhance the analysis outcomes. In-depth interviews were conducted randomly with the Human Resources units in companies that had accepted UI's internship students. The purpose of these interviews was to gather information and recognize the quality of the interns' performance during their internship at the respective companies.

Sampling and data collection

The population needed in this study were final year students at the Universitas Indonesia. A total of 209 completed responses were received and 3 people from company were interviewed. Out of the total sample of 209 participants, the majority were female, accounting for 70.8% or 148 individuals, while males comprised 29% or 61 individuals. Regarding the university's batch year, 88.5% or 185 participants belonged to the 2018 batch, while 11.5% or 24 participants were from the 2017 batch. In terms of academic clusters, 66% or 137 participants were from the Social Humanity cluster, 24% or 51 participants were from the Science and Technology cluster, and 10% or 21 participants were from the health Sciences cluster.

4. Findings and Discussion

Validity and Reliability Test

In measuring the level of validity, researchers used the Pearson correlation product moment technique to identify and further analyze the relationship between variables or the strength between these variables. The test results will be compared later, namely between r arithmetic and r table with a significance level of 5% (0.05) or a confidence level of 95%. If the test results show r arithmetic $>$ r table, then the item can be said to be valid and can be used for further research. More specifically, the following are

the results of the validity test on the pre-test conducted by this study. The reference value of r table in this study with the number of $n = 30$ is 0.3494. Thus, the indicator is said to be valid if r count $>$ r table, i.e r count $>$ 0.3494.

The reliability test in this study was conducted to see the consistency of each statement instrument in the questionnaire. Researchers use Cronbach's Alpha method as a method that is quite popular in conducting reliability tests. The instrument can be declared reliable if the value of $>$ 0.600 according to Hair, et al. (2012). The reliability test was analyzed using SPSS 22.0 software.

Table 2.

Validity and Reliability Test

Variable	Dimensions	Indicators	Validity (Pearson correlation)	Reability (Cronbach Alpha)
<i>Internship Quality</i>		IQ1	0,7790	0,862
		IQ2	0,9180	
		IQ3	0,8580	
		IQ4	0,8110	
<i>Self-perceived Employability</i>	<i>My university</i>	MU1	0,4120	0,827
		MU2	0,3870	
		MU3	0,4920	
		MU4	0,6240	
	<i>My Study Field</i>	MS1	0,7560	0,749
		MS2	0,6390	
	<i>Self-belief</i>	SB1	0,7450	0,890
		SB2	0,7860	
		SB3	0,7280	
	<i>Reduced Career-entry Worries</i>		CW1	0,9410
CW2			0,8720	
CW3			0,8920	
CW4			0,9360	
CW5			0,8120	
CW6			0,9240	
CW7			0,9420	

Source: Data Processed by SPSS (2021)

Results

Hypothesis testing is carried out to see whether the proposed hypotheses can be accepted or not. This test was conducted by looking at the significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables on the research model. There are four hypotheses in this study. To test these hypotheses, the F test and T test were carried out. The F test and T test in this study was conducted to show the significance of the influence between variables. The F test can

be said to be significant if the value of f arithmetic $>$ f table (3.755) and the significance value <0.05 . Then the T test can be said to be significant if the t count $>$ t table (1.971) and the significance value <0.05 . In addition, there is a Sobel test which is declared to be influential if the p (value) is less than 0.05. The following are the results of processing and the significance of each hypothesis.

Table 3.
Conclusion of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Statement	R	Coefficient >1,971	F Count >3,755	Value Significance <0,050	Conclusions
H1	<i>Internship Quality affects Self-Perceived Employability significantly positive</i>	0,420 ^a	6,653	44,263	0,000	Accepted
H2	<i>Internship Quality affects Reduced Career-entry Worries significantly positive</i>	0,394 ^a	6,175	38,132	0,000	Accepted
H3	<i>Self-Perceived Employability affects Reduced Career-entry Worries significantly positive</i>	0,565 ^a	9,582	97,058	0,000	Accepted
H4	<i>Reduced Career-entry Worries mediate the relationship between Internship Quality and Self-Perceived Employability significantly positive</i>	4,821	0,000	39,311	0,000	Accepted

Source: Data Processed by SPSS (2021)

Discussion

In the first hypothesis, the model of the influence of Internship Quality on Self-perceived Employability shows an R value of 0.420 or it can be said that the relationship between variables has a moderate to strong correlation (De Vaus, 2002). Based on the data processing that has been carried out, the t value of the internship quality is 6.653, which is positive and > 1.971 . Because the value is above the t table value, it can be concluded that H1 is accepted. It can be interpreted partially, that there is a positive influence between Internship Quality on Self-perceived Employability. Based on the results of the ANOVA test data, it is known that the F count value is 44,263 with a significance value of 0.000 which indicates that the significance value is lower than 0.05. In addition, obtained F table of 3.755. Therefore, this result also answers that the result of the f test states that the value of F count is greater than F table, namely $44,263 > 3.755$. These results mean that a simple regression model can be used to predict the variables of Internship Quality on Self-perceived Employability. This is also reinforced by the statement of the results of in-depth interviews with resource persons whose work is related to human resources.

"Yes, of course, candidates who have internship experience will have a greater chance of being recruited, especially when the internship shows good performance, good performance will be immediately targeted for nomination when we have a need later, we will be recruited immediately." (Interview with Human Resources, General Affairs and Legal Manager, Yanti, 8 December 2021).

Another resource person also expressed his opinion regarding students who had internships.

"It depends, the internship experience is not related to the job that is being sought, which is still needed. If it's related, for example, it means that he already has experience, but if his internship experience is not related to the

job he needs, it doesn't really have much effect." (Interview with Human Capital Supervisor, Faricha, 4 December 2021).

Through the results of the interview, it can be seen that students who have internship experience do have a greater chance of being recruited by the company, however, the experience they have must also be in accordance with the company's needs.

Furthermore, in the second hypothesis, the model of the influence of Internship Quality on Reduced Career-entry Worries shows an R value of 0.394 or it can be said that the relationship between variables has a moderate to strong correlation (De Vaus, 2002). Based on the data processing carried out, the t-value of the Internship Quality was 6.175 which indicates the value is positive and > 1.971 . With a value that is above the value of t table, it can be concluded that H2 is accepted. Based on the results of the ANOVA test data, it is known that the F count value is 38,132 with a significance value of 0.000 which indicates a significance value lower than 0.05. In addition, obtained F table of 3.755. Therefore, this result also answers that the result of the f test states that the value of F count is greater than F table, which is $38,132 > 3.755$. These results mean that a simple regression model can be used to predict the variables of Internship Quality on Reduced Career-entry Worries.

Then, in the third hypothesis, the model of the influence of Self-perceived Employability on Reduced Career-entry Worries shows an R value of 0.565 or it can be said that the relationship between variables has a strong to very strong correlation (De Vaus, 2002). Based on the data processing carried out, the t value of self-perceived employability is 9.852 which indicates that the value is positive and > 1.971 . Because the value is above the t table value, it can be concluded that H3 is accepted. Based on the results of the ANOVA test data, it is known that the F count value is 97.058 with a significance value of 0.000 which indicates a significance value lower than 0.05. In addition, obtained F table

of 3.755. Therefore, this result also answers that the result of the f test states that the value of F count is greater than F table, namely $97.058 > 3.755$. These results mean that a simple regression model can be used to predict the variables of Self-perceived Employability on Reduced Career-entry Worries.

Finally, in the fourth hypothesis, related to the mediating effect of Reduced Career-entry Worries on the relationship between Internship Quality and Self-perceived Employability, multiple regression analysis and Sobel tests were used. From the regression analysis, the a value is 0.522, the b value is 0.327, the sa value is 0.085, and the sb value is 0.042. The a, b, sa, and sb values that have been obtained are then entered into the "Calculation for The Sobel Test: An Interactive Calculation Tool for Mediation Test". The significance value of the results of data processing shows a significance value (p-value) of 0.000 which means $0.000 < 0.05$ for the accepted hypothesis, so it can be concluded that the hypothesis (H4) is accepted or Reduced Career-entry Worries have a mediating effect on the relationship between the Internship Quality variable and variable Self-perceived Employability. Based on the results of the ANOVA test data, it can be seen that the significance value obtained is 0.000 so it can be said that the regression model can be used because it has a significance value of less than 0.05. Meanwhile, the calculated F value obtained is 39.311. When compared with the F table for this study which has 209 respondents and with a significance level of 0.05, it has a value of 3.755 which means that Fcount is greater than Ftable so that the hypothesis (H4) is accepted.

5. Conclusion

The research findings regarding the significant impact of Internship Quality on increasing Self-perceived Employability and reducing Career-entry Worries at Universitas Indonesia have several implications.

Theoretical Implications

The acceptance of all hypotheses provides theoretical implications for the relationship between Internship Quality and its effects on Self-perceived Employability and Reduced Career-entry Worries. This finding supports and strengthens existing theories or models that posit the positive influence of quality internships on students' future employability and psychological well-being. It contributes to the understanding of how internship experiences can shape students' perceptions of their readiness for the job market.

Practical Implications

The practical implications of the study highlight the importance of universities in Indonesia in enhancing its internship programs across all faculties. Given that positive internship evaluations have been shown to boost student satisfaction, confidence, and reduce career-entry worries, it becomes crucial for universities to provide quality internships that offer meaningful and valuable experiences. This may involve establishing strong partnerships with reputable organizations, ensuring effective supervision and mentorship during internships, and implementing robust evaluation mechanisms to maintain and improve internship quality.

Additionally, the finding emphasizes the need for career services or counseling centers at universities throughout Indonesia to recognize the role of quality internships in enhancing students' self-perceived employability. These centers can provide guidance and support to students in seeking and securing high-quality internships that align with their career goals, thereby facilitating their transition into the workforce with reduced concerns.

Methodological Implications

The research findings also have methodological implications for future studies in the field. The success in accepting all hypotheses suggests the effectiveness of the employed research methodology in capturing the relationship between

Internship Quality and Self-perceived Employability and Reduced Career-entry Worries. This provides a foundation for further investigations using similar or expanded methodologies to explore related factors or potential moderators and mediators that may influence the internship experience and its outcomes.

Furthermore, the findings underscore the importance of using a comprehensive approach that combines quantitative measures of Internship Quality, Self-perceived Employability, and Reduced Career-entry Worries. Future studies can build upon this approach by incorporating qualitative data or longitudinal designs to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms and long-term effects of internships on students' career development.

In summary, the significant conclusions of the research regarding the impact of Internship Quality on Self-perceived Employability and Reduced Career-entry Worries at Universitas Indonesia have theoretical implications for existing knowledge, practical implications for program enhancement, and methodological implications for future research in the field.

Limitation

This study only focuses on final year students as research subjects, so it does not take opportunities for other batch students who may have participated in internships. In addition, internship activities have many different variations in each study program within universities in Indonesia, while in this study only the internship program implemented at companies or agencies refers to previous research.

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