



A Study of Commerce Students Attitude towards Experiential Learning (Internships) with reference to Solapur District

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Abstract

In the contemporary education system, experiential learning has emerged as a crucial pedagogical approach, especially in professional courses such as commerce and management. Internships, as a form of experiential learning, provide students with opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in real organizational settings. The present study aims to examine the attitude of commerce students towards experiential learning through internships. It also seeks to understand the perceived benefits, challenges faced during internships, and the role of internships in enhancing employability and career readiness. The study is based on primary data collected from undergraduate commerce students using a structured questionnaire. The findings reveal that most commerce students possess a positive attitude towards internships, considering them essential for skill development, confidence building, and career planning. However, issues such as inadequate supervision, lack of meaningful tasks, and limited integration with academic curriculum were also identified. The study suggests the need for better coordination between educational institutions and industry to strengthen experiential learning outcomes.

Introduction:

Education in the field of commerce has traditionally focused on classroom teaching and theoretical knowledge. However, with rapid changes in the business environment, employers increasingly demand graduates who possess practical skills, problem-solving abilities, and workplace readiness. Experiential learning, particularly through internships, plays a significant role in bridging the gap between academic knowledge and industry requirements.

An internship is a structured, supervised work experience offered to students for a limited period, enabling them to gain exposure to real business operations. For commerce students, internships provide insights into accounting practices, banking operations, taxation, marketing, finance, and human resource

management. Such exposure enhances students' understanding of organizational culture, professional ethics, teamwork, and communication. Attitude towards experiential learning is an important factor that determines the effectiveness of internships. A positive attitude motivates students to actively engage, learn, and reflect, whereas a negative attitude may limit learning outcomes. Therefore, understanding students' attitudes towards internships is essential for designing effective experiential learning programs.

Objectives of the study:

The present study has been undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To study the attitude of commerce students towards experiential learning through internships.
2. To analyse the perceived benefits of internships among commerce students.
3. To identify the challenges faced by commerce students during internships.
4. To examine the impact of internships on students' career readiness and future plans.

Review of Literature:

The concept of experiential learning was strongly advocated by David A. Kolb (1984), who proposed that learning is a continuous process based on experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. Internships align well with this model by allowing students to learn through direct involvement in workplace activities. Several studies have highlighted the positive role of internships in higher education. Smith and Smith (2018) found that students who completed internships demonstrated higher employability skills and job confidence compared to non-interns. Gupta (2021) observed that commerce students considered internships essential for understanding practical aspects of accounting and finance. However, literature also points out certain limitations. Patil and Rao (2019) reported that poorly structured internships with routine clerical work reduce learning effectiveness. Inadequate mentoring and lack of feedback were also cited as major concerns. The review indicates that while internships are widely valued, their effectiveness depends on quality, relevance, and supervision.

Scope and Limitations of the study

- ✓ The study is limited to a small geographical area.
- ✓ Findings are based on self-reported data.
- ✓ Variations in internship quality were not deeply analysed.

Research Methodology:

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive research design, as it seeks to describe and analyze students' attitudes and perceptions regarding experiential learning.

Population and Sample Size:

- ✓ Population: Undergraduate commerce students who have completed or are currently undergoing internships.
- ✓ Sample Size: 150 commerce students from three degree colleges.
- ✓ Sampling Technique: Purposive sampling was used to ensure that only students with internship experience were included.

Data Collection:

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of demographic information, Statements measuring attitude towards internships, Items related to benefits and challenges, Questions on career impact. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

Techniques of Data Analysis:

The collected data were analysed using-percentage analysis, mean and standard deviation, simple tabulation and interpretation.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Table 4.1
Reliability Statistics (Attitude Scale)

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
0.812	12

Interpretation:

The Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.812 indicates high internal consistency, confirming that the attitude scale used in the study is reliable.

Table 4.2
Descriptive Statistics – Attitude towards Internship

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Attitude Score	150	2.80	5.00	4.12	0.53

Interpretation:

The analysis reveals that the majority of commerce students hold a positive attitude towards internships. Students strongly agreed that internships help them understand practical applications of theoretical concepts learned in subjects such as accounting, banking, and business management. A high mean score indicates that students view internships as an integral part of commerce education rather than an additional requirement.

The mean score of 4.12 (above the neutral value of 3) shows a positive attitude of commerce students towards experiential learning.

Table 4.3
One-Sample Test (Test Value = 3)

Variable	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Attitude towards Internship	21.84	149	0.000	1.12

Decision:

Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Conclusion:

Commerce students show a statistically significant positive attitude towards internships.

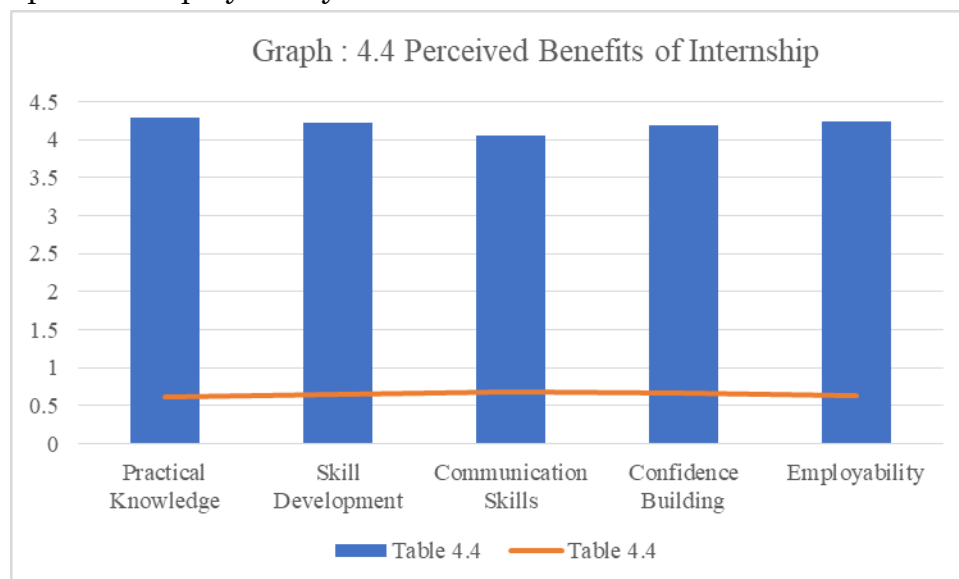
Table 4.4
Descriptive Statistics – Perceived Benefits of Internship

Benefit	Mean	Std. Deviation
Practical Knowledge	4.28	0.61
Skill Development	4.22	0.64
Communication Skills	4.05	0.69
Confidence Building	4.18	0.66
Employability	4.24	0.63

Interpretation:

Students identified several benefits, including:

- ✓ Development of professional skills such as communication, teamwork, and time management.
- ✓ Increased self-confidence in dealing with real business situations.
- ✓ Exposure to organizational culture and work ethics.
- ✓ Improved employability and resume value.



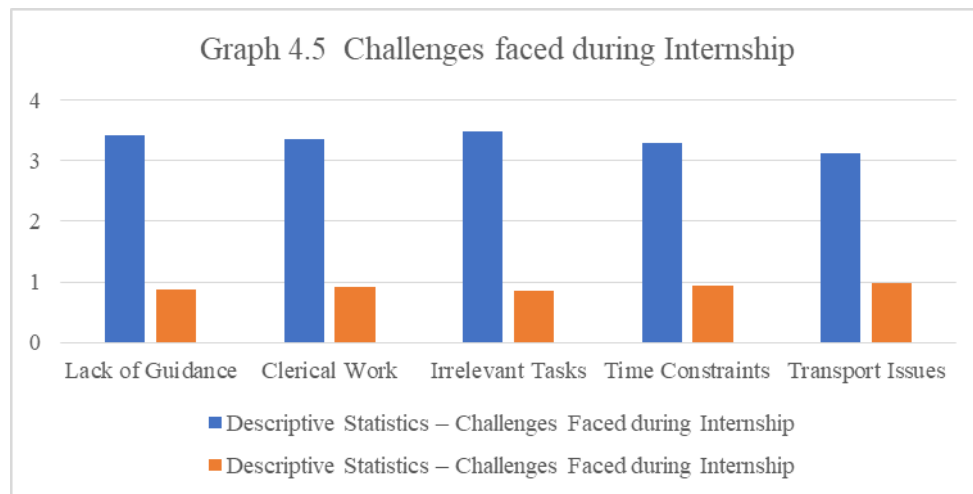
Many students reported that internships helped them understand their strengths and weaknesses, thereby motivating them to improve.

All benefit dimensions recorded mean scores above 4.00, indicating strong agreement regarding the usefulness of internships.

Table 4.5
Descriptive Statistics – Challenges Faced during Internship

Challenge	Mean	Std. Deviation
Lack of Guidance	3.42	0.88
Clerical Work	3.36	0.91

Irrelevant Tasks	3.48	0.85
Time Constraints	3.29	0.94
Transport Issues	3.12	0.97



Interpretation:

Despite positive attitudes, students also faced challenges:

- ✓ Some internships lacked proper planning and learning objectives.
- ✓ Limited interaction with supervisors reduced learning opportunities.
- ✓ Certain students were assigned repetitive or clerical tasks.
- ✓ Transportation and time management issues affected participation.

These challenges indicate the need for better internship design and monitoring. Moderate mean scores suggest that students experienced challenges, particularly related to supervision and task relevance.

Table 4.6

One-Sample Test – Career Readiness (Test Value = 3)

Variable	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Career Readiness	18.63	149	0.000	1.05

Decision:

Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Conclusion:

Internships significantly enhance students' career readiness.

Table 4.7

Correlation Analysis between Internship Experience and Career Clarity

Variables	Career Clarity
Internship Experience	0.612

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Interpretation:

There is a moderate positive correlation between internship experience and career clarity among commerce students.

Table 4.8**ANOVA – Attitude towards Internship across Year of Study**

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.214	2	1.607	5.84	0.004
Within Groups	40.431	147	0.275		
Total	43.645	149			

Decision:

Since $p < 0.05$, differences are statistically significant.

Conclusion:

Attitude towards internship differs significantly across academic years.

Table 4.9**Model Summary – Impact of Internship on Employability**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	0.657	0.432	0.428	0.41

Interpretation:**Impact on Career Readiness**

Internships significantly influenced students' career orientation. Many students gained clarity about whether they wished to pursue employment, professional courses, or entrepreneurship. Internships also helped students understand industry expectations, making them better prepared for interviews and future work roles. Internship experience explains 43.2% variation in employability, indicating a strong predictive relationship.

Findings of the study:

1. Commerce students generally exhibit a positive attitude towards experiential learning.
2. Internships enhance practical knowledge and professional skills.
3. Quality of mentorship plays a crucial role in learning outcomes.
4. Internships contribute positively to career awareness and employability.
5. Certain structural and organizational challenges reduce effectiveness.

Conclusion:

The study concludes that experiential learning through internships is a valuable component of commerce education. Internships not only supplement theoretical learning but also prepare students for the dynamic demands of the business world. While students appreciate the opportunity to gain real-world experience, the effectiveness of internships largely depends on structured planning, meaningful tasks, and continuous guidance. Educational institutions must play a proactive role in ensuring quality experiential learning experiences.

Suggestions:

Dr. R. M. Kilare

1. Colleges should integrate internships formally into the curriculum with clear learning outcomes.
2. Industry mentors should be trained to guide and evaluate interns effectively.
3. Regular feedback and reflection sessions should be conducted.
4. Internship duration and task relevance should be standardized.
5. Collaboration between academia and industry should be strengthened.

References (Suggested Additions)

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