

Understanding the Internship Learnings and Experiences of ITHM Students of FEU during the 2nd Semester of SY 2021-2022

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Abstract

This paper looked into the virtual internship of students at the Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management at Far Eastern University during the second semester of the school year 2021-2022. Many aspects of student education have changed because of the pandemic, including the need for practical experiences, such as student internship programs. Participation and competence development are now needed for students to fulfill future employment expectations. Best practices that encourage lifelong learning may aid in the achievement of future goals. This research utilized a descriptive quantitative design. It involved one hundred respondents who had enrolled in a student internship program for the 2nd semester of the school year 2021-2022. All essential data, including demographics, attitudes, learning, experiences, evaluation, and assessment, were gathered through a survey questionnaire via Google Forms. The findings revealed that students currently have a heightened awareness of how government organizations sell and popularize local tourism destinations. Students' most valuable experience includes having the opportunity to discuss and network with other guests and professionals and to interact with actual industry leaders and learn from their expertise. Overall, most interns taking virtual internships claimed that they learned many skills, abilities, traits, and knowledge that are relevant and important to their studies. However, some interns had difficulties understanding the materials on their own and encountered internet interruptions and technical problems. Most students recommended a face-to-face type of modality in the internship program for future semesters.

Keywords: Virtual internship; Student internship; Experiential learning; Bloom's taxonomy; Anderson's Online Learning Model.

Introduction

Many countries have declared a state of emergency to combat the pandemic virus. During the height of the pandemic, half of all internships in Philippine schools were cancelled (Martin, 2021). The Tourism and Hospitality Higher Education System adapted to the changes brought about by the pandemic by shifting away from traditional classroom settings and moving toward virtual education. A number of facets of the student educational setting are affected by this transformation, notably courses that include fieldwork exposures, like student internship programs. It has influenced both the number of accessible student internships and the structure of internship programs. Student internships and other kinds of professional learning are progressively seen as necessary opportunities for aspiring professionals in higher education. Internships benefit individuals planning to join the industry by increasing their success chances. It enriches learners' overall experience and helps them make the connection with their respective sectors (Powers & Riegel, 1993). According to Park and Jones (2021) in student internship programs, virtual internships could be a valuable component. Online apprenticeships, like on-site experience, can be an uplifting learning opportunity if they are well planned and implemented. They enable individuals to maximize their technical abilities while integrating classroom educational experiences into real-world managerial scenarios.

The COVID-19 epidemic has had a profound effect on every industry and has changed the way businesses function across the country. Approximately 50% of student internships were cancelled in 2020 due to the COVID-19 outbreak, which resulted in the closure of multiple companies around the country (McGregor, 2020; Nietzl, 2020). Companies, institutions, and employers were scrambling to develop innovative ideas for student internship programs due to the massive disruption to everyday life. In the wake of the COVID-19 epidemic, some companies have ceased offering internships altogether, but others have shifted to virtual internships. These actions endanger the lives of thousands of students, the firms for which they work, and the course offerings that appear to be entirely responsible for their education.

Educators are provided with vital online teaching training to have a solid basis for the tactics and approaches they will employ in this mode of learning. Internships can be seen as a pedestal for how students will look at work and doors of opportunities in their respective fields. With this program,

students will be placed in occupations to learn about various work processes, job responsibilities, and tools and procedures in a real-world working environment, thereby improving their chances of finding long-term employment (Almanzor, 2016). Moreover, internship or practicum programs engage and expose students to real-world situations that arise in the tourism sector. Additionally, it gives students an opportunity to hone their skills in a controlled atmosphere under the supervision of possible employers (Commission on Higher Education, 2021). It is more than vital for them to perform well during their internships to have a smoother transition in their area, which places significant pressure on their advisers to deliver efficiently.

Flexible learning must be implemented, according to The Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Flexible learning is a pedagogical technique that incorporates, and is not limited to, the use of technology to allow for time, location, and audience adaptation (Commission on Higher Education, 2021). It opens doors for internship advisers to effectively provide students with on-site experiences and lessons that can further help them. It closes doors to other setbacks that might hinder the total capacity of the students rather than in an online setting.

Pre-pandemic, FEU ITHM internships were held on-site, providing interns with a view into everyday operations in a supportive, learning, and interesting atmosphere. Despite the ongoing pandemic's limitations, FEU's practice teaching program has continued via virtual sessions (Far Eastern University, 2020). Interns maintain flexibility throughout their internship, starting with remote work and eventually transitioning to a hybrid model in the new normal. In connection, this research intends to investigate the learning and experience of students at the Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management as they transition from an on-field internship to a virtual internship in the new normalization of education. In line with this, the paper aims to accomplish the following objectives: to ascertain the gender, year level, degree program, and track of student respondents who took the virtual internship programs conducted in the second semester of SY 2021-2022; to measure the level of students' internship experiences in terms of Course Management (Content, Allotted Time, Learning Platform), Faculty Engagement, and Student Engagement; to assess the level of students' learning during virtual internships; to understand, based on Bloom's taxonomy, the student's self-evaluation, and assessment after participating in virtual internships; and to identify the challenges and barriers to virtual internships.

Literature Review

Experiential Learning

The experiential learning hypothesis places a high value on the importance of experience in human development and education. As a holistic paradigm, it defines learning as a system in which knowledge is formed via “experience transformation.” Afalla et al. (2019) examined teachers’ perceptions of Experiential Learning Courses (ELCs), enabling pre-service instructors to have appropriate encounters in the educational setting, adequately preparing them for the education sector. The study shows instructors’ optimistic attitudes regarding ELCs, as respondents expressed significant favorable attitudes toward the programs while expressing disagreement with opposing views. It indicates that field-based learning provides respondents with direct exposure to the topics covered in their curriculum and a commitment to analyze and address concerns in the real world. A critical component of experiential learning is the chance for learners to employ their knowledge in real-world situations and evaluate their service encounters inside a classroom environment.

Tan & Vicente (2019) highlighted that practitioners must embrace a student-centered learning strategy in lieu of conventional teacher-centric teaching. According to the study, most Marketing Management respondents believed that an innovative experiential and cooperative learning method is highly beneficial in adapting theories to real-world scenarios. Furthermore, they can increase their capacity to uncover requirements and prospects, generate authentic products/services depending on recognized requirements, collaborate with an interdisciplinary group, expand overall people skills, and strengthen their leadership abilities. It highlights that experiential learning is a method of active engagement in which learners “learn by action” and ponder on their experiences. Thus, well-designed, monitored and evaluated experiential learning initiatives may promote scholarly inquiry by fostering integrative training, civic participation, career advancement, and the development of various technical and cognitive abilities, among others.

Agsalog (2019), on the other hand, found a substantial difference in academic achievement between pupils who were taught experientially and those who were taught conventionally. The experimental and control groups were selected at random from two intact groups, wherein the experimental group’s motivation was measured using a modified motivation scale. This

concludes that the experiential learning technique phases provided meaningful and valuable learning experiences for pupils. Additionally, Dolotallas and Nagtalon (2015) examined the effects of Experiential Learning on the performance of Filipino students by comparing the pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups in order to determine whether there was a variation in performance between the first and second-grade groups. It should be noted that the former was taught experientially, while the latter was instructed conventionally. This was to investigate the role of independent factors in the demographic profile in the accomplishment variation of students taught via experiential learning and conventional methods. The post-test revealed a substantial difference in performance between the experimental and control groups, indicating that pupil performance varies significantly. The researchers concluded that experiential learning might increase student performance and be employed in different areas.

Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment of Internships

Experiential learning in internships (i.e., face-to-face, and virtual) has been acknowledged as a successful technique to integrate classroom learning with industrial engagement and has been pointed to as a vital part of academic and career growth (Stirling et al., 2017). That means, it is vital to maximize the academic relevance of internships in undergraduate courses by going beyond the existing emphasis on offering professional expertise and boosting reflective features, linking academics, and real-world experience, and allowing learners to put creative ideas into action.

Internships are a type of practical learning that can include various activities. It generally includes interactive learning, community service, collaborative training, and performed internships. According to Sapungan et al. (2018), internships are a skill-building opportunity for future professions and proficiency in both methods and expertise. Interns must go through this training to get the necessary information, improve their abilities, and become productive members of the workplace.

Flores (2016) highlighted that an internship is initial professional work for a particular time. An individual could be paid or not paid, as long as the intern develops the skills. Usually, students apply for an internship during their postgraduate courses in their chosen program and then work for a business for one or more months, either full-time or part-time. Someone

could work as an intern during vacation, even during a semester or a quarter between semesters. Some internships provide college credit once completed. Internships may provide students with helpful job experience, complete the university requirements, and provide content for their résumé. These might expose students to several aspects of full-time work, exploring new talents and developing their particular professional aspirations.

Another study, conducted by Sisselman-Borgia and Torino (2017) noted that internships allow respondents to receive fruitful experiential learning, utilize prior information, acquire new learning, and expand employment prospects following graduation. Active involvement both in and out of the school enables individuals to make an informed choice concerning a topic and participate and communicate in a discussion. Learners are expected to think critically about what they have learned and put it into practice. Hence, learning programs that allow learners to exhibit this kind of integration in a real-world work environment are priceless.

Covid-19 Working Environment

The World Health Organization labelled the COVID-19 outbreak a major public health emergency on January 30, 2020. In the weeks that followed, the virus rapidly spread globally, prompting authorities in impacted areas to impose mandatory measures to minimize the speed of transmission and prevent excessive patients in emergency rooms.

The outbreak has wreaked havoc on the delivery of education and healthcare in the Philippines. Schools were shut down by the government in March 2020, and former president Rodrigo Roa Duterte declared in June that face-to-face instruction would be prohibited until a vaccine was widely accessible. Although schools reopened in October 2020, only remote education was permitted. Undeniably, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant effect on many aspects of every individual's life, and it is expected to have a greater impact in the next months and years. On the other hand, according to research done by Kevin Kniffin (2020), a Dyson School faculty member, the consequences of the outbreak and community responses to pandemic issues are not seen as exclusive ramifications. People can now make valuable changes in careers and respective lives that were impossible before due to the COVID-19 impediments. Numerous individuals may view this situation as a chance to adapt to big adjustments in their day-to-day life and, as a result, acquire new counter habits. Workers who realize that new

methods of working (for example, work-from-home) increase their productivity as well as being more joyful than being in a working environment or workplace, in contrast, to plainly working in an office, are examples of such individuals.

Traditional education has been thrown into chaos as a result of the COVID-19 lockdowns. In this period, students are increasingly relying on their own ability to pursue their learning via the internet, tv, and radio, despite the efforts of educational institutions to guarantee that education continues. Instructors were also required to adapt to the changing academic concepts and instructional methodologies for which they may or may not have had formal training. Students from underprivileged areas, for instance, are disadvantaged due to a lack of access to online learning materials, as well as the capacity and motivation to study alone (Schleicher, 2020). A more rational investigation is needed to consider both the beneficial and unfavorable implications of the COVID-19 issue on individual health, well-being, and productivity, while accounting for the variable impacts on diverse groups. This type of study is capable of producing recommendations on how to mitigate the negative consequences of current and future pandemic-related difficulties in the working community while parallelly boosting positive outcomes.

Virtual Internships

Internships enrich undergraduates by exposing them to competence, organizational skills, teamwork, and communication skills in real-world scenarios. Over the last thirty years, advancements in technology have significantly affected how employees are recruited, selected, and evaluated at a company. With today's technology, more flexible and geographically dispersed work styles are feasible, including everything such as teleworkers, virtual workers, and virtual interns. With the rapid growth of online education, virtual internships are becoming more commonly accepted and utilized (Marr, 2019; Reed et. al, 2018). For nearly a decade, virtual internships have been available. This sort of apprenticeship has risen into the spotlight in the aftermath of the COVID outbreak, displacing traditional internships. Undoubtedly, in the face of the worldwide pandemic's physical constraints on academic and professional activity, leveraging virtual engagement, connectivity, and involvement offers both immediate and long-term potential. According to the Center for Research on College-

Workforce Transitions (2021), a virtual internship is a work-based and experiential training program delivered primarily through online or digital technology, with significant differences in program model and compliance with experience-based learning requirements. It is recognized for its ability to bridge the gap between classroom theory and actual applications. Many companies are extremely specific about the qualifications that potential candidates must have for professional and operational abilities, as well as transferable skills such as the capacity to handle problems effectively and creatively in a team setting. Virtual internships can help interns satisfy these requirements by empowering them to engage in pedagogically aligned challenges modelled on actual working conditions.

Virtual or e-internships have the ability to train prospective graduates for self-employment and freelancing, which are becoming increasingly important in today's computer-mediated graduate job situations (Gandini, 2016). To keep up with the demands of today's world, learners should have excellent internet-based communication skills, including the ability to effectively convey concepts, opinions, and work outputs in a computer-mediated setting. Moreover, virtual internship programs enable interns to gain practical experience in their chosen industry with organizations regardless of physical location, situation, or other personal obligations (Feldman, 2021). It has significant benefits for both the tourism and hospitality industries as well as educational institutions, including the ability to educate and lead the future generation of industry professionals with exceptional career opportunities and access to seasonal and low-cost labor sectors.

According to Bayerlein and Jeske (2017), computer-mediated internships can replicate the majority of the benefits of traditional internships while simultaneously addressing a list of their weaknesses. For instance, it has been found challenging to support students' skill-based and effective learning outputs through this style of training, and the challenging way of addressing the reliability issues associated with traditional internships. According to Jeske and Axtell (2016), learners benefit from being able to incorporate such internships within their academic calendars. Virtual internships are a more cost-effective option than conventional internships considering they neither require long-distance travel nor relocation.

There are three parties involved in the internship: the student intern, the on-site supervisor, and the student internship administrator. However,

while discussions and preparations are essential, as is the case with every project, it is also critical to anticipate and prepare for setbacks, obstacles, and gaps on the part of all project participants. Long-term objectives will be achieved with perseverance and a straightforward evaluation of obstacles, including a willingness to discover and acclimate. In the post-pandemic period, virtual internship programs are expected to be widely accepted and commonplace, even if not all participants finish the internships. The emergence and acceptability of distance learning, technological advancements in remote employment, and school environments with such technology are significant drivers of this.

Methodology

A descriptive quantitative design was used in this study. It is a type of quantitative study that aims to gather measurable data for statistical analysis of a population sample. The design is appropriate for this study because this undertaking examined and analyzed the interns' virtual internship learnings and experiences. To achieve a fair and accurate outcome, this study was confined to a total of one hundred respondents. The selected respondents were enrolled in a student internship program for the second semester of the school year 2021-2022. Bloom's taxonomy and Anderson's Online Learning Model were used as the blueprint for the survey questionnaire indicators. The basic aspects addressed in the survey were demographics, perceptions, learning, experiences, evaluation, and assessment. The data accumulated from the survey questionnaires were analyzed thoroughly and interpreted verbally. The interns' degrees of experience and learning were determined using a four-point Likert scale. The survey used the mean with verbal interpretation as its statistical measurement. On the other hand, both frequency distribution and percentage were employed to characterize the interns. The sets of data were examined with the use of Google Forms & Excel spreadsheets.

Instrument Design

The researchers prepared an informed consent form. The researchers then conducted data gathering through the survey using Google Forms. Aside from the quantitative data that were included in the survey questionnaire, five additional qualitative questions were asked of the respondents to gather the challenges and barriers that the respondents experienced during the virtual internship. The survey questionnaire consisted of the following parts:

(I) Demographic profile; (II) Perception of the virtual internships in terms of Learning objectives and course content, Delivery of internship facilitator and adviser, and Student Engagement, (III) Evaluation of Level of learnings and experience during the virtual Internships; (IV) Self-Evaluation and assessment after participating in virtual internships; and (V) Interview questions with regard to learnings, challenges, and Recommendations. The questionnaire served as the main instrument for the researchers to identify the profile of the respondents, and their experiences and learnings during the virtual internship for the second semester of the school year 2021-2022.

Research Findings

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

<i>Demographic Profile of the Respondents</i>			
Variables		Frequency	%
Gender	Female	59	59%
	Male	41	41%
	Total	100	100%
Year Level for SY 2021-2022	Fourth Year	99	99%
	Third Year	1	1%
	Total	100	100%
Degree Program	Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management (Culinary Management Track)	13	13%
	Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management (Hotel Operation Track)	12	12%
	Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management (Event Management Track)	4	4%
	Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management (Travel and Tours Management Track)	71	71%
	Total	100	100%
Virtual Student Internship Program taken for 2nd Semester SY 2021-2022	-	7	7%
	Batangas Wedding Events Professional	2	2%
	Certification Program	10	10%
	Cruise Tourism	1	1%
	FEU ITHM Office	2	2%
	Hospitality Institute of America-Philippines Inc. Virtual	32	32%
	ITHM-Internship Office	1	1%
	Laguna Events Association of Professionals	1	1%
	OMNI Aviation	29	29%
	Pasig City Cultural Affairs and Tourism Office	4	4%
	Rajah Travel Academy	4	4%
	Track 1	6	6%
	Work Crediting	1	1%
	Total	100	100%

There were 59% of females and 41% of males participated in the survey. About 99% of the population were in their fourth year, with only 1% in their third year of study. Moreover, the majority of the respondents' degree program was BSTM (Travel and Tours Management Track) at 71%, followed by BSHRM (Culinary Management Track) at 13% and BSHM (Hotel Operations Track) at 12%. The lowest number of participants were from BSTM (Event Management Track) with 4%. The majority of the interns were enrolled at OMNI Aviation (29%) and Hospitality Institute of America-Philippines Inc. Virtual (32%) internship program.

Table 2. The Perceptions of Students of a Virtual Internship based on Anderson's Online Learning Model (2011)

Overall Perceptions of Students of a Virtual Internship		
Variables	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Learning Objectives and Course Content	3.61	Strongly Agree
Delivery Of Internship Facilitator and Adviser	3.6	Strongly Agree
Student Engagement	3.55	Strongly Agree
Total	3.58	Strongly Agree
A. Learning Objectives and Course Content		
The objective of the program/s was met since I have learned internship techniques and internship skills during the semester using synchronous modality.	3.59	Strongly Agree
The course content was beneficial to developing my skills as a student and as a future professional and applicable during distance learning	3.55	Strongly Agree
The concepts and/or topics discussed during virtual internship programs are clear and relevant to students like me	3.67	Strongly Agree
The internship program/s' lessons and information could contribute to achieving personal and professional goals to my needs as a student.	3.67	Strongly Agree
Online activity-based learning provides me a way to experience and interact with the ideas and information	3.57	Strongly Agree
The internship schedules were appropriately followed or restructured by the instructor as the needs arise	3.63	Strongly Agree
The online tool/platform used for virtual internship programs was appropriate	3.57	Strongly Agree
Total	3.61	Strongly Agree
B. Delivery of Internship Facilitator and Adviser		
Internship facilitator and adviser provided video materials on career coaching and advising during internship hours and were effective	3.63	Strongly Agree
Internship facilitator and adviser's online career coaching/advising during internship hours were effective	3.58	Strongly Agree
Internship facilitator and adviser are experts and knowledgeable in their assigned content area	3.6	Strongly Agree
Internship facilitator and adviser clarified the content in response to students' questions	3.59	Strongly Agree
Total	3.6	Strongly Agree
C. Student Engagement		
The student has ample opportunities to participate during the activity using the online platform	3.61	Strongly Agree
The assessment activities of students were successfully presented in the online platform	3.52	Strongly Agree
The student never missed the virtual internship sessions as required	3.56	Strongly Agree
The two-way online communication and actual simulation with student and faculty were smooth and internet issue was not experienced	3.4	Strongly Agree
Total	3.55	Strongly Agree

According to Anderson (2011), a student's learning experience is based on three factors: the teacher, the student himself, as well as the content. One of the study's aims was to ascertain respondents' learnings and experiences from virtual internships conducted during the second semester of the school year 2021-2022. As shown in Table 2, Learning Objectives and Course Content got the highest rating from the respondents with a rating of 3.61 (Strongly Agree) followed by Delivery of Internship Facilitator and Adviser (3.60) and Student Engagement received the lowest rating with 3.58. This data finding might be explained by the fact that students need significant motivation from the Course Content and Facilitator and Adviser in order to engage. This shows that the Facilitator and Adviser pay very little attention to motivating the students to participate and step out of their comfort zone to gain full benefit from the virtual internship opportunity. Therefore, the academic advisor and facilitator should play a critical part in guiding and motivating the students to participate in the virtual internship program in order to have student and facilitator engagement. The data, on the other hand, demonstrates that the virtual internship programs' learning objectives and course material meet the students' expectations and satisfaction.

In terms of Learning Objectives and Course Content, with an overall mean of 3.61, the data shows that students believed that the concepts and/or topics discussed during virtual internship programs were clear and relevant. On top of that, the students agreed that the internship program/s' lessons and discussions are beneficial and that the skills and information gained can contribute to achieving their personal and professional goals in the future. On the other hand, the indicator "*The course content was beneficial to developing my skills as a student and as a future professional and applicable during distance learning*" got the lowest mean of 3.55 (strongly agree). This may be connected to the fact that students are having trouble using virtual learning to enhance their abilities as students and future professionals.

With regards to the experiences of student-respondents in relation to the Delivery of the Internship Facilitator and Adviser, only a few students agreed that the Internship facilitator and adviser are experts and knowledgeable in their assigned content area. Therefore, the internship facilitator and advisors should find time to focus on reviewing their assigned content area. The facilitator and adviser should have sufficient knowledge, appropriate

information, preparation, and support, including regular meetings to monitor improvements, prior contingency planning, a two-way communication channel, as well as agreements regarding work standards and objectives developed in advance. However, the data reveals that most of the students agreed that the Internship facilitator and adviser provided video materials on career coaching and advising during internship hours and were effective in the students' learning.

In terms of student engagement, with a mean of 3.61 (Strongly Agree), the students agreed that they have ample opportunities to participate in the activity using the online platform. This might be connected to the fact that students benefited from virtual internships since they were encouraged to engage in activities. On the other hand, some students agreed that the two-way online communication and actual simulation with students and faculty were smooth and internet issues were not experienced.

Table 3. Level of Student's Learning and Experience During Virtual Internships

III. Evaluation of Level of Learnings and Experience During Virtual Internships	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
The student understands the concept, the rule, and procedures of the practical activities during virtual internship session	3.62	Strongly Agree
The student learned to use personal strategies to think, organize and behave during virtual internship session	3.61	Strongly Agree
The student experienced challenges but have been undertaken by developing new skills in the process	3.59	Strongly Agree
The student learned to identify own strengths and creativity during virtual internship session	3.55	Strongly Agree
The internship activities and return demonstration are feasible and measurable for student assessment	3.56	Strongly Agree
Total	3.58	Strongly Agree

As shown in Table 3, the students strongly agreed that they understand the concept, the rule, and the procedures of the practical activities during the virtual internship sessions. On the other hand, the least number of students have learned to identify their own strengths and creativity during the virtual internship session. The facilitator and advisor should focus on developing and improving the student's strengths and skills.

Table 4. Student's Self-Evaluation and Assessment After Participating in Virtual Internships Based on Bloom's Taxonomy

IV. Self-Evaluation and Assessment After Participating in Virtual Internships	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
I can remember all the facts, ideas, concepts, and terms learned from the entire semester.	3.44	Strongly Agree
I understand the facts, ideas, concepts, and terms shared by the faculty member/s.	3.62	Strongly Agree
From the virtual internship programs, I can solve problems in new situations by applying acquired knowledge, facts, concepts, and techniques in different ways.	3.51	Strongly Agree
By attending the virtual internship programs, I can easily analyze and examine a situation and conclude a response from the knowledge acquired.	3.52	Strongly Agree
By attending the virtual internship programs, I can evaluate, present and defend opinions by making judgments about the validity of ideas and situations	3.5	Strongly Agree
By attending virtual internship programs, I can create and compile information together in a different way by combining methods and techniques or solutions to a situation.	3.55	Strongly Agree
Total	3.52	Strongly Agree

As shown in Table 4, the respondents did not completely achieve the Student's Self-Evaluation and Assessment After Participating in Virtual Internships Based on Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) with an overall value of 3.52. The "Understand" section obtained the highest rating of 3.62, while the "Remember" section received the lowest rating of 3.44. According to the statistics, students struggle with analyzing, expressing, and defending their beliefs through making judgments about the validity of ideas and situations. That means the students did not have enough opportunities to express themselves. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that students grasped the facts, ideas, concepts, and terms provided by the faculty member/s during the course of the semester better than they can analyze, present, and defend their beliefs by making judgments about the validity of ideas and situations.

The Challenges and Recommendations of Interns Regarding the Implementation of Virtual Internship Programs

New Learning Gained from the Virtual Internship Programs

Students indicated in response to the survey question, "What new skills have you obtained through virtual internship programs?" that obtaining new abilities is critical, particularly in relation to the sectors and responsibilities of the hotel industry. Students should always be available to their employer

when he or she calls, according to the virtual internship facilitator. Regardless of the epidemic, the sector has a number of opportunities. Students currently have a heightened awareness of how government organizations sell and popularize local tourism destinations. Professionalism is required when working for a corporation.

Difficulties Encountered by The Students Throughout the Virtual Internship in Terms of The Learning Management System (LMS) And the Delivery of The Internship Facilitator and Adviser

In accordance with the survey question, “*What are the challenges that you have experienced during a virtual internship in terms of the Learning Management System (LMS) and Internship Facilitator and Adviser Delivery?*” and, as the learners testified, the most often encountered concerns are those technologies such as the internet and device access. The students’ internet provider is subpar since they often have network issues and unpredictable connection interruption, which causes interference with their virtual internship. Many students are having difficulty managing their time with their employers’ requests while still attending virtual courses.

Students Recommendation for Improving the Virtual Internship Program

When students were asked for “*Comments/suggestions for improving the virtual internship program*” and their recommendations, it was determined that students urge that face-to-face internships be reinstated since everything is good and they quickly overcome any technical difficulties. It would be ideal if it were incorporated so that students could get field experience. Furthermore, students believe that programs should be focused on goals that will help graduates use what they have learned and experienced when they begin working for a company. Finally, the students felt that the curriculum should focus more on developing skills and talents that will be useful in their future career management and employment outcomes.

Internship Facilitator and Advisor Improvement Suggestions from Students

In response to the survey question “*Comments/suggestions for improvement of the Internship Facilitator and Adviser*” as well as student suggestions, it was concluded that the students would like to advise that the virtual internship facilitator be used to minimize the number of students

assigned to each advisor. Notify students in advance of any changes or alterations and increase the number of icebreakers to relieve the monotony and exhaustion of the learners. Each section should have a single adviser for structure and, most importantly, communication ease.

Most Significant Experience that Students Gained During the Virtual Internships

In response to the question “*What was your most important experience during the conduct of a virtual internship?*”, students said that the most valuable experience they had during their virtual internship was the opportunity to interact with actual industry leaders and learn from their expertise. Additionally, seeing their colleagues and superiors in virtual internships and learning about their occupations has been a valuable learning experience and it also provides them with the opportunity to discuss and network with other guests and professionals.

Table 5. Student’s Recommended Type of Modality in Internship Program Next Semester

What type of Modality would you recommend having in the internship program next semester?	Frequency	Percent
Blended Modality (50% Online, 50% Face to Face)	33	33%
Face to Face Internship	59	59%
Pure Asynchronous	5	5%
Pure Synchronous	3	3%
Grand Total	100	100%

As indicated in Table 5, the majority of student respondents (59%) selected Face to Face Internship, followed by Blended Modality (33%), Pure Asynchronous (5%), and Pure Synchronous (3%). This reveals that the majority of students choose to participate in face-to-face internships. Due to poor engagement, the data suggests that the students choose face-to-face internships over virtual internships. Due to a poor internet connection, the students are having difficulty connecting and communicating with the facilitators, advisors, and classmates. It is often difficult for kids to remain focused and motivated.

Discussion

Respondents’ Demographic Profile

Female students made up the majority of participants, indicating that females were somehow increasing in number in this sector of specialty.

Accordingly, UN Women (2019) confirmed the above finding, stating that the majority of the tourist workforce worldwide is 54 percent female and continues to grow annually. Furthermore, practically all the participants in the virtual internship program were graduating students, and the track that had the most participation in this research was the Travel and Tours Management track.

Perceptions of Students to a Virtual Internship

The respondents' perception of their virtual internships is that they obtained a variety of talents, abilities, traits, and knowledge that are relevant and important to their studies. This means students were aware that virtual internships can have a significant impact on their professional development, relationship building, and skills sharpening. The preceding statement is corroborated by Park's study (2021) which found that a greater proportion of interns and site supervisors expressed satisfaction with virtual internships, implying that virtual internships can be a viable choice for student internship programs.

Student's Level of Learning and Experience during Virtual Internships

The respondents indicated that they gained a great deal of knowledge and experience throughout their virtual internship. As a result, respondents have a general understanding of the internship experience. However, students revealed an inadequate knowledge of their strengths and limitations during their internship, which could result in a lack of competence development. The preceding statement was supported by Ramadhani and Rahayu (2020) that students must be aware of their own strengths and weaknesses in order for the internship program to be successful in developing their competencies.

Students' Evaluation and Assessment after Enrolling in Virtual Internship Programs

The results of the students' self-evaluative assessment after completing the virtual internship revealed that they gained an understanding of the principles and philosophies that would be beneficial to their intellectual development as a result of their relations with their faculty members. But despite the above-mentioned results, students can remember only a limited set of information they acquired throughout the semester. Thus, rather than educating students in the classroom, students' intellectual development

about concepts and ideas in their profession occurs throughout the internship program, and this development is well established. The result was supported by Sagar (2022) that it is essential to have established intellectual growth in order to have the ability to think, explore, and understand. Additionally, this would aid in the development of knowledge and problem-solving ability in individuals. Individuals, particularly students, benefit from having these critical abilities because they are better prepared to deal with challenges when they arise. Therefore, well-established intellectual development helps students when problems arise when they are in the field.

Virtual Internship Programs Implementation

Students stated that the virtual internship program aided them in developing their skills and knowledge, and it also allowed them to interact with and learn from industry professionals. The respondents proposed a face-to-face mode of contact for the next set of internship programs in order to achieve beneficial outcomes such as improved communication, connection building, a broader range of tasks, and support for organizational cultures. According to Chan (2021), face-to-face interaction during internships is preferred by both undergraduate students and organizations alike. On the other hand, our findings in this study are that the majority (91%) of our respondents' remarks suggested that face-to-face interaction during their service-learning internships was more beneficial than a fully online internship experience. This would mean there is an elevated level of learning and experience students may acquire when they are in the face-to-face internship modality and may also avoid technological issues. Moreover, due to the online nature of the internship, students encountered connectivity issues and technical difficulties that impacted their performance.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The research is summarized, and the study's conclusions are examined and interpreted. The researchers wanted to understand the FEU ITHM students' learnings and experiences for the second semester of the school year 2021-2022, as well as the students' perceptions of a virtual internship, how they assess themselves after enrolling in virtual internship programs, and the challenges and recommendations for interns regarding the virtual internship implementation.

The results showed that students faced a wide range of unique and complex difficulties when completing their online coursework. Overall findings show that the extent of challenges and strategies varied from one student to another. The responses of the students indicate that their online learning challenges and techniques were moderated by the resources accessible to them, including interaction with their professors and fellow students, and the school's existing policies and guidelines for online learning. Students have a heightened knowledge of how government organizations market and promote local tourism sites, according to the research. The most significant experience for students is the chance to converse and network with other guests and professionals, as well as to interact with actual industry leaders and learn their expertise. In general, the majority of interns who participated in virtual internships reported gaining numerous relevant and essential skills, abilities, qualities, and knowledge for their studies. Nevertheless, some interns struggled to comprehend the courses on their own and experienced internet outages and technological challenges. The majority of students supported a face-to-face modality for future semesters of the internship program.

Based on the findings, researchers are making the following recommendations. Administrators, program heads, and teachers should collaborate to design a professional plan for each student that could prepare them for success in their future careers. Skills acquired in college help make students professionally competent in their industry, maximize their strengths and capabilities, and be competitive individuals. Instructors should analyze students and create educational seminars, training, and workshops to help students address their weaknesses and build on their strengths so that when internship time comes, they are prepared and well-established persons. Teachers should support students in strengthening their expertise and abilities by advising them on how to deal with potential future situations. Facilitators and advisers involved in the internship program should communicate and motivate their students about the program in order to achieve a high level of student engagement. They should place greater emphasis on the practical training of students in order for them to outperform in the actual world of advancement and development. Top management and department heads engaging in internship programs should use a face-to-face internship model so that students can gain more hands-on experience in dealing with industry experts, communicating with them, and harnessing their knowledge, skills, and experiences.

Limitations

Some limitations in this study need to be acknowledged and addressed in future studies. The most notable limitation is the risk of respondent bias in open-ended questions. Hence, future research may retain the format of open-ended questions and rely on the participants' diligence and conscientiousness, or, they can substitute closed-ended questions for open-ended ones. Yet, there is a chance that individuals will respond differently or utilize distinct memory or reasoning processes while answering the questions. In connection with that, this research is exclusively focused on students' perspectives. Future studies may widen the sample by including all other actors taking part in the teaching-learning process. Researchers may go deeper by investigating teachers' views and experiences to have a complete view of the situation and how different elements interact with them or affect others. Methodologically, the researchers acknowledge that the quantitative nature of their study restricts a deeper interpretation of the findings. Future researchers should incorporate other variables not included in this study to see what factors influence intern learning and experience. Additionally, they may do a comparative analysis of the relationship between the virtual internship program from the facilitators' and advisers' perspectives.

Appendix

Internship Program in the New Normal

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) implements and promulgates the following Guidelines on Flexible Learning to be implemented by public and private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). In accordance with *CHED Memorandum No. 4 Series of 2020*, HEIs must continue to use their discretion when deploying flexible learning and other alternative modes of delivery in place of traditional learning or face-to-face modality. HEIs and their faculties must employ judgment in a rational, transparent, and outcomes-based manner. They must use data-driven and inclusive approaches to identify and execute the most feasible type of flexible learning and teaching based on their capacity, particular circumstances, national government agency standards, and local government unit recommendations.

Students may deepen their knowledge and prepare for future employment conditions by taking advantage of flexible learning, an innovative strategy that uses cutting-edge technology to enable students to explore the ins and outs of an industry virtually. During the worldwide

pandemic, online internships with a work-from-home setup have emerged as the most desirable internship format. Each school or program has to compile a list of approved Host Training Establishments (HTEs) that provide online or distant internship opportunities for its students. The University is responsible for identifying HTEs prepared to give remote internships and job responsibilities, as well as monitoring the virtual performance of student-interns.

Another approach is aimed to assist students who are unable to find a recognized HTE that offers online-exclusive internship duties. It will be the responsibility of the school to provide learners with experience opportunities to supplement their classroom-based learning. Student learning in experiential internship courses should include but not be limited to the following: service or community-engaged learning; case-based learning activities; modular output-based; supplemental webinars; and practical exercises.

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