

The Effect of Job Challenge and Role Clarity through Innovative Work Behavior on Internship Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Internships in higher education are vital for students' practical experience and skill development, with satisfaction being a key measure of success. Job challenge and role clarity significantly influence internship satisfaction. Job challenge enhances engagement and creativity, while role clarity reduces confusion, allowing students to focus on learning. Innovative work behavior, involving the initiation and implementation of new ideas, mediates this relationship, benefiting both the organization and students' sense of accomplishment. Together, these factors critically shape students' internship satisfaction. **Method:** The sampling technique was simple random sampling. The collected survey data is then analyzed using SEM-PLS with SmartPLS software. **Results:** The research indicates that **innovative work behavior** does not significantly affect internship satisfaction. **Job challenge** positively influences innovative behavior but has no significant impact on satisfaction. **Role clarity** does not directly affect innovative behavior but positively influences satisfaction. Neither job challenge nor role clarity significantly affects satisfaction through the mediation of innovative work behavior. **Novelty:** This research not only examines the direct influence of job challenge and role clarity on internship satisfaction, but also explores how students' innovative behaviors—such as the ability to initiate, implement, and adapt new ideas—can mediate the relationship.

INTRODUCTION

In higher education, internships have become an important component of the curriculum, providing opportunities for students to gain practical experience in the workplace before they graduate (D'Abate et al., 2009). Internships not only provide insight into the real world of work but also help students develop professional skills, build networks, and improve their work readiness (Pianda et al., 2024). A quality internship experience is expected to improve technical skills and develop professional attitudes needed in the world of work (Petrla et al., 2015). However, the success of an internship program is measured not only by how much experience students gain but also by their level of satisfaction with the internship experience. Therefore, the effectiveness of the internship program is highly dependent on the level of internship satisfaction, which reflects a positive perception of the experience and learning gained during the internship (D'Abate et al., 2009). Student internship satisfaction is an important indicator that reflects the effectiveness of the internship program in meeting students' expectations and needs (Narayanan et al., 2010).

Internship satisfaction is influenced by various internal and external factors in the work environment (Binder et al., 2015). Job challenge and role clarity are two variables that have the potential to influence internship satisfaction. Job challenge refers to the level of challenge and difficulty of tasks students face during their internship. Perceived challenges can increase student engagement and encourage them to develop creative

solutions, which in turn can increase their satisfaction with the internship experience (Tims et al., 2013). Research shows that appropriate work challenges can increase student engagement and encourage them to develop creative solutions, which in turn increases satisfaction with the internship experience (Silvianita et al., 2024). Role clarity, on the other hand, relates to clarity regarding students' expectations, responsibilities, and roles during the internship. Role clarity can reduce role confusion and conflict, thus allowing students to focus on learning and achieving internship goals, which can also increase internship satisfaction (Parker et al., 2006). Role clarity, which includes a clear understanding of responsibilities and expectations during the internship, can reduce role confusion and conflict, allowing students to focus on learning and achieving internship goals (Lan et al., 2025).

Furthermore, Innovative work behavior is introduced as a mediator in the relationship between job challenge, role clarity, and internship satisfaction. Innovative work behavior includes the ability of students to initiate, implement, and adapt new ideas during internships (Lan et al., 2025). Innovative work behavior reflects the extent to which individuals feel they have room to innovate, ultimately impacting their satisfaction level with their internship experience (Messmann & Mulder, 2011). This innovative behavior is not only beneficial to the organization where the internship takes place but also provides a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction for the students themselves (Lee et al., 2019). When students face complex and meaningful tasks, they are encouraged to look for new ways of solving problems, which in turn increases the chances of displaying innovative work behavior (AlEssa & Durugbo, 2024).

Based on the background that has been explained, the following is the formulation of this research problem: 1.) How does job challenge affect student internship satisfaction?; 2.) How does role clarity affect student internship satisfaction?; 3.) How do job challenge and role clarity influence through Innovative work behavior on student internship satisfaction?

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a quantitative approach. This approach was chosen because it is able to provide a systematic, measurable, and statistically testable description of the phenomenon under study. This study uses a cross-sectional research design. The population in this study was all undergraduate management study program students who had carried out an internship program. The sampling method used is simple random sampling, which is a simple random sampling technique in which each member of the population has the same opportunity to be selected as a respondent. This technique was chosen to generalize the research results more representatively to the target population.

Data collection was carried out using a questionnaire, which is a research instrument in the form of a list of written questions prepared to extract information from respondents by the variables studied. This questionnaire instrument was developed based on previous research by D'Abate, C. P., Youndt, M. A., and Wenzel, K. E. (2009), which has been shown to have good validity and reliability in similar contexts. For data analysis,

the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method was used with the help of SmartPLS 3.0 software SEM.



Figure 1. Flowchart for The Research

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The refined research instruments were ready to be used for data collection through the survey. The sampling technique is purposive. With a Saturated sample, namely all undergraduate students of S1 Management student one of state universities in Surabaya who carry out MBKM Internships. The collected survey data were then analyzed using SEM-PLS with SmartPLS software.

Table 1. Tables convergent validity

Variable	Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Criteria	Decision
Job Challenge	JC1	0.632	>0.5	Valid
	JC2	0.570	>0.5	Valid
	JC3	0.800	>0.5	Valid
	JC4	0.753	>0.5	Valid
	JC5	0.727	>0.5	Valid
	JC6	0.765	>0.5	Valid
	JC7	0.660	>0.5	Valid
	JC8	0.583	>0.5	Valid
	JC9	0.578	>0.5	Valid

Variable	Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Criteria	Decision
Role Clarity	RC1	0.550	>0.5	Valid
	RC2	0.559	>0.5	Valid
	RC3	0.686	>0.5	Valid
	RC4	0.764	>0.5	Valid
	RC5	0.743	>0.5	Valid
	RC6	0.701	>0.5	Valid
	RC7	0.698	>0.5	Valid
Innovative Work Behavior	IWB1	0.813	>0.5	Valid
	IWB2	0.672	>0.5	Valid
	IWB3	0.546	>0.5	Valid
	IWB4	0.794	>0.5	Valid
	IWB5	0.676	>0.5	Valid
	IWB6	0.844	>0.5	Valid
	IWB7	0.856	>0.5	Valid
	IWB8	0.882	>0.5	Valid
	IWB9	0.878	>0.5	Valid
Satisfaction	KEP1	0.680	>0.5	Valid
	KEP2	0.666	>0.5	Valid
	KEP3	0.680	>0.5	Valid
	KEP4	0.522	>0.5	Valid
	KEP5	0.716	>0.5	Valid
	KEP6	0.796	>0.5	Valid
	KEP7	0.647	>0.5	Valid
	KEP8	0.657	>0.5	Valid
	KEP9	0.629	>0.5	Valid
	KEP10	0.661	>0.5	Valid
	KEP11	0.664	>0.5	Valid
	KEP12	0.636	>0.5	Valid

Based on the table above, the outer loading of each indicator is more than 0.5 so it is said that the indicators in the study are valid to meet the requirements.

Table 2. Tables Reliability Test

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_c)
Innovative Work Behavior	0.917	0.932
Job Challenge	0.850	0.884
Satisfaction	0.885	0.904
Role Clarity	0.809	0.853

The Cronbach's Alpha value of each variable is more than 0.70. This shows that the variables have met the Cronbach's Alpha requirements or have strong reliability. And for composite reliability, the variable is more than 0.70, which means that the variable has good reliability.

Table 3. Tables Reliability Test

	Original sample	T-statistic	P-Value
innovative work behavior--> satisfaction	0.165	0.889	0.374
job challenge-->innovative work behavior	0.770	13.187	0.000
job challenge-->satisfaction	0.207	1.117	0.264
role clarity-->innovative work behavior	0.098	1.226	0.220
role clarity-->satisfaction	0.412	3.794	0.000
job challenge-->innovative work behavior-->satisfaction	0.127	0.871	0.384
role clarity-->innovative work behavior-->satisfaction	0.016	0.674	0.500

Innovative work behavior has no effect on internship student satisfaction. One of the reasons is the duration of internships carried out by students. The results showed that the average internship duration of respondents was 3 to 4 months. Students tend to focus on technical learning and adapting to the work environment during this time (Vaniasari & Surya Perdhana, 2023). The short duration of internships can limit students' involvement in innovative activities, as there is limited time to understand and develop new ideas (Jerez Gomez et al., 2023). In addition, on average, internship students are given more administrative tasks. In this case, the space to show innovative behavior tends to be limited, so the impact of innovative work behavior is less significant (Zain et al., 2024). Research conducted by Schneider et al., (2024) indicates that a high administrative task load can limit the space for students to show innovative behavior, because their focus is more on completing routine tasks.

Job challenge affects innovative work behavior. When employees successfully face work challenges, they tend to experience increased confidence in their ability to generate new ideas (Hameli et al., 2025). When employees feel able to contribute creatively, they are more likely to take initiative and try new approaches to their work (Jiang et al., 2025). This confidence encourages them to behave more innovatively in the next job (Jankelová et al., 2021). A challenging work environment encourages active learning and the development of new skills (Arofah et al., 2024). This condition can be used as a facility for developing innovative solutions to complex problems (Zhao et al., 2022).

Job challenge has no effect on internship student satisfaction. Research by Mensah et al., (2020) confirms that support from the organization, supervisors, and co-workers has a significant positive relationship with student internship satisfaction in the hospitality industry. This suggests that interpersonal relationships and social support in the workplace determine internship satisfaction more than job challenges. Student interns often prioritize learning experiences, mentorship, and a supportive work environment over job complexity or challenge (Ali et al., 2022). Relationships with supervisors and relevant training impact their satisfaction more than job challenges (Bawica, 2021).

Student internship satisfaction is determined more by experiences that provide skills and career development support than by complex and challenging tasks (NACE, 2023).

Role clarity has no effect on innovative work behavior. Role clarity can reduce uncertainty and increase job satisfaction which may indirectly support innovative work behavior, but its impact is often masked by individual motivation. This is because motivated employees tend to be innovative regardless of whether their roles are clearly defined (Ordu & Sari, 2022). When employees are motivated, they are likely to engage in innovative behavior regardless of their role clarity (Nilasari et al., 2022). Role clarity that is too structured or rigid may limit the freedom felt by employees and reduce their motivation to think innovatively (Kundu et al., 2020). This is because an individual often explores new ideas without being limited by strict job definitions (Nilasari et al., 2022).

Role clarity affects internship student satisfaction. Role clarity allows better communication between supervisors and interns, creating an environment that supports feedback and professional development, which is a source of satisfaction for interns (Poltimäe et al., 2023). When student interns clearly understand their job duties and expectations, they tend to feel more confident in completing their assigned responsibilities and are open to direction and feedback (Adams & Jessup-Anger, 2025). This directly increases the sense of engagement and satisfaction with the internship experience. In addition, students who gain role clarity during their internship are more likely to have positive career outcomes, such as job offers or mastery of skills relevant to industry needs (Feng et al., 2023). Furthermore, role clarity makes student interns feel that they are experiencing achievement and development during their internship, thus increasing overall satisfaction. When learning objectives and expected contributions are explained well, students are more likely to view their internship as a meaningful and productive experience (Anonymous, 2024).

Job challenge has no influence on intern satisfaction through innovative work behavior. The job challenges interns experience often do not match their developmental needs, which causes stress rather than encouraging creativity. Factors such as freedom, competence, and motivation are more important in increasing innovation and satisfaction than just the job challenge itself (Papachristopoulos et al., 2023). This is often due to a mismatch between the challenges interns face and their developmental needs, which can lead to stress rather than creativity (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Therefore, it is crucial for organizations to ensure that job challenges align with interns' capacities while also fostering an environment that promotes freedom, competence development, and intrinsic motivation to enhance both satisfaction and innovation.

Role clarity has no effect on internship student satisfaction through innovative work behavior. Role clarity affects job satisfaction more in more stable environments and long-term jobs, where expectations are more closely aligned with job performance (Theurer et al., 2018). While role clarity may support innovation in more structured settings, in the context of internships, other factors such as autonomy, learning opportunities, and motivation may mediate or even outweigh the influence of role clarity on satisfaction and innovative work behavior (Nilasari et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: Research shows that innovative work behavior does not have a significant effect on internship student satisfaction, there is a positive influence between job challenge and innovative work behavior, job challenge has a positive effect on innovative behavior but does not have a significant effect on internship student satisfaction, role clarity does not show a direct effect on innovative work behavior, role clarity has a positive effect on internship student satisfaction, job challenge and role clarity have no significant effect on internship student satisfaction through innovative work behavior. **Implication:** Suggestions for institutions are to provide more varied and challenging tasks to encourage innovative behavior. Ensure role clarity while still allowing students the freedom to explore new ideas. Focus on the learning experience and mentorship support to increase student satisfaction during the internship. Thus, it is hoped that internship students can get the most out of their experience and improve the quality of innovation in the workplace. **Limitation:** The limitations of this research is that it cannot access some of the desired journals. **Future Research:** We hope that future research can make research more developed by adding new variables, new instruments or new research methods to examine.

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