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Research Article

Internship Factors and Career Path Clarity: The Role of Organizational Context and Career Decidedness

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to examine the relationship between variables related to internship and clarity of career path among university students who completed On-the-Job Training (OJT). Data were collected using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design for 149 participants in six constructs: internship experience, work environment, personal impact, company size and structure, career decidedness, and career clarity. We used descriptive statistics, Spearman's correlation and multiple regression analyses. The findings revealed that internship experience, work environment and personal impact were all significantly associated with career clarity, with personal impact having the strongest association. However, only company size and structure and career decidedness were significant predictors in the regression model. The results underscore the importance of organizational context and the clarity of prior career in affecting students' career development. The findings indicate that well-structured internship opportunities, positive work environments and effective matching between students and host organizations can lead to better career clarity and employability outcomes. Future research may address limitations by employing longitudinal designs and broader institutional contexts.

Keywords: *Career path clarity, Internship experience, Job Satis, Organizational Well-being, Quantitative Descriptive-Correlational Design, Regression Analysis, Work Environment and Workplace Well-being*

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Background

The internship provides an opportunity to apply what you have learned in the classroom. They help students make better choices in their careers and gain confidence and that knowledge." Structured, supervised, and feedback-supported internships have been found to promote employability and the development of professional identity in meaningful work (Galbraith & Mondal, 2019; Pianda et al., 2024). Supported students are better prepared for the labor market as they know what to do (On-the-Job Training (Kapareliotis et al., 2019; Maes et al., 2022)) Also,

The concept of work-integrated learning, which connects real work experience with academic learning and career development (Hora et al., 2023; Galbraith & Mondal, 2019) is the basis for this study. Self-efficacy theory also explains how initiative and confidence influence one's performance and employment choice (Bandura, 1997; Hong et al., 2021). Furthermore, the role clarity and feedback environment models suggest that a clear goal and performance feedback are beneficial for the learning and clarity of purpose (Whitaker et al., 2007; Bak, 2020). Employability and clarity about career are important aspects of graduate development and professional identity as they affect motivation, values and career orientation (Tomlinson, 2017; Jackson, 2016). Finally, the literature on organizational learning suggests that the size and structure of a firm can either facilitate or inhibit the learning and socialization experiences of the interns (Yang et al., 2022; Deng et al., 2022).

Recent studies identified good practices such as welcoming interns, integrating them into teams, and creating a good working environment (Maaravi et al., 2021; Hora et al., 2023 The rise of hybrid/remote internships necessitates intentional onboarding and socialization of interns to support their ongoing learning (Hoyt & McCown, 2023; Chue, et al., 2024). Many students enter careers in OJT and internships with uncertain prospects and internships can better help in reducing unknowns through real world exposure (Bargmann et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022). The organization's context is important. The company's size and structure affect the distribution of tasks, exposure and mentoring, and consequently, the career choices (Yang et al., 2022; Gutiérrez-Pulido & Orozco-Rodríguez, 2025).

Most of the recent studies concentrate on one of the factors like self-efficacy, environment or satisfaction. However, few studies have examined the combined influences of internship experience, work environment, personal impact, organizational context (e.g. firm size and structure) and students previous vocational decidedness on clarity of career path. In order to solve this gap, the present study examines the way these variables interact on the clarity of students' career path after OJT (Pianda et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2022). The interaction of internship experiences, workplace culture and individual factors on career clarity has been examined in few studies, while considering the effect of organizational context and previous career decisions. Universities and their industry partners need to know what aspects of OJT improve employability and career clarity and how to design internship programs to achieve such outcomes (Hora et al., 2023; Kapareliotis et al., 2019).

This study addresses a set of questions: (1) What is the association between OJT completers' internship experience, work environment, and personal impact and career clarity? (2) How is company size and structure related to career path clarity when examined alongside internship-related factors? (3) How is career decidedness associated with career path clarity when considered with internship-related factors? (4) How much do the independent and additional predictor variables predict career clarity together? The resulting null hypotheses are as follows: H01: Internship experience has no significant relationship with career decision. H02: Work environment has no significant relationship with career decision. H03: Personal impact has no significant relationship with career decision. H04: Company size and structure do not have a significant relationship with career path clarity. H05: Career decidedness does not have a significant relationship with career path clarity. H06: The combined model of independent and additional predictor variables does not significantly predict career clarity.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study and provides a roadmap for

understanding the interrelationships between the key variables. It shows how factors encountered during On-the-Job Training (OJT) such as internship experience, work environment and personal impact are considered as the main inputs affecting clarity of career path. Company size and structure and career decidedness are included in the model as other predictors that may influence the nature of this relationship.

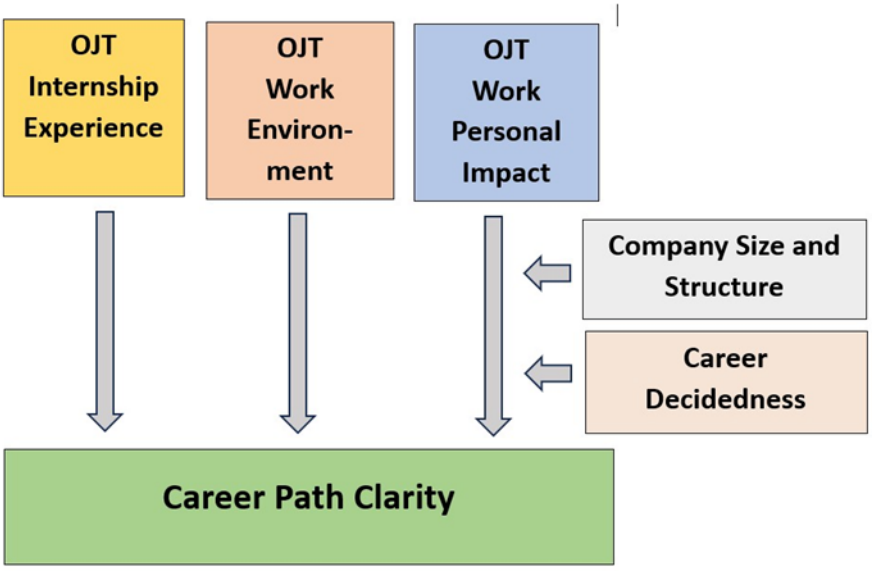

Figure 1. Conceptual Model Showing Internship Experience, Work Environment, Personal Impact, Company Size and Structure, Career Decidedness, and Career Path Clarity

Internship experience, work environment, and personal impact directly indicate the clarity of the career path, and it is obvious that these experiences are important for the students as to how clearly the student understand and plan the career ahead. Company size and structure and career decidedness are included in the model as additional predictors that may influence career path clarity when considered alongside internship-related factors. The two variables work together as a reflection of their combined influence in determining the internship experience and in the context of it influencing student careers.

Methods

Research Design

Based on the research hypothesis above, this study used a quantitative descriptive-correlational design to explore the influence of internship-related factors on the decision of university students as to what career path to follow after they have completed On-the-Job Training (OJT). The research instruments and methods used were constructed using a questionnaire developed by the researcher on the six constructs: internship experience, work environment, personal impact, company size and structure, career decidedness, and career clarity. Internship experience, work environment, and personal impact became independent variables, company size and structure and career decidedness acted as additional predictor variables, and career clarity was the dependent variable on the model. The structure of this design allowed the study to provide information for describing patterns of agreement and assessing relationships between variables by descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression.

Respondents

The respondents of this study are 149 university students who have already completed their (OJT) for their academic requirements. They were chosen because they had direct exposure to internship programs, so they are an opportunity to evaluate internship experience, work environment, personal impact, company size and structure, career decision, and career

clarity factors. The students were varied across different academic programs, and the sampling was purposefully conducted to ensure that all participants participated in OJT as a part of the academic program during the defined study. Their insights gave us credible information for investigating how internship-related variables affect career path clarity, so we considered that students and internship factors that support a clearer future were worth using.

542 university students with OJT made up the study's overall population. Based on Cochran's formula to calculate the sample size, the recommendation was 226 respondents. But it was hard to reach these students as they had all already graduated. Finally, 149 respondents were contacted and completed the survey. A priori power analysis was performed using G*Power software (3.1.9.2). The analysis indicated that the minimum sample size of 129 respondents was needed to detect a medium effect size (f 2 = 0.15) with an alpha of 0.05 and a power of 0.80 for multiple regression analysis with up to five predictors. The sample size obtained (n=149) was above the required threshold and therefore the study was well powered to detect significant associations between variables, though did not meet the sample size recommended by Cochran.

Instruments

The questionnaire included six sections to measure prominent constructs of the study. It has four statements each on internship experience, work environment and personal impact as independent variables, four statements each on company size and structure and career decidedness as additional predictor variables, and three statements on career clarity as dependent variable. Reliability analysis was performed with Cronbach's alpha which produced coefficients of .7691 for internship experience, .8338 for work environment, .7765 for personal impact, .8086 for company size and structure, .8037 for career decidedness and .7512 for career path clarity. All values were greater than the acceptable level of 0.70, showing that the scales have acceptable internal consistency.

The measurement items were mainly developed by the researchers based on a comprehensive review of the related literature on internship experience, workplace learning, and career development. Content validity was assured by the instrument being reviewed by experts in research and domain who reviewed the items for clarity, relevance and correspondence to the intended constructs. They provided feedback that was incorporated in revisions prior to data collection. Because the study was exploratory in nature and the items were newly developed, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was not performed; nevertheless, the reliability testing and theoretical underpinnings provided adequate initial support for the validity of the instrument.

The first part of the internship experience claims was developed through the existing literature review that emphasizes the important aspects of a successful internship. According to D'Abate et al. (2009), the satisfaction of OJT tasks is perceived as a strong predictor of success in internship periods. One of the key benefits of work-integrated learning is the application of classroom knowledge in OJT (Galbraith & Mondal, 2019). According to Whitaker et al. (2007) role clarity seems to affect the intern's performance and initiative. Positive feedback from the supervisor is important for improving learning and engagement (Ali et al., 2022). This research contributed to the development of the four statements used in this article to assess internship experience.

The second part of the work environment was written based on the current research that presents the four critical components that facilitate intern development. Supportive supervision and a favorable work environment are essential and have been linked to higher satisfaction with the internship (Maaravi et al., 2021). To participate in the internship, one has to feel a part of the team. Procedures of onboarding can foster social inclusion and improve the acclimation (Hoyt & McCown, 2023). Internships that offer structure and experience to support skill development significantly improve the skills of interns (Hoyt & McCown, 2023). Finally, the relationship of greater workplace learning outcomes with learning conducive environments that provide information, resources and feedback (Brijmohan, 2024).

The four items of personal effect in last section were based on current research that motivation, abilities, self-confidence and value fit are all important for future success of internship. Research shows a positive relationship between engagement and achievement and OJT motivation (Hong et al., 2021). Tomlinson (2017) suggests that communication and flexibility skills are required for work-integrated learning in performance. This is reflected in the ability to take the initiative (Bandura, 1997; Zhou et al., 2023), i.e., the self-efficacy that facilitates proactive behaviors and job planning. Once one's values are in line with the organization, one's learning and employability outcomes, commitment and happiness are enhanced (Jackson, 2016). From the results, four statements were written and used to measure personal effect in the study.

The four items in the section on Company Size and Structure were created in reference to research emphasizing effects of the organizational context on the internship experience. It is reported that the size and structure of the firm influence task assignment, including interns' responsibilities and variety of functions exposure (Yang et al., 2022). Experience within corporations of differing types contributes real industrial experience, which is vital for transitioning academic knowledge to practical real-world work (Gutiérrez-Pulido & Orozco-Rodríguez, 2025). The organizational setting affects learning by affecting resources availability, mentoring and collaboration potential (Deng et al., 2022). Finally, evidence also indicates that company size and structure may influence career choice since organizational attributes frequently impact individuals' career pathways and expectations in the future workplaces and work settings that interns experience (Karakiraz et al., 2021). These considerations gave rise to the four statements to be assessed.

The four items in the section on Career Decidedness were created from studies, which identify the importance of previous clarity and experiential stimulation in developing a career. Previous research has shown that knowing one's career path prior to OJT can influence future decisions and improve confidence (Bargmann et al., 2022). Internships reinforce students' career choices, resulting in higher commitment and less indecision (Yu et al., 2021). They also help in removing doubts by transforming unclear plans to more specific career goals through real-life experience (Zhang et al., 2022). Also, confidence in making career decisions prior to OJT is related to proactive attitude and self-efficacy which are improved by internships (Zhou et al., 2023). These findings formed the basis for the four statements on career decidedness used in this study.

The three things in my Career Path section Studies that have examined internships as role-modeling experiences have provided me with clarity. OJT contributes to students' outlooks on their future careers through providing them with practical experiences that support their career identity and planning (Pianda et al., 2024). Internships also allow students to learn about the job opportunities that are available to them, which helps them learn more about what they may be doing. Finally, OJT enables students to evaluate their suitability for future employment, enabling them to determine their personal fit and readiness for future employment (Karakiraz et al., 2021). The results of the study made it possible to develop three statements for determining the clarity of the career path.

Data Collection

Information was gathered through a web-based survey via Google Forms and distributed to qualified participants. All participants read an informed consent form regarding the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and confidentiality of answers prior to responding. The questionnaire consisted of three items relating to the study variables and was instrumented according to the 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). Responses were collected automatically in Google Forms and subsequently organized for statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics in the study. Descriptive statistics (primarily mean scores) were applied to summarize answers for the six study variables. In order to analyze relations among

the variables, the Spearman's rho correlation method and multiple regression analysis were applied. These methods enabled the study to test hypotheses and investigate whether other variables played a role in determining the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Regression analysis was appropriate for investigating these effects and offered evidence-based insights.

Ethical Considerations

A clear description of study objectives, scope, and potential risks gave them ample information to do so. No personal identifiers were collected and the survey was conducted anonymously. Participation was voluntary; respondents could stop participation at any time, with no penalties. The study adhered to the APA Ethics Code (2017) and ensured informed consent, confidentiality, and responsible handling of data.

Results and Discussions

Internship Experience

This table presents average scores and agreement levels on four items measuring students' Internship Experience (Independent Variable) during OJT. The instrument had a 5-point Likert scale with the following cutoffs: 1.00–1.80 = Strongly Disagree; 1.81–2.60 = Disagree; 2.61–3.40 = Neutral; 3.41–4.20 = Agree; 4.21–5.00 = Strongly Agree. Items include satisfaction with OJT tasks, application of classroom knowledge, clarity of roles, and supervisor feedback.

Table 1. Means and Levels of Agreements of Factors Encountered during OJT - Internship Experience

Internship Experience (Independent Variable)	**Means**	**Interpretation**
1. I was satisfied with my OJT tasks.	4.25	Strongly Agree
2. The OJT helped me apply classroom knowledge.	4.21	Strongly Agree
3. My roles during OJT were clear.	4.31	Strongly Agree
4. My supervisor gave helpful feedback.	4.32	Strongly Agree
Average	**4.27**	**Strongly Agree**

Note. Interpretation of mean scores: 1.00–1.80 = Strongly Disagree; 1.81–2.60 = Disagree; 2.61–3.40 = Neutral; 3.41–4.20 = Agree; 4.21–5.00 = Strongly Agree

Indicating, all four items are categorized under "Strongly Agree" according to the given cutoffs, meaning that respondents consistently indicated very positive experiences in internships across the dimensions: satisfaction with OJT tasks (M = 4.25), classroom application of knowledge (M = 4.21), clarity of roles (M = 4.31), and helpfulness of supervisor feedback (M = 4.32). This trend is also consistent with the literature on work-integrated learning in general showing that the quality of meaningful tasks, role clarity, and supervisor feedback are tightly tied to satisfaction with internships, transfer of learning received, and preparation for work.

In general, the high mean ratings of the internship experience items also indicated that students had pleasant OJT experiences that are important to enhancing learning outcomes and career development prospects. Students' confidence for a profession and skill transfer are enhanced when they can apply classroom concepts during their internship (Kong, 2021; Hora et al., 2023). Role clarity also reduces ambiguity and improves work readiness during OJT because well-defined responsibilities result in high performance and job satisfaction (Kapareliotis et al., 2019). Besides, the supervisor's constructive criticism is vital for promoting creativity and learning (Bak, 2020). As the findings suggest, schools and partner institutions should create internships with defined tasks, explicit objectives, and frequent feedback in order to enhance learning and prepare students for future careers (Maes et al., 2022).

Work Environment

Table 2 shows the mean values and agreement scores for four of the items measuring students' Work Environment (independent variable) in OJT. A 5-point Likert scale with cutoffs was used to measure this instrument, from

1.00 to 1.80 as "Strongly Disagree"; 1.81 to 2.60 indicating "Disagree"; 2.61 to 3.40 as "Neutral"; 3.41 to 4.20 as "Agree"; 4.21 to 5.00 as "Strongly Agree." The items relate to the workplace culture, inclusion in the workplace, skill acquisition and learning support/facilitation.

Table 2. Means and Levels of Agreements of Factors Encountered during OJT - Work Environment

Work Environment (Independent Variable)	**Means**	**Interpretation**
5. The workplace culture was supportive.	4.43	Strongly Agree
6. I felt welcomed as part of the team.	4.50	Strongly Agree
7. The workplace helped me improve my skills.	4.40	Strongly Agree
8. The company environment supported my learning.	4.36	Strongly Agree
Average	**4.42**	**Strongly Agree**

Note. Interpretation of mean scores: 1.00–1.80 = Strongly Disagree; 1.81–2.60 = Disagree; 2.61–3.40 = Neutral; 3.41–4.20 = Agree; 4.21–5.00 = Strongly Agree.

The results show that all the items and the overall mean fell under the category of "Strongly Agree". Respondents strongly agreed to the statements, "the workplace culture is supportive" (M=4.43), "I feel accepted as a member of the team" (M=4.50), "the workplace has helped me develop my abilities" (M=4.40), and "the workplace environment is conducive to learning" (M=4.36). These results suggested that the students had a very good work environment during their OJT, consistent with studies that stress the importance of team integration and organizational culture that promotes a good working environment can improve satisfaction and learning experiences in internships (Kapareliotis et al., 2019; Bak, 2020).

The signs all point to the fact that an inviting and inclusive workplace is the key to the internship's success. A favorable work culture and teamwork increase interns' confidence and involvement, which is crucial for skill development and career success (Kapareliotis et al., 2019). Interns who feel valued, supported and accepted at work are more engaged and are more likely to perform their duties successfully. Interns who are supported and integrated into the company are more likely to apply what they learn in the classroom to real work settings and gain useful professional skills (Hora et al., 2023).

In addition, a good working environment increases the overall satisfaction of the internship and develops the learning and growth conducive to successful experience learning (Kong, 2021). Feedback, teamwork and practical experience opportunities greatly improve interns' professional competence and personal development. Besides, good working environment helps interns to be committed to their future jobs and it is also easier for interns to adapt to professional environments. The school and partner institutions should provide a positive work environment, promote teamwork, and give organizational training support to optimize the benefits of OJT and improve the students overall learning experience (Maes et al., 2022).

Personal Impact

We used this analysis to determine the mean scores and corresponding agreement between the items (on the Independent Variable of Personal Impact) of students during OJT, respectively. The instrument was a 5-point Likert scale with cutoffs (1.00–1.80 = Strongly Disagree, 1.81–2.60 = Disagree, 2.61–3.40 = Neutral, 3.41–4.20 = Agree, 4.21–5.00 = Strongly Agree; respectively). The items include motivation, application of the skills learnt, confidence in initiative, and value alignment with the company.

Table 3. Means and Levels of Agreements of Factors Encountered during OJT – Personal Impact

Personal Impact (Independent Variable)	**Means**	**Interpretation**
9. I was motivated to do well during OJT.	4.30	Strongly Agree

Personal Impact (Independent Variable)	Means	Interpretation
10. My skills (communication, adaptability) helped me succeed.	4.40	Strongly Agree
11. I felt confident taking initiative.	4.25	Strongly Agree
12. My values matched the company's values.	4.21	Strongly Agree
Average	**4.29**	**Strongly Agree**

Note. Interpretation of mean scores: 1.00–1.80 = Strongly Disagree; 1.81–2.60 = Disagree; 2.61–3.40 = Neutral; 3.41–4.20 = Agree; 4.21–5.00 = Strongly Agree.

The items, as well as the aggregate, are categorized as "Strongly Agree" values. Respondents strongly agreed that they were motivated to perform well during OJT (M = 4.30), that their skills helped them succeed (M = 4.40), they felt confident taking initiative (M = 4.25), and that their values matched the company's values (M = 4.21). These findings suggest that students reported high rates of personal involvement and alignment in OJT and that support higher performance, adaptability, and professional development (Tomlinson, 2017).

The strong correspondence between personal impact indicators indicates that internships play a prominent role in student motivation, confidence, and value alignment. Motivation and action in OJT are associated with improved learning of skills and employability success (Tomlinson, 2017). Students whose personal values are also related to organizational values have commitment and satisfaction levels that result in greater learning and career clarity (Tomlinson, 2017). Moreover, self-efficacy — an important predictor of successful workforce transition (Bandura, 1997) — is developed as confidence in initiating tasks becomes a part of the culture in the institution. Such results suggest internships should include some activities that will support the development of autonomy, help one apply skills, and also encourage reflection on values to boost career readiness (Jackson, 2016).

Company Size and Structure

The descriptive statistics representing the mediating variable Company Size and Structure are listed in Table 4 in the study of aspects (found in OJT factors) upon students' decisions. The table features four questions on the correlation between a company's size, organizational setup, and structure and interns' duties, realistic industry experience, and learning experience. For each element, the average score and the interpretation band along the five–point Likert scale (1.00–1.80 = Strongly Disagree; 1.81–2.60 = Disagree; 2.61–3.40 = Neutral; 3.41–4.20 = Agree; 4.21–5.00 = Strongly Agree) are presented. An average overall is reported for the mediating variable.

Table 4. Means and Levels of Agreements of Factors Influencing the Relationship Between Factors Encountered during OJT and Students' Career Path Decisions - Company Size and Structure

Company Size and Structure (Additional Predictor)	Means	Interpretation
13. The company's size and structure affected the tasks I received.	4.11	Agree
14. Working here gave me real-world industry exposure.	4.17	Agree
15. The organizational setup influenced my learning.	4.06	Agree
16. The company's size and structure may shape my career choices.	4.11	Agree
Average	4.11	Agree

Note. Interpretation of mean scores: 1.00–1.80 = Strongly Disagree; 1.81–2.60 = Disagree; 2.61–3.40 = Neutral; 3.41–4.20 = Agree; 4.21–5.00 = Strongly Agree.

The overall mean scores reflect consensus on how significant company size and structure are in affecting OJT experience for participants. Item 14 ("Working here gave me real-world industry exposure.") has the maximum mean (4.17), indicating high perceived exposure to industry practices. Item 13 ("The company's size and structure affected the tasks I

received.") and Item 16 ("The company's size and structure may shape my career choices.") both are fully agreeing (4.11), which indicates the perceived impact on job placement and expected career progression. Item 15 ("The organizational setup influenced my learning.") has the lowest mean, 4.06, but it is still in the agree interval reflecting positive (but relatively weaker) positive effect on learning. The mean overall score of 4.11 supports that organizational context (size and structure) plays a significant role in shaping internship experiences and students' career path clarity.

These findings suggest that host organizations' size and structural design can help or hinder what interns do, learn, and make decisions about their careers. Previous research corroborates that internships help in employability development and career crystallization as far as providing structured, meaningful tasks and real-world exposure is concerned (Pianda et al., 2024; Gutiérrez-Pulido & Orozco-Rodríguez, 2025). Over-formalization of organizational structures reduces learning; decentralized and supportive organizational environments often promote learning processes (Yang et al., 2022). Good mentoring and socialization also improve task mastery, satisfaction, and integration – crucial processes by which the organizational context influences interns' career intentions (Deng et al., 2022). Careful programme planning and matching of internship tasks with the students' career goals may in general shorten the transition to first employment and improve sector persistence (Karakiraz et al., 2021). In implementation, both universities and employers need to pair students up with companies whose size/structure can offer varied tasks, clear objectives, and continuous onboarding/feedback, even in a hybrid setting where socializing needs purposeful support (Chue et al., 2024; Banker & Borchardt, 2025). All in all, creating internship placements that leverage organizational context (size and structure), mentoring, and aligned tasks should amplify learning gains, making clearer career path decisions for the student interns. (Pianda et al., 2024; Gutiérrez-Pulido & Orozco-Rodríguez, 2025).

Career Decidedness

Table 5 presents descriptive statistics concerning the moderating variable Career Decidedness in the study of factors encountered during OJT and their impact on students' career path decisions. The table presents four items measuring students' level of pre-OJT career clarity, confidence, reinforcement of career plans, and resolution of uncertainties. The items are scored on a five-point Likert scale (1.00–1.80 = Strongly Disagree; 1.81–2.60 = Disagree; 2.61–3.40 = Neutral; 3.41–4.20 = Agree; 4.21–5.00 = Strongly Agree) with the mean score and interpretation in the index. This also provides the overall average of all items in total.

Table 5. Means and Levels of Agreements of Additional Predictor Variable and the Relationship between Factors Encountered during OJT and Career Path Clarity – Career Decidedness

Career Decidedness (Additional Predictor)	**Means**	**Interpretation**
17. Before OJT, I already knew my career path.	3.64	Agree
18. My OJT reinforced my career plans.	3.98	Agree
19. My OJT clarified uncertainties about my career.	4.03	Agree
20. I was confident making career decisions before OJT.	3.65	Agree
Average	**3.83**	**Agree**

Note. Interpretation of mean scores: 1.00–1.80 = Strongly Disagree; 1.81–2.60 = Disagree; 2.61–3.40 = Neutral; 3.41–4.20 = Agree; 4.21–5.00 = Strongly Agree.

The findings demonstrated the general student consensus on all dimensions of career decidedness with mean scores of 3.64 to 4.03. The statement that OJT assisted in resolving doubts on their career was the highest area of agreement (M = 4.03), indicative of a training experience that would help reduce uncertainties. On the other hand, most of the students perceived that OJT supported their career

plans (M = 3.98), indicating that OJT strengthens their already-formed intentions. The low point in the pre-OJT confidence and prior knowledge of career paths indicators were M = 3.64 and M = 3.65, respectively, which highlights that students had some knowledge prior to OJT but the OJT experience played a much more important role in either validating or further establishing their career decisions. With an overall average of 3.83, participants consistently agreed that OJT positively impacted career decidedness.

These results imply that well designed OJT experiences not only confirm existing career intentions but also reduce uncertainty, thereby moderating the effect of OJT on students' vocational choice. Bargmann et al. (2022) found that students that have some prior clarity of their desired career path also find an internship meaningful in terms of self-efficacy, and their ability to commit and stick with their goal in education. The literature on career exploration models suggests that exposure during training programs strengthens career decision-making and turns vague plans into concrete targets (Yu et al., 2021). Additionally, internships reduce career indecision and make it easier to transition from education to work because they reduce doubt and boost career-focused beliefs, doing these two things (Zhang et al., 2022). In this regard, educational institutions and employers should work together to ensure that OJT programmes are designed to reinforce students' existing career clarity, through for example guided tasks, reflective assignments and feedback loops. These structured mechanisms can increase the impact of Career Decidedness on more clear and confident career choices.

Career Clarity

Table 6 reflects the average scores of student career pathway clarity and interpretation level after OJT study. It incorporates three responses about the extent to which OJT transformed students' attitudes toward their projected careers, new career choices, and confidence in their prospective fields. Mean scores for these comments are presented along with interpretation with a five-point Likert (1.00–1.80 = Strongly Disagree; 1.81–2.60 = Disagree; 2.61–3.40 = Neutral; 3.41–4.20 = Agree; 4.21–5.00 = Strongly Agree) scale. The average overall score for all three statements is also shown.

Table 6. Means and Levels of Agreements of Career Path Clarity after Completing OJT

Career Path Decision (Dependent Variable)	**Means**	**Interpretation**
21. My OJT experience influenced how I see my future career.	4.27	Strongly Agree
22. OJT made me aware of new career options.	4.23	Strongly Agree
23. OJT helped me assess if I am suited for my planned career.	4.28	Strongly Agree
Average	**4.26**	**Strongly Agree**

Note. Interpretation of mean scores: 1.00–1.80 = Strongly Disagree; 1.81–2.60 = Disagree; 2.61–3.40 = Neutral; 3.41–4.20 = Agree; 4.21–5.00 = Strongly Agree.

All three statements share the "Strongly Agree" category, with 4.23-4.28 mean scores. In the following section, students most strongly agreed that OJT assisted them to evaluate their suitability for their established careers (M = 4.28), closely related to the statement regarding influencing their view of future careers (M = 4.27). Also, they strongly agreed that OJT made them aware of new career opportunities (M = 4.23). This gives an average of 4.26, with the overall average showing that students who completed their OJT felt much better about the careers they chose, being more self-aware, informed and more confident.

They find that OJT greatly enhances students' clarity about the best career path, therefore acting as a vital process for career choice. The research shows internships help students test and validate their career options, promoting a higher chance of employment on a positive measure (Pianda et al., 2024). Additionally, exposure to jobs in the real world prior to student employment provides students with an increased environment of "test-drives" to

different roles, resulting in realistic expectations and clearer plans (Kaur, 2025). If OJT can be said to provide practical self-assessment and the awareness of new possible career choices, OJT reduces unknowns and promotes more thoughtful career commitment by reducing uncertainty. Thus, education should therefore be oriented to provide structured experiences of OJT structured by reflecting regularly and scaffolded OJT, as well as the implementation of structured routine reflection and guided assessments to develop these clarity enhancing benefits for the learner.

Factors Encountered during On-the-Job Training and Career Path Clarity

Table 7 presents the Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficients (ρ) and p-values indicating the correlation of three independent variables in OJT—Internship Experience, Work Environment, and Personal Impact—to the dependent outcome, namely Career Path Clarity. The table shows how the null-hypothesis decision was made for all tests and the significance of the correlation according to the test criterion ($p < .05$). Spearman's ρ is used to test for monotonic relations of ranked/ordinal type data, without assuming normality.

Table 7. Relationship Between the Factors Encountered during OJT (Independent Variables) and Career Path Clarity

Independent Variables	*ρ*	*p*	*Decision (Null Hypothesis)*	*Significance*
Internship Experience	0.399	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Work Environment	0.384	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Personal Impact	0.521	0.000	Rejected	Significant

Note. ρ = Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient; p = probability value. Results are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

All three OJT factors are positively associated with Career Path Clarity (all $p = .000$). Specifically, the strongest correlation of Personal Impact ($\rho = 0.521$) indicates the most positive correlations between OJT and students' personal reflection, self-efficacy, and perceived growth in terms of clearer career pathways. Internship Experience ($\rho = 0.399$) and Work Environment ($\rho = 0.384$) also have significant positive relationships, indicating that the nature of the internship's tasking quality and the contextual organization both contribute to the extent to which students can envision and plan their career. While these findings suggest good co-movement between the variables and career clarity within this sample we cannot infer cause-and-effect since Spearman's correlation measures association not causation. The results shown in Table 7 reject Hypothesis 01, Hypothesis 02 and Hypothesis 03. Internship Experience ($\rho = 0.399$, $p < .05$), Work Environment ($\rho = 0.384$, $p < .05$) and Personal Impact ($\rho = 0.521$, $p < .05$) indicate statistically significant positive relationships with Career Path Clarity.

Strong positive correlations signal that when internships are designed to strengthen student impact at the personal level, as well as by ensuring supportive workplace and meaningful task structures, career clearer Path is very likely to be achieved. Existing studies have demonstrated that work environment components and job attributes are strong predictors of internship satisfaction, a pathway linked to a stronger sense of career identity and clearer career choice (D'Abate et al., 2009; Maaravi et al., 2021). When OJT deepens students' career decision-making self-efficacy, and generates satisfying experiences, it fosters commitment to a field and more tangible intentions to remain, allowing decision-making to be consistent with realistic self-assessment (Wang, 2021; Feng et al., 2023). In addition, systematic reviews of Scopus-indexed studies support that internships promote career crystallization and employability, thereby reinforcing the importance of structured, mentored, and feedback-rich placements in the workplace (Pianda et al., 2024). On the ground, universities and host institutions should co-design OJT whereby meaningful, feedback-driven tasks complement

more supportive supervision and reflective activities that allow students to realize meaningful personal development along with the need for a good work culture while also receiving more visibility on what their future endeavors might entail.

Internship Experience, Career Path Clarity, and Company Size & Structure

Table 8 Summary of multiple linear regression analysis for two OJT predictors, Internship Experience, and Company Size & Structure, with respect to Career Path Clarity. For each predictor the table provides the unstandardized coefficient (β), standard error (SE), t-value, p-value, 95% confidence interval (CI) for β, and the partial correlation (partial r), reflecting the unique association with the outcome after controlling for the other predictor. Summary of the model is reported (R^2, adjusted R^2, F-statistic, p-value as well as the N), the overall fit and predictive power of the model is presented.

Table 8. Relationship Among Internship Experience, Career Path Clarity, and Company Size & Structure During OJT

Predictor	***β***	***SE***	***t***	***p***	***95% CI for β***	***Partial r***
Internship Experience	0.2195	0.0715	3.07	0.0026	[0.0781, 0.3609]	≈ 0.246
Company Size & Structure	0.4568	0.0748	6.11	< .001	[0.3090, 0.6045]	≈ 0.451

Note. Model summary: R^2 = .342, adjusted R^2 = .333, F(2, 146) = 37.98, p < .001, N = 149.

Both predictors are significant and positive predictors of Career Path Clarity. Company Size & Structure has the most distinct unique effect (β = 0.4568, SE = 0.0748, t = 6.11, p < .001, 95% CI [0.3090, 0.6045], partial r ≈ 0.451), which means larger or better structures of organizations are significantly correlated to clearer student career paths. Internship Experience can in further effect as well (β = 0.2195, SE = 0.0715, t = 3.07, p = .0026, 95% CI [0.0781, 0.3609], partial r ≈ 0.246), implying that while less unique, meaningful contributions to clarity have been achieved. The model explains approximately 34% of the variance in career path clarity (R^2 = 0.342, adjusted R^2 = 0.333; F(2, 146) = 37.98, p < .001), which suggests a reasonable fit of the two-predictor model in this case. Both factors are checked for a zero point in confidence intervals which increases the robustness of positive associations.

They observed that the development of students' careers becomes clearer when they see that OJT work is being conducted in companies with manageable size and structure that provide well-planned learning opportunities supported by structure, and meaningful tasks and feedback in the internship. The literature consistently suggests that an organizational framework and supportive environment improve learning and integration—two important mechanisms through which internship exposure gets translated into clarity and commitment (Yang et al., 2022; Gutiérrez-Pulido & Orozco-Rodríguez, 2025). Internships with significant tasks, feedback, supervisor support, and learning opportunities were significantly associated with good intern satisfaction, which in turn fostered a strong career identity and decision making (D'Abate et al., 2009; Maaravi et al., 2021). Also, systematic reviews indicate internships can be a route to career crystallization and employability, when they are structured and mentor-rich (Pianda et al., 2024). In practice, universities and host institutions need to co-design OJT to (1) screen students and match them with firms whose size/structure can offer a diverse and structured experience, and (2) ensure that internships will include clear goal-setting, regular feedback, and supervisor mentorship—elements likely to solidify students' career path clarity for post-graduation success. These findings support the rejection of Hypothesis 04, as statistically significant associations are observed between Company Size and Structure and Career Path Clarity (p < .05).

Work Environment, Career Path Clarity, and Company Size & Structure

Table 9 summarizes the findings of a multiple linear regression in which we test the relationship between two OJT predictors Work

Environment and Company Size & Structure to Career Path Clarity. For all predictor variables, the table shows we have unstandardized coefficient (β), standard error (SE), t-value, p value and 95% confidence interval (CI) on beta and partial correlation (partial r), which signifies the special relation of Career Path Clarity with the other predictor. Summary statement of model (R^2, adjusted R^2, F statistic, model p, and N) to demonstrate explanatory power and fit.

Table 9. Relationships among Work Environment, Career Path Clarity, and Company Size & Structure during OJT

Predictor	***β***	***SE***	***t***	***p***	***95% CI for β***	***Partial r***
Work Environment	0.1707	0.0804	2.12	0.0354	[0.0118, 0.3296]	≈ 0.173
Company Size & Structure	0.4641	0.0807	5.75	< .001	[0.3046, 0.6237]	≈ 0.430

Note. Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.321$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.312$, $F(2,146) = 34.48$, $p < .001$, $N = 149$.

Career Path Clarity is positively and statistically significantly correlated with both predictors. Clearer career pathways among students are substantially correlated with organizational scale and structural arrangements (β = 0.4641, SE = 0.0807, t = 5.75, p <.001, 95% CI [0.3046, 0.6237], partial r ≈ 0.430). The work environment is also significant (β = 0.1707, SE = 0.0804, t = 2.12, p =.0354, 95% CI [0.0118, 0.3296], partial r ≈ 0.173), indicating that the immediate workplace climate (e.g., support, learning opportunities) contributes to clarity, though its unique effect is smaller than that of company size/structure. The model has a moderate overall fit for a two-predictor model, explaining 32.1% of the variance in Career Path Clarity (R^2 = 0.321; modified R^2 = 0.312; F(2, 146) = 34.48, p <.001).

The findings suggest students become more likely to identify clear career paths when the organization of these internships is large and structured to encourage well-organized learning and transfer, and when the work organization also supports feedback and learning opportunities as per supervisors. Previous literature supports the premise that organisational structure can encourage learning, or undermine it and the effective integration of work knowledge and that decentralized, supportive organizational arrangements are associated with greater learning outcomes (Yang et al., 2022). Meanwhile, work environment attributes (task significance, feedback, learning opportunities, supervisor support) are also consistently related to higher internship satisfaction, which contributes to a stronger career identity and informed choices (D'Abate et al., 2009; Maaravi et al., 2021; Feng et al., 2023). Systematic literature similarly shows that structured, mentor-rich internships foster career crystallization and employability–supporting the value of a deliberate design approach to internships, and coordinated operations between universities and employers (Pianda et al., 2024; Gutiérrez-Pulido & Orozco-Rodríguez, 2025). In reality, schools and host firms should co-design OJT placements that: (1) work with organisations whose size/structure can offer cohesive and scalable learning experiences; and (2) integrate clear targets, regular feedback and active supervision—decisions that are likely to enhance career trajectory clarity for student interns (D'Abate et al., 2009; Feng et al., 2023; Gutiérrez-Pulido & Orozco-Rodríguez, 2025; Maaravi et al., 2021; Pianda et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2022).

Personal Impact, Career Path Clarity, and Company Size & Structure

Table 10: Results of multiple linear regression analysis, focusing on Personal Impact and Company Size & Structure, which are two OJT predictors influencing Career Path Clarity. For each predictor, the unstandardized coefficient (β), standard error (SE), t-value, p-value, 95% confidence interval (CI) for β, and partial correlation (partial r) are provided as output in the table for the unique association with the outcome while controlling for the other predictor. Summary of model (R^2, adjusted R^2, F-statistic, model p-value, and N) shows overall model fit and explanatory power.

Table 10. Relationships among Personal Impact, Career Path Clarity, and Company Size & Structure during OJT

Predictor	***β***	***SE***	***t***	***p***	***95% CI for β***	***Partial r***
Personal Impact	0.3137	0.0920	3.41	0.0008	[0.1318, 0.4956]	≈ 0.27
Company Size & Structure	0.3604	0.0880	4.10	< .001	[0.1866, 0.5343]	≈ 0.32

Note. Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.351$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.343$, $F(2,146) = 39.56$, $p < .001$, $N = 149$.

Both predictors are strong and significant predictors of Career Path Clarity. Company Size & Structure also demonstrate a strong unique effect (β = 0.3604, SE = 0.0880, t = 4.10, p < .001, 95% CI [0.1866, 0.5343], partial r ≈ 0.32), thereby suggesting that organizational scale and its structural arrangements is positively related to clarity of career paths. Personal Impact also is significant (β = 0.3137, SE = 0.0920, t = 3.41, p = .0008, 95% CI [0.1318, 0.4956], partial r ≈ 0.27), supporting the conclusion that students self-assessment, confidence and perceived growth in OJT are significant predictors of the degree to which they're able to clarify their own work. The model accounts for 35.1% of the variance in career path clarity (R^2 = 0.351; adjusted R^2 = 0.343; F(2, 146) = 39.56, p < .001), yielding decent explanatory power for a two-predictor type model.

The results suggest that students have a clearer career path when OJT provides not only self-development but also a supportive environment to learn. Internships that promote self-efficacy, confidence, and reflective learning (Hong et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2023) prepare students better and assure them of future jobs. Interns learn more about their skills, interests and career goals through hands-on experiences, thus making more informed choices about employment. Also, reflective learning activities help students relate their academic knowledge to real-world job experiences, which further enhances students' professional development. The size and structure of an organization also strongly influence student learning. Supportive and well-organized workplaces provide clearer direction, improved communication, and increased opportunities for mentorship and collaboration to help interns apply what they learn more successfully (Yang et al., 2022). In these contexts, students are more likely to be more committed to their potential professional choices and to know more about the demands of employment. These experiences not only enhance students' interpersonal and technical skills, but also better equip them to enter the workforce after graduation.

Studies on internship programs suggest that a well-designed internship with clear objectives, ongoing feedback and active industry involvement can improve student satisfaction and facilitate the development of student competencies. This will help to build more tangible long term career plans (Gutiérrez-Pulido & Orozco-Rodríguez, 2025). A good internship program helps students to know their responsibilities, encourages their performance and relates their work experiences to their future careers. Supervisors' feedback helps students to identify their weaknesses and strengths. Well-mentored internships have also been found to improve career clarity and employability, emphasizing the need for cooperation between universities and host companies (Pianda et al., 2024). Supervisors and mentors help interns to get acquainted with professional working environment and to be inspired and guided. In addition, strong school–industry partner links help to ensure that internship activities are aligned with workplace needs and learning objectives. This means that activities that promote reflection such as coaching for self-efficacy and guided reflection should be incorporated in internship programs, within the context of structured elements such as defined roles, regular feedback and supervision. Such approaches can help students understand pathways to careers, develop confidence and workplace skills, and prepare for future employment.

Internship Experience, Career Path Clarity, and Career Decidedness

Table 11 indicates outcomes of a multiple linear model for two OJT predictors, Internship Experience and Career Decidedness; the relationship with Career Path Clarity. The table

shows the unstandardized coefficient (β), standard error (SE), t-value, p-value, 95% confidence interval (CI) for β, and partial correlation (partial r), which illustrates each predictor's unique relationship with the outcome while controlling for the other. Model summary (R^2, adjusted R^2, F statistic, model p, and N) describes the overall regression model explanatory power and fit.

Table 11. Relationship Among Internship Experience, Career Path Clarity, and Career Decidedness during OJT

Predictor	***β***	***SE***	***t***	***p***	***95% CI for β***	***Partial r***
Internship Experience	0.2639	0.0736	3.58	0.0005	[0.1184, 0.4095]	≈ 0.28
Career Decidedness	0.2962	0.0620	4.78	< .001	[0.1737, 0.4186]	≈ 0.37

Note. Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.286$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.276$, $F(2,146) = 29.23$, $p < .001$, $N = 149$.

In comparison with this, both predictors have significant positive unique relationships with Clarity around Career Path. Career Decidedness's significance level (β = 0.2962, SE = 0.0620, t = 4.78, p < .001, 95% CI [0.1737, 0.4186], partial r ≈ 0.37) was higher, indicating that students with a high level of confidence in their career path had more distinct career trajectories during OJT. Internship Experience is important as well (β = 0.2639, SE = 0.0736, t = 3.58, p = .0005, 95% CI [0.1184, 0.4095], partial r ≈ 0.28), and indicates a real unique contribution to clarity. The model explains 28.6% of the variance in Career Path Clarity (R^2 = 0.286; adjusted R^2 = 0.276; F(2, 146) = 29.23, p < .001), which is a moderate degree of explanatory power for a two-predictor model. The two coefficients rule out zero from the model's confidence interval for this type of output. These numbers show the strength of our positive connections.

The findings indicate that students' career paths are clearer when OJT combines good internships with strong career decidedness. Well designed internships have been found to increase practical exposure to skills and transfer those to increased clarity and employability (Gutiérrez-Pulido & Orozco-Rodríguez, 2025; Pianda et al., 2024). Concurrently, it has been demonstrated that a higher level of career decidedness, which is primarily supported by career exploration and mentorship, reduces indecision and improves confident planning (Yu et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022). From a programmatic perspective, universities and host organisations could co-design OJT with purposeful work, ongoing feedback and reflective tasks to develop self-efficacy and focus. These aspects in combination contribute to strengthening career decidedness and translate internship learning into defined, concrete career plans. The findings also show that Hypothesis 05 is rejected. Career Decidedness has a statistically significant relationship with Career Path Clarity in regression models (p < .05).

Work Environment, Career Path Clarity, and Career Decidedness

Table 12 Results of a multiple linear regression analyses the relationship between two OJT predictors, Work Environment and Career Decidedness, and Career Path Clarity. For each predictor, the table lists the unstandardized coefficient (β), standard error (SE), t-value, p-value, 95% confidence interval (CI) for β, and the partial correlation (partial r) that indicates that there is a specific relationship between each predictor with the outcome independent of the other. The model summary (R^2, adjusted R^2, F statistic, model p, and N) is given to demonstrate the general effectiveness and the fit.

Table 12. Relationships among Work Environment, Career Path Clarity, and Career Decidedness during OJT

Predictor	***β***	***SE***	***t***	***p***	***95% CI for β***	***Partial r***
Work Environment	0.2900	0.0736	3.94	< .001	[0.1447, 0.4354]	≈ 0.31
Career Decidedness	0.3101	0.0594	5.22	< .001	[0.1926, 0.4276]	≈ 0.40

Note. Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.298$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.288$, $F(2,146) = 30.97$, $p < .001$, $N = 149$.

Both predictors are positively, significantly unique with respect to Career Path Clarity. Career Decidedness has the higher unique association (β = 0.3101, SE = 0.0594, t = 5.22, p < .001, 95% CI [0.1926, 0.4276], partial r ≈ 0.40), implying that more decisively decided-about students are reported clearer career pathways during OJT. Work Environment is also significantly associated (β = 0.2900, SE = 0.0736, t = 3.94, p < .001, 95% CI [0.1447, 0.4354], partial r ≈ 0.31), implying a positive workplace environment (eg feedback, supervisor support and learning opportunities) is associated with greater clarity. The model accounts for 29.8% of the variance in Career Path Clarity (R^2 = 0.298; adjusted R^2 = 0.288; F(2, 146) = 30.97, p < .001), showing moderate explanatory power for a two-predictor model. Both coefficient confidence intervals exclude zero, lending additional support to the robustness of such positive effects.

This suggests that OJT programs may need to intentionally integrate a supportive work environment with interventions that improve students' career decidedness. Previous studies have demonstrated that work environments that are supportive, such as those that provide meaning in tasks, feedback, support from supervisors, and opportunities for learning, can increase satisfaction during internships, which in turn helps in the formation and understanding of one's career identity and clarity (D'Abate et al., 2009; Maaravi et al., 2021; Feng et al., 2023). In parallel, increased career decidedness, which is likely to be facilitated by career exploration and mentoring, constrains indecision and leads to more confident planning (Yu et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022). Moreover, systematic reviews and case studies also support that highly structured, mentor-rich internships increase career crystallization and employability and reinforce the importance of co-design between universities and host organizations (Pianda et al., 2024; Gutiérrez-Pulido & Orozco-Rodríguez, 2025). More pragmatically, schools and partner firms should have explicit aims, regular feedback, supervisory guidance and reflective activities, to improve the work environment and career decidedness together, so as to increase career path clarity for their students.

Personal Impact, Career Path Clarity, and Career Decidedness

Table 13 shows the results of a multiple linear regression that tests the relationship between two OJT predictors—Personal Impact and Career Decidedness—and Career Path Clarity. The table provides for each predictor the unstandardized coefficient (β), standard error (SE), t-value, p-value, 95% confidence interval (CI) for β, and the partial correlation (partial r) to show how each predictor was uniquely associated with the outcome independent of the other. Overall, a summary of the model (R^2, adjusted R^2, F statistic, model p, and N) reflects the overall explanatory power and fit.

Table 13. Relationships among Personal Impact, Career Path Clarity, and Career Decidedness during OJT

Predictor	***β***	***SE***	***t***	***p***	***95% CI for β***	***Partial r***
Personal Impact	0.4066	0.0838	4.85	< .001	[0.2410, 0.5722]	≈ 0.37
Career Decidedness	0.2215	0.0645	3.44	0.0008	[0.0941, 0.3489]	≈ 0.27

Note. Model summary: $R^2 = .331$, Adjusted $R^2 = .322$, $F(2,146) = 36.12$, $p < .001$, $N = 149$.

Both predictors demonstrate positive and statistically significant distinct relationships with Career Path Clarity. Personal Impact exerts the greater unique effect (β = 0.4066, SE = 0.0838, t = 4.85, p < .001, 95% CI [0.2410, 0.5722], partial r ≈ 0.37), suggesting that the students' self-evaluation feelings, confidence and perceived growth during OJT are significantly associated with a clearer career trajectory. Career Decidedness also shows to be a well-known predictor (β = 0.2215, SE = 0.0645, t = 3.44, p = .0008, 95% CI [0.0941, 0.3489], partial r ≈ 0.27), suggesting that before-applications clarity and commitment for the career trajectory promote the elaboration of explicit career plans throughout OJT. The model is able to account for 33.1% of the variance for career path clarity (R^2 = .331; adjusted

R^2 = .322; F(2, 146) = 36.12, p < .001), which reflects the high predictive power in a two-predictor model. Both coefficients have confidence intervals that exclude zero, supporting these positive effects.

The findings suggest that OJT programmes need to deliberately promote personal impact (i.e., self-efficacy, reflective learning, and confidence) and to solidify students' career decision making. Indeed, research indicates that internship experiences enhancing self-efficacy and engagement lead to role clarity as well as role readiness, which correlate positively with a clear impression of future careers (Hong et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2023). Simultaneously, stronger career decision-making, which is often enhanced in career exploration and mentoring, discourages indecision and encourages confident planning (Yu et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022). Case and review studies also suggest that structured, mentor-rich internships, providing transparent performance objectives, feedback, and industry input strengthen career crystallization and the employability of students who are able to turn OJT learnings from superficial to high-impact life aspirations (Pianda et al., 2024; Gutiérrez-Pulido & Orozco-Rodríguez, 2025). Universities and host organizations should collectively co-design OJT placements with structured tasks, regular feedback, and supervisory support that leverage guided reflection and self-efficacy coaching towards maximum clarity of career path.

Internship Experience, Work Environment, Personal Impact, Company Size and Structure, and Career Decidedness With Career Path Clarity

The findings of the multiple regression in Table 14 indicate the relationships between the factors of Internship Experience, Work Environment, Personal Impact, Company Size & Structure, and Career Decidedness and Career Path Clarity. The table contains unstandardized coefficients (β), standard errors (SE), t-values, p-values, 95% confidence intervals for β, and partial correlation coefficients for each predictor. A summary of the model is also presented, showing overall fit statistics.

Table 14. Relationships Among Internship Experience, Work Environment, Personal Impact, Company Size and Structure, and Career Decidedness with Career Path Clarity

Predictor	***β***	***SE***	***t***	***p***	***95% CI for β***	***Partial r***
Internship Experience	0.101	0.092	1.09	0.276	[−0.0815, 0.2832]	0.091
Work Environment	0.028	0.099	0.28	0.777	[−0.1677, 0.2238]	0.024
Personal Impact	0.169	0.107	1.58	0.117	[−0.0430, 0.3817]	0.131
Company Size & Structure	0.292	0.092	3.18	.0018	[0.1105, 0.4733]	0.257
Career Decidedness	0.158	0.065	2.42	.0168	[0.0289, 0.2873]	0.198

Note. Model summary: $R^2 = .389$, adjusted $R^2 = .368$, $F(5,143) = 18.22$, $p < .001$, $N = 149$. Partial r values were computed from each predictor's t statistic with $df = 143$using $r = t/\sqrt{t^2 + df}$.

The regression model accounted for approximately 39% of the variation in Career Path Clarity (R^2=.389), indicating a moderate overall fit. Company Size & Structure and Career Decidedness remain statistically significant (p = .0018 and p = .0168) in the presence of all five predictors suggesting strong uniqueness in terms of the organizational context and prior clarity about their careers. The combined model shows a minor but not significant effect for Internship Experience, Work Environment and Personal Impact. This pattern does not imply that the experience of the internship, the work environment and the personal impact are less important; it rather reflects the overlapping explanatory variance between the predictors. In multiple regression, the shared variance is divided so the model can identify which predictors have the most influence in explaining the outcome. Interestingly, Company Size and Structure and Career Decidedness are the strongest predictors of Career Path Clarity, suggesting that these variables may explain or subsume the effects of other internship-related factors when considered together. This pattern could be seen as a dominance effect, with pre-existing career clarity and organizational con-

text having a more significant role, possibly influencing or regulating how internship experiences convert into more obvious career pathways.

The results suggest that although all factors have an impact on career development, Company Size and Structure and Career Decidedness are the most salient and influential predictors of Career Path Clarity, thus reinforcing their central role in the development of students' career outcomes. When we add Company Size & Structure and Career Decidedness we find that this information would best be used to improve career clarity, holding all else equal. This suggests that organizational context and student prior clarity of career pathways are important determinants of outcomes. Internship Experience , Work Environment , and Personal Impact are each important but their contributions overlap with others and become less pronounced when added together . This "dilution" occurs because multiple regression isolates each variable's contribution to a construct, removing shared variance of correlated predictors (Kapareliotis et al., 2019; Pianda et al., 2024). Schools and employers should concentrate on matching students with well-structured organizations and provide career counselling before and during internships for greater clarity and job opportunities (Yang et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2021). From the overall regression model results, Hypothesis 06 is rejected. The combined model of independent and additional predictor variables significantly predicts Career Path Clarity ($F(5,143) = 18.22$, $p < .001$).

Summary of Findings

During their internships, students had very positive in-depth experiences according to the study. A majority of respondents found the work they were asked to do to be relevant and meaningful to their academic background, and that their roles and responsibilities were clearly defined. They said they also received constructive and helpful feedback from their supervisors that helped facilitate ongoing learning. In addition, the students stated that by the internship experience they had the opportunity to practically use the theories learnt in a classroom to real cases of work, increasing their confidence, skill set, and overall preparedness for going to work.

It was well done, the culture felt great and students felt welcome, in a supportive organisational culture, and they could develop their professional potential. These were conducive to an environment where learning and growth was encouraged. Impact on individual level was again perceived positively, in motivation and confidence that a student took risks to succeed, and that competencies were the force behind their success. Furthermore, they felt their own values, they say, were consistent with those of the company which helped crystallize their career aspirations for themselves. And there are also big reasons why there is the size company's size structure and how small or large the company, in addition to the company itself, had a hand in the internship experience. Larger or more structured organizations presented a more complex and comprehensive internship than others due to more opportunities to learn other learning factors students reported, they commented, with these shaping their responsibilities and learning opportunities and possibilities for career advancement.

How college-level career decisions prior to the internship experienced by students significantly influenced their experiences. And, although many students were aware of their anticipated career paths and had some clarity of what they wanted to do before coming to the internship, many felt it reinforced their plans already and made all of the confusion somewhat understood. In general, internships are reported to heighten career clarity considerably according to the present study's findings, as this practice increases awareness of alternatives for students in career paths, better provides them with an opportunity of their interest, abilities, and match to their ideal career path to measure their interest and aptitude.

The statistical analysis showed that internship experience, work environment, and personal impact were significantly and positively associated with career decision. Personal impact was the strongest of these relationships among them all. Results of the regression analysis also confirmed that company size and structure, along with career decidedness, were significant predictors of clearer career paths.

Only Company Size & Structure and Career Decidedness performed significantly on this measure when all the factors were explored jointly in a multiple regression model. This indicates that both factors significantly impact career clarity, yet that the effects of internship experience, work environment, and personal impact are less pronounced due to the fact that these variables tend to overlap and add value to previous job roles.

Implications of the Study

Results indicate that internships are key supportive resources to support the career decision of students. Internship programs designed well have clear responsibilities, defined roles, and feedback loops, so that the knowledge gained will make them confident that they are able to use the academic knowledge with their real-life situation. So students feel better set up for future jobs and direction in terms of careers. This is helped along by a positive work environment. Interns, by feeling included and being a part of the team more than anything, are motivated to learn and improve. This brings to the fore the role of cooperation between educational establishments and organisations in providing an encouraging working culture and conducive environment for learning/development in organisations. Personal development was also a primary developmental outcome of the internship program. The development of such goals, which are stronger and more focused, is also seen as being consistent with employee motivation; motivation is important and students are more likely to develop strong career plans when they are motivated, confident and have strong compatibility with the organization's values. Internships, then, would have to feature opportunities for them to be initiative-led, self-assured and values influenced. The size and organizational structure of host companies also impact learning. Experience, tasks and mentoring support are better, and greater exposure is at play in larger or well-structured organizations. As such, schools should take into account the organization they are entering into a partnership with, especially those that provide meaningful contributions to the learning and guidance involved with the company.

The decisions regarding a career have an impact on how things go before the internship. Students who already have some clarity about their careers benefit more, but internships also let undecided students alleviate uncertainty. Such clarity should be reinforced through reflection and career counselling in programs. Regression analysis reveals the strongest differences in the differential impact of two factors on career clarity were seen in relation to each other that when all those factors are considered together, Company Size & Structure and Career Decidedness have the significant impact individually compared to other factors becoming less well separated as their effects overlap. This implies that organizational context and prior career clarity must be front and center in internship design. And finally, the schools and employers must work together. Internships must be an amalgamation of defined tasks, feedback, mentorship and contemplation. This design helps students develop not just their basic technical skills but also confidence and clearer plans for their careers.

Conclusion

This investigation determined that students' career decisions are heavily influenced by their internships. Positive OJT experiences, including clear assignments, defined roles, expectations, and helpful feedback, help students apply classroom knowledge and build their confidence on the job. Also, a supportive work environment and other factors like intrinsic motivation and value alignment are key to career choice, as well as personal factors that influence what we do. According to the research, the personal impact was stronger in predicting career decision than company size and company structure, which showed a significant and independent contribution to career clarity alongside career decidedness. After all, when the variables were included in a regression analysis only Company Size & Structure and Career Decidedness are statistically significant, which implies that these respective variables collectively have the most impact on career clarity compared to the other variables which may overlap with one another. These results show that good internships, conducive working environment and cooperation between the

schools and employers are all vital in improving the employability of students, and building the way forward for them to choose career direction.

However, research is not without its limitations. A sufficient number of participants (statistically speaking, not optimal sample size) was found to be insufficient because it was difficult to recruit new graduates. Finally, the study was limited to one university setting which can be a big problem given its restrictions. In addition, self-reported data is subject to bias by looking at findings as well as cross sectional data and cause and effect cannot be inferred. To overcome this limitation, future research should adopt a longitudinal design, following students before, during and after their internship experiences. Such an approach would allow researchers to better capture changes in career clarity over time and provide stronger evidence of causal relationships between internship-related factors and career development outcomes.

Moreover, longitudinal studies that follow career clarity over time and across other institutions and sectors should be explored in future work. It might also explore virtual or hybrid internships, the quality of mentoring and what kinds of cultural factors influence the decision on a career overall. Insight into interviewees' perceptions of internships and informal mixing would bring a few additional qualitative methods to the forefront to explore how we can create more effective internships for learning and professional development.

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