

ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS REGARDING INTERNSHIPS

Mihaela PĂCEȘILĂ

Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania
mihaela.pacesila@man.ase.ro

Ruxandra-Irina POPESCU

Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania
irina.popescu@man.ase.ro

Abstract

In recent years, Romanian higher education institutions have focused on providing students the opportunity to do internships in the field studied, while obtaining the necessary credits for graduation. This paper analyses the expectations of students enrolled in the bachelor program of Human Resources within Bucharest University of Economic Studies before doing a curricular internship. The study is based on a group of 93 second year undergraduate students and refers to the academic year 2021-2022. The findings highlights the skills to be acquired by students during the internship as well as their expectations regarding the internship and leads to the conclusion that they are aware of how important is this experience in their training.

Keywords: *students' expectations, skills acquired through internships, professional training*

1. INTRODUCTION

Internships are an essential step in the students' professional training (Klooster et al., 2008). They allow students to become familiar with the environment where they will later pursue their profession. Thus, they will be better prepared emotionally and professionally while having the ability to apply the theoretical knowledge acquired during the years of study (Tang, 2012).

Dealing with workplace problems is a very complex endeavor leading to satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Integration into the labor market requires a certain level of knowledge as well as theoretical and practical training in order to be able to perform in a way that is acceptable to the employers (Costache et al, 2015; Muja et al., 2019). In this context, the internships allow the student to get to know better a certain field of activity, to prevent possible difficulties in adapting to the future job, to fix the theoretical and practical knowledge, to strengthen its skills and to acquire new ones necessary to cope successfully with the difficulties of the future profession (Schambach and Dirks, 2002; Tocar and Cudmore, 2015).

The most important element of the internship is not necessarily to know everything related to a particular job, but to gain more knowledge about organization culture, career opportunities, possibilities to improve the contribution and performance (Sahin, 2008; Tovey, 2009).

Moreover, the internship allows students to perform tasks with a degree of progressive difficulty, while they are carefully monitored. Monitoring reduces the students' fears about getting involved in something new, something from reality while providing them the safe space they need to try as well as the opportunity to say what they think, to express their opinion, to get answers and be helped to correct the mistakes (Petrișor-Buzilă et al., 2020).

In fact, some bachelor graduates, theoretically well-prepared and having a very good school situation, suffer a shock at employment when becoming aware they are not able to develop professional relationships, to use all the knowledge acquired during the years of study or do not know what approach to adopt when dealing with the beneficiaries or clients of the services provided (Carnevale and Desrochers, 2003; Crudu, 2019).

In this context, the internship becomes an opportunity of carrying out activities within a professional team,

where the students will have to integrate, adapt quickly and deal with the difficulties the team tries to solve. Furthermore, the students will have to learn to work with the team, to acquire knowledge from team members and even to respect the hierarchies (Anjum, 2020). Thus, at some point, the students' "colleagues" will come to share their experience or even explain in detail certain aspects of their professional life while helping them to become more quickly visible and appreciated by others or to make their work easier later (Draper and Louw, 2012).

In addition to the above, according to Petrișor-Buzilă et al. (2020), the internship could be a unique opportunity for students to determine whether or not that field of activity suits them, whether it meets their wishes and aspirations. Consequently, they can reorient themselves in time while identifying other areas of interest or even completing their level of training in order to have access to sectors of activity appropriate to their personal and professional profile (Gelu, 2018).

Tracking what others are doing, how they work and interact with others allow students to understand and even learn how to communicate effectively with other people, clients, suppliers, bosses, colleagues. Moreover, they will get to know how to use the concepts acquired in the field of activity, how to manage their mistakes and correct them, how to get out of tense and even conflicting situations (Simons et al., 2012).

The students will also know how to argue their opinions (Profiroiu and Păceșilă, 2017) as well as how to respect everything that is closely related to the discipline of work: receiving tasks, fulfilling them on time, respecting the work schedule and even punctuality, providing interest in organizing and managing time, showing respect for professional ethics and deontology, ensuring confidentiality of information they access, complying with the organization's internal regulations, knowing and complying with instructions on occupational safety and health as well as fire prevention (Petrișor-Buzilă et al., 2020).

Internships lead to creating a win-win-win relationship between students, internship organization and university. While their impact on students' personal and professional development is huge, it is quite difficult to quantify it. Among the internship benefits for students we can mention:

I. Working in an interesting field of activity and understanding how daily activities are carried out

In general, the internships are quite well structured, and the internship organizations have clearly set the students' responsibilities and what is expected of them. Moreover, the students could experience a work environment, be integrated into a team, become even more aware of the future perspectives (Tynjälä, 2008). Thus, students are able to understand what is the contribution of each department to the organization's objectives, the purpose of its establishment, the strategies adopted to achieve the objectives as well as other information about the size of the organization, its market position, etc. Hence the internship becomes the first stage of professional training, providing students the opportunity to learn procedures, routines, activities, ways of working that are closely related to their future profession (Gault et al., 2010).

II. Meeting new people as well as expanding the professional network

Nowadays it is possible to access many social networks. However, knowing as many people as possible, especially in the field of activity, is always an advantage. In this context, the internship allows students to improve their network of contacts, both for an easier integration into the labor market (Dickey, 1979) and for identifying an organization that may be useful in the future in developing the graduation thesis.

III. Developing realistic expectations regarding employment opportunities in the field of activity

In general, employment is conditioned by various aspects, such as individual's performance, ability to assimilate new knowledge quickly, spirit of initiative, creative spirit and critical thinking necessary to quickly identify solutions to the organization's problems (Anjum, 2020).

IV. Increasing the interest in a particular career

V. Increasing the students' degree of independence and responsibility

While the students are appreciated by the internship organization for their work, they will become more confident they could get to the desired job, thus gaining financial independence.

VI. Paying a greater attention on what needs to be deepened over the years of study

Internships are an opportunity not only to apply theoretical knowledge in practice, but also to improve this knowledge. Internships have a great contribution to the knowledge completion, while providing advice and guidance to students on activities that suit them. Moreover, a very well-organized internship allows students to complete their knowledge and even to combine university studies with active work (Farrell, 1992; Hymon-Parker), 1998. Furthermore, the internship could be seen as a defining learning process for professionals wanting to be able to face the challenges encountered during their career.

As regards the organization internship, the benefits consist in:

VII. Identifying students who fit the positions for which the organization needs staff and even creating a database with people who have stood out through their skills and knowledge during the internship

Every organization interested in performance pays great attention to the selection of its staff while providing them the necessary training and development. Moreover, special attention is also paid to staff retention and promotion as well as to the reward procedures. Often, identifying individuals suitable for a particular position is quite cumbersome and time consuming (Hurst and Good, 2010). In this regard, internships are a great opportunity to attract talented young people who can later become the company's employees.

VIII. Understanding the students level of knowledge and skills in a particular field of activity

In general, in Romania there is a permanent criticism from employers regarding knowledge and skills of higher education graduates. Moreover, the latter sometimes have a wrong perception of what is happening in the workplace. In fact, the transfer of knowledge from practice to higher education system is often deficient, leading to a gap between the graduates' skills and knowledge and the needs of employers (Clemence and Handler, 2001; Dindire et al., 2011). Internships can thus help to improve the interaction between the two sectors, that is the university and the labor market.

IX. Involving students in the current activities of the organization

Internships allow organizations to put students in touch with the active world, thereby contributing to completing their professional and personal training and thus giving them the opportunity to do internships in a real production environment.

As far as higher education institutions are concerned, nowadays they should reinvent themselves to meet new challenges and satisfy the needs of different stakeholders: students, parents, employees, companies, society (Vazquez, 2015; Resch, 2017). In this regard, internships development allows universities to gain several advantages:

i. Increasing the employment rate of bachelor graduates in their field of study

Supporting young graduates to integrate into the labor market is one of the major concerns of the Romanian universities. Taking into account the dynamics of the labor market, the employment prospects of young graduates are intensively examined by universities (Mineia, 2013). In this regard, internships are one of the most complex ways of non-formal learning, of taking on responsibilities as well as of making contact with the employers.

ii. Providing students with practical training complementary to that provided by the university without additional costs

The university role is to provide well-prepared young people to the labor market while ensuring not only quality multidisciplinary training, but also the transfer of knowledge at all levels: students, graduates, representatives of business, of politics as well as of cultural environment (Geryk, 2016). In this context, internships are the best way to complement traditional mechanisms with practical and professional initiatives to increase employment capacity.

iii. Increasing the number of university students taking into account the benefits they receive after doing internships

In today's society, the university should focus on rethinking its role (Burcea and Marinescu, 2011) and also become aware of how important it is to adapt to the society demands in the context of the new challenges posed by internationalization and the fierce global competition.

- iv. Initiating collaborations with many employers in various fields of activity

Universities have a key role to play in creating individuals able to adapt to economic conditions and showing a strong desire for permanent (self) training and professional reform in the event of failures. In these circumstances, higher education institutions should constantly correlate the educational offer with the labor market needs (Abdoul et al., 2007) and communicate permanently with employers, otherwise their role is limited to only a formal one (Korka, 2009). Thus, internships could become a useful tool in helping Romanian universities to stay in touch with employers while building sustainable partnerships with them and having more accurate information about their requirements and expectations.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The students' expectations regarding internships as well as the importance of such programs for their professional development have been well addressed in the literature. According to Cannon and Arnold (1998), both employers and academics consider it is essential to understand students' expectations regarding internships carried out during the academic years. The internships provide crucial work experience to students, on one hand, and help companies to identify young people well-prepared and suitable for a specific field of activity who can later become employees, on the other hand. Moreover, internships contribute to increasing collaboration between higher education institutions and external environment (Ruhanen et al., 2013), while allowing students to apply theoretical knowledge in practice (Lam and Ching, 2007; Chang and Chu, 2009).

Other authors (Hite and Bellizzi, 1986), investigating students' expectations regarding internships in marketing, concluded that students consider internships a valuable learning experience helping them to integrate more easily into the job market. In addition, their research pointed out that internships allow students to gain practical knowledge and they are more useful than teaching. In the same vein, other researches focused on practical experience gained through internships as well as skills and knowledge that cannot be acquired by students through teaching (Clark, 2003; Boger and Lim, 2005; Alpert et al., 2009). However, according to Ronnestad and Skovholts (1993), the practical knowledge acquired by students depends on their level of knowledge and the ability to associate the information they have with the existing problems in the work environment.

An interesting research belongs to Raskin (1994) highlighting there is a considerable difference between the theoretical knowledge gained by students through learning and the requirements of the labor market. Furthermore, he stated that students and academia are not fully aware of the internships' benefits. His study also pointed out that students only get in touch with the internship organization and passively observe its activity without applying theoretical knowledge in practice. In fact, universities do not provide adequate support to students to take full advantage of internship opportunities. This idea is also supported by Harrison and Kennedy (1996), in whose opinion both universities and academic advisors should be involved in carrying out the internship.

Furthermore, in a study conducted by Garrett and Bauer (1995) addressing students' preferences and the experience gained by participating in internships, it was found that students show a desire to take part in paid internships and to obtain academic credits.

Other researches investigating the role and importance of internships for student development highlights either the benefits provided by these programs to students due to the combination of theoretical and practical knowledge (Walo, 20021; Busby, 2003; Stitts, 2006) or the advantages and disadvantages of the parties involved, namely students and companies (Strock, 1991; Oldman and Hamadah, 1994).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Primary and secondary data have been used for developing this article while data have been collected through the questionnaire and written documentation. As regards the collection of primary data, a questionnaire-based

survey was used. This method was preferred due to its main characteristics: short time and ease of collecting answers, reduced resources needed for conducting researches, large amount of information that could be accessed in a short time.

As regards the secondary data, scientific papers, books, online publications and websites about internships have been used.

TABLE 1 – THE STRUCTURE OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Item	Question
<i>Socio-demographic factors</i>	
1. Age	Possible values: 19-22; 23-26; >26
2. Gender	Possible values: Male/Female
3. Area of origin	Possible values: Urban; Rural
<i>Participation in previous internships</i>	
4. Participation in other internships	Possible values: Yes; No
5. Organizations where the internships were carried out	Possible values: Public authorities/institutions; Private companies; Nongovernmental organizations (associations, foundations, federations)
<i>Skills to be acquired during the internship</i>	
6. Completion of professional tasks	Possible values: To a very large extent; To a large extent; To some extent; To a small extent; Don't know/no opinion
7. Communication skills (knowledge, understanding and use of specialized terms)	Possible values: To a very large extent; To a large extent; To some extent; To a small extent; Don't know/no opinion
8. Timely delivery of required documents	Possible values: To a very large extent; To a large extent; To some extent; To a small extent; Don't know/no opinion
9. Event planning and organizing	Possible values: To a very large extent; To a large extent; To some extent; To a small extent; Don't know/no opinion
10. Team work	Possible values: To a very large extent; To a large extent; To some extent; To a small extent; Don't know/no opinion
11. Identifying and resolving the companies deficiencies	Possible values: To a very large extent; To a large extent; To some extent; To a small extent; Don't know/no opinion
12. Time management skills	Possible values: To a very large extent; To a large extent; To some extent; To a small extent; Don't know/no opinion
<i>Internship's expectations of students enrolled in the bachelor programme of Human Resources</i>	
13. Possibility of applying theoretical knowledge in practice	Possible values: To a very large extent; To a large extent; Neutral; To some extent; To a small extent
14. Improving knowledge in the field of study	Possible values: To a very large extent; To a large extent; Neutral; To some extent; To a small extent
15. Increasing employment opportunities	Possible values: To a very large extent; To a large extent; Neutral; To some extent; To a small extent
16. Improving your resume	Possible values: To a very large extent; To a large extent; Neutral; To some extent; To a small extent
17. Interaction with employees in the field	Possible values: To a very large extent; To a large extent; Neutral; To some extent; To a small extent
18. Interaction with potential future employers	Possible values: To a very large extent; To a large extent; Neutral; To some extent; To a small extent
19. Identifying a field of activity appropriate to the personal and professional profile	Possible values: To a very large extent; To a large extent; Neutral; To some extent; To a small extent
20. Creating a better image of the professional future	Possible values: To a very large extent; To a large extent; Neutral; To some extent; To a small extent
21. Discovering skills you weren't aware of	Possible values: To a very large extent; To a large extent; Neutral; To some extent; To a small extent
22. Knowing how employees and company leaders act and think	Possible values: To a very large extent; To a large extent; Neutral; To some extent; To a small extent
23. Knowing how to solve problems within the company	Possible values: To a very large extent; To a large extent; Neutral; To some extent; To a small extent

The research was conducted in December 2021, prior to the second semester of the academic year 2021-2022 when the internship is carried out. The sample used for this study consisted of students enrolled in the Human

Resources bachelor program, Faculty of Administration and Public Management within Bucharest University of Economic Studies. To complete the questionnaire, the respondents accessed a link to survey questions available on the platform isondaje.ro. The questionnaire was distributed only in electronic format, without possibility of completing it on paper. The distribution of the link and the completion of the questionnaire was carried out during the whole month of December 2021. In this regard, various digital platforms such as Email, WhatsApp and Zoom.us have been used. 93 responses have been obtained, meaning a very high response rate (92.07%), taking into account that 93 of the 101 second-year students in the Human Resources bachelor program responded to the request to complete the questionnaire.

The questionnaire contains a preamble setting out the purpose of using it. Only closed-ended questions were used while students were able to choose between several answer options. The last two questions were built on a Likert scale with five points. The first part includes questions about socio-demographic data (age, gender, area of origin). The second part contains two questions regarding the previous participation of students in other internships as well as the organizations where they previously completed the internship. Both the third and the fourth part of the questionnaire contain one question each: identifying those skills that second year undergraduate students in the Human Resources program show a desire to acquire or develop during the internship; knowing their expectations regarding the internship.

4. RESULTS

4.1. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The analysis of the respondents' profile (Table 2) highlights that most of the participants in this research are between 19-22 years old (90.3%). Therefore, nowadays, a high level of education is associated with the possibility of having access to a better paid job, leading young people to enroll in universities. The relatively young age of most respondents leads us to think that well-prepared young people graduating high school end up attending the university courses for several years to complete their studies. Thus, today's world becomes more and more aware that young people with a higher level of education are better able to cope with the competition in the labor market (Triventi, 2013).

As regards the respondents' gender (Table 2), it is found that over 84% of them are female, while the remaining 15.1% are male. Moreover, this distribution is in full accordance with the general profile of the students in the Human Resources bachelor program within the Faculty of Administration and Public Management. In fact, according to studies (Pricopie et al., 2011), most girls show a desire to attend a faculty in the humanities and socio-political field. Compared to them, boys prefer especially engineering and military sciences. This situation is also valid for the aforementioned study program providing graduates in sociology.

The answers to the question regarding the respondents' area of origin (permanent residence - see table below) show that most of them come from urban areas (68.82%) and less than a third are from rural areas (31.18%). This very large difference between urban and rural area comes from the mechanisms of financial support for university students (number of students' budgeted positions, value of social scholarships, accommodation in dormitories, transport facilities, etc.) which are designed to be more favorable to children from higher-income families (Pricopie et al., 2011). In fact, it is well known that in Romania the families living and working in cities have higher incomes than those in rural areas (Inglot et al., 2012), especially taking into account the higher degree of economic development of these localities (Păceșilă, 2004).

TABLE 2 - DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Item	Possible values	Frequency	Percentage
Age	19-22	84	90.32%
	23-26	4	4.3%
	>26	5	5.38%
Gender	Female	79	84.95%
	Male	14	15.05%
Area of origin	Urban	64	68.82%
	Rural	29	31.18%

4.2. PARTICIPATION IN PREVIOUS INTERNSHIPS

The second part of the questionnaire focuses on the internships previously completed by students. In addition, students were asked to mention the type of internship organization.

TABLE 3 – PARTICIPATION IN PREVIOUS INTERNSHIPS

Item	Possible values	Frequency	Percentage
Participation in other internships	Yes	15	16.13%
	No	78	83.87%
Organizations where the internships were conducted	Public authorities/institutions	2	13.33%
	Private companies	7	46.67%
	Nongovernmental organizations (associations, foundations, federations)	6	40%

Question no. 2 is a closed dichotomous question (yes/no). Out of 93 respondents (Table 2), only 16.13% participated in internships (which were not previously carried out by means of the Faculty of Administration and Public Management). Thus, from a future career perspective, most students are somewhat passive and more often not aware of how important it is to involve in various activities to get in touch with the active world and to complete their professional and even personal training.

As regards question no. 3 (Table 2), the students were asked to indicate the type of the organization where they did the internship prior to the academic year 2021-2022. Only 15 of the 93 respondents answered this question. Private companies ranked first (46.67%), followed closely by nongovernmental organizations (40%) while public authorities/institutions (13.33%) ranked last.

Taking into account the evolution of the labor market in Romania, its major challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the expected high unemployment rate (GiGroup, 2020), it is recommended that young people focus on internships in various sectors to benefit from multidisciplinary training. This could facilitate their quick access to a with a stable and decent income from wage employment over the long term. Moreover, despite the negative aspects mentioned above, the labor market is still very dynamic amid technological and economic developments while the skills provided by education and training systems are sometimes insufficient (Păceșilă și Colesca, 2019). Thus, internships become an important part of student training, whether or not they are carried out by means of the university.

4.3. SKILLS TO BE ACQUIRED BY STUDENTS DURING THE INTERNSHIPS

The third part of the questionnaire contains one closed-ended question (see Table 4) to measure several aspects according to a set of predetermined criteria. The options for the answers indicates different degrees of intensity, from "to a very large extent" to "to a small extent". The question addresses the skills that students want to develop during the internship. All 7 items within this question recorded positive answers from over 80% of the respondents.

Although their number is not significant, there are also respondents without interest in developing the skills mentioned above, ticking the option "to a very small extent", as follows: completion of professional tasks (2.2%), communication skills (2.2%), timely delivery of required documents (3.2%), event planning and organizing (1.1%), teamwork (2.2%), identifying and resolving the companies' deficiencies (4.3%), time management skills (4.3%).

According to the averages calculated for the answers provided by students, the skills they are interested in were arranged as follows: communication skills (4.65), timely delivery of required documents (4.55), completion of professional tasks (4.54). The skills with the lowest scores were: teamwork (4.45) and time management skills (4.38), followed closely by event planning and organizing (4.37) as well as identifying and resolving the companies' deficiencies (4.22).

Acquiring or developing communication skills ranks first the in respondents' preferences, showing they are aware that most employers are interested in candidates knowing how to open communication channels. Moreover, the ability to communicate leads to creating a harmonious and constructive work environment, while

providing the possibility to build an efficient work team (Grover, 2005). The open and direct communication could lead to more positive results by improving the way the team works (Paksoy et al., 2017).

TABLE 4 – SKILLS TO BE ACQUIRED DURING THE INTERNSHIP

Item	Possible values	Frequency	Percentage
Completion of professional tasks	To a very large extent	59	63.4%
	To a large extent	30	32.3%
	To some extent	2	2.2%
	To a small extent	0	0
	Don't know/no opinion	2	2.2%
Communication skills (knowledge, understanding and use of specialized terms)	To a very large extent	69	74.2%
	To a large extent	20	21.5%
	To some extent	2	2.2%
	To a small extent	0	0
	Don't know/no opinion	2	2.2%
Timely delivery of required documents	To a very large extent	65	69.9%
	To a large extent	21	22.6%
	To some extent	4	4.3%
	To a small extent	0	0
	Don't know/no opinion	3	3.2%
Event planning and organizing	To a very large extent	50	53.8%
	To a large extent	31	33.3%
	To some extent	10	10.8%
	To a small extent	1	1.1%
	Don't know/no opinion	1	1.1%
Team work	To a very large extent	55	59.1%
	To a large extent	29	31.2%
	To some extent	7	7.5%
	To a small extent	0	0
	Don't know/no opinion	2	2.2%
Identifying and resolving the companies' deficiencies	To a very large extent	48	51.6%
	To a large extent	28	30.1%
	To some extent	11	11.8%
	To a small extent	2	2.2%
	Don't know/no opinion	4	4.3%
Time management skills	To a very large extent	55	59.1%
	To a large extent	28	30.1%
	To some extent	5	5.4%
	To a small extent	1	1.1%
	Don't know/no opinion	4	4.3%

As for the skills obtaining the lowest scores, they should not be seen as not of interest to students, especially since their scores are not far enough from the first ranked skills. In fact, teamwork is one of the key elements in maintaining a position and a job in an organization (Feleki et al., 2021). A well-cohesive team could achieve much better results compared to individual work. Furthermore, teamwork leads to a more pleasant atmosphere at work, while encouraging and stimulating the team's potential and leading to higher efficiency in performing tasks (Yuan-Duen and Huan-Ming, 2008; Farh et al., 2012).

The respondents are also interested in acquiring time management skills because time management contributes to working efficiently, saving the organization's money and increasing its revenue. In fact, employees who manage their time well are more productive and more likely to meet deadlines. They know how to set priorities and focus on the most important tasks, setting aside those considered non-essential (Ahmad et al., 2012).

There were also many respondents interested in acquiring the ability to identify and resolve the companies' deficiencies. In fact, efficient employees with problem-solving thinking are able to think objectively and productively, especially when problems arise. Moreover, they do not focus on the negative results and on identifying the culprits, but show calmness and impartiality, helping the team to find solutions. Only in this way the obstacles can be discovered and removed in order to improve the work process (Puccio et al., 2005).

4.4. EXPECTATIONS MENTIONED BY STUDENTS REGARDING INTERNSHIPS

The last question is dedicated to the expectations of students enrolled in the bachelor program of Human Resources about the internship within the second semester of the academic year 2021-2022. Similar to the above-mentioned question, this question also received positive answers to all 11 items.

TABLE 5 – INTERNSHIP'S EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN THE BACHELOR PROGRAMME OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Item	Possible values	Frequency	Percentage
Possibility of applying theoretical knowledge in practice	To a very large extent	44	47.3%
	To a large extent	35	37.6%
	Neutral	12	12.9%
	To some extent	1	1.1%
	To a small extent	1	1.1%
Improving knowledge in the field of study	To a very large extent	59	63.4%
	To a large extent	28	30.1%
	Neutral	4	4.3%
	To some extent	1	1.1%
	To a small extent	1	1.1%
Increasing employment opportunities	To a very large extent	65	69.9%
	To a large extent	20	21.5%
	Neutral	7	7.5%
	To some extent	0	0
	To a small extent	1	1.1%
Improving your resume	To a very large extent	61	65.6%
	To a large extent	28	30.1%
	Neutral	3	3.2%
	To some extent	0	0
	To a small extent	1	1.1%
Interaction with employees in the field	To a very large extent	47	50.5%
	To a large extent	39	41.9%
	Neutral	5	5.4%
	To some extent	1	1.1%
	To a small extent	1	1.1%
Interaction with potential future employers	To a very large extent	51	54.8%
	To a large extent	34	36.6%
	Neutral	5	5.4%
	To some extent	1	1.1%
	To a small extent	2	2.2%
Identifying a field of activity appropriate to the personal and professional profile	To a very large extent	56	60.2%
	To a large extent	30	32.3%
	Neutral	3	3.2%
	To some extent	1	1.1%
	To a small extent	3	3.2%
Creating a better image of the professional future	To a very large extent	54	58.1%
	To a large extent	34	36.6%
	Neutral	1	1.1%
	To some extent	1	1.1%
	To a small extent	3	3.2%
Discovering skills you weren't aware of	To a very large extent	55	59.1%
	To a large extent	30	32.3%
	Neutral	6	6.5%
	To some extent	0	0
	To a small extent	2	2.2%
Knowing how employees and company leaders act and think	To a very large extent	55	59.1%
	To a large extent	31	33.3%
	Neutral	2	2.2%
	To some extent	3	3.2%
	To a small extent	2	2.2%
Knowing how to solve problems within the company	To a very large extent	53	57%
	To a large extent	33	35.5%
	Neutral	5	5.4%
	To some extent	1	1.1%
	To a small extent	1	1.1%

According to the calculated averages, the students' expectations were arranged as follows:

- i. Increasing employment opportunities and improving your resume ranked first (4.59);
- ii. Improving knowledge in the field of study ranked second (4.53);
- iii. Discovering skills you weren't aware of and knowing how to solve problems within the company ranked third (4.46);
- iv. Identifying a field of activity appropriate to the personal and professional profile and creating a better image of the professional future ranked fourth (4.45), very close to the third position;
- v. Knowing how employees and company leaders act and think ranked fifth (4.44), very close to the previous positions;
- vi. Interaction with potential future employers (4.40), interaction with employees in the field (4.39) and possibility of applying theoretical knowledge in practice (4.29) ranked last, with a very close average.

The internship provides students the opportunity to have a various academic development, on several levels, as well as to improve their network of contacts through dialogue with employees and employers. Moreover, students can explore a job or field of activity while such an experience could allow them to choose a career based on their practical skills, knowledge and personal profile. Furthermore, students are aware that internships can be a valuable learning experience, which also explains the positive answers received as regards their internship expectations.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

This paper attempted to contribute to better understanding the expectations of students enrolled in the bachelor program of Human Resources regarding the internship carried out in the second semester of the academic year 2021-2022. The study paid attentions to various aspects, such as students' participation in previous internships, type of internship organization, skills to be acquired during the internship and expectations regarding the internship.

The analysis of the answers obtained from the research pointed out the need to involve students in activities allowing them to develop or acquire communication skills, timely delivery of documents and professional tasks' completion. The students' interest in these aspects shows they are not sufficiently developed through the university curriculum.

Moreover, taking into account the current problematic context of the labor market, it is recommended that internship tutors also focus on activities and tasks contributing to increasing students' employability, namely resume improvement, interaction with employees and employers, involvement in a field of activity suitable to the professional profile. Last but not least, activities closely related to personal development (discovering skills that the students were unaware of, improving knowledge in the field, etc.) are important in preparing students to meet the challenges of the labor market and to help them to build a career.

The students' expectations could be transformed into successful elements of the internship if there is will and openness from all parties involved. Moreover, developing a relationship between the student and the tutor of the internship organization can lead to continuing the collaboration after the end of the internship.

As regards research limitations, the paper investigates only the expectations of students enrolled in the second year of the Human Resources bachelor programme and not of all students within the Faculty of Administration and Public Management or even of all university's students. That is why the results should be viewed with caution.

This study could be a starting point for further researches conducted to investigate the long-term effects of the internship program on the professional development of all bachelor students in the Faculty of Administration and Public Management within Bucharest University of Economic Studies.

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