

Clinical Internship: A Constructive or Commercialized Approach

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ABSTRACT

Internships are important components of a well-rounded study of psychology. In an internship, you can see psychological theories and concepts come to life! An internship is a planned, structured, and closely supervised educational experience involving “real world” work that is closely related to a student’s anticipated career path. The purposes of the Psychology internship include providing students with opportunities to enhance and supplement the college classroom learning experience by “learning through doing;” develop and apply new knowledge about human behavior as well as new social and interpersonal skills; explore and reflect on personal strengths and weaknesses related to interpersonal behavior in work settings; explore and reflect on future career and employment options; and develop a network of contacts and references, which will lay a foundation for future employment and/or education and training. But unfortunately in today’s world where most of the population and various institutions are heading towards commercialization, the quality of services being provided are compromised. The objective of the survey is to find how sturdy and effectual is the internship structure, delivery of services and Guidance being provided by various hospitals, institutions, and other clinical set-ups to the budding clinical psychologists. The survey was conducted in Delhi and NCR where significant results were found as discussed in the paper.

Keywords: *Internship, Commercialization, Clinical Psychology, Training.*

“Any official or formal program to provide practical experience for beginners in an occupation or profession.”

The modern concept of internships essentially springs from the medieval apprenticeship, in which skilled laborers (often craftsmen) would teach a young person their trade and, in exchange, that person would agree to work for the teacher for a certain length of time.

The main difference between an apprenticeship and an internship is that internships are more exploratory. You're not bound to work for your employer after the internship is over (although many interns do receive job offers). If you start early enough to do a few internships throughout

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college, you can use the first ones to get a feel for what career you'd like to pursue and the later ones to build your experience.

Internships are important components of a well-rounded study of psychology. In an internship, you can see psychological theories and concepts come to life! In addition to the real-world application of psychology, an internship is an exciting opportunity for you to explore career possibilities, gain hands-on experience, and build your network by meeting people who are working in the specific field matching your career goals. Internships allow you to “try out” a career before deciding if it is the right path for you.

Internships also enhance your marketability in the professional world. For students entering today's competitive job market directly after earning their undergraduate degree, internships are practically a must. They're a key factor in setting you apart as a job candidate. As an intern working with a professional in your field of interest, you'll be able to apply your in-depth classroom knowledge to real-world applications. All employers' value hands-on experience coupled with a solid academic foundation!

Another reason that internships are a good idea: it could lead you to a full-time job after graduation! Nearly 40% of interns go on to full-time employment with the company they intern with. Also, by building your network and experience in the field, you will discover even more job opportunities outside of your internship site.

Though employment isn't guaranteed at the end of an internship, many employers use internships as a way to train and evaluate future employees. In fact, a 2009 NACE survey of U.S. employers with interns found that 67% of those interns were given job offers after their terms were complete.

The primary goal of the program is to provide high quality training that will prepare psychology students for the practice of professional psychology. Upon completion of the program, interns are expected to be able to function as competent, ethical, entry-level psychologists able to provide a variety of psychological services in a variety of clinical settings.

Internships provide comprehensive clinical training with severe psychopathology in child, adolescent and adult psychiatric populations. It is designed to prepare generalists who are capable of providing mental health services to diverse populations. The internship provides intensive experiential training in core areas of psychology practice including diagnosis and assessment, therapeutic intervention, psychological testing, crisis intervention, consultation and scholarly inquiry. Interns also gain direct experience with the hospital practice of psychology and are exposed to matters of professional practice. Interns who complete the program will be capable of functioning autonomously and responsibly in a variety of professional psychology roles.

The internship training experience is primarily experiential and developmentally structured in terms of sequence, intensity, duration and frequency so that interns assume increased responsibility and independence as the year progresses. The training experiences are designed to

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build upon skills and competencies obtained and to provide new clinical and training experiences.

Characteristics include:

- Duration of anywhere from a month to two years, but a typical experience usually lasts from three to six months.
- Generally a one-time experience.
- May be part-time or full-time.
- May be paid or non-paid.
- Internships may be part of an educational program and carefully monitored and evaluated for academic credit, or internships can be part of a learning plan that someone develops individually.
- An important element that distinguishes an internship from a short-term job or volunteer work is that an intentional “learning agenda” is structured into the experience.
- Learning activities common to most internships include learning objectives, observation, reflection, evaluation and assessment.
- An effort is made to establish a reasonable balance between the intern’s learning goals and the specific work an organization needs done.
- Internships promote academic, career and/or personal development.

Adapted from materials published by the National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE)

All training experiences occur in an atmosphere of modeling, mentoring and collaborative interaction with the supervisors and senior psychology staff members. Internship training is accomplished through direct clinical experience, individual and group supervision, didactic seminars, treatment team staff meetings, psychotherapy seminar, professional consultation, peer-group meetings, continuing professional education and scholarly readings. The internship training program emphasizes an understanding and appreciation for diversity both within the group of interns and across all internship activities. While interns participate in core training activities to build useful competencies to function independently as professional psychologists, they also have the opportunity to focus on some of their own interests in each training rotation.

The internship program combines intensive clinical and didactic training to help solidify and consolidate the intern’s understanding of psychological theory as it applies to clinical practice. While the primary focus of the internship is the clinical practice of psychology, the application of pertinent literature and research is strongly emphasized. Interns are exposed to the integration of research and practice through didactic training, seminars, supervision, treatment team meetings, case conferences, assigned readings in professional journals and books, continuing professional education and the activities of their supervisors. The internship encourages clinical thinking, independent scholarly inquiry and the consideration and implementation of scientific empirical findings in all clinical work.

The purposes of the Psychology internship include providing students with opportunities to:

- Enhance and supplement the college classroom learning experience by “learning through doing;”

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- Develop and apply new knowledge about human behavior as well as new social and interpersonal skills;
- Explore and reflect on personal strengths and weaknesses related to interpersonal behavior in work settings;
- Explore and reflect on future career and employment options; and
- Develop a network of contacts and references, which will lay a foundation for future employment and/or education and training.

The central theme of the internship concept is that work experience outside of the college classroom can greatly enhance education and better prepare students for entry into jobs and careers after college.

A goal of the Psychology program is to help students develop knowledge and skills in areas of applied psychology that will help them function effectively in the work world. Although much of this knowledge and many of the skills will develop through classroom lecture and discussion, active learning projects, presentations, and writing assignments, the internship adds a unique and essential learning experience, which complements classroom learning. As a result of the work experience, Psychology graduates will have a broader and more practical college experience and will be better prepared to enter jobs in social service organizations and businesses, which require knowledge and skills related to applied psychology.

KEY TASKS TO LEARN DURING INTERNSHIP:-

- ❖ Demonstrate an understanding of child, adolescent and adult psychopathology and the ability to make differential diagnoses using the DSM-V.
- ❖ Demonstrate the ability to administer, interpret and integrate a variety of assessment measures (e.g., cognitive, behavioral, affective, personality, memory, motor, and verbal functioning).
- ❖ Demonstrate the ability to develop an appropriate case formulation, link assessment data to treatment recommendations, communicate results, and prepare a quality written report.
- ❖ Demonstrate a basic understanding of neuropsychological disorders and issues and the ability to use and interpret basic neuropsychological assessment measures.
- ❖ Demonstrate the ability to implement a variety of effective interventions (e.g., individual therapy, family therapy, marital/couples therapy, group therapy and crisis intervention) and to appropriately evaluate treatment outcomes.
- ❖ Demonstrate the ability to develop and maintain appropriate therapeutic relationships (e.g., establish rapport, define boundaries, transference and counter transference, termination issues, etc.).
- ❖ Demonstrate an awareness and sensitivity to issues of diversity and a desire to learn more about individuals from diverse backgrounds through diversity training seminars, reading and supervision.
- ❖ Demonstrate an understanding of the effects of individual differences on the therapeutic process and the ability to evaluate and address the therapeutic needs of diverse populations (racial/ethnic/multi-cultural, gay/lesbian, disabled, etc.).
- ❖ Periodically reviews the patient satisfaction surveys and related data, is responsive to feedback, and participates in program development and improvement.

HOW DO INTERNSHIPS BENEFIT EMPLOYERS?

- Year round source of highly motivated pre-professionals
- Students bring new perspectives to old problems
- Visibility of your organization is increased on campus
- Quality candidates for temporary or seasonal positions and projects
- Freedom for professional staff to pursue more creative projects
- Flexible, cost-effective work force not requiring a long-term employer commitment
- Proven, cost-effective way to recruit and evaluate potential employees
- Your image in the community is enhanced as you contribute your expertise to the educational enterprise.

But unfortunately in today's world where most of the population and various institutions are heading towards commercialization, the quality of services being provided are compromised. The objective of the survey is to find how sturdy and effectual is the internship structure, delivery of services and Guidance being provided by various hospitals, institutions, and other clinical set-ups to the budding clinical psychologists. The survey was conducted in Delhi and NCR.

METHOD

Sample: -

For this study a sample of 70 interns (both graduates and post graduate students) in the field of clinical psychology, counseling psychology, special education were taken only from private hospitals. They were interviewed and a questionnaire was being filled up.

Procedure

This study was undertaken where the 70 interns (both Graduates and Post Graduate Students) in the field of clinical psychology, counseling psychology, and special education were taken only from private hospitals. They were interviewed and a questionnaire was being filled up. First a rapport was made with the interns, then after the rapport was built, they were briefed about what they were required to do. On the basis of data collected the result was analyzed.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Internships are the training and experience component of a curriculum. They are career-oriented endeavors of practical application. High schools focus the curriculum around internships so as to make learning real. Student internships have a sound educational foundation and philosophical basis. Internships in different disciplinary areas involve projects and activities that are meaningful to students and that advance their academic programs. Students make use of their prior classroom learning to build a bridge to the world outside the classroom. They relate their skills and knowledge to the practice of applied experiences in actual work situations, and then integrate their internship field experiences back into academic school programs, curriculum and classroom learning. Work-based internship programs that are able to establish connections between work and school and that are closely tied with the school curriculum are preferable. The type of learning that is fostered by internships is experiential. It is active learning that is based on doing, on "what works" and in which experience is central. It is learning in the community, in the real world and in actual work situations. It is interacting and engaging with the environment,

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where problem-solving is emphasized. It is learning that is individualized to meet one's own needs and interests, and combines learning how to learn on one's own (i.e., independent learning) and learning with the help, support and guidance of others (i.e., cooperative learning).

Work-based internship programs have associated costs for their design, delivery and sometimes for student participation. The number of hours students are involved in internships may have negative effects on some aspects of their school performance and may interfere with students' homework time. Some high-school internships are geared for boys and girls, yet female students are more likely to participate in work-based internships than male students. Additional work-based internships involving activities and settings that appeal to male students need to be developed.

Many students have interned with more than one organization, since students typically need multiple internships to fill out their resumes for college or postsecondary employment. Unless internships provide challenging and high-quality experiences for students, then participating in them can become a "zero-sum game" in which students take internships for the sake of developing a list to impress college-admissions directors and/or future employers.

But unfortunately in today's world where most of the population and various institutions are heading towards commercialization, the quality of services being provided are compromised. Thus after conducting the questionnaires and a brief interview with the subjects following issues were concluded :-

- The interns were charged from Rs. 6000 to Rs.12000 per month.
- In many private institutes and hospitals the interns were not given any kind of receipt against the payment they made for internship.
- The interns were given the responsibility of taking the history or MSE from the patients of his/her family, without any supervision of any counselor.
- Interns also reported that they were not allowed to see any counseling case that the counselor or therapists were taking.
- It was observed that there is no set format/ guidelines being given to the students or available with the doctors or counselors in the hospitals.
- At most of the places interns are asked to sit and read certain books and find answers to their own queries rather than addressing to their questions.
- There's not enough work assigned to the interns and they feel bored and underutilized.
- Because interns are just glad to get a foot in the door, some work places took advantage of young workers by giving them very long hours of dull repetitive work including typing work, calling etc.
- Competition with other interns
- Your work is not used. The Supervisor gives the intern a project/article/research that s/he finally feels will make use of the college education. But it ends up never being published, getting lost on their desk, or, whoops – there was a miscommunication between the senior staff and your project is now unnecessary. Not only is this frustrating because of your seemingly wasted time and effort, but it makes you less motivated for projects in the future.

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- Another common complaint of students is that they are not receiving adequate supervision i.e. at least once a week.
- A lot of workshops are being held on psychometric testing where undergraduate and post graduate students are eligible but these students can't practice all these tests before MPhil.
- One of the more common complaints of interns is their dissatisfaction with performing occasional clerical duties or seemingly irrelevant "paper work." The extent to which an intern is expected to engage in these types of activities should be clearly stated in the intern's contract. Often, when these complaints surface, either the intern needs to understand better the necessity of these seemingly tedious tasks or, if the intern is not being given a professional experience, the issue needs to be discussed with the internship supervisor. This teaches the intern how to be assertive and work within a system. If the intern is unsuccessful in attempting to remedy the problem, the faculty supervisor may meet with the intern and the internship supervisor to clarify the terms of the internship contract.
- One of the most serious and difficult problems occurs when the internship site asks the student to perform duties for which they are not adequately trained, such as administering psychological tests which they have not been trained to use, or performing psychotherapy. This is unethical. It has been found that this problem has occurred almost exclusively at small, privately owned psychotherapy clinics. For example, one student working in a private psychological clinic was asked to substitute in a family therapy session for one of the therapists who had a conflicting appointment. At another setting, a student was asked to administer one of the Wechsler Intelligence Tests after having only reviewed the manual at home. In both of these situations, the clients were charged for the services of a licensed psychologist. In situations like these, the faculty supervisor must intervene very quickly to protect both the student and the client. If an immediate change in the behavior of the internship supervisor does not occur, the student should be removed from the internship and be given an alternate placement. It is because of experiences like these that colleges no longer allow their students to work at privately owned for-profit sites.
- Many of these problem can be circumvented by a well written contract. One problem that is occasionally encountered is intern absenteeism. It is common for an intern to miss work due to poor weather conditions, car trouble, illness, or the need to study. In order to impress upon the intern the importance of their attendance, the contract should address the issue of absenteeism. The contract should delineate how and when a student will make up hours that they have missed, and whether penalties will be instituted if an unacceptable level of absenteeism is reached. Thus, the internship should help a student explore their career interests and develop skills and contacts that will be useful when they graduate. Finally, the internship should cultivate the students' commitment to make a contribution to the community. Many students have indicated that they have found the internship experience and the internship class to be the most important course in their college career.

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Conflict of Interest

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