Exploring Challenges And Opportunities In Internship Amidst Pandemic Using Sentiment Analyzer For Interns

By

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Abstract

An internship is a period during which students can get work experience related to their studies. This study aims to find out the challenges and opportunities that the IT, Business, and Accountancy students experience while conducting their internship program amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. The researcher used a qualitative approach in data collection from 12 participants from Information Technology, Business, and Accountancy students who conducted their internship during the pandemic. The respondents were interviewed online through semi-structured questionnaires, and the information collected was recorded, refined, and analyzed using Monkey Learn sentiment analysis. The study discovered that students have some difficulties adapting to work-from-home internships due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings show that students frequently encountered issues such as the need to learn new software and IT tools, difficulty locating companies, an unstable internet connection, a lack of necessary resources for the job, lack of supervision, noise and distraction in the workplace, limitation of the task assigned, and difficulty collaborating with other interns. However, they highlighted positive responses, such as the assigned tasks are related to their programs. They gained new knowledge, learned new IT tools, improved collaboration and communication skills, and developed study habits. Furthermore, they feel safer in their home, have no hassle going to work, save money on travel and boarding costs, and discover new companies offering online internships. The findings provide an insight into the challenges and favorable impact students encountered during their work-from-home internship. Even amid a pandemic, the institution and organization can collaborate to deliver the learning objectives required for students' career advancement.

Keywords: Internship; challenges; opportunities; pandemic; interns; work-from-home internship; sentiment.

Introduction

The internship is a significant part of the curriculum for students to finish their courses. A learning process that allows students to gain more experiences and insight into how to use their skills and knowledge according to their level of competency. When Covid-19 strikes, academic institutions find ways for students to meet their academic obligations without compromising their safety. Because offices were required to close, most interns were forced to do internships at home throughout the pandemic to finish their educational requirements and graduate. A virtual internship is a work experience opportunity that students can do from the comfort of their own homes. Students communicate with their internship supervisor via various collaborating tools, including Skype, Microsoft Teams, Google meet, Zoom, email, and

webinars[1]. The intern will communicate digitally with their on-site supervisor about projects and progress and with their internship coordinator about the obligations they must complete.

In Indonesia and Malaysia, some research was undertaken to gain feedback on internship satisfaction and measure the skills developed by accounting students during their internships[2]. One difficulty with the short period work-from-home mode is that it makes it difficult for interns to engage with their supervisors and co-workers, resulting in interns' limited productivity and quality of work[3]. This study used a qualitative method to conduct online interviews with semi-structured questionnaires.

Although some studies on internships during pandemics have been done, most focused on accounting students. During the pandemic, Baliwag Polytechnic College, a government-funded school in Bulacan, conducted for the first time a work-from-home internship program to help students meet their requirements for graduation and given numerous concerns in providing good internships during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study uses Monkey Learn sentiment analysis to analyze the data collected. It enables the researcher to examine the primary hurdles, the favorable impact, and whether or not the challenges and difficulties outweigh the positive effects.

This research shed insight on the difficulties that IT, Business, and Accounting students face and the positive influence of the work-from-home internship. It is essential to bring attention to these difficulties and the beneficial impacts to improve the internship program in this new normal brought on by the pandemic. The school and on-site businesses can use the findings to collaborate on delivering the learning objectives required for students to advance in their careers while the pandemic is ongoing.

Methodology

The data for this research were gathered through online interviews with semi-structured questionnaires using Zoom and Google meet application. Four students were chosen through purposive sampling to participate in the interview from each of the three courses: Bachelor of Science in Information Technology, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, and Bachelor of Science in Accounting. These twelve participants were interviewed online to learn their sentiments about their work-from-home internship during the Covid-19 pandemic. The questionnaire consists of the following: (a.) What challenges or problems did you encounter before and during your work-from-home internship? (b.) What beneficial impact or opportunities did your work-from-home internship provides you?

The respondents are given a consent form before the interview to determine their willingness to participate in the study and educate them about the research goals. Respondents are free to express their thoughts on the questions asked during the interview in whatever language (English, Tagalog, or both) they feel comfortable with. The raw information/data obtained during the recorded interviews were refined into meaningful information, and a sentiment analyzer was applied to better understand the outcomes. The researcher used Monkey Learn sentiment analysis to better support the interpretations of data gathered. It highlighted the negative and positive tone of the data acquired from the online interviews.

Results

The results of the interviews reveal the challenges and benefits of the work-from-home

internship that Information Technology, Business Administration, and Accounting students completed. Students can look for a company to work for on their own, and the school can also help some of them find one, especially the accounting students. Table 1 shows the demographic of the respondents.

Table 1. *Demographic of Respondents*

Initial	Gender	Courses	Nature of Company/ Business	Company/ Job Placement
BA1	Male	Business Administration	Property Services Company	Searched by the Student
BA2	Male	Business Administration	BPO Company	Searched by the Student
BA3	Male	Business Administration	Digital Marketing Agency	Searched by the Student
BA4	Male	Business Administration	Manufacturing Firm	Searched by the Student
IT1	Male	Information Technology	Hospital, MIT Department	Provided by the School
IT2	Female	Information Technology	Advertising/Marketing Services	Searched by the Student
IT3	Female	Information Technology	Advertising/Marketing Services	Searched by the Student
IT4	Male	Information Technology	Health/ Wellness Services	Searched by the Student
BSA1	Male	Accountancy	Accounting Firm	Provided by the School
BSA2	Male	Accountancy	Accounting Firm	Provided by the School
BSA3	Female	Accountancy	Accounting Firm	Searched by the Student
BSA4	Female	Accountancy	Accounting Firm	Provided by the School

Table 2 summarizes the challenges and difficulties faced by interns before and throughout their internship. The finding shows that apart from those assisted by the school in finding a company, many interns had a hard time locating organizations that would allow them to conduct a work-from-home internship. The majority of them had to learn how to use new software and IT tools to accomplish the assigned tasks. The completion of duties was also delayed due to an unreliable internet connection, a lack of effective monitoring, and delays in supervisors responding to queries. There are also issues with a lack of appropriate technology to utilize during internships, particularly among accounting and business administration students. When the company assigned group projects, collaboration with other interns became a problem because some of them came from various schools and had minor subjects to attend to.

Furthermore, data confidentiality was a concern for some accounting students. Because the firm is hesitant to submit data to be processed online, they are given a limited amount of jobs. Additionally, some interns expressed difficulty staying focused when working from home due to the noise and distractions in the surroundings

Table 2. *Challenges and Problems of Work-From-Home Internship*

Challenges and Problems of Work-From-Home Internship	Respondents who Mention It
New software and IT tools must be learned	8
Difficulty in finding a company that offers work-from-home internship	7
Unstable internet connection	6
Lack of proper supervision and timely responds from the on-site supervisor	5
Lack of devices and equipment to use during the internship	4
Noise and distraction in the workplace	2
The limited task is given because of confidentiality and privacy of information	2
Difficulty in collaboration with other interns	2

Table 3 detailed the beneficial impact and opportunity that students gained through a work-from-home internship. The findings show that almost all of the duties allocated to interns are relevant to their studies, and they are able to learn new skills and knowledge, particularly in the field of information technology. In addition, some were able to use this technology to develop their collaborating and communicating skills in dealing with clients, supervisors, and teammates while completing assignments. The majority of interns claimed that working from home makes them feel safer because they do not have to travel to the office during the pandemic, saving money on transportation and boarding. They also mentioned that because of the flexibility of time, they are able to plan their schedules and work activities. Several interns also say that having their supervisors' support and constantly reviewing their accomplishments helps them complete their projects on time and improves their ability to communicate. However, the confidentiality of data was not an issue for certain accounting students because the school and the firm agreed that any information shared with the student would be kept confidential. Also, other students stated that they are pleased to work for a large company regardless of its distant location. However, some students were surprised to learn that some companies offered work-from-home internships even before the pandemic.

Table 3. *Beneficial Impacts and Opportunity of Work-From-Home Internship*

Beneficial Impact and Opportunity	Respondents who Mention It
The tasks assigned are related to their respective course	12
Acquired new knowledge and skills in IT and technology use	9
Safety of workplace	7
Reduce travel and boarding costs	7
Flexible and manageable schedule	7
Guided by the supervisors and check accomplishments on a regular basis.	6
No hassle of going to the company	5
Improved collaboration and communication skills in dealing with clients, workmates, and supervisors	4
Self-study habit has been developed.	4
Found out that there are companies that offer work-from-home internships even before pandemics.	2
Ability to complete an internship in a large company regardless of geographical limitations	2

To determine the negative and positive tone of data and to support the findings, Monkey Learn sentiment analysis is used. It evaluates whether the positive effects and opportunities surpass the obstacles and challenges that the interns face during their internship.

The following figures show the result of sentiment analysis from the three courses, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Bachelor of Science in Information Technology, and Bachelor of Science in Accountancy.
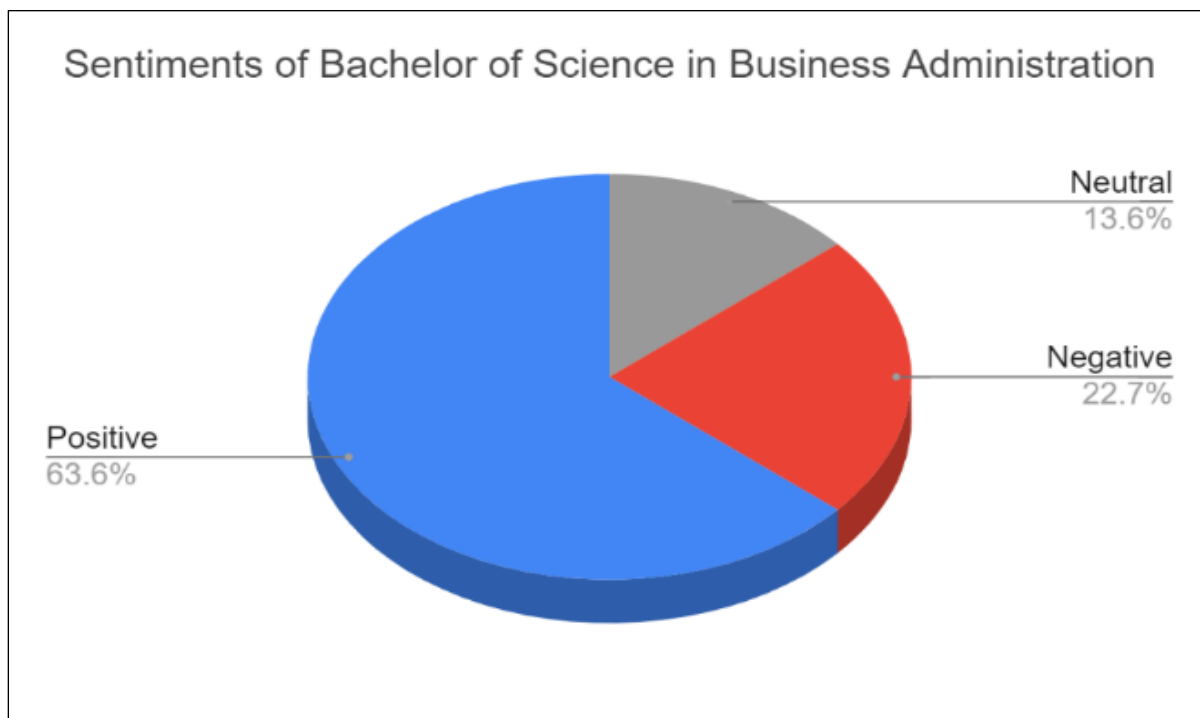

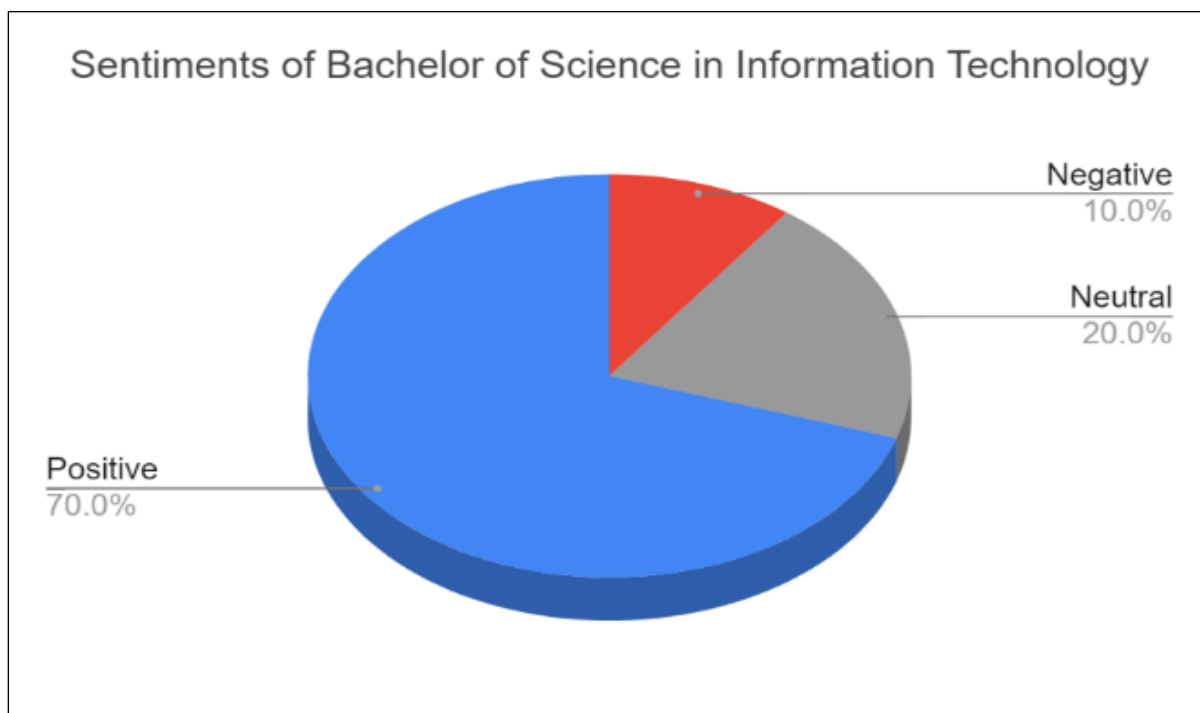**Figure 1.** *Sentiments Result of Bachelor of Science in Business Administration*

Figure 2. *Sentiments Result of Bachelor of Science in Information Technology*
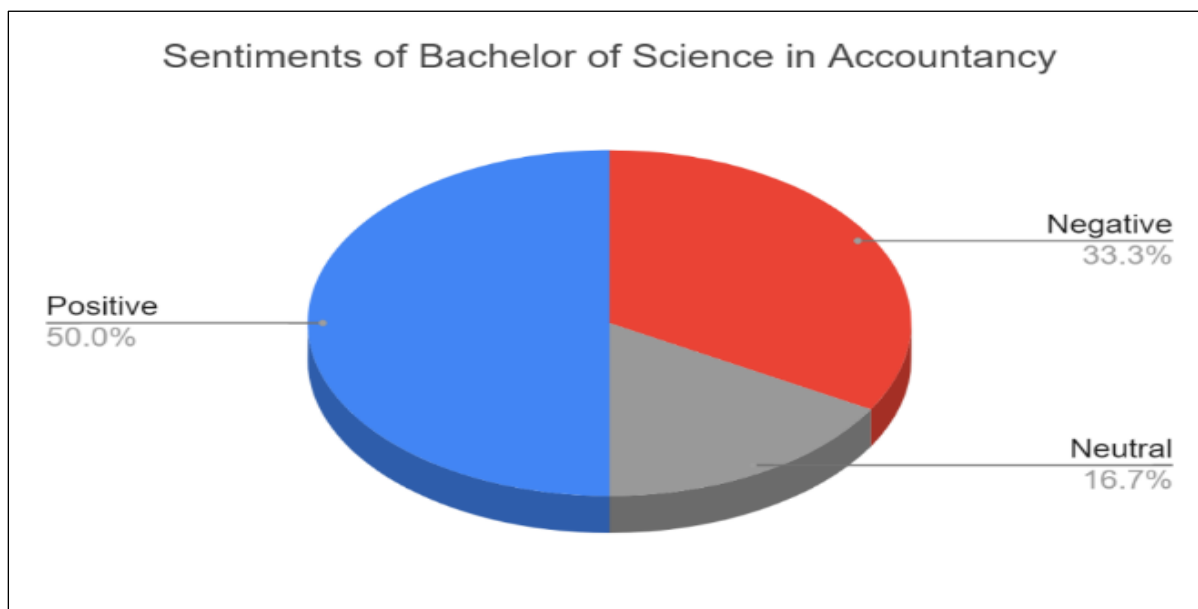
Figure 3. *Sentiments Result of Bachelor of Science in Accountancy*

Discussions

This study examines the challenges and opportunities associated with a work-from-home internship during the Covid-19 outbreak. It intends to assess the sentiments of students from Baliwag Polytechnic College who enrolled in three distinct courses: Business Administration, Information Technology, and Accounting. The findings show that interns' most significant challenge was unfamiliar with the software applications and technologies they needed to make the most of their internship. They must study the software and tools to complete the task at hand and improve their knowledge. Another significant issue that interns encounter is locating a company that will enable them to undertake work-from-home internships. Some companies offered work-from-home internships even before the pandemic, but students have trouble locating one that suits their courses because of the increased demand. However, only a few interns have trouble interacting with other interns within the company, and only some accounting students encounter confidentiality concerns, not those in other programs.

Despite the significant challenges mentioned above, findings show significant opportunities and favorable impacts. Most interns said that their task was related to their course, and they applied their knowledge and skills to practical use. It also helped them develop their skills and acquire new knowledge in the field where they belonged. Furthermore, their communication abilities improved, mainly when dealing with clients, teammates, and supervisors. Additionally, it provides an opportunity for some to learn about organizations that offer work-from-home internships and do internships at large corporations regardless of their geographical limitations.

The use of sentiment analysis demonstrates that, despite all of the problems and difficulties, there are also positive aspects that outweigh the disadvantages of working from home.

The sentiment assessment for Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in Table 1 shows 63.6% positive feedback, 22.7% negative comments, and 13.6 % neutral feedbacks. Most of them were satisfied with their internship because the duties and tasks were relevant to

their programs, and they applied their knowledge and skills to work in the real world. Respondents stated that:

(BA1)….”yung napunta po sa aking tasks is related naman po sa course ko,… more on procurements..logistics social media at promo implementation po.”

(BA2)…”related po sa course ko yung mga task ko.. like bank reconciliation…creating reports on excel”

(BA3)…”natuto po akong gumawa ng marketing proposal and strategies na related po sa subject namin sa skul, na magagamit ko po kapag nagstart nako magwork sa corporate world”

(BA4)..”hindi naman po ako nahirapan kasi related po sa course ko yung mga tasks na inaassign”

They were also pleased to learn new software applications and technology that aided them in gaining new knowledge and improving their skills. Respondents stated that:

(BA1)…”madami din po akong natutunan kagaya po ng mga technical skills, more on sa IT po… natutunan ko po mag edit ng picture, gamitin yung mga IT tools para makipagcommunicate po… for promo and social media implementation…mag fb live at zoom po,.. mag email and spreadsheets.”

(BA2)..”natuto po ako ng accounting software (Zero software), reconciliation,… gumamit ng mga visa, mastercards, American cards.. natuto ng different formula sa excel”

(BA3)…”naenchanced po ung technical skills ko…especially sa IT tools like chatbot and website designing”

(BA4)…”natuto po akong mag self-study at madagdagan yung nalalaman ko..sa paggamit po ng iba’t ibang application”

They also say they feel safer at home, have more flexible schedules, and save money. Respondents stated that:

(BA1)… : “naka save ka po ng money and time and effort dahil di mo na po kailangan pumunta sa company…at mas safe po sa bahay.”

(BA2)…”less expenses when it comes to transportation costs…saka pagod,..I can work with my household chores after I finish my tasks…I can use my time efficiently”

(BA4)…”flexible po yung time ko…I can do other things aside po sa tasks na inaassigned ng supervisor ko…mas safe po sa bahay kaysa pumunta po sa company”

Additionally, some also mention that their communication skills have improved. Respondents stated that:

(BA1)…” maghahanap po kami ng mga suppliers para sa magbibigay ng posters sa bawat branch sa buong Pilipinas po, nakikipagusap po sa clients para sa mga promo ng company.

(BA3)…”naghandle po ng administrative tasks…handling clients, better communication po with my co-workers and supervisors”

Overall, the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration interns are delighted with their internship, despite the challenges they faced. Their knowledge and abilities have grown, and they can use what they have learned once they begin working in the real world.

The sentiment analysis results in Table 2 for Bachelor of Science in Information Technology showed 70% positive feedback, 10% negative comments, and 20% neutral feelings. Each responder claimed that their responsibilities are related to their academic interests. They learned and applied new programming languages and software tools, enhancing

their technical abilities and establishing relationships with other businesses, preparing them for future employment. Respondent stated that:

(IT1)…"natuto po akong mag self-study….inaral po yung mga programming languages po para sa mga dinedevelop naming system, designing tools... mas naging confident po ako kasi naideploy po yung ginawa naming system."

(IT2)…"inaral ko pa pong mabuti ung mga software pang design ng website, pati din po sa pageencode…mas nadagdagan po yung mga nalalaman ko…nakakausap po yung ibang clients… nagkakaron po ng connections sa ibang company… nakapagdesign po kami ng website"

(IT3)…"mas lalo ko pong pinagaralan yung mga software na ginagamit namin para makabuo ng website… nagbibigay po ako ng inputs sa mga kasama ko para mas mapaganda po yung project namin… mas nag-improved po yung kakayahan ko"

(IT4)…"nagkarong po ng new knowledge, lalo na po sa mga tools na gagamitin sa tasks at online meeting…email, zoom meeting, excel, word documents… nakikipagusap po sa mga clients… madami pong nakikila…pwede po akong magapply after makagraduate"

They also manage their time effectively. Respondents stated that:
(IT1)…"yung schedule po is flexible, pwede ko po gawin sa gabi ung project namin."
(IT2)…"flexible and manageable po yung schedule namin… nakakagawa po ako ng ibang chores sa bahay…
(IT3)…"habang iniintay po yung feedback nung supervisor, ginagawa ko po yung mga dapat i-submit na requirements sa school"… pwede ko po gawin sa gabi yung ibang tasks"
(IT4)…"kapag po tapos na yung tasks sakin ng onsite ko… habang nagiintay po ng new assignment.. nagagawa ko po yung mga requirements na kailangan ipasa sa school"

Additionally, they also stated feeling safer at home, having less trouble getting on-site, and saving money on transportation and boarding costs. Respondents stated that:

(T1)…"malayo po kasi yung company… naka save po ako sa transportation…di na po need umupa ng malapit na apartment…"

(IT2)…"kahit po malayo…nakapag OJT po kami… nakatipid po sa pamasahe saka hindi na po kailangan umupa ng boarding house….hindi po nagtatravel.. mas safe po sa bahay"

(IT3)…" mas safe po ako sa bahay…hindi po kailangan magbyahe…malayo po kasi yung company… nakatipid po sa pamasahe at boarding house…

(IT4)…"no need to commute po and saved money"

Overall, the interns from the Bachelor of Science in Information Technology are contented with their internship, despite the problems they faced, and they were able to acquire more benefits from it.

Lastly, the sentiment analysis for Bachelor of Science in Accountancy in Table 3 shows 50% positive feedback, 33.3% negative comments, and 16.7 % neutral feedbacks. The tasks assigned to them are related to their course, and some of them are able to apply what they have learned in a practical case. Respondents stated that:

(BSA2) …"nagencode po kami dun sa BIR form… willing naman po sila ishare samin ung mga information… yung mga assignment po namin is pang accounting tasks po."
(BSA3)…"natutunan ko pong magfile ng tax"
(BSA4)…"sa BIR po nun di gaanong nadidiscuss sa school, pahapyaw lang… then dun po sa

internship dun nyo po makikita yung mga actual na nangyayari.. sa mga BIR forms, compliance…mas natutunan ko po yun."

They also feel safer at home and able to save transportations expenses. Respondenst stated that:

(BSA1)…"less po yung gastos kasi po kung field yun, syempre po mamamasahe… mas safe po sa bahay kasi po ang daming pang cases during po ng nagOJT kami"

(BSA3)…."nakatipid ako ng pamasahe…hindi hassle ung pagtravel papunta ng office"

(BSA4)…"hindi ko na po kailangan mamasahe… liblib po sa lugar namin, medyo malayo sa city…hindi ko na po kailangan lumabas kasi po pandemic, mas safe po sa bahay."

Although some interns were able to learn and use their learnings during their internship, some of them ran into challenges with data confidentiality that needed to be processed online.

(BSA1)…"sa accounting po kasi confidential…limited lang po yung pinagawa samin…hindi din po kasi nila mailabas ung mga record online… once lang po ako nabigyan ng tasks, the rest po is reading and webinars na po"

(BSA3)…"hindi po nila maipagawa sakin ung ibang task kasi po dapat po nasa office lang nila ung record, dun po gagawin… naging limited lang talaga ung tasks na pinagawa sakin."

In general, interns from the Bachelor of Science in Accountancy program did not maximize their learning objectives due to the firm's requirement for data privacy. Although the school helps them find firms, some firms are still unwilling to disclose information with the intern, resulting in the limited task handed to interns.

Conclusion

This study discussed interns' challenges and opportunities during their work-from-home internship due to the Covid19 outbreak. While the pandemic is still happening, it is essential to understand the issues students face during their internship so that the school can develop new strategies to strengthen the internship program. Despite the difficulties mentioned above, there were numerous positive outcomes and possibilities for students that extended beyond the confines of their internship. They were able to enhance their knowledge, talents, and self-esteem.

The school can help the students in eliminating confidentiality concerns, particularly in the Accounting course, by entering into an agreement with the firm that all information processed by the student would be kept confidential. The constraints of tasks presented to them will no longer be an issue, and they will be able to achieve their learning goals. Furthermore, this research can also develop a preliminary plan for work-from-home internship initiatives for future interns, as many companies have started such programs. All interested parties may consider all beneficial factors that may result in more thorough insights to ensure that the internship program's learning objectives are achieved.

Due to the limited number of interviewees, the future researcher may choose to collect additional data and obtain more precise results using quantitative approaches.

Acknowledgments

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