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## **The Influence of Internship Effectiveness on Graduate Employability Skills of Undergraduate Business Administration Students at a Private University in Thailand**

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### **Abstract**

Internships for business students need to be effective as they play an important role in preparing students for the workforce. This quantitative study aimed to investigate the influence of Internship Effectiveness, as defined by Academic Preparedness, Positive Attitude, Self-initiative, Challenging Tasks, Effectiveness of Supervision, Task Clarity, and Compensation, on Graduate Employability Skills of undergraduate business administration students at a private university in Thailand. The Model of Internship Effectiveness and CareerEDGE Model of Graduate Employability guided as the theoretical framework. Data was collected through a self-reported questionnaire adopted from Phoebe (2010) and Dacre Pool et al. (2014) and a convenience population sample of 72 students participated. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and multiple linear regression analysis was employed. Findings revealed moderately high levels of both internship effectiveness and graduate employability skills. While Academic Preparedness, Positive Attitude, and Effectiveness of Supervision, were positively correlated with Graduate Employability Skills, these correlations were not strong enough to have significant, predictive linear relationships. Self-initiative and Task Clarity demonstrated significant, positive predictive relationships with Graduate Employability Skills, explaining 76.1% of the variance. An inverse relationship was found for Compensation that belonging to certain compensation group is associated with lower predicted Graduate Employability Skills, however, the differential effect was not significant. These findings show that by prioritizing Self-initiative and Task Clarity during internships, these aspects can enhance undergraduate business administration students' Graduate Employability Skills in this context.

**Keywords:** Business Administration Students, Graduate Employability Skills, Internship Effectiveness

## Introduction

Traditionally, employability was viewed through a narrow lens, focusing on matching the number of unemployed individuals with the current labor market needs. However, the dynamic nature of the modern workplace has significantly impacted the skillsets required for successful employment, necessitating the evaluation of the concept of employability. Employability should encompass specific skills, an individual's inherent characteristics, and the ability to adapt and thrive in a dynamic work environment.

As of 2022, 155 accredited higher education institutions were under the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI) in Thailand (UNESCO National Commission, 2022). The total enrolment in higher education institutions in 2021 was 1,586,852, and approximately 90% were in bachelor's degrees, with the rest in graduate programs. However, this broad educational participation has not been translated into proportional employment success. The National Economics and Social Development Council (NESDC) reported that of the total 462,500 unemployed individuals in the fourth quarter of 2022, a disconcerting fifty percent were recent graduates (Chitviriyakul, 2023; NESDC, n.d.). Notably, 49.3% of these unemployed graduates hold tertiary degrees. This data reflected a persistent contrast between the growing number of graduates and the employment rate, raising concerns about the quality of education (Srisa-an & Pramoolsook, 2018).

According to ThaiPBS World (2022), there are 500,000 fresh graduates entering the Thai labor market every year, looking for job opportunities that align with their interests and specialization during their undergraduate studies. While Thailand has over 40 million workforces, the number of vacancies specifically for fresh graduates paints a different picture. As of January 2024, Thailand had only 76,611 job vacancies (Trading Economics, n.d.). According to the job platform called JobsDB, there were only 860 jobs specifically listed for fresh graduates in March 2024, reflecting the fierce competition for these entry-level positions in the Thailand job market. These data shed light on the stressful and challenging scenario for fresh graduates, especially those without work experience. Higher education institutions shall support their graduates to acquire the right and lifelong employability skills in the fourth industrial revolution (Chia & Sheng, 2022). Through structured education guided by educators, universities can provide a traditional learning process in an academic setting while through work placement experiences or internships, they can promote informal learning where students can explore and develop core competencies for graduate employability (Johnson, 2000; Karunaratne & Perera, 2019; Trotskovy & Sabag, 2010).

Previous studies have pointed out the limited focus of Thai universities on developing undergraduate employability skills such as lack of integration into the curriculum (Jiracheewong, 2022) and the gap between academic training and real-world work demands. These shortcomings leave a significant gap in graduates' understanding of the importance employability skills (Jackson, 2013; Shafie & Nayan, 2010; Wye & Lim, 2009). Recognizing this gap, Thai higher education institutions have increasingly incorporated internships into their curriculum, often as semester (Carrera, 2024) or summer placement. However, the quality and

effectiveness of these internships vary widely. Challenges include irrelevant placements where internships assign menial tasks and unrelated tasks to students' field of study or career inspirations (Pusawiro, 2014) and lack of students' readiness to perform tasks during internship (Bunchutrakun et al., 2019).

These challenges mirror broader issues faced by higher education systems across Asia, including maintaining educational quality despite financial constraints, ensuring curriculum relevance amid rapidly changing labor markets, optimizing financial resources, and balancing access expansion with quality concerns (Asian Development Bank, 2011). Research conducted in Hong Kong (Phoebe, 2010) and the Philippines (Bawica, 2021) have identified key factors contributing to internship effectiveness and workplace preparation. Their studies revealed that three individual factors (academic preparedness, positive attitude, self-initiative) and four organizational factors (challenging task, effectiveness of supervision, task clarity, and compensation) significantly influence internship effectiveness. These factors are also relevant to Thailand's context as they address documented challenges such as students' lack of readiness, irrelevant task assignments, and varying program quality. To the researcher's knowledge, it remains a significant research gap in Thailand regarding the factors influencing internship effectiveness and their impact on graduate employability, particularly within private universities. The current study attempted to address this gap by investigating the level of internship effectiveness, graduate employability skills, and the predictive relationship of internship effectiveness on graduate employability skills of undergraduate business administration students at a private university in Thailand.

These are the research questions addressed by this study.

1. What is the level of internship effectiveness of undergraduate business administration students at a private university in Thailand?
2. What is the level of graduate employability skills of undergraduate business administration students at a private university in Thailand?
3. Is there a significant predictive relationship between internship effectiveness and graduate employability skills of undergraduate business administration students at a private university in Thailand?

These are the research objectives addressed by this study.

1. To determine the level of internship effectiveness of undergraduate business administration students at a private university in Thailand
2. To determine the level of graduate employability skills of undergraduate business administration students at a private university in Thailand
3. To determine whether there is a significant predictive relationship between internship effectiveness and graduate employability skills of undergraduate business administration students at a private university in Thailand

The current study hypothesized that there is a significant, positive predictive relationship between internship effectiveness and graduate employability skills of undergraduate business administration students at a private university in Thailand, with a significance level of 0.05. The findings of this research are expected to benefit various

stakeholders. Firstly, the self-diagnostic tools for internship effectiveness and graduate employability skills of undergraduate students may provide the opportunity for the students to reflect on their attitude towards the internship and their readiness to enter the professional workplace. This engagement will encourage them to improve their areas of concerns, helping them make informed decisions for their career choices. Secondly, school administrators from private universities will have an evidence-based understanding of internship effectiveness on graduate employability skills. Respective administrators may reevaluate and refine their internship programs, ensuring the maximum benefits to their undergraduate students' development of their graduate employability. Thirdly, this study may be beneficial for host organizations to understand the importance of internship effectiveness in developing the employability skills, which will motivate them to co-design internship programs with universities. Lastly, the researcher hopes the current study will provide insight for future investigations into internship effectiveness and graduate employability skills of undergraduate business administration students in Thailand private university context.

## **Literature Review**

### **Internship Effectiveness**

According to the literature, there are three typical types of internship: 1) curricular internships: formally integrated internships into academic programs, requiring agreement between students, host organizations, and educational institutions, 2) open-market internships: internships that are undertaken by young graduates independently to seek a pathway to work, and 3) active labor market programs (ALMP) internships: internships that are administered by public or non-governmental organizations which are specifically designed for unemployed young people with limited skills to improve participants' employability through work experience and skills development (Stewart et al., 2018). The internship in the current study refers the first one as the researcher explored the internship programs integrated into the curricula and organized by the university.

Contemporary internships provide graduates with opportunities to develop adaptive and applied skills that are crucial to thrive in a professional workplace, which is different from the structured academic environment higher education institutions have created (Lo Presti et al., 2022). Numerous scholars have been trying to analyze the impact of internship on students' skill and competencies development. Several factors influence the effectiveness of internship such as the motivation and performance of interns, quality of internship design and effective supervision, appropriate governance, and quality assurance by the institution as well as the host organization. The absence of effective regulatory mechanisms for internships raises concerns about the potential for unintended negative consequences, undermining program effectiveness and jeopardizing the well-being of students, educational institutions, and host organizations (Hempel & Pantelic, 2020). This study adopted the Model of Internship Effectiveness by Phoebe (2010) where Phoebe identified that three individual attributes: (1) academic preparedness, (2) positive attitude, (3) self-initiative and four organizational structures: (4)

challenging task, (5) effectiveness of supervision, (6) task clarity (7) compensation significantly contribute to internship effectiveness.

### ***Academic Preparedness***

Academic preparedness is one of the key determinants of internship effectiveness (Beard, 1997; Beard & Morton, 1999). The students shall possess a firm grasp of necessary knowledge, concepts, and skills (Bourland-Davis et al., 1997) to effectively apply their learning in the practical context of their internship. Furthermore, students' intrinsic interest in their coursework positively influences their engagement with internship opportunities and their subsequent ability to transfer acquired knowledge (Narayanan, 2010).

### ***Positive Attitude***

Positive attitude is one of the key determinants of internship effectiveness (Beard, 1997; Beard & Morton, 1999), correlating with increased student engagement in their tasks and learning during their internship. Students who approach tasks with enthusiasm and a desire to acquire new skills and knowledge are more likely to benefit from positive opportunities and occupational experiences (Beard, 1997).

### ***Self-initiative***

Self-initiative, characterized by a proactive approach to learning and engagement, is one of the key determinants of internship effectiveness (Beard, 1997; Beard & Morton, 1999). While student proactivity in seeking tasks and projects can maximize learning outcomes (Helyer & Lee, 2014), it is crucial to distinguish between self-initiative and unbridled autonomy. Effective proactivity during an internship involves actively seeking clarification through thoughtful questions, contributing positively to teamwork, building strong relationships with colleagues, embracing constructive feedback, and demonstrating a genuine interest in the organization's objectives.

### ***Challenging Task***

Challenging task is one of the key determinants of internship effectiveness, as it offers students opportunities for significant learning and development (Meyer & Allen, 1988). By engaging in challenging tasks, students can develop new skills and work with a degree of independence. Rothman (2007) found that students expect challenging tasks, not only as opportunities for learning, but also as a means to contribute meaningfully to the organization.

### ***Effectiveness of Supervision***

Effectiveness of supervision is one of the key determinants of internship effectiveness, significantly influencing the overall program's efficacy (Phoebe, 2010). By ensuring that assigned tasks, projects, and assignments align with pre-defined learning goals, effectiveness of supervision fosters student skills development and enhance students' perceived job prospects (Gupta et al., 2010). Furthermore, supervisors play a crucial role in fostering employee commitment by demonstrating genuine interest and communicating the organization's value for the individual (Dixon et al., 2005).

### ***Task Clarity***

Task clarity is one of the key determinants of internship effectiveness. When students have a clear and comprehensive understanding of their assigned tasks, it minimizes confusion

and reduces errors, thereby enhancing overall productivity (Rothman, 2007). The recommendations include explaining the rationale behind work assignments (Tackett et al., 2001), developing a clear job description (Crumbley & Sumners, 1998), and establishing reasonable deadlines and clear performance expectations (Rothman, 2007).

### ***Compensation***

Literature suggests that compensation is one of the key determinants of internship effectiveness. Providing compensation, even at a minimum wage level, demonstrates a clear message of valuing students' contributions (Berger, 1992). Beyond financial benefits, compensation can serve as a symbolic bridge to the professional world, helping students shift their mindset from student to employee by fostering a sense of value for their work (Hamilton, 1992).

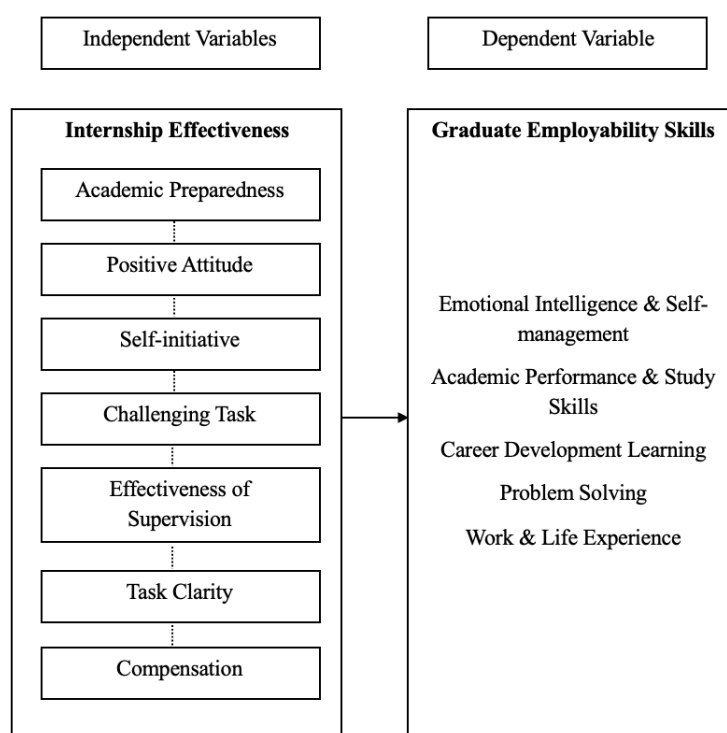
### **Graduate Employability**

The conceptualization of employability has undergone a significant shift, transitioning from a narrow focus on addressing workforce gaps to an emphasis on empowering individuals to navigate the dynamic landscape of their careers (Fugate et al., 2021; Thijssen et al., 2008). Employability is no longer as simple as employment. Employment refers to having a job while employability refers to individual's abilities and competencies to secure employment and gain career success over time (Forrier et al., 2009; Lo Presti & Pluviano, 2016). Employability is a critical skill that is relevant throughout life (Mason et al., 2009). Hence, this paper is adapting the definition of graduate employability by Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) as "having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose and secure occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful" (p. 280).

Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) sought to articulate a clear and comprehensive understanding of employability through the development of the CareerEDGE Model. The mnemonic "CareerEDGE" represents its five core components - Career Development Learning (CDL), diverse Experience (both work and life-related), Degree Subject Knowledge, Skills and Understanding, Generic Skills, and Emotional Intelligence. Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) emphasized the importance of providing students with opportunities for reflection and evaluation of these experiences. This introspective process fosters the development of self-efficacy, self-confidence, and self-esteem, which are considered crucial attributes for graduate employability.

### **Conceptual Framework of the Current Study**

The conceptual framework of this study was developed based on Model of Internship Effectiveness by Phoebe (2010) and the CareerEDGE Model of Graduate Employability by Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) and it is depicted in Figure 1.

**Figure 1***Conceptual Framework of the Current Study*

## Research Methodology

### Research Design

A quantitative, cross-sectional correlational research design was used in this study, to determine whether there is a significant, positive predictive relationship between internship effectiveness and graduate employability skills among undergraduate business administration students at a private university in Thailand. This study employed descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and multiple linear regression analysis.

### Population and the Participants of the Study

The study was conducted at a private university in Thailand and the population came from undergraduate business administration students majoring in Accounting, Economics, Finance, Hospitality and Tourism Management, International Business and Entrepreneurship, International Business Management, Marketing, and Real Estate who participated in summer internships during the academic year 2023 – 2024. The total population of the students who participated in summer internships by the time the study was conducted was 122. Due to the manageable size of the student population, a total population sampling technique was employed to ensure comprehensive data collection and minimize sampling bias. No data was collected from the Hospitality and Tourism Management program, and 72 responses out of 122



participants were received, yielding a response rate of 59.02%. An initial data screening was conducted to identify any missing values with data collection performed via Google Forms.

### Research Instrument

The survey instrument to determine the effectiveness of internship was adopted from Internship Programme Survey Sample – Part A: Assessment of predictors which was developed by Phoebe (2010). The instrument included 16 items categorized into 6 subscales, namely *Academic Preparedness*, *Positive Attitude*, *Self-Initiative*, *Challenging Task*, *Effectiveness of Supervision*, and *Task Clarity*. To better reflect the internship context, the subscale originally named as *Challenge Job* was renamed as *Challenging Task*. The reliability of the scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The validity of this instrument was established by Phoebe through focus group discussion, pilot testing, expert input, and factor analysis in Hong Kong. The instrument has also been employed by Bawica (2021) in the Philippines. The current study yielded poor to excellent reliability coefficients for most of the variables, ranging from .56 to .92 which were generally consistent with previous research by Phoebe (2010). However, the *Challenging Task* scale exhibited an unacceptable reliability coefficient of .09, suggesting potential issues with internal consistency. Therefore, this scale was removed from further data analysis in the current study. As Phoebe's study didn't report reliability score for this specific scale, further refinement may be necessary to enhance its reliability. Bawica (2021) did not report Cronbach's alpha scores for the scales.

The survey instrument to assess students' development of graduate employability was adopted from the Employability Development Profile (EDP), a self-diagnostic tool developed by Dacre Pool et al. (2014). The instrument included 26 items categorized into 5 subscales, namely *Emotional Intelligence and Self-management*, *Academic Performance and Study Skills*, *Career Development Learning*, *Problem Solving Skills*, *Work and Life Experience*. The EDP was validated through expert review and student feedback, a split-sample approach that incorporated both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. The reliability of the scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and the current study yielded good to excellent reliability coefficients, ranging from .83 to .94, comparable with the original study.

## Research Findings

### Findings from Research Objective One

Research Objective One was to determine the level of *Internship Effectiveness* of undergraduate business administration students at a private university in Thailand. The statistical analysis on numerical variables revealed that the level of *Internship Effectiveness* was moderately high ( $M = 5.91$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ) which can be interpreted that the students perceived their internship experiences to be effective and they have moderately high *Academic Preparedness* ( $M = 5.83$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ), *Positive Attitude* ( $M = 6.17$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ), *Self-initiative* ( $M = 5.80$ ,  $SD = 1.29$ ), *Effectiveness of Supervision* ( $M = 5.95$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ) and *Task Clarity* ( $M = 5.85$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ) during their internship.

As for the categorical variable, *Compensation*, the effect of receiving it on perceived internship effectiveness was examined by comparing the mean scores of internship effectiveness across the different compensation groups. Internship compensation was measured by asking participants to select their monthly internship salary range (in Baht) from the following options: No compensation received,  $3k \leq \text{compensation} \leq 6k$ ,  $6k < \text{compensation} \leq 9k$ ,  $9k < \text{compensation} \leq 12k$ ,  $12k < \text{compensation} \leq 15k$ , and  $\text{compensation} > 15k$ . The frequency distribution of responses revealed a decreasing trend in the number of participants with increasing compensation ranges. To ensure sufficient sample sizes within each category for meaningful analysis, the *Compensation* variable was recoded into four groups for data analysis of the current study: No compensation received ( $n = 28$ ),  $3k \leq \text{compensation} \leq 6k$  ( $n = 14$ ),  $6k < \text{compensation} \leq 9k$  ( $n = 13$ ), and  $\text{compensation} > 9k$  ( $n = 17$ ).

The analysis revealed that the amount of compensation did not have a statistically significant effect on the students' perception of internship effectiveness. Students in all levels of compensation categories reported moderately high levels of internship effectiveness: No compensation ( $M = 5.66$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ),  $3k \leq \text{compensation} \leq 6k$  ( $M = 6.18$ ,  $SD = .72$ ),  $6k < \text{compensation} \leq 9k$  ( $M = 6.26$ ,  $SD = .54$ ), and  $\text{Compensation} > 9k$  ( $M = 5.81$ ,  $SD = .72$ ). This finding suggested that respondents across all compensation groups perceived their internship experiences as similarly effective.

### Findings from Research Objective Two

Research Objective Two was to determine the level of *Graduate Employability Skills*. The analysis of the descriptive statistics revealed that the level of *Graduate Employability Skills* was moderately high ( $M = 5.84$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ) which can be interpreted that the respondents perceived themselves to possess moderately high level of *Graduate Employability Skills* and that they possess moderately high levels of *Emotional Intelligence and Self-management* ( $M = 5.90$ ,  $SD = 1.17$ ), *Academic Performance and Study Skills* ( $M = 5.86$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ), *Career Development Learning* ( $M = 5.84$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ ), *Problem Solving Skills* ( $M = 5.68$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ), and *Work and Life Experience* ( $M = 5.72$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ).

This finding suggested that while the students perceived themselves to possess a good foundation of *Graduate Employability Skills*, there may still be room for further development in specific areas. For instance, scores for *Problem Solving Skills* and *Work and Life Experience* were slightly lower. Continuous development and refinement of these skills are essential for students' success in the dynamic and competitive job market.

### Findings from Research Objective Three

Research Objective Three was to determine whether there is a significant, positive predictive relationship between *Internship Effectiveness* and *Graduate Employability Skills*. A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the independent variables including both numerical (i.e. *Academic Preparedness*, *Positive Attitude*, *Self-Initiative*, *Effectiveness of Supervision*, and *Task Clarity*) and categorical variables (i.e. *Compensation*) and the dependent variable (i.e. *Graduate Employability Skills*).

Prior to the multiple regression analysis, bivariate correlations were examined to assess the relationships between the numerical independent variables and the dependent variable. Variables with non-significant correlations ( $p > .05$ ) with *Graduate Employability Skills* were excluded from further analysis. This significance level of .05 aligns with common practices in social and behavioral sciences (Cohen, 1988). As shown in Table 1, the correlation analysis revealed that all the numerical independent variables – *Academic Preparedness* ( $r = .73, p < .001$ ), *Positive Attitude* ( $r = .61, p < .001$ ), *Self-initiative* ( $r = .76, p < .001$ ), *Effectiveness of Supervision* ( $r = .79, p < .001$ ), and *Task Clarity* ( $r = .79, p < .001$ ) exhibited significant, strong, and positive correlations with *Graduate Employability Skills*.

The presences of multicollinearity among the independent variables were also assessed afterwards. Multicollinearity refers to a situation where independent variables are highly correlated with each other ( $r \geq .80$ ), potentially inflating the standard errors of regression coefficients and making it difficult to interpret the unique contribution of each variable to the model (Hair et al., 2018). None of the correlations between the independent variables exceeded .80 suggesting a lack of concerning multicollinearity.

**Table 1**

*Bivariate Correlations Between Academic Preparedness, Positive Attitude, Self-initiative, Effectiveness of Supervision, Task Clarity, and Graduate Employability Skills*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Academic Preparedness	-					
2. Positive Attitude	.65** ( $<.001$ )	-				
3. Self-initiative	.72** ( $<.001$ )	.73** ( $<.001$ )	-			
4. Effectiveness of Supervision	.80** ( $<.001$ )	.68** ( $<.001$ )	.74** ( $<.001$ )	-		
5. Task Clarity	.64** ( $<.001$ )	.54** ( $<.001$ )	.68** ( $<.001$ )	.76** ( $<.001$ )	-	
6. Graduate Employability Skills	.73** ( $<.001$ )	.61** ( $<.001$ )	.76** ( $<.001$ )	.79** ( $<.001$ )	.79** ( $<.001$ )	-

**Note:** \*\*denotes a statistically significant relationship (statistical significance level set at  $p = .05$ , two tailed). p-values appear within parentheses below the correlation coefficients.

The result from bivariate correlation and multicollinearity analysis warrants further investigation using multiple linear regression analysis. The categorical independent variable compensation was added to the multiple linear model regression analysis. Categorical variables represent qualities or classifications that fall into distinct groups. However, since multiple linear regression requires independent variables to be numerical, dummy coding is employed by creating a set of binary variables (0 or 1) from a single categorical variable (*Compensation*). This allowed the regression model to capture the effects of different categories within the

original variable on the dependent variable.

As shown in Table 2, the analysis revealed that there is a significant, very strong correlation between the combination of *Self-Initiative and Task Clarity* with the *Graduate Employability Skills*,  $R = .87$ ,  $F(8, 63) = 25.11$ ,  $p < .001$ . The multiple coefficient of determination indicates that the combination of their *Self-Initiative and Task Clarity* during the internship account for 76.1 % of the variance in the *Graduate Employability Skills* of undergraduate business administration students,  $R^2 = .761$ . The results indicated that the numerical variables *Academic Preparedness*, *Positive Attitude*, and *Effectiveness of Supervision* do not have a significant linear relationship with the dependent variable ( $p = .205$ ,  $.901$ , and  $.126$  respectively).

The coefficients for all the dummy-coded categorical variables can be interpreted as follows: compared to the reference group (no compensation received), the effect of receiving a  $3k \leq \text{compensation} \leq 6k$  is having 0.23 increments decrease in graduate employability skills while the effect of receiving a  $6k < \text{compensation} \leq 9k$  and a compensation  $> 9k$  is having 0.22 increments decrease and 0.28 increments decrease. However, these differential effects are not significant ( $p = .182$ ,  $.210$ , and  $.077$  respectively). From all these results, it can be concluded that there is no significant differential effect of students' compensation during the internship on their graduate employability skills (the DV).

This finding suggested that there is a significant positive predictive relationship between two key determinants of internship effectiveness - *Self-initiative* and *Task Clarity* - and *Graduate Employability Skills*, explaining 76.1% of the variance in *Graduate Employability Skills*. This indicates that internships that provide clear task instructions and encourage proactive student engagement are highly effective in developing the skills that are necessary for students to thrive in the workplace.

**Table 2**

*Multiple Linear Regression Results for Factors Predicting Graduate Employability Skills of Undergraduate Business Administration Students at A Private University in Thailand*

Variable	Coefficient*	SE	t (df=71)	p
Constant	1.030	.411	2.510	.015
Academic Preparedness	.146	.114	1.282	.205
Positive Attitude	-.011	.089	-.125	.901
Self-initiative	.250	.098	2.560	.013
Effectiveness of Supervision	.171	.110	1.553	.126
Task Clarity	.292	.077	3.771	<.001
3k-6k or not	-.226	.167	-1.351	.182
6k-9k or not	-.218	.172	-1.268	.210
9kandmore or not	-.278	.155	-1.797	.077
N	72			
F(8,63)	25.11			

Variable	Coefficient*	SE	t (df=71)	p
Prob. > F	<.001			
R	.87			
R <sup>2</sup>	.761			

**Note:**\* The regression coefficients reported here for each of the predictor variables are unstandardized. An unstandardized or raw regression coefficient (often denoted as B) describes the relationship between the predictor and the dependent variable in terms of the original (i.e., raw) units of measurement

The regression equation for predicting graduate employability skills of undergraduate business administration students at a private university in Thailand would be written as follows: Predicted Graduate Employability Skills of undergraduate business administration students =  $1.03 + .25 \times (\text{Self-initiative}) + .29 \times (\text{Task Clarity}) - .23 \times (3k \leq \text{compensation} \leq 6k \text{ Baht Group}) - .22 \times (6k \leq \text{compensation} \leq 9k \text{ Baht Group}) - .28 \times (\text{compensation} > 9k \text{ Baht Group})$ .

### Research Hypothesis

An analysis of the regression equation can be used to explore the hypothesized relationships between the numerical variables and the dependent variable. The analysis revealed a significant positive predictive relationship between two key determinants of internship effectiveness - *Self-Initiative* and *Task Clarity* and *Graduate Employability Skills*. Higher scores on *Self-initiative* and *Task Clarity* are associated with an increase in the *Graduate Employability Skills* of undergraduate business administration students at a private university in Thailand. *Graduate Employability Skills* of a student could increase by 0.25 for every 1 increment in *Self-initiative*, holding all other variables constant. Similarly, *Graduate Employability Skills* of a student could increase by 0.29 for every 1 increment in *Task Clarity*, holding all other variables constant.

The coefficient of *Compensation* group represents the effect of belonging to different compensation groups on predicted *Graduate Employability Skills*. The negative signs indicate an inverse relationship. Compared to a reference group (students who do not receive compensation during internship), belonging to certain compensation groups is associated with lower predicted graduate employability skills. Students belonging to  $3k \leq \text{compensation} \leq 6k$  Baht group were predicted to have 0.23 increments decrease in their *Graduate Employability Skills* compared to a reference group. Similarly, students belonging to  $6k \leq \text{compensation} \leq 9k$  Baht group were predicted to have 0.22 increments decrease. Students who belong to the highest compensation group (compensation > 9k Baht group), were predicted to have the lowest *Graduate Employability Skills*, 0.28 increments decrease compared to a reference group. However, there is no significant differential effect on students' *Graduate Employability Skills* based on the compensation group they belong to during the internship.

## Discussions and Recommendations

### Discussions

The current study shed light on the factors influencing the development of *Graduate Employability Skills* of undergraduate business administration students at a private university in Thailand during their internship. The most significant findings point to the crucial role of students' *Self-initiative* and *Task Clarity* during their internship experience. These factors contribute to *Graduate Employability Skills* development through increased student agency and exposure to meaningful work experiences. These findings highlight the importance of student ownership and active participation in internship tasks for skill development. A positive correlation existed between *Academic Preparedness*, *Positive Attitude*, *Effectiveness of Supervision*, and *Graduate Employability Skills*. However, these connections were not strong enough to predict *Graduate Employability Skills*.

The study found a significant predictive relationship between *Self-initiative* and *Graduate Employability Skills* of undergraduate business administration students. This finding aligns with Helyer and Lee's (2014) emphasis on graduates' proactivity as a key determinant of maximizing learning outcomes. It further supports the growing recognition of the importance of self-directed learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace. The emergence of student proactivity as one of the significant predictive positive relationships on *Graduate Employability Skills* reflects contemporary global trends that increasingly emphasize adaptability and proactivity skills. This finding highlights the need for Thai higher education to transition away from traditional passive learning models towards more dynamic, student-centered approaches that foster proactive learning. By cultivating self-initiative skills, Thai universities can better prepare graduates for the demands of the modern workplace.

The current study found a significant predictive relationship between *Task Clarity* and *Graduate Employability Skills* of undergraduate business administration students at a private university in Thailand. This finding underscores the importance of well-structured internships, emphasizing the provision of clear and meaningful tasks to foster student development. This aligns with Seidel et al.'s (2005) scaffolding concept and Eraut's (2007) emphasis on work design in learning. Within Thailand's evolving economic landscape, particularly under the Thailand 4.0 initiative, well-structured internships with task clarity are crucial to bridge the skills gap between academic preparation and industry requirements. This suggests that Thai universities should develop standardized internship frameworks that incorporate clear task structure and performance metrics, fostering closer industry-academia collaboration in program design (Sumanasiri et al., 2015). By offering well-defined deliverables and clear expectations, internships can facilitate the application of theoretical knowledge to practical settings, thereby enhancing graduate employability skills and preparing students for success in the dynamic Thai job market.

The lack of a significant, predictive relationship between *Academic Preparedness* and *Graduate Employability Skills* underscores the complex interplay between academic achievement and workplace readiness. While academic knowledge is essential, employers

increasingly prioritize a broader skillset encompassing emotional intelligence, problem-solving, communication, and adaptability. These findings align with previous research by Isa et al. (2020), which highlighted the gap between academic preparation and the demands of the modern workplace. To bridge this gap, Thai universities must develop well-rounded graduates with academic knowledge and practical skills, which may be fostered through internship experiences that provide clear tasks and opportunities for student initiative.

While the current study did not find a direct predictive relationship between *Positive Attitude* and *Graduate Employability Skills* of undergraduate business administration students at a private university in Thailand, this does not negate its potential influence on broader career success. A *Positive Attitude* can manifest behaviors highly valued by employers, such as treating internships as learning opportunities and demonstrating a strong work ethic. These behaviors, in turn, can contribute to the development of broader *Graduate Employability Skills*. Research by Phonkaew et al. (2020) corroborates the importance of a positive attitude in the workplace. A study by Phonkaew et al. (2020) within the Hospitality and Tourism sector identified service orientation, a strong work ethic, and positive interpersonal skills as key competencies employers seek. Future research could explore the mediating role of *Positive Attitude* in the relationship between *Internship Effectiveness* and *Graduate Employability Skills* outcomes to have a more comprehensive understanding of factors contributing to *Graduate Employability Skills*.

The current study did not find a significant predictive relationship between the *Effectiveness of Supervision* and *Graduate Employability Skills*. However, this does not necessarily negate the importance of quality supervision from the host organizations in overall internship experiences. Schwartz (2010) highlighted the mediating role of organizational mentors, suggesting that their guidance can significantly influence program perception and student outcomes. This underscores the potential complexity of the relationship between the *Effectiveness of Supervision* and *Graduate Employability Skills*. Direct supervisory influence on employability skills might not be as pronounced as anticipated in this study, and this could be due to the specific measurement of the current instrument used. The broader context of supervision within the internship program in Thailand, including the role of academic and organizational mentors, warrants further investigation. It is possible that the combined efforts of both academic and organizational supervisors contribute to a more holistic development of undergraduate business administration students' graduate employability skills.

The finding that *Compensation* did not significantly have a differential effect on *Graduate Employability Skills* of undergraduate business administration students suggests that intrinsic motivators, such as gaining experience and exploring careers, might be more influential factors for students. This aligns with research conducted by Kapareliotis et al. (2019), which found that students prioritized intrinsic rewards, such as valuing the opportunity to apply their academic knowledge in practical settings and gain exposure to employer expectations. On the other hand, *Compensation* is a multifaceted construct encompassing both financial and non-financial rewards. Research by Ramadhina and Kemalasari (2023) has highlighted students' preference for specific compensation types. Their findings agree that while financial incentives

are valued, non-financial rewards such as learning opportunities and a positive work environment significantly impact students' satisfaction and motivation. This suggests a more nuanced understanding of different types of *compensation's* role in shaping internship experiences and their potential indirect influence or effect on *Graduate Employability Skills* within Thai context warrants further investigation.

The current study's finding of moderately high *Graduate Employability Skills* among undergraduate business administration students at a private university in Thailand diverges from previous research that suggested a broader deficit in employability skills preparation within Thai universities (Jiracheewong et al., 2017; Isa et al., 2020). This discrepancy prompts further exploration of potential factors contributing to the observed difference. One possible explanation lies in the moderately high level of internship effectiveness offered by the university where the current study is being conducted. The current study has suggested the significant, predictive relationship between undergraduate students' *Self-initiative*, *Task Clarity*, and *Graduate Employability Skills*. It is possible that the internship program at this particular university effectively equips students with the necessary skills and experiences to enhance their graduate employability skills.

However, generalizing these findings to other universities and programs requires caution. The unique characteristics of this institution, including the design of the internship programs, its curriculum, faculty, and industry partnerships, may contribute to the observed discrepancy. The current study's focus on business administration students and a private university setting may have influenced the results. Future researchers may consider the contextual differences and need to determine how internship programs at other universities in Thailand effectively prepare students for the workplace. The characteristics of the student sample in this study may differ from those in previous research, potentially influencing the findings. For example, students with higher levels of motivation and self-initiative may demonstrate stronger graduate employability skills. By investigating the specific elements of internship programs that contribute to graduate employability skills, future research can provide valuable insights for enhancing internship design and implementation across the higher education sector in Thailand.

To the researcher's knowledge, no prior empirical research has been identified that examines the relationship between *Internship Effectiveness* (i.e., *Academic Preparedness*, *Positive Attitude*, *Self-Initiative*, *Challenging Task*, *Effectiveness of Supervision*, *Task Clarity*, and *Compensation*) and *Graduate Employability Skills* of undergraduate business administration students within the private university context in Thailand. By identifying *Self-initiative* and *Task Clarity* as key predictors for the development of *Graduate Employability Skills* of undergraduate business administration students, the current research provides valuable insights for educational institutions and internship host organizations. To enhance graduate students' employability skills, these entities can prioritize *the Self-initiative* of students and *Task Clarity* when designing and implementing internship programs.

The rapid evolution of the business landscape due to globalization and technological advancements has imposed heightened demands on graduates' employability. Internships are a



pivotal mechanism to address the widening gap between academic qualifications and industry expectations. By immersing students in real-world work environments, internships provide a practical platform to cultivate the requisite soft skills and technical proficiencies which employers demand. Therefore, internships have long been recognized as a bridge that translates theoretical knowledge into practical application and equips graduates with the competencies necessary to navigate the complexities of the contemporary workplace.

Acknowledging the role of internships in developing students' competencies and understanding of workplace culture, this study sought to determine whether there is a significant positive predictive relationship between internship effectiveness and graduate employability skills of undergraduate business administration students at a private university in Thailand. The findings from the current study revealed a significant positive, predictive relationship between self-initiative, task clarity, and graduate employability skills. The analysis did not indicate a significant predictive relationship between academic preparedness, positive attitude, effectiveness of supervision, compensation, and graduate employability skills. These results suggest that while internships offer a valuable platform for skill development, the specific elements within the internship experience that contribute to graduate employability warrant further investigation. It is important to note that the challenging task was removed from any data analysis because of an unacceptable Cronbach's alpha score.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, several key recommendations emerge for stakeholders in internship program development and implementation. Students are encouraged to proactively seek challenging responsibilities while maintaining clear understanding of task expectations. School administrators and program directors shall integrate self-initiative development and task clarity into curriculum designs and strengthen industry partnerships to ensure the quality of internship programs. Internship host organizations shall focus on designing the program with clear goals, expectations and timelines and opportunities for independent project ownership.

Future research should prioritize longitudinal studies to track graduate career trajectories and comprehensive stakeholder analyses involving internship supervisors from host organization, and academic internship supervisors. Methodological improvements are needed, including expanding samples across diverse institutions for the generalizability of findings, and incorporating qualitative methods for richer insights. The refinement of measurement constructs, particularly the "challenging task" variable, would strengthen construct validity and reliability in future studies. Additionally, investigating the influence of demographic variables, such as cumulative GPA, year of study, gender, major, and the nature of host organization, on undergraduate students' internship effectiveness and the development of graduate employability skills would provide deeper insights for program enhancement.

### Limitations of the Study

Recognizing the current study's limitations is crucial for interpreting the findings and guiding future research directions. Therefore, the researcher would like to acknowledge that the following limitations warrant consideration when interpreting the findings. The study's cross-sectional design limited the ability to establish causal relationships between the variables. The reliance on self-reported data for measuring internship experiences and their effectiveness and employability skills may have introduced the potential for social desirability bias, which may overestimate the reported levels of certain variables. Additionally, using a convenience sample of undergraduate business administration students from a single private university in Thailand may the generalizability of the findings to other populations and contexts.

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