



The Contribution Of Interns To Strengthening A Positive Work Culture: A Case Study In A Tourism And Event Service Company

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the role of interns in supporting the development of a positive organizational work culture through initiative, responsibility, professionalism, and the processes of adaptation and competency development during the internship period. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, with data collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Informants included the Chief Business Officer (CBO) as the main supervisor and several supervisors from various operational divisions. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis with methodological triangulation and member checking to ensure validity. Findings indicate that interns not only assist in operational tasks but also contribute to strengthening discipline, responsibility, and teamwork within the organization. Their interaction and communication with employees and supervisors facilitate learning and professional attitude development. Interns also introduce new perspectives that add value to organizational processes. Challenges such as initial guidance needs, inconsistent discipline, and adaptation to professional work culture were noted. Structured mentoring and effective communication are essential to optimize interns' contributions.

INTRODUCTION

Work culture constitutes a crucial aspect of an organization, as it plays a significant role in shaping the behavior, attitudes, and patterns of interaction among organizational members. A positive work culture can foster the development of a professional, disciplined, and collaborative work environment, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of organizational performance. Numerous studies have demonstrated that organizational culture exerts a significant influence on employee behavior, performance, and the sustainability of organizations in responding to changes in the work environment (Hamkar & Watanyar, 2024; Mellinda, 2024). A strong

organizational culture can also enhance employee engagement, work productivity, and the quality of working relationships among members of the organization.

In the context of modern human resource management, organizational culture not only influences individual performance but also serves as an important factor in enhancing job satisfaction, employee loyalty, and retention. Previous research indicates that an organizational culture that supports open communication, collaboration, and employee development can significantly improve job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Sadikin et al., 2025; Suherman et al., 2024). Furthermore, a positive organizational culture contributes to increasing employee engagement and encourages the creation of an adaptive and innovative work environment (Khoiri et al., 2025).

In practice, the development of work culture is influenced not only by managerial policies but also by interactions among individuals within the organization, including the involvement of interns. Internship programs represent an important learning platform that connects students with the professional work environment while simultaneously providing companies with opportunities to interact with a new generation of the workforce. Through internship activities, students not only acquire practical work experience but also contribute to the company's operational activities and interact with employees and supervisors in various professional tasks.

PT X is a company operating in the tourism industry and event management sector, and the company provides opportunities for students to participate in internship programs. PT X regularly accepts interns from various universities as part of its human resource development initiatives and corporate social responsibility efforts. In this context, the author participated as an intern in the internship program conducted at PT X.

During the internship period, the author observed that interns were not only involved in the company's operational activities but also actively interacted with employees, supervisors, and clients in several projects. Throughout the internship period, the author was able to observe the work culture practiced collectively by both interns and employees. Several issues identified within PT X, such as less professional communication behavior, the use of inappropriate language, and low levels of employee discipline, represent crucial concerns that are highly relevant to be examined within the field of management, particularly in the areas of human resource management and organizational culture.

Several previous studies have shown that organizational culture has a significant influence on employee performance, work engagement, and organizational productivity (Ariyani & Frianto, 2024). However, most prior research has primarily focused on the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance, job satisfaction, or employee retention. In contrast, studies that specifically examine the contribution of interns to the strengthening of organizational work culture remain relatively limited.

Furthermore, although the involvement of interns at PT X has been implemented regularly and has been positively received by various stakeholders, there has been no clear documentation or evaluation regarding the extent to which interns contribute to strengthening a positive work culture within the company. This condition indicates the existence of a gap between the implementation of internship programs and their utilization as part of an organizational strategy aimed at reinforcing work culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Work Culture

Work culture refers to the values or habitual practices adopted by an organization as guidelines to achieve its organizational objectives (Pramudya et al., 2023). In the context of modern organizations, work culture is often understood as a shared system of meaning that distinguishes one organization from another and serves as a collective identity influencing performance as well as the quality of working relationships among individuals. Conceptually,

work culture is formed through several key elements, including organizational values, work norms, communication patterns, reward systems, and leadership role modeling. Muhammad and Syahrani (2025) state that organizational culture constitutes the foundation of an organization because it represents the organization's identity. A strong and positive work culture plays a strategic role in enhancing both individual and overall organizational performance. Furthermore, Lestary and Harmon (2017) explain that the work environment is an important aspect that must be considered by organizations, as it is one of the determining factors influencing employee performance.

Positive Work Culture

Positive work culture is one of the key factors within organizations that shapes the behavior, attitudes, and interaction patterns among organizational members. A well-established work culture can create a professional, disciplined, collaborative, and productive work environment, thereby improving the effectiveness of organizational performance. Research indicates that the implementation of a strong organizational culture can enhance employee performance, strengthen organizational commitment, and support the development of more harmonious and sustainable working relationships (Vega & Wahyuningsih, 2023). In practice, a positive work culture is reflected in various work-related values such as discipline, teamwork, integrity, effective communication, and professionalism in carrying out tasks. These values serve as a critical foundation for building trust, improving work coordination, and fostering more optimal team performance within organizations (Saputri, 2024).

1. Discipline

According to Pratiwi and Permatasari (2022), work discipline is an important aspect that influences the achievement of work productivity. The existence of work discipline is essential for organizations because when all employees maintain a high level of discipline, organizations can more easily implement work programs and achieve their targets. Within organizations, discipline is considered an important indicator of professionalism as it is directly related to performance consistency and individual reliability in fulfilling assigned roles. The purpose of discipline is not merely limited to adherence to rules or maintaining order (Ismail & Pamilu, 2024).

2. Teamwork

According to Aqobah et al. (2020), teamwork refers to collaborative activities carried out among individuals to achieve common objectives. Through cooperation, individuals are able to complete tasks more effectively and efficiently. In organizational environments, teamwork becomes a key element of success since most work activities involve interactions across individuals and departments. For interns, teamwork serves as a primary means of adapting to the organizational work culture. Teamwork is also clearly reflected in team-based practices within event and tour activities at PT X, which are supported by the self-confidence of each individual, as such collaboration occurs not only internally but also externally. Apriansyah et al. (2017) explain that self-confidence is a valuable attribute that every individual should possess. Without being fully realized, self-confidence encourages and motivates individuals to perform, contribute, and demonstrate their strengths.

3. Integrity

Integrity refers to consistency and alignment with values, whether those values are explicitly defined or implicitly understood (Suyono, 2022). Integrity encompasses honesty, responsibility, and a commitment to working ethically, even in the absence of direct supervision. This value forms the foundation of trust in professional relationships. Within internship programs, integrity is reflected in the attitudes of interns when carrying out assigned tasks according to instructions, maintaining data confidentiality, and taking responsibility for the outcomes of their work.

Interns who demonstrate high levels of integrity tend to gain greater trust from supervisors and are often provided with broader opportunities for development within the organization. Unethical behavior by a single individual may negatively affect the overall image of the company. Therefore, fostering integrity through habituation and role modeling during the internship period becomes a strategic step in building a healthy organizational work culture.

4. Communication

Workplace communication refers to the process of conveying information, ideas, and instructions effectively within an organizational environment. Adinda and Kusumadinata (2023) explain that the professional world requires active communication that plays a significant role in facilitating work-related activities. In the context of internships, communication skills greatly influence the ability of students to adapt to the workplace environment. Sahija and Dela Cruz (2022) explain that engaging in discussions, sharing ideas, and completing tasks collaboratively can enhance both verbal and written communication skills. Interns are therefore expected to express their opinions politely, accept feedback constructively, and understand work instructions clearly.

5. Professionalism

Professionalism reflects work attitudes and behaviors that align with ethical standards, competence, and responsibility in performing professional roles. Professionalism includes a commitment to work quality, the ability to manage emotions, and awareness of one's roles and limitations within the organization. Interns who demonstrate professionalism are able to position themselves appropriately as part of the organization, even though they hold the status of internship participants. Ziyad et al. (2025) state that internship experiences provide significant contributions to understanding how the values of professionalism can be developed concretely through direct involvement in the professional work environment.

Human Resource Development

Satrio (2021) explains that human resource development refers to the process of preparing individuals to assume greater responsibilities by enhancing their competencies and professionalism. One form of development that is particularly relevant for prospective workers is the internship program, in which interns participate in experiential learning processes. This program not only provides practical experience but also increases students' motivation for career development (Liana et al., 2025; Jamilah et al., 2025). Within the framework of experiential learning theory, interns' competencies develop through a cycle of concrete experience, reflection, conceptualization, and application (Hasan et al., 2023). During the internship, participants learn to manage their time, follow standard operating procedures, receive evaluations, and take responsibility for assigned tasks. Intensive interaction with employees and supervisors enables interns to internalize the values of professionalism and work ethics, which are essential components of organizational culture (Astuti & Amri, 2024). In addition to benefiting interns, internship programs also provide advantages for organizations.

The presence of interns allows companies to instill work-related values early, identify potential talent, and strengthen organizational culture through cross-generational interactions. With structured and learning-oriented management, internship programs can serve as strategic instruments for developing human resources who are competent, possess integrity, and are aligned with the organization's vision and values (Musa et al., 2025).

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach to explore social phenomena in depth through direct interactions between interns, employees, and supervisors. This approach is used to understand how the interactions and active roles of interns function not only as task recipients

but also contribute to reinforcing the values of professionalism, collaboration, discipline, and responsibility within the work environment.

The unit of analysis includes the Chief Business Officer (CBO) as the direct supervisor, as well as several employees from operational divisions who interact with the interns in daily work activities. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and participatory observation (primary data), supported by relevant written sources (secondary data) such as scholarly books, journal articles, and previous studies. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, categorized according to themes, and validated through methodological triangulation and member checking to ensure credibility.

RESULTS

The implementation of the internship program generally proceeds well; however, several challenges are still encountered, particularly in relation to discipline, professionalism, and work independence. Some interns still need to improve their compliance with time management and organizational rules, their formal communication skills, as well as their understanding of the work context in order to avoid miscommunication.

In addition, the process of adapting to the organizational work culture and the confidence to act independently without constantly waiting for instructions still require further development, so that the contributions of interns can be more optimal. To further understand how interns provide positive contributions to the company, the following section presents the results of interviews conducted with the Human Capital Development (HCD) division and supervisors from each department:

Table 1 Interview Question

Leadership and Exemplary Behavior				
How do interns exhibit positive attitudes and initiative, and in what ways do these behaviors impact team motivation and the organizational work culture?				
<i>HCD</i>	<i>AAFE</i>	<i>TOE</i>	<i>DME</i>	<i>CDE</i>
The role of interns in fostering positive values within the workplace is considered satisfactory, although not yet fully consistent. Leadership initiative in small tasks or projects emerges occasionally and contributes to improving team motivation. The presence of interns also stimulates behavioral changes within the team through feedback processes, even though the reinforcement of organizational work culture remains partial.	Interns are perceived to demonstrate significant positive values within the workplace. Independently executing small projects reflects both initiative and responsibility. Their presence substantially alleviates the workload of internal teams and contributes to the strengthening of work culture.	Interns in the Operations division exhibit diverse characteristics yet display considerable initiative. Their presence helps reduce team workload, although an initial adaptation period is required. A relaxed work culture is implemented to maintain productivity effectively.	Some interns have become role models by demonstrating integrity, discipline, and a strong willingness to learn. Their presence provides fresh energy and encourages openness and concern among internal team members. This indicates that organizational cultural values can be effectively applied.	Interns are evaluated as highly effective in exemplifying positive values in the workplace. Their proactive attitude and active engagement enhance team motivation and further strengthen a positive work culture.

Thematic Analysis: Interns are perceived to demonstrate initiative in small-scale tasks and exert a positive influence on team motivation and work attitudes. Exemplary behavior through discipline, work ethics, and proactive engagement contributes to the reinforcement of organizational work culture, although such consistency has not yet been fully achieved.				
Communication and Collaboration How do interns demonstrate communication skills in cross-divisional collaboration, respond to feedback, and contribute to the establishment of smooth teamwork and an open work environment?				
Interns' communication skills are generally assessed as good, although formal communication still requires improvement. Cross-divisional collaboration functions effectively, and guidance from team members is received openly. The presence of interns contributes to creating a supportive work environment.	Interns' communication abilities are considered appropriate for their educational level. Cross-divisional collaboration is generally effective, although occasional miscommunication occurs. Interns are able to accept feedback and facilitate smooth teamwork.	Initially, interns' communication skills were not well-structured, but they demonstrated significant improvement as they gained work experience. Internal collaboration operates fairly effectively, while cross-divisional collaboration still requires enhancement. The presence of interns contributes to a more positive workplace atmosphere.	Interns exhibit active, polite, and open communication. Cross-divisional collaboration is conducted with an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each division. This communication fosters an inclusive and collaborative work environment.	Interns' communication skills are evaluated as highly effective, particularly in their willingness to ask questions. Cross-divisional collaboration proceeds smoothly and responsively. Their openness to feedback supports the efficiency and continuity of work processes.
Thematic Analysis: Based on the responses of the five informants, interns' communication is considered fairly effective. They are able to receive feedback and collaborate across divisions, although challenges such as occasional miscommunication still occur.				
Responsibility and Discipline How would you assess interns' responsibility, professionalism, and commitment in completing tasks accurately and consistently on time?				
The execution of interns' responsibilities is generally considered satisfactory. However, discipline and professionalism still require improvement, although commitment to assigned tasks remains visible throughout the internship period.	In the Finance division, interns are evaluated as responsible and reliable. Time management is relatively good, although occasional delays are observed in some other divisions. Professionalism among some interns still needs enhancement.	Interns are generally responsible and able to complete tasks on time when provided with clear instructions. Flexible work arrangements influence the level of discipline, but commitment to tasks remains evident, even when guidance is required.	Interns demonstrate seriousness and responsibility in their work. Time discipline is still in the adaptation phase for some individuals, while professionalism and task commitment are relatively consistent.	Some interns are highly responsible and disciplined, completing tasks punctually with a professional attitude and demonstrating strong commitment to their work.

Thematic Analysis: Interns demonstrate responsibility in completing tasks, particularly when provided with clear instructions. However, time discipline and professionalism are still developing and require ongoing guidance and support.				
Innovation and Initiative How would you assess interns' initiative, new ideas, and innovative contributions in supporting the improvement of team work processes?				
Some interns have proposed new ideas or solutions in their work, although the courage to try new approaches still requires further development. Initiatives that emerge are generally accommodated and have a positive impact.	Several interns demonstrate high initiative in presenting ideas, which can stimulate innovative thinking within the team and positively influence work processes.	While some interns have submitted ideas, their contributions are not always significant. The willingness to experiment with new approaches develops gradually as they gain work experience. Initiatives still provide added value to the team.	Often, interns are able to bring fresh and innovative ideas, with the courage to try new approaches prompting creative discussions within the team. Initiatives are considered meaningful contributions when followed by concrete actions.	Some interns confidently propose ideas and test new approaches, generating new perspectives in task completion. These initiatives are assessed as tangible contributions to the improvement of work processes.
Thematic Analysis: From an innovation perspective, interns are able to generate new ideas and perspectives that stimulate team discussions. Innovative contributions are considered meaningful when ideas can be implemented and produce a direct impact on work processes.				
Adaptation and Learning How quickly do interns adapt to the work culture, demonstrate a learning spirit, and enhance their competencies and independence during the internship period?				
Interns' adaptation skills are generally assessed as satisfactory. Throughout the internship period, increases in competencies and learning motivation are observed, although independent learning still requires further development.	The adaptation period of approximately one month is considered ideal for interns. During this time, improvements in skills and work attitudes are evident, although not all interns demonstrate the same level of learning motivation.	Interns require time to adjust to the company's work rhythm. Competency development is observable during the internship, yet independent learning abilities still need to be further cultivated.	Interns show a strong willingness to understand business processes. Both technical and non-technical competencies improve during the internship, and independent learning emerges particularly among interns with high initiative.	Overall, interns are considered quick to adapt to the organizational work culture. Increases in competencies and learning motivation are evident, and independent learning is demonstrated through proactive behavior.
Thematic Analysis: Interns require time to adjust to the organizational culture and work rhythm. Throughout the internship, improvements in competencies and learning motivation are observed, although independent learning still needs to be further developed.				

The Contribution of Interns to Team Spirit and Collaboration

The internship program at PT X contributes to strengthening a positive work culture through interns' involvement in various operational activities. Interns are not only responsible for administrative tasks but also participate in data management and company operations, which gradually fosters discipline and professionalism in their work behavior. The internship experience serves as a learning process that connects academic knowledge with professional practice. Most interns are able to complete tasks responsibly, particularly in data management and administration, indicating the development of professional responsibility (Ramadhani Parapat et al., 2025; Silva et al., 2018).

In addition to discipline and responsibility, interns also promote teamwork through coordination across individuals and divisions. Their involvement in organizational activities strengthens collaboration and effective communication, demonstrating that internship programs benefit students while also reinforcing the organization's work culture (Tri Soni & Arminda, 2023).

The Role of Interaction and Communication in Shaping a Professional Work Culture

Interactions between interns, employees, and supervisors play a significant role in shaping a professional work culture at PT X. Based on observational findings, the company implements a relatively open communication pattern, allowing interns the opportunity to ask questions, engage in discussions, and receive direct guidance from supervisors and colleagues. This communication pattern supports interns' adaptation in understanding the dynamics of the organizational work environment.

Interview results indicate that interns are generally able to accept guidance, feedback, and constructive criticism from supervisors and colleagues effectively. However, formal communication skills still require improvement to better align with the company's professional standards. This finding suggests that the learning process during internships is not limited to technical skills but also involves the development of interpersonal communication abilities in the workplace. Fatmawati (2022) emphasizes that communication is a critical aspect of organizational functioning because it influences work behavior and the effectiveness of coordination among organizational members.

Furthermore, interns are involved in cross-divisional collaborations, including administrative activities, recruitment processes, and the implementation of company events. Such involvement requires effective communication skills and a clear understanding of the roles of each division. Leadership example also influences the communication patterns of interns, as they tend to adjust their communication behavior according to the examples demonstrated by their supervisors. This finding is consistent with the research of Tistasari (2023), which states that leaders play an important role in shaping organizational work culture through behavioral role modeling. Therefore, interaction and communication during the internship program contribute to fostering a more professional work culture at PT X.

Initiative, Innovation, and Challenges in Optimizing the Role of Interns

Interns also play a role in bringing new enthusiasm to the workplace through initiative and innovation. Based on observational findings, interns begin to demonstrate the courage to take initiative after undergoing an initial adaptation period. These initiatives are reflected in efforts to complete tasks independently and seek solutions to work-related problems. Interview results indicate that several ideas proposed by interns have triggered discussions within the team, demonstrating the potential of interns as agents of positive change. The innovations introduced by interns generally stem from their fresh perspectives and academic experiences (Sugrainsi & Cerya, 2023). Although these ideas are often small in scale, they still provide added value to the work process, even though not all ideas can be immediately implemented due to limitations in experience and organizational context.

Observational findings also indicate that interns' level of independence increases during the later months of the internship period. Nevertheless, several challenges remain in optimizing interns' contributions. Differences in backgrounds, inconsistent discipline, and conflicts between academic obligations and work responsibilities represent the primary obstacles (Dayanti et al., 2025). Interview results reveal that some interns still require intensive guidance from supervisors.

The internship program plays a strategic role in strengthening a positive work culture at PT X. Interns function not only as supporting personnel but also as part of the organizational learning process. However, the success of the program largely depends on the mentoring and evaluation systems implemented by the company. Therefore, optimizing the internship program becomes an important step in developing a sustainable work culture.

Evaluation of Interns' Responsibility and Professionalism in Task Implementation

Based on observational results during the internship period, interns' sense of responsibility is reflected in their active involvement in various administrative and operational tasks within the company. Observations indicate that most interns are able to complete assigned tasks in accordance with supervisors' instructions. This reflects an initial commitment to work responsibility. Interview results with supervisors and employees show that interns are generally considered sufficiently responsible in completing assigned tasks, particularly when instructions are provided clearly and systematically.

However, several concerns remain regarding punctuality and the consistency of professionalism among some interns. Instances of tardiness and the need for additional supervision are still encountered in certain work situations. Interns' professionalism can also be observed through their daily work attitudes within the company, such as maintaining politeness, respecting supervisors, and adhering to established procedures (Syaidaturrahmah et al., 2025).

The evaluation of responsibility and professionalism is also related to interns' ability to work independently (Agustin et al., 2025). At the beginning of the internship period, interns tend to wait for instructions before taking action. Over time, however, an increase in independence becomes evident, as interns begin completing tasks without constantly waiting for direction. Overall, the evaluation shows relatively positive results, although there is still room for improvement.

Adaptation and Competency Development During the Internship Period

The adaptation of interns to the company's work culture represents an important stage in the development of professional competencies. Positive interactions with fellow interns and supervisors strengthen the learning and adaptation processes of participants within the professional work environment (Endriani & Rahayuningsih, 2025). Based on observational findings, interns typically require the first month to understand the work rhythm and organizational structure. During this initial stage, interns primarily engage in observation and learn the company's workflow.

Interview results indicate that after passing the initial phase, interns begin to demonstrate greater confidence in carrying out their tasks. The development of technical competencies is reflected in interns' abilities to manage administrative tasks, prepare reports, and support the implementation of company activities. Observations also indicate improvements in accuracy and work efficiency during the following months.

In addition to technical competencies, non-technical abilities or soft skills also develop throughout the internship period (Ria Idauli et al., 2021). Interns learn to express their opinions in meetings, receive feedback openly, and understand team dynamics through cross-divisional interactions. Thus, internship programs not only enhance students' competencies but also function as a bridge between theoretical knowledge acquired in higher education and practical application in the professional world (Jamilah et al., 2025).

DISCUSSION

This study aims to analyze the role of interns in supporting the strengthening of a positive organizational work culture through initiative, responsibility, professionalism, as well as adaptation and competency development. The findings indicate that internship programs function not only as a learning medium for students but also contribute to organizational work dynamics, with interns actively completing tasks, participating in teamwork, and adapting to a professional work environment.

Interns also bring new perspectives that add value to organizational processes. Interaction between interns, employees, and supervisors plays a crucial role in shaping professional attitudes, including communication, teamwork, and understanding of organizational culture. However, challenges such as the need for initial guidance, inconsistent discipline, and differences in interns' backgrounds affect their adaptation to the workplace.

The findings highlight the importance of structured management of internship programs through mentoring and effective communication. With proper management, internship programs can provide benefits for both students and organizations in developing competencies and strengthening work culture. This study is limited to a single organization with a small number of informants, suggesting that future research should expand to multiple companies or industry sectors for a more comprehensive understanding of internship programs within organizations.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study results, the internship program demonstrates that the presence of interns is not merely as operational support but also plays a role in strengthening a positive work culture. Through involvement in various activities, interns adapt to company standards and show development in responsibility, professionalism, and discipline, while also connecting academic knowledge with practical workplace experience.

Interaction and communication between interns, employees, and supervisors play a key role in shaping professional attitudes. Through open communication and participation in cross-divisional teamwork, interns learn, receive guidance, understand organizational dynamics, and contribute to reinforcing the value of collaboration within the work environment.

Although challenges exist, such as the need for initial guidance, adaptation to work culture, and differences in backgrounds, the internship program has strategic potential for both student competency development and the strengthening of work culture. With structured management through mentoring, evaluation, and effective communication, internship programs can provide optimal benefits for both interns and organizations.

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