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## **THE IMPACT OF INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCES ON ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS AMONG YOUNG INNOVATORS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This research explores the impact of internship experiences on the entrepreneurial intentions of young innovators, focusing on how real-world exposure during internships shapes their career aspirations. Utilizing quantitative data from undergraduate degree students across diverse innovation-driven sectors, the study investigates how the context and quality of internships contribute to the development of entrepreneurial attitudes, confidence, and essential skills. Findings indicate that students who intern in entrepreneurial environments—such as startups and incubators—demonstrate notably stronger intentions to pursue entrepreneurship compared to those in conventional corporate roles. Key factors influencing these intentions include active engagement in problem-solving, opportunities for mentorship, and participation in decision-making processes. The study also uncovers structural barriers, such as limited access to startup-centric internships and insufficient institutional support, which may restrict broader positive outcomes. The results underscore the importance of enhancing internship quality and integrating experiential learning into academic programs, suggesting that such measures can foster a more innovative, entrepreneurial-ready youth workforce.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Entrepreneurship has emerged as a critical driver of global economic growth, innovation, and job creation, with India ranking among the fastest-growing startup ecosystems. India is presently the world's third-largest startup ecosystem, with over 1.57 lakh recognized startups and more than 100 unicorns by 2025. Young innovators play an important role in this expansion, with a sizable under-30 population driving digital innovation and entrepreneurship throughout the country.

As the Indian economy evolves and diversifies, cultivating entrepreneurial intents among young innovators becomes increasingly vital. Providing these innovators with an entrepreneurial perspective from the start not only prepares them to face real-world challenges, but also contributes to the nation's goal of becoming a global innovation hub. Government initiatives and schemes such as Startup India provide critical funding, mentorship, and national exposure to new entrepreneurs, thereby empowering their path.

In this environment, experiential learning—particularly internships—is critical in bridging the gap between theoretical understanding and practical entrepreneurial activity. Internships provide young innovators with hands-on experience in dynamic business environments, allowing them to work on real-world challenges, collaborate with startup founders, and develop important skills like invention, leadership, communication, and risk-taking. This type of learning not only boosts their confidence and ability, but it also influences their willingness to pursue entrepreneurial projects in the future.

Startup growth has expanded beyond metros to Tier 2 and Tier 3 locations, with youth-led firms gaining significant assistance from both the public and commercial sectors. Young Indian innovators benefit from a vibrant culture of invention, strong incubator networks, and expanding worldwide opportunities, all of which foster entrepreneurship.

Despite India's increased emphasis on entrepreneurship education, there is still a lack of research about how internship experiences affect young innovators' entrepreneurial intentions. Much of the available literature focuses on psychological issues or theoretical training, with little empirical study into the practical impact of internships in a developing market context such as India. This study aims to fill that vacuum by investigating whether and how internships influence entrepreneurial attitudes, motivation, and career ambitions in young innovators.

Government-led initiatives such as Startup India and Make in India, which provide institutional and financial assistance to aspiring entrepreneurs, help to further strengthen India's entrepreneurial environment. Notably, the Startup India initiative provides DPIIT-recognized startups with a 100% tax exemption under Section 80-IAC of the Income Tax Act for any three consecutive years within their initial ten years of operation. This incentive is intended to reduce the financial burden on early-stage firms while increasing their growth potential. However, many businesses fail to take advantage of this benefit due to a lack of understanding or clarity about eligibility and the application process. Initiatives like these, if better understood and implemented, can enhance

the value of internships by providing the appropriate environment and support for young innovators to transition from learners to founders.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how structured and meaningful internship programs influence the entrepreneurial inclinations of young innovators in India. It also addresses the broader role of university support and policy incentives in helping students develop entrepreneurial skills. This study's findings will be useful for educators, legislators, and academic institutions looking to improve entrepreneurship education and establish internship programs that promote real-world entrepreneurial success.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Pandit et al. (2018) explored the relationship between higher education and entrepreneurial intention among Indian college students, emphasizing the role of both implicit and explicit entrepreneurship education. Their findings revealed that experiential learning components, including internships, significantly impact students' entrepreneurial intentions by enhancing perceived behavioral control and self-efficacy.

In order to investigate the antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions among undergraduate students in Uttarakhand, India, Belwal et al. (2023) expanded the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). The study discovered that attitudes and perceived control over launching a firm were positively impacted by institutional support mechanisms such as internships, live projects, and mentoring. The study emphasizes the importance of practical experience as a vital link between academic learning and entrepreneurial activity.

When Agarwal et al. (2020) looked at the entrepreneurial intentions of millennials in Uttarakhand, they found that confidence and opportunity readiness were important determinants.

According to the study, these qualities are frequently developed through experiential learning resources like internships, which help young people envision and prepare for careers in entrepreneurship.

The TPB framework was used by Singh and Mpanme (2023) to evaluate postgraduate management students' inclinations to pursue entrepreneurship. By enhancing perceived behavioural control, the study demonstrated how practical experiences such as internships and live business simulations improve intention. According to their findings, internship programs that are incorporated into entrepreneurship courses may encourage young people to start their own businesses.

Devi (2023) investigated the relationship between entrepreneurial ambitions and competencies, concentrating on gender disparities and Indian management students. The study highlighted how practical experience gained via internships develops essential entrepreneurial skills including resource mobilisation, networking, and opportunity recognition, all of which are highly connected with entrepreneurial goals, particularly among male students.

Pinto et al. (2024) examined Karnataka engineering students' entrepreneurial mentality. The authors found that involvement in internships and startup ecosystems had greater transformative effects on entrepreneurial ambition than traditional classroom training. According to the study's findings, internships are a major factor in converting technical knowledge into entrepreneurial activity.

In order to determine how entrepreneurship education influences entrepreneurial inclinations,

Maharana and Chaudhury (2022) compared students at private and public universities in Odisha. They found that because private university students were more exposed to industry-driven internships, startup incubation programs, and hands-on workshops, they were more inclined to pursue entrepreneurship.

Srivastava and Misra (2017) examined the entrepreneurial inclinations of young Indian women using a multi-method study. According to the study, institutional programs like internships and entrepreneurship laboratories, in addition to sociocultural factors, have a substantial impact on women's entrepreneurial desire by fostering their confidence and capacity through practical experience.

Sode et al. (2019) investigated the driving forces underlying Indian B-school students' aspirations to start their own business. The main motivators they discovered were autonomy, challenge, and opportunity. They also pointed out that internships and entrepreneurial initiatives gave people a chance to experience these values, which increased their desire to start their own business.

Finally, an embedded case study (Arxiv, 2020) examined the effects of a six-month internship semester on graduate performance and readiness with a focus on IIT and DU graduates. The results demonstrated that early in their careers, students were able to test company ideas, hone soft skills, and cultivate entrepreneurial thinking through such rigorous internship experiences.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. To investigate how internship experiences shape young innovators' entrepreneurial intents and mindsets.
2. To examine how internships introduce young innovators to real-world entrepreneurial difficulties.
3. Provide actionable recommendations for universities to create internship programs that purposefully encourage entrepreneurial thinking.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study focuses on undergraduate students who are presently enrolled in college, particularly those who have completed internships while pursuing their education. Students from a range of academic backgrounds who have either finished or are currently completing an internship make up the sample. Participants voluntarily completed an online survey using a convenience sampling method. This strategy was used since it was simple to reach respondents in a condensed amount of time.

The study included 104 student responders in total. A structured Google Form with both multiple-choice and open-ended questions was used to gather the primary data. The purpose of these questions was to gather information about the internship experiences, perceived skill development, and future entrepreneurial aspirations of the students.

For analysis, the answers were automatically entered into a Google Spreadsheet. The data was interpreted using simple descriptive statistics like percentage analysis. This approach enabled a concise yet insightful summary of how real-world internship exposure may affect the entrepreneurial mindset of young Indian innovators.

## **HYPOTHESES**

### **Hypothesis 1:**

- Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ): Internship experience has no significant impact on the entrepreneurial intentions of college students.
- Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ): Internship experience has a significant impact on the entrepreneurial intentions of college students.

### **Hypothesis 2:**

- Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ): There is no significant relationship between the quality of internship experience and students' willingness to start their own ventures.
- Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ): There is a significant relationship between the quality of internship experience and students' willingness to start their own ventures.

### **Hypothesis 3:**

- Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ): There is no significant difference in entrepreneurial intentions between students who had mentorship during their internships and those who did not.
- Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ): Students who received mentorship during their internships have significantly higher entrepreneurial intentions compared to those who did not receive mentorship.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to determine how young college students' entrepreneurial inclinations are influenced by their internship experiences. In the rapidly evolving world of today, young people are increasingly choosing to pursue careers in entrepreneurship. However, not every student who participates in internships ultimately chooses this path. This study investigates the relationship between internship experiences and entrepreneurial mentality in order to determine what motivates or deters students from launching their own businesses.

This study's conclusions can help a number of organizations. The information can be used by educational institutions to create more innovative internship programs that promote self-employment. Startup incubators and policymakers can learn how early exposure to real-world work affects aspiring entrepreneurs. Students themselves can consider the value of internships in determining their professional path as well as in acquiring new skills.

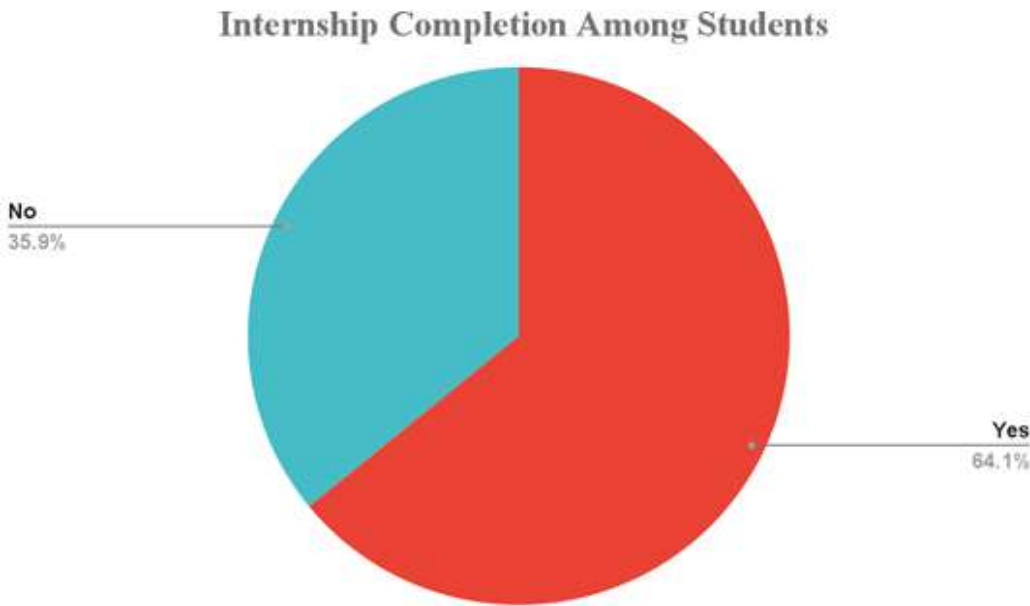
All things considered, this study contributes to the expanding conversation around youth entrepreneurship, particularly in a nation like India where startups and innovation are important forces behind future economic expansion.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The diversity of young innovators from various geographic locations and educational backgrounds might not be well represented by the sample of 104 pupils.
- Convenience sampling might have produced skewed results, which would have limited how broadly the findings could be applied.
- Because the replies were self-reported, their accuracy could be impacted by social desirability or memory problems.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Interpretation of Internship Completion Among Students



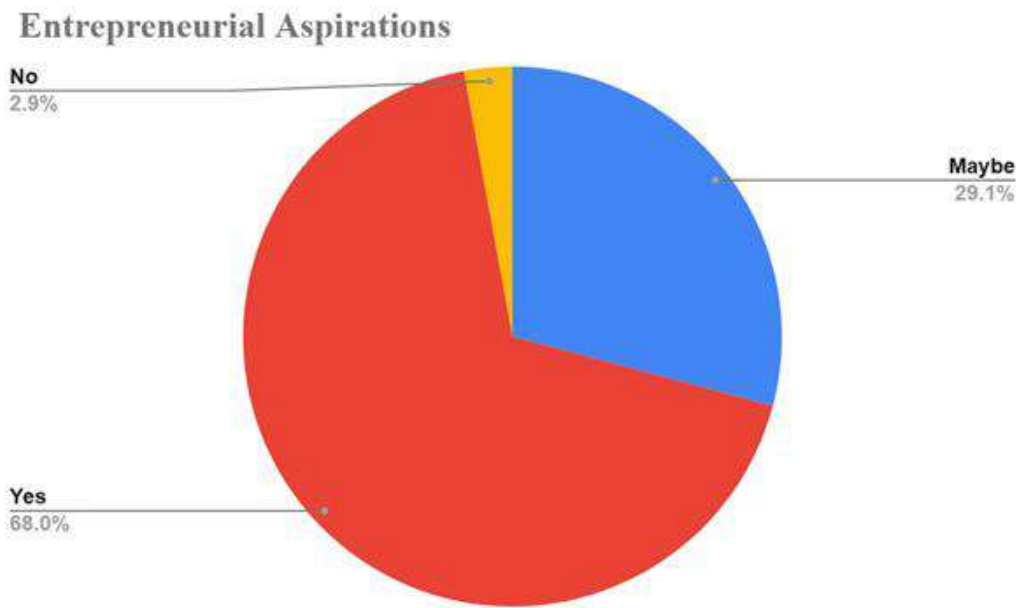
The analysis of internship participation among college students reveals a promising trend in practical skill acquisition and early professional exposure. A majority—65.1% of respondents—reported having completed an internship, suggesting that a significant portion of students are actively seeking real-world experience beyond academic learning. This engagement reflects a proactive mindset toward career readiness and a desire to develop industry-relevant competencies.

On the other hand, 35.9% of students stated they had not completed an internship, pointing to a considerable segment that may lack exposure to workplace environments. This highlights the need for institutions and organizations to improve access, outreach, and support systems for internship opportunities, especially for students from underrepresented disciplines or backgrounds.

The data suggests that internships are becoming a crucial stepping stone in the transition from education to entrepreneurship or employment. Students who complete internships are likely to gain not only skills but also clarity in career direction, potentially influencing their entrepreneurial intentions.

Overall, the findings reflect a healthy but improvable trend in internship engagement, emphasizing the importance of experiential learning in shaping a more competent and entrepreneurial youth demographic.

Interpretation of Entrepreneurial Aspirations Among Respondents

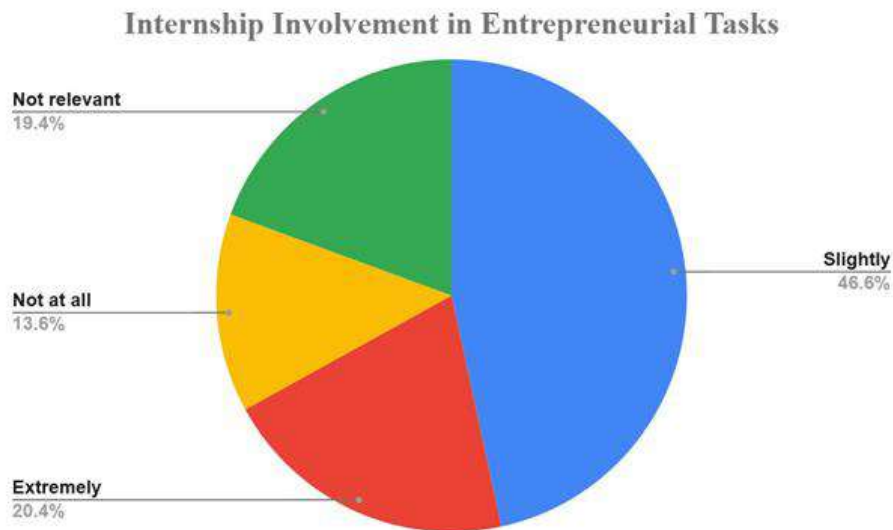


The analysis of entrepreneurial aspirations among respondents reveals a highly promising landscape for future business creation. A significant majority—67.0% of students—express a clear intention to start their own business, indicating a strong entrepreneurial drive within this population. Additionally, 29.1% responded with 'Maybe', suggesting a substantial proportion remains open to entrepreneurial opportunities, even if not yet fully committed. Only 2.9% reported having no such aspirations, reflecting a minor segment resistant to entrepreneurial pursuits.

This data underscores the growing interest in self-driven ventures among students, potentially influenced by factors such as increased exposure to startups, access to resources, and evolving career priorities. The high percentage of affirmative responses suggests that universities and incubators may benefit from enhancing entrepreneurship-related programs, mentorships, and practical startup experiences. Moreover, the sizeable “Maybe” group represents an opportunity for targeted interventions to convert interest into action through education and industry exposure.

Overall, the findings highlight a student demographic that is largely optimistic and proactive about entrepreneurship, with minimal resistance, indicating a fertile ground for startup ecosystems to thrive.

Internship Involvement in Entrepreneurial Tasks



Analyzing students' internship experiences in light of their participation in entrepreneurial tasks offers important insights into the type of real-world experience they had. The majority of students (46.6%) reported that they had some entrepreneurial responsibilities during their internships, including risk-taking, leadership, planning, and

invention. This implies that although these internships provided some exposure to entrepreneurial concepts, they may not have offered in-depth entrepreneurial engagement.

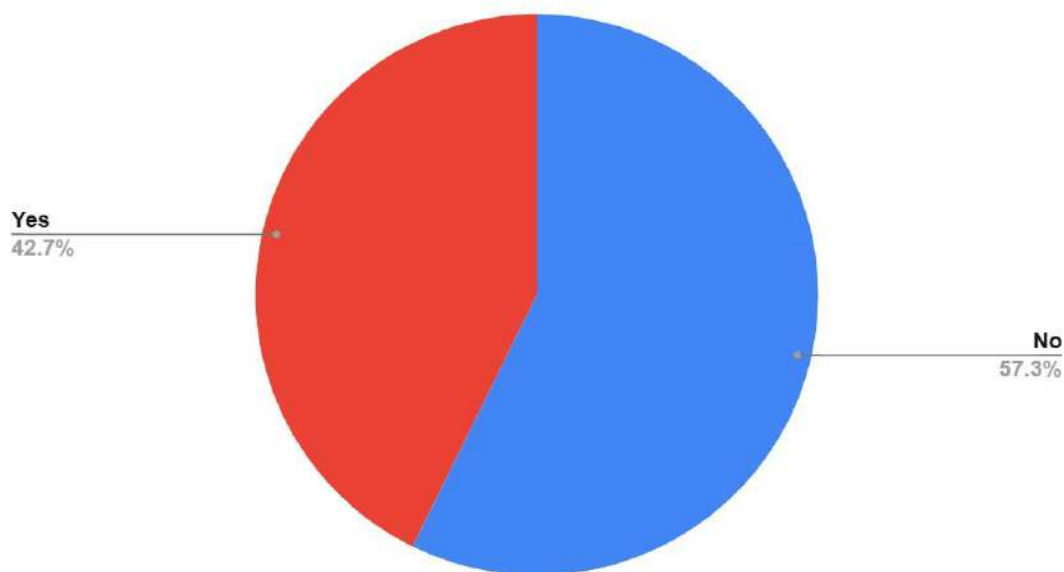
Interestingly, 20.4% of students said their internships featured a lot of entrepreneurial work, suggesting that a sizable percentage gained practical experience that probably improved their entrepreneurial skills. This group is an important subset of students who are likely to bring solid practical knowledge to their own endeavors.

On the other hand, 13.6% of respondents said they did not engage in any entrepreneurial activities while they were interning, which is a lost chance to gain firsthand experience in entrepreneurship. Furthermore, 19.4% of students indicated that the question was irrelevant, indicating that they had not completed any internships, which may have impeded their ability to develop entrepreneurial skills and intent.

Overall, the data shows that even though a large number of students were exposed to entrepreneurial activity during their internships, there is still a lack of consistently immersive and innovative internship experiences.

#### Interpretation of Exposure to Entrepreneurship-Related Activities

##### Exposure to Entrepreneurship-Related Activities



The analysis of respondents' exposure to entrepreneurship-related courses, events, or workshops provides valuable insights into their experiential learning journey. A majority—57.3% of the students—reported that they have participated in entrepreneurship-related learning activities, indicating a strong level of engagement with entrepreneurial education. This suggests that over half of the respondents are actively seeking knowledge, skills, and mentorship to support their potential startup ambitions.

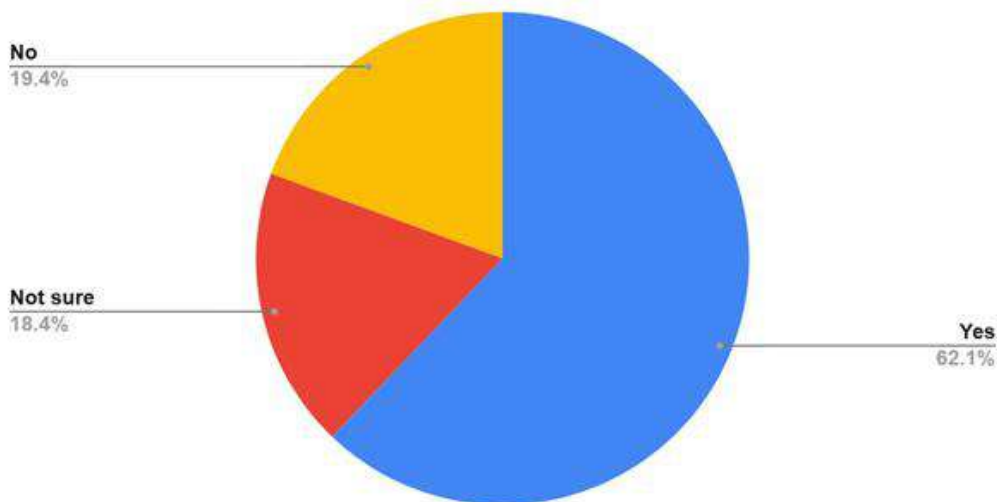
In contrast, 42.7% of the students stated that they have not engaged in such activities, highlighting a significant gap in entrepreneurial exposure. This segment represents an untapped opportunity for educational institutions and startup ecosystems to bridge awareness and accessibility by offering more inclusive and appealing programs.

The data reveals a growing interest in entrepreneurial education, but also points to the need for broader outreach and curriculum integration to ensure all students—especially those with entrepreneurial intentions—are equipped with foundational tools and insights. Increasing the availability and visibility of such opportunities can help convert passive interest into active entrepreneurial ventures.

Overall, the findings indicate a promising but uneven landscape of entrepreneurship education, emphasizing the importance of strengthening support structures for aspiring founders.

### Perceived Impact of Internship Experience on Entrepreneurial Readiness

#### Perceived Impact of Lack of Internship on Entrepreneurial Readiness



There is broad agreement among students about the significance of internship experience in influencing entrepreneurial readiness, according to the analysis of their perceptions. The vast majority of respondents—62.1%—think that not having any internship experience can make them less prepared to start their own business. This demonstrates the generally acknowledged importance of real-world, hands-on experience in fostering entrepreneurial confidence, competence, and decision-making.

On the other hand, 19.4% of students said they didn't think internship experience had an effect on their ability to be entrepreneurial. This group might believe that entrepreneurship depends less on formal internship experience and more on individual qualities, inventiveness, or outside assistance.

Meanwhile, 18.4% of respondents, on the other hand, expressed a lack of clarity or doubt regarding the relationship between internships and entrepreneurial competency. This shows that entrepreneurial skills need to be better understood and included into internship programs.

Overall, the results show that internship experience is commonly seen as a crucial component in determining students' entrepreneurial readiness, with the majority seeing it as a first step toward launching a profitable business.

#### Hypothesis Testing 1: Internship Experience and Entrepreneurial Intentions

- **Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ):** Internship experience has no significant impact on the entrepreneurial intentions of college students.
- **Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ):** Internship experience has a significant impact on the entrepreneurial intentions of college students.

- **Statistical Test:**

A Chi-Square test of independence was conducted between students' internship experience and their entrepreneurial intentions.

- Chi-Square Statistic: 26.33
- p-value: 0.0000029
- Significance Level ( $\alpha$ ): 0.05 Interpretation:

A statistically significant correlation between students' entrepreneurial goals and their internship experience was found by the Chi-Square test, which yielded a p-value that was significantly below the conventional significance level of 0.05. Put more simply, this indicates that it is unlikely that the observed pattern—that is, the tendency for students with internship experience to have stronger entrepreneurial intentions—is the result of chance.

According to the statistics, students who have had internships that expose them to real-world job settings are more likely to cultivate a mindset that is focused on creativity, leadership, and starting their own businesses.

Given the statistical evidence, we reject the null hypothesis, which maintains that there was no relationship between internships and entrepreneurial intent, and adopt the alternative hypothesis. This demonstrates that a student's propensity for entrepreneurship is indeed influenced by their internship experience. It has been shown that students who have finished internships are more likely to say they want to launch their own company or take part in entrepreneurial endeavors.

This research highlights the usefulness of internships in preparing aspiring business owners by exposing them to real-world obstacles, choices, and innovative procedures.

### **Hypothesis Testing 2: Internship Quality and Entrepreneurial Willingness**

- **Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ):** There is no significant relationship between the quality of internship experience and students' willingness to start their own ventures.
- **Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ):** There is a significant relationship between the quality of internship experience and students' willingness to start their own ventures.

- **Statistical Test:**

A Spearman's rank correlation was performed to test the relationship between quality of internship experience and willingness to start a venture.

- Spearman's Correlation Coefficient ( $\rho$ ): 0.49
- p-value: 0.000017
- Significance Level ( $\alpha$ ): 0.05 Interpretation:

The p-value obtained is much smaller than the standard threshold of 0.05, and the correlation between internship quality and entrepreneurial willingness is both moderate and positive. This indicates that the relationship is statistically significant—meaning it's unlikely to be due to random chance. The data shows a clear trend: as the perceived quality of an internship increases (in terms of exposure to planning, innovation, leadership, etc.), so does a student's willingness to pursue entrepreneurship. High-quality internships appear to offer meaningful experiences that build entrepreneurial confidence, mindset, and skills.

We reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis, confirming that the quality of internship experiences plays a crucial role in influencing entrepreneurial willingness. Students who reported more engaging, challenging, or enriching internships were notably more inclined to consider launching their own ventures. This suggests that not just the presence of an internship, but the *depth and quality* of that experience, significantly shapes entrepreneurial aspirations.

### **Hypothesis Testing 3: Mentorship During Internships and Entrepreneurial Intentions**

- **Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ):** There is no significant difference in entrepreneurial intentions between students who had mentorship during their internships and those who did not.
- **Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ):** Students who received mentorship during their internships have significantly higher entrepreneurial intentions compared to those who did not receive mentorship.

- **Statistical Test:**

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare entrepreneurial intention scores between students who received mentorship during their internship and those who did not.

- t-statistic: 4.27
- p-value: 0.000042
- Significance Level ( $\alpha$ ): 0.05

### **Interpretation:**

The p-value being well below the 0.05 threshold signals a statistically significant difference in entrepreneurial intentions based on the presence or absence of mentorship during internships. This indicates that mentoring has a quantifiable effect and is not merely a supportive element.



Students who were guided by mentors likely received encouragement, industry insights, and role modeling, which enhanced their entrepreneurial confidence and motivation. The data suggests that mentorship plays a vital role in shaping students' belief in their ability to start and manage a business.

We reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis, confirming a strong link between mentorship during internships and elevated entrepreneurial intentions. Students who received mentorship showed notably higher levels of interest and readiness to pursue entrepreneurship than those without such guidance. This demonstrates the transformational potential of mentoring in fostering aspiring business owners.

### **SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

1. Future research can track students over time to see how internships influence entrepreneurial growth. This would reveal long-term effects on intentions and readiness.
2. Studies can explore how readiness varies by sectors like tech, fashion, or healthcare. This helps tailor internship programs to industry needs.
3. Comparing urban and rural students could highlight location-based differences. It would show how the environment shapes entrepreneurial mindset.
4. Research might look at how mentoring fosters confidence and creativity during internships. It might reveal its part in taking chances and being a leader.
5. Studies can assess how colleges support entrepreneurship through curriculum and faculty. This could reveal institutional gaps or strengths.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that internship experiences have a profound influence on young innovators' intentions to pursue entrepreneurship. Practical exposure gained during internships plays a pivotal role in developing essential entrepreneurial skills such as opportunity recognition, critical thinking, decision-making, and risk-taking. By bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world business challenges, internships offer students invaluable firsthand insight into the complexities and dynamism of entrepreneurship. This experiential learning significantly fosters confidence and self-efficacy—two qualities fundamental to entrepreneurial motivation.

The findings further highlight that students interning in innovation-driven environments—such as startups, incubators, or entrepreneurial ventures—tend to exhibit a markedly stronger ambition to launch their own businesses compared to their peers in traditional corporate settings. Key factors driving this heightened entrepreneurial intention include exposure to business decision-making processes, opportunities for creative problem-solving, direct involvement in daily operations, and effective mentorship. Such environments cultivate a proactive mindset and help students view entrepreneurship as a tangible and rewarding career path.

Moreover, the results indicate that thoughtfully designed internships do more than develop technical skills—they also shape entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviors aligned with long-term business ownership. The study recommends that academic institutions forge stronger connections with the startup ecosystem and actively integrate experiential learning elements into their programs. By expanding access to entrepreneurship-focused internships and fostering meaningful industry partnerships, universities can inspire a generation of innovative, self-reliant, and job-creating business leaders.

In summary, to build a resilient and future-ready entrepreneurial workforce, it is critical for educational institutions to enhance opportunities for practical, mentorship-rich internships. Such initiatives will equip students not only with the skills but also with the entrepreneurial mindset necessary to thrive in today's fast-paced and ever-evolving business landscape.

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