

Analyzing Non-Monetary Factors' Influence on Interns' Job Conversion Intent in Philippine SMEs

Maria Adiel Aguilung, Chynna Mandela Bondoc, Robert Joshua Enriquez,
Carlos Vicente Lozano, Lois Sebastian Peralta

De La Salle University
maria.adiel.aguilung@dlsu.edu.ph

Abstract: Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) increasingly regard internships as a strategic pipeline for future talent. Converting interns into full-time employees improves workforce readiness and reduces recruitment costs, making it essential to understand what influences interns' intent to stay. This study investigates how non-monetary factors shape interns' intentions to pursue full-time employment in SMEs in the Philippines. The study focused on five core variables: Supervisory Support (SS), Psychological Contract of Employer Obligations (PCO_ER), Job Satisfaction (JS), Affective Organizational Commitment (AOC), and Perceived Advancement Opportunities (PAO). These factors reflect the interns' relational, emotional, and psychological experiences within the workplace, which are often overlooked in favor of monetary concerns. A quantitative research design was employed, using a 5-point Likert scale survey based on the Intern Conversion Intention Model developed by Hurst et al. (2008). Data were collected through Google Forms from 80 student interns enrolled at four major universities: the University of the Philippines-Diliman (UPD), De La Salle University-Manila (DLSU), Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU), and the University of Santo Tomas (UST). The responses were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM 4.0). Six out of ten hypotheses were supported. Key findings indicate that SS significantly enhances interns' PCO_ER which in turn positively influences both PAO and AOC. Additionally, AOC emerged as a strong predictor of conversion intention. Conversely, SS and PCO_ER did not significantly affect JS, and neither JS nor PAO had a direct impact on conversion intention. These results reveal the complex interplay of relational and psychological factors affecting intern retention. SMEs are encouraged to cultivate a supportive culture, clarify career pathways, and strengthen emotional bonds with interns to boost conversion rates.

Key Words: SME; Intern Conversion; Non-monetary Factors; Internship Supervisory Support; Job Satisfaction in Internship

1. INTRODUCTION

SMEs require skilled professionals to ensure stability, foster innovation, and achieve sustained development (Jooss et al., 2023). However, these enterprises often face limitations in talent depth and resources for talent development (Jooss et al., 2023; Monteiro et al., 2020). Globally, organizations have been recognizing internships as avenues for employee recruitment (Kojongian & Setiorini, 2024; Rose et al., 2021). The dynamic nature of SME environments provides interns with opportunities to cultivate adaptability, problem-solving, and leadership skills (Varghese et al., 2012; Alrumaih, 2017). Consequently, these experiences can equip them to drive innovation, enhance collaboration, and generate lasting value within

organizations, positioning them as agile leaders with long-term impact.

What attracts SME interns to convert to employment? Research indicates that compensation is a significant determinant in employment decisions (Ghapanchi & Aurum, 2011; Medallon, 2020) overlooking non-monetary influences despite their impact on talent retention (Rose et al., 2021; Shakeel & Butt, 2015). This study focuses on five non-monetary factors—Supervisory Support (SS), Psychological Contract of Employer Obligations (PCO_ER), Job Satisfaction (JS), Affective Organizational Commitment (AOC), and Perceived Advancement Opportunities (PAO)—to better understand how relational, emotional, and psychological elements influence interns' job conversion decisions.

Drawing upon Psychological Contract Theory and Organizational Socialization Theory (Rousseau & Schalk, 2000; Van Maanen, 1975, as cited in Hurst et al., 2012), this research examines how non-monetary factors shape interns' career decisions in SMEs. Specifically, this paper studies how Supervisory Support (SS), Job Satisfaction (JS), Perceived Advancement Opportunities (PAO), Affective Organizational Commitment (AOC), and Psychological Contract of Employer Obligations (PCO_ER) affect intention, following the framework of Hurst et al.'s intern conversion intention. This focus is particularly relevant in the Philippines, where SMEs play a vital role for job creation, economic expansion, and workforce stability (Department of Trade and Industry, 2024). The findings of this research will offer practical insights for Philippine SMEs to enhance their non-monetary offerings, thereby improving their ability to attract and retain emerging talents.

1.1. Research Questions

The research answers these questions:

- 1) How do non-monetary factors such as SS, PCO_ER, JS, PAO, and AOC influence interns' decisions to be converted into full-time employees in SMEs in the Philippines?
- 2) What insights can be drawn from the influence of non-monetary factors on intern conversion to help SMEs improve the overall internship-to-employment pipeline?

1.2. Significance of the Study

This study highlights how SMEs in the Philippines can strategically use internship programs to attract, retain, and convert interns into full-time employees—an approach vital to sustaining growth and competitiveness. Intern-to-employee transitions offer key advantages, such as reduced recruitment and training costs (Rogers et al., 2019; Divine et al., 2007), while building a pipeline of job-ready talent.

By developing structured internship experiences, SMEs can bridge the education-to-employment gap, support economic development, and contribute to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4: Quality Education and SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth). The study underscores the broader value of internships, not merely as workforce solutions but as platforms for mentorship, humanistic leadership, and inclusive growth.

Aligned with the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME, 2024), the research promotes ethical and socially responsible business

practices. It advocates for internships that cultivate both professional skills and personal development—empowering SMEs to nurture future leaders with competence and compassion.

In doing so, the study also reflects Lasallian values of Spirit of Faith, Zeal for Service, and Communion in Mission (De La Salle University Manila, 2024), extending its relevance to both business and community development. Ultimately, the findings aim to offer actionable strategies for SMEs to enhance intern conversion, reinforce organizational capacity, and contribute to a more inclusive and sustainable Philippine economy.

1.3. Scope and Limitations

The scope of the study is limited to the data from students in the “Big Four” universities—UPD, DLSU, ADMU, and UST—who completed at least 200 internship hours in SMEs. It briefly acknowledges monetary factors and lacks a defined population size due to privacy constraints.

1.4 Definition of terms

The following terms are defined and described based on existing literature.

Small and Medium Enterprises: The Magna Carta for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) describes asset size and workforce count to characterize Philippine firms (Republic Act 9501, 2008). The term “Small, and Medium Enterprises” (SMEs) refers to any business activity or enterprise involved in industry, agribusiness, or services (RA No. 9501, 2008). These can be corporations, cooperatives, partnerships, or single proprietorships. SMEs are categorized as follows: (a) By asset size: Small: PhP3,000,001 - PhP15,000,000; Medium: PhP15,000,001 - PhP100,000,000; (b) By number of employees: Small: 10 - 99 employees; Medium: 100 - 199 employees (Small and Medium Enterprise Development [SMED] Council Resolution No. 01 Series of 2003 (16 Jan. 2003), as cited in Hampel-Milagrosa, 2014).

Accept; Intern’s Conversion Intentions refer to the intern’s acceptance of the offer in SMEs.

Affective Organizational Commitment refers to an employee’s emotional attachment to the organizational goals and values leading one to stay in the organization by choice (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mowday, 1979).

Job satisfaction is a person's subjective assessment of their work experience encompassing happiness, fulfillment, and contentment derived from their job roles and workplace (Baxi & Atre 2024).

Psychological Contracts refer to an individual's perception of mutual obligations in the workplace beyond formal agreements (Rousseau, 1990; Hurst et al., 2012). Since they are not legally binding, unmet expectations reduce commitment and organizational citizenship (Hannah et al., 2016; Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000) while met expectations foster loyalty and job stability (Hannah et al., 2016; Rousseau, 1990)

Perceptions of Advancement Opportunities refer to an individual's understanding or recognition of the potential for promotions and career growth that a company provides, extending past the internship period (Hurst et al., 2012).

Supervisory Support refers to employees' perceptions of the degree to which their supervisors value their input and show concern for their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988).

Salaries and Allowances comprise employee compensation. Patnaik & Padhi (2012) define employee compensation as a structured monetary exchange. Watkins & Fusch (2021) link higher pay to job satisfaction, motivation, and performance.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

The research adopts a quantitative research design based on Hurst et al.'s (2012) Intern Conversion Intention model as depicted in Figure 1.

Based on the extant literature, the following hypotheses were derived:

H1. Interns' met SS expectations will have a positive effect on PCO_ER and JS.

H2. Interns' met PCO_ER will have a positive effect on PAO, JS, and AOC.

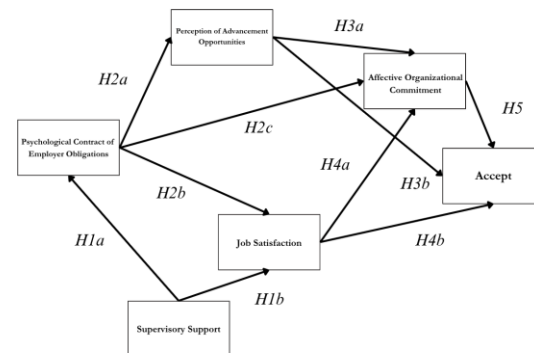
H3. Interns' met PAO will have a positive effect on AOC and a positive effect on conversion intentions.

H4. Interns' JS will have a positive effect on AOC and conversion intentions.

H5. Interns' AOC will have a positive effect on conversion intentions.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model of Interns' Conversion Intentions (Hurst, 2012)



The study is further grounded in Psychological Contract Theory (Rousseau, 1990) and Organizational Socialization Theory (Van Maanen, 1975), which together provide a deeper understanding of how interns form expectations, interpret their experiences, and develop organizational commitment. Psychological Contract Theory informs how interns assess the fulfillment of employer obligations, influencing their perceptions of support, satisfaction, and future opportunities. Organizational Socialization Theory explains how interns adapt to organizational norms and values, shaping their sense of belonging and commitment. These frameworks support the study's examination of how perceived obligations, workplace experiences, and integration processes influence the key variables.

2.2. Participants and Sampling Strategy

This study collected data from students-excluding those in medical and medical-allied fields-of UPD, DLSU, ADMU, and UST. Participants must have completed at least 200 hours of internship in an SME, aligning with CHED (2017) guidelines. A combination of snowball and convenience sampling was used. LinkedIn Sales Navigator aided in filtering and contacting potential participants.

2.3. Research Instruments

A 5-point Likert scale survey was used to gather data on JS, SS, PCO_ER, AOC, and Accept via Google Forms. A pre-test with 30 participants (Perneger et al., 2014) was conducted to ensure clarity, relevance, and reliability (Soori, 2024). Based on the pre-test and results from Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), certain questions within the

variables were omitted to improve factor loadings and enhance the overall reliability of each construct. The variables themselves were retained in full. Cronbach's alpha scores were computed for the final survey, all of which exceeded 0.80, indicating strong internal consistency. EFA further confirmed that the remaining items loaded appropriately onto their intended factors, supporting the instrument's structural validity.

Discriminant validity was assessed using three tests: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), cross-loadings, and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). All VIF values were below 5, indicating no multicollinearity. Cross-loadings showed each item loaded highest on its intended factor, and all HTMT values were below 0.85. These results confirm that the constructs are distinct and the instrument is both valid and reliable for further analysis.

2.4. Analytical Methods

This study used PLS-SEM to examine the influence of non-monetary factors on interns' intent to transition to full-time roles in Philippine SMEs. PLS-SEM is ideal for complex, exploratory models with small sample sizes and multiple latent variables. It allows simultaneous analysis of measurement and structural models and handles non-normal data well. Bootstrapping (300 resamples) tests the significance of path coefficients, supporting robust and reliable inference (Hair et al., 2018; Wong, 2013). Hair et al. (2018) guide the methodology, focusing on JS, SS, PCO_ER, and AOC. Data analysis, including Cronbach's Alpha, Model Fit, and Path Analysis, were conducted using SmartPLS 4.0.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. Path Analysis: Model Fit

Figure 2
 PLS-SEM Path Analysis Model

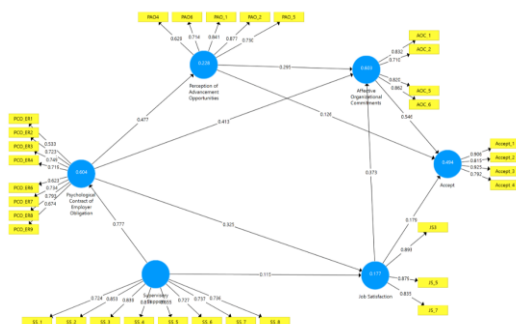


Figure 2 presents the PLS-SEM structural model, showing the relationships among key variables: SS, PCO_ER, JS, PAO, AOC, and Intern Conversion Intention (Accept). Arrows indicate path directions.

Table 1
 PLS-SEM Bootstrap

Path	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
AOC → Accept	4.436	0.000
JS → Accept	1.384	0.167
JS → AOC	4.209	0.000
PAO → Accept	1.090	0.276
PAO → AOC	3.179	0.002
PCO → AOC	4.416	0.000
PCO → JS	1.886	0.060
PCO_ER → PAO	5.274	0.000
SS → JS	0.693	0.489
SS → PCO_ER	16.796	0.0000

Table 1 summarizes the results of the PLS-SEM bootstrap analysis, indicating the significance of each hypothesized path.

Out of ten hypothesized paths, six were positive and statistically significant ($t > 1.96$, $p < 0.05$): AOC → Accept; JS → AOC; PAO → AOC; PCO_ER → AOC; PCO_ER → PAO; SS → PCO_ER. The remaining paths were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$).

The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) of 0.120 is above the ideal threshold of 0.08. However, this value remains acceptable for exploratory and complex models (Hair et al., 2022), indicating the model is generally interpretable but may benefit from refinement.

3.2. Hypothesis Testing

The study provided strong support for the proposed operational framework.

H1A revealed that SS significantly enhances interns' PCO_ER ($\beta = 0.777$), emphasizing the supervisor's role in shaping perceptions of employer obligations. However, H1B, which proposed that SS influences JS, was not supported ($\beta = 0.115$), suggesting satisfaction may be influenced more by factors like compensation or autonomy.

The H2 series focused on PCO_ER. H2A found strong support for its positive effect on PAO opportunities ($\beta = 0.477$), while H2B, which suggested an impact on JS, was not significant ($\beta = 0.325$). H2C was supported, indicating that fulfilling PCO_ER fosters AOC ($\beta = 0.413$).

H3A showed that PAO enhances affective commitment ($\beta = 0.295$), but H3B, which linked these opportunities to intern conversion intentions, was not supported ($\beta = 0.126$). Similarly, H4A confirmed that JS contributes to affective commitment ($\beta = 0.373$), while H4B, proposing a direct link between satisfaction and conversion intentions, was not significant ($\beta = 0.179$).

Finally, H5 was strongly supported, indicating that AOC significantly influences intern conversion intentions ($\beta = 0.546$). These findings highlight that while JS and SS may not directly affect conversion, PCO_ER, PAO, and AOC play more critical roles. The rejected hypotheses underscore the complexity of workplace dynamics, pointing to other potential factors shaping intern engagement and intent to stay.

3.3. Discussion

Our findings highlight key strategies for Philippine SMEs aiming to retain interns despite limited financial incentives. The strong link between SS and PCO_ER suggests that mentorship and structured feedback are crucial. Since PCO_ER significantly affects PAO ($\beta = 0.477$) and AOC ($\beta = 0.413$), clear onboarding and communication processes are essential. As AOC is the strongest predictor of conversion intent ($\beta = 0.546$), SMEs should focus on cultural integration and meaningful work to foster emotional attachment.

Ultimately, these initiatives enhance an intern's ethical relationship with the SME within the PRME framework, thus advancing SDG 4, SDG 8, and SDG 9. By adopting these possible strategies, SMEs may be able to improve their internship programs and remain competitive in the increasingly challenging labor market, with

consideration of fostering a responsible and sustainable business environment.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that non-monetary factors—especially affective organizational commitment (AOC), psychological contract of employer obligations (PCO_ER), and perceived advancement opportunities (PAO)—greatly influence whether interns want to stay and work full-time in Philippine SMEs. Among these, AOC was found to be the strongest direct factor, highlighting the importance of emotional connection in shaping long-term commitment. Meanwhile, PCO_ER and PAO also played meaningful roles by making interns feel that their efforts are recognized and that there is a future for them in the organization.

These findings challenge the common belief that salary is the main reason interns accept job offers. While financial rewards still matter, this study shows that supportive relationships, clear communication of expectations, and visible career growth opportunities can be just as, if not more, important in shaping intern decisions. When interns feel respected, included, and see a path for growth, they are more likely to choose to stay.

For SMEs, this presents a valuable opportunity. By focusing on improving mentorship, clarifying roles and expectations, and showing interns how they can grow within the company, SMEs can increase the chances of converting interns into loyal full-time employees. These actions not only benefit the business by reducing recruitment costs but also help in building a more stable and motivated workforce.

However, this study has its limitations. The data was gathered from a relatively small sample of students from the top four universities, which may not fully represent all interns across the country. The study also only reflects the interns' side, without including input from employers. Future research should include a more diverse range of schools, involve employer perspectives, and use longitudinal designs to observe how intern attitudes and outcomes change over time.

In the long run, creating a workplace culture where interns feel valued, supported, and included can make a big difference. Philippine SMEs

that invest in these non-monetary aspects stand to gain not only better retention but also a more committed and future-ready talent pool.

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