

Work World of Coordinators of Criminal Justice Education Internship Program in Negros Island Region (NIR), Philippines

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Abstract. The study's main objective is to explore the experiences, coping strategies, and aspirations of coordinators of the Criminal Justice Education Internship Program in Negros Island Region (NIR), Philippines. Guided by Role Theory, Experiential Learning Theory, and Vroom's Expectancy Theory, the research aimed to address the gap in understanding the multifaceted role of coordinators in the criminology internship program. Employing a transcendental phenomenological design, the study engaged ten (10) purposively selected coordinators from higher education institutions offering the Bachelor of Science in Criminology program. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and analyzed using Colaizzi's method, resulting in twelve emergent themes organized into four areas: positive experiences, negative experiences, coping strategies, and aspirations. Positive experiences highlighted real-world student preparation, practical pre-internship training, values and professional formation, and collaboration with agency and alumni support. Negative experiences reflected the interns' emotional and behavioral concerns, safety risks, logistical limitations, and administrative bottlenecks and constraints in placement. Coping strategies emphasized the coordinators' personal commitment and resource gap, as well as conflict mediation and communication skills. Aspirations focused on improving the program based on feedback, strategic planning, and effective coordination. The study concludes that coordinators play a crucial yet demanding role in internship delivery, underscoring the need for policy reforms, institutional support, and professional development to strengthen internship programs in Philippine higher education.

Keywords: Work world; Internship coordinator; Experiences; Coping strategies; Aspirations

1.0 Introduction

Internship programs are globally recognized as a crucial component of higher education, serving as a structured transition between academic knowledge and professional practice. Across many countries, they are implemented to enhance students' employability by allowing them to apply theoretical concepts in real-world settings. According to Urquía-Grande and Pérez Estébanez (2020), higher education institutions (HEIs) must develop their internship programs in a way that strengthens communication among three core stakeholders: employers, academic supervisors, and students. When this triad is well-aligned, students gain a clearer understanding of their roles and expectations during the internship, which improves the quality and impact of their experiential learning. Internationally, there is also a growing emphasis on ensuring that internships build

not only technical skills but also essential soft skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, adaptability, and problem-solving skills, which employers consistently prioritize in an increasingly competitive global job market.

In countries such as the United States, Australia, and many European nations, internship programs are integrated into curriculum frameworks and are backed by institutional policies and industry partnerships. For example, in the U.S., the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) provides extensive guidelines and outcome-based frameworks for internship programs, emphasizing the need for meaningful work experiences supervised by professionals (NACE, 2021). Similarly, the European Commission promotes structured internship experiences through initiatives like the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, encouraging institutions to co-design internships with industry partners to ensure relevance and employability (European Commission, 2020). These examples underscore the global trend of enhancing the quality, structure, and stakeholder involvement in internship programs as a means to bridge the academic-professional divide.

In contrast, many developing countries are still working to integrate practical experiences into higher education effectively. For instance, Anjum (2020) highlights that in Pakistan, while internship programs are recognized as necessary, the educational system often lacks structured opportunities for students to engage in hands-on learning during their academic journey. He stresses that inadequate teaching methodologies and the absence of experiential learning lead to a gap in students' ability to apply theoretical knowledge in solving real-life problems. Consequently, internships become an essential solution, offering both faculty and students exposure to real-world practices, thereby enhancing the quality of teaching and student preparedness.

In the Philippines, the Student Internship Program of the Philippines (SIPP) is mandated by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to equip students in various academic disciplines with the necessary skills, values, and competencies required in the workplace. One key requirement under this program is the appointment of a SIPP Coordinator, whose primary function is to manage, supervise, and monitor internship activities to ensure they align with both institutional objectives and CHED guidelines. Within the field of Criminal Justice Education, these coordinators play a particularly critical role in connecting academic institutions with various host training establishments, including agencies within the five pillars of the Criminal Justice System. Their responsibilities include arranging placements, maintaining communication with partner agencies, monitoring intern progress, and resolving any issues that may arise during the internship.

Internship program coordinators in the Philippine criminology context are expected not only to facilitate administrative requirements but also to ensure that students are prepared for the demands of fieldwork. They serve as mentors, problem-solvers, and policy implementers all at once. Their presence ensures that the academic component of the internship remains strong while also catering to the evolving expectations of partner institutions in law enforcement, corrections, forensic science, and the judiciary. These coordinators often face complex challenges, including aligning institutional calendars with agency schedules, addressing student concerns in real time, and dealing with policy changes or operational constraints within partner agencies.

Particularly in the Negros Island Region, internship program coordinators in the College of Criminal Justice Education serve as the primary point of contact connecting students to the field. These coordinators manage the three key stages of internship implementation: Pre-immersion, Immersion, and Post-immersion. They address the logistical complexities of coordinating schedules across multiple agencies, balancing the unique needs and concerns of diverse student groups, and ensuring that the overall internship process contributes to both academic growth and professional development. Coordinators must also maintain ongoing communication with stakeholders to provide a responsive and adaptive internship structure. These demands require a high level of organizational skill, emotional intelligence, and policy knowledge.

Literature search revealed that there are studies conducted about challenges of the criminology students during the internship program by Lumingkit et al. (2024), about the supervisor's perspective on what makes a good intern by De Villiers et al. (2018), and about the analysis of site supervisors' evaluations of interns' professional development by Williams et al. (2019). However, the researcher could not find a study on the experiences of internship coordinators regarding their positive and negative experiences, coping mechanisms for the challenges encountered, and aspirations to improve the implementation of the internship program in Criminal Justice Education.

Having served as an internship program coordinator herself, the researcher had firsthand experience navigating the challenges of aligning academic instruction with field-based requirements. She was deeply involved in all three internship phases, witnessing both the program's accomplishments and its limitations. Among the most pressing challenges were managing student readiness, navigating agency expectations, and maintaining consistent communication with stakeholders. These experiences served as the impetus for the present study.

Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the experiences of internship coordinators in the Criminal Justice Education programs of the Negros Island Region. It aimed to understand their successes and difficulties, identify how they cope with the demands of the role, and capture their aspirations for improving internship implementation. By amplifying the voices of these coordinators, this research aimed to contribute to more effective policy formulation, increased institutional support, and stronger partnerships between academic institutions and industry stakeholders, ultimately enhancing the internship experience for both coordinators and students.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The qualitative research employed the transcendental phenomenological research design. Creswell and Poth (2018) posited that there is a need to study a group or population, identify variables that cannot be easily measured, or hear the voices of those who are silenced. Conducting qualitative research empowers individuals to share their stories, listen to their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between researchers and the participants in the study. Qualitative research answers questions about what the experience is like and provides the reader with an understanding, enabling others to make sense of reality (Cypress, 2019). Qualitative research examines why individuals think or behave in a certain way and how they come to understand these complex thoughts and actions within their lives (Denny & Weckesser, 2019).

The transcendental phenomenology approach involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis, portraying the essences of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). It is not the researcher's goal to explain why the informants experienced the phenomenon, but to present the informants' perspective of what they experienced and how they experienced it. Moustakas (1994) posited phenomenology is an appropriate tool for exploring and describing shared experiences related to phenomena. This study followed a qualitative transcendental phenomenological design. Moustakas (1994) define transcendental phenomenology as a form of inquiry that seeks to understand human experience. As mentioned in the interview guide, it asked the informants to describe a successful experience in preparing orientation and training sessions for criminology students, particularly addressing the needed skills and knowledge for criminal justice internship placements as well as their difficulties. Moreover, since they have encountered those difficulties, they were also asked on what strategies or methods they have used to address it. When transcendental phenomenology is utilized in a study, researchers aim to describe the essence of the experience with respect to the phenomenon and examine it in its totality. Transcendental phenomenology is the appropriate research design for this study because it investigates how related phenomenon is experienced and describes how the informants experience the phenomenon using their descriptions.

In the current study, the phenomenon is the internship program coordinators. The researcher sought to describe the experiences, strategies and aspirations of internship program coordinators in the College of Criminal Justice in the Negros Island Region. By focusing on how coordinators perceived their roles, the phenomenological method allows for a deep understanding of their personal and professional experiences, capturing the essence of what it means to be an internship program coordinator. This approach aligns well with the study's objective to reveal insights into their work world, highlighting common themes and challenges in their work world.

2.2 Research Informants

The informants for this study's in-depth interviews comprised 10 coordinators of internship programs, drawn from the selected schools in the Negros Island Region (NIR) that offer Bachelor of Science (BS) in Criminology programs. This study utilized in-depth interviews (IDI) exclusively, as they are most suitable for capturing the rich, personal experiences of internship coordinators, which aligns with the phenomenological nature of the research. Additionally, the use of IDI allowed each participant to express their unique institutional experiences without being overshadowed by others, ensuring confidentiality and authenticity in the data collected. The

selection of these informants was guided by purposive sampling, focusing on their specific qualifications and experiences, specifically a criminologist and at least one year of experience as an internship coordinator, to ensure rich, relevant data for the phenomenological investigation. Each selected coordinator brought a unique perspective shaped by their years of experience, institutional affiliation, and involvement in overseeing internship programs.

2.3 Research Instrument

In this study, the researcher utilized a semi-structured interview guide designed to gather in-depth data from the selected internship program coordinators in the Negros Island Region. This instrument consists of open-ended questions that encouraged participants to share their lived experiences, challenges, and aspirations related to their roles in managing internship programs within the Bachelor of Science (BS) in Criminology curriculum, which was reviewed by a panel of experts using the Validation form to assess its relevancy, clarity, conciseness, and completeness to the research objectives.

The interview guide questions were divided into four parts. First part is the Demographic Information. This section collected basic background information from the informants, including their age, gender, educational background, type of educational institution, and years of service as an internship coordinator. The part two was designed to gather Experiences of the coordinators of Criminal Justice Education internship program divided into positive and negative experiences faced which focused on three key stages: pre-immersion, immersion, and post-immersion. Part three was addressing the challenges encountered as coordinators of Criminal Justice Education internship program where it asked the strategies and coping mechanisms used to manage issues during internship preparation and immersion. Moreover, part four, which asked questions about the aspirations of the Criminal Justice Education internship coordinator for the internship program, was used to inform future improvements.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to the actual data collection, the researcher asked permission from the school's Dean of the College of Criminal Justice Education through a letter request. Following written approval from the school's dean, contact was made with the internship coordinator to schedule suitable times for interview. Informants were provided with an informed consent form which explained the study's purpose, data collection procedures, and confidentiality measures. The interview was held in a designated area or a suitable location at each school, depending on the availability of the place and the participant's preferences. Interviews were audio-recorded (with participants' consent) to ensure accurate capture of responses, and detailed notes were taken during each session.

2.5 Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis for this study utilized Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive phenomenological method, which provided a rigorous and systematic framework for exploring and interpreting the lived experiences of informants. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and richness of detail. In line with Colaizzi's approach, the first step involved familiarization with the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts, allowing the researcher to immerse fully in the narratives and gain a holistic understanding of the informants' perspectives. Significant statements that directly related to the phenomenon under investigation were then extracted from the transcripts. These statements were carefully reviewed and interpreted to formulate meanings.

Once meanings were formulated, they were clustered into themes that reflected common aspects of the lived experiences. These clusters served as the foundation for developing broader emergent themes, capturing the depth and complexity of the data. The researcher then synthesized the themes into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon. This description was further refined into a concise statement that articulated the fundamental structure of the phenomenon under study. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the analysis, the findings were returned to the participants for validation through member checking, allowing them to confirm the accuracy and authenticity of the interpretation (KR & S, 2021).

2.6 Ethical Considerations

In conducting this research, the ethical principles of informed consent was strictly upheld. Informants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits, and their voluntary participation was ensured through explicit consent. The researcher prioritized beneficence by aiming to generate insights that

would improve internship programs for the benefit of students, coordinators, and institutions. At the same time, non-maleficence was ensured by protecting informants from emotional, psychological, or professional harm through strict confidentiality and careful handling of sensitive information. The principle of justice guided the fair and equitable selection of informants. At the same time, autonomy was honored by respecting informants' right to make informed choices and withdraw from the study at any time.

Given the researcher's background as a former internship coordinator, she also employed bracketing and reflexivity to manage personal biases. By setting aside her own experiences and remaining self-aware, she ensured that the informants' voices and lived realities were accurately captured and centered in the research process.

3.0 Results and Discussion

Positive Experiences of the Informants as Coordinators of Criminal Justice Education Internship Program

Theme 1: Real-World Preparation and Skill Development

Internship coordinators shared that one of the most fulfilling aspects of their role is seeing students gain real-world knowledge and professional competence through internship immersion. Students are placed in partner agencies where they perform tasks aligned with their functions and interact with professionals. This practical exposure provides interns with a hands-on understanding of their chosen field, enhancing their technical and interpersonal skills, including teamwork, communication, and discipline. The key issues highlighted included a sub-theme.

Enhancement of Practical Experience and Career Preparation

This sub-theme arose when internship coordinator shared positive experience regarding pre-internship orientation and training.

"They were really happy. They were very eager to know what it is really like in the field, especially in the bureaus. They said they learned a lot because they finally saw what actually happens in real situations. As for the partner agencies, they also appreciated having interns; it gave them a chance to share their experiences, inspire the interns to consider joining their bureaus, and at the same time, they had the opportunity to teach them."

Many coordinators observed that students return from the field more aware of the complexities of criminal justice work and more eager to engage with their academic coursework. The application of classroom theories to real-life situations not only enhances student learning but also motivates them to strive for excellence.

This was supported by Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, which highlights how internships provide students with concrete experiences that they can later reflect upon, transforming these into abstract knowledge to guide future actions. Coordinators play a crucial role in this process, serving as facilitators who ensure that students are placed in environments that foster deep learning and continuous feedback. This approach promotes meaningful, transformative education that extends beyond textbook instruction. Similarly, Role Theory underscores the institutional expectation for coordinators to act not only as administrators but also as educators and mentors, shaping both the professional and personal growth of interns. Expectancy Theory further explains their sustained motivation despite the workload, as they believe their efforts will directly enhance student performance, and they highly value the resulting academic and professional success.

This alignment between theory and practice echoes the findings of Shore and Dinning (2023), who note that higher education has a dual responsibility: to provide intellectually stimulating learning and to produce work-ready graduates equipped with skills to thrive in a dynamic global market. As the employability agenda gains prominence, the need to immerse students in real-world workplace contexts becomes essential, especially in preparing them for the demands of the 5th industrial revolution.

The World Economic Forum (2020) predicted a growing demand for skills in active learning, adaptability, and creativity; capabilities that are best developed through engaging with live, real-world challenges provided by external organizations.

Likewise, Anjum (2020) emphasized that structured internship programs act as a bridge between academic theory and professional practice, enhancing job preparedness, workplace confidence, critical thinking, and

communication skills. Collectively, these perspectives underscore that well-designed internships, guided by dedicated coordinators, are crucial in equipping students for both immediate employability and lifelong professional development.

Leadership and Responsibility Through Internship Tasks

Another sub-theme arose as shared insight by the internship coordinator. This reflects how internships provide students with chances to lead and take accountability. Through assigned tasks, they learn to organize work, make decisions, and uphold professional standards.

“What I usually do, especially during orientations, is to brief them first about what they should do, what they might encounter in the areas where they’ll be assigned. I give them knowledge about the various situations in different bureaus. I really focus on honing their leadership skills so that during the OJT, everyone has the chance to become a leader.”

This approach reflects a deliberate effort to instill not only technical readiness but also leadership capacity and accountability among interns. The development of leadership is no longer viewed as a product of innate traits alone but as a dynamic process shaped by interactions, contexts, and the active engagement of both leaders and followers. By providing early guidance and encouraging each student to lead at some point, the coordinator fosters both confidence and responsibility in their professional practice.

This aligns with Gigliotti and Spear’s (2022) assertion that graduate and professional education should purposefully integrate leadership concepts, strategies, and practices into experiential opportunities such as internships. They emphasize that leadership development equips students with competencies like teamwork, problem-solving, communication, and the ability to lead change, skills that extend beyond discipline-specific expertise. Moreover, applied experiences in real-world contexts help students develop leadership identities alongside their professional roles. When coupled with mentoring and reflective practice, these experiences not only reinforce a sense of responsibility but also prepare students for future leadership roles in their respective fields.

Similarly, the Dallas Virtual Internship Toolkit (2021) underscores the value of meaningful projects, clear expectations, and goal setting as essential components in preparing interns for leadership roles. By orienting students to their tasks, anticipated challenges, and workplace contexts before deployment, coordinators create an environment where interns can take initiative, collaborate effectively, and build decision-making skills. This approach not only enhances their readiness to lead during the internship but also strengthens their long-term capacity to engage in social influence and contribute meaningfully to their academic and professional communities.

Theme 2: Effective Pre-Internship Formation

Another significant positive experience noted by the coordinators involves the comprehensive orientation and training sessions provided to students before they begin their internships. Coordinators emphasized that proper orientation and early preparation before deployment are crucial to a successful internship. Activities such as pre-deployment seminars, agency briefings, and ethics orientations help students understand what is expected of them in the field.

Legal, Ethical, and Operational Orientation before Deployment

Internship coordinator shared that structured orientation programs based on CHED orders were conducted, including first aid and leadership training:

“Before the first week of instruction, I conducted an orientation based on CHED orders. I also had them undergo training like basic first aid, fire safety, leadership training. Example aside leadership, we also have physical fitness activities.”

These preparatory measures align students' behavior and attitudes with professional standards, preventing potential issues during the actual internship. Such pre-internship formations serve not only as logistical requirements but also as moral and professional groundwork. These proactive steps help ensure a smoother internship experience for both the students and the partner agencies, reinforcing the value of preparation in professional practice.

Role theory supports this theme by emphasizing that pre-internship activities help reduce role ambiguity. When coordinators provide clear guidance, students better understand their responsibilities and the behavioral expectations linked to their positions. This clarity not only enables students to perform more effectively but also allows coordinators to fulfill their own roles with greater efficiency, setting standards and boundaries that minimize conflicts or misunderstandings during fieldwork. From the perspective of Experiential Learning Theory, such preparation ensures that interns begin the learning cycle with both awareness and readiness, priming them for deeper reflection and engagement during their actual internship tasks. Expectancy Theory also applies, as coordinators recognize that thorough preparation increases the likelihood of strong student performance, leading to favorable agency evaluations ultimately yielding satisfying outcomes for all stakeholders involved.

This result is reinforced by Libradilla et al. (2023), who found that the quality of pre-internship training primarily shapes the impact of criminology internships on both knowledge and skill development. Structured activities, such as orientation sessions, role familiarization, legal briefings, and simulation exercises, provide interns with a clear understanding of their duties and expected professional conduct. Entering the field with defined expectations fosters greater confidence, adaptability, and the ability to perform in alignment with industry standards—outcomes consistent with Role Theory’s focus on minimizing role confusion.

Pre-Internship Training and Skills Development

Internship coordinator also emphasized the in-house training provided by the institution, which included physical and moral preparation:

“We do conduct the in house training as part of the pre-internship program; we could say after the in house training, that our interns are ready for exposure in different agencies. The in-house is composed of endurance, group dynamics, also moral and religious”.

Shahrani et al. (2022) states that pre-placement training is considered a vital preparatory phase for students entering internships or work-integrated learning programs. This training often includes workshops, industry briefings, and skill-building sessions designed to equip students with the necessary competencies to perform effectively in professional environments. Such programs may address both technical skills relevant to the placement role and essential soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. By engaging in pre-placement training, students are better prepared to meet workplace expectations, adapt to organizational cultures, and contribute productively from the start of their internship experience.

Theme 3: Development of Values and Professional Behavior

One of the most encouraging observations made by internship coordinators was the transformation in students' values and attitudes throughout their internship. Interns began to display a sense of professionalism, accountability, and ethical conduct. Many were commended by agency supervisors for being respectful, good followers and attentive to detail, which are essential values in law enforcement and public service.

Formation of Discipline, Respect, and Professionalism

Internship coordinator expressed satisfaction with the feedback received from partner agencies about student behavior, especially regarding discipline and courtesy:

“There are observations from them sometimes there are positive feedbacks with regards to the manner on how the students perform their functions inside the agency as well as the discipline which they will have always to maintain about courtesy and discipline within the agency”.

Moreover, internship coordinator quoted that students generally adhere to guidance and respect for authority by strictly following agency protocols:

“They are obedient, and they also observe protocols of the agency or station. They really follow rules. When we say follow this or that, the concern is raised, and then they always ask permission from me because the agency also tells them to ask permission.”

These behavioral improvements were attributed to immersion in environments that demanded real

responsibility. Coordinators observed that as students encountered real-world workplace scenarios, they internalized the importance of discipline, confidentiality, teamwork, and leadership. The internship thus became a venue not just for skill development but for moral and professional growth, which coordinators view as equally essential outcomes of the program.

Experiential learning theory supports this theme by showing how values are cultivated through concrete experiences and reflective observation. Students internalize ethical and professional behaviors by witnessing them in practice during fieldwork and by being held accountable for their own conduct. Over time, these lessons become part of their personal and professional identity. Role Theory further explains how coordinators act as guides in transferring institutional and societal values, ensuring that interns understand and fulfill the expectations of their future professional roles. Expectancy Theory also applies, as coordinators remain committed to mentoring students, motivated by the belief that their guidance will shape competent and morally grounded professionals—an outcome they highly value, which drives their efforts despite any challenges.

This is consistent with Bonilla and Patubo's (2025) study on the criminology internship program at Our Lady of the Pillar College-San Manuel Inc. and Our Lady of the Pillar College-Cauayan Inc., which found that internships significantly enhanced interns' administrative, technical, and field operational skills, as well as organizational and occupational capabilities. These skill improvements reflect a deeper internalization of professional values and behaviors. The study emphasized that structured internships, offering real-world exposure and responsibilities, are crucial in instilling professionalism and ethical standards among criminology students. Immersion in actual law enforcement and criminal justice settings enables interns to grasp the expectations and responsibilities of their chosen field, reinforcing their commitment to uphold the values essential to the profession.

Theme 4: Agency Collaboration and Alumni Support

Collaboration with external stakeholders, especially alums working in the agencies, was a common positive experience among coordinators. Alums served as contact persons, mentors, or evaluators, ensuring smoother communication and more reliable placements. This network of support helped coordinators manage logistics more efficiently and enhanced the overall quality of internship experiences.

Strengthening Agency Collaboration and Alumni Partnerships

Internship coordinator shared that managing the internship program involves active coordination with partner agencies and building strong linkages:

“Okay. Usually, it is the coordination with agencies, ma'am. Then, in addition to coordination, we establish a quick connection. For example, we apply for PNP. And then, during all the parades of the local government in the Mabinay unit, you are included. Moreover, we will not say no because the mayor is a good person to us.”

The internship coordinator also shared the practical benefit of having former students embedded in partner institutions, stating:

“We prepare programs as well as documents for interns assigned to every place. Moreover, fortunately, we have a large number of graduates from CPSU here. Most of them are also assigned in our neighboring cities and municipalities. So those people that we usually utilize for us to help or to assist us in placing or in contacting or in communicating with these partner agencies.”

Alums and agency partnerships also contributed to sustained credibility and trust in the academic institution. Coordinators shared that having former students in positions of influence fostered a sense of continuity and professional loyalty. Alumni often gave interns more attention, provided feedback, and served as role models, further enriching the learning experience.

Role theory illustrates how coordinators utilize their professional networks, including those with alums, to fulfill institutional expectations for efficient program implementation. Alums, shaped by the same academic environment, reinforce these role expectations by serving as mentors who guide current students in their transition to professional roles. Expectancy Theory further supports this theme by highlighting how collaboration increases instrumentality; coordinators believe that partnerships, particularly with agency

personnel and alums, directly lead to improved outcomes. From the lens of Experiential Learning Theory, agency personnel and alums engagement enriches students' reflective learning through firsthand accounts and professional examples, offering practical insights that strengthen both competence and career aspirations.

This aligns with Bawica's (2021) observation that collaboration between institutions and employers is essential for fostering work-related learning and improving graduates' employability. Because internships require balancing the goals and expectations of the awarding institution, the student, and the employer, maximizing student experiences can be challenging, especially when evaluating program outcomes and success.

Andersen (2024) adds that alum partnerships can help address coordination and behavioral challenges by creating supportive professional connections. These networks foster collaboration opportunities, enhance operational success, and contribute to a positive psychosocial environment that sustains both program implementation and the professional growth of students and coordinators alike.

Negative Experiences of the Informants as Coordinators of Criminal Justice Education Internship Program

Theme 5: Behavioral and Emotional Struggles of Interns

A significant challenge highlighted by internship Coordinators was dealing with students' behavioral issues and emotional immaturity during internships. Instances of absenteeism, lack of discipline, and emotional instability were cited as recurring problems. These behaviors often disrupted agency operations and placed additional burdens on the coordinators, who had to intervene, mediate, and at times, discipline the students to protect the institution's reputation.

Managing Intern Behavior and Emotional Well-being

Despite efforts to prepare students, the internship coordinator acknowledged that some interns occasionally fail to follow the guidelines set by their assigned agencies:

"There are some interns who are not following the guidelines provided to them. When they report to their assigned stations, they are given their specific guidelines, but some interns still fail to follow, for example, the protocol. We make sure that any negative feedback they receive is corrected."

In another instance, internship coordinator noted that challenges still arise during the internship, particularly with students who report late or fail to carry out their assigned duties properly:

"Sometimes we face difficulties, like for example some of the students are reporting late and or sometimes they are not really observing their function during their duty, they will be reminded always on what to do time-to-time, and should we say the knowledge or the skill, sometimes our students there are only a few that are not well prepared during the immersion program."

Beyond student behavior, the emotional toll on coordinators was also evident. Some felt stressed and unsupported in addressing these recurring issues. Some coordinators admitted that they often had to act as counselors and life coaches, roles not formally assigned to them. These situations added layers of emotional labor and reinforced their perception that internship coordination extends beyond administrative work, touching deeply on student development and well-being.

In some cases, interns require special attention and continuous supervision due to a lack of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Mohamad et al. (2020) found that some employers reported interns' poor time management, weak problem-solving skills, and inability to accept criticism. These shortcomings made it challenging for supervisors to design and assign tasks aimed at building competencies, as they doubted the interns' ability to perform effectively.

Ali et al. (2024) further noted that individuals with behavioral disabilities often experience changes in thoughts and emotions that result in challenging behaviors. When emotional and behavioral problems occur, they can lead to poor school adjustment, reduced efficiency, high absenteeism, low self-esteem, social incompetence, loneliness, and a decline in overall well-being later in life.

Similarly, Moore et al. (2020) observed that emotional distress among interns is frequently unreported due to a fear of judgment. This concealment prevents early intervention and makes it harder for coordinators to address

issues, especially when they lack formal training in psychological support.

In the Philippine context, Calfoforo (2023) reported that interns often exhibit low self-confidence and a fear of criticism, which hinders their performance and requires coordinators to provide frequent counseling, follow-ups, and conflict resolution. These additional responsibilities extend beyond administrative coordination, placing emotional and operational strain on coordinators as they balance program management with student welfare.

Theme 6: Safety Risks

Another concern voiced by internship Coordinators was the safety and security of interns placed in high-risk environments such as police stations, jails, or field operations. Exposure to real-life criminal justice settings sometimes placed students in unpredictable or unsafe conditions. Coordinators bore the responsibility of ensuring student safety, often without the necessary institutional authority or logistical support to control field placements or environments.

Students Safety Assurance

The internship coordinator raised concerns about student honesty during the internship process. Such situations highlight the challenges coordinators face in ensuring transparency and the importance of maintaining integrity throughout the internship program:

“There are some students who are not honest, ma’am. For example, during our training session, there was one participant who was undergoing training but later found to be pregnant. Even though we conducted medical screenings, she submitted a falsified medical result.”

The internship coordinator also shared a safety-related concern encountered during field monitoring. Some interns were observed participating in traffic operations without taking proper precautions or obtaining prior approval. This raised serious concerns about road safety and protocol adherence:

“I encountered mam during my monitoring of students, especially in traffic. They joined the traffic operations on the road. That is the one that I really dislike, where the student cannot observe road safety. So I reminded them to seek our permission first if the agency required them.”

This responsibility caused anxiety among coordinators, who feared the repercussions of potential harm to students. While they recognized the educational value of these placements, the unpredictability and danger associated with the field made it difficult for them to feel fully confident about deployments. Safety protocols were sometimes unclear, and agency readiness to host students varied widely, adding to their concerns.

Concerns about student safety and integrity during internships highlight the importance of clear protocols and risk management in higher education. Odlin et al. (2021) emphasized that work placements carry various risks that require realistic, evidence-based mitigation strategies, rather than purely procedural compliance. Effective risk management demands significant institutional resources and careful oversight to prevent unsafe practices and reduce exposure to unmanaged risks. In line with this, best-practice frameworks recommend clearly defined responsibilities, informed consent, and pre-placement safety briefings to ensure students understand workplace hazards and follow established procedures.

Safety assurance also extends to ethical conduct. Studies on academic integrity have shown that dishonest behaviors in academic settings, such as falsifying information, can carry over into professional environments if left unaddressed. Instances of unethical practices during internships highlight the importance of providing early guidance, close monitoring, and fostering a strong culture of accountability. Furthermore, the literature on workplace safety emphasizes that physical and procedural safeguards are crucial for off-campus activities, particularly in high-risk environments such as traffic operations. By combining structured safety planning with ethical mentoring, coordinators can better protect students, maintain professional standards, and strengthen institutional trust with partner agencies.

Theme 7: Logistical Limitations

Logistical concerns, such as distant placements, scheduling issues, transportation problems, and budget constraints, were a recurring theme among coordinators. Many shared how they struggled to manage student placements efficiently, mainly when partner agencies were located far from the institution or had inconsistent availability. Coordinators often had to adjust their personal schedules, provide transportation, or bridge communication gaps to accommodate students and agency requirements.

Ensuring Equitable Access Through Logistical Support

The internship coordinator shared that due to unapproved vehicle requests, coordinators often use their own money and personal vehicle to visit interns, particularly those assigned to distant areas:

“Financial for monitoring. That is the problem, ma’am, because we use our own money. Our vehicle request was not approved. Sometimes I have to bring my own car and give others a ride, especially for far locations.”

The internship coordinator further added that a limited budget poses a challenge in coordinating with partner agencies. While funding is allocated for communication and related tasks, it is often insufficient to cover all necessary expenses.

“So one of the problems that we encountered is time because sometimes, most of the time, we are busy. And of course, not all the time our partner agencies. That is why sometimes we could not come up with our contract or our arrangement were being delayed because of the availability of the people. Moreover, one of our problems is also our financial needs. Even though we have a budget for this purpose to communicate with our partner agencies, our budget is limited.”

The lack of administrative support and institutional resources exacerbated these logistical burdens. Coordinators recounted how logistical tasks, such as delivering documents, following up with agencies, and adjusting schedules, were completed without assistance or reimbursement. This created an unsustainable workload that affected their capacity to focus on student learning and development.

This result exemplifies Role Theory’s depiction of institutional neglect and overextended roles, where coordinators are expected to act as program designers, logistical officers, and liaisons without clearly defined support systems. These excessive demands reflect poor role structuring, which can result in burnout and dissatisfaction. From an Expectancy Theory perspective, coordinators face reduced instrumentality when their logistical efforts do not always translate into smooth placements or satisfied students, diminishing their motivation. Experiential Learning Theory is also indirectly affected, as logistical inefficiencies can interrupt or shorten students’ field exposure, hindering the completion of the full experiential learning cycle.

Magnaye (2022) emphasized the importance of institutional support for the effective implementation of the Student Internship Program, recommending travel or load allowances for coordinators, improved coordination in the use of university vehicles, the establishment of a grievance committee, and the assignment of dedicated coordinators for each program with internship courses. Regular meetings between coordinators and Host Training Establishments (HTEs) were also suggested to promote smoother operations. Coordinators further identified supports such as faculty, employer, and alum collaboration, technology integration, and staff assistance. However, they pointed to time limitations, budget constraints, and unfavorable staff-to-demand ratios as persistent barriers. These constraints not only affect program management but also the quality and continuity of student learning experiences, reinforcing the need for institutional measures that address both logistical and human resource challenges.

Theme 8: Administrative Bottlenecks and Constraints in Placement

Coordinators reported constant delays in filing requirements, processing Memoranda of Agreement, and slow internal procedures, all of which disrupted the internship timeline. These administrative bottlenecks caused delays in student deployment, eroded agency trust, and created stress among both students and coordinators.

Delays in MOA Processing and Limitations in Internship Placement Opportunities

Internship coordinators recalled the exhausting process of coordinating with agencies, often requiring repeated visits:

“This is the current dilemma for coordinators because the approval comes from the regional office. I have had numerous experiences going back and forth to agencies to accommodate our requests and complete the requirements. The documents get delayed even at the provincial level. In one bureau, I had to go back five times.”

Moreover, they also reported the taxing nature of coordination and documentation requirements:

“Aaaah...It could be quite difficult and taxing, considering that we have to process it with the respective regional offices, and of course, the preparation of paperwork, documents required by these offices, before the deployment.”

Furthermore, internship coordinator pointed out the added burden of regional bureaucracy.

“This is one of my biggest struggles hahaha. When the approval is regional, for example, let us say the experience is BFP. I have attempted to apply twice for their agency, but it turns out that I am unable to comply. So, the bureaucracy. Moreover, when two agencies cannot agree on the format of the MOA, I have experienced this as well. When the national agency has its MOA, its format, and our school also has the MOA. And then they cannot come into agreement. So in ending, there is no OJT can be done.”

The inefficiency of bureaucratic systems often forced coordinators to act as mediators between the school administration and external agencies. They frequently had to follow up documents, explain delays to agencies, and manage student anxiety about late placements. These added responsibilities were not part of their formal job description but became unavoidable due to institutional inefficiencies.

In connection to the result, Del Rosario et al. (2022) noted that internship programs are designed to complement classroom learning with practical skills, desirable attitudes, and hands-on experiences in recognized Host Training Establishments (HTEs). However, while these programs offer significant benefits, the requirement for coordinators to manually prepare and process documents—such as recommendation letters, waivers, and contracts —alongside continuous monitoring of students creates heavy workloads.

Similarly, De Guzman (2021) stressed that the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) mandates partnerships between higher education institutions and reputable HTEs through formal agreements detailing roles, responsibilities, safety measures, training plans, and evaluation methods. Although these partnerships strengthen program quality, they also increase the coordinators’ administrative load. Overall, these combined pressures underscore the need for systemic support to streamline processes and safeguard both coordinator efficiency and student learning outcomes.

Addressing the Challenges Encountered as Coordinators of the Criminal Justice Education Internship Program

Theme 9: Personal Commitment and Resource Gaps

Despite the lack of institutional resources and formal support, many coordinators shared that they still went beyond their designated roles to ensure the success of student internships. Some used their personal funds for transportation or communication, while others adjusted their own schedules or allocated extra time to resolve student issues. This personal commitment stemmed from a deep sense of responsibility toward their students’ learning and safety, even if their extra efforts were not officially recognized or rewarded.

Coordinators’ Personal Initiative and Dedication

Internship coordinators admitted to covering logistical costs from their own pocket to support the program:

“I just cover the logistics and supplies using my own money. When it comes to behavioral issues among interns, I address them, especially when reports are made to me, so I can immediately correct the behavior. “

Internship coordinators also shared that, although they rely on personal funds at times, they occasionally receive support from the city government.

Financially, we use our personal budget to have resources for supervisory functions. However, if we request transportation,

the city will also provide it, but we must provide the exact schedule in order to receive it. "

The coordinators' commitment revealed how much of the internship program's success depends on their initiative and dedication rather than institutional planning. While they acknowledged the exhaustion that came with these added responsibilities, they expressed pride in helping students grow and succeed. However, the continuous demand for personal sacrifice also made them feel underappreciated and unsupported, especially when there were no mechanisms for additional compensation or acknowledgment.

This result is supported by Role Theory, which explains the expanded and often informal roles taken on by coordinators, as well as responsibilities that extend beyond their official job descriptions. Due to unclear role boundaries and inadequate institutional systems, they find themselves managing logistics, providing mentorship, offering counselling, and even handling crises. This disconnect between formal role expectations and actual role performance often results in fatigue and burnout. From the perspective of Expectancy Theory, coordinators experience low instrumentality since their extra efforts rarely lead to tangible rewards; yet, they persist due to the high valence they place on student success and maintaining the integrity of the internship program. In terms of Experiential Learning Theory, the coordinators themselves engage in a continuous learning process, adapting to institutional challenges and refining strategies based on field experiences, demonstrating resilience and professional growth as program implementers.

Similarly, Schneider et al. (2024) found that internship supervisors are deeply invested in the success and well-being of their students, which shapes their approach to program improvement. Supervisors frequently discussed strategies to avoid the exploitation of students and ensure that internships are both rewarding and beneficial. These shared concerns underscore the commitment of coordinators and supervisors alike to creating meaningful and supportive internship experiences, despite institutional and resource limitations.

Theme 10: Conflict Mediation and Stakeholder Communication

Coordinators often act as mediators when conflicts arise between students and agency supervisors or between students and the administration. Whether it is a miscommunication, performance issue, or unmet expectations, coordinators take on the responsibility of diffusing tension and maintaining good relationships among all stakeholders. They are often called upon to resolve issues diplomatically and ensure both students and agency personnel feel heard and respected.

Conflict Resolution and Stakeholder Coordination for Smooth Task Execution

The internship coordinator explained that she facilitates dialogue between the agency and the intern to resolve misunderstandings.

"I meet with both the student and the police officer involved. Because we are concerned that we might receive negative feedback that they are being neglected. Sometimes, ma'am, whatever attitude they show reflects on us as if we were the ones who taught them that way. So I make sure to correct it right away, ma'am, because I really cannot accept that I never taught them to behave like that. "

Moreover, the internship coordinator emphasized the importance of maintaining close communication with partner agencies. When issues arise involving interns, agencies promptly contact the coordinators to resolve the matter.

"We are in close contact with our communications with our partner agencies, such as the PNP bureau. If our OJT or intern encounters any problems, they usually contact us so that we can resolve them. Alternatively, they may contact their office directly to resolve the issue. So when it is personal, we connect with their parents or with their guardians."

The role of the coordinator as a conflict mediator was seen as essential but emotionally draining. Coordinators frequently managed sensitive issues involving misconduct, misinterpretation of guidelines, or interpersonal problems. In doing so, they serve as the critical link between academic institutions and the professional community, ensuring that the internship remains a productive and respectful partnership for everyone involved.

Ahmed et al. (2024) emphasized that conflict management is one of the most challenging yet essential responsibilities for any manager, requiring the selection of the most suitable strategies for each situation. Conflicts arise when values, goals, or beliefs are incompatible and unresolved, often leading to tension within an organization. They identified five primary conflict resolution styles: collaborating, compromising, accommodating, avoiding, and competing, each with context-specific strengths and weaknesses. For example, collaboration is generally regarded as the most effective approach, as it seeks win-win outcomes that satisfy all parties and foster cooperation. In contrast, avoidance may be beneficial for trivial matters or highly emotional situations that require a cooling-off period.

In line with this, Breiner (2022) noted that while most communications between students and mentors or agency directors were positive and routine, there were occasions when students reported problematic behavior at their placement sites. In such cases, the fieldwork coordinator was required to engage directly with agency directors to address the issues. Students were encouraged from the start of the semester to resolve minor concerns, such as miscommunication, directly with their mentors when possible. However, they were also advised to promptly inform the fieldwork coordinator about more serious issues, particularly those involving breaches of contract, so that appropriate action could be taken. Together, these studies underscore the importance of equipping coordinators with robust conflict resolution skills and clear communication protocols to maintain professionalism, protect student welfare, and uphold the integrity of internship programs.

Aspirations of the Informants to Improve the Implementation of the Criminal Justice Education Internship Program

Theme 11: Program Enhancements Based on Feedback

Coordinators emphasized that continuous improvement in the internship program stems from listening to students, partner agencies, and other stakeholders. Feedback mechanisms, whether through formal evaluations, casual conversations, or exit conferences, help uncover gaps in implementation and provide actionable insights for refining processes. These may include suggestions on schedules, supervisor availability, training modules, or orientation practices. By actively integrating this feedback, coordinators can tailor the program to better meet the expectations and needs of all involved, resulting in a more effective and satisfying internship experience.

Institutional Adaptability Based on Feedback

The internship coordinator emphasized their willingness to improve and avoid past mistakes:

“There is always a place for improvement. I always consider it whenever issues are raised regarding the internship. I take them into account. Next time, sir, we will do our best. Especially when it comes to documents, there are sometimes missing ones, delays, or items that get overlooked. There will really be shortcomings. However, we take it positively, considering that we are only making requests from the stations. “

Feedback-driven changes signal responsiveness and a strong commitment to quality assurance. Several informants shared how their departments had already implemented modifications, such as adding pre-deployment seminars, improving documentation templates, or revising student assignments, all as a direct result of the feedback received. This participatory approach not only fosters transparency and accountability but also builds trust between coordinators, students, and partner institutions.

According to Role Theory, individuals in organizational settings take on roles with defined behaviors and responsibilities. For coordinators, one key role is serving as a facilitator and mediator between the institution, students, and external agencies. Incorporating feedback into program development demonstrates role adaptability and responsiveness, qualities that align with their social position and professional expectations. Conversely, misalignment between expectations and actions can lead to role conflict; thus, systematic feedback helps prevent such issues by aligning actions with stakeholder needs. Meanwhile, Experiential Learning Theory supports the idea that learning occurs through a continuous cycle of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. The process of gathering and applying feedback from internship experiences exemplifies this cycle, as both students and coordinators reflect on deployment outcomes, extract key lessons, and implement improvements for future batches. This reflective practice not only enhances real-world learning but also embeds a culture of continuous refinement in the program.

In connection with this, Bentor et al. (2022) emphasized that evaluating training systems, programs, or courses is often a social, institutional, and economic necessity. Their study assessed practicum students' performance across multiple dimensions, including knowledge and attitude, punctuality and active presence, performance proficiency, and interpersonal skills. Industry perceptions were also gathered to provide a comprehensive view of student outcomes and their correlation with demographic profiles. These findings underscore the importance of structured evaluation as a feedback mechanism, ensuring that both academic and industry expectations are met while informing program adjustments that strengthen internship quality.

Theme 12: Strategic Planning and Coordination

Coordinators strongly advocated for more proactive and long-term planning of internship-related activities. They suggested the early drafting and approval of MOAs, advance scheduling of agency meetings and the preparation of documents. They believed that strategic planning would eliminate last-minute problems, reduce stress, and ensure smoother implementation.

The internship coordinator underscored that the best strategy for a successful internship program is to complete all required documents before the deployment period begins.

"It should be done at the earliest possible time, ma'am, because we do not have control over many things. The best strategy, really, is to have all the required documents for the internship ready before it even starts."

Moreover, the internship coordinator suggested a more streamlined and collaborative approach to the MOA signing process:

"If there were a chance in the future, like, there is a program of both the HTE and more so come into one place, and then there is an MOA signing, because when MOA, it is like just signing, then another one follows. Sometimes we question, "Is this really the right process?" Why not in OJT if there is something like that for signing? Then all the agencies, partner agencies are present in NORSU, and the president, they are present doing the signing."

Coordinators hold a central role as planners and facilitators who ensure alignment between institutional requirements, student readiness, and agency expectations. Fulfilling this role effectively requires clarity, anticipation, and coordination, qualities that are reinforced through early MOA preparation, advance scheduling, and pre-deployment document readiness. When these responsibilities are performed systematically, role conflict is minimized, and stakeholders develop confidence in the coordinator's leadership. Meanwhile, each deployment cycle serves as an opportunity for iterative improvement: after every batch, coordinators reflect on the planning process, assess bottlenecks, and refine timelines or templates for future implementation. This experience-reflection-adjustment loop enhances organizational learning and embeds continuous improvement into the program's culture.

Supporting this result, Kola (2025) found that effective strategic planning in academic departments begins with aligning mission and vision, evaluating resources, and conducting environmental scanning, emphasizing that "failure to plan could drive institutions into uncharted waters." The study also noted that a predominantly top-down planning approach often overlooks valuable bottom-up input, and that failure to communicate the plan to employees can weaken execution. This underscores the need for inclusive, transparent planning processes in internship coordination, where both institutional leadership and on-the-ground coordinators contribute to scheduling, MOA preparation, and documentation protocols.

Similarly, Schneider et al. (2024) identified persistent challenges in internships, including communication gaps between students, institutions, and workplace supervisors, as well as unclear role expectations. Their recommendations include structured onboarding meetings to review backgrounds, goals, and communication plans, as well as collaborative frameworks for setting learning objectives. They also highlight the value of scheduled discussion times between interns and supervisors to exchange feedback and address emerging issues promptly. Together, these findings reinforce that strategic, early-stage planning, when coupled with open communication and role clarity, is not merely an administrative preference but a critical success factor in ensuring smooth, stress-free internship execution and stronger partnerships with external agencies.

4.0 Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the multifaceted role of coordinators of the Criminal Justice

Education internship program in Negros Island Region (NIR), Philippines. By uncovering their positive and negative experiences, strategies in addressing challenges, and aspirations for improvement, the research contributes to the limited scholarly work on internship coordination in criminology education.

The implications are extensive across multiple sectors. Coordinators themselves require training and capacity-building programs that strengthen competencies in documentation, student behavior management, crisis response, and stakeholder communication, along with support systems for mental health and workload management. Host Training Establishments should be oriented on their mentoring role and collaborate with academic institutions through regular dialogues and joint policy reviews. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is encouraged to refine and standardize Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) formats, streamline bureaucratic processes, and expand policies to address the welfare and professional development of coordinators. Local Government Units (LGUs) may provide logistical assistance in transportation, facilities, and support for deployment and supervision. At the institutional level, School Administrators and the Dean of the College of Criminal Justice are called to strengthen supervision structures, mentoring frameworks, and evaluation systems to ensure the internship program effectively complements academic formation. Similarly, agencies such as the Philippine National Police (PNP), Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), and the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (DRRMO) are urged to institutionalize stronger academic linkages, develop structured orientation and feedback mechanisms, ensure safety compliance, and create meaningful learning experiences aligned with professional standards.

For research, future directions may include developing standardized digital monitoring systems, conducting comparative studies across disciplines and regions, and examining the long-term impact of internship coordination on student employability and ethical decision-making. Together, these contributions highlight the importance of sustained collaboration among coordinators, institutions, government agencies, and communities in advancing the quality and sustainability of criminology internship programs in the Philippines.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

Author 1: Proposal writing, conceptualization, data gathering, and data analysis.
Author 2: Conceptualization, data analysis.

6.0 Funding

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7.0 Conflict of Interest

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