

Exploring the perceived experiences of interns in non-profit organisations

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I declare that:

- (a) The work presented in this dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Business Administration at the North-West University is my own, and it has not previously been presented for another assessment.
- (b) This is my original work; the analysis and the findings are for academic purposes only.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my family, wife, Sonto Molefe and colleagues. A word of gratitude to my employer, Health and Welfare SETA, for their financial support. A special word of gratitude to my church for the word of prayer and support. Special dedication to my parents: my mom, Agnes and my late father, John, who encouraged me to study and enlightened me always to seek knowledge.

Special thanks to my supervisor, Dr Johan Jordaan, for picking me up and guiding me to be able to submit this body of work. May God keep you and richly bless you.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the experiences and impact of interns in non-profit organisations. It highlights the benefits of internships for students and organisations, discusses the challenges and barriers to internships, and provides recommendations for improving internship programs. A qualitative method was employed, with participants in the internship programme as participants in the interviews. The study emphasizes the importance of mentorship and support for interns and suggests that internships can contribute to the functioning of non-profit organizations. It also discusses the impact of COVID-19 on internships and the need for government support. The study concludes that internships are valuable for students and organizations and recommends further research in this area.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Non-profit organisation: “A non-profit organization is a business that has been granted tax-exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) because it furthers a social cause and provides a public benefit.” (Investopedia)

Internship: “An internship is a period of work experience offered by an employer to give students and graduates exposure to the working environment, often within a specific industry, which relates to their field of study.” (Investopedia)

Interns: “An intern is a trainee who has signed on with an organisation for a brief period. An intern's goal is to gain work experience, occasionally some university credit, and always an overall feel for the industry they're interning in. Internships may be paid, partially paid, or unpaid.” (Investopedia)

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CHAPTER ONE: NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1.1 BACKGROUND

South Africa has been facing the challenge of unemployment since the dawn of democracy. This problem is evident among women and the youth. Even if it happens, the rate of job creation does not match the rate at which the unemployment rate is growing, and a lack of skills and formal work experience worsens these unemployment challenges. On top of that problem, higher education institutions want to assist the government and society in dealing with this issue as their programmes do not appear to adequately prepare students for the world of work (Department of Public Service Administration, 2006).

There is an urgent need to reduce the high levels of unemployment among young graduates and offer them an opportunity to gain practical work experience (Barford, Coombe, & Proefke, 2021:169.) In 2002, the Cabinet of the South African government approved the document on Human Resource Development (HRD) Strategy for the Public Service, which includes an internship framework and a scarce skills strategy. The purpose of the framework was to establish an effective and efficient internship programme that will bridge the gap that exists between what has been learnt and achieved at the institution of higher learning and the competent performance required in the workplace by offering internship opportunities to students and unemployed youths, which will enable them to gain practical work experience over 12 months (DPSA, 2006).

The non-profit sector is generally regarded as a dynamic, vibrant, and meaningful workplace (Bolzoni, 2019:456). Internship implementation can have a massive impact on a non-profit's capacity as they constantly battle with funding and the attraction of human resources as they constantly compete with companies with the financial muscle to attract requisite skills (Setlhatlhanyo, Sekonopo, & Njeru, 2024: 284). Implementing internships in a non-profit organisation (NPO) may also contribute to the pipeline of future NPOs (Sanon, 2022). It is, therefore, important that internships are treated with care and professionalism. It is also crucial that the NPO, should they decide to implement internships, start by clarifying and explaining whether the offered internships include stipends (Palitsky *et al.*: 2022:842). If the NPOs have financial muscle or budgets available, it is highly recommended that they pay the interns a stipend (National Council of Non-Profits, 2019).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CORE RESEARCH QUESTION

Non-profit organisations (NPOs) often depend on donations and volunteers' assistance (MacQuillan et al., 2023:11). A large portion of the work is performed by interns placed at NPOs to perform much-needed work and get experience. (Illias *et al.*, 2020: 13). However, the value that interns bring to the table for NPOs, especially in South Africa, has never been scientifically researched (Dahmane & Achit, 2019:14).

Essentially, an NPO will only employ interns if they contribute to the operations of the organisation (Illias *et al.*, 2020: 13). The willingness and ability of interns to add value to the organisation would be severely influenced by how the interns and the managers of NPOs experience their internship. This leads us to the following primary research question: *What are the perceptions of interns on their contribution to NPOs?*

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES/SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study's primary objective is to explore interns' experience in NPOs. The following secondary objectives support the primary objective:

- To identify from the literature how internship programmes contribute to the functioning of the non-profit sector.
- To assess the current state of interns in non-profit organisations' operations.
- To recommend how interns can be better utilised in NPOs.

1.4 DELIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

1.4.1 DELIMITATIONS (SCOPE)

Initially, this study was designed to confine itself to interviewing the management of non-profit organisations and observing their daily operations. However, interviews were held with management and interns at seven non-profit organisations the relevant SETA represents. All of them requested that their names be withheld. Eventually, the number of participants from the ranks of management was so limited that the study only reported the responses from interns.

1.4.2 ASSUMPTIONS

The study assumed that:

- non-profit organisations were fully operational and were delivering services to the community,
- organisations had professional personnel providing mentorships to interns and
- the organisations were fully participating in the internship programmes, funded or unfunded.

Table 1: Abbreviations used in this document.

Abbreviation	Meaning
ASGISA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa
DOL	Department of Labour
HRD	Human resource development
NPO	Non-profit organisation

1.5 MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

The study was motivated by two factors. Firstly, there was an increase in the number of non-profit organisations applying for internship programmes funded by various Sector Education Training Authorities (SETAs) (Botha, Fischer Mogensen, Ebrahim & Brand, 2023:178). This increased demand for internships raises an inquisitiveness to establish these interns' impact on how the organisations work. The second factor is that the interns have not expressed dissatisfaction with these organisations (Raphotle, 2023), raising interest in the interns' presence in these kinds of organisations.

1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study's objective was to explore the perceptions of the impact that the interns, who are university graduates, are making on the operations of non-profit organisations (NPOs). NPOs' operations are generally not funded, and they source funding from various sources such as the government and donors (Chikoto-Schultz & Sakolvittayanon, 2020:111). Therefore, the recruitment of professionals by these organisations is a central challenge. The study checked the impact the interns, who are at these organisations for experiential purposes, have on their daily operations.

1.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The study will enhance how internships are implemented within the NPO sector and how the internships can also add value to the operations of NPOs. While internships are a means for young graduates to gain experience, they must not be isolated as part of job creation, as most interns receive stipends during their internships. Adding community service to some of the degrees has further necessitated that interns be paid stipends during community service. The NPO sector has recently been the workplace where interns with Social Work degrees are utilised to get experience, which might result from their preferred workplaces. This study will investigate how they add value within the NPO sector to the operations of the organisations operating within this space.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The chapter contains a literature review on the internship process in general and internship implementation in non-profit organisations. The focus will be on the literature that seeks to clarify how the internships have impacted the workplace and what benefit the interns get from this experience. There has been some negative criticism of the internships and their implementation, especially in government departments (Parry & Gordon 2021; 803). Critics criticised the experience graduates are exposed to. They indicated that the interns spend much time making tea for senior personnel and running errands. However, there is also some positive feedback, such as some mentioning that interns are deeply involved in all processes. The interns are recent university graduates who hope to gain knowledge from more seasoned mentors, although occasionally they work without mentor support. The literature study will serve as the foundation for the investigation and aid the investigator in defending the entire course of work. The literature on internships will inform the empirical study investigating interns' positive and negative experiences.

2.2 Internships

According to Harms (2017:1), it is increasingly common for university graduates to go through short-term practical work experiences, such as internships, before finding regular employment. University formal classes are more focused on what students must know and not on what they can do with what they have learnt, but in an internship programme, the primary focus is on what students do. Internship programmes allow young students to gain enough experience by implementing the knowledge they have acquired in the classroom in the actual workplace under the mentorship of an experienced mentor. Experience gained during internships impacts business students' professional growth and success and helps them receive good financial earnings in their first job (Maertz *et al.*, 2014: 140). Students also acquire the required skills for their professional success. Internship opportunities allow students to receive high-quality job offers sooner. They help them directly interact with corporate professionals and build a strong network for their first job (Maertz *et al.*, 2014: 140). Corporates usually favour job applicants with work experience and practical knowledge (Urquía-Grande, E. & Perez Estebanez, R., 2020:505). Therefore, they sometimes have an eye on their interns to select them as their future employees (Ahmad, Afzal & Imtiaz, 2020).

An internship is regarded as a form of experiential learning that allows a person who completed their studies at an institution of learning to apply theoretical classroom knowledge in a practical setting where the intern develops skills in the professional world. Internships allow graduates to sharpen their skills, values, and attitudes toward the workplace. In contrast, non-profit organisations gain the knowledgeable intern to be part of the non-profit organisation (Urquía-Grande, E. & Perez Estebanez, R., 2020: 503). Organisations benefit from interns by providing valuable support for temporary or seasonal projects (Missionbox, 2019). According to Magaya and Mbekomize (2014:23), many educational institutions of higher learning have noticed that internship programmes are an excellent source for students' career and professional preparation. Internships provide work-related experience to the students, and, on the other hand, interns make it easy for companies to select flexible, experienced, and highly qualified job applicants during recruitment. Internship programmes are rewarding and add value to students, educational institutions, and employers. The experience gained during the internship always puts the candidates ahead during subsequent interviews (Wright, E. and Mulvey, B., 2021:353). It proves that work-related learning and practical training through internship programs are vital for businesses, including non-profit organisations, thereby increasing the personal and professional development that culminates in building strong organisations. In recent years, having a university degree no longer gives you a competitive advantage over other candidates during an interview to find a permanent job (Magaya & Mbekomize, 2014:24).

Harms (2017:33) described internships as different from other training in that the graduate learns and grows under the mentorship of experienced personnel. The degree of supervision and self-study students experience during internships could propel them to more significant opportunities after completing their internships. Students learn by doing and experience that feeling that they oversee their destiny. Internships are suitable for developing soft and interpersonal skills, such as professionalism, cultural sensitivity, time management and integrity, which are not generally taught at institutions of higher learning. She further highlighted that business schools worldwide have designed internship programmes that attach students to various organisations to give them practical insight into what they learn theoretically at school. Magaya and Mbekomize (2014:36) argued that apart from being of benefit to students, internship programmes give universities a chance to collaborate with industry and thereby create an opportunity for student placements upon completing their degrees and minimising the risks for students who move around checking the employers that have space for internship. Several administrative and academic staff had participated in the internship programmes. The university or college internship

coordinator plays a vital role in scouting for organisations that are willing to accept interns. The students are then placed in an organisation, and academic supervisors typically visit each student. Therefore, internship programmes help nurture the development of mutual relationships between the faculty and host organisation (Magaya & Mbiyokoyimze, 2014:38). Carval and Barkhuizen (2010:75) highlighted the huge costs that are associated with the erosion of talented personnel in South African organisations. Many organisations have invested in graduate internship programmes to counteract this erosion to attract and retain highly qualified graduate interns.

A huge challenge is the retention of new graduates by many South African companies (Hedding *et al.* 2020:3). Despite a retention strategy, the possibility is high that newly qualified graduates are likely to pursue and find alternative employment (Ghani *et al.*, 2022:2885). There has been a growing demand for internships as some believe that being in an internship programme improves students' employability, contributes to the community, and allows interns to adapt quickly to the workplace. Students increase their understanding of theoretical knowledge learned at university or college and how to implement practically what was learned. At the same time, the student is learning about their community, the type of people they live with and the real world of employment (Jung & Lee, 2020:23). As they engage other colleagues in the workplace (Jung & Lee, 2016:250), the student learns about people management and how to build partnerships. According to Jung and Lee (2016:253), student internships benefit employers and learners. Internships also make it easy for employers to recruit as they can recruit from internships, train the interns, and recruit them as future employees (Smith & Green, 2021:587). Internship work experience is increasingly being recognised as a major vehicle to help students establish a link between their academic study at a tertiary institute and the world of work so that they can get used to what the workplace looks like and learn about the rules and responsibility of each party; that is, the employer and employee as well as their stakeholders. Employers tend to be favourably disposed to work experience, and there is a growing trend toward recruiting graduates who have undertaken work placement with companies (Smith & Green, 2021:587). The need for experience when opponents present themselves has been discussed. Employers from large and small organisations think work experience helps students develop desirable attributes (Chinomona & Surujlal, 2012:889). Chinomona and Surujlal (2012:886) estimated that probably a quarter of the graduates who end up being recruited have had some form of internship or work experience. The reason provided is that graduate students with internship work experience interview better because they have more to talk about, and they tend to be able to allude to an insight into working life that the other graduates cannot do.

This means that internship work experience is rapidly becoming a fundamental feature of being employed and enhances the chances of growing in the world of work. Completing an internship increases the chances of enhancement for interns and prospective employers. Internships as a work-based placement play a crucial part in developing specific work-related skills and provide the intern with a foretaste of workplace culture, help graduates be effective quickly, and provide a broader perspective on attribute development and career management (Chinomona & Surujlal, 2012:894). Interns are mostly interested in the learning and acquisition of experience. This is also the case with interns at non-profit organisations, but those at non-profit organisations have a passion for the services they are providing. Most interns want an opportunity to learn, grow, and be visible with the experience gained. While the interns are new to the workplace, this opportunity might be their first exposure. They might need induction to alleviate the fear of the unknown in the workplace. The biggest thing to the employer is human resource addition, while for the intern, the biggest interest is the learning and growth opportunities that matter most. Internships also need to reflect what an authentic career the student will need to follow the completion of the internship programme (Deep Dive, 2017). There are some qualifications in which students require an internship in work-integrated learning to complete their qualifications. In this case, students opt for an unpaid internship so that they can achieve their qualifications. Students get credits that will assist them in completing their studies. The student who qualifies to be placed at a non-profit organisation feels the skills development facilitator is uninterested in them. Interns must be exposed to all parts of the work the manager will allocate to them. There must be mentor/mentee agreements. The employer will create an environment that gives the current employees real support. Once you have it in place, you must post a great job promoting it to candidates (Toolbox, 2017). The economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic has been visible to everyone, including internships, and many people have lost their jobs, and the new normal has kicked in. Young people, including students looking forward to the internship programme and those graduating, have also felt the virus's impact. Companies like Facebook have opted for virtual internships, which has never been done before. Those who cannot afford these technologies have opted for the traditional way of implementing internships or have cancelled them altogether (CNBC, 2020). According to Anjum (2020:1), transitioning from student to professional life is difficult. Students need guidance to adjust to the professional environment they find themselves in when attempting to implement the theory they learned from an institution of higher learning. The internship programmes are a link between theory and practice. He further said that internships improve students' skills and polish their professional growth. Internships are a means to supply valuable people, professionals, and

competent employees to the labour market. While organisations benefit from the interns' human resources, it must be noted that interns must work under supervision and guidance. The argument put forward by Anjum (2020:2) is that organisations, including the NPO, save a great deal of money on training if they implement internships. The world's economies are rapidly changing daily, impacting what talents, skills, and experience are needed to be a part of the growth of economies. While the job market is a competitive one, most of the time, though, the learning curve for recent graduates has sparked debates about how ready students who graduated for the world of work are. According to Big Ideas (2018), that has been a big reason behind the growth of applied learning and internship opportunities to become a key part of the institution of a higher learning experience for all students. Despite the reason for gaining experience, an internship benefits young people by providing an opportunity for professional networking and boosting the social confidence of the learner. Big Ideas (2018) further mentions that there is a one in sixteen chance of securing a job by connecting with people, so networking is critical.

2.3 Non-Profit Organisations

The non-profit sector is viewed by many people who love humanity as self-motivated, exciting, and conducive to a working environment. It does not matter what your chosen field of study was at university, whether social services, healthcare, the environment, art and culture, or anything in between; there are countless career paths for people who share the sector's common vision: to make a difference. Over recent years, the non-profit sector has grown very fast and expanded in the number of organisations functional worldwide and the number of employees working under their respective banners. The benefits of working in the non-profit work sector often extend further than those of traditional compensation, medical benefits, or other charitable endeavours. The working environment in the non-profit sector leads individuals to live purposefully, execute their jobs that provide immense gratification with passion, give back to local or international communities, and make a difference in people's lives (Absolute, 2020). Interns can be great additions to a non-profit organisation's capacity as most organisations within that sector rely on donor funding and, in some instances, state subsidies for operation.

On top of that, interns can also add to the pipeline of future non-profit leaders. Therefore, organisations that have interns in their operations must treat them professionally. The starting point in showing respect for the interns is that the organisations must first clarify whether the interns will be unpaid or paid employees.

An internship's purpose is to provide an experience which benefits both the intern and employer during the internship term. The choice is at the discretion of the non-profit, depending in most cases on the availability of finances to supplement the intern's stipend. It is not advisable to not pay the intern as this might affect their performance during the internship programme (National Council of Non-Profits, 2019). Non-profit organisations that host interns mentor potential non-profit leaders and bright future workers. The internship experience dramatically impacts the intern's perception of conducting themselves in front of stakeholders and society, providing them with professional work habits in the non-profit sector. The opportunity that interns get in the non-profit sector and the feedback, as well as growth, enable the intern to be an independent thinker and a reliable leader as the focus is on the mission of the non-profit, which is the signal that the non-profit community is a meaningful place to work. Those interns who want to make a full-time career in the non-profit sector are in an excellent position to be potential leaders in the future (National Council of Non-Profits, 2019).

There is an interdependent relationship that exists between the non-profit organisation and interns. While internships are not just a great path for students to get a real feeling of how the workplace operates, they are also beneficial to the organisation as there is a great boost of productivity in the office with the utilisation of interns. All these can result in the organisation achieving its growth goals. Therefore, organisations must be able to utilise the intern very well and know how to control these students' skills properly. Since internships normally only last a few months, getting interns placed quickly and appropriately is vital so they do not lose many work hours and be as productive as possible. The organisation must create a conducive environment that will enable interns to feel that they are part of the organisation and to integrate them with the staff. The availability of the workstation and the tool of the trade for the intern on the first day at work will guarantee the interns that they are valuable and recognised (MIP, 2019). If an organisation implements an effective internship programme, it can bring in motivated and self-driven workers with new ideas and a fresh way of doing things. In addition to the two benefits mentioned, the organisation also stands to benefit by increasing its diversity and raising the visibility of non-profits, their mission, and their vision. By implementing internships, the non-profit organisation practises the philosophy of non-profit work: giving back to the community by providing pre-professionals with training and experience in the workplace (Missionbox, 2019). Student interns are a massive addition to any growing organisation with ambitions to achieve the maximum output. Most interns are motivated, ambitious, tech-savvy, and eager to gain experience in their field of study under the mentorship of an experienced employee. Non-profit

organisations stand to benefit. These interns can be significantly helpful for non-profit organisations that could benefit from having an extra set of hands around the office at a fraction of the cost of a salaried employee. Most non-profit organisations forever have an acute shortfall of revenue as they depend on funding from donors or the government (Datis, 2018). According to Datis (2018), only 18% of non-profit executives believe their organisation is adequately staffed to handle the current service demand. This is a serious concern as most non-profit organisations provide essential services that the government cannot handle. Most non-profit organisations cannot match the money that private companies pay to their employees, and this cannot match the money that private companies pay to their employees, pushing them to rely on the intern who is more interested in service than money (Datis 2018). According to Datis (2018), non-profit internship adverts fail to draw large application pools, leaving organisations with little to no options to work with. This can be frustrating for executives, who must go above and beyond to recruit talent to their organisations. When students are looking for internships, there is a slim chance that they will actively go on a non-profit's website or social media pages searching for an internship as they believe the organisation does not have money. Students will also be unlikely to go out of their way to inquire about possible internship opportunities. This means that organisations must be smart and strategic about where they post their position openings. The students' perception of the non-profit organisation is that they will struggle to pay stipends. According to Datis (2018), non-profit organisations (NPOs) need to wake up to the new reality and think outside the box to create partnerships with different organisations that can help them sustain the internships they are employing, thus relieving the stress of the financial burden the NPO carries monthly and save on paying the stipend. Plenty of social impact clubs with missions may coincide with non-profits. Finding these clubs and introducing the organisation to them can be a great way to find passionate students and potential interns (CNBC, 2020). According to Charity Village (2017), the Canadian resource centre for NPOs, Canada is home to more than a million university students. According to the Canadian University Survey, half of the students took part in experiential learning, of which internships are a part. They went further to say that the NPO sector, or the charitable sector as it is called in Canada, plays an important role in youth employment. They pride themselves on being able to equip the youth with skills and knowledge to face the most challenging issues of life. Charity Village (2017) believes there should be incentives for the sector to attract and retain young workers; however, the finance issue has been raised as an obstacle to the full realisation of this sector. These organisations must invest in young workers to reap the benefits of the sector's long-term sustainability (Charity Village, 2017). Non-profit organisations (NPOs) that applied and were approved to implement internships

also had to advertise them. As it is commonly known with NPOs, the challenge is a lack of funding, and placing an advert in the mainstream print media becomes a big problem. The competition among employers to recruit the best interns may be won by those who have cast their net wide through their advertisements, implying that employers who had budgeted for advertisements in various print and digital media will have a huge advantage over the employers who rely on word-of-mouth to recruit.

2.4 Government intervention in addressing human resource challenges in non-profit organisations.

The shortage of skilled employees in the market has created a challenging situation for a non-profit organisation competing with financially strong employers for good interns. Newly appointed employees with specialised skills can leave the organisation anytime and find work at reputable firms. The high rate of unemployed graduates in South Africa necessitates a change in the National Skills Development Strategy to ensure that a category for new entrants is included. This strategy was implemented by the Department of Labour (DoL) in 2005. These changes to the strategy pushed the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) to register and promote graduate internship programmes to support the objectives set in the NSDS2 (Carval & Barkhuizen, 2010:79). They further mentioned that the National Government added the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA), which is a vehicle to identify key enabling areas, one of which is education and skills development. Therefore, internship programmes should include the essential soft skills of communication, teamwork, delegation, appraisal, presentation, and motivation. These are now key to making businesses more profitable and better workplaces.

Companies and different organisations recently identified that business and technical skills and soft skills are essential to human resource development. The lack of soft skills is the main reason many graduates are unsuccessful in the recruitment phase (Carval & Barkhuizen, 2010:48). According to Jung and Lee (2016:250), in today's world of work, changes are happening at a faster rate, and you might be left behind if you are not following closely. Most of these changes pose significant challenges to young adults transitioning from school theory to the workplace. There is no guarantee that the longer the students stay at university, the better the chances of being employed, and the duration you spend at the institution of learning is also not a guarantee that your level of problem-solving skills is higher than the required skills necessary to meet the complex demands of the labour market. They further mentioned a widespread social concern that higher education fails to address the skills needed for jobs, resulting in unnecessarily increased costs to economies,

businesses, and workers. These higher education institutions are expected to present a curriculum relevant to job skills before students enter the labour market. They need to introduce students to the world of work to inform them of the outside world's expectations and ensure that they are fully prepared to enter future job markets and face the reality of life. Although the classroom-taught theory is essential, adding workplace practicals will ensure that students achieve their life goals. During the internship, additional training will be required here and there to enhance the already acquired theory and add it to work experience to improve the initial competencies acquired in the classroom. Workplace experience has existed in some professions for a long time, for example, in medicine, law, and education. These professions require community service in most countries before being declared competent.

2.5 Advantages of Internships at non-profit organisations

According to Roots (2020), there are obvious reasons and benefits to doing your internship at a non-governmental organisation (NGO). One is that you will contribute to a social or environmental cause. Also, the time and effort you put in during your internship will help you achieve something worthwhile and gratifying, which can be hugely rewarding. There is a massive opportunity for growth and being able to be independent quickly when you intern at these types of organisations. The nature of your work might be visible very quickly, unlike in a big company, and the intern's work might pay off. According to the Roots (2020), some of the examples of visible achievement and gratification include but are not limited to projects reaching their funding goals, structures being built, trees being planted, and lives being changed, which can boost the life of the intern if they were actively involved.

Unquestionably, internships provide a great environment to meet professionals in the career field you want to pursue and learn from those who walked before you in the career you are following and other interns with similar interests. While most career advertisements list experience as a prerequisite, if the intern has completed the internship programme, they stand an excellent chance to make it to the shortlist, and that will be the proof that internships when correctly implemented, give an advantage (Smith & Green 2021:577). Therefore, young graduates need to have an internship on their resume. Doing your internship at a non-profit organisation creates an atmosphere of symbiotic relations; that is, both parties benefit in the process of interning at an NPO (Big Ideas, 2018; McClean, Odio & Kerwin, 2020:23). Non-profit internships give you the chance to work on a variety of issues and causes.

Experience in non-profits and NGOs can be an excellent stepping stone for psychology, law, and government careers. NPOs cover various areas, such as animal rights, immigration, domestic violence, women's rights, environmental advocacy, and other international issues (Roots, 2020). Internships offer a crucial pathway to future employment for the next generation of non-profit leaders. However, the universality of unpaid internships in the non-profit sector creates financial hurdles for students to participate in experiential learning. The non-profit sector is a dynamic, vibrant, and meaningful workplace. Whether the intern's chosen field is social services, healthcare, the environment, art and culture, or anything in between, there are countless career paths for people who share the sector's common vision: to make a difference. Absolute Internship's non-profit internships offer first-hand experience for ambitious individuals wishing to enter the non-profit sphere. The benefits of non-profit work often extend further than those of traditional compensation, medical benefits, or other charitable endeavours. They allow individuals to live purposefully, execute their jobs, and give back to local or international communities (Absolute, 2020).

Non-profit internships are designed to develop skills in policy development, programme development, and operations (Oliveira *et al.*, 2021: 75). The passion for helping others will be channelled through trade organisations, social change organisations or hospitals. In any of these scenarios, interns will positively change themselves and the world. Non-profits aim to increase public interest in specific topics and causes; they have tangible leadership experience and are well-versed in making things happen. Non-profit internships teach participants how to manage the workflow of a non-profit organisation and develop their leadership skills to make a difference efficiently and effectively (Absolute, 2020). NPO internships allow you to gain international work experience in the operations and administration of an inspirational NGO. (Absolute, 2020). The mission and work of the non-profit sector appeal to many young people. Many of those interviewed in the Young People & The Non-profit Sector report "felt that their values aligned with the primary objective of the non-profit sector – creating social good." They also felt that the non-profit sector offered more opportunities than other sectors regarding flexible work, opportunities to learn as they go, and space to be creative and innovative. Like many good things in the non-profit sector, sometimes money becomes a barrier (Cordeaux, 2017).

As part of a commitment to youth employment and training, various levels of government offer funding for non-profits to subsidise the costs of hiring students and graduates. Internship students are a source of new talent and potential future employees. Every charity has a list of dream to-dos they would do if they had more staff, time, or money. It was not difficult to produce a list of critical projects we thought would be a good fit for students.

Often, the best way to maximise an internship is to produce a primary project for them to work on during their term. Treat your intern or summer student the same way you would treat any other employee. Many students arrive knowing little about the organisation and its work, but this fresh perspective offers opportunities. True to the stereotype, interns often offer new technological skills to a non-profit organisation. The more the student knows up front, the less likely tension will be created later in their internship programme. Supervision should have a mentorship quality and ensure tasks are accomplished. An internship is an educational placement, so organisations should look for ways to educate their interns about how their organisation is run and how it fits within the larger organisation, the sector, and the geographical area. Inviting students to meetings with staff, clients, and the more significant sector allows them insight and networking opportunities. Including students in professional development opportunities can be eye-opening for many students (Charity Village, 2017). These organisations make a meaningful impact in communities by, for example, providing access to education and health services, improving nutrition, or creating a safe environment where children can play and learn. It is also essential that, during their internships at the non-profit organisation, the interns are prepared for success in the world of work and life in general (Carter *et al.*, 2021:171).

In preparing them for success, the supervisors at the non-profit organisation must spend time with interns and provide them with complete training so that they are best equipped to complete the assignments or the tasks you expect them to perform. Non-profit organisations must treat the interns the same way they would treat the new permanent employee, and they do not expect the employee to jump right in without being inducted into the organisation's operations. Therefore, the interns must also be treated as new employees, ensuring they have good internship experiences within the non-profit organisations. When implementing internships, non-profit organisations are encouraged to go beyond the call of providing internships to interns (Adeosun *et al.*, 2022:177). The organisation needs to promote creativity in the interns when performing specific tasks. To inspire them to continue in the non-profit sector, the organisation can allow interns access to different parts of a non-profit to see what clicks and what might spark a career. Encourage interns to build relationships with staff members. This might be beneficial when it is time to job-hunt, whether at the same organisation or elsewhere. For example, interns can be taken to networking events at the non-profit organisation's office and introduced to other organisational representatives and, in so doing, the organisation will be playing an essential role in helping the interns enjoy the internship journey and give them faith that they will one day serve in the non-profit organisation as full-time employees (Adeosun *et al.*, 2022:177).

2.6 Recruitment of Interns

It is imperative that employers when advertising these opportunities for internships, must bear in mind that interns may be potential employees of the company. Therefore, the recruitment of interns must be treated very seriously so that the skills transfer between the employees of the company and the interns does not go to waste. Because times are changing and there is migration from various print media to digital media, companies and NPOs use their websites to advertise opportunities for interns (Smith *et al.*, 2023: 13). This can also assist interns in not wasting time verifying whether the opportunities exist. The use of promoted Facebook pages is the other option that organisations use to recruit interns. Most young people use or have Facebook pages. Many potential interns can access the promoted Facebook pages as the promotion is determined by the employer, as part of the country they want to recruit from. Due to the nature of Facebook, which allows one to have friends from all over the world, those who had seen the advertisement in their area may share it with those for whom the advert was not intended, and this results in the company receiving applications from the best potential interns. Platforms like Twitter have further demarcated their space into their home pages and careers. Employers who tweet their careers stand an excellent chance to reach many internship prospects, thereby being able to recruit the best interns. NPOs can also use platforms like Twitter to advertise their interns' opportunities. It is, therefore, critical that organisations that have smaller budgets for recruitment take advantage of social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, which are less costly in terms of being used as recruitment agencies than using real recruitment agencies to select the type of interns that you require to have in the organisation (Ndiaye & Lockowandt, 2021). Intensive internships in the field of study in which students have studied are essential to the successful outcome after graduation. Internship programmes are necessary for the young, newly graduated person who needs entrepreneurial or career growth. Internships are also vital for the character growth of the interns. Because internships are seen as door-to-opportunities, they are in demand for young people who have graduated from tertiary institutions. The question that young people will always ask is, how can they access these opportunities, and where are they being advertised? Government departments in South Africa follow the complete procedure of recruitment to recruit interns. Firstly, the advert will be placed in the national newspaper for the intern position. After that, the interns respond as required in the advertisement, and the whole process culminates in an interview, and then an intern will be selected. This process is tedious and has financial implications for that department's budget. Most advertisements require the respondent to complete the commonly used government recruitment form, the Z83 (Roots, 2020). The

form, recently certified certificates, and curricula vitae will then be posted or hand-delivered to the government department concerned. Considering that today's youth favour the electronic completion of documents rather than physical paper, young people might miss opportunities for government internships if they are only advertised through traditional media (Roots, 2020).

2.7 Advantages of Internships

Graduates with relevant workplace experience tend to be more valued by employers, which makes internships attractive: new ways to set themselves apart from all equally qualified and skilled candidates. An internship should give an intern practical skills, experience, and more excellent knowledge of an industry if the programme is implemented correctly (Sihombing, 2021:19). It must be mentioned that interns cannot work independently without the mentor's guidance. The same mentors play a critical role in the recruitment process of the interns (Qu *et al.*, 2021:100311). They can influence and determine from which university they are recruiting interns. Internships give students real-life experience of the workplace and field they hope to break into.

An internship can be paid or voluntary; however, the first position is always encouraged. While an internship can be viewed as a short-term work experience whereby companies or organisations, irrespective of their size, offer graduates an opportunity to gain experience, its benefit to the people participating in the internships becomes visible as young graduates apply for jobs and some entry-level work experience is then made a requirement for the job used for. It is, therefore, of utmost importance that opportunities such as internships are accessible to young people who have just graduated. Internships are vital to the undergraduate learning experience (Qu *et al.*, 2021:100311). They provide students with pre-professional opportunities in the workplace that expose them to careers and organisations of interest. Internships test students' abilities, build their networks, and let them try out various professional roles and workplace cultures before making their career decisions. Internships also allow non-profits to engage with and learn from students who know the sector (Laponte, 2022). There is mutual beneficiation between interns and non-profit organisations. The young person gains experience, and the organisations gain a wealth of knowledge from the higher place of learning. The administration of stipends is purely the organisation's responsibility, and exposing the learner to the various worlds of their work and providing professional guidance are just some of the responsibilities.

Supervision and mentorship are two processes that the intern receives while at the NPO doing the internship (Ali *et al.*, 2022: 345). Being a good supervisor of the intern means checking in regularly to discuss progress, pitfalls, and plans for the future. Good supervisors will ensure that the intern gets feedback that builds the intern's professionalism. They will hold a session to discuss with the intern what they will have to do; in addition, why and how it is done upskills the intern to equip them with the necessary skills and system they will use during their internship. In managing the internship programme, non-profit organisations must ensure they do not just push them out of the nest and expect them to do things independently. A weekly one-on-one meeting is a great way to find out how your intern is completing tasks and how you are giving them the training and opportunities they are looking for. The supervisor can use these meetings to assess how things are going and possibly reassess workload or goals in the future.

The cost that non-profit organisations incur when they provide internships is far outweighed by the benefits of having professional and learned personnel. Most non-profit organisations cannot afford the professionals' salaries required daily. The presence of interns in non-profit organisations eases the financial burden that the non-profit organisations have to carry while providing their much-needed services in their community (Rothschild & Rothschild, 2020: 5). The value the interns add to these non-profit organisations is worth the rewards. The interns bring a wealth of understanding of how the non-profit organisation works. In completing their internships at non-profit organisations, they do not expect too much monetary reward. Still, they offer their service with an understanding that the organisations' communities need the service they provide. Building a good and solid long-term relationship between the interns and the non-profit organisation is another way to ensure that the non-profit organisation can be an employer of choice to the interns and other graduates outside of the non-profit organisation. This will benefit the non-profit sector by getting qualified and professional personnel through their recruitment. It is of utmost importance that the interns are appreciated when they execute the tasks allocated to them by their supervisors. The organisation must show the interns the difference they are making, if noticeable, by being explicit when providing feedback during mentorship sessions.

2.8 Challenges to Internships

According to Mabeba (2019:22), the discussion on skills development has become a critical issue of modern societal, political, and scholarly debate. South Africa is facing a massive skills shortage, among other challenges. It is paramount that the impact of internships on unemployment is investigated. There are reasons interns sometimes feel they do not learn

anything in the workplace. It has been common knowledge that interns in most government departments are being sent to make photocopies and run errands for managers. It has impacted how graduates view internships as not an opportunity but a waste of time. Interns are not necessarily satisfied with the nature of duties they are expected to perform during working hours, particularly in public institutions. Mabeba (2019:23) mentioned that, among other things, interns feel uncomfortable making tea for colleagues and sometimes making photocopies. As a result, therefore, interns see this as a valueless exercise. Interns do not get a salary but receive a stipend from the Sector for Education and Training Authorities (SETA). Another issue is access to these opportunities when they are being advertised. Prospective interns are expected to make certified copies of their CVs and qualifications at their own expense. Mabeba (2019:25) further says that, unlike student interns, some who are placed require practical in-service training to complete their qualifications.

In contrast, graduate interns must apply for the advertised internship opportunities and go through the regular recruitment and selection processes, such as interviews (Mabeba, 2019:29). There has been a growing concern regarding how graduates can access opportunities such as internships immediately after graduating from institutions of higher learning. Internships are regarded as jobs as they provide income to the participants through stipends. The best recruiters are agents who can assist them in selecting and recruiting interns and job seekers (Bowen, 2020:423). The risks of internships in small organisations include job specifications for year-long 'internships' that involve considerable responsibility, with virtually zero supervision and full accountability (Hite, 2022).

Common excuses for low wages are that recent graduates do not contribute meaningfully to the workforce straight out of college. Interns are being tossed straight into the deep end, are expected to produce professional-quality, income-generating work, and are paid less. In some instances, interns are used to weed out underperforming juniors and also to relieve the employees who need leave to rest (Rothschild & Rothschild, 2020: 5). Non-profit internships give interns the chance to work on a variety of issues and causes that can impact humanity in massive ways. Intern placements with non-profit organisations have increased recently and have been a popular programme within the non-profit sector. The post-COVID financial pressure has severely impacted NPOs and their ability to use interns (Zaman *et al.*, 2021: 384). The profit-making employers cannot be blamed for this decline, as these companies exist purely to make a profit. Interns are expected to always work under supervision, but this is not a condition.

Various reasons for interns to work unsupervised include a lack or absence of mentors in the workplace and a shortage of professional supervisors who fully understand the scope of the study for the programme that the students have achieved (Kuzwayo, 2023). Most of the non-profit organisations were established by people who had no qualifications but were big-hearted and wanted to provide humanitarian services to the community they lived in, as the demands for such services had been visible and could not be provided by the state (Maboya & McKay, 2019:9). Non-profit organisations (NPOs) have played a critical part in trying to resolve the challenges and inequalities prevalent in South African society. Still, they are facing a future with increasingly limited funding and support within a fragile economy (Maboya & McKay, 2019:9). On a basic level, the NPO identifies and meets broad community needs. It does so within a bureaucratic system where its responses to issues can be faster and more creative than government responses. The NPO has taken on a position where it often supports weak or failing governments, making it an essential tool for the country's continued growth.

Many people with good hearts and ideas want to start an NPO, but they do not have qualifications. Sustainability is only possible if the model is set up to alleviate a social ill while implementing solid business principles, and few NPOs succeed. The misunderstanding of the cost of development and the cost of business or social impact complicates the matter tremendously. Some poorly administered NPOs have given legitimate organisations an unfavourable reputation, undermining confidence in the sector. Some funds have been dispersed to projects that have reaped little reward, and few people, except board members, have benefited. Several organisations emphasised that corruption within government and the NPO sector is a significant challenge that must be overcome for these organisations to step up and deliver the solutions that the country so badly needs (Eining *et al.*, 2020: 71). NPOs need to be more proactive and more open about their finances and how their money is spent. NPOs historically worked to address inequalities in service provision. In the past 20 years, this work has remained crucial because we have continued to address the development needs of the population (Corcoran, 2021: e20013). The organisation needs to provide a detailed plan and what is expected of the intern. This will allow the intern to come to the workplace prepared. The allocation of tasks, a mentor, and a place of work provide the intern with the required tools to perform the task efficiently and without fear, as the mentor is there to walk them through it. Interns can be terrific additions to a non-profit's capacity-building journey and contribute to future non-profit leaders' pipeline. Treating interns professionally is essential, starting by clarifying whether they are unpaid volunteers or paid employees. Interns can be volunteers, in which case

they are not paid, or they may be classified as employees, in which case they receive compensation (Rothschild & Rothschild, 2020: 5).

Non-profit organisations need to understand the laws governing wages and hours of work so that they can adhere to the minimum wage in case they implement the paying internship (Maboya & McKay, 2019). All labour laws must be enforced and explained to the interns. The intern needs to understand all protocols to be followed in case there is a grievance the intern needs to raise. During the internships, all interns are considered employees of the organisation. NPOs must ensure that interns are paid at least minimum wage as employees. Non-profit organisations that pay interns a stipend below minimum wage should be familiar with Sectoral Determination 5, published by the Department of Labour, which documents how employers should implement and run their internship programme. Non-profits that host interns are essentially mentoring a future non-profit leader. Non-profits must ensure that there are detailed plans on how the internship can be a success, and also, they must ensure that there is a written job description for an intern. Non-profit organisations need to set goals and expectations for interns when implementing internships. The issue of stipend payments should be discussed as part of the expectation. This will ensure that the interns are not doing their internships without knowing what is required. Interns must meet individually with their supervisors and produce a general sketch of the internship, and this must be done monthly to establish the progress and determine whether all is going according to the goals and expectations. As part of the discussion, it is also necessary that the intern is provided with an opportunity to explain what they hope to get out of the experience that they will be involved in at the non-profit organisation (Maboya & McKay, 2019).

2.9 Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs)

The Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) are tasked to ensure a skilled and well-developed workforce in the country. These state entities were established by the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998. They are funded through skills levies, paid by various employers whose annual payroll is above R500 000). The Act's primary purpose is to expand the knowledge and competencies of the labour force to improve productivity and employment. In addition, it also aims to increase the levels of investment in education and training in the labour market and to improve the return on that investment. The SETAs then disburse the levies through discretionary grants such as internships, bursaries for employed persons, skills programmes, training, learnerships and many more programmes that can enhance the development of the employees within the sector in which they are allocated. When the funding window is opened through the expression of interest in which employers

are called to apply, you will find that few employers apply for grants. This impacts the young people who want to participate in programmes such as internships, learnerships and many more. It is then the responsibility of employers who apply for and approve internships to put out adverts calling for young graduates to use (McKay, 2023: 307).

2.10 SETA Funding Model Description

Non-profit organisations' recognition as employers by the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) allows them to apply for discretionary grants. The internship programme is one of the grants they can apply for if they have submitted the Work Skills Plan (WSP) and Annual Training Report (ATR). Their application is considered like any other employer paying the skills levies to that SETA. The eligibility of non-profit organisations to participate in the discretionary grant funding has assisted most SETAs in achieving the annual performance target set on the disbursement of the grant because most levy-paying employers' participation has declined. Most companies are concerned with profit as their core business for existence. They have less interest in developing their employees and the communities in which they operate (McKay, 2023: 307). The advice provided by the SETAs is that the employers must have separate bank accounts into which the money from the SETAs can be paid when their applications for grant funding have been approved. This advice is made because when the SETAs conduct the monitoring and evaluation to check whether the money has been put to good use, as stipulated in the memorandum of agreement between the SETA and the employer, the employer can provide proof of income and expenditure in the form of bank statements. This bank statement will not reflect the operational money of the company but that of the grant received from the SETA and used to pay stipends to interns. It is worth mentioning that the grant that the SETAs made available for the employers to apply is the money collected from the same employer in the form of a skills levy by the South African Revenue Services (SARS) on behalf of the SETAs (McKay, 2023: 307). The collection of grants is done according to the Skills Levy Act, Skills Development Act and SETA grant regulations. All three stipulate that these legislations compel an employer with an annual payroll of more than R500 000.00 to pay one per cent (1%) of their annual payroll to the SETA under which they fall. There are 21 SETAs classified according to the country's economic activities. Due to the nature of their business, most non-profit organisations belong to or participate in grant funding at the Health and Welfare SETA (McKay, 2023: 307).

The grant funding provided by the SETAs is not for operational purposes but for the development of the staff and to allow the employers to provide for the communities they are

serving or in which they operate the ability to impact the community by ensuring that they can get a chance to be part of the company or organisation. One of the challenges the SETAs have experienced in reaching communities is the lack of employers in the area they are targeting. SETAs' money cannot be disbursed for the sake of disbursing it but for the sake of impacting employees. Non-profit organisations, as employers, handle the grant received from the SETA as per the memorandum of agreement. They also provide a platform for the students who completed their qualifications and required experiential learning through internships to gain experience. In implementing internships, they also mentor these interns (McKay, 2023: 307). This mentorship is provided by experienced supervisors at these organisations who are professional in everything they do. Without an experienced mentor, the non-profit organisation turns to the Department of Social Development (DSD) for assistance from its personnel. One reason provided by the organisations for approaching the DSD is because the DSD assists them with operational costs, and the DSD understands their operational needs. The non-profit organisation must understand the contents of any funding agreement they sign up for. The SETAs support the development of work experience through internships for unemployed youth. The primary purpose of funding the internships is to address the scarce and critical skills identified in the sector skills plan. To achieve this goal, they need an employer to host the young. At this stage, the non-profit organisations became vital role-players in ensuring the internships were implemented. The other purpose is to promote the developmental and transformational imperatives of the national skills development strategy of the country.

Lastly, in implementing internships, the SETAs do that to increase the sector's professionalism. In ensuring that the internships are implemented as per the memoranda of the agreement, the SETAs put in place the criteria for funding for both levy-paying organisations and non-levy-paying organisations, such as NPOs. The critical requirement for the application for grant funding to be considered is that the employer must have submitted the WSP/ATR for the current year. Non-compliant employers or organisations in the past implementation of discretionary grants will not be considered for funding unless evidence of remediation to the satisfaction of the SETAs is produced. Interns must be South African citizens. The internship funding ensures that South Africa has a skilled and professional workforce. The NPOs must declare whether they have received money for such projects from other funders. This reduces double dipping and might disadvantage other students who need funding if one organisation benefits twice from two funders who fund the organisation for the exact social cause (DPSA, 2006).

2.11 Synthesis:

In essence, the literature is clear that using interns in NPOs in South Africa has significant benefits but also faces potential pitfalls. Good management of NPOs could yield tremendous benefits to interns and organisations, but interns need to be managed as a resource.

2.12 Summary

Organisations must ensure that the interns are given meaningful work when the supervisor allocates tasks. The work that does not fall within the scope of what has been agreed about should be adhered to. Interns who fully participate in the organisation where they are working will work harder and produce better results. It is, therefore, vital that they are valued and appreciated. The supervisors or mentors must declare such good stories to interns to motivate them to work harder. While it is essential to keep the interns motivated, the non-profit organisation must ensure that the well-being of the interns is being taken care of. The organisation must avoid a situation whereby interns are reduced to coffee makers and make copies daily. This kind of practice has degenerated internships as a programme that does not add any value to the curricula vitae of the interns. It must be clear that interns are not at the organisation to fetch coffee and make copies. The way organisations roll out internship programmes is crucial for the life-long learning experience of the intern and will have a psychological impact on their future careers. Interns must be well-blended with the permanent staff to raise issues with anyone without fear of reproach when they are not happy with their treatment.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Internships have been implemented in various organisations worldwide. The value that interns add to the operations of the organisations has not been investigated. The only thing that is known regarding internships is that they are opportunities presented by employers to offer young people a chance to gain workplace experience. Internships are only limited to exposure to the workplace. The question that came to the researcher's mind is, what happens in the case of an organisation, like a non-profit organisation, where its funding is insufficient to cover all operational costs? They cannot afford professional staff, get the opportunity to implement an internship, and what value will the intern add to the operation of this organisation?

The previous chapter describes the terms and the environment in which NPOs operate. In this chapter, the method for the empirical research is outlined.

3.2 The Methodology

The study used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. The qualitative research design enabled the researcher to obtain the data that helped him to fully understand the impact the internship granted by the Health and Welfare Sector Education Training Authority (HWSETA) made on the operations of Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs). The study involved capturing data from the interviews. According to McMillan & Schumacher (2010: 199), qualitative research gives the researcher rich, detailed and often emotionally driven insights based on the personal views of those being interviewed – for example, what people feel about an issue. In contrast, open-ended surveys gave the researcher a broader, robust view based on standardised questions.

This triggered the researcher's thinking to investigate the interns' impact on the operations of non-profit organisations. The study was based on randomly selected non-profit organisations in the Emfuleni Local Municipality. The limitation that the researcher experienced was the restrictions on actual interactions with the participants in the study, that is, the interns, supervisors of the non-profit organisations and the director of the organisation due to the COVID-19 pandemic when the study was completed. He overcame the restrictions by interviewing the interns and management virtually and remotely. The questionnaire was shared with non-profit organisations' representatives as the researcher

had already met with them in a previous engagement where the purpose of the study was discussed. At the same meeting, he requested to conduct the interviews at their centres.

The view placed on the interns was narrowed to the experience. However, while they gained the experience, the interns played a crucial and meaningful role in improving the organisational operations during COVID, as described in some interviews. It is on this score that the researcher's study was based. The role of the mentors in building the interns to be effective and productive employees was not ignored. The research instrument used in this study contained only interviews with open-ended questions because no validated instrument existed that measured the impact of interns in any field that could be expanded to NPOs, but also because it gave richer information on the topic while triangulating the interview results.

3.3 Population

Twenty interns and the management of the organisations where they were placed were contacted to participate in the study. The first meeting was conducted physically at the different venues where the organisations were based before COVID-19. Then, COVID-19 happened, and all meetings were resorted to virtual meetings because of a restriction by the South African government.

3.4 The interview questions

The **interns** were allowed to answer the questions as reflected in the questionnaire. The following questions were on the questionnaire:

1. What qualification did you obtain at university?
2. As an intern at your current workplace, do you have a mentor, and if so, did you sign a mentorship agreement with them?
3. What professional programmes are being offered by the organisation?
4. Are the programmes offered at the organisation relevant to your field of study you completed at university?
5. What kind of experience are you gaining from being involved in these programmes
6. What activities are your mentor assisting you with?

7. How often do you meet with your mentor, and what dominates the discussion?
8. What (if any) are you doing differently because of the mentorship received from your mentor?
9. What suggestions will you suggest to the organisation to improve the internship?
10. Does the internship programme add value to the body of knowledge you acquired through your qualification
11. Overall, how effective is the mentorship programme in assisting you in achieving your career development objectives and assisting the organisation in developing a more effective delivery of their programmes?

The **management** of the NPOs was asked the same questions from a management perspective.

1. What qualifications do you require interns to have?
2. Are you mentoring interns, and if so, did you sign a mentorship agreement with him/her?
3. What professional programmes are being offered by the organisation?
4. Are the programmes offered at the organisation relevant to the intern's field of study?
5. What kind of experience are interns gaining from being involved in these programmes
6. What activities are your mentors assisting interns with?
7. How often do you meet with your interns, and what dominates the discussion?
8. What (if any) is the effect of the internship system on the operation of the organisation?
9. What suggestions will you suggest to the organisation to improve the internship programme?
10. Does the internship programme add value to the organisation?

11. Overall, how effective is the mentorship programme?

3.5 How informed consent was obtained?

The discussion was held with participants to discuss the consent form and to make clear the rights they have as participants in the study. The indemnity form was sent to the organisations. The purpose of the study was shared with the directors so that all of us are on the same page as to why this study and commitment were made from my side and that the results will be shared with the organisations so that they can take note of the role they play in implementation programmes. All fears were expressed, and every participant understood that their confidentiality would be upheld. It was also agreed that the questionnaires would be shredded once the University submitted and accepted the dissertation. Mutual trust existed between the researcher and the participants. In this, Microsoft Teams, the virtual platform, also states that all participants agreed to the meeting to be recorded. If the participants disagreed, they were permitted to leave the meeting; in this study, none left it.

3.6 Researcher's Role

The researcher's role was limited to interviewing the interns in the selected organisations in the Emfuleni Municipal area. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all interviews were done virtually. Arrangements were made with the supervisors to ensure the interns' availability per the schedule shared with the non-profit organisations. All these organisations are participating in discretionary grant funding at HWSETA.

3.7 How organisations were contacted.

The questionnaire was distributed to the selected non-profit organisations' supervisors. The organisations are based in three areas of Emfuleni, which are closer to each other: Sharpeville, Sebokeng and Vereeniging. The organisation based in Vereeniging is called the 5Ps of Manhood. It exists to provide mentorship programmes to young boys from the age of 10 to 21. It has three satellite offices. This was a good choice as all three offices have interns. The organisation in Sharpeville is a nursing home catering to older people. They are housed at this centre, and during my first visit, I met the organisation's director to explain the purpose of my study and what I need assistance with. The organisation has social work interns, which was appropriate for the research. The organisation is well run as

it has staff and knowledgeable managers on duty 24 hours a day. The organisation in Sebokeng is a youth organisation that young people lead. The organisation deals with various issues, including home-based care, agricultural developments, and waste management. The organisation's board of directors consists mainly of young people. The purpose of the study was shared with the director of the organisation, who then allocated me one of the supervisors to assist in handling the questionnaire and ensuring that the interns were made available for interviews. The questionnaires were shared with the organisation, and all clarity-seeking questions were discussed so the questionnaire administration could be hassle-free.

3.8 How the research interview was conducted.

It is worth mentioning that planned visitations were hampered by the restrictions of COVID-19 and the change to virtual interviews was discussed and agreed upon with all parties concerned in the research. The organisations supported this idea as they had many people in their centres. The organisations have been implementing internship programmes in the past years. This study was intended to inform them how the interns view their organisation and assist them in improving their organisation. All the interviews were conducted through Microsoft Teams and recorded. The reason for using Microsoft Teams instead of other available platforms was that all organisations had access to Microsoft Teams, which is very friendly to use.

3.9 Data sources

All the data for the study was using virtual interviews. Due to the inaccessibility of some interns to Microsoft Teams, several interviews were done with interns using WhatsApp video calls and telephonic interviews. These were transcribed and used as data sources. The telephonic interviews with the non-profit organisations' supervisors were also added. The interns who are placed in these organisations are funded by the HWSETA. The interns receive monthly stipends. It is of utmost importance to mention that all these organisations are not implementing non-funded internships. The reason is that they all have financial constraints and cannot afford to fund the interns themselves. In distributing the questions, sent in pdf format to avoid the questions being tampered with, the organisations were requested to print out the questions for the interns and ensure that the interns were prepared for the interviews. From the university at which they studied.

3.10 Summary

Interview questions were shared with the participants before the actual interviews to enable them to be prepared. The administration of the questions was a very smooth process. The organisations' directors played a crucial role in printing and handling all the questions. Collecting all questions was done physically so the researcher could pass the word of gratitude to all directors for assisting. The questions were analysed manually, and all interview transcripts were printed for analysis.

The analysis had taken into consideration the interviews that were conducted with interns as well as supervisors. The interns demonstrated that they are moving with the times and will be ready for the world of work upon completing their internships. The administration of the tools, like the distribution of questions and the conducting of semi-structured interviews, was successfully implemented. This was due to the cooperation the researcher received from the directors of the NPOs, who ensured that the interns were available when the meeting was scheduled with them.

The analysis of the questionnaire was done thoroughly and recorded. The interviews were done on Microsoft Teams or by telephone, allowing me to make the recordings. The recordings were listened to several times to ensure the correct meaning was captured and then transcribed. It must be noted that the themes already emerged during the interview process. The manual transcription of the data simply confirmed the themes. The virtual interview didn't impact the quality of the interviews, and interns enjoyed the meeting very well as the video was switched in all meetings. The interaction was very professional, and one needs to mention that the interns' and management's level of communication was of high standards.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Key findings demonstrated that the interns are very impactful on the operations of the NPOs. Their presence in these NPOs has shown growth in the organisations' operations and yielded positive impacts in the operations of these organisations. The creativity of the interns had shown that the organisations had the potential to be more efficient in meeting the needs of the community they were serving. It is then evident that the interns, with the knowledge that they bring to the NPOs from the institutions they graduated from, can transform the organisations' operations. The findings will be discussed under various themes to ensure that they are comprehensive and understood by all parties. The findings are divided into seven (7) themes:

4.2 Issues mentioned during interviews.

The interviews were conducted with the interns, of whom the majority had acquired a Bachelor of Social Work degree or a Bachelor of Commerce in Human Resources to a lesser extent. The responses of both groups of interns were different in all cases. The social work interns at 5Ps of Manhood, the NPO based in Vereeniging, painted a picture of a well-run and professional organisation. Their responses on the availability of the mentor who must guide them in their internship was that the organisation has three experienced social workers who are knowledgeable and have set up the systems needed to support the young boys the organisation is dealing with.

Regarding the availability of workstations that will allow them to do their work, they indicated they all have their own workstation fitted with desktop computers. There is no sharing of computers as the organisation had received donations of such equipment or tools of trade from Standard Bank. The interns indicated that they were well received on their arrival at this organisation and appropriately inducted.

Their response to the organisation's professionalism regarding human resource matters was that the organisation has a dedicated human resource officer who deals with their leave administration and payment of stipends. They also indicated that they are allowed to participate in staff meetings and make inputs on the issues raised in the meeting. The interns indicated they were allowed to implement the new boys' mentorship programmes that had since elevated the organisation's status to such an extent that the Province of

Gauteng nominated their director for the award of best-managed boys' programmes. The questionnaires received from the organisation were neatly and well packaged. This demonstrates the professionalism that was captured during the interviews of the interns.

The supervisors' responses during the feedback sessions that they held with interns were that there was good progress and that the interns were coping well with the demands placed on them by the organisation. However, the HR interns' supervisor indicated a lack of work exposure for her interns as the organisation is not too big to afford her interns to be creative regarding NPO administration. She indicated that the intern would get more of what is missing in the scope of her work when she gets permanent employers outside the organisation. The organisation's size and activities that they are doing are part of the limitations to the interns' exposure.

The interns at the organisation in Sharpeville's responses were that the organisation does provide them with the opportunity to produce creative solutions to the challenges within their organisations. As the organisation deals with elderly people, they indicated that some of the challenges they had to deal with were the lack of visitation by the immediate family of the elderly person and, to some extent, the neglect of the family of the elderly person residing at the centre displayed. An example of the solution that they produced was the trace and find system, in which they were allowed to contact the Department of Home Affairs and Health Department to trace the families of the elderly person and contact them and beg them to visit the centre to spend a few hours with the elderly person. The challenge they raised was the lack of mentorship for social work interns.

The organisation does not have full-time social work and heavily relies on the social development social work supervisors who typically visit the organisation once a week. These supervisors act as mentors, and they usually have meetings with them. The social development supervisors had drawn up a work plan for the interns, which is being followed each week. The interns indicated that they do not have problems or experience problems with their stipends. They feel that if vacancies appear at the organisation and the organisation is willing to pay them, they will stay. This will allow them to see the programmes they implemented bearing fruit. There is a great deal of learning in this organisation. The challenge of the workstation is also experienced in this organisation. There is a lack of computers and the interns had opted to bring their laptops to ensure that they can compile the reports on time. They indicated that the challenge is that the organisation is managed by grown-up people, who focus a great deal on ensuring that the elderly people are sorted with food. They indicated that the management at the organisation seems not to understand

the psychosocial support and well-being of the elderly person. Therefore, they do not see the need to ensure that the organisation has enough workstations for professionals such as social workers.

The lack of full-time social workers to provide daily guidance to the interns is the issue that the interns raised as a risk. They are of the view that this is part of the work that they need supervision. The presence of interns has created a professional way of doing things. This is the response provided by the social development supervisor when asked what kind of difference they see and find when they visit the centre every week. The interns played a tremendous part in the well-being of the elderly and the proper record keeping that is always needed by the Department when visiting the centre. The organisation needs a full-time social worker, and the presence of interns at the centre has closed that absence, the interns' professionalism in their conduct has ensured that the centre's psychosocial support to the elderly people has increased. The conduct of these interns is commendable in ensuring that the organisation remains compliant with Social Development guidelines on the centre to house the elderly people or be called an old-age home.

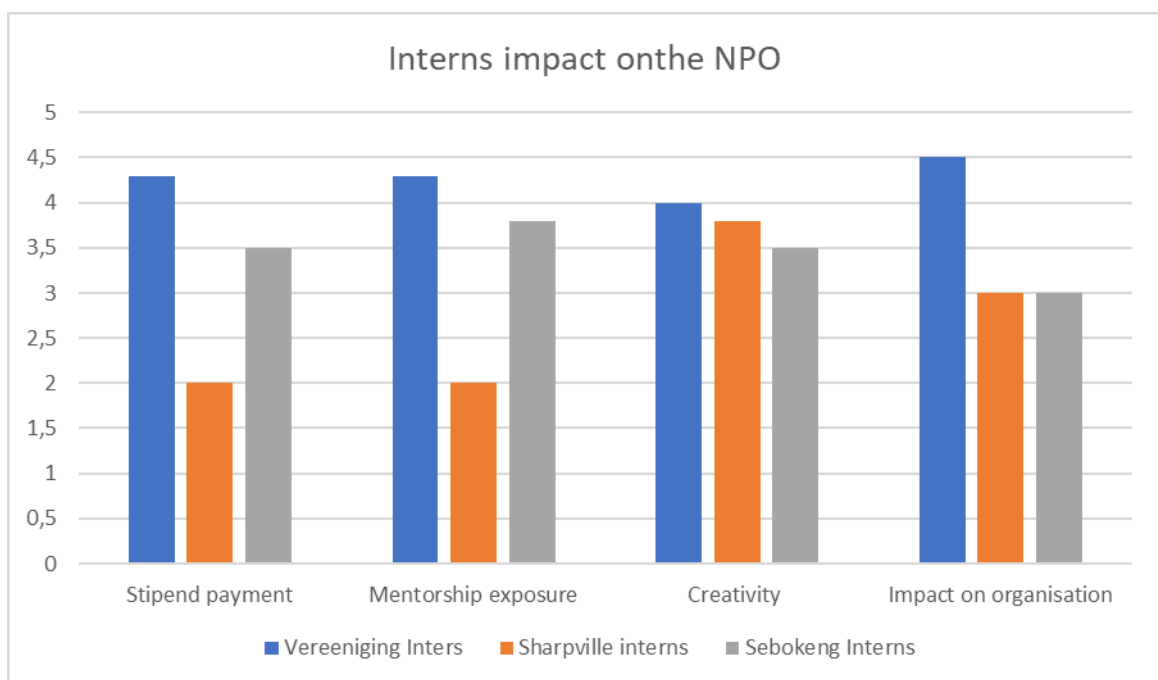
The supervisors from Social Development indicated that they do this mentoring for the organisations as this is the only old-age home based in the township of Sharpeville and plays a critical role in ensuring that the elderly are taken care of. The organisation in Sebokeng has five interns who are graduates with a Bachelor of Social Work, a Diploma in Marketing, and three of them are Sport Management interns. The organisation's activities are mostly youth-based. The organisation has one full-time social worker who has been with the organisation since 2005. She considers herself the brainchild of this action after identifying the lack of or decline in youth opportunities around the Vaal area. The organisation runs many campaigns in health activities, such as Aids awareness and breast cancer awareness.

The interns indicated that the organisations pay their stipends on time and that they fully engage in their daily work. The organisation's office space is minimal, hampering the counselling sessions they regularly hold with young people. The organisation does provide workstations for them to be able to do their work, and they are allowed to be creative in thinking about other activities that they need to engage the youth in to ensure that youth empowerment is a success. They had recently implemented a diversion programme for the youth suffering from drug abuse. This has allowed parents unable to afford expensive rehabilitation programmes to take their children to counselling programmes. The organisation only operates for eight hours a day, which, according to the interns, is one of

the obstacles for them to reach more young people who need assistance. The agriculture projects that they had established to give the rehabilitated young people an opportunity to produce vegetables for themselves and sell them on the street market have been acknowledged by the community as a means of removing the youth from the street and ensuring that the youth are fully engaged the whole day, thereby avoiding idling, which can lead to them getting involved in criminal activities and drug abuse.

Graphical presentation of data

Figure 2: Interns' responses



Source: Compiled from interview data

The graph represents the responses to the questionnaires received from the NPOs' interns and reflects the analysis made from the questionnaire. Based on the graph, it can clearly be seen that there is a positive response to the questions asked. A score below three was experienced on the mentorship issue of the organisation based in Sharpeville. Checking the results of the stipend payment graphs reflected, the organisation processes the payment of stipends. This reflects the organisation's efficiency in processing the interns' stipend payments. It must be mentioned that the stipend assists the interns to come to work as they use it for transport and other small items such as lunch. Regarding creativity, the graphs tell us which NPO has

been allowing the interns to think creatively about solutions regarding daily operations, thereby impacting the organisation's operations. The organisations with mentors to support this organisation allowed the interns to be more creative. The interns' responses also demonstrated that they are learning a great deal and can implement the processes they learned from the university.

4.2 Themes Identified

4.2.1 Theme 1: Absence of a mentor

The innovation of the interns, even when they do not have mentorships, is commendable and plays a crucial role in ensuring that the well-being of the people they serve is improved. The interns' impact on the services they provide to the organisation was even noticeable by the provincial government of Gauteng in nominating the director of the organisation, 5Ps of Manhood, as the director who runs the best NPO for boys' mentoring. The interns demonstrated that if they are given an opportunity and are well mentored, they can add more value than we expect. The crucial part of their impact on this organisation's operations is also attributed to the organisation's openness to practising what they had learnt at university. The interns indicated that the absence of mentors created uncertainty regarding the programmes they are implementing at these organisations. The wait for the social worker from the Department of Social Development wastes much time for interns. The absence of full-time mentors in most organisations had a negative start to the internships as the interns spent much time figuring out their roles in these organisations. The majority of the interns indicated that the Department of Social Development needs to make the availability of mentors an essential requirement for these organisations to receive grant funding from the Department, as this will force them to have a space for professional personnel on their organogram.

4.3.2 Theme 2: The lack of physical resources

The availability of workstations and tools of the trade for interns cannot be underestimated in the impactful role the interns had on the operations of the NPOs in Vereeniging. This issue was mentioned during all the interviews.

4.3.3 Theme 3: The impact of mentors

The availability of mentorship also boosted how the interns impacted the operations of the organisations. Based on the graphic representation of the Vereeniging NPOs, it is evident

that the organisation has qualified mentors in the organisation. Based on the graphic representation of the Vereeniging NPOs, it is evident that the organisation has qualified mentors who can maximise its operations. Most of the interns held a meeting once a month. Work-related matters mostly dominate the discussion. The interns responded that the mentors guide them in various activities the organisations provide to their clients. The interns in human resource (HR) components in these organisations indicated that the mentors guide them. Still, she can only assist with psychosocial support guidance in all processes that human resource practitioners are involved in their daily activities.

The social worker interns mentioned that the mentors are mentoring them in report writing, and some of these reports are presented in a court of law. Most of those who do not have mentors on site indicated that they had to rely on what they had studied at university, which needs validation from other experienced professionals. Most interns indicated that they usually meet once a month to discuss the progress they are making in the workplace. They also indicated that the sessions with mentors are very fruitful as they reflect on how they learn and implement the processes in the workplace. A few interns raised the issue of lack of proper guidance as they did not have mentors on site and had to rely on external mentors from the Department of Social Development. *“Once a month, the discussion is dominated by the procedures I must follow to provide the services.”*

The social workers' interns were greatly praised for their mentor support. They indicated that due to this support, they can see an improvement in compiling their reports. The other interns acknowledged the mentors' role and indicated that it is making their internships very progressive and helping them learn the actual world of work. They even suggested that the organisations that gave them the opportunity of internships must first ensure the availability of mentors before recruiting interns. They believed there would be enough time to learn from day one of their internship. The interns who relied on the external mentors mentioned that the organisations must formalise agreements with the external mentors so that there is a schedule of when the mentors are coming to meet them and when the feedback sessions with the mentors are. The interns' response to the effectiveness of mentorship was that the mentors are an irreplaceable resource in acquiring excellent experience. The value of internships for most interns who had on-site mentors was visible in the response to what they do daily. *“Mentorship is very important as it provides the basis on which you can build your career. It is a simple way of learning the practicalities of what you are expected to do in the workplace.”* Effective mentorship in which meetings between mentor and mentee are held, feedback and guidance are provided are very crucial. The impact of it cannot be underestimated as it has smoothened the interns' journey in their

internship programme, and most of the interns, despite being halfway through their programme, felt that they were ready for the workplace and to make appropriate decisions in executing the tasks at hand.

4.3.4 Theme 4: The mutual benefits between the organisation and interns

There has been a mutual benefit between the organisations and the interns. The organisations benefitted regarding the knowledge the interns have, and the interns benefitted from the guidance and supervision provided by the mentors as well as from the organisations themselves by allowing them to showcase their ability and implement the theory they learnt during their three or four years, depending on their qualifications, at university. This mutual benefit has demonstrated that the interns can do more than we perceive can be done by interns. All interns are graduates of South African universities. Their degrees range from Bachelor of Social Work, BA in Community Development, and BCom in Human Resource Management. Most of the graduates interviewed in these organisations completed their studies in BA Social Work. The interns were recruited through normal recruitment processes where the internship was advertised, and they submitted their curricula vitae. The services these organisations provide are relevant to the experience they need to acquire.

4.3.5 Theme 5: Lack of financial resources

Few organisations do not have a qualified social worker, and the mentorship is provided by the social worker employed by the Department of Social Development. This is achievable when the department pays a visit to the centre. No mentorship agreement is signed, as the social worker visits the centre once a month. The interns responded that most organisations have professionals who can mentor them. Still, they later learnt from the directors that the organisation cannot afford the compensation of the professionals they need in their organisations. The organisations provide various services, including drop-in, caring for old-aged clients, psychosocial support, boys' mentorships, and other related miscellaneous services. The reasons provided by the interns regarding why they choose these organisations range from scarcity of opportunities to the availability of the workplace that can provide internships with stipends. The parents of children with disabilities working full time come to the dropping centre to leave their children during the day, and the centre takes care of them. At the old-age home, the centre cares for the older citizens who reside there. The interns indicated that at the old-age centre, there is a dire need for social services for old people, and they needed guidance on handling the needs

of the old citizens. Due to their disabilities, parents of these children feel that their children can only be cared for by well-trained child minders. The role of the intern is to learn the professional services that the organisation is providing.

4.3.6 Theme 6: The reasons for interns to select the organisation.

Most of the interns indicated that the programmes offered by the organisations are relevant to what they studied in their degrees. Their only concern is that they are not exposed to the aspects of the real world of work by experienced mentors who will motivate them and guide them to do precisely what is expected of them. They must learn the process and procedure by themselves without the assistance of mentors.

On the question of whether the organisations can afford to operate to provide services without the experience of professional employees, the interns responded that there is no way the organisations can afford to provide quality services to the community they are servicing. The organisations need professional, experienced workers to guide new graduates who require experiential learning through internships. Most of the interns raised the issue of limited financial constraints, which this organisation functions under, which hinder the affordability and hiring of experienced professionals full-time. They indicated that, in most of the staff meetings, the directors of these organisations will always highlight the financial constraints as an obstacle to implementing some programmes they were planning to implement. The interns indicated that they are learning a lot in these internship programmes. They are exposed to the real world of work and real-life experiences. Most interns reported experiencing the fundamental disciplines they will face if they can be absorbed permanently into these organisations. They reported that they are being treated and feel like part of the permanent staff in the workplace. The absence of mentors did not deter them from putting forward the suggestions that are vital for the survival of the organisations. The interns believe that they can flourish if the organisations can implement the good practices, they suggested during the staff meeting. The mentors' assistance and availability are still critical for interns' development into experienced employees. The interns believe that with the mentor's assistance and guidance, there would be rapid professional growth that will enhance the quality of the services and duties that are tasked to them. Without the guidance and support of the mentors, the interns believed that the challenges would overwhelm them.

4.3.7 Theme 7: Suggestions by interns to the solutions required by non-profit organisations.

Most interns suggested that the organisations must be fully assisted in the recruitment process of interns. They indicated that the advertisement was unclear regarding the type of internships the organisations offer. Most of the interns mentioned the lack of induction on the first day. They indicated that the first day was wasted as they had idled the whole day without being told what the day programme entails. They all raised the professionalism issues that organisations require to function optimally. They indicated that the organisation's directors need to understand that interns cannot function alone and require much learning from mentors. Most of the interns indicated that the directors of these non-profit organisations need to be given leadership and governance courses to demarcate between the experienced professionals and the graduates from university who are acquiring the experience through the internship. To have a professional mentor, even if they can have a retiree to provide such roles, is imperative. Most interns' reactions to the value the internship adds to the body of knowledge already acquired was that the internship is necessary for all graduates, and they even compared it to the law graduates serving articles as a means of acquiring experience, which is compulsory for law graduates. They indicated that an internship is a must for all graduates as it provides a natural feeling of being in the workplace. Learning from experienced professionals is a key to career growth.

4.4 Summary

The interns who participated in the study were very informative and cooperative. The responses provided were constructive. Most interns understand that to learn effectively, they need mentors. They understand that the knowledge acquired at universities needs to be supplemented by practical experience, which they are attempting to get. Still, the lack of professionals who need to mentor them is a frustrating process. The findings demonstrate that organisations need assistance in all aspects of their operations—the knowledge acquired by interns added value to the organisation's operations. The system the interns who didn't have mentors managed to put in place shows the type of education they had received had prepared them for the situation they found themselves in.

CHAPTER FIVE: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

The interns' effectiveness relies on the mentorship they receive from the mentors. Despite most interns showing excellent innovative means of ensuring that the presence of experienced, qualified professionals does not fully impact the organisations, they managed to keep the organisation going and be able to provide services. In this chapter, the conclusions of the study and recommendations will be recorded. The findings and recommendations will be shared with the directors of the non-profit organisations to inform them so that they can decide if they will be able to implement them and how helpful they will be to their organisations. In comparison, the study which was conducted on the baseline of interns found that misalignment between the interns' career goals and the organisation's objectives was a very big problem and affected many issues and eventually corroded the confidence of some of the interns at the end of their internship, the results were more or less similar as the effectiveness of interns is mostly dependent on good and solid mentorship.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Criteria for selecting the mentorship for the interns.

Mentorship is vital in guiding new employees in learning the ins and outs of the profession the new employee studied in the post-school institution. It is essential to note that mentorship can only be provided by well-experienced personnel who have had an illustrious journey within the profession. In selecting a mentor, it is essential to set an explicit criterion for the person who can play the mentor role. The other recommendation is that the mentor selected should receive a mentorship course. This will allow them to learn the mentor's roles and responsibilities. Secondly, it will expose them to the actual mentorship programme and give the person selected as a mentor an opportunity to learn how to assist the mentee in achieving the goals set at the beginning of the internship programme.

5.2.2 Skills and knowledge transfer between the organisation and the intern

As an internship is not permanent employment, it is critically important that there should be a guideline which will be used to guide the whole process of the internship. In this situation, for the intern with fresh and robust knowledge, getting work exposure for a

certain period puts forward innovative solutions that should be viewed as a new asset to the organisation. The interns' knowledge is current, and, in some instances, the mentors had a little bit of obsolete knowledge, but with a wealth of experience, it simply means the two can learn from each other. There are skills transfers from mentors to interns, which must be recommended and modified to ensure that the skills and knowledge that interns have remain in the organisation for the benefit and growth of the organisation.

5.2.3 Presentation by the chairperson of the board of the NPO

All the randomly sampled organisations are governed by the boards, which the stakeholders have elected with an interest in what the organisation is offering to the community. It is recommended that the chairperson of the board should present the findings of this project. This will demonstrate the management's endorsement of this report's findings and acknowledge the interns' impact on the operations of these organisations. The board is aware that there are interns at these organisations and might not know that these interns are doing marvellous work. The address by the chairperson will add the cherry on top of the excellent work the interns had done in the non-profit organisation in which they were placed.

5.2.4 Presentation of the researcher to the management of the NPO

The findings of this research report will be presented to each organisation that participated in the study. This will maintain the trust we had developed among each other during our brief physical and virtual engagements. The researcher will first put forward a word of appreciation to the organisation, thank them for their cooperation, and assist him with all logistics in conducting the study. The researcher needs to mention that it would be impossible to conduct this research considering the restrictions placed on us by the COVID-19 pandemic. Words will not be enough to appreciate the assistance the researcher received from the management of NPOs, the supervisors and interns at these organisations. The commitment and time the interns afforded the researcher cannot be overstated. The honesty displayed by participants cannot be forgotten. We all understand the benefit of this study and the confidence it will bring to these interns and future interns. In addition, the researcher would love to thank the management of the organisations for trusting him with confidential information, such as payment of stipends.

5.3 Conclusions

The country can significantly benefit if most organisations correctly implement internship programmes. It is also evident that the country, which is faced with a shortage of much-needed skilled workers and has high unemployment rates among young people, can benefit a lot from the interns who graduate from university. The fact is that there are financial resources that can be sourced from the SETAs to fund the internship programme, and what is required is the employers is a willingness to take these interns and be patient with them while they are learning the systems of operations. The NPO sector can take many interns based on the services they provide in their communities if funding in the form of stipends can be readily available. Another lesson learnt is that the unavailability of mentors inside the organisation must not be seen as an obstacle to successfully implementing the internships. We can even use retired, experienced personnel we had in this country to provide such services once or twice a week. The limitation of interns to only practical work experience exposure is a myth that can be eliminated, and we should consider them employees while implementing internship programmes. The interns' impact on this organisation demonstrated the quality of education they received from the tertiary institution they were enrolled in and the quality of lecturing personnel. It is, therefore, essential to note that the country can deliver service excellence with quality personnel if the interns are provided with a workplace to showcase the ability and knowledge they gained during their studies at university. The internship is the programme that most graduates need, and I learnt a lot from it. Most interns expected what the internship should offer them. In all engagements, they understand that they are not full-time employees of the organisations and are there for learning. The experience they were getting, especially with mentors, was truly appreciated.

Meeting the research objectives

The study's primary objective was to explore the perceptions of the impact that the interns, who are graduates from universities, are making on the operations of non-profit organisations (NPOs). This objective has been met, as described in the above conclusions and recommendations. Note that, although the original intention was to get the perceptions of both managers and interns, the study turned out to only be able to get the opinion of interns themselves.

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