



International Internship Experiences of Japanese Language and Culture Students through a Human Security Approach

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Abstract. This study aims to assess the personal security status and experiences of students from the Bachelor of Japanese Language and Culture Program at Diponegoro University who are participating in an internship program in Japan through the Japan JIPA, using a Human Security approach. Despite Japan's high safety standards, concerns about natural disasters and job-related risks persist. The study employs a questionnaire to collect data from eight interns, referencing the three pillars of Human Security: 'freedom from fear,' 'freedom from want,' and 'freedom to live in dignity.' Findings indicate that while most students feel safe and have access to healthcare, specific job risks and environmental hazards require attention. Issues such as stress and perceived unfair treatment highlight the need for improved mental support and cultural preparation. Integrating HS principles and emphasizing SDG 4 on quality education are crucial for creating a safe and inclusive internship environment. This research provides insights for enhancing internship programs, ensuring they offer a safe and supportive environment for students.

Keywords: Human Security, BKJ-FIB Undip, International Internship, JIPA, MBKM.

1 Introduction

The internship program of HEIs as a means for students to enhance their competencies through practical experience should be conducted in environments that are conducive to achieving these goals, regardless of the location or partner institution involved. However, the implementation of internship programs, particularly those in partnership with foreign entities, has encountered several legal issues, with some cases being classified as human trafficking. For instance, Kompas newspaper reported on June 28, 2023, a case involving Politeknik Pertanian Negeri Payakumbuh, which sent students for internships to Japan, only for them to be forced to work as laborers without rest [1]. The students were forced to work 14 hours a day and not even allowed to practice their religion [2]. Another prominent case is the FerienJob program in Germany, which affected 1,047 students from 33 HEIs in Indonesia. This case came to light following complaints from several students to the Indonesian Embassy [3].

These cases illustrate that the implementation of internship programs is quite challenging and demands that HEIs act diligently and seriously in selecting partners to ensure the safety and well-being of their intern students. This is related to the SDGs 4,

which aims for quality education [4]. To achieve quality education, specifically in terms of providing quality internship programs as a key component, it is essential to ensure that students are placed in safe and supportive environments where they can learn and grow during their internships.

Previous studies have shown the benefits of internship programs in the development of professional skills (both hard and soft skills) and the personal growth of interns [5], [6][7][8]. However, other studies have highlighted problems faced by interns, such as being often perceived as cheap labor [9] and encountering cultural differences, work attitude discrepancies, and communication barriers [10][11][12]. From these studies, specific research on the personal security conditions of interns has yet to be conducted, which is crucial given that internship locations are abroad and beyond the direct control of HEIs. Therefore, this study examines the extent of personal security (PS) experiences among students interning abroad. The subjects of this research are students from the Bachelor Japanese Language and Culture (BJLC) Program, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Diponegoro (Undip), who are participating in an internship program in Japan through the Japan Indonesia Academic Program (JIPA).

2 Methods

This study uses a mixed-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques, aimed at outlining the findings regarding the subjects and objects of the research as they are. Data were collected through questionnaires administered to 8 interns in Japan for approximately 3-11 months. The questions were designed according to the Human Security (HS) framework. The researcher first distributed general questionnaires to the informants (8 interns), then followed up with more details questions through WhatsApp due to scheduling conflicts. In addition to the quantitative data, qualitative insights were gathered through interviews and open-ended questionnaire responses. Secondary data were obtained from literature reviews, including online news, previous research, books, and documents relevant to this research. HS refers to the three main pillars: 'freedom from fear', 'freedom from want', and 'freedom to live in dignity'[14]. Among the main threats to HS, PS pertains to individuals' presence or absence of fear or insecurity. Using this approach, the researcher will analyze whether interns feel safe and secure individually during their internship program in Japan.

3 Result and Discussion

This section describes the personal security (PS) status and experiences of these students through the lens of the three pillars of the Human Security (HS) approach. The

eight students are distributed across the prefectures of Hokkaido, Gifu, Osaka, and Okinawa, with four students placed in F&B companies (NS restaurant and DL restaurant) and four students placed in hospitality services (OGO, SM, and M).

3.1 Status of Student Safety at Internship Placement Locations

It is essential to assess the security status of internship students regarding their living environment and internship placement to ensure they experience the program safely and comfortably. Survey results indicate that although 62.5% of interns occasionally feel concerned about their security, all of them find their living environment and internship locations relatively safe. They have not encountered personal security threats like air pollution, physical violence, or cyber threats. Nevertheless, NRS has experienced threats from earthquakes and storms. According to NRS, who works at RM resort (located in a coastal area), there are concerns that earthquakes in Japan could trigger Tsunamis. At the same time, severe storms can cause power outages and disrupt access to food supplies if not adequately prepared.

The companies collaborating through JIPA each have security procedures and access to healthcare facilities in case of threatening situations. One intern working at NS restaurant also reported that the restaurant provided information about nearby shelters during a natural disaster. Although the living environments and internship locations are deemed safe, it was found that 2 out of 8 interns felt that their jobs were relatively high-risk, particularly those working in the kitchen. IA and AA mentioned that they are exposed to risks such as minor burns (from used hot oil and cooking utensils) and cuts from knives, unlike the other 2 interns at DL restaurant who work in cashier or server roles with minimal physical risk.

The survey results indicate that there are no significant sources of fear such as physical violence, organized crime threats, or deprivation of basic needs. However, the high-risk kitchen jobs and placement in tsunami-prone areas highlight potential hazards that need to be addressed. PT and JIPA, as partners, should continuously monitor and manage these risks to ensure that interns do not face them. The need for regular monitoring is supported by MB's statement, who works at DL restaurant, expressing a desire for periodic questionnaires related to PS or other forms to assess their security conditions.

3.2 Student Internship Experience at Placement Locations

The survey results show no restrictions on vital sources of livelihood for the interns. They receive living allowances from their host companies, indicating that they are able to live comfortably during their internship. However, NRS reported difficulties in obtaining food due to the lack of nearby shops; the closest convenience store is 5 km away, requiring reliance on their days off for shopping.

Beyond NRS, the study found that some interns experienced feelings of worry, stress, and perceived unfair treatment. MHR felt insecure due to insufficient language skills, while NRS was concerned about being placed in a coastal area. Stress was reported by AA, who felt pressured to perform multiple tasks, and NM, who experienced stress from not meeting work expectations. In terms of treatment, although not from supervisors or colleagues, MB felt that some customers were less friendly or engaged in *catcalling* compared to being served by Japanese staff. Additionally, NM working in hospitality felt that colleagues might distance themselves if NM did not perform well. To address these issues, HEIs and JIPA should enhance language and cultural preparation, provide mental and emotional support for students, ensure easy access to essential facilities, review workloads, and offer adequate training. Moreover, strict anti-discrimination policies and regular monitoring are necessary to create a fair and inclusive work environment.

Despite these discomforts, most interns felt that their internship met their initial expectations, though communication and cultural differences were challenges. Supervisors and colleagues provided supportive environments conducive to learning, with freedom to express opinions and practice religion. However, a ban on wearing hijabs at one internship location was seen as contradictory to the principle of "Freedom to live in dignity," impacting the interns' dignity and well-being.

In analyzing the security status of internship students in Japan, the 3 pillars of HS-PS and point 4A of SDG 4 regarding quality education are highly relevant. While most interns feel secure from physical threats, workplace risks and environmental hazards such as earthquakes and storms need further attention. JIPA and partner companies must ensure adequate security procedures and healthcare access. Additionally, mental support, cultural preparation, and anti-discrimination policies are crucial for creating an inclusive and safe work environment. Point 4A of SDG 4 emphasizes the development of safe and inclusive educational facilities, which can enhance the internship experience and support adequate and safe education for students. This research is expected to provide insights for policymakers and educational institutions in designing more inclusive and sustainable internship programs, contributing to overall HS.

4 Conclusion

This study shows that internships in Japan are generally safe for BKJ FIB Undip students, though risks related to natural disasters and job assignments persist. While most interns feel secure and have access to healthcare, improvements in mental and cultural support are needed. Integrating the three pillars of HS and point 4A target of SDG 4 (Quality Education) is crucial for ensuring a safe and inclusive internship

environment. HEIs, JIPA, and partner companies must continually monitor and manage risks to safeguard students' well-being.

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