

Internship Satisfaction in Hospitality: Organisational Factors and the Impact of Work Stress

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Abstract

This study examines the factors influencing overall internship satisfaction among hotel management interns undergoing training in star-category hotels across the Delhi NCR. Drawing on a structured conceptual framework, the study investigates the direct effects of workplace culture, student perception of the internship experience, and learning satisfaction on overall internship satisfaction. In addition, the study evaluates the moderating role of WS in shaping these relationships, recognising the demanding operational nature of hotel internship environments. Data were collected from 510 hotel management interns using a questionnaire-based approach. The measurement model was validated through EFA and CFA. Hypotheses were tested using SEM for direct relationships, while moderation effects were assessed through Hayes' PROCESS Macro. The findings confirm that workplace culture, student perception, and learning satisfaction significantly and positively influence overall internship satisfaction. Further, Work Stress (WS) significantly moderates each relationship, indicating that stress weakens the strength of these positive effects under high-pressure internship conditions. Practically, the findings provide actionable guidance for hotel HR departments and training managers to strengthen internship structures through supportive workplace environments, learning-focused training designs, and stress-sensitive internship management practices.

Keywords: workplace culture, student perception, learning satisfaction, WS, overall internship satisfaction

Introduction

“Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.” (Kolb, 1984). Internships have long been positioned as the most powerful form of experiential learning, particularly in professionally oriented disciplines where classroom knowledge must be translated into workplace competence. Globally, higher education institutions increasingly rely on structured internship programmes to enhance student readiness, strengthen employability, and develop industry-aligned skills. Within this broader agenda, researchers have consistently emphasized that internship outcomes depend not only on task exposure but also on the organizational environment, interpersonal support systems, and the quality of learning embedded within the training process. For instance, studies examining internship satisfaction highlight that workplace conditions, supervision quality, and learning opportunities shape how students evaluate their placement experiences and develop professional confidence (Zehr & Korte, 2020). Similarly, evidence suggests that work-based support received during internship contributes meaningfully to satisfaction outcomes and influences students' overall appraisal of the programme (Tabi et al., 2025). More recent scholarship has further indicated that mentoring systems and workplace guidance structures play a central role in shaping satisfaction during hotel internships by strengthening professional learning and adjustment outcomes (Liu et al., 2024). Collectively, this literature confirms that internship experiences function as a strategic link between education and practice, while also highlighting the need to understand the organisational and psychological factors that determine whether internships become developmental opportunities or stressful obligations.

In the Indian context, internships remain a mandatory and highly valued component of professional education, particularly in vocational and industry-focused programmes. However, internship experiences in India are often

shaped by operational realities such as long working hours, limited stipends, high workload intensity, and unequal learning exposure, which may influence students' evaluations of training effectiveness and overall satisfaction. This is especially relevant in metropolitan regions such as the Delhi NCR, where the hospitality labour market is highly competitive and internship environments vary across hotel ownership structures. Emerging research and sector-based evidence further suggests that internship stress is not uncommon and may affect interns' emotional and behavioural outcomes, reinforcing the need to examine stress-related mechanisms within internship settings (Mensah et al., 2021). In addition, evolving internship structures in Delhi NCR and neighbouring regions—particularly after major sector disruptions—have attracted increasing academic attention, reflecting the growing relevance of this location for internship-related research (Divya & Bathla, 2025). Despite these developments, there remains limited empirical work in India that jointly evaluates organizational environment factors and psychological strain in shaping overall internship satisfaction among hospitality interns.

Internship experiences have also been widely studied across domains such as management, engineering, healthcare, information technology, and education, where research frequently links internship satisfaction with learning outcomes, work adjustment, and career confidence. Yet, the hospitality domain represents a uniquely demanding internship environment due to its continuous service orientation, operational intensity, strict discipline, and high interpersonal load. Unlike several other professional internships that follow predictable schedules and structured role expectations, hospitality internships often expose students to real-time service pressure, multi-department rotations, and physical work demands from the earliest stage of training. In hotel management education, internship typically carries the weight of an entire semester and functions as a decisive transition point between academic preparation and industry expectations. This first sustained exposure to operational realities can be professionally rewarding but simultaneously stressful, particularly when interns experience time pressure, fatigue, or reduced perceived control over their work environment. Nevertheless, while internship satisfaction has received increasing attention internationally, studies focusing specifically on the interplay of organisational factors and stress mechanisms in hospitality internship outcomes remain relatively scarce, thereby signaling a clear scholarly gap.

Against this backdrop, the Delhi NCR provides a strategically appropriate research setting, as it hosts one of India's most developed hospitality ecosystems, including several pioneering Indian hotel groups as well as a strong presence of foreign chain hotels. The region offers a highly diverse internship environment in terms of service standards, organisational procedures, workplace expectations, and training cultures, thereby making it an ideal context for examining variations in intern experiences and satisfaction. Since interns in Delhi NCR are frequently placed in premium properties with high service intensity, the region provides strong ground for investigating how organisational conditions shape internship perceptions and learning outcomes, and how psychological strain may influence these relationships.

Building on this foundation, the present study develops a conceptual framework that explains overall internship satisfaction through three core predictors, namely workplace culture, student perception, and learning satisfaction. Workplace culture is included because hospitality internships are inherently shaped by the organisational atmosphere, supervisory behaviour, work discipline, and team interactions that interns experience on a daily basis. Student perception is incorporated as it captures the interns' cognitive appraisal of internship value, relevance, and professional usefulness, which forms an important evaluative basis for satisfaction outcomes. Learning satisfaction is included because internship programmes are expected to generate practical competence and applied understanding, and interns' satisfaction is strongly influenced by whether they perceive meaningful learning progression during training. In addition to these predictors, this study introduces WS as a moderator, recognising that internships in hospitality frequently operate under high workload intensity, time constraints, and operational pressure. Work Stress (WS) is a theoretically grounded construct with established measurement approaches, and prior scholarship supports its relevance for understanding internship-related satisfaction outcomes (Parker & DeCotiis, 1983). Importantly, WS is expected to influence how workplace culture, student perception, and learning satisfaction translate into overall internship satisfaction, as high stress conditions can weaken the benefits of positive workplace environments and learning opportunities, whereas manageable stress levels may allow such benefits to fully materialise.

By integrating organisational, perceptual, and learning dimensions with Work Stress as a boundary condition, this study offers both theoretical and applied contributions. From a practical perspective, the findings are expected to provide actionable guidance for hotel HR managers, training coordinators, and department supervisors to strengthen intern satisfaction through improvements in workplace culture, learning structure, and stress-sensitive training practices. From a managerial standpoint, the outcomes may support better internship Programme planning, improved intern retention attitudes, and more sustainable talent pipelines for star-category hotels in the Delhi NCR, ultimately enhancing both training effectiveness and workforce readiness within the hospitality sector.

Reviewing the variables

Workplace Culture

Workplace culture is widely recognised as a decisive organisational factor shaping how interns experience training, interpret workplace realities, and form satisfaction judgements. In hotel environments, interns are exposed to structured hierarchy, operational discipline, interpersonal coordination, and service performance expectations, making workplace culture particularly influential in shaping overall internship satisfaction. Existing research indicates that supportive workplace conditions, effective supervision, and organisational climate play a meaningful role in determining internship satisfaction and learning outcomes within hospitality settings (Lingadkar & Sankaranarayanan, 2023; Mensah et al., 2020). Evidence also suggests that hospitality internships can shape students' attitudes and subsequent outcomes depending on whether the workplace environment matches expectations and supports professional development (S et al., 2025). Moreover, internship programme challenges such as working hours, supervision, and communication have been found to significantly influence satisfaction evaluations, reinforcing the role of workplace-level conditions in shaping intern experiences (To & Lung, 2020). Given the operational intensity and continuous service requirements in star-category hotels, workplace culture serves as a foundational predictor in explaining internship satisfaction. Taken together, these arguments support the formulation of the following hypothesis:

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between workplace culture and overall internship satisfaction among hotel management interns in star-category hotels in the Delhi NCR.

Student Perception

Student perception reflects interns' evaluative understanding of the internship experience, including how relevant, meaningful, and professionally valuable the training is perceived to be. In professional education, satisfaction is not determined solely by exposure to workplace tasks but also by how students interpret and mentally appraise their experiences relative to expectations and career relevance. Research in tourism and hospitality highlights that the alignment between student expectations and post-internship perceptions strongly shapes satisfaction outcomes and future orientation toward the industry (Vicente et al., 2024). In addition, evidence confirms that internships act as a bridge between academic learning and professional realities, strengthening students' overall evaluation of the experience when perceived positively (Shen et al., 2024). Studies focusing on hotel interns further report that internship satisfaction depends on the perceived usefulness and developmental value of the training exposure, indicating that perception strongly influences satisfaction judgements (Alves et al., 2025). Internship-related challenges such as communication quality, supervision, and working hours can further shape how students evaluate internship effectiveness and value (Gomez et al., 2023). Hence, the study empirically examines the following proposition:

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between student perception of the internship experience and overall internship satisfaction among hotel management interns in star-category hotels in the Delhi NCR.

Learning Satisfaction

Learning satisfaction represents the degree to which interns believe that the internship contributes meaningfully to skill development, competence enhancement, and application of academic knowledge in real operational settings. In hospitality education, internships are designed not merely as employment exposure but as structured learning platforms that build professional readiness. Prior research suggests that hospitality internships enable students to acquire practical understanding of hotel operations, workplace standards, and service performance expectations, which may directly influence satisfaction outcomes when learning is perceived as effective (Bartaula, 2025). Empirical evidence further demonstrates that intern satisfaction is shaped by whether learning experiences during training are productive and aligned with long-term professional development, linking learning outcomes closely to overall satisfaction evaluations (Poltimäe et al., 2023). In addition, tourism and hospitality internship studies confirm that learning-related perceptions often stem from the extent to which expected learning is realised during actual internship exposure, reinforcing learning satisfaction as a core determinant of satisfaction (Liu, 2021). Challenges such as extended duty hours, inadequate mentoring, and limited training guidance may restrict learning quality, which can subsequently affect satisfaction assessments (ALawi et al., 2025). In alignment with these theoretical and empirical insights, the following hypothesis is articulated:

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between learning satisfaction and overall internship satisfaction among hotel management interns in star-category hotels in the Delhi NCR.

Work Stress (WS)

WS represents a crucial boundary condition within hotel internship settings, where interns are routinely exposed to physically demanding responsibilities, strict timelines, extended working hours, and continuous guest-facing performance expectations. From a work stress perspective, WS originates from work-related demands and directly shapes satisfaction-related evaluations by influencing psychological comfort, coping capacity, and emotional stability (Parker & DeCotiis, 1983; Selye, 1976). In hospitality internships, these stressors are particularly pronounced because interns frequently experience operational pressure, role overload, and intense service delivery requirements, which directly alters how organisational and learning-related experiences are converted into overall internship satisfaction (Azila-Gbetor et al., 2022; To & Lung, 2020). Importantly, the inclusion of WS as a moderator is justified because stress does not simply reduce satisfaction directly; it also changes how interns interpret and respond to workplace experiences, thereby shaping the strength of key satisfaction-building relationships in internship settings (Goldsmith & Trede, 2024). More specifically, WS moderates the workplace culture–overall internship satisfaction relationship by reducing the benefits of a supportive organisational environment under demanding workload conditions (Hora et al., 2023). Even when hotels provide cooperative teams and professional supervision, elevated WS diminishes interns' ability to fully experience workplace support due to fatigue and strain, thereby changing satisfaction outcomes (Nangia & Garg, 2025). Likewise, WS moderates the relationship between student perception and overall internship satisfaction because stress reshapes interns' evaluative judgement, weakening the extent to which positive perceptions of internship relevance and value translate into satisfaction under high-pressure work conditions (Shahril et al., 2023). Furthermore, WS moderates the learning satisfaction–overall internship satisfaction relationship, as stress constrains attentional resources and learning engagement, limiting the extent to which learning satisfaction contributes to overall satisfaction even when training exposure is available (Xu & Yang, 2021). Building on this reasoning, the study posits the following:

H4: WS significantly moderates the relationship between workplace culture and overall internship satisfaction among hotel management interns in star-category hotels in the Delhi NCR.

H5: WS significantly moderates the relationship between student perception of the internship experience and overall internship satisfaction among hotel management interns in star-category hotels in the Delhi NCR.

H6: WS significantly moderates the relationship between learning satisfaction and overall internship satisfaction among hotel management interns in star-category hotels in the Delhi NCR.

Development of the Conceptual Model

The conceptual model for the present study was developed to explain overall internship satisfaction among hotel management interns undergoing training in star-category hotels in the Delhi NCR. Grounded in the broader literature on internship effectiveness, work-based learning, and organisational behaviour, the framework focuses on the organisational and experiential conditions that shape interns' satisfaction outcomes during their training period. In line with this perspective, the model identifies workplace culture, student perception, and learning satisfaction as the key independent variables that collectively represent the core dimensions of the internship experience. Workplace culture reflects the organisational environment in which interns operate, including supervisory support, communication practices, and team dynamics, which are critical in determining how interns adjust to professional settings. Student perception captures interns' evaluative judgement of the internship experience in terms of its relevance, value, and alignment with career expectations, which strongly influences their satisfaction appraisal. Learning satisfaction represents the extent to which interns feel that the internship has contributed meaningfully to skill development, competence enhancement, and practical exposure, thereby serving as a direct determinant of overall satisfaction. In addition to these direct relationships, the model incorporates WS as a moderating variable to account for the demanding and high-pressure nature of hotel internship environments. WS is conceptualised as a boundary condition that shapes how interns interpret workplace experiences and convert them into satisfaction outcomes. Given that internships in star-category hotels involve physically intensive tasks, extended work hours, and continuous service expectations, WS plays a critical role in strengthening or weakening the influence of workplace culture, student perception, and learning satisfaction on overall internship satisfaction. By integrating WS into the conceptual framework, the model provides a more comprehensive explanation of internship satisfaction by highlighting not only the predictors of satisfaction but also the conditions under which these predictors exert stronger or weaker effects. Overall, the proposed conceptual model (Fig 1) offers a structured and empirically testable framework for understanding internship satisfaction in the hospitality sector and provides clear managerial direction for designing supportive work environments, effective learning systems, and stress-sensitive internship practices.

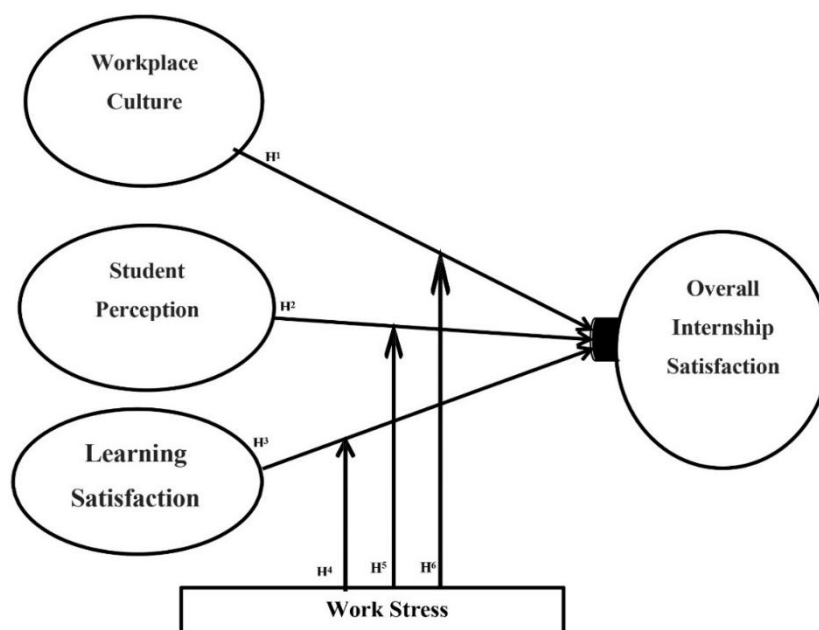


Fig 1: Conceptual model for the study

Methodology

The present study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the determinants of overall internship satisfaction among hotel management interns undergoing training in star-category hotels in the Delhi NCR. The research framework was developed to evaluate the direct effects of workplace culture, student perception, and learning satisfaction on overall internship satisfaction, along with the moderating role of WS in these relationships. A structured questionnaire-based approach was selected as it allows systematic measurement of latent constructs and supports the application of advanced statistical techniques for hypothesis testing.

Sampling Design and Data Collection

Data were collected from hotel management students who had completed or were actively undergoing internship training in star-category hotels operating in the Delhi NCR. A sampling approach was employed to identify respondents who satisfied the predetermined criteria, ensuring that only eligible interns with relevant industry exposure were included in the study. In total, 588 questionnaires were administered to qualified participants, and 542 were received back. After applying thorough data screening procedures to remove incomplete, inconsistent, and extreme-value cases, 510 responses were retained for the final analysis, thereby confirming the stability and reliability of the dataset.

Measurement Instrument and Scale Adaptation

The research instrument consisted of two sections. The first section captured demographic information, including gender, age, stipend, and region of residence. The second section included measurement items assessing workplace culture, student perception, learning satisfaction, overall internship satisfaction, and WS. All constructs were operationalised using established and validated scales adapted from prior studies to ensure content validity and measurement reliability. Workplace culture, student perception, learning satisfaction, and overall internship satisfaction were measured using multi-item statements commonly employed in internship and workplace learning research (Zehr & Korte, 2020; Lin, 2024). WS was measured using a standardised job stress scale adapted from Parker and DeCotiis (1983), which has been widely applied in organisational and service-sector research. Responses to the measurement statements were captured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Data Analysis Strategy

The data analysis followed a structured sequence consistent with empirical research standards. Initially, descriptive statistics were computed to summarise respondent characteristics and establish preliminary insights into the distribution of responses across study variables. Reliability and validity assessments were then conducted to confirm the adequacy of the measurement model. This process included internal consistency evaluation through Cronbach's Alpha and CR, along with validity assessment through AVE and DV using HTMT.

Following the establishment of an adequate measurement model, SEM was employed as the principal analytical technique to test the hypothesised direct relationships between workplace culture, student perception, learning satisfaction, and overall internship satisfaction. SEM was selected due to its capacity to simultaneously estimate multiple relationships among latent constructs while accounting for measurement error and enhancing the explanatory rigour of the findings. Model fit was assessed using standard fit indices to confirm the suitability of the structural model for hypothesis testing.

To examine the moderating effect of WS, Hayes' PROCESS Macro was utilised. This technique was applied to evaluate whether WS significantly influences the strength of the direct relationships between each independent variable and overall internship satisfaction. PROCESS Macro was chosen due to its robust capability for estimating moderation effects, including interaction terms, conditional effects, and confidence intervals, thereby providing a statistically rigorous approach for assessing moderation within behavioural research settings.

Results

Descriptive Analysis: Demographic Breakdown of Respondents

The demographic composition of the respondents is presented in Table 1 and provides important contextual insight into the characteristics of hotel management interns included in this study. The analysis is based on 510 valid responses collected from interns undergoing training in star-category hotels across the Delhi NCR. In terms of gender distribution, male respondents constituted 65.10% of the sample, whereas female respondents accounted for 34.90%, indicating a higher representation of male interns within operational internship roles.

With regard to age, the majority of respondents belonged to the 21–23 years category, representing 50.98% of the total sample. This was followed by interns aged 18–20 years, who accounted for 30.59% of the respondents, while the smallest proportion of interns fell within the 23 years and above group (18.43%). This distribution reflects the typical internship stage within hotel management programmes, where students generally complete industrial training during the early years of their academic progression.

The stipend-based distribution of respondents revealed a clear dominance of the ₹2000–₹3000 range, which accounted for 65.10% of the respondents. Interns receiving a stipend between ₹1000–₹2000 represented 24.71% of the sample, while those earning ₹3000 and above constituted 10.19%, indicating that mid-range stipend structures remain the most common practice in internship placements across star-category hotels.

In relation to regional background, respondents from the North constituted the largest proportion at 50.00%, followed by interns from the West (21.18%) and East (14.90%). Interns from the South accounted for 10.39%, while the Central region represented the lowest share of the sample at 3.53%. This regional pattern reflects the geographic proximity of Delhi NCR to northern states and the higher concentration of hotel management institutions in this region, which supports stronger participation from nearby areas.

Finally, in terms of hotel ownership type, the majority of interns (55.10%) were placed in foreign chain hotels, while 44.90% completed internships in Indian chain hotels. This distribution highlights the strong presence and internship absorption capacity of foreign hotel chains within the Delhi NCR and supports the relevance of comparing internship outcomes across different organisational contexts within the region.

Table 1: Demographic Attributes of the Respondent Group (N = 510)

Category	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	332	65.10
	Female	178	34.90
Age	18–20 Years	156	30.59
	21–23 Years	260	50.98
	23 Years and above	94	18.43
Stipend (per month)	₹1000–₹2000	126	24.71
	₹2000–₹3000	332	65.10
	₹3000 and above	52	10.19
Region of Residence	North	255	50.00
	West	108	21.18
	East	76	14.90

Category	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Hotel Ownership Type	South	53	10.39
	Central	18	3.53
	Foreign chain hotels	281	55.10
	Indian chain hotels	229	44.90

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

EFA was performed to verify whether the measurement items used in the survey clustered into meaningful dimensions aligned with the theoretical structure of the study. The analysis was executed on the complete dataset (N = 510) using PCA with Varimax rotation to obtain a clean and interpretable factor solution. The extracted factor pattern revealed a well-defined structure corresponding to the intended constructs, and the retained factors reflected satisfactory item grouping for WC, SP, LS, WS, and OIS.

Prior to factor extraction, the dataset was examined for adequacy using widely accepted EFA criteria, including sampling adequacy, inter-item correlation suitability, and overall factorability. The outcomes confirm that all prerequisite conditions were satisfied, indicating that the dataset was appropriate for factor-based validation. Table 2 summarises the prerequisite checks and validation status for EFA.

Table 2: Prerequisite Assessment for EFA (N = 510)

EFA Prerequisites	Conditions	Referencing	Outcome
Sample size adequacy	n > 200	(Glenn D. Israel, 1992)	Validated
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	p < 0.001	(Tobias & Carlson, 1969)	Validated
KMO measure of sampling adequacy	> 0.70	(Liu & Wang, 2021)	Validated
Communalities	> 0.50	(Hadi et al., 2016)	Validated
Total variance explained	> 50%	(Howe, 1999)	Validated
First factor variance	< 50%	(Howe, 1999)	Validated

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Following EFA, CFA was conducted to validate the measurement model and to confirm whether the retained indicators represented their respective latent constructs with satisfactory psychometric strength. CFA results confirmed that all items demonstrated acceptable loadings and contributed meaningfully to their assigned constructs as shown in Table 3. The measurement model exhibited adequate CV and DV, while reliability estimates supported strong internal consistency across the constructs. Whereas under Table 4, DV was verified using HTMT, with values remaining below the recommended cut-off of 0.85, indicating that each construct measured a distinct conceptual domain without problematic overlap (Yusoff et al., 2020).

Table 3: Validity and Reliability Outcomes (N = 510)

Constructs (α)	Measured Variables (Questionnaire Statements)	Factor Loadings	CR	AVE
WC ($\alpha = 0.91$)	WC1: The hotel provided a supportive and professional work environment during my internship.	0.71	0.90	0.61
	WC2: Supervisors treated interns with respect and fairness.	0.82		
	WC3: Team members were cooperative and helpful during daily operations.	0.75		
	WC4: Communication between staff and interns was clear and effective.	0.72		
	WC5: The organisational culture encouraged learning and professional growth.	0.69		
SP ($\alpha = 0.89$)	SP1: The internship met my expectations regarding practical exposure.	0.63	0.88	0.60
	SP2: The internship experience was relevant to my academic programme.	0.78		
	SP3: I perceive this internship as valuable for my future career.	0.82		
	SP4: Overall, my perception of the internship experience is positive.	0.75		
LS ($\alpha = 0.90$)	LS1: The internship helped me develop practical hospitality skills.	0.71	0.89	0.62
	LS2: I gained meaningful hands-on learning during my internship.	0.72		
	LS3: The training provided enhanced my professional competence.	0.72		
OIS ($\alpha = 0.91$)	OIS1: Overall, I am satisfied with my internship experience.	0.78	0.91	0.66
	OIS2: I feel positive about completing my internship at this hotel.	0.79		
	OIS3: The internship experience met my overall expectations.	0.82		
	OIS4: I would rate my internship experience as highly satisfactory.	0.77		
WS ($\alpha = 0.88$)	WS1: I often felt pressure to complete tasks quickly during my internship.	0.83	0.90	0.64
	WS2: The workload during my internship was excessive at times.	0.68		
	WS3: I experienced stress due to long working hours and shift	0.83		

Constructs (α)	Measured Variables (Questionnaire Statements)	Factor Loadings	CR AVE
	duties.		
	WS4: I found it difficult to balance physical demands with learning expectations.	0.71	
	WS5: I felt mentally tired due to the intensity of internship work.	0.81	

Table 4: HTMT Matrix for DV (Value < 0.85)

Constructs	WC	SP	LS	WS	OIS	HTMT < 0.85
WC	1.00					Pass
SP	0.64	1.00				Pass
LS	0.62	0.68	1.00			Pass
WS	0.55	0.58	0.60	1.00		Pass
OIS	0.71	0.73	0.76	0.59	1.00	Pass

Structural Model Estimation

After validation of the measurement model, SEM was applied to assess the direct effects proposed in H1–H3. The results confirmed that WC, SP, and LS exhibit statistically significant positive effects on OIS, supporting the acceptance of all three direct hypotheses. The structural model reflects strong explanatory consistency, indicating that organisational environment, student evaluation of internship experience, and learning-related satisfaction jointly contribute to shaping overall internship satisfaction outcomes among hotel management interns in the Delhi NCR.

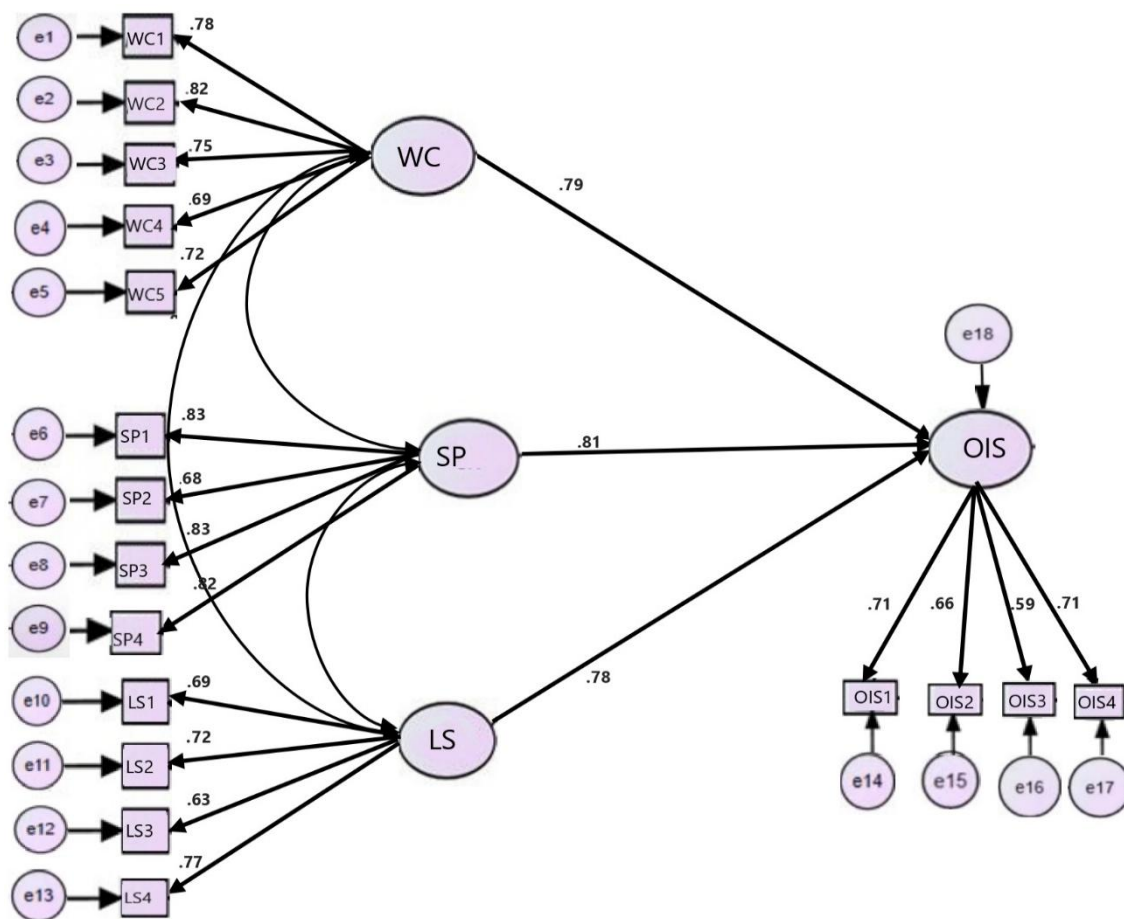
The overall adequacy of the SEM model was supported by acceptable goodness-of-fit values as reflected in Fig 2. The AMOS output reported CFI = 0.912, χ^2/df = 2.642, and RMSEA = 0.051, confirming that the proposed structural framework demonstrates satisfactory alignment with the observed dataset and is suitable for hypothesis testing. In summary, the structural path estimates reported in Table 5 Structural Model Results, supported by acceptable model fit indices, confirm that the proposed relationships are statistically significant and consistent with the study framework. The results indicate that WC (β = 0.158, C.R. = 3.854), SP (β = 0.241, C.R. = 5.128), and LS (β = 0.327, C.R. = 6.289) exhibit statistically significant positive effects on OIS at *** p < 0.001. Accordingly, H1, H2, and H3 are accepted, confirming that all three predictors significantly contribute to explaining overall internship satisfaction.

Collectively, these outcomes validate the acceptance of the hypothesised direct effects and indicate that the model sufficiently explains variation in OIS among hotel management interns in star-category hotels across the Delhi NCR.

Table 5: Structural Model Results

Hypothesis	Pathways	β	S.E.	C.R.	Inference	Decision
H1	WC → OIS	0.158	0.041	3.854	***	Accepted
H2	SP → OIS	0.241	0.047	5.128	***	Accepted
H3	LS → OIS	0.327	0.052	6.289	***	Accepted

Figure 1 Structural model Estimates



CFI = 0.912, $\chi^2/df = 2.642$, RMSEA = 0.051

Moderation Results

To examine the moderating role of WS, the moderation hypotheses (H4–H6) were tested using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013). The results, reported in Table 6, demonstrate that WS significantly moderates the relationships between WC, SP, LS and OIS. The moderation models were estimated using interaction terms, allowing the analysis to capture whether the strength of each direct relationship varies across different levels of

WS. In this procedure, the independent variables (WC, SP, and LS), the moderator (WS), and the interaction terms (WC × WS, SP × WS, and LS × WS) were included in the regression-based estimation to determine both main effects and conditional effects on OIS. The significance of the moderation effects was confirmed through the confidence interval approach (LLCI and ULCI), where the interaction effects were considered statistically meaningful when the confidence intervals did not include zero. This analytical approach provided robust evidence regarding the boundary role of WS in shaping how organisational and learning-related factors influence interns' overall internship satisfaction.

Table 6: Assessing moderation with PROCESS macro

Model (WC × WS → OIS)

coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	12.4386	1.9824	6.2741	.0000	8.5431 16.3341
WC_T	.6124	.0741	8.2642	.0000	.4668 .7580
WS_T	-.4317	.0689	-6.2664	.0000	-.5671 -.2963
Int_1	-.0946	.0218	-4.3394	.0000	-.1374 -.0518

Model (SP × WS → OIS)

coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	10.9047	2.1043	5.1833	.0000	6.7704 15.0390
SP_T	.5849	.0716	8.1715	.0000	.4442 .7256
WS_T	-.3972	.0704	-5.6415	.0000	-.5356 -.2588
Int_1	-.0813	.0224	-3.6295	.0003	-.1253 -.0373

Model (LS × WS → OIS)

coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	11.2219	1.9568	5.7349	.0000	7.3776 15.0662
LS_T	.6581	.0735	8.9510	.0000	.5137 .8025
WS_T	-.4528	.0697	-6.4964	.0000	-.5895 -.3161
Int_1	-.1027	.0221	-4.6480	.0000	-.1461 -.0593

Moreover, as reflected in table 7,8 and 9, the interaction effects were statistically significant for all three moderation models. Specifically, the interaction term for **WC × WS** was significant ($\beta = -0.0946$, $t = -4.3394$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that WS significantly moderates the association between WC and OIS. Likewise, the interaction term for **SP × WS** was also significant ($\beta = -0.0813$, $t = -3.6295$, $p = 0.0003$), indicating that WS significantly moderates the relationship between SP and OIS. Similarly, the interaction between **LS × WS** was significant ($\beta = -0.1027$, $t = -4.6480$, $p < 0.001$), establishing that WS significantly moderates the relationship between LS and OIS. Across all three models, the negative interaction coefficients demonstrate that as WS increases, the strength of the positive relationship between the independent variables and OIS becomes weaker, reflecting the dampening role of stress on satisfaction formation during internships.

Conditional impacts of the focal predictor based on moderator values (WS)

Table 7: Conditional effects (WC → OIS at levels of WS)

WS_T	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
2.0000	.7011	.0609	11.5150	.0000	.5815	.8207
3.0000	.6065	.0587	10.3346	.0000	.4912	.7218
4.0000	.5119	.0648	7.8995	.0000	.3846	.6392

Table 8: Conditional effects (SP → OIS at levels of WS)

WS_T	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
2.0000	.6662	.0583	11.4230	.0000	.5516	.7808
3.0000	.5849	.0716	8.1715	.0000	.4442	.7256
4.0000	.5036	.0734	6.8583	.0000	.3593	.6479

Table 9: Conditional effects (LS → OIS at levels of WS)

WS_T	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
2.0000	.7608	.0629	12.0972	.0000	.6372	.8844
3.0000	.6581	.0735	8.9510	.0000	.5137	.8025
4.0000	.5554	.0756	7.3452	.0000	.4069	.7039

The conditional effect results further clarify the moderation mechanism by demonstrating that the magnitude of the direct relationships varies across different levels of WS. At lower levels of WS, the effects of WC, SP, and LS on OIS remain comparatively stronger and statistically significant, indicating that interns are more able to benefit from supportive workplace conditions, positive evaluations of their internship experience, and meaningful learning outcomes when stress levels are manageable. In contrast, at moderate and higher levels of WS, the strength of these positive relationships declines systematically, reflecting the dampening role of stress in internship settings. This pattern confirms that increased stress limits interns’ psychological and cognitive capacity to fully translate favourable organisational environments and learning experiences into higher levels of overall satisfaction. As a result, the influence of WC, SP, and LS on OIS becomes weaker when interns operate under high-pressure conditions characterised by workload intensity, fatigue, and time constraints.

In summary, the PROCESS macro findings presented in Table 10, Moderation Analysis Results confirm WS as a statistically significant moderator across the three proposed relationships, thereby offering strong empirical support for the moderation hypotheses. Accordingly, H4, H5, and H6 are supported.

Table 10: Moderation Analysis Results (PROCESS Macro)

Hypothesis	Pathways	Direct Impact	Interaction Impact	Inference	Moderation Type	Decision
H4	WC × WS → OIS	0.612	-0.095	Significant Moderation Supported	Accepted	Accepted
H5	SP × WS → OIS	0.585	-0.081	Significant Moderation Supported	Accepted	Accepted
H6	LS × WS → OIS	0.658	-0.103	Significant Moderation Supported	Accepted	Accepted

Discussion and Conclusion

The acceptance of the first hypothesis H1 ($\beta = 0.158$, $p < 0.01$) confirms that workplace culture exerts a significant positive influence on OIS among hotel management interns in star-category hotels in the Delhi NCR. A strong workplace culture provides interns with a structured environment that supports clarity of roles, cooperative working relationships, and respectful supervision, which collectively improve their comfort, confidence, and overall training satisfaction. This outcome is reasonable in the hospitality context, where interns are exposed to high service standards and operational pressure, making organisational support essential for satisfaction formation. The result aligns with evidence suggesting that workplace climate and organisational conditions meaningfully shape internship satisfaction and the learning experience (Lingadkar & Sankaranarayanan, 2023; Mensah et al., 2020). Practically, these findings indicate that hotels must focus on strengthening communication practices and supervisor–intern interactions to enhance internship outcomes. Two key lessons from this result are that hotels should (i) establish structured orientation and onboarding processes and (ii) develop supervisor training modules aimed at improving mentoring and feedback quality, as these measures can directly raise interns’ overall satisfaction.

Moving to the second hypothesis, the validation of H2 ($\beta = 0.241$, $p < 0.01$) demonstrates that student perception of the internship experience significantly predicts OIS. Interns who perceive their internship as valuable, relevant, and professionally meaningful are more likely to report stronger satisfaction with the overall training programme. This relationship is expected because interns form satisfaction judgements not only from task exposure but also from how they cognitively evaluate the usefulness of the internship in shaping employability and professional identity. When perceptions remain positive, interns interpret workplace challenges as growth-oriented rather than discouraging, resulting in higher satisfaction. This result is consistent with literature highlighting that internship evaluations and satisfaction are strongly influenced by the perceived value, relevance, and developmental contribution of the placement (Vicente et al., 2024; Shen et al., 2024). Based on this finding, hotels and academic institutions can improve internship perceptions by (i) ensuring role relevance through meaningful departmental exposure and (ii) communicating clear training outcomes so interns recognise their learning progression, which can significantly strengthen satisfaction outcomes.

With regard to learning outcomes, the acceptance of H3 ($\beta = 0.327$, $p < 0.01$) confirms that learning satisfaction is a strong determinant of OIS among interns. This result indicates that interns place high importance on whether the internship delivers practical competence, skills, and performance learning aligned with hotel operations. In hospitality education, internship is not merely an industry requirement but a high-stakes training semester where interns expect measurable improvement in skills, professional confidence, and operational understanding. When interns perceive strong learning outcomes, they develop a more favourable evaluation of the entire training experience, enhancing overall satisfaction. These findings support prior research showing that learning-related internship outcomes strongly influence satisfaction and shape the perceived effectiveness of the internship programme (Poltimäe et al., 2023; Liu, 2021). From a managerial standpoint, this highlights that learning satisfaction can be improved through (i) structured departmental learning objectives and (ii) continuous evaluation systems such as mentoring feedback and skill tracking, ensuring interns feel consistent development during the training period.

Beyond the direct effects, this study also examined moderation effects through WS, recognising that hotel internship environments are operationally demanding and psychologically challenging. The acceptance of H4 ($\beta = -0.094$, $p < 0.01$) establishes that WS significantly moderates the relationship between workplace culture and OIS. This indicates that even when workplace culture is supportive, elevated WS reduces interns’ ability to convert organisational support into satisfaction outcomes due to exhaustion, time pressure, and mental strain. This moderating effect is consistent with job stress theory, which explains that high stress weakens positive workplace experiences by limiting coping resources and emotional stability (Bliese & Jex, 2002; Selye, 1976). The implication is that hotels cannot rely only on positive culture; they must actively manage workload intensity. Two practical measures derived from this result include (i) limiting extreme shift duties for interns through balanced scheduling and (ii) introducing short wellness-oriented practices such as rest breaks and role rotation planning to reduce strain and protect satisfaction levels.

Similarly, the acceptance of H5 ($\beta = -0.081$, $p < 0.01$) confirms that WS moderates the relationship between student perception and OIS. Under high WS, interns' positive perceptions about internship value and relevance become weaker predictors of satisfaction, because stress shifts focus from learning and professional growth to fatigue management and survival-oriented coping. This finding is consistent with hospitality internship research suggesting that operational pressure and workload challenges influence how interns interpret their experience and whether they evaluate it positively (Zhao et al., 2023; Moore et al., 2020). The practical implication is that even if hotels promote internships as career-building opportunities, stress exposure can undermine these perceptions. Accordingly, two recommended actions are (i) improving internship communication systems through structured briefing and daily guidance to reduce uncertainty and (ii) ensuring interns receive predictable task allocation and adequate support, which stabilises perception and strengthens satisfaction outcomes.

Finally, the acceptance of H6 ($\beta = -0.103$, $p < 0.01$) demonstrates that WS significantly moderates the relationship between learning satisfaction and OIS. This confirms that as WS increases, the positive contribution of learning satisfaction toward overall internship satisfaction weakens, because stress reduces attention, engagement, and the ability to absorb learning opportunities. Even well-designed training exposure becomes less effective in improving satisfaction when interns face excessive work pressure. This result aligns with stress-based explanations showing that high-pressure conditions restrict learning engagement and weaken satisfaction-related outcomes (Isaacs & Spencer, 2022; Goller et al., 2020). The managerial learning from this outcome is that training quality alone is insufficient without stress management. Hence, hotels should (i) integrate skill-focused learning plans that avoid overload and (ii) appoint departmental mentors to ensure learning remains consistent without becoming mentally exhausting, thereby enhancing satisfaction even in demanding operational contexts.

In conclusion, the findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the proposed conceptual framework and confirm that WC, SP, and LS significantly improve OIS, while WS acts as a critical boundary condition that weakens these relationships under high-pressure conditions. Collectively, the results indicate that internship satisfaction in star-category hotels is shaped not only by organisational and learning experiences but also by how intensively interns experience operational stress. From a practical perspective, the study highlights that hotels must adopt an integrated internship strategy that strengthens workplace culture, improves learning satisfaction, enhances positive student perception, and simultaneously manages WS through structured scheduling and supportive supervision. These insights provide meaningful implications for hotel HR teams, training managers, and hospitality educators seeking to enhance internship effectiveness and satisfaction outcomes in the Delhi NCR.

Practical and Theoretical Implications

The findings of the present study offer substantial practical value for hotel HR managers, training coordinators, departmental supervisors, and hospitality educators operating in star-category hotels across the Delhi NCR. Since WC, SP, and LS emerged as significant determinants of OIS, hotels must prioritise creating structured and supportive training environments that encourage professional development and positive intern engagement. Specifically, strengthening supervisory mentoring, improving communication practices, and fostering teamwork-oriented culture can directly enhance interns' satisfaction levels and training outcomes. In addition, the moderating role of WS indicates that hotels must not only focus on improving workplace and learning conditions but also actively manage the stress associated with internship duties. Practical strategies such as balanced shift allocation, clear task planning, structured job rotation, and regular feedback sessions can reduce operational strain and enable interns to experience the positive benefits of WC, SP, and LS more effectively. From an institutional perspective, hospitality education providers can reinforce internship success by establishing stronger industry-academia coordination, monitoring internship learning progress, and ensuring that student expectations are aligned with workplace realities, which collectively strengthens internship satisfaction and future industry commitment.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study contributes to internship and hospitality training literature by integrating organisational, perceptual, and learning-based predictors within a single satisfaction-based framework. By demonstrating that WC, SP, and LS significantly influence OIS, the findings strengthen the evidence that internship satisfaction is shaped through multiple overlapping dimensions rather than a single factor. More importantly, the inclusion of WS as a moderator extends the explanatory depth of internship satisfaction research by confirming that stress functions as a critical boundary condition in hospitality internship settings. This contribution supports broader stress-related perspectives within organisational behaviour research, where job-related demands influence the strength of relationships between workplace experiences and attitudinal outcomes (Parker & DeCotiis, 1983). Overall, the study offers a refined understanding of how workplace conditions and learning experiences translate into satisfaction outcomes under varying stress conditions, thereby strengthening both the conceptual and applied relevance of internship satisfaction research in high-intensity service environments such as star-category hotels in the Delhi NCR.

Limitations and Future Scope

Although the present study provides meaningful insights into the determinants of OIS among hotel management interns, certain limitations must be acknowledged, each of which presents a clear direction for future research. First, the study is geographically centred on star-category hotels in the Delhi NCR, a region that largely comprises urban and suburban properties catering to bureaucrats, ministers, and business clientele due to its status as the national capital. As a result, the operational environment, service structure, and internship exposure in this setting may differ from other hospitality contexts such as resorts, motels, and budget hotels, where work routines, guest interaction patterns, and training processes are often distinct. Accordingly, future studies should extend this framework to alternative hospitality segments and destinations, including leisure-driven markets and hill or resort-based regions, to assess whether the relationships among WC, SP, LS, WS, and OIS remain consistent or vary across different tourism and accommodation formats.

Second, the respondent profile in this study was dominated by Gen Z interns, which reflects the current composition of hospitality education cohorts. However, the internship structure, learning expectations, and training approaches have evolved considerably from the earlier Millennial phase to the Gen Z phase, particularly with respect to feedback preferences, workplace expectations, and stress tolerance. Therefore, future research should consider comparative cohort-based investigations to examine whether internship satisfaction drivers differ between Gen Z and earlier generational groups. Moreover, the present research reflects the intern-side assessment of the internship experience, which provides only one perspective of the training process. To strengthen practical relevance and build more comprehensive implications, future studies should incorporate the supervisor and training manager viewpoint, enable a more balanced evaluation of internship effectiveness allowing researchers to identify mismatches between intern expectations and organisational training intentions.

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