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## From Internship to Employment: The Role of Talent Management in Retaining Interns as Full-Time Employees <sup>a</sup>

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### Abstract

This study examines the perceived effectiveness of talent management practices on the intention of interns to convert to full-time employees. The research explores the mediating roles of career satisfaction and organizational attractiveness in this relationship. Data were collected from interns through an online survey. The study employs multiple regression and mediation analyses to test the proposed hypotheses. The findings reveal that higher perceived intensity of talent management practices is positively associated with both career satisfaction and organizational attractiveness, which in turn significantly influence interns' conversion intentions. More specifically, organizational attractiveness fully mediates the relationship between talent management practices and conversion intentions, while career satisfaction serves as a partial mediator. These results emphasize the importance of implementing effective talent management practices during internships to enhance the likelihood of retaining interns as full-time employees. This study provides actionable insights into designing effective internship programs that leverage talent management practices to boost career satisfaction and enhance organizational attractiveness. By strategically aligning these practices, organizations can significantly improve the conversion of interns into committed full-time employees, strengthening their talent pipelines and fostering long-term organizational success in talent acquisition and retention.

**Keywords:** Talent management, Intern conversion, Career satisfaction, Organizational attractiveness, Internship, Talent retention

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## 1. Introduction

Acquiring and retaining the right talent is critical for organizational success in a competitive global market (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Effective talent management systems are linked to faster revenue growth and profitability (Farley, 2005; Hongal & Kinange, 2020), yet the scarcity of talent has intensified competition, commonly referred to as the "war for talent" (Michaels et al., 2001). This challenge is exacerbated by globalization, demographic shifts, and the rapid development of emerging markets, driving organizations to strategically position themselves as attractive employers to secure top talent (Minbaeva & Collings, 2013; Ewerlin, 2013). To attract and retain top candidates, organizations are investing heavily in becoming attractive employers and improving their talent pipelines, particularly through internship programs (NACE, 2023; Hurst, Good, & Gardner, 2012; Zhao & Liden, 2011). Internships serve as an important mechanism for providing insights into candidates' skills and cultural fit before long-term employment decisions are made while fostering a future talent pool (Beenen & Rousseau, 2010; Zhao & Liden, 2011). Especially, talent management practices during internships, such as benefits, structured mentorship, effective leadership, and targeted training, significantly impact internship experience and interns' intentions to stay or leave the organization (Hurst et al., 2012; Lee & Chao, 2013; D'abate, Youndt & Wenzel, 2009).

Research, however, shows that many organizations struggle to retain talented interns as full-time employees after the internship period, as interns often leave due to unmet expectations such as insufficient training, inadequate supervision, or misaligned job roles (Hurst et al., 2012; Lee & Chao, 2013; Stewart et al., 2018; NACE 2022). In this regard, some studies suggest that it can be more difficult to retain interns compared to permanent employees due to the fixed term of internships and the expectation of continued education. As a result, interns may experience less guilt related to leaving their position voluntarily (Zhao & Liden, 2011).

Other studies focusing on the host organization and internship experience suggest that factors within the organization and the work environment, which are closely connected to talent management practices, have an impact on interns' intentions to either become full-time employees or leave the organization (Lee & Chao, 2013; D'abate, Youndt & Wenzel, 2009). For instance, providing valuable learning opportunities during internships can impact interns' likelihood of accepting a permanent job offer from the host employer as these opportunities serve as indicators of the potential for similar future opportunities in full-time roles (Beenen & Rousseau, 2010). This raises the question of how talent management practices in internship programs affect their intentions to pursue full-time employment.

This study applies signaling and social exchange theories to explore the relationship between perceived talent management practices during internships and interns' intention to pursue full-time roles, mediated by career satisfaction and organizational attractiveness. Signaling theory provides a framework for understanding how talent management practices, such as providing benefits, targeted training, and mentorship opportunities, signal the organization's values, priorities, and long-term investment in interns (Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991), thereby influencing their perceptions of organizational attractiveness. Social exchange theory complements this by highlighting the reciprocal relationship between the organization and interns, where positive experiences—such as career development opportunities and effective mentorship—enhance career satisfaction and foster a sense of obligation to remain with the organization (Lee et al., 2011; Björkman et al., 2013; Rose et al., 2014).

While previous research has largely focused on retaining current employees (Festing & Schäfer, 2014; Pandita & Ray, 2018), the significance of talent management in internship programs for retaining young talents as permanent employees has not been well addressed. Internships require distinct consideration due to their unique context and challenges. Unlike full-time employment, internships are typically short-term, and interns often enter these programs with the expectation of further education or career exploration, making their retention inherently more complex (Zhao & Liden, 2011). Factors such as unmet expectations, insufficient training, or lack of alignment between job roles and career aspirations can significantly influence interns' decisions to stay (Lee & Chao, 2013; Stewart et al., 2021). This study contributes to the literature by examining how talent management practices influence intern retention.

It additionally emphasizes interns' perceptions, providing insights into their reactions to talent management practices. Unlike full-time employees, interns often approach their roles with a combination of limited professional experience and an exploratory mindset, which can lead to distinct expectations and interpretations of workplace practices. For instance, interns may place greater emphasis on opportunities for learning, mentorship, and career development, while being more sensitive to unmet expectations or perceived lack of support. Therefore, understanding their experiences provides valuable insights for improving internship programs.

Finally, the study contributes empirical evidence through a quantitative analysis of interns' responses, identifying the key factors that influence their career satisfaction, attraction to employers and ultimately decision to join host organizations as full-time employees. Specifically, the study hypothesizes that perceived intensity of talent management practices positively influences interns' intentions to convert to full-time roles, with career satisfaction and organizational attractiveness mediating this relationship. The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: a literature review and hypotheses development lead to a conceptual framework; this is followed by the methodology, results, and a discussion of theoretical and practical implications. The study concludes with a summary of the main findings.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Conceptualizing Talent and Approaches to Talent Management**

Talent management has become a critical area of strategic human resource management, yet defining "talent" remains challenging due to its contextual variability (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016; McDonnell et al., 2023). Definitions vary widely: the CIPD (2018) emphasizes talent as individuals enhancing organizational performance either immediately or by demonstrating high potential over time, while the APA (2018) focuses on innate abilities or an aptitude, and Ulrich and Smallwood (2012) describe it as a combination of competence, commitment, and contribution. In organizational contexts, talent is viewed through two lenses: the subject approach, identifying talent as individuals, and the object approach, focusing on attributes like ability, mastery, and fit. The subject approach can be further divided into inclusive, treating all employees as talent, and exclusive, focusing on high performers or high potentials (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013). Recognizing talent has tangible implications, as individuals identified as talent tend to show higher commitment, better performance alignment with strategic goals, and lower turnover intentions (Björkman et al., 2013). This study adopts

an exclusive perspective, focusing on interns whose contributions or potential make them significant assets to the organization.

Talent management itself is broadly defined as processes and strategies for attracting, identifying, developing, engaging, retaining, transitioning and deploying individuals valuable to an organization (CIPD, 2023; ATD, 2024). Theoretical frameworks categorize it into aligning HR functions, developing talent pools, or managing high performers (Lewis & Heckman, 2006). While academic research often emphasizes exclusive talent management, organizations frequently adopt a hybrid approach, blending inclusivity and exclusivity (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016; Stahl et al., 2012).

Empirical studies distinguish between strategic talent management, which prioritizes key individuals and roles to achieve competitive advantage (Collings & Mellahi, 2009), and global talent management, which addresses HR challenges in multinational organizations (Scullion & Collings, 2011). Global talent management, in particular, tackles issues such as talent shortages, adapting global strategies locally, talent flow and managing generational differences, all of which are critical for competitiveness (Anlesinya et al., 2019; Tarique & Schuler, 2010). In response to these common issues, increasingly organizations adopt standardized global practices, driven by the worldwide competition for the same talent pool, the need for internal coherence, the imitation of successful firms, and the impact of consultancies spreading specific viewpoints on global talent management. While such convergence helps align global talent strategies with organizational goals, it risks superficial adoption without strategic intent, potentially undermining effectiveness (Stahl et al., 2012; King, 2015).

Within the scope of these findings, Stahl et al. (2012) propose a comprehensive list of best practices in global talent management. These practices are categorized into recruitment and staffing, training and development, and retention management integrated with business objectives to create sustainable competitive advantages (Stahl et al., 2012). This study explores how adapting these talent management practices within internship programs impacts the successful transition of interns into full-time roles. By understanding the varied approaches to talent management and the strategies and practices organizations employ to identify and nurture talent, we gain a foundation for exploring how these principles can be applied in specific organizational contexts. One such context, which plays a pivotal role in talent acquisition and retention, is the internships.

## **2.2 Internships as a Pathway to Talent Acquisition and Retention**

Internships serve as a unique platform for implementing talent management strategies, offering organizations a way to assess and develop potential future employees. This section examines how internships function as a critical pathway for attracting and retaining talent. While the concept of internships lacks a universally agreed-upon definition, it is broadly understood as structured, career-relevant work experiences for students or recent graduates (Taylor, 1988). The International Labour Organization (ILO) describes internships as arrangements designed to provide experience, skills, and professional contacts to enhance future employability (Stewart et al., 2018), while the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2024) emphasizes their role in bridging theoretical learning with practical workplace applications.

Internships are studied from organizational and student learning perspectives. From an organizational perspective, internships are a highly effective recruitment strategy, providing a

pipeline of potential employees while serving as an extended selection process (Zhao & Liden, 2011). Interns gain professional exposure and learning opportunities, while organizations benefit from cost-effective labor, reduced hiring expenses, enhanced access to a talent pool and the ability to evaluate talent before making long-term commitments (Cook et al., 2015; Beenen & Rousseau, 2010; Lee & Chao, 2013). However, not all interns transition into permanent roles post-internship, with decisions influenced by talent management practices, including benefits, leadership, and training (Hurst et al., 2012; Lee & Chao, 2013; NACE 2022).

Thus, strategically managing internship programs is essential for nurturing talent and fostering long-term organizational commitment. Internships provide organizations with an opportunity to implement effective talent management practices that influence interns' decisions to join permanently, thus serving as a cornerstone of successful talent management. By aligning internships with best practices in talent management, organizations can enhance their capacity to attract, develop, and retain top talent, ensuring a sustainable competitive advantage in the evolving workforce landscape.

### **3. Hypotheses Development**

#### **3.1 Retention of Interns After Completion of Their Internship**

Signaling theory (Spence, 1973; Connelly et al., 2011) explains how organizations use HR practices to communicate their values, strategies, and expectations to job seekers, including interns, to address information asymmetry (Wayne & Casper, 2012). Through these signals like training, mentorship, and developmental opportunities, organizations convey insights about the workplace environment, career development opportunities, and organizational priorities (Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991). The signals derived from an organization's talent management strategies influence interns' attraction to the organization. Training and development opportunities offered during internships signal the organization's dedication to fostering employee potential and ensuring long-term professional growth. Interns are more likely to remain with employers who provide greater career satisfaction and robust learning opportunities, as these factors indicate the potential for meaningful career advancement (Rose et al., 2014). For interns, such signals are instrumental in assessing their fit within the organization and their prospects for long-term employment. Effective talent management practices, such as individual development plans, enhanced supervisor interaction, consistent feedback, and job rotations, not only enhance the internship experience but also serve as signals of a promising future within the organization (Beenen & Rousseau, 2010; Rose et al., 2014). Thus, talent management practices highlight an organization's investment in learning opportunities and career satisfaction during internships, are instrumental in shaping interns' perceptions and influencing their intention to transition into full-time roles.

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) complements this view by emphasizing reciprocal relationships between organizations and interns. When interns see being chosen as talent or firms make tangible investments in interns through talent management practices—such as individualized career development, feedback, or job rotations—interns are likely to reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviors, including stronger attachment and a willingness to remain with the organization. These practices not only foster positive attitudes but also signal the organization's commitment to their growth and future. This reciprocal dynamic aligns with talent management practices by reinforcing the mutual benefits for both parties: interns gain a sense of belonging and professional development, while organizations enhance their ability to

attract, develop, and retain promising talent (Lee et al., 2011; Björkman et al., 2013; Rose et al., 2014; De Boeck, Meyers, & Dries, 2018). By integrating signaling theory, which highlights how these practices convey organizational priorities and values, and social exchange theory, which emphasizes the relational aspect, this framework underscores the strategic importance of talent management practices during internships in building long-term organizational commitment for interns.

*H1: The perceived intensity of talent management practices is positively associated with the intention of interns to convert to full-time employees.*

### **3.2 Mediating Role of Career Satisfaction in Intern Conversion**

Career satisfaction is the extent to which individuals feel their career progress aligns with their goals, values, and preferences (Barnett & Bradley, 2007). It reflects personal evaluations of achievements, advancement, meaningfulness, and future opportunities (Hofmans, Dries & Pepermans, 2008). Effective talent management practices significantly influence career satisfaction by shaping the employee experience (Bonneton et al., 2022; Dries & Pepermans, 2007; Tymon, Stumpf, & Doh, 2010).

Interns, as emerging talents, often have high expectations for career support and opportunities. When these expectations are unmet, dissatisfaction can arise, whereas effective support enhances satisfaction (Lee & Chao, 2013; Maertz, Stoeberl & Marks, 2014; Stewart et al., 2018). Recognized talents typically receive more developmental opportunities, reducing the gap between interns' expectations and actual experiences, and improving their career satisfaction (Dries & Pepermans, 2007; Björkman et al., 2013; Feild & Harris, 1991).

Studies indicate that career satisfaction is closely linked to employee retention (Coetzee & Stoltz, 2015) and serves as a predictor of employees' intentions to leave their positions (Zopiatis, Theocharous & Constanti, 2018). Satisfied employees are less likely to leave, as career satisfaction aligns with social exchange theory, which posits that individuals who feel fulfilled in their roles are more likely to exhibit loyalty and stay longer with their organization (Aburumman et al., 2020).

Career satisfaction also enhances subjective well-being by boosting self-efficacy, self-esteem, confidence, and optimism, contributing to overall happiness. Happier employees tend to remain with organizations that meet their expectations and develop a stronger emotional connection (Nae & Choi, 2022). Conversely, dissatisfaction may prompt employees to seek new opportunities that offer better career fulfillment (Salleh et al., 2020).

For interns, satisfaction during their limited tenure is shaped by effective internship practices (Lee & Chao, 2013). Implementing strong talent management practices can improve interns' well-being, strengthen their attachment to the organization, and positively influence their intention to transition to full-time roles.

Hypotheses 2 and 3 collectively propose a mediating relationship, indicating that career satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived talent management practices and interns' intention to convert to full-time employees. Specifically, Hypotheses 2 explores how talent management practices enhance career satisfaction, while Hypotheses 3 focuses on the positive association between career satisfaction and interns' intention to transition into full-time

roles. Together, these hypotheses underscore the mediating role of career satisfaction within the broader framework of intern retention and conversion.

*H2: The perceived intensity of talent management practices is positively associated with interns' career satisfaction.*

*H3: Higher levels of career satisfaction are positively associated with the intention of interns to convert to full-time employees.*

### **3.3 Mediating Role of Organizational Attractiveness in Intern Conversion**

Organizational attractiveness, the extent to which individuals see an organization as a desirable employer, has two aspects: internal (appealing to current employees) and external (attracting potential hires) (Highhouse et al., 2003; Pingle & Sodhi, 2011). Effective talent management practices, such as competitive pay, career advancement, and training, boost this attractiveness by signaling that the organization values and invests in its workforce, including interns (Lievens et al., 2007; Bethke-Langenegger et al., 2011; Sandeepanie et al., 2023).

Organizations with strong talent management practices often retain employees better (Jiang & Iles, 2011). These practices act as incentives, encouraging employees to engage more and appreciate the functional, economic, and psychological benefits offered, leading to a stronger perception of the organization as a desirable workplace (Edwards, 2017; Sandeepanie et al., 2023).

In addition, Ewerlin (2013) suggests that promoting global talent management programs can further enhance organizational attractiveness. Tailored programs signal the organization's commitment to talent growth, reinforcing its appeal to recruits and demonstrating a dedication to offering meaningful incentives (Yaquab & Khan, 2011; Ewerlin, 2013).

Organizational attractiveness is crucial for attracting new talent and retaining current employees, as it correlates with employees' intentions to stay (Kaathan, 2018) and candidates' likelihood of accepting job offers (Tsai and Yang, 2010). Thus, developing a strong employer image reduces turnover and attracts skilled individuals from the labor market.

The employer brand, defined as a unique set of attributes and qualities, is a key factor in enhancing organizational attractiveness (CIPD, 2023). It communicates the functional, economic, and psychological benefits of working for the organization (Highhouse et al., 2003) and strategically appeals to individuals who align with the company's culture. A strong employer brand improves candidates' intention to join (Sharma & Prasad, 2018; Highhouse et al., 2003) and helps firms compete effectively in the labor market to recruit suitable candidates (Turban & Cable, 2003). Studies show that an attractive employer positively influences both talent acquisition and retention. For interns, perceiving their employer as attractive increases their intent to transition to permanent roles.

As a result, the attractiveness of the host organization as an employer mediates the relationship between perceived talent management practices and interns' intention to convert to full-time employees. Specifically, Hypothesis 4 highlights the influence of perceived talent management practices on organizational attractiveness, while Hypothesis 5 emphasizes the impact of organizational attractiveness on interns' conversion intentions. Together, these hypotheses establish the mediating role of organizational attractiveness within the framework.

*H4: Higher perceived intensity of talent management practices is positively associated with the attractiveness of host organizations as employers.*

*H5: The attractiveness of host organizations as employers is positively associated with interns' intention to become full-time employees.*

Figure 1 graphically shows the hypothesized effects:

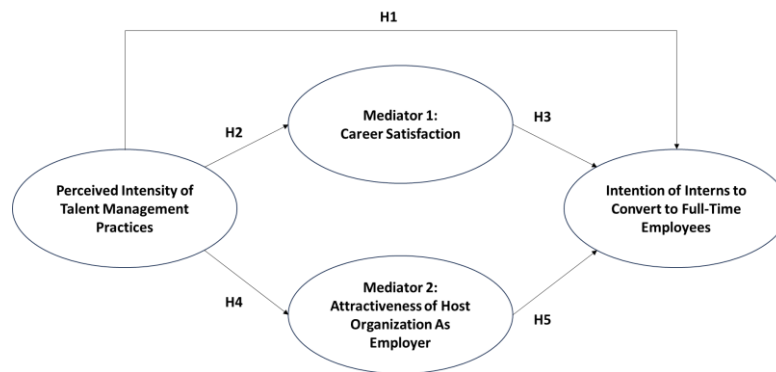


Figure 1. Framework explaining the relationship between perceived talent management practices and the intention of interns to convert to full-time employees

## 4. Hypotheses Development

### 4.1 Mediating Role of Organizational Attractiveness in Intern Conversion

This study has a quantitative research approach. Using this approach is more appropriate because the aim of the current study is to quantify the extent of the influence of perceived effectiveness of talent management techniques on intern conversion intentions, as well as explore possible mediators. Data were collected via an online, self-administered survey that was distributed to interns in several countries, primarily in the UK and Türkiye. The survey was adapted from a validated instruments used in a prior studies. The original instruments were developed in English. All participants in the current study had a strong command of the language, ensuring their ability to understand and accurately respond to the survey. Additionally, the talent management questions did not include practices likely to be affected by cultural differences, making the instrument applicable across contexts without the need for significant modifications. The use of a well-established scales ensured reliability and validity in capturing the intended constructs. The target sample comprised of students and recent graduates due to their recent or current internship experiences. Recent graduates refer to those who have completed their education and obtained a degree within the last two years. Also, participants must have recently finished or currently be involved in an internship within the past 2 years, ensuring that their internship experiences are both recent and relevant to the study.

This study employed a combination of snowball and selected sampling methods to ensure a diverse and relevant sample (Parker, Scott & Geddes, 2019; Clemenceau, 2010). Participants were initially reached via email and social media platforms, such as LinkedIn, targeting interns who fit the study criteria. Snowball sampling was used to expand the participant pool, allowing initial respondents to share the survey with other interns within their network. While snowball sampling can introduce potential sampling bias due to the lack of randomization, it was chosen because of the inherent difficulty in accessing this specific population across multiple countries. To mitigate this limitation, we used selected sampling alongside snowball sampling by directly

approaching individuals affiliated with known internship programs or organizations. This ensured that the study included a diverse group of participants and reduced overrepresentation from any single network. This approach ensured diversity in several aspects, including age, geographic distribution, industry sectors, and internship type and mode. Geographically, participants came from multiple countries, primarily the UK and Türkiye, with additional representation from other regions. In terms of sectors, the sample included interns from industries such as technology, finance, healthcare, and education. Internship type and mode also varied, encompassing in-person, remote, and hybrid arrangements as well as paid and unpaid internships.

The survey included a written consent form that explained the purpose and nature of the study, emphasizing the significance of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. Participants were notified that the survey's purpose was to understand their intention to continue working with their host organization following the completion of their internship. To maintain anonymity, participants were not requested to provide for their names or any identifying information. The survey utilized validated scales to measure key constructs, such as perceived intensity of talent management practices (Bonneton et al., 2022), career satisfaction (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990), organizational attractiveness (Highhouse et al., 2003), and intention to convert to full-time employment (Hurst, Good, & Gardner, 2012). These scales ensured the reliability and validity of the data collected, while additional questions captured demographic and internship-related details

The survey was completed by a total of 103 individuals, with a nearly equal distribution of genders (50.5% male and 49.5% female), and the average age of the participants was 25 years. Approximately 60.2% of the participants had internships that lasted for less than 3 months. The majority, accounting for 58.2%, finished their most recent internships within the past year. This includes 13.6% who were still involved in ongoing internships at the time of the survey. The majority (59.2%) of internships were completed in-person. The survey participants contained individuals from 27 different countries and various sectors, with the Government/Public Sector (15.5%), Consulting (9.7%), and Finance/Banking (8.7%) being the most commonly represented sectors. Approximately 85 percent of the interns were paid, while approximately 30 percent received academic credit for their internship. Over half of the participants (50.5%) were pursuing a master's degree. Out of all the participants, 12.6% were presently employed by the organization where they had completed their most recent internship.

Table 1. Sample demographics and internship characteristics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	52	50.5	50.5	50.5
	Female	51	49.5	49.5	100.0
<b>Age</b>	Mean	25.02	-	-	-
	Median	24.00	-	-	-
	Std. Deviation	2.811	-	-	-
<b>Internship Duration</b>	Less than 1 month	10	9.7	9.7	9.7
	1-3 months	52	50.5	50.5	60.2
	4-6 months	23	22.3	22.3	82.5

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
<b>Internship Type</b>	7-9 months	7	6.8	6.8	89.3
	10-12 months	7	6.8	6.8	96.1
	More than 12 months	4	3.9	3.9	100.0
	Paid	88	85.4	85.4	85.4
	Unpaid	15	14.6	14.6	100.0
<b>Academic Credit for Internship</b>	Yes	31	30.1	30.1	30.1
	No	72	69.9	69.9	100.0
<b>Current Employment with Internship Organization</b>	Yes	13	12.6	32.5	32.5
	No	27	26.2	67.5	100.0
<b>Internship Mode</b>	In-person	61	59.2	59.2	59.2
	Hybrid	35	34.0	34.0	93.2
	Online	7	6.8	6.8	100.0
<b>Current Employment Status</b>	Undergraduate	11	10.7	10.8	10.8
	Master's	51	49.5	50.0	60.8
	Full-time	27	26.2	26.5	87.3
	Part-time	7	6.8	6.9	94.1
	Temporary	6	5.8	5.9	100.0
<b>Most Recent Internship Timing</b>	Ongoing	14	13.6	13.6	13.6
	Within the last 3 months	6	5.8	5.8	19.4
	3-6 months	9	8.7	8.7	28.2
	6-12 months	31	30.1	30.1	58.3
	12-18 months	20	19.4	19.4	77.7
	18-24 months	23	22.3	22.3	100.0

Table 1 presents the detailed demographics and internship characteristics. These variables are included to provide context for the study's analysis and to explore their potential influence on the key constructs of career satisfaction, organizational attractiveness, and intern conversion intentions. Demographic variables, including age, gender, nationality, and education level, are presented to describe the diversity of the sample and to allow for potential subgroup analyses. Internship-specific details, such as timing, length, and sector, provide information regarding eligibility of internship experience and additional context, and ensure the data's relevance to the research questions. Variables such as whether the internship was paid or unpaid, credit-bearing or non-credit-bearing, and the mode of internship (online, in-person, or hybrid) were collected based on their established relevance in prior research. These characteristics have been shown to significantly impact interns' experiences, satisfaction, and intentions, making them critical for understanding the diverse factors that shape conversion outcomes.

## 4.2 Measures

This study employed four different scales: Perceived Intensity of Talent Management Practices, Career Satisfaction, Organizational Attractiveness, and Intern Conversion Intentions. The scales were conducted in English. The survey includes 40 scaled-response questions, 13 basic additional questions, addressing participants' demographic information, internship details and other relevant feedback. The survey takes participants around 10 to 12 minutes to finish the survey.

### 4.2.1 Independent Variable and Mediators

#### Perceived Intensity of Talent Management Practices

To assess the perceived intensity of talent management practices, an index created by Bonneton et al. (2022) was used. The index comprises 16 items that are drawn from the research conducted by Stahl et al. (2007), offering a list of best talent management practices. Every item refers to a talent management practice that focus on talent attraction, development, and retention. Interns rated these items based on their internship experiences, utilizing a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (to a very high extent). An example item is, “To what extent have you been accompanied in your career by more experienced colleagues (mentoring, coaching, etc.)?”. In the previous research, the scale achieved a satisfactory Cronbach’s alpha of 0.81 (Bonneton et al., 2022). This scale was selected because of the limited availability of alternative measures specifically tailored to talent management practices in the context of internships. Bonneton et al.'s index provides a comprehensive approach, encompassing dimensions such as training, mentorship, and developmental opportunities, which align closely with the focus of this study. It is particularly suited for capturing the organizational practices most relevant to interns' experiences, ensuring alignment with the study's objectives.

#### Career Satisfaction

The measurement of career satisfaction was conducted using the scale devised by Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990). Respondents rated five items related to their career satisfaction considering their internship experience. The scale consisted of 5 items and was measured on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). An example item is, “I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my goals.” The internal consistency of the scale was found to be high, ( $\alpha = .88$ ) (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990). This scale was chosen because of its established reliability and validity in measuring satisfaction. The scale was reviewed for applicability to the internship setting. No substantial adaptations were needed, as the constructs remain relevant for assessing career satisfaction among interns.

#### Organizational Attractiveness

The attractiveness scale by Highhouse et al. (2003) was used to measure organizational attractiveness as an employer. This scale consists of 15 items that measure the perceived attractiveness of the host organization as an employer. Responses were collected on a seven-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating greater attractiveness. An example item is, “This company is attractive to me as a place for employment.” The alpha coefficient for the

scale was 0.88 (Highhouse et al., 2003). This measure was chosen for its strong reliability and validity in measuring in prior studies, and the constructs remain relevant and directly applicable for assessing attractiveness among interns.

#### 4.2.2 Dependent Variable: Intern Conversion Intentions

The intention of interns to convert to full-time employees in their host organization was measured using a four-item scale from Hurst, Good, and Gardner (2012). Interns were requested to indicate their intention to accept a job offer from the host organization. An example item is, "I would accept a job offer from my internship company before considering a job offer from any other company." Responses were assessed using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The scale generated an alpha coefficient of 0.81 (Hurst, Good, & Gardner, 2012). This scale was selected because of its specific focus on capturing interns' intentions to transition into full-time roles with their host organizations. This measure provides a strong foundation for evaluating this construct within the context of internships. Since the original wording was directly relevant to the context of internships, no significant adaptations were required.

#### 4.2.3 Reliability Analysis

In the present research, Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability of the measurement scales.

Table 2. Reliability analysis results for measurement scales

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Perceived Intensity of Talent Management Practices	.818	16
Career Satisfaction	.882	5
Organizational Attractiveness	.934	15
Intern Conversion Intentions	.822	4

The scale for perceived intensity of talent management practices showed a high level of internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .818. Similarly, the scales for career satisfaction, organizational attractiveness, and intern conversion intentions also demonstrated high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values of .882, .934, and .822, respectively.

#### 4.2.4 Control Variables

This study includes several control variables that are known to potentially impact career satisfaction, organizational attractiveness, and intern conversion intentions. First, some internship characteristics have been found to significantly influence intern job satisfaction (Rogers et al., 2021). Prior research has examined whether there are differences in career satisfaction and conversion intentions depending on if an internship was paid or unpaid, with mixed results reported (Hurst, Gardner, & Dorie, 2023; Saltikoff, 2017). Therefore, participants in this study were asked if their internship was paid or unpaid.

Also, the difference between credit-bearing and non-credit bearing internships is another important factor, however it has often been neglected to consider in previous research (Hurst, Gardner, & Dorie, 2023; Saltikoff, 2017). Maertz, Stoeberl, and Marks (2014) emphasized that whether academic credit is offered is a key dimension of internships. Additionally, other studies

have demonstrated that receiving academic credit for an internship can significantly affect interns' satisfaction and their overall internship experience (Hergert, 2009; Saltikoff, 2017). Therefore, participants were asked whether they received academic credit for their internship.

The mode of internship (online, in-person, or hybrid) has also been found to influence interns' satisfaction and outcomes. Studies indicate that online internships may result in decreased satisfaction levels and diminished academic and developmental benefits (Hora et al., 2021). Moreover, additional studies suggest that remote internships can hinder learning outcomes, engagement, and overall satisfaction (Mitchell, 2023; Wong, Lau, & Chan, 2021). Thus, participants were asked to specify whether their internship was conducted online, in-person, or in a hybrid format.

To further ensure the relevance of the data and identify any potential ineligible respondents (for example, those who completed their internship more than two years ago), participants were asked to provide additional demographic and internship-related information. This included their age, gender, nationality, highest level of education, current employment status, timing and length of their most recent internship, and the sector of the internship. These variables were included to explore if further analysis is needed to see whether certain patterns exist based on these characteristics.

#### **4.3 Data Analysis**

The dataset was checked for missing values, ineligible respondents and outliers before performing the data analysis. These responses were identified and removed. After completing the data cleaning process, 21 responses were removed from the initial 124 as they were primarily incomplete, with participants not providing sufficient data to include in the analysis. Additionally, a few responses were excluded because the internships referenced were completed too long ago to be considered relevant to the study's scope. This resulted in a total of 103 responses available for further study. All analyses were performed using SPSS 29 software.

The data analysis was conducted in multiple stages to examine the proposed hypotheses and explore the relationships between the variables. Initially, identification of descriptive statistics was performed to summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample. This was done to provide a full overview of the profiles of the respondents (Table 1). Subsequently, a reliability analysis was performed to verify the consistency of each measurement scale (Table 2). Later, correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationships between the variables. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to identify significant associations (Table 3).

Multiple regression analysis was then employed to examine the direct effects of the independent variable on both the dependent variable and the mediators. Separate regression models were conducted to assess the hypothesized relationships. Later, mediation analysis was performed to determine whether career satisfaction and employer attractiveness mediate the relationship between perceived intensity of talent management practices and intern conversion intentions. The analysis was performed with PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 (Igartua & Hayes, 2021). Indirect effects were tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples, which is a robust method for estimating mediation effects by providing confidence intervals for the indirect paths. Mediation significance was evaluated using a 95% confidence interval, where mediation was considered significant if the confidence interval for the indirect effect did not include zero. To ensure the robustness of the findings, additional checks were performed by

incorporating control variables, including gender, internship type, and mode, into the analysis models.

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Correlation Analysis

To explore the relationships between the key variables, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed, along with descriptive statistics for each variable.

Table 3. Pearson correlation coefficients

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Perceived Intensity of Talent Management Practices (PerIntensTM)	3.89	0.96				
2. Career Satisfaction (CarSatis)	4.47	1.26	.458**			
3. Organizational Attractiveness (OrgAttr)	4.55	1.21	.587**	.613**		
4. Intern Conversion Intentions (IntCon)	3.90	1.54	.510**	.456**	.724**	

Note: M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation. N = 103 for all variables. \*\* $p < .01$ .

The descriptive statistics indicated that the mean scores for perceived intensity of talent management practices ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 0.96$ ), career satisfaction ( $M = 4.47$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ), organizational attractiveness ( $M = 4.55$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ), and intern conversion intentions ( $M = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 1.54$ ) were all relatively high.

The correlation analysis revealed several significant associations. A positive and significant correlation was found between the perceived intensity of talent management practices and career satisfaction ( $r = .458$ ,  $p < .01$ ), organizational attractiveness ( $r = .587$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and intern conversion intentions ( $r = .510$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The study also showed that career satisfaction was positively and significantly correlated with both employer attractiveness ( $r = .613$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and intern conversion intentions ( $r = .456$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Furthermore, there was a significant and positive relationship between the attractiveness of the organization and the interns' intentions to convert into full-time employees ( $r = .724$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The findings demonstrate that a stronger perception of the intensity of talent management practices is associated with increased levels of career satisfaction, organizational attractiveness, and intentions to transition to full-time work. Moreover, there is a significant positive correlation between both career satisfaction and organizational attractiveness and the intention to convert from an intern to a permanent employee.

### 5.2 Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was then performed to examine the direct effects of the independent variable on both the dependent variable and the mediators. The first regression analysis (Table 4) was conducted to examine the direct effect of perceived intensity of talent management practices on intern conversion intentions, while controlling for other variables.

Table 4. Regression analysis results for the effect of perceived intensity of talent management practices on intern conversion intentions

Variable	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	95% CI for B
(Constant)	2.039	1.015		2.009	.047	[.024, 4.053]

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Variable	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	95% CI for B
PerIntensTM	.739	.139	.462**	5.303	<.01	[.462, 1.015]
Gender	-.202	.262	-.066	-.769	.444	[-.723, .319]
Internship Type	-.756	.380	-.174*	-1.990	.049	[-1.510, -.002]
Academic Credit for Internship	-.116	.286	-.035	-.406	.686	[-.684, .452]
Internship Mode	.235	.212	.095	1.106	.271	[-.186, .656]

Note: \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$

The overall model was significant,  $F(5,97) = 8.396$ ,  $p < .01$ , explaining 26.6% of the variance in intern conversion intentions ( $R^2 = .302$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .266$ ). Perceived intensity of talent management practices was a significant predictor of intern conversion intentions ( $\beta = .462$ ,  $p < .01$ ), with a confidence interval of [.462, 1.015]. This indicates that higher perceptions of talent management practices were associated with an increased intentions to convert to full-time employment, thereby supporting Hypothesis 1. Among the control variables, only whether the internship was paid or unpaid significantly predicted intern conversion intentions ( $\beta = -.174$ ,  $p = .049$ ), with a confidence interval of [-1.510, -.002]. The remaining control variables did not have any statistically significant effects. The second regression analysis (Table 5) was performed to test the direct effect of perceived intensity of talent management practices on career satisfaction, while controlling for other variables.

Table 5. Regression analysis results for the effect of perceived intensity of talent management practices on career satisfaction

Variable	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	95% CI for B
(Constant)	3.458	0.864		4.005	<.01	[1.744, 5.172]
PerIntensTM	0.565	0.119	0.432**	4.768	<.01	[.330, .801]
Gender	-0.007	0.223	-0.003	-0.031	.976	[-.450, .436]
Internship Type	-0.449	0.323	-0.126	-1.389	.168	[-1.090, .192]
Academic Credit for Internship	-0.237	0.243	-0.087	-0.974	.332	[-.720, .246]
Internship Mode	-0.178	0.180	-0.088	-0.985	.327	[-.536, .180]

Note: \*\* $p < .01$

The overall model was significant,  $F(5,97) = 6.284$ ,  $p < .01$ , explaining 20.6% of the variance in career satisfaction ( $R^2 = .245$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .206$ ). Perceived intensity of talent management practices was a significant predictor of career satisfaction ( $\beta = .432$ ,  $p < .01$ ), with a confidence interval of [.330, .801]. This finding demonstrates that higher perceptions of talent management practices were associated with increased career satisfaction, confirming Hypothesis 2. None of the control variables exhibited significant effects on career satisfaction. The third regression analysis (Table 6) was conducted to examine the direct effect of career satisfaction on intern conversion intentions, while controlling for other variables.

Table 6. Regression analysis results for the effect of career satisfaction on intern conversion intentions

Variable	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	95% CI for B
(Constant)	2.401	1.038		2.312	.023	[.340, 4.461]
Career Satisfaction	0.515	0.110	0.421**	4.673	<.01	[.296, .734]
Gender	-0.280	0.268	-0.091	-1.044	.299	[-.813, .252]
Internship Type	-0.729	0.392	-0.168	-1.861	.066	[-1.508, .049]
Academic Credit for Internship	-0.067	0.295	-0.020	-0.228	.820	[-.653, .518]
Internship Mode	0.382	0.217	0.155	1.760	.081	[-.049, .814]

Note: \*\*p < .01

The overall model was significant,  $F(5,97) = 6.998$ ,  $p < .01$ , explaining 22.7% of the variance in intern conversion intentions ( $R^2 = .265$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .227$ ). Career satisfaction was a significant predictor of intern conversion intentions ( $\beta = .421$ ,  $p < .01$ ), with a confidence interval of [0.296, 0.734]. This indicates that higher career satisfaction was associated with increased intentions to convert to full-time employment, providing support for Hypothesis 3. There were no control variables that had a significant impact on predicting intern conversion intentions. The fourth regression analysis (Table 7) was conducted to examine the effect of perceived intensity of talent management practices on organizational attractiveness of host organization as an employer, while controlling for other variables.

Table 7. Regression analysis results for the effect of perceived intensity of talent management practices on organizational attractiveness

Variable	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	95% CI for B
(Constant)	1.947	.765		2.546	.012	[.429, 3.465]
PerIntensTM	.736	.105	.586**	7.015	<.01	[.528, .945]
Gender	-.257	.198	-.107	-1.301	.196	[-.650, .135]
Internship Type	.194	.286	.057	.679	.499	[-.374, .762]
Academic Credit for Internship	-.007	.216	-.002	-.030	.976	[-.434, .421]
Internship Mode	-.063	.160	-.033	-.397	.692	[-.381, .254]

Note: \*\*p < .01

The overall model was significant,  $F(5,97) = 10.845$ ,  $p < .01$ , explaining 32.6% of the variance in employer attractiveness ( $R^2 = .359$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .326$ ). Perceived intensity of talent management practices was a significant predictor of organizational attractiveness ( $\beta = .586$ ,  $p < .01$ ), with a confidence interval of [0.528, 0.945], indicating that higher perceptions of talent management practices were associated with increased attractiveness. This result confirms Hypothesis 4. None of the control variables were significant predictors in this model. The last regression analysis (Table 8) was conducted to examine the effect of organizational attractiveness as an employer on intern conversion intentions, while controlling for other variables.

Table 8. Regression analysis results for the effect of organizational attractiveness on intern conversion intentions

Predictor	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	95% CI for B
(Constant)	.644	.750		.858	.393	[-.845, 2.132]
Employer Attractiveness	.901	.085	.708**	10.648	<.01	[.733, 1.069]
Gender	.016	.204	.005	.080	.937	[-.389, .421]
Internship Type	-.965	.289	-.222**	-3.340	<.01	[-1.539, -.392]
Academic Credit for Internship	-.122	.220	-.037	-.556	.579	[-.560, .315]
Internship Mode	.301	.163	.122	1.848	.068	[-.022, .625]

The overall model was significant,  $F(5, 97) = 27.337$ ,  $p < .01$ , explaining 56.4% of the variance in intern conversion intentions ( $R^2 = .585$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .564$ ). Organizational attractiveness was a significant predictor of intern conversion intentions ( $\beta = .708$ ,  $p < .01$ ), with a confidence interval of [.733, 1.069], indicating that higher attractiveness was associated with increased intentions to convert to full-time employment. This finding supports Hypothesis 5. Among the control variables, whether the most recent internship was paid or unpaid also significantly predicted intern conversion intentions ( $\beta = -.222$ ,  $p < .01$ ), with a confidence interval of [-1.539, -.392]. The other control variables did not show significant effects.

### 5.3 Mediation Analysis

A mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether career satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived intensity of talent management practices and intern conversion intentions, while controlling for gender, internship type, academic credit for internship, and internship mode.

Table 9. The analysis for career satisfaction

Predictor	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	95% CI for B
(Constant)	3.458	.864		4.005	<.01	[1.744, 5.172]
PerIntensTM	.565	.119	.565**	4.769	<.01	[.330, .801]
Gender	-.007	.223	-.031	-.031	.976	[-.450, .436]
Internship Type	-.449	.323	-.126	-1.389	.168	[-1.090, .192]
Academic Credit for Internship	-.237	.244	-.087	-.974	.332	[-.720, .246]
Internship Mode	-.178	.181	-.088	-.985	.327	[-.536, .180]

Note: \*\* $p < .01$

The analysis indicated that the model was significant,  $F(5,97) = 6.284$ ,  $p < .01$ , explaining 24.5% of the variance in career satisfaction ( $R^2 = .2447$ ). Specifically, perceived intensity of talent management practices was a significant predictor of career satisfaction,  $\beta = .565$ ,  $p < .01$ , with a 95% confidence interval of [0.330, 0.801] (Table 9).

Table 10. The analysis for intern conversion intentions

Predictor	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	95% CI for B
(Constant)	.900	1.057		.851	.397	[-1.199, 2.999]
PerIntensTM	.553	.149	.553	3.701**	< .01	[.256, .849]
Career Satisfaction	.329	.115	.329	2.860**	< .01	[.101, .558]
Gender	-.200	.253	-.081	-.788	.432	[-.702, .303]
Internship Type	-.608	.370	-.168	-1.642	.104	[-1.343, .127]
Academic Credit for Internship	-.038	.278	-.014	-.137	.892	[-.589, .513]
Internship Mode	.293	.206	.122	1.425	.157	[-.115, .701]

Note: \*\*p < .01

The regression analysis for the intern conversion intentions, also revealed a significant model,  $F(6,96) = 8.877$ ,  $p < .01$ , explaining 35.7% of the variance in intern conversion intentions ( $R^2 = .357$ ). Both perceived intensity of talent management practices and career satisfaction were significant predictors of intern conversion intentions, with  $\beta = .553$ ,  $p < .01$ , and  $\beta = .329$ ,  $p < .01$  respectively. The 95% confidence intervals were [0.256, 0.849] for perceived intensity of talent management practices and [0.101, 0.558] for career satisfaction (Table 10).

Table 11. Direct and indirect effects of perceived intensity of talent management practices on intern conversion intentions via career satisfaction

Effect	B	SE	95% CI
Direct	.553	.149	[.256, .849]
Indirect	.186	.096	[.039, .425]

The direct effect of perceived intensity of talent management practices on intern conversion intentions was significant,  $\beta = .553$ ,  $p < .01$ , with a 95% confidence interval of [0.256, 0.849]. The indirect effect through career satisfaction was significant,  $\beta = .186$ , with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval of [0.039, 0.425]. This indicates that career satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between the perceived intensity of talent management practices and intern conversion intentions (Table 11).

Table 12. Summary of mediation analysis for career satisfaction (N = 103)

Predictor	Outcome	B	SE	t	p	95% CI
PerInTM	Career Satisfaction	.565**	.119	4.769	<.01	[.3300, .8006]
PerInTM	Intern Intention	.553**	.149	3.701	<.01	[.2563, .8493]
Career Satisfaction	Intern Intention	.329**	.115	2.860	<.01	[.1007, .5579]
Direct Effect		.553	.149	3.7005	<.01	[.2563, .8493]
Indirect Effect via Career Satisfaction		.186	.096			[.0389, .4246]

Note: \*\*p < .01

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Another mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether organizational attractiveness of host organization as employer mediates the relationship between perceived intensity of talent management practices and intern conversion intentions, while controlling for other variables. The first model for the mediator variable revealed that the model was significant,  $F(5, 97) = 10.845$ ,  $p < .01$ , explaining 35.9% of the variance in organizational attractiveness ( $R^2 = .3586$ ). Perceived intensity of talent management practices was a significant predictor of organizational attractiveness ( $\beta = .737$ ,  $p < .01$ ), with a confidence interval of [.528, .945].

Table 13. The analysis for organizational attractiveness

Predictor	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	95% CI for B
(Constant)	1.947	.765		2.546	.012	[.429, 3.465]
PerIntensTM	.736	.105	.737**	7.015	<.01	[.528, .945]
Gender	-.257	.198	-.107	-1.301	.196	[-.650, .135]
Internship Type	.194	.286	.057	.679	.499	[-.374, .762]
Academic Credit for Internship	-.007	.216	-.002	-.030	.976	[-.434, .421]
Internship Mode	-.063	.160	-.033	-.397	.692	[-.381, .254]

Note: \*\* $p < .01$

The second model for the intern conversion intentions was also significant,  $F(6, 96) = 22.841$ ,  $p < .01$ , explaining 58.8% of the variance in intern conversion intentions ( $R^2 = .5881$ ). While organizational attractiveness was a significant predictor of intern conversion intentions ( $\beta = .850$ ,  $p < .01$ ), with a confidence interval of [.643, 1.056], perceived intensity of talent management practices did not have a significant direct effect on intern conversion intentions ( $\beta = .113$ ,  $p = .393$ ) (Table 14).

Table 14. The analysis for intern conversion intentions

Predictor	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	95% CI for B
(Constant)	.385	.810		.475	.636	[-1.222, 1.992]
PerIntTM	.113	.132	.113	.857	.393	[-.149, .376]
Organizational Attractiveness	.850	.104	.850**	8.164	<.01	[.643, 1.056]
Gender	.017	.204	.005	.082	.935	[-.389, .423]
Internship Type	-.921	.294	-.222**	-3.132	<.01	[-1.504, -.337]
Academic Credit for Internship	-.111	.221	-.037	-.500	.618	[-.549, .328]
Internship Mode	.289	.164	.122	1.760	.082	[-.037, .614]

Note: \*\* $p < .01$

However, the indirect effect of perceived intensity of talent management practices on intern conversion intentions through organizational attractiveness was significant with an effect size of  $\beta = .626$  and a 95% bootstrap confidence interval that did not include zero [.408, .898]. This indicates that employer attractiveness fully mediates the relationship between the perceived intensity of talent management practices and intern conversion intentions (Table 15).

Table 15. Direct and indirect effects of perceived intensity of talent management practices on intern conversion intentions via employer attractiveness

Effect	B	SE	95% CI
Direct	0.113	0.132	[-0.149, 0.376]
Indirect	0.626	0.125	[0.408, 0.898]

The mediation analysis confirms that career satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived intensity of talent management practices and interns' intention to convert to full-time roles, supporting the combined logic of H2 and H3. Additionally, the results confirm that organizational attractiveness mediates this relationship, supporting the combined logic of H4 and H5.

Table 16. Summary of mediation analysis for organizational attractiveness (N = 103)

Predictor	Outcome	B	SE	t	p	95% CI
PerInTM	Organizational Attractiveness	.736**	.105	7.015	<.01	[.5281, .9448]
PerInTM	Intern Conversion Intention	.113	.132	0.857	.393	[-.1490, .3755]
Organizational Attractiveness	Intern Conversion Intention	.850**	.104	8.164	<.01	[.6430, 1.0561]
Direct Effect		.113	.132	0.8573	.393	[-.1490, .3755]
Indirect Effect via Organizational Attractiveness		.626	.125			[.4079, .8980]

## 6. Discussion

This study explored how perceived talent management practices impact interns' intentions to convert to full-time employees, focusing on career satisfaction and organizational attractiveness as mediators. Using social exchange and signaling theories, the study proposed that effective talent management practices enhance career satisfaction and organizational attractiveness, leading to increased intern conversion intentions. The findings underscore the importance of strategic internship management to improve talent retention.

The results confirmed all hypotheses. Organizational attractiveness fully mediated the relationship between perceived talent management practices and intern conversion intentions. While talent management practices did not directly influence conversion intentions, they significantly impacted organizational attractiveness, which, in turn, influenced intern conversion intentions. This aligns with prior research suggesting that strong talent management practices enhance employer attractiveness, signaling value and rewards to interns (Bethke-Langenegger, Mahler, & Staffelbach, 2011; Sandeepanie et al., 2023). Organizations should actively communicate their good practices to improve perceptions of their attractiveness. Additionally, it contributes to the theoretical understanding of how organizations should strategically manage internships to enhance intern conversion rates by prioritizing the improvement of their attractiveness as employers.

Career satisfaction partially mediated the relationship, supporting previous studies emphasizing its role in talent retention. Interns who perceive strong career support through talent management practices experience higher satisfaction, closing the gap between expectations and experiences (Björkman et al., 2013; Feild & Harris, 1991). This satisfaction increases interns' intentions to accept full-time roles, reflecting a sense of reciprocity and attachment to the organization (Bonneton et al., 2022). Also, this result support that, increased career satisfaction improves interns' well-being and strengthens their attachment to the organization, encouraging conversion to full-time roles as reciprocity for investments in training and development (Aburumman et al., 2020; Björkman et al., 2013). However, the partial mediation indicates that other aspects of talent management practices also directly influence conversion intentions.

This study expands the existing literature by shifting the focus from permanent employees to interns, emphasizing internships as a strategic tool for talent management.. Unlike prior research that primarily focuses on permanent employees, this study demonstrates that internships are not merely transitional experiences but can be integral to organizational talent strategies. By highlighting the mediating mechanisms of career satisfaction and organizational attractiveness, the study offers a nuanced understanding of how internships drive talent retention, and it provides actionable insights for organizations aiming to enhance their talent pipelines.

## **7. Limitations and Future Research**

This study has several limitations. The cross-sectional design limits causal inferences, and alternative hypotheses remain unexamined. Future longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into causality. The sample, largely from the UK and Türkiye, limits generalizability. More extensive data is needed to explore contextual variations. Additionally, while platforms like LinkedIn were effective in reaching a large number of participants, this method may have introduced certain limitations. For instance, the reliance on digital platforms could have excluded interns who lack access to these tools, potentially impacting the representativeness of the sample.

Reliance on self-reported data introduces potential biases, such as social desirability and recall bias. Also, potential confounding variables, such as current employment with the host organization, were not fully addressed. Interns' current job situation may impact their perceptions of talent management practices and their intention to remain in their current position.

Future research should include a wider range of variables, such as external labor market conditions, to isolate the effects of talent management practices. Expanding participants to include HR managers could also provide a more comprehensive understanding of internship processes. Another important direction is conducting longitudinal studies to evaluate the long-term experiences of individuals who transition from internships to full-time positions. Such studies could provide deeper insights into how talent management practices impact career trajectories, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment over time. Additionally, future research could explore similar topics across different sectors, cultural contexts, and job roles. This would help determine whether the findings of this study are consistent across various organizational and cultural environments or whether specific factors influence intern retention

and conversion differently. Examining cross-cultural differences could also provide organizations with tailored strategies for managing internships in diverse settings.

### **7.1 Practical Implications**

The findings have significant implications for practitioners aiming to optimize their internship programs as talent acquisition tools. Organizations must view internships as more than temporary work arrangements; they are critical opportunities to invest in and retain future talent. Effective communication of these practices enhances employer attractiveness and career satisfaction, increasing the likelihood of intern conversion to full-time roles. Therefore, organizations must ensure that interns are well-informed about the talent management systems and practices available to them. Internship programs should provide explicit career information on career pathways within the organization and opportunities in the industry.

Regarding organizational attractiveness, organizations should do regular assessments of employer attractiveness. Regular assessments of employer branding and intern satisfaction can help identify areas for improvement and reinforce the organization's appeal. They should proactively communicate their talent management practices, and leverage employee experiences through mentorship programs (Rose et al., 2014) and intern-employee interactions (Dassler et al., 2022) thus they can enhance organizational attractiveness more effectively. In terms of career satisfaction, developmental programs such as training, job rotation, and international assignments should be prioritized to enhance career satisfaction (Bonneton et al., 2022). Interns should be provided with professional development opportunities to build their skills and explore different organizational roles. Investing in comprehensive training and supportive supervisory relationships can significantly improve intern conversion outcomes.

The results underscore the need for a paradigm shift in how organizations design and manage internships. Rather than viewing them as temporary or auxiliary roles, internships should be treated as strategic components of broader talent management strategies. Investing in robust talent management practices during internships not only enhances retention but also contributes to long-term organizational success by building a sustainable pipeline of committed talent.

## **8. Conclusion**

This study explored the mechanisms through which talent management practices influence interns' conversion intentions, with organizational attractiveness and career satisfaction playing pivotal mediating roles.. By integrating signaling and social exchange theories, it extends theoretical insights into how internships can serve as a strategic bridge between talent acquisition and retention.

Findings indicate that organizational attractiveness fully mediates this relationship, emphasizing the need for organizations to enhance their employer brand and communicate talent management practices effectively. Career satisfaction partially mediates the relationship, suggesting that mentorship, development opportunities, meaningful work, and clear career paths can significantly boost intern retention.

The research highlights the strategic role of internships in talent acquisition and retention, integrating signaling and social exchange theories to show how talent management practices influence intern conversion. While the study provides valuable insights, its cross-sectional

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design and reliance on self-reported data present limitations. Future longitudinal research and more diverse samples are essential to validate these findings and explore additional factors influencing intern conversion intentions

In the context of an increasingly competitive and dynamic workforce landscape, it is key to refine internship programmes in a manner that aligns with the strategic objectives of talent management. Effective internships serve not only to attract top talent but also to establish a foundation for the development of sustainable talent pipelines.

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### **Data Availability**

The data supporting this study are not publicly available due to privacy and confidentiality restrictions.

### **Declaration of Computing Interest**

The author declares that they have no competing interests related to this research.

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