

## Impact of MSIB Program on the Personal Development of Students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta

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**Abstract:** The *Magang dan Studi Independen Bersertifikat* (MSIB) program, initiated by Indonesia's Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology in 2021, provides students with opportunities to gain hands-on experience in the professional world. This study aims to determine the impact of MSIB on the personal development of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta (UMS) students in 2023. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were gathered through interviews, observations, and documentation involving 10 UMS participants. Thematic descriptive analysis, validated through data triangulation, revealed significant positive impacts on students' personal growth. The category of improved personal development is divided into four, namely: 1) improved personal development in working knowledge, 2) improved personal development in work skills, 3) improved personal development in work commitment, and 4) improved personal development in professional relationships. This research highlights MSIB's role in fostering student development and bridging academic learning with industry demands, positioning it as a transformative higher education model.

**Keywords:** Independent Study, Internship, MSIB, Personal Development

### A. Introduction

Internships are popular among university students. Internships are the first step for students to apply academic knowledge to the real world through work-relevant activities (To & Lung, 2020). Direct work experience during an internship strengthens theoretical understanding and builds a work ethic that is in line with industry needs (Kuat & Kristiyanto, 2020). Internships consist of learning experiences in the form of academic learning, cooperative learning, applied practice training and community service learning (Bae et al., 2022). Involvement in these various activities allows students to strengthen interpersonal and emotional skills that are critical to their personal and professional development (Suranto & Rusdianti, 2018). Research on internships has increased over the past two decades as a result of the realization that internship experiences have an impact on students' academic experience on campus and students' employment opportunities (Prescott et al., 2021). Chan et al. (2020) suggest that employability is influenced by four independent variables: work

experience, performance, interpersonal skills, and social networks. Students feel that internship activities can develop transversal skills far more than the cognitive skills learned in the study program that students take (Urquía-Grande & Estébanez, 2020). In addition, students who participate in internships will get better learning terminology and work culture competencies (Luk & Chan, 2021). Internship activities are expected to create superior quality Human Resources (HR) by providing benefits for students' personal development (Frouda et al., 2022).

*Magang dan Studi Independen Bersertifikat* (MSIB or Certified Independent Study and Internship) program is a prestigious internship event for students in Indonesia. In MSIB Batch 5 in 2023, the number of students who registered reached 98 thousand with a total of 39 thousand students accepted. The MSIB program was launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) in 2021 as one of the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM or Freedom to Learn - Independent Campus) programs. In curriculum development in Indonesia, the MBKM part of the *Kampus Merdeka* is expected to become a very essential curriculum at the Higher Education level (Rahmattullah & Syamsu, 2021). MSIB activities that offer opportunities for work experience, learning outside the classroom, and improving skills needed in the world of work can be followed by students for 1-2 semesters (Nizam, 2020). Students who take part in the MSIB program will get 20 credits. MSIB provides students with practical experience in various industrial partners according to student interests by directing them to result-based learning and independence (Novitasari & Asbari, 2021).

MSIB's industrial partners have met the requirements set by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Companies must systematically design internship tasks, recruitment and selection, as well as practices and reports to obtain students as potential human resources (Lan, 2020). Students will be guided by mentors in MSIB activities. The role of mentors is a factor in internship satisfaction at three United States Universities (Hora et al., 2020). Jackson et al. (2019) revealed that mentors can facilitate interns regarding the transfer of knowledge and skills at the internship site. Well-structured internship programs such as MSIB are considered effective in improving students' skills, career attitudes (Bawica, 2021), and vocational identity (Cheunga et al., 2019).

Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta (UMS) is actively involved in implementing the MSIB program. UMS has committed to providing opportunities for students to learn and develop themselves outside the classroom through the Decree of the Chancellor of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta Number 72/II of 2020 concerning Provisions for Independent Learning Activities for UMS Students. Higher education contributes to improving human resources (Aprillita, 2023). Preparing competent students and having quality graduates who are ready to compete in the world of work is the main goal of Higher Education Institutions (Franco et al., 2019). The MSIB program is in line with the vision and mission of UMS to produce graduates who are competent, have character, and are ready to contribute to society.

Research related to internships is of interest to researchers. Research on the impact of internships on personal development has been conducted by Anjum (2020) in Pakistan. Research related to MSIB itself has been conducted by Effendy & Hertati (2024) and Sari et al. (2021). However, research on the specific impact of MSIB on student personal development, especially at UMS, is still limited. This is the main background of the research so that this study aims to find out how the MSIB program impacts the personal development of UMS students. By understanding the impact of student personal development on the MSIB program, it is hoped that this research can contribute to the development of the MSIB program both at UMS and nationally, so that it can prepare Indonesian students to become superior human resources and be able to face the challenges of the world of work.

## **B. Methods**

This research uses a qualitative approach with primary data. The subjects of this study were UMS students who had participated in the MSIB program in 2023. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted by asking questions to MSIB participating students to get information directly about their experiences in the MSIB program. Observations were made by observing student activities and interactions during the MSIB program. Documentation was conducted by collecting MSIB activity logbook documents to ensure the support of interview and observation data. Data from interviews, observations, and documentation were transcribed, identified the main categories of data, and analyzed thematically descriptively by describing each category in depth to identify the impact of the MSIB program on the personal development of UMS students. Data triangulation was conducted to ensure consistency and validity of data by comparing results from interviews, observations, and documentation. The results of the analysis were used to evaluate the extent to which the MSIB program made a positive contribution to the personal development of UMS students. Data on research sources can be seen in the table 1.

**Table 1. Data of Interviewees**

<b>Interviewees</b>	<b>Study Program</b>	<b>Industry Partners</b>	<b>Position</b>
Student 1	Geography	Directorate General of Land and Spatial Control and Issuance Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency	Land Utilization Control Analyst (LUCA)
Student 2	Development Economics	PT Bank BTPN Syariah Tbk	Remote Site Facilitator (Rural) - Java
Student 3	Electrical Engineering	PT Inti Utama Solusindo	Back-End Robotic Developer Intern
Student 4	Industrial Engineering	PT Pan Brothers Tbk	Industrial Engineering Officer (Boyolali)
Student 5	Informatics Engineering	PT Stechoq Robotika Indonesia	Software Engineer in Developing Digital Transformation and Industry 4.0

Student 6	Accounting	PT Stechoq Robotika Indonesia	Startup Business Development in Developing Digital Transformation and Industry 4.0 Helpdesk Staff
Student 7	Industrial Engineering	PT Telkom Access	
Student 8	Industrial Engineering	PT Trafoindo Prima Perkasa	Operation Officer (SCM)
Student 9	Architecture	UPTD Science and Technology Area	Building and Area Development Officer
Student 10	Communication Science	PT Trans Digital Media	Digital Journalist Surakarta

### **C. Results and Discussion**

The MSIB program was designed by the government to prepare students for the world of work. The MSIB program provides an opportunity for students to learn outside the classroom and engage directly in the world of work. MSIB is a solution to answer the demands of the world of work such as having massive academic knowledge, having practical skills, and work experience in college graduates.

The MSIB program is implemented through stages involving cooperation between students, universities, and industry partners or other institutions. Internship students are directly involved in the company's operational activities, work on projects, and learn from experienced mentors. Independent study students follow learning modules, work on assignments, and interact with fellow participants and mentors. To find out the impact of the MSIB program on students' personal development, research was conducted on UMS students who participated in the MSIB Batch 5 program in 2023.

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation with UMS students who participated in the MSIB program, there was an improvement in student personal development as a result of the MSIB program. Improved personal development based on the data obtained can be categorized into four, namely: 1) improved personal development in working knowledge, 2) improved personal development in work skills, 3) improved personal development in work commitment, and 4) improved personal development in professional relationships.

#### **Improved Personal Development in Working Knowledge**

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, improved personal development in working knowledge consists of entrepreneurial, geographical, journalistic, and technological knowledge. The following presents data on the grouping of students according to the statement of improved personal development in working knowledge.

**Table 2. Improved Personal Development in Working Knowledge**

<b>Improved Working Knowledge</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Results of Interviews, Observations, and Documentation</b>
1.	Entrepreneurship	Apprenticeship activities accompanying customer businesses need to first understand the entrepreneurial material that will be delivered to customers. Indirectly improve knowledge about entrepreneurship (Student 2). Being involved in startup business development improves interest in entrepreneurship (Student 6).
2.	Geographical	Geographical knowledge has also improved from previously not knowing the Boyolali area to now understanding the Boyolali area as a result of mentoring activities to customers (Student 2). Understanding the geographical and spatial aspects of regional development improved geographical understanding (Student 9).
3.	Journalism	The improve in journalistic and technological knowledge developed due to the habit of covering news and presenting information through digital platforms in the Surakarta area, finding and developing interesting and relevant news ideas, collecting data and information through interviews, research, and observation, writing and editing news clearly, accurately, and interestingly, using technology and social media to spread the news. Journalistic knowledge fosters interest in becoming a journalist (Student 10).
4.	Technology	When assisting customers' businesses using specialized platforms and when debriefing using previously unfamiliar online meeting tools, it certainly improves the understanding of technology (Student 2). The interest in robotics can be applied directly to MSIB activities so as to build deeper expertise in back-end programming languages, data structures, algorithms, and databases, as well as knowledge of APIs and web services (Student 3). Such hands-on use of software in the workplace enhances in-depth understanding of technology (Student 4). Understanding and applying new technologies in the industrial world increases the understanding of technology (Student 6). Using the latest technology for regional planning and management enhances technological understanding (Student 9).

Table 2 describes the improved working knowledge of students impacted by the MSIB program in four sub-categories: entrepreneurship, geography, journalism, and technology. In the area of entrepreneurship, students recognized an improved understanding of business, especially when assisting customers and being involved in the development of startups, which helped generate interest in entrepreneurship. Geographical knowledge has also improved, as experienced by students assisting clients in Boyolali, where they learned about regions and spatial planning.

In addition, experience in journalism hones skills in writing, editing, and disseminating news through digital platforms. This not only broadens journalistic knowledge but also fosters interest in becoming a journalist. Lastly, in the area of technology, students who were involved in the use of software and digital platforms during their internships found their understanding of technology deepened.

### **Improved Personal Development in Work Skills**

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, improved personal development in work skills consists of communication skills, time management, collaboration, and critical thinking. The following data presents the grouping of students according to the statement of improved personal development in work skills.

**Table 3. Improved Personal Development in Work Skill**

<b>Improved Work Skill</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Results of Interviews, Observations, and Documentation</b>
1.	Communication	The results of land use data analysis are usually presented to various parties, of course good communication is needed so that they are trained and accustomed to communicating well (Student 1). The improved communication impact of the MSIB program is evidenced by more confidence when communicating with other people or new people (Student 2). Better communication is evident when there is no anxiety when talking to new people (Student 4). Interacting with many parties during the internship trained themselves to communicate well (Student 6). More structured communication is now evidence of improved communication skills (Student 7). Good communication is trained when interacting with various parties for coordination and reporting (Student 9). Improved communication and relationships are evidenced by good interactions with sources, editors, and audiences (Student 10).
2.	Time management	Meeting with 12 customers at each session (time) requires good time management (Student 2). Dividing time for internships and lectures becomes accustomed to managing schedules to make a list of daily activities (Student 6). MSIB internships also have an impact on better time management as evidenced by attending lectures on time (Student 7).
3.	Collaboration	Evidence of improved good cooperation is currently becoming more active in cooperation forums and easy to establish cooperation with others (Student 1). Improved self-confidence and teamwork are evidenced when group presentations in lecture assignments that were previously more passive are now able to become moderators, more active in discussions, and answer audience questions (Student 3). Increased collaboration skills are evident when discussing with classmates who are able to more actively convey ideas (Student 4). Working together in a team to solve customer problems familiarizes them to collaborate well with each other (Student 7). Working with a team to develop and manage areas and buildings improves collaboration skills (Student 9).
4.	Critical thinking	An improve in critical thinking and good communication is evidenced when lectures are currently more active in expressing opinions (Student 1). When assisting customers, it is necessary to first analyze the SWOT of the customer's business, this has become a habit in everyday life after attending MSIB in making decisions that need to be thought of critically (Student 2). Solving problems with the right solution during the internship really trains critical thinking so that in everyday life when making decisions always analyze the risks first (Student 6).

Based on Table 3, improved personal development in students' work skills during the MSIB program is evident in various aspects. In communication skills, students are increasingly trained to interact with various parties, both in presentations and discussions, so that their confidence improves. They are also no longer anxious when talking to new people, and more structured communication and good relationships with sources and audiences further strengthen this ability. In terms of time management, students learn to manage their schedules well, both for internships and lectures, as evidenced by their on-time attendance and more effective time management. Collaboration is also a skill that has improved significantly. Students became more active in cooperation forums, more confident in group discussions, and more ready to collaborate with teams to solve problems. In addition, their critical thinking skills also developed, as evidenced by their skills in analyzing situations and making more mature decisions, both in daily life and at work. This critical thinking was honed through the experience of analyzing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of customers' businesses and solving problems encountered during the internship.

### **Improved Personal Development in Work Commitment**

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, improved personal development in work commitment consists of increasing a sense of discipline and responsibility. The following data presents the grouping of students according to the statement of improved personal development in work commitment.

**Table 4. Improved Personal Development in Work Commitment**

<b>Improved Work Commitment</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Results of Interviews, Observations, and Documentation</b>
1.	Discipline	Accustomed to being committed to completing internship tasks within a certain period of time, currently becoming a more responsible person such as when having an appointment with a friend, he will come on time according to the agreement (Student 4). Managing projects and carrying out tasks in accordance with the SOP and time given by industry partners (Student 9).
2.	Responsibility	Maintaining the quality and security of the program code developed, writing technical documentation and providing training to users, staying updated with the latest technology and trends in the digital field is a form of improving a sense of responsibility as an intern (Student 5). As Helpdesk staff in charge of handling customer problems, train yourself to always be responsible in providing solutions to customers (Student 7).

Table 4 explains that the improvement in personal development in student work commitment during the MSIB program is reflected in the aspects of discipline and responsibility. The discipline aspect improved significantly with the training of students in completing internship tasks according to the schedule and standard operating procedures of the company. This improvement in discipline is evident when students keep meeting agreements with other parties and attend on time. In addition,

improved responsibility is also seen in students who take part in the MSIB program. The improvement in students' sense of responsibility is reflected in their efforts in maintaining the quality of the company's products as well as maintaining the quality of themselves during their internship. Moreover, the obstacles that occur in MSIB activities also help students develop a sense of responsibility regarding solutions to problem-solving.

### **Improved Personal Development in Professional Relationships**

Improved personal development in professional relationships consists of relationships with superiors and subordinates, relationships with coworkers, and relationships with clients. The following data presents the grouping of students according to the statement of improved personal development in professional relationships.

**Table 5. Improved Personal Development in Professional Relationships**

<b>Improved Professional Relationships</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Results of Interviews, Observations, and Documentation</b>
1.	Relationships with superiors and subordinates	Reporting on the completion of assignments to mentors proved a positive impact on the establishment of good relationships with supervisors during MSIB (Student 5). Obtaining a job offer after graduation from a supervisor is evidence of a positive professional network (Student 10).
2.	Relationship with coworkers	Working together with colleagues to solve client problems established positive relationships with colleagues (Student 7). Relationships improved by participating in the MSIB program, such as friendships from one mentor who came from various universities (Student 4).
3.	Relationship with clients	Meeting with 12 clients in each session improved relationships with clients (Student 2). Relationships improved, of course, when the MSIB program was implemented, many knew new people in the company and established good relationships (Student 3).

Based on Table 5, improved personal development in professional relationships of MSIB students is seen in three main aspects: relationships with superiors and subordinates, coworkers, and clients. Students participating in MSIB felt a positive impact on relationships with superiors during the internship, as evidenced by task reporting that strengthened good relationships with mentors. In addition, some students even received job offers after graduation from their supervisors, demonstrating their success in building a strong and sustainable professional network.

Relationships with colleagues also developed significantly, especially in working together to solve client problems. Students felt closer to their peers, and the internship program expanded their network of friends with students from various universities. Meanwhile, interactions with clients during the internship, such as meeting with clients on a regular basis, helped students build positive relationships and expand their professional relationships in the working world.



This study reveals data on the impact of MSIB on the self-development of UMS students. There are four main categories identified as a result of the MSIB program in improving student self-development: improved work knowledge, improved work skills, improved work commitment, and improved professional relationships. In line with Suranto et al. (2023), internships have a positive effect on students' personal development and employability. Improving work knowledge includes increasing one's information and understanding of theories, concepts, and procedures relevant to the job. Pitri (2020) found that work knowledge affects the quality of performance. The results of this study indicate that the MSIB program makes a significant contribution in improving the self-development of UMS students, especially in the aspect of work knowledge.

The first knowledge improvement is related to the field of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial knowledge is very important in the world of work because it helps students understand business dynamics and develop the skills needed to start and manage a business. Nurhidayah & Susilo (2023) argue that entrepreneurship can increase employment which has an impact on reducing unemployment to overcome poverty. Students who are directly involved in business development gain practical insights into business management, marketing strategies, and financial management. In line with Suryatno & Insana (2022) research, student involvement in business development can foster interest in entrepreneurship, and the MSIB program provides opportunities for interested students to deepen their knowledge in this area. Furthermore, another knowledge improvement focuses on geographical knowledge. This knowledge has important value in the world of work, as shown by the research of (Rusi et al., 2021), which states that geographic information systems are indispensable in asset management. Geographic knowledge can be used to analyze the potential of an area based on its geographical conditions, which is beneficial in various fields of work. Another finding is related to the improvement of journalistic knowledge. Students involved in MSIB at industry partners engaged in media, communication, and information gained improved journalistic knowledge. Activities such as covering news, developing story ideas, collecting data, and disseminating information, can enrich students' insights in this field. Research by Ndruru et al. (2023) also showed that an understanding of journalism increases students' interest in pursuing a career as a journalist.

Lastly, improved technological knowledge was also found to be one of the outcomes of the MSIB program. Participating students experienced improved knowledge in technology as they were exposed to various advanced software, data analysis tools, and online collaboration platforms during MSIB activities. Technological knowledge is very important to improve students' competence in facing the growing demands of the world of work. Research by Mariance & Rahmadani (2023) stated that the MBKM program successfully improved students' technological capabilities, which are needed to adapt quickly to technological changes and increase efficiency and productivity in the workplace.

Overall, the results of this study support the findings of Haryadhi & Pudjoprastyono (2023) who stated that through the MSIB program, students can significantly improve their working knowledge in various fields. The MSIB program has a significant impact on improving students' personal development, especially in work skills. Employability skills include specific abilities or expertise required to complete a task or job, which are developed through practice, experience, and knowledge. Sari & Sari (2023) in their research showed that work knowledge affects productivity. The first improvement identified was in communication skills. Students who participated in the MSIB program experienced improved communication skills as a result of their interactions with colleagues, mentors, and clients. Communication skills are important in the world of work as they can open up wider career opportunities as well as build a professional image. These skills include the ability to convey ideas effectively, listen well, convey information accurately, and use appropriate language. Communication skills are also the foundation for developing other skills. The next skill improvement is time management skills. Through the various tasks that must be completed in the MSIB program, students learn to divide their time between lectures and MSIB activities, which helps them manage their time well. Good time management trains students to be better prepared for the demands of the world of work. Kadir et al. (2024) proved that time management in companies affects employee productivity.

Furthermore, collaboration skills have also improved. These skills are particularly important in the work environment, where teamwork is required to achieve common goals. Through collaboration, students can channel ideas to each other, work together to complete assignments, and increase understanding through active social interaction (Sidi, 2020). A solid team with good collaboration skills can work more efficiently and effectively, improve productivity and work quality, and ultimately contribute greatly to the achievement of company goals. In line with Tandrianingsih & Rohmah (2023), MSIB as one of the MBKM programs is proven to improve student cooperation skills.

In addition, critical thinking skills are also one of the significant improvements. Riasty & Sari (2024) stated that critical thinking skills are highlighted in the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum to prepare graduates who are able to face fierce job competition. These skills are important for analyzing situations, making the right decisions, and solving problems effectively. Students' involvement in the MSIB program provides them with hands-on experience which is very useful for honing critical thinking skills in facing challenges in the world of work. Overall, the experience gained through the MSIB program shows that hands-on engagement in a real work environment contributes to improved communication, time management, collaboration, and critical thinking skills. These skills help students be better prepared for the world of work and provide a competitive advantage in their future careers. This is in line with the research of Anjani et al. (2024), which showed that the MBKM program had a positive impact on improving student skills.

The impact of self-development can then be seen in a significant improvement in work commitment. Purwaningsih & Burhanudin (2021) emphasize that commitment in the work environment is an important indicator that reflects a person's seriousness, dedication, and responsibility for their work. Discipline which is part of commitment can also help students to develop good character, such as responsibility, honesty and hard work (Jatmika, 2018). The study of Mora et al. (2020) also shows that improved individual commitment contributes directly to improved performance. For example, when an employee has a strong commitment to the company, they tend to work more efficiently and effectively to achieve company goals. This certainly has a positive impact on the company in achieving the desired targets and results.

Improved student commitment as a result of the MSIB program opens up great opportunities for them to better prepare themselves to enter the workforce. For example, students who have a high commitment to their studies will be more active and enthusiastic in completing academic assignments. This can help students develop the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the workforce. Thus, high commitment is a key factor in achieving optimal performance, both in the academic environment and in the professional world. Improved self-development in the category of professional relationships is also an important finding in this study. Aksa (2023) stated that internship activities can improve professional networks, and the same thing happened to students who participated in the MSIB program. This improvement in professional relationships occurs through student involvement in various interaction activities with coworkers, mentors, and clients.

Students have the opportunity to work with colleagues on various projects and tasks, which helps them build strong professional relationships, improve their teamwork skills, and expand their professional network. These interactions also teach them how to communicate effectively, resolve conflicts, and work towards a common goal. In addition, students who participate in MSIB receive direct guidance from mentors. Mentors not only provide technical knowledge and skills, but also insights into work ethics, corporate culture, and career development strategies. This mentor-mentee relationship becomes a source of support and inspiration for students to achieve their professional goals.

MSIB students also have the opportunity to interact with industry professionals through various activities such as seminars, workshops, and networking events. These interactions help students understand the latest industry trends, gain insight into various careers, and build connections that can be useful in the future. They also learn best practices and the latest innovations in their field. In addition, this study found that students also managed to establish good relationships with clients. In line with the findings of Rangki (2021), good relationships with clients can improve service quality and customer satisfaction. The positive impact of this relationship is not only limited to improving service quality, but can also bring long-term benefits to students, such as the creation of a productive and sustainable work environment. Overall, the

improvement in professional relationships experienced by students through the MSIB program shows that direct interaction with colleagues, mentors, and clients is very important for personal and professional development. These relationships help students hone their skills and knowledge, while giving them a competitive edge in the future workforce.

#### **D. Conclusions**

Based on the results of this study, the MSIB program has a positive impact on the personal development of UMS students. MSIB is able to improve knowledge, skills, commitment, and relationships in the fields of interest to students. Improved knowledge includes entrepreneurial knowledge, geographical knowledge, journalism, and commitment. Improved skills include communication skills, time management, collaboration, and critical thinking. Commitment to discipline and responsibility was also shown to increase through this program. Interaction with peers, mentors, and industry professionals during MSIB activities can improve students' professional relationships. The MSIB program directs students to explore the theory and practice related to the internship position they are interested in. The findings from this study can be an important consideration for students who want to develop themselves and prepare for careers in various relevant fields by joining the MSIB program. However, to understand the impact of the MSIB program more comprehensively, further research is needed.

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