



The Impact of Internship Experiences on the Employment of Students from Political and Law Vocational Colleges

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Abstract

Background and Aim: In today's competitive job market, students from higher vocational colleges in political and legal fields face significant employment challenges. This study aims to explore the current employment situation of these students and the impact of internship experiences on their employability.

Materials and Methods: The study utilized a mixed-method approach combining literature analysis and questionnaires. The questionnaire assessed students' employment preparation, professional skills, and career planning, using a Likert scale. It was distributed to 348 students across two legal vocational colleges, with a focus on ensuring content validity and reliability through expert reviews and pre-testing.

Results: The findings revealed that students with internship experience demonstrated superior performance in understanding the job market, resume writing, and interview skills compared to those without internships. These students also showed greater proficiency in applying theoretical knowledge to practical scenarios, proficiency in legal documentation, and information retrieval. Notably, internships significantly enhanced students' soft skills, including communication, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities, while also fostering a clearer sense of career planning and higher confidence in their future career development. Notably, students with internship experience scored 36% higher in communication skills and 41% higher in resume-writing and interview proficiency compared to those without internships.

Conclusion: Internships play a crucial role in boosting the employability of students from political and legal vocational colleges. The study emphasizes the need for these institutions to strengthen internship programs and integrate practical elements into their curricula. It also highlights the importance of incorporating career planning education to better prepare students for the job market and support their long-term professional growth. Institutions should strengthen internship programs, integrate practical career-planning education into their curricula, and regularly evaluate internship outcomes to support students' long-term professional growth.

Keywords: Internship Experiences; Vocational Skills; Career Planning; Employment Competitiveness

Introduction

In today's competitive job market, students in legal and political vocational institutions face unprecedented employment challenges. With the popularization of higher education and the increasing number of graduates year by year, there is an intensifying job market competition due to growing graduate numbers. Every year, millions of college graduates flood into the job market, intensifying competition among job seekers. In such an employment environment, it is not easy for students in politics and law at higher education institutions to stand out. On the one hand, they not only have to compete with graduates in the same major but also have to compete with job seekers from other related majors for limited job resources. On the other hand, society has put forward higher requirements for the training quality and employability of students in politics and law at higher education institutions. This not only requires them to have solid professional knowledge, such as familiarity with legal provisions and understanding of legal theories, but also requires them to master multiple vocational skills to adapt to the needs of different positions. At the same time, with the rapid development of society and the continuous upgrading of industrial structure, the demand for talent by employers is also undergoing profound changes. The traditional education model of politics and law higher education institutions pays too much attention to the teaching of professional knowledge, but pays less attention to the training of other professional skills. This single education model has been difficult to meet the needs of modern society for diversified talents. Employers pay more and more attention to the comprehensive quality of job seekers, including



interpersonal and communication and collaboration ability, self-management ability, ability to analyze and solve problems, and legal professional ethics. Therefore, an in-depth study of the employment status of students in politics and law higher education institutions is of great significance for optimizing the education model, reforming the teaching content and methods, and enhancing the employment competitiveness of students. This not only helps students better adapt to the demands of the job market but also lays a solid foundation for their future career development. Although prior research acknowledges the value of internships, few empirical studies quantitatively assess their multidimensional impact on law vocational students in China. In response to these challenges, this study aims to explore how internship experiences influence the employability of students in political and legal vocational institutions. The following sections present the study's objectives, methods, and empirical findings.

Objectives

This study aims to investigate the employability of students from political and law vocational colleges through both descriptive and evaluative lenses. First, it seeks to analyze the current employment status of these students, focusing on key challenges such as inadequate preparation, limited technical operational skills, and insufficient exposure to real-world practice. It also examines students' existing levels of professional knowledge, soft skills, and career planning, while assessing their clarity regarding career goals and their awareness of industry expectations.

In addition to describing the current situation, the study evaluates the impact of internship experiences on students' professional competence, practical abilities, and employability-related soft skills. Particular attention is given to how internships influence students' confidence, motivation, and strategic career planning. Finally, based on the findings, the study proposes evidence-based recommendations for curriculum reform and instructional improvements aimed at enhancing the alignment between vocational legal education and labor market demands.

Literature review

1. Employment Challenges

The employment landscape for students from political and law vocational colleges has become increasingly complex due to escalating job market competition, structural shifts in industry demands, and the oversupply of graduates (Li, 2014; Zhao, 2018). Students face compounded challenges: not only must they compete with peers from similar majors, but also with candidates from broader legal and administrative disciplines. Studies have noted that many students lack adequate job preparation, career direction, and technical operational skills essential for employment (Han, 2022; Ren, 2024). Employers now place greater emphasis on soft competencies—including communication, self-management, and ethical professionalism—over mere academic knowledge (Zhao & Deng, 2017; Wang & Chen, 2018). Nevertheless, there remains limited empirical synthesis on how these challenges specifically impact students in law-focused vocational tracks, particularly in the Chinese context.

2. Internship Effectiveness

Internships have been widely acknowledged as instrumental in bridging the gap between academic learning and professional requirements. Zhao (2018) and Ding (2017) found that students participating in internships demonstrated improved task performance and workplace adaptation. International perspectives echo similar conclusions: Adhikari and Roy Chowdhury (2024) highlight the transformative role of internships in developing legal soft skills, while Pianda et al. (2024) emphasize that structured internships foster better integration of 21st-century competencies. However, there is still a paucity of quantitative evaluations assessing the multidimensional effects of internships, such as on communication, career confidence, and technical operations, among Chinese vocational law students. This study addresses this gap through statistical comparison across five skill domains.

3. Curriculum Reform and Skill Gaps



The mismatch between vocational curricula and evolving labor market needs is a recurring concern in the literature. Wang (2024) and Cao (2020) argue that overreliance on theory-based teaching has marginalized essential vocational training. Despite attempts to integrate simulated courts and case-based learning, many institutions continue to underinvest in practice-oriented modules. Studies like Chen (2022) and Qian (2021) advocate for stronger school-enterprise collaboration and a shift toward outcome-based education. More recently, Xia and Niu (2024) found that students trained with practice-integrated curricula displayed better problem-solving and legal writing performance. Zhang (2024) further emphasizes the need for aligning legal service training with actual job profiles to close institutional gaps. Yet, little has been done to systematically examine which curriculum elements most significantly influence student employability in law-related technical education.

Table 1 Authors' Key Findings

Author(s)	Year	Focus	Key Findings	Relevance to Current Study
Li	2014	Employment pressures	Oversupply of graduates; weak preparedness	Justifies the exploration of job readiness
Han	2022	Job readiness gaps	Students lack market awareness and job-seeking skills	Informs readiness metrics
Zhao & Deng	2017	Soft skills and recruitment	Employers prioritize communication and ethics	Underpins soft skill inclusion
Ding	2017	Internship practice	Enhances technical legal competencies	Supports internship value
Cao	2020	Case-based teaching	Boosts practical abilities in vocational settings	Highlights active learning
Chen	2022	School-enterprise cooperation	Strengthens training alignment with job needs	Basis for reform recommendations
Adhikari & Roy Chowdhury	2024	Global perspective on legal soft skills	Internships are critical for employability	Justifies internship analysis
Pianda et al.	2024	Internship effects (systematic)	Strong internship impact on job preparedness and confidence	Basis for multidimensional internship evaluation
Xia & Niu	2024	Practice-based curriculum	Practice-based students perform better in legal writing	Validates applied curriculum impact
Wang & Chen	2018	Soft skills & employer expectations	Graduates must demonstrate applied competencies	Reinforces job-readiness competencies
Zhang	2024	Curriculum alignment & job roles	Advocates tailored training for legal service roles	Adds support to curriculum-practice alignment

Overall, existing research confirms the multifaceted challenges faced by vocational legal students and the value of internships and curricular reform. However, many studies are descriptive or narrowly focused, with few offering integrated, data-driven comparisons across skill domains. This study contributes by quantitatively assessing the effects of internships on professional, technical, and soft skills, while also examining how educational design supports or limits employability outcomes.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework developed in this study aims to comprehensively understand the employment status of students from politics and law higher education institutions.

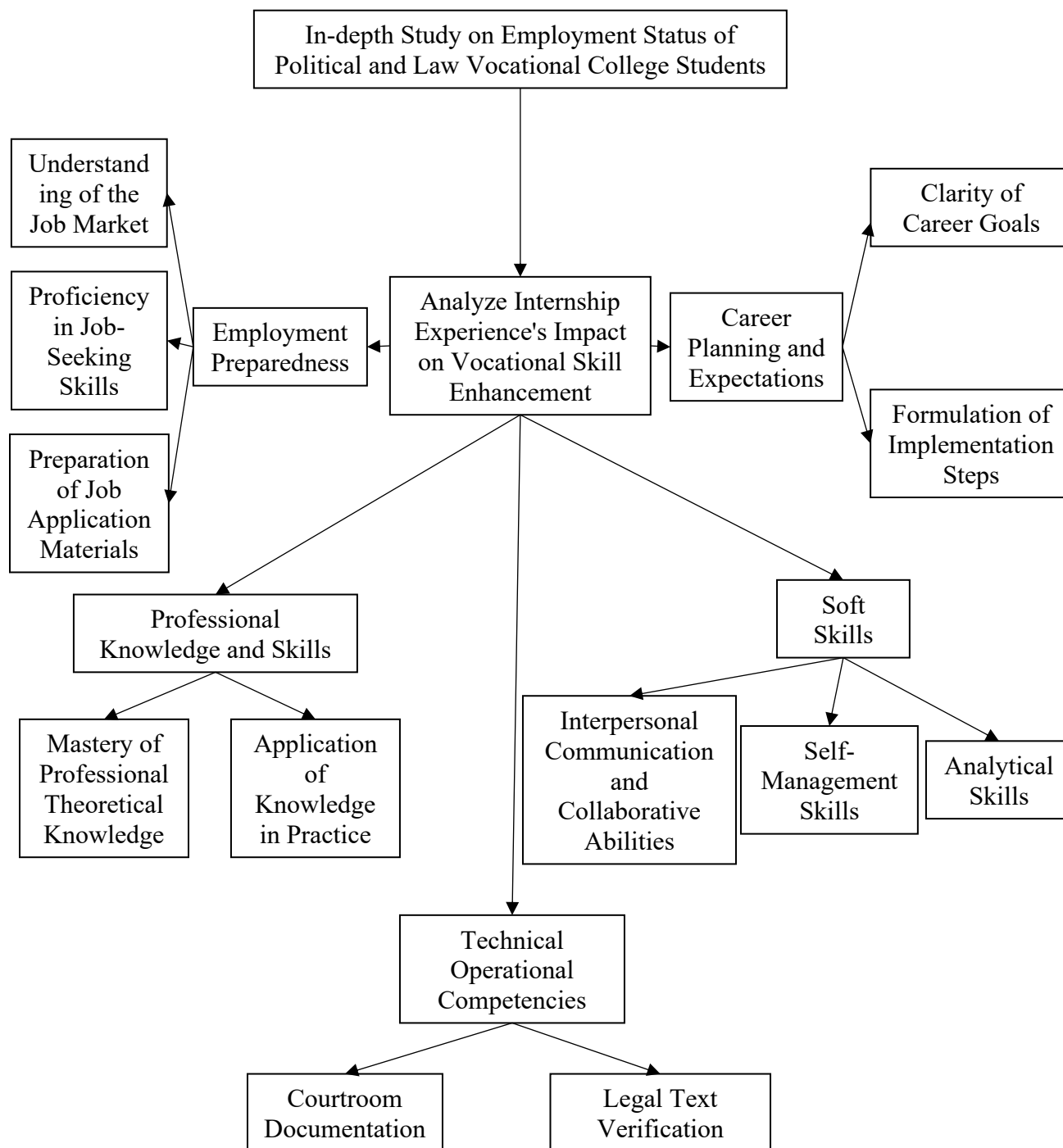


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework: Impact of Internship Experience on Employability Dimensions

This framework illustrates how internship experience contributes to each employability domain, which collectively influences students' job market readiness. This framework covers the following key dimensions:

1. Employment preparation: It involves students' understanding of the job market, proficiency in job-seeking skills, and preparation of job-seeking materials such as resumes and interview techniques. This section evaluates students' readiness before entering the job market.
2. Professional knowledge and skills: Focus on students' mastery of professional theoretical knowledge and their ability to apply this knowledge to practical case analysis. This is one of the core competencies of students in politics and law in higher education institutions.
3. Technical operation skills: Emphasize students' proficiency and accuracy in practical operations, such as court records, legal document verification, etc. These skills directly affect students' work efficiency in the legal profession.
4. Soft skills: including interpersonal and communication, collaboration ability, self-management skills, analytical skills, etc. These skills help students collaborate in teams and solve practical problems at work.
5. Career planning and expectations: It involves students' planning and expectations for their future career, evaluating whether they have clear career goals and development directions.

Through the above framework, this study can systematically analyze the employment status of students in politics and law higher education institutions and identify the key factors affecting employment competitiveness. This framework provides a theoretical basis for subsequent data collection and analysis, as well as a structured approach for proposing targeted educational reform recommendations.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-method approach, combining literature analysis with a structured questionnaire survey. The literature review synthesized theoretical models and empirical findings relevant to vocational legal education and employability. The primary data collection instrument was a questionnaire designed to assess students' employment preparedness, vocational skills, and career planning across five dimensions, using a 5-point Likert scale.

Participants were selected using a stratified convenience sampling method, ensuring balanced representation across academic years and disciplines. The two participating political and law vocational colleges were chosen based on purposeful sampling, reflecting accessibility and institutional willingness to cooperate.

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by legal education experts and underwent pilot testing. The final version was administered to students in both institutions, yielding 348 valid responses. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were used to analyze the data. Inferential analysis was not conducted, as the study aimed to provide exploratory insights rather than test causal relationships. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of trends across key employability domains.

Ethical procedures were strictly followed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary and anonymous; all students provided informed consent, and data were stored and analyzed in compliance with institutional ethical guidelines.

Limitations of the study include its geographic restriction to two Chinese institutions, which may affect the generalizability of findings to other regions. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the potential for response bias.

This study used the Likert five-point scale to rate participants' job readiness, proficiency in vocational skills, and career planning. According to Likert's criteria, the following scales were used in the questionnaire:



Table 2 Scoring Criteria for the Likert Five-Point Scale

Scale	Used Level	Mean Range
5	Extremely outstanding	4.21 - 5.00
4	More outstanding	3.41 - 4.20
3	Intermediate	2.61 - 3.40
2	Slightly insufficient	1.81 - 2.60
1	Insufficient	1.00 - 1.80

Results

This study collected data via questionnaire surveys to investigate the employment status of political and law vocational college students, revealing the impact of internship experiences on employment preparedness, professional knowledge and skills, technical operational competencies, soft skills, and career planning and expectations.

Table 3 Students' Understanding of the Job Market

Employment Preparedness Item	With Internship Experience			Without Internship Experience		
	$\bar{x}$	SD	Rating	$\bar{x}$	SD	Rating
I have a thorough understanding of the current job market	3.09	0.79	Intermediate	2.61	0.66	Intermediate
I am fully prepared for employment	2.95	0.84	Intermediate	2.65	0.71	Intermediate
I am clear about my career interests	2.88	0.90	Intermediate	2.63	0.76	Intermediate
I stay updated on target field developments	2.83	0.80	Intermediate	2.67	0.68	Intermediate
School career services are beneficial	3.03	0.92	Intermediate	2.57	0.75	Slightly insufficient

In terms of employment preparedness, data indicate that students with internship experience outperform those without internship experience in understanding the job market, proficiency in job-seeking skills, and preparation of application materials. Specifically, regarding "understanding of the current job market," students with internships demonstrated significantly higher scores ($\bar{x} = 3.09$, $SD = 0.79$) compared to those without internships ($\bar{x} = 2.61$), with the former performing at a moderate level while the latter showed relatively insufficient performance. For "adequate employment preparation, including resume writing and interview skills," students with internships ($\bar{x} = 2.95$, $SD = 0.84$) similarly scored significantly higher than their counterparts without internships ($\bar{x} = 2.65$), with both groups within the moderate range, but the latter at a comparatively lower level. In terms of self-awareness, students with internships scored significantly higher ($\bar{x} = 2.88$, $SD = 0.90$) on "clarity about career interests and strengths" than those without internships ($\bar{x} = 2.63$). Regarding "understanding and tracking the latest developments in target employment fields," students with internships ($\bar{x} = 2.83$, $SD = 0.80$) also achieved significantly higher average scores than those without ($\bar{x} = 2.67$). Furthermore, when evaluating "the perceived helpfulness of school-provided



career guidance services for employment preparation," students with internships reported significantly higher recognition ($\bar{x} = 3.03$, $SD = 0.92$) than those without ($\bar{x} = 2.57$). Internship experience significantly enhances employment preparedness by deepening understanding of the job market, improving proficiency in job-seeking skills, strengthening self-awareness of career interests and strengths, increasing attention to developments in target employment fields, and enhancing recognition of the value of institutional career guidance services.

Table 4 Ability to Apply Professional Knowledge to Case Analysis

Professional Knowledge and Skills	With Internship Experience			Without Internship Experience		
	$\bar{x}$	SD	Rating	$\bar{x}$	SD	Rating
I possess solid professional theoretical knowledge	3.11	0.90	Intermediate	2.66	0.74	Intermediate
I can apply professional knowledge to a practical case analysis	3.13	0.93	Intermediate	2.56	0.75	Slightly insufficient
I regularly update my professional knowledge through reading or research	3.05	1.03	Intermediate	2.63	0.69	Intermediate
I actively participate in academic activities or competitions related to my profession	3.08	0.98	Intermediate	2.51	0.84	Slightly insufficient
I consider my professional skills to be at a high level among peers	3.22	1.00	Intermediate	2.67	0.62	Intermediate

In terms of professional knowledge and skills, students with internship experience demonstrate significant advantages over those without such experience. Specifically, in the dimension of "possessing solid professional theoretical knowledge," students with internships scored significantly higher ($\bar{x} = 3.11$, $SD = 0.90$) than those without internships ($\bar{x} = 2.66$). Regarding applied capabilities, students with internships also significantly outperformed their counterparts without internships ($\bar{x} = 2.56$) in "applying professional knowledge to practical case analyses" ($\bar{x} = 3.13$, $SD = 0.93$). On knowledge updating, students with internships achieved significantly higher scores ($\bar{x} = 3.05$, $SD = 1.03$) than those without ($\bar{x} = 2.63$) in "regularly updating professional knowledge through reading or research." For engagement, students with internships reported significantly higher participation ($\bar{x} = 3.08$, $SD = 0.98$) than those without ($\bar{x} = 2.51$) in "actively participating in profession-related academic activities or competitions." Additionally, in self-assessment, students with internships showed significantly stronger agreement ($\bar{x} = 3.22$, $SD = 1.00$) than those without ($\bar{x} = 2.67$) regarding "considering my professional skills to be at a high level among peers." While all mean scores fell within the moderate range, students without internships consistently demonstrated lower performance across metrics. Comprehensive findings indicate that internship experience not only consolidates and deepens professional knowledge but also significantly enhances practical application abilities, strengthens confidence and competitiveness in professional skills, effectively stimulates motivation for continuous knowledge updating and engagement in field-related activities, thereby highlighting the substantive value of internships in advancing professional knowledge and skill development.



Table 5 Proficiency in Courtroom Documentation

Technical Operational Skills	With Internship			Without Internship		
	Experience			Experience		
	$\bar{x}$	SD	Rating	$\bar{x}$	SD	Rating
I can proficiently transcribe court hearings with accuracy.	3.13	0.91	Intermediate	2.40	0.81	Slightly insufficient
I excel at proofreading legal documents, identifying and correcting errors and inaccuracies.	3.09	0.94	Intermediate	2.40	0.76	Slightly insufficient
I master the application of office software (e.g., Word, Excel) in legal work.	3.06	0.89	Intermediate	2.36	0.78	Slightly insufficient
I possess efficient legal provision retrieval skills to quickly locate relevant laws and cases.	3.00	0.89	Intermediate	2.66	0.80	Intermediate
In simulated legal work scenarios, I efficiently complete transcription, database construction, legal provision retrieval, and document proofreading tasks.	3.04	0.89	Intermediate	2.68	0.72	Intermediate

In multiple legal practice skills, students with internship experience demonstrate significantly higher proficiency. Specifically, in "proficiently transcribing court hearings," students with internships scored significantly higher ($\bar{x} = 3.13$, $SD = 0.91$) than those without ($\bar{x} = 2.40$). Similarly, for "proofreading legal documents," students with internships ($\bar{x} = 3.09$, $SD = 0.94$) significantly outperformed those without ($\bar{x} = 2.40$). Regarding "mastering office software applications," students with internships ($\bar{x} = 3.06$, $SD = 0.89$) achieved significantly higher scores than their counterparts without ($\bar{x} = 2.36$). In "legal provision retrieval ability," though both groups fell within the moderate range, students with internships ($\bar{x} = 3.00$, $SD = 0.89$) scored significantly higher than those without ($\bar{x} = 2.66$). Finally, for "task completion proficiency in simulated legal work scenarios," students with internships ($\bar{x} = 3.04$, $SD = 0.89$) demonstrated significantly greater proficiency than those without ($\bar{x} = 2.68$). Students with internship experience exhibit distinct advantages in technical operational skills, particularly showing superior proficiency in practical skills such as court hearing transcription, legal document proofreading, and office software applications. The hands-on experience and repeated practice during internships enable students to better master and apply these skills. In contrast, students without internships demonstrate relatively lower proficiency due to insufficient practical opportunities, resulting in underdeveloped skill competency.

Table 6 Self-Assessment of Communication and Collaboration Skills

Soft Skill Development Statement	With Internship Experience			Without Internship Experience		
	$\bar{x}$	SD	Rating	$\bar{x}$	SD	Rating
I excel at effective communication with others.	3.08	0.89	Intermediate	2.69	0.64	Intermediate
I actively collaborate and contribute within teams.	3.17	0.91	Intermediate	2.67	0.72	Intermediate
I effectively handle interpersonal conflicts at work.	3.10	0.88	Intermediate	2.67	0.68	Intermediate
I regularly participate in team activities to enhance collaboration skills.	3.16	0.95	Intermediate	2.60	0.81	Slightly insufficient
I consider interpersonal skills crucial for career development.	3.08	0.86	Intermediate	2.49	0.74	Slightly insufficient
I effectively manage time and tasks.	3.20	0.95	Intermediate	2.54	0.79	Slightly insufficient
I maintain efficient work habits under pressure.	3.19	0.86	Intermediate	2.74	0.76	Intermediate
I regularly set and pursue personal/professional goals.	3.07	0.89	Intermediate	2.68	0.71	Intermediate
I self-motivate for continuous learning and growth.	3.21	0.88	Intermediate	2.62	0.78	Intermediate
I consider self-management skills essential for career development.	3.22	0.92	Intermediate	2.62	0.73	Intermediate
I quickly comprehend and analyze complex issues/cases.	3.02	1.01	Intermediate	2.64	0.77	Intermediate
I regularly apply critical thinking to evaluate information and perspectives.	3.18	0.90	Intermediate	2.77	0.69	Intermediate
I excel at extracting key insights from extensive data.	3.02	1.12	Intermediate	2.38	0.77	Slightly insufficient
I believe my analytical skills will be highly valuable in future work.	3.13	0.89	Intermediate	2.49	0.74	Slightly insufficient
I regularly practice to enhance my analytical skills.	3.19	0.85	Intermediate	2.58	0.79	Slightly insufficient

The cultivation and development of soft skills play a critical role in enhancing students' employability. Research indicates that students with internship experience demonstrate significant advantages across multiple soft skill dimensions—including interpersonal communication and collaborative abilities, self-management skills, and analytical competencies. Specifically, in "effective communication with others," students with internships scored significantly higher ($\bar{x} = 3.08$, $SD = 0.89$) than those without ($\bar{x} = 2.69$). Regarding team collaboration skills, students with internships significantly outperformed their counterparts without internships in both "actively collaborating and contributing within teams" ($\bar{x} = 3.17$, $SD = 0.91$ vs. $\bar{x} = 2.67$) and "handling interpersonal conflicts at work" ($\bar{x} = 3.10$, $SD = 0.88$ vs. $\bar{x} = 2.67$). Furthermore, students with internships reported significantly higher agreement for "participating in team activities to enhance collaboration skills" ($\bar{x} = 3.16$, $SD = 0.95$ vs. $\bar{x} = 2.60$) and "recognizing the importance of interpersonal skills for career development" ($\bar{x} = 3.08$, $SD = 0.86$ vs. $\bar{x} = 2.49$). In self-management competencies, students with internships achieved significantly higher scores in "time and task management" ($\bar{x} = 3.20$, $SD = 0.95$), "maintaining efficiency under pressure" ($\bar{x} = 3.19$, $SD = 0.86$), "setting and achieving goals" ($\bar{x} = 3.07$, $SD = 0.89$), and "self-motivation for continuous growth" ($\bar{x} = 3.21$, $SD = 0.88$) compared to those without internships ($\bar{x} = 2.54$; $\bar{x} = 2.74$; $\bar{x} = 2.68$; $\bar{x} = 2.62$). Within analytical skills, students with internships also demonstrated significantly superior performance in "analyzing complex problems" ($\bar{x} = 3.02$, $SD = 1.01$ vs. $\bar{x} = 2.64$), "applying critical thinking" ($\bar{x} = 3.18$, $SD = 0.90$ vs. $\bar{x} = 2.77$), and "extracting key insights from data" ($\bar{x} = 3.02$, $SD = 1.12$ vs. $\bar{x} = 2.38$). Students with internship experience demonstrate superior performance across all soft skill dimensions, highlighting

the significant role of internships in enhancing these competencies. The authentic work environment during internships provides substantial opportunities for practicing communication, collaboration, and self-management, while simultaneously strengthening analytical and problem-solving capabilities. In contrast, students without internship experience exhibit relative deficiencies in these critical soft skills, which can be attributed to insufficient practical exposure and application opportunities.

Table 7 Clarity of Career Planning

Career Planning and Expectations	With Internship Experience			Without Internship Experience		
	$\bar{x}$	SD	Rating	$\bar{x}$	SD	Rating
I have clear career plans with defined implementation steps.	3.04	0.93	Intermediate	2.38	0.86	Slightly insufficient
I understand the required skills and qualifications in my desired career field.	3.02	0.88	Intermediate	2.42	0.81	Slightly insufficient
I find school career planning services highly beneficial for career decision-making.	3.06	0.96	Intermediate	2.51	0.69	Slightly insufficient
I regularly monitor industry trends in my target career field.	3.05	0.87	Intermediate	2.67	0.76	Intermediate
I feel full of anticipation and confidence about my future career development.	3.05	0.85	Intermediate	2.55	0.79	Slightly insufficient

In terms of career planning and expectations, research reveals that students with internship experience demonstrate marked advantages in career goal clarity and planning capabilities. Specific data indicate that in the dimension of "possessing clear career plans with defined implementation steps," students with internships scored significantly higher ($\bar{x} = 3.04$, $SD = 0.93$) than those without ($\bar{x} = 2.38$). Regarding "understanding required skills and qualifications in desired career fields," students with internships ($\bar{x} = 3.02$, $SD = 0.88$) similarly outperformed their counterparts without ($\bar{x} = 2.42$). For institutional service evaluations, students with internships expressed significantly stronger agreement ($\bar{x} = 3.06$, $SD = 0.96$) than those without ($\bar{x} = 2.51$) on "perceiving school career services as beneficial for career decision-making." In industry engagement, students with internships scored significantly higher ($\bar{x} = 3.05$, $SD = 0.87$) than those without ($\bar{x} = 2.67$) on "monitoring development trends in target career fields." Finally, regarding career confidence, students with internships reported significantly higher levels ($\bar{x} = 3.05$, $SD = 0.85$) than those without ($\bar{x} = 2.55$) for "anticipation and confidence toward future career development." Comprehensive findings demonstrate that internship experience significantly enhances clarity in career planning and confidence in professional futures. This advantage stems from students' in-depth industry understanding and accumulated practical experience during internships, enabling more precise goal-setting and implementation pathway design. In contrast, students without internships exhibit relative vagueness in career planning, lacking clear direction and confidence due to insufficient practical exposure and industry familiarity, resulting in underdeveloped career expectations that lack clarity and specificity.

Discussion

This study provides empirical evidence supporting the significant role of internship experiences in enhancing the employability of students from political and law vocational colleges. Consistent with prior research (Han, 2022; Ding, 2017; Adhikari & Roy Chowdhury, 2024), students who completed internships outperformed their non-internship peers in employment preparedness, technical competence, soft skills, and career planning. The results reaffirm the critical function of internships as a bridge between academic training and workplace expectations.

Notably, while internship students consistently achieved higher scores across all domains, the average ratings in soft skill areas, such as communication, self-management, and analytical thinking, remained moderate ($\bar{x} \approx 3.1$). This suggests that although internships provide a valuable foundation, there remains room for programmatic enhancement, especially in areas requiring complex interpersonal or cognitive skills.



Unexpectedly, the most substantial score differences were observed not in theoretical knowledge but in practical, operational tasks such as legal proofreading and courtroom documentation. This underscores the distinct advantage of experiential learning in fostering job-specific competencies that may not be adequately developed through classroom instruction alone.

However, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, internship quality and duration likely varied across institutions and individuals. Without standardization, some students may have received richer experiential training than others. As such, while the trends are consistent, the intensity of benefit may differ, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study focused on only two colleges in China, which constrains its external validity across broader geographic or institutional contexts.

Another limitation lies in the reliance on self-reported Likert-scale responses. Although the questionnaire was validated and piloted, subjective self-assessments may be affected by social desirability or overestimation biases. Future research may incorporate third-party evaluations, such as supervisor ratings or observed performance tasks, to triangulate findings and provide a more objective measure of skill acquisition.

Finally, although this study is situated in the Chinese vocational legal education context, its findings echo trends identified internationally. For example, Adhikari and Roy Chowdhury (2024) emphasize similar internship-related gains in India and Southeast Asia, particularly in soft skill development and job preparedness. Nevertheless, institutional, cultural, and legal system differences suggest that further comparative studies are needed to tailor interventions appropriately.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that internship experiences significantly enhance the employability of students in political and law vocational colleges across multiple domains, including employment preparedness, technical competence, soft skills, and career planning. The findings affirm that internships are not merely complementary but essential components of effective vocational legal education.

Structured internships with aligned learning objectives should be formally embedded in legal vocational education policies to better facilitate the school-to-work transition and ensure alignment between academic training and labor market demands.

What distinguishes this research is its multidimensional, data-driven approach to assessing employability within a legal vocational context—an area often overlooked in prior studies that tend to focus on general education or qualitative perceptions. By offering granular insights into five core competency areas, this study provides a foundation for targeted curricular reform and internship program development.

Future research should expand the scope to include more diverse institutions and employ longitudinal designs or external assessments to validate self-reported outcomes and strengthen causal inferences.

Recommendation

Based on research findings, the following recommendations are proposed for students, faculty, and institutions of politics and law higher education institutions:

Students should actively engage in internship programs to integrate professional knowledge with practical application, thereby enhancing vocational skills. Simultaneously, they must strengthen employment preparedness by exploring diverse channels to understand job market trends, improve job-seeking competencies, clarify career objectives, and develop structured career plans.

Faculty members should stay attuned to industry developments and corporate demands, revising teaching content to incorporate real-world cases and vocational skill training. Pedagogical methods such as case-based teaching and simulated practice should be prioritized to elevate students' practical capabilities. Additionally, faculty should strengthen collaborations with enterprises to create more internship and employment opportunities while emphasizing the cultivation of students' professional ethics and comprehensive competencies.

Institutions should deepen partnerships with enterprises to establish stable internship bases and expand practical opportunities. Curriculum design should be optimized by increasing the proportion of hands-on courses and reinforcing career planning and employment guidance systems to enhance students' career awareness and strategic planning abilities. Regular collection and analysis of employer feedback on graduates' performance should inform continuous improvements in teaching content and methodologies, alongside refining employment feedback mechanisms.



Through coordinated efforts among students, faculty, and institutions, the employability of political and law vocational college students can be effectively enhanced, enabling them to better adapt to workplace environments and achieve successful employment and long-term career development.

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