

Examining the Impact of Career Development and Work-Life Balance on Career Decisions of Interning Students

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ABSTRACT

Internship programs play a crucial role in bridging academic knowledge with professional practice, yet their impact on career decisions remains underexplored. This study investigates how career development and work-life balance influence the career decisions of university interns, with a focus on the moderating role of work-life balance. A quantitative approach was employed, utilizing Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze data from 174 internship students at PT United Tractors Tbk MSIB Batch 6 in Indonesia. Data were collected through Likert-scale questionnaires measuring career development, work-life balance, and career interest. Statistical analysis, including validity, reliability, and moderation tests, was conducted using SmartPLS 3. Career development significantly and positively affected interns' career decisions ($\beta = 0.344, p < 0.001$), as did work-life balance ($\beta = 0.261, p < 0.001$). Furthermore, work-life balance strengthened the relationship between career development and career decisions, acting as a significant moderator ($\beta = 0.748, p < 0.001$). The model explained 58.2% of the variance in career decisions. Internship programs that integrate structured career development initiatives and prioritize work-life balance are essential for fostering career readiness. Organizations should offer mentorship, flexible schedules, and skill-building opportunities, while universities should equip students with strategies to manage professional and personal responsibilities. These findings underscore the need for holistic internship designs that address both technical and well-being aspects.

1. INTRODUCTION

The internship program is a widely used strategy to improve students' job readiness by providing practical experience in an industrial environment. Internships not only aim to introduce students to the world of work but also to develop the professional skills needed in their careers. Based on research, internship experience has a significant impact on students' job readiness because it provides an opportunity for them to apply the theory obtained in lectures into actual practice in the workplace (Hakiki et al., 2023). Internships play an important role in preparing students for the world of work by providing practical experience and enhancing the skills required by industry. Research shows that good quality internships significantly improve students' career adaptability, which in turn has a positive impact on their job search success, including the chances of getting better jobs and higher salaries (Santosa et al., 2024). One of the commonly used ways to improve this readiness is through an internship program that provides direct experience in the work environment. (Solahudin et al., 2024) State that employee affective commitment is influenced by leadership, competence, and organizational culture, which shows that a supportive work environment can increase students' readiness to enter the world of work.

Studies show that collaboration between higher education institutions and industry in internship programs can increase students' readiness to enter the workforce (Johnson, 2022). However, its effectiveness in shaping career interests is still debated. One of the internship programs currently implemented in Indonesia is the MSIB (Magang dan Studi Independen Bersertifikat), which is part of the MBKM (Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka) policy. This program aims to equip students with relevant industry skills and real work experience before they enter the professional world. In Batch 6, as many as 47,984 students from 873 universities participated, with 21,950 students undergoing internships at 203 industry partners (Dikti Kemendikbud, 2024).

One of the industry partners in this program is PT United Tractors Tbk, a company engaged in the heavy equipment, mining, and construction sectors. Interns at PT United Tractors have the opportunity to be directly involved in various professional activities, including technical skills development, industry-based projects, and mentoring from experienced professionals. The program is designed to provide relevant and applicable work experience so that students can understand the dynamics of working in the industry. In addition, the program also provides soft skills training such as professional communication, problem-solving, and time management, which are essential aspects of students' job readiness after graduation.

Although the program aims to improve students' career readiness, there are still various challenges in practice. Some students face high workloads, mismatches between tasks and their fields of study, and difficulties in balancing academic responsibilities and internships. A study by (Alhadi et al., 2022) shows that the relationship between internship experience and job readiness is only 6.5%, indicating that internships alone are not enough to ensure students' readiness for the world of work. Other factors, such as career development and work-life balance play a role in shaping students' career readiness and interest (Fitri et al., 2023; Yusuf Iis et al., 2022). This shows that work-life balance and career development also play a role in

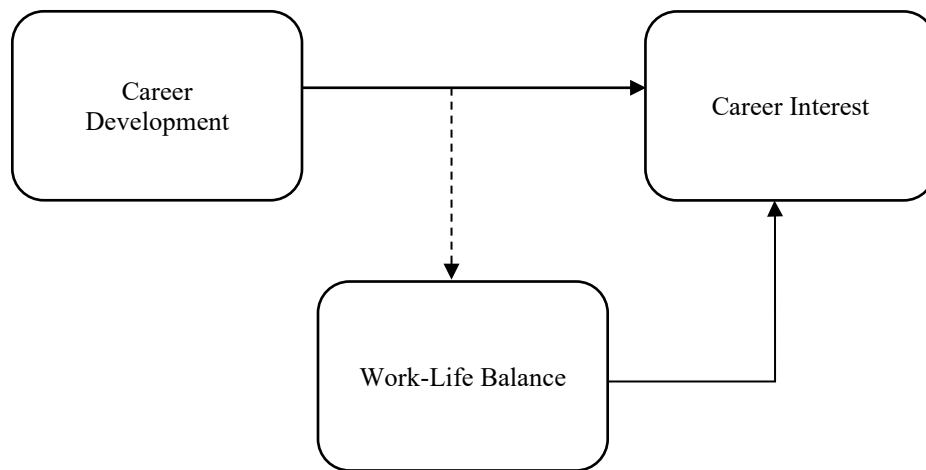
shaping students' career interests. Students who have an interest in a particular academic field tend to be more interested in pursuing a career relevant to their discipline. However, internship experience can provide a new perspective, both reinforcing this interest and directing students to other fields that are more in line with their skills and aspirations.

Career development plays a critical role in shaping students' career interests and long-term professional growth. Students' career decisions are influenced not only by external factors, but also by internal factors such as professional identity and psychological capital. Students with a high level of professional identity tend to be more confident in making career decisions, which in turn has a positive impact on their career development (Deng, 2024). Students face various obstacles in making their career choices, both from individual and environmental factors. According to (Dewi & Nurhayati, 2021), career development covers various aspects, including the provision of mentors or sponsors to guide employees, the implementation of training programs, and the design of career development procedures, while increasing organizational commitment can be done through job satisfaction, 360-degree feedback, and competency-based training. (Akbar et al., 2022) explain that a person's career development is influenced by many factors, including professional connections and guidance from mentors or sponsors in the workplace.

Work-life balance is a significant factor in career decision-making (Chung et al., 2020). This suggests that internship students with good WLB are more likely to develop career interests, while those experiencing imbalance may lose motivation. Research on internship programs, particularly MSIB, also indicates that maintaining a healthy work-life balance during internships can affect students' learning experiences and career motivation (Angela et al., 2024). Employees with better work-life balance tend to have higher career motivation and engagement, making this factor crucial in shaping career interests. This factor is influenced by work flexibility, workload, and psychological well-being. Flexibility helps students manage their time better, while a high workload can cause stress and reduce career interest. Psychological well-being determines whether an internship experience supports or hinders students' career interests (Boccoli et al., 2022; Wei, 2023).

However, research explicitly on how work-life balance moderates the relationship between career development and career interest remains scarce in academic literature. Understanding this relationship is essential, as effective career development programs should not only provide technical skills but also support students' well-being and work-life integration. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring the relationship between career development, work-life balance, and career interests of interns. To achieve this, the study will examine several key factors in career development, such as training, mentoring, feedback, and professional networks (Akbar et al., 2022; Dewi & Nurhayati, 2021). On the other hand, work-life balance will be measured through work flexibility, workload, and psychological well-being (Boccoli et al., 2022; Wei, 2023). Career interest in this study is calculated based on interest in academic subjects, the desire to pursue interests in a career, and career decisions (Quinlan & Renninger,

2022). This research aims to explore the relationship between career development, work-life balance, and career interests of interns. The research model is presented in the following Figure 1



Description :

- Dependent Variable
 -----→ Moderating Variable

Figure 1. Framework

Career Interest. Career interest is an individual's interest in a profession or field of work that arises after going through a process of observation, comparison, and consideration of one's needs (Hendrawati, 2022). Career interest is important in determining students' understanding of lecture material and the work experience they undergo during their internship. According to (Awaah et al., 2021), there is a significant relationship between students' career interests and the level of difficulty they face in understanding academic concepts. Students who have a high interest in careers in public administration tend to find it easier to understand the concepts in their studies. This suggests that the more relevant an academic or work experience is to one's career interests, the more likely they are to be able to master the material well.

In addition, interest in academic fields plays an important role in shaping students' career certainty. (Quinlan & Renninger, 2022) Found that students who have a strong interest in their academic subject tend to be more stable in making career choices. Their study showed that academic interest is a significant predictor of career certainty, which is mediated by students' desire to explore these interests in the world of work. Internship experiences relevant to academic interests can strengthen students' career decisions. Students who can apply the knowledge they are interested in in a real work environment will be more likely to set clear career goals that match their interests.

Career choice is a complex process influenced by various intrinsic and extrinsic factors. An individual's interest in a field is one of the most significant intrinsic factors. Their internship experience can act as a means of exploration that helps them reduce uncertainty regarding career choices while increasing their readiness to face the challenges of the world of work (Gray et

al., 2021). The study showed that students with a strong interest in a field are more likely to choose a relevant career and feel more satisfied with their career decisions.

Furthermore, internship experience also plays a role in increasing students' career interests. Research by (Lehman et al., 2024) found that internship experience played a significant role in increasing students' interest in careers in computing. Most of the students who participated in the internship reported improved professional skills and awareness of the skills needed in the world of work. This suggests that internships not only provide practical insights but can also strengthen students' career interests and assist them in determining career paths that align with their interests and skills.

Career Development and Career Interest. Students' career development has become an important aspect that is increasingly recognized in the academic environment. Many universities have begun to prioritize career readiness as an institutional priority to ensure their graduates are prepared for the increasingly competitive world of work Cruzvergara et al., 2018 in (Schlesinger et al., 2021). One strategy that can support student career development is through internship programs. Internship programs can play an essential role in students' career development and help them transition to the world of work (Gamboa et al., 2021). Internships not only give students the opportunity to gain hands-on work experience but also broaden their horizons to various fields of work that match their interests and competencies (Wart et al., 2020). This type of work experience is a key pathway in career preparation, as it has been shown to provide benefits in developing professional skills and increasing students' understanding of the world of work (Akos et al., 2021).

In addition to practical experience, educational factors in the academic environment and through internship programs play a crucial role in shaping students' career development. Personal, academic, and professional interests have been shown to have a significant influence on their career decision-making process (Dos Santos, 2021). In this case, career decision-making becomes a factor that not only determines students' career paths but also predicts their future career sustainability (Wang et al., 2023). In addition, career development also contributes to increasing self-efficacy in finding employment and strengthening career planning skills, especially in the context of non-Western countries that have different education systems and labor market dynamics from Western countries (Zhao & Wu, 2022). Previous studies have discussed the impact of career development on students' career interests ((Alexander & Vasantha, 2023), where organizations that actively support career development through skill enhancement programs and performance evaluation are able to increase students' commitment to their profession during internships. In this case, students who have clear career planning tend to experience less difficulty in making career decisions.

H1: Career development positively influences internship students' career interests.

Work-life balance and Career Interest. Work-life balance (WLB) is a crucial factor in shaping career interests. Workplace policies that promote work-life balance play a significant role in enhancing individual well-being and productivity. Organizations that implement WLB policies, such as flexible working hours or balanced task arrangements, can improve employee loyalty and job satisfaction (Suprayitno, 2024). Beyond contributing to psychological well-being, WLB also influences career decisions and interests. Research suggests that individuals with a good work-life balance are less likely to sacrifice personal activities for professional responsibilities and experience fewer conflicts between work and personal life (Chung et al., 2020). This indicates that maintaining a healthy work-life balance can enhance job satisfaction and shape future career preferences. Additionally, job insecurity, which can negatively impact psychological well-being, can be mitigated by a strong work-life balance, thereby increasing an individual's readiness to face workplace challenges (Abdul Jalil et al., 2023). However, previous research indicates that WLB does not always directly affect job performance but can improve work readiness when supported by other factors, such as commitment to work (Sofiana et al., 2025).

In the context of students and early career experiences, WLB also plays a role in shaping career interests. (Pramana & Putra, 2022) Found that maintaining a good work-life balance during internships increases satisfaction and encourages students to pursue careers in the field they interned in. Furthermore, research by (Farhana et al., 2024) revealed that WLB significantly affects the emotional exhaustion of students working part-time, highlighting its impact on job satisfaction and engagement. Students who struggle to balance academic and work demands risk compromising one or the other. Therefore, effective time management and responsibility allocation are essential for optimizing both roles (Hidayatullah & Prihastuty, 2023).

H2: Work-life Balance significantly influences the career interests of internship students.

Work-life balance moderates the relationship between career development and career interests. Several previous studies have highlighted that work-life balance is also a factor that influences students' motivation and perception of the world of work. (Reza & Anindita, 2021) Affirm that a good work-life balance increases students' productivity and engagement in work. At the same time (Sharma & Nidhi, 2023) show that work-life imbalance can cause stress and reduce students' career interest after graduation. However, research by (Arceta, 2020; Wood et al., 2020) reveals that inflexible work experience and high workloads can negatively impact students' perceptions of the world of work. These findings show that work-life balance not only has a direct effect on individuals but can also strengthen or weaken the relationship between factors related to career development.

H3: Work-life balance moderates the relationship between career development and career interests.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach to analyze the effect of career development and work-life balance on the career interests of internship students at PT United Tractors in the MSIB

Batch 6 program. The analytical method used is multiple linear regression based on Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the direct relationship as well as the moderating role of work-life balance. This approach was chosen because it is able to handle latent variables as well as test interaction effects in the research model (Setiabudi et al., 2025).

Data were collected through a survey using a five-point Likert scale-based questionnaire measuring the variables of career development, work-life balance, and career interest. The research sample consisted of 174 internship students selected using the Slovin formula from a population of 307 students. The sample included male and female students aged twenty to twenty-five years from various educational backgrounds such as Informatics Engineering, Management, Industrial Engineering, Communication Science, management and others. The diverse characteristics of the respondents reflect the range of roles and experiences provided by PT. United Tractors during the internship program. Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 3 software, which enables PLS-SEM-based structural model testing. Validity tests were conducted with convergent validity ($AVE \geq 0.5$) and discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion and HTMT < 0.85). Reliability tests were conducted with Composite Reliability ≥ 0.7 and Cronbach's Alpha ≥ 0.7 to ensure the internal consistency of the research instruments.

However, this study is limited to internship students at PT United Tractors MSIB Batch 6 and does not encompass University students from other internship programs or institutions. Additionally, the study only includes students from specific academic disciplines relevant to the company's internship offerings, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader University student population. Descriptive statistical analysis was performed to summarize the data collected for career development, work-life balance, and career interest. These analyses served as a basis for further inferential statistical testing, ensuring the suitability of the data for the selected research methods.

Structural equation modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS) was used to measure the direct effect of career development and work-life balance on students' career interests. At the same time, an interaction effect analysis was conducted to test whether work-life balance strengthens or weakens the relationship between career development and career interest. Hypothesis testing was conducted using bootstrapping techniques to determine the significance of the relationship between variables based on t -statistics ≥ 1.96 and p -value ≤ 0.05 . (Setiabudi et al., 2025). Through this approach, this study provides an empirical understanding of how the internship experience, which includes career development and work-life balance, can increase students' interest in continuing their career in the field they pursued during their internship.

2. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristic. Descriptive statistics are used to provide an overview of the characteristics of respondents and trends of each research variable. Based on data obtained from

174 internship students at PT United Tractors. The characteristics of respondents can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristic Of Respondent

Characteristic	Category	Total	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	79	45.4
	Female	95	54.6
Age	20	29	16.7
	21	26	14.9
	22	28	16.1
	23	30	17.2
	24	28	16.1
	25	33	19.0
Position	IT & Data Science Developer Intern	41	23.6
	People Management Intern	43	24.7
	Operation Excellence Intern	17	9.8
	Communication & Graphic Designer Intern	39	22.4
	CSR, Health, Safety & Environment	16	9.2
	Others	18	10.3
Study Program	Informatics Engineering	18	10.3
	Management	23	13.2
	Industrial Engineering	19	10.9
	Communication Science	18	10.3
	Management	23	13.2
	Others	66	31.8
Total		174	100.00

Source: Research data

Based on gender, the majority of respondents were female (54.6%), while the majority were male (45.4%). In terms of age, the respondents ranged from 20 to 25 years old, with the largest age group being 25 years old (19.0%), followed by 23 years old (17.2%), and 20 years old (16.7%). Regarding the position during the internship, most respondents occupied the position of People Management Intern (24.7%) and IT & Data Science Developer Intern (23.6%). In addition, some respondents work in the field of Communication and graphic design (22.4%), as well as other fields such as Operation Excellence Intern, CSR, Health, Safety and environment, and Sales and Marketing Intern. In terms of study programs, the majority of respondents came from Management (13.2%), followed by Industrial Engineering (10.9%), Informatics Engineering (10.3%), Communication Science (10.3%), and Management (13.2%). The rest of the respondents came from various other study programs, reflecting a diverse academic background.

Variable Descriptive Statistics. According to Indarto and Ghozali, 2016 in (Angelica & Yusrizal, 2022), , descriptive statistical analysis is used to describe data through maximum, minimum, mean, and standard deviation values. The variable descriptive statistics can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Career Development (X ₁)	174	12.00	25.00	20.7299	3.05282
Work-Life Balance (X ₂)	174	11.00	25.00	20.3908	3.19268
Career Interest (Y)	174	12.00	21.00	17.1552	2.09156
Valid N (listwise)	174				

Source: Research data

The descriptive results show that most respondents gave high scores to the three variables measured, reflecting a positive perception of their internship experience. The high average score indicates that students feel that internships contribute to their career development. In addition, students generally have a positive view of work-life balance during internships, although the experience may vary for each individual. A good balance in this aspect plays an important role in increasing satisfaction during internships and encourages motivation to continue a career in the field of interest.

Interns at PT United Tractors show a strong interest in pursuing careers that align with their academic interests, professional aspirations, and career decisions formed during their internships. This finding is in line with (Quinlan & Renninger, 2022), who emphasize that interest in academic subjects plays an important role in shaping students' career decisions. This study shows that the development of academic interests, supported by proactive exploration and work experience, can increase the clarity of students' career goals and their motivation to pursue a meaningful profession.

Results of Validity and Reliability Tests. The instrument's validity was tested using factor loading in Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), where high factor loading indicates strong representation of the latent variable. In PLS-SEM, reliability is assessed through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, with values above 0.7 indicating good reliability (Ghozali, 2021) these measures ensure internal consistency and accuracy in further analysis. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Validity and Reliability Tests

Variable	Results of Validity Test			Results of Reliability Test			
	Items	Significance	Information	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Information
Career Development (X1)	CD1	0,885	Valid	0,920	0,940	0.758	Reliable
	CD2	0,879	Valid				
	CD3	0,855	Valid				
	CD4	0,868	Valid				
	CD5	0,866	Valid				
Work-Life Balance (X2)	WLB1	0,874	Valid	0.923	0,941	0.761	Reliable
	WLB2	0,896	Valid				
	WLB3	0,825	Valid				
	WLB4	0,897	Valid				
Career Interest (Y)	CI1	0,910	Valid	0.937	0,952	0.799	Reliable
	CI2	0,889	Valid				
	CI3	0,889	Valid				
	CI4	0,889	Valid				
Career Development (X1) * Work-Life Balance (X2)	CD * WLB	0,898	Valid	1.000	1.000	1.000	Reliabel

Source: Smart PLS Version 3.0

In this study, the validity test results show that all items in the questionnaire have factor loading above 0.50, which indicates that each indicator has a considerable contribution to the latent variable. The Cronbach's Alpha value for each research variable is above 0.70, which indicates that the research instrument has high internal consistency (Ghozali, 2021). This indicates that the questionnaire used in this study can be trusted to measure the variables under study consistently. This finding is in line with research (Matsuo, 2022), which shows that high reliability on career measurement instruments can increase accuracy in research related to career development and work-life balance. The initial results from the research model calculations, obtained using the SmartPLS 3 software, are presented in Figure 2 :

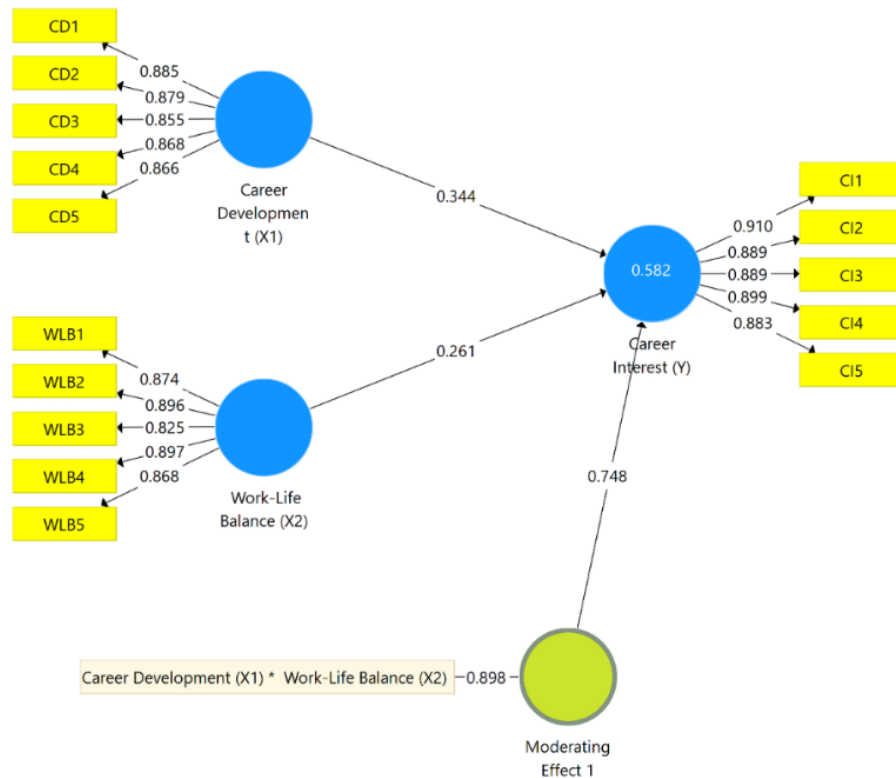


Figure 2. Outer model

Source: Smart PLS Version 3.0

Discriminant Validity. Discriminant validity is tested by two methods, The Fornell-Larcker Criterion test ensures discriminant validity by comparing the square root of AVE with the correlations between variables. Each variable should have a higher square root of AVE than its correlation with other variables. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Work Life Balance (X2)	Career Interest (Y)	Moderating Effect 1	Career Development (X1)
Work-Life Balance (X2)	0,872			
Career Interest (Y)	0,235	0,894		
Moderating Effect 1	-0,047	0,628	1,000	
Career Development (X1)	0,016	0,287	-0,091	0,871

Source: Smart PLS Version 3.0

The Fornell-Larcker Criterion test shows that the square root of AVE for each variable exceeds the correlation between other variables, with the highest values in career interest (0.894), career development (0.871), and work-life balance (0.872). The strongest correlation is between career development and career interest (0.287), indicating a fairly strong relationship. Work-life

balance correlates moderately with career interest (0.235). Meanwhile, the moderating effect on career interest is 0.628, suggesting that work-life balance serves as a moderately strong moderator between career development and career interest.

The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio HTMT test assesses discriminant validity by ensuring that the correlation ratio between constructs remains below 0.85. A lower HTMT value indicates clear distinctions between variables. The results are presented in Table 5.

Tabel 5. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Work-Life Balance (X2)	Career Interest (Y)	Moderating Effect 1
Work-Life Balance (X2)			
Career Interest (Y)	0,241		
Moderating Effect 1	0,049	0,652	
Career Development (X1)	0,059	0,306	0,096

Source: Smart PLS Version 3.

Discriminant validity was also tested using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) to ensure that the variables tested were truly different from each other and did not experience multicollinearity problems. The HTMT test results show that the highest value is found in the relationship between the moderation effect and career interest (0.652), followed by the relationship between work-life balance and career interest (0.241). HTMT values lower than 0.85 indicate that all variables have good discriminant validity, which means that each variable has a clear distinction and there is no overlap between concepts.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis. After ensuring that the research instruments were valid and reliable, regression analysis using PLS-SEM was conducted to examine the relationship between career development (X1), work-life balance (X2), and career interest (Y). The coefficient of determination (R^2) values can be seen in Table 6.

Tabel 6. Coefficient Determination (R^2)

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Career Interest (Y)	0,582	0,575

Source: Smart PLS Version 3.0

The R^2 value of 0.582 indicates that Career Development (X1) and Work-Life Balance (X2) explain 58.2% of the variation in Career Interest (Y), while the remaining 41.8% is influenced by other factors not included in the model. The adjusted R^2 (0.575) accounts for the number of predictors, preventing overestimation of explanatory power. The effect size results are presented in Table 7.

Tabel 7. F-Square (F^2)

	Career Interest (Y)
Career Development	0,281
Work-Life Balance (X2)	0,163
Moderating Effect 1	1,069

Source: Smart PLS Version 3.0

Work-Life Balance (X2) has a moderate effect (0.163) on Career Interest (Y), meaning that this variable contributes significantly to increasing career interest. Career Development (X1) has a more significant effect (0.281) than X2, indicating that career development factors are more influential than work-life balance in increasing career interest. Moderating Effect 1 has a substantial effect (1.069), indicating that the moderating variable has a very strong impact on strengthening the relationship in the model.

Hypothesis test. Hypothesis testing employs the bootstrapping technique by resampling data to estimate the distribution of a test statistic. This approach evaluates t-statistics and p-values to determine the significance of relationships between variables, providing more robust results, especially in cases with small samples or non-normal data. The path coefficients can be seen in Table 8.

Tabel 8. PathCoefficients

	Original (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Result
Career Development (X1) -> Career Interest (Y)	0,344	0,343	0,070	4,899	0,000	Accepted
Work-Life Balance (X2) -> Career Interest (Y)	0,261	0,264	0,068	3,841	0,000	Accepted
Moderating Effect 1 -> Career Interest (Y)	0,748	0,734	0,063	11,942	0,000	Accepted

Source: Smart PLS Version 3.0

The influence of career development on the career interests of internship students. The results showed that career development significantly influenced the career interests of internship students ($\beta = 0.344$, $p < 0.001$). This finding underlines the importance of skills training, mentoring, and performance feedback in shaping students' interest in pursuing careers relevant to their field of internship.

This aligns with research Alexander & Vasantha (2023), which found that training-based career development and evaluation increases students' motivation to work in their field. In addition, Gamboa et al. also emphasize that career development in internship programs increases students' self-efficacy, which contributes to increased career interest. Previous research, as highlighted (Akbar et al., 2022), reveals that well-designed career development initiatives can increase job satisfaction and individual motivation. These findings support the idea that students who feel supported in their career growth tend to show a strong interest in the profession they are studying. (Lo Presti et al., 2023) adds that effective career development not only improves

students' technical skills but also helps them build a stronger professional identity, which impacts their interest in pursuing a career in that field (Dewi & Nurhayati, 2021) also finds that effective mentoring in career development programs can increase students' motivation and positive perceptions of their chosen industry. This result supports previous research that shows a relationship between career guidance and students' career choices, where appropriate guidance can help them make career decisions that are more in line with their abilities and aspirations (Zaman et al., 2021).

In the context of PT United Tractors, interns are allowed to apply academic skills in a real industrial environment. This supports (Fahmy et al., 2023) findings that direct work experience during internships improves students' employability and interest in their field. However, it is important to note that career development that is too demanding without regard to student welfare can reduce its effectiveness, as stated by (Gennissen et al., 2021).

The influence of work-life balance on the career interests of interns. In addition to career development, this study also found that work-life balance has a significant effect on the career interests of interns ($\beta = 0.261$, $p < 0.001$). This finding emphasizes that students who are able to balance work, academic, and personal responsibilities tend to have a strong interest in a career in their field.

Research by (Reza & Anindita, 2021) supports this finding, showing that a good work-life balance can increase employee engagement and overall job satisfaction, (Wei, 2023) shows that students who have a balance between academic life and work during internships are more motivated and have higher satisfaction with their chosen career path. Meanwhile (Boccoli et al., 2022) found that students who experience stress due to excessive workload tend to lose interest in a career in that field. This is also reinforced by (Farhana et al., 2024) who shows that high work pressure during internships can cause emotional exhaustion, which in turn reduces students' interest in a career. (Chung et al., 2020) also emphasizes that work-life balance influences career decision-making and can have a direct impact on how much interest students have in a particular career.

In the context of PT United Tractors, student interns who have flexible working hours and can manage the balance between academic and work tasks tend to have a higher interest in the industry. On the other hand, students who experience excessive workload without good time management tend to lose interest and choose a different career path after the internship program.

Work-life balance moderates the relationship between career development and career interests in student interns. The results of this study show that work-life balance has a very strong moderating effect in strengthening the relationship between career development and career interests ($\beta = 0.748$, $p < 0.001$). This high value shows that WLB is not just an additional factor but a key element that significantly increases the effectiveness of career development in shaping students' career interests. This finding has important implications, especially since previous studies that explicitly investigate the moderating role of WLB in the context of career development and career interests are still very limited. Most previous studies only explored the

influence of career development on career interests (Alexander & Vasantha, 2023) or the direct relationship between WLB and job satisfaction and productivity (Reza & Anindita, 2021).

This study proves that when students feel a balance between internship, academic, and personal life responsibilities, they are better able to absorb the benefits of career development. Which ultimately increases their interest in that career. This is in line with the findings (Hatane et al., 2022), which state that WLB can strengthen the impact of career development on career interests, especially when students feel that the balance between personal and professional life is maintained during internships. (Gennissen et al., 2021) Also identified that the younger generation increasingly makes WLB a major factor in determining their career choices.

In the context of PT United Tractors, which is engaged in the heavy industry sector, maintaining a balance of WLB for student interns is an important factor in increasing their interest in a career. This is in line with (Kim et al., 2024) research, which found that a good WLB experience during an internship impacts students' career decisions, especially in high-demand sectors. By providing work flexibility, supportive mentoring, and good workload management, companies can ensure that students truly feel the benefits of their career development, thus increasing their chances of pursuing interests in their careers, and career decisions.

3. CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION

This study demonstrates that career development and work-life balance significantly influence the career interests of interns at PT United Tractors in the MSIB Batch 6 program. The findings indicate that structured career development programs enhance students' motivation to pursue careers aligned with their internship experience. Additionally, maintaining a balanced work-life dynamic plays a crucial role in sustaining students' engagement and professional aspirations. The study further confirms that work-life balance acts as a moderating factor, amplifying the impact of career development on career interest.

The findings of this study emphasize the need for internship programs that not only focus on technical skill development but also consider students' well-being. Organizations should implement career development initiatives that incorporate mentoring, structured training, and career planning while ensuring a supportive work-life balance through flexible scheduling and well-being programs. Educational institutions should integrate career planning and work-life balance management courses into their curriculum to prepare students for professional challenges. Further studies should examine additional moderating variables such as personality traits, industry sectors, and cultural differences. Expanding research across different internship settings could provide a more holistic understanding of career decision-making factors.

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