
Digital Social Capital and Government Interns' Career Success in Surabaya: Mediating Role of Knowledge Sharing

Rizky Eka Perdana Saputra¹ | Muhammad Fajar Wahyudi Rahman²

^{1,2}Department of Digital Business, Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia
Corresponding: rizky.23315@mhs.unesa.ac.id

Abstract

Objective – This study considers the effect of digital social capital on interns' career success, with knowledge sharing as a mediating variable, within the context of the Government-sponsored internship program in Surabaya, Indonesia. Addressing a gap in which knowledge sharing is often treated as an outcome rather than a mechanism, this study is among the first to model digital social capital, knowledge sharing, and career success as an integrated mediation pathway among interns in a large-scale, government-coordinated internship setting in an emerging economy.

Design/Methodology/Approach – A quantitative approach was employed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), with data collected from 174 undergraduate interns via a structured five-point Likert scale questionnaire.

Findings – The findings reveal that digital social capital positively and significantly affects knowledge sharing (H1 supported), knowledge sharing positively and significantly determines career success (H2 supported), and digital social capital directly and positively affects career success (H3 supported). Furthermore, knowledge sharing was confirmed as an important partial mediator between digital social capital and career success (H4 supported).

Implications – These results underscore the strategic role of fostering digital social capital within government-sponsored internship programs and suggest that program designers, universities, and partner state-owned enterprises should integrate structured knowledge-sharing mechanisms to maximize interns' career development outcomes.

Keywords: Career Success, Digital Social Capital, Interns, Knowledge Sharing, Social Capital Theory.



INTRODUCTION

The rapid digitalization of career environments has fundamentally transformed the way young professionals build, maintain, and leverage social networks. For university students undertaking internship programs, the ability to cultivate digital social capital — defined as the resources embedded within online professional networks — has become an increasingly important determinant of career success. Social capital theory claims that individuals who occupy advantageous positions in social networks gain preferential access to information, opportunities, and support (Pena-López et al., 2021; Alecu et al., 2022). In the digital era, this premise has been extended to encompass online networking behaviors mediated by platforms including LinkedIn, professional messaging applications, and organizational intranets (Ellison et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2017). As digitalization reshapes the early-career landscape, understanding how interns strategically accumulate and deploy digital social capital to advance their professional trajectories has become a pressing concern for researchers, educators, and policymakers alike.

In the context of digital social capital and career outcomes, Kistyanto et al. (2025) demonstrate that digital social trust — one of its core dimensions — positively influences career success among both digital natives and digital immigrants in Indonesia. Their study using PLS-SEM and multi-group analysis confirms that employees embedded in digitally rich social networks are better positioned to achieve favorable career outcomes. Similarly, Smith et al. (2017) argue that social network sites uniquely enable professionals to accrue both bridging and bonding social capital through affordances such as digital search, digital relations, and network transparency — mechanisms that translate online connectivity into access to productive resources. These findings affirm the theoretical relevance of digital social capital not only in established professional settings but also in early-career contexts such as structured internship programs. Kistyanto (2021) further establishes digital social capital — encompassing digital social trust, digital social cliques, digital social networking, and digital social obligation — as a multidimensional construct with direct implications for individual career success in Indonesian organizational settings, providing the foundational theoretical and measurement framework adopted in the present study.

Knowledge sharing has been identified as a central process through which social capital yields productive outcomes (Lefebvre et al., 2016; García-Sánchez et al., 2019). Through open and reciprocal exchange, individuals enhance their competencies, broaden professional perspectives, and strengthen their reputational standing within networks. Rahman et al. (2025) show that knowledge sharing mediates the link between intrinsic motivation and innovative behavior in academic communities in Indonesia and India, affirming its role in translating social resources into individual outcomes. For interns, it enables integration into organizational communities of practice, accelerates learning, and enhances perceived professional value (Ahmad & Karim, 2019; S. K. Singh et al., 2021). Meitiana et al. (2020) further show that knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between organizational learning and employee performance, while comparable Indonesian evidence indicates that social capital fosters knowledge sharing, which in turn channels relational resources into innovative and productive outcomes (Dhaneshwara & Pusparini, 2023; Jumhur et al., 2024).

This mediating logic is reinforced by organizational learning research. Santosa et al. (2024), in a systematic review of higher-education settings, identify knowledge sharing as a crucial mediator linking individual capacities to productivity, while Mayasari & Chandra (2020) show that social capital is the foundational source of knowledge that management systems convert into competitive advantage. Similarly, Dayanti & Yulianti (2023) and Udin & Shaikh (2022) find that knowledge sharing

significantly mediates the effects of servant and transformational leadership on innovative work behavior. Taken together, this evidence supports treating knowledge sharing as a mediating process rather than an isolated outcome, and recent Indonesian PLS-SEM studies confirm that it enhances employee performance through innovative behavior or job satisfaction (Nasrulloh & Husain, 2025; Andari et al., 2026).

Internship programs represent a critical transition phase in a student's career journey, offering not only technical skill development but also opportunities to expand social networks, engage in peer learning, and accumulate career-relevant resources (Pena-López et al., 2021; Alecu et al., 2022). The Government-sponsored internship program, coordinated by the Indonesian Ministry of State-Owned Enterprises through Forum Human Capital Indonesia (FHCI), represents one of the largest structured government-sponsored internship platforms in Indonesia, placing thousands of students annually in state-owned enterprises across major cities including Surabaya. Despite the scale and policy significance of this program, the mechanisms through which digital social capital translates into meaningful career outcomes within such structured settings remain insufficiently understood. Prior research has predominantly examined social capital in established professional or entrepreneurial contexts, with limited empirical attention directed toward government-coordinated internship programs in emerging economies (Arthur & Koomson, 2024; Tsambou et al., 2024; Gutiérrez-Pulido & Orozco-Rodríguez, 2025). This constitutes a meaningful gap in the literature, as the distinctive structural features of government-sponsored internship programs — including their formal placement mechanisms, institutional oversight, and multi-enterprise scope — may shape how digital social capital is accumulated and leveraged in ways that differ from private-sector or self-arranged internship contexts.

Prior studies on digital social capital and knowledge sharing in Indonesian organizational contexts — including Rahman et al. (2022) on cyberloafing and innovative work behavior in banking, and Rahman et al. (2025) on eSports-driven knowledge sharing among academic communities — establish that digital interaction behaviors and social capital dimensions yield differentiated outcomes contingent on contextual factors including organizational culture, individual motivation, and the nature of work settings. Novelya & Karuehni (2023), examining career development in Indonesian government offices through the lens of intervening variable analysis using SmartPLS, highlight that career outcomes are shaped not only by direct individual capabilities but also by mediating performance-related variables — a structural logic that resonates with the mediation framework proposed in this study. These findings underscore that the relationships among digital social capital, knowledge sharing, and career outcomes are not uniformly generalizable across contexts. Yet the internship context, particularly government-coordinated internship programs in Indonesia, remains largely absent from this body of inquiry.

The present study addresses this gap by proposing and testing a structural model in which digital social capital influences interns' career success both directly and indirectly through knowledge sharing, focusing on participants of the Government-sponsored internship program in Surabaya. The novelty of this study is threefold and explicitly distinguishes it from the existing literature. First, while prior studies on digital social capital and career success have focused on established employees, digital entrepreneurs, or cross-sectional professional populations (Smith et al., 2017; Kistyanto et al., 2025), this study is among the first to empirically examine this relationship within a government-sponsored internship program — a context defined by structural formality, institutional coordination, and early-career vulnerability. Second, unlike prior research that positions knowledge sharing predominantly as a dependent or outcome variable (Meitiana et al., 2020; Dayanti

& Yulianti, 2023), this study advances it explicitly as a mediating mechanism, thereby offering a more theoretically nuanced account of the process through which digital social capital is converted into career outcomes among early-career individuals. Third, by situating the inquiry within Indonesia's Government-sponsored internship program — a large-scale, policy-driven internship initiative operating across diverse state-owned enterprises — this study contributes empirical evidence from a governance and institutional context that is substantially underrepresented in both the social capital and career development literatures. Based on this theoretical foundation and the identified research gaps, this study proposes four hypotheses: H1: Digital social capital positively and significantly affects knowledge sharing; H2: Knowledge sharing positively and significantly affects career success; H3: Digital social capital positively and significantly affects career success; H4: Knowledge sharing mediates the effect of digital social capital on career success.

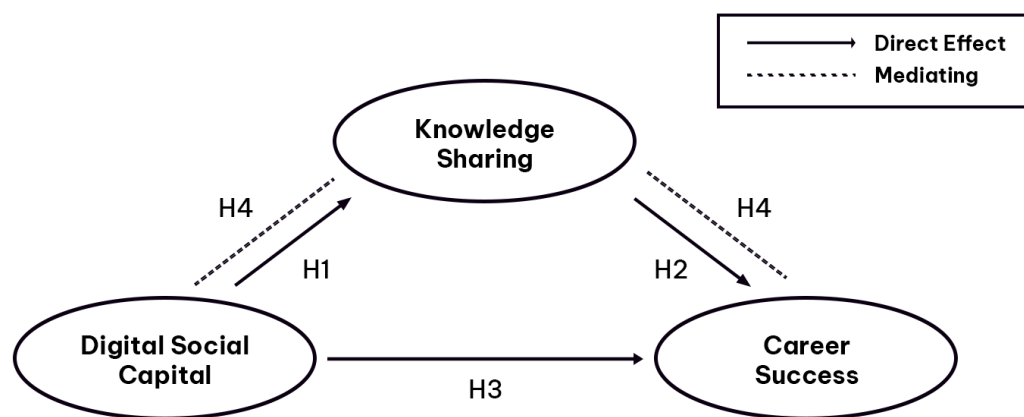


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODS

This study adopts a quantitative research design with a cross-sectional survey approach. The population consists of undergraduate students who have completed or are currently undertaking internships under the Government-sponsored internship scheme in Surabaya, East Java. Coordinated by the Indonesian Ministry of State-Owned Enterprises through Forum Human Capital Indonesia (FHCI), the Government-sponsored internship program places interns across various state-owned enterprises in multiple sectors. A purposive sampling strategy was employed, targeting active participants in Government-sponsored internship programs placed at state-owned enterprises in the Surabaya metropolitan area, encompassing companies in the finance, logistics, energy, telecommunications, and public services sectors. A total of 174 valid questionnaires were collected from respondents drawn from multiple universities in East Java who participated in the Government-sponsored internship program in Surabaya. The sample size meets the minimum requirement for PLS-SEM, which recommends at least ten times the maximum number of paths directed at any latent construct (Hair et al., 2019).

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Three constructs were measured using adapted multi-item scales. Digital social capital was measured using ten items adapted from Kistyanto et al. (2025) and

grounded in the conceptual framework established by Kistyanto (2021), capturing four dimensions: digital social trust (X1–X3), digital social cliques (X4–X6), digital social networking (X7–X8), and digital social obligation (X9–X10). Knowledge sharing was operationalized using nine items: seven items (M1–M7) were adapted from Pian et al. (2019) as used in Rahman et al. (2025), capturing knowledge donating (M1–M6) and knowledge collecting (M7) behaviors; and two items (M8–M9) were adapted from A. Singh (2022), capturing knowledge donating through sharing work documents and professional experience. Career success was measured using ten items adapted from Kistyanto et al. (2025), drawing on the multidimensional scale of Gattiker & Larwood (1986) for financial and hierarchical success (Y1–Y5) and Greenhaus et al. (1990) for career satisfaction (Y6–Y10). The operationalization of each variable, along with its definition and indicators, is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Variable Identification

Variable	Definition	Indikator Variabel
Digital Social Capital (X) Kistyanto et al. (2025); adapted from Kistyanto (2021)	An individual's actual and potential resources in digital social trust, digital social cliques, digital social networking, and digital social obligations, created and maintained through digital platforms to support career-related outcomes (Kistyanto, 2021; Kistyanto et al., 2025).	Digital Social Trust (X1-X3) Digital Social Cliques (X4-X6) Digital Social Networking (X7-X8) Digital Social Obligation (X9-X10)
Knowledge Sharing (M) Pian et al. (2019) via Rahman et al. (2025); A. Singh (2022)	The process through which individuals exchange experiences, knowledge, and know-how with colleagues through both knowledge donating (sharing) and knowledge collecting (seeking) behaviors, to support the completion of tasks and promote collective development (Pian et al., 2019; A. Singh, 2022).	Knowledge Donating (M1-M6) Knowledge Collecting (M7) Work Documents & Experience Sharing (M8-M9): adapted from A. Singh (2022)
Career Success (Y) Gattiker & Larwood (1986); Greenhaus et al. (1990); adapted by Kistyanto et al. (2025)	The accumulation of positive career outcomes encompassing financial success (compensation and promotion), hierarchical success (career advancement opportunities), and career satisfaction (subjective fulfillment of career goals and skills development) experienced by an individual (Gattiker & Larwood, 1986; Greenhaus et al., 1990; Kistyanto et al., 2025).	Financial & Hierarchical Success (Y1-Y5): adapted from Gattiker & Larwood (1986) Career Satisfaction (Y6-Y10): adapted from Greenhaus et al. (1990)

Source: Concept developed in this research, 2026

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was selected as the analytical method for several reasons. First, PLS-SEM is well suited to research with a predictive, theory-

development orientation and to complex models involving mediation, as in the present multi-path framework (Hair et al., 2019). Second, it is robust to non-normal data and performs reliably with the relatively modest sample sizes characteristic of specialized populations such as government-sponsored interns. Third, it estimates the measurement and structural models simultaneously, which is appropriate for the reflectively measured latent constructs examined here. Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4.0 software following a two-stage approach: (1) outer model assessment to evaluate measurement reliability and validity, and (2) inner model assessment to test the structural hypotheses. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability ($CR \geq 0.70$). Convergent validity was evaluated through average variance extracted ($AVE \geq 0.50$) and indicator loadings (≥ 0.70). Discriminant validity was established using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio criterion ($HTMT < 0.90$). For mediation analysis (H4), the bootstrapping method with 5,000 resamples was applied to obtain bias-corrected confidence intervals for indirect effects (Hair et al., 2019; Rahman et al., 2025).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first stage of data analysis involved evaluating the measurement model (outer model) to ensure that the latent constructs exhibited adequate reliability and validity. The evaluation was conducted by examining outer loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), Cronbach's Alpha (CA), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) in accordance with established guidelines (Hair et al., 2019; Rahman et al., 2025). Prior to final assessment, ten indicators with low or cross-loading outer loadings (X1, X3, X7, X8, M7, M8, Y1, Y2, Y5, Y7) were removed iteratively to improve convergent validity, retaining 19 indicators across the three constructs.

Table 2. Measurement Model Assessment

Construct / Indicator	Loadings	CR	CA	AVE	VIF
Digital Social Capital (X)		0.871	0.823	0.529	
X2. Based on my digital reputation, my supervisor or mentor will assist me when I face difficulties.	0.713				1.486
X4. On social media, I join communities that are an important part of my identity.	0.761				1.724
X5. On social media, I prefer interacting with people who share similar interests.	0.734				1.591
X6. On social media, I have a high esprit de corps within my groups or communities.	0.729				1.717
X9. I feel obligated to share experiences on social media with those who have shared experiences with me.	0.700				1.587
X10. I feel obligated to reciprocate the kindness of colleagues or mentors who have helped me during the internship.	0.726				1.531
Knowledge Sharing (M)		0.896	0.864	0.552	
M1. I share my experiences and knowledge with colleagues at the internship site.	0.798				2.088
M2. I share knowledge to help complete both my own work and my colleagues' work.	0.779				2.034
M3. I actively exchange useful knowledge to	0.707				1.709

support the completion of shared tasks.			
M4. I disseminate and share knowledge through non-public channels such as chat and discussions.	0.678		1.515
M5. I exchange experiences and knowledge with the team to improve collective performance.	0.760		1.859
M6. I am willing to share knowledge to support overall team development.	0.722		1.815
M9. I share work experience or know-how with my colleagues.	0.747		1.777
Career Success (Y)		0.909	0.880
			0.626
Y3. I earn income commensurate with what I believe my work deserves.	0.790		2.093
Y4. I am satisfied with the promotions I have received so far.	0.777		1.842
Y6. I will achieve all of my career goals.	0.723		1.510
Y8. I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career.	0.829		2.599
Y9. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward fulfilling my overall career goals.	0.841		2.733
Y10. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward achieving my skill development goals.	0.782		2.033

Source: SmartPLS 4 Output (2026)

During the measurement model evaluation, ten indicators (X1, X3, X7, X8, M7, M8, Y1, Y2, Y5, Y7) were removed due to low outer loadings, leaving 19 valid indicators for the final analysis. The results of the measurement model analysis indicate that all indicators have outer loading values greater than 0.50, ranging from 0.678 to 0.841, thereby satisfying the criterion for significance toward their respective constructs (Hair et al., 2019; Rahman et al., 2025). Internal reliability evaluation yielded Composite Reliability (CR) values for each construct ranging from 0.871 to 0.909, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 and indicating good internal consistency among the indicators. Cronbach's Alpha (CA) values for the constructs ranged from 0.823 to 0.880, also surpassing the minimum threshold of 0.70, further supporting instrument reliability.

Convergent validity was evaluated through Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The AVE values for each construct ranged from 0.529 to 0.626, exceeding the 0.50 threshold, indicating that the indicators explain more than half of the variance in their respective constructs. Furthermore, collinearity was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). All outer VIF values ranged from 1.486 to 2.759, well below the conservative threshold of 5.0, confirming the absence of multicollinearity issues among the indicators (Hair et al., 2019).

After confirming convergent validity, discriminant validity was assessed using both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). As shown in Table 3, the square root of the AVE exceeded its inter-construct correlations for all constructs except a marginal overlap between digital social capital and career success (0.736 vs. 0.728); accordingly, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio was prioritized as the primary discriminant-validity criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Additionally, all HTMT values (Table 4) were below the conservative

threshold of 0.90, with the highest being 0.846 between Career Success and Digital Social Capital, confirming adequate discriminant validity (Widanarni, 2025).

Table 3. Discriminant Validity – Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	DSC (X)	KS (M)	CS (Y)
Digital Social Capital (X)	0.728		
Knowledge Sharing (M)	0.722	0.743	
Career Success (Y)	0.736	0.682	0.791

Note: Diagonal = $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$; off-diagonal = latent variable correlations. HTMT (Table 4) is used as the primary discriminant-validity criterion.

Source: SmartPLS 4 Output (2026)

Table 4. HTMT

Pair	HTMT	Decision
X $\leftrightarrow$ M	0.833	Accepted
Y $\leftrightarrow$ M	0.759	Accepted
Y $\leftrightarrow$ X	0.846	Accepted

Source: SmartPLS 4 Output (2026)

Structural Model Evaluation

Table 5. Structural Model

Criterion	Value	Interpretation
R ² — Knowledge Sharing	0.521 (adj. 0.518)	Moderate
R ² — Career Success	0.589 (adj. 0.584)	Moderate
f ² — X $\rightarrow$ M	1.087	Large
f ² — M $\rightarrow$ Y	0.115	Small
f ² — X $\rightarrow$ Y	0.303	Medium
SRMR	0.084	Good fit (< 0.10)
NFI	0.797	Marginal

Source: SmartPLS 4 Output (2026)

The R-square value for Knowledge Sharing (M) is 0.521, indicating that Digital Social Capital (X) explains 52.1% of the variance in knowledge sharing among interns, representing a moderate level of explanatory power (Widanarni, 2025). The R-square value for Career Success (Y) is 0.589, indicating that Digital Social Capital and Knowledge Sharing collectively explain 58.9% of the variance in career success, which also falls within the moderate range (Widanarni, 2025).

The f-square analysis reveals that Digital Social Capital exerts a large effect on Knowledge Sharing (f² = 1.087) and a medium direct effect on Career Success (f² = 0.303), whereas Knowledge Sharing has a small effect on Career Success (f² = 0.115) (Salimi et al., 2022). The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value of 0.084 is below the recommended threshold of 0.10, indicating a good model fit (Shi & Maydeu-Olivares, 2020). The Normed Fit Index (NFI) value of 0.797, while slightly below the 0.90 benchmark, together with the acceptable SRMR, indicates a reasonable model fit.

Hypothesis Testing

Bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples) evaluated path significance (supported if $t > 1.96$, $p < 0.05$). Results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coef. (β)	T Statistics	P Values	95% CI (Lower–Upper)	Decision
H1	$X \rightarrow M$	0.722	12.342	0.000	[0.569 – 0.811]	Supported
H2	$M \rightarrow Y$	0.314	4.066	0.000	[0.168 – 0.469]	Supported
H3	$X \rightarrow Y$	0.509	6.298	0.000	[0.335 – 0.658]	Supported
H4	$X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y$	0.227	3.716	0.000	[0.121 – 0.360]	Supported (Partial Mediation)

Source: SmartPLS 4 Bootstrapping Output (2026)

The bootstrapping results confirm that all four hypotheses are supported. The direct effect of Digital Social Capital on Knowledge Sharing (H1: $\beta = 0.722$, $t = 12.342$, $p < 0.001$) is positive and statistically significant, with a 95% confidence interval that does not include zero. Similarly, the effect of Knowledge Sharing on Career Success (H2: $\beta = 0.314$, $t = 4.066$, $p < 0.001$) is positive and significant. The direct effect of Digital Social Capital on Career Success (H3: $\beta = 0.509$, $t = 6.298$, $p < 0.001$) is also positive and significant.

The total effect of Digital Social Capital on Career Success is 0.736 ($t = 13.688$, $p < 0.001$), comprising the direct effect of 0.509 and the indirect effect via Knowledge Sharing of 0.227 ($t = 3.716$, $p < 0.001$). Since both the direct and indirect paths are significant, Knowledge Sharing acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between Digital Social Capital and Career Success (H4 supported), consistent with the guidelines established by Baron & Kenny (1986) and refined through bootstrapping procedures (Rahman et al., 2022; Kistyanto et al., 2025).

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the influence of digital social capital on interns' career success, with knowledge sharing as a mediating variable, within the context of the Government-sponsored internship program in Surabaya, Indonesia. The findings provide empirical support for all four proposed hypotheses and offer several meaningful insights into the mechanisms through which digital social capital translates into career outcomes for undergraduate interns.

The Effect of Digital Social Capital on Knowledge Sharing (H1)

Digital social capital has a positive and significant effect on knowledge sharing ($\beta = 0.722$, $t = 12.342$, $p < 0.001$; $f^2 = 1.087$, large effect). This finding indicates that interns with stronger digital social trust, online community participation, reciprocal obligation, and networking behaviors engage in knowledge sharing more actively, consistent with social capital theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) and recent evidence from Indonesian organizational settings (Rahman et al., 2022; Kistyanto et al., 2025). Notably, interpersonal sharing with colleagues (M1, loading = 0.798) and team-based

knowledge exchange (M5, loading = 0.760) were among the strongest indicators. This suggests that informal, relationship-based channels—rather than formal digital platforms—remain the dominant medium for knowledge sharing in internship settings, consistent with findings that relational social capital dimensions are more consequential for knowledge exchange than structural ones in early-career contexts (Lefebvre et al., 2016; García-Sánchez et al., 2019).

The Effect of Knowledge Sharing on Career Success (H2)

Knowledge sharing positively influences career success ($\beta = 0.314$, $t = 4.066$, $p < 0.001$; $f^2 = 0.115$, small effect). This result confirms that knowledge exchange enhances interns' competencies, broadens professional perspectives, and accelerates integration into organizational communities of practice (Ahmad & Karim, 2019; S. K. Singh et al., 2021), aligning with prior evidence that knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between organizational learning and individual performance (Meitiana et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2025). The small effect size indicates that career success perceptions are shaped by multiple factors beyond knowledge sharing alone, consistent with the multidimensional nature of career success encompassing extrinsic (income, promotion) and intrinsic (satisfaction, skill development) dimensions (Greenhaus et al., 1990; Ingarianti et al., 2022). This aligns with Nasution & Saragih (2023), who find that knowledge sharing significantly improves employee performance and that individual capabilities, such as self-efficacy, affect performance outcomes. The modest magnitude of this effect invites a why-and-why-not interpretation: knowledge sharing improves career success because it accelerates competence acquisition and social integration, yet its limited direct weight suggests that within short, structured internship placements the career payoff of knowledge exchange is not fully realized and likely depends on complementary organizational conditions. A comparable pattern is reported by Santi (2025), whose PLS-SEM study published in this journal shows that human resource practices raise employee performance largely through an intervening organizational mechanism rather than directly.

The Direct Effect of Digital Social Capital on Career Success (H3)

Digital social capital exerts a significant direct effect on career success ($\beta = 0.509$, $t = 6.298$, $p < 0.001$; $f^2 = 0.303$, medium effect), demonstrating that network resources—mentorship, referrals, and professional visibility—independently contribute to career outcomes. This aligns with social capital theory's core premise that network resources directly translate into career advantages (Rahman et al., 2022; Kistyanto et al., 2025), and extends its applicability to government-sponsored internship programs. Furthermore, the finding reinforces evidence that social network sites enable individuals to accrue bridging and bonding social capital through digital affordances (Smith et al., 2017; Spottswood & Wohn, 2020). Interns who leverage these affordances are better positioned to showcase competencies, maintain professional visibility, and access career-enhancing referrals. The highest-loading career success indicator was satisfaction with progress toward career goals (Y9, loading = 0.841), underscoring that interns prioritize goal attainment and personal satisfaction over purely extrinsic rewards.

The Mediating Role of Knowledge Sharing (H4)

Knowledge sharing partially mediates the relationship between digital social capital and career success (indirect $\beta = 0.227$, $t = 3.716$, $p < 0.001$), revealing a dual-pathway mechanism: digital social capital directly provides career-enhancing resources while also fostering knowledge sharing that further amplifies career success. The total effect ($\beta = 0.736$, $t = 13.688$, $p < 0.001$) substantially

exceeds the direct effect (0.509), confirming the additive contribution of the indirect pathway. This finding is consistent with Adler & Kwon (2002) framework that social capital facilitates both resource access and intellectual capital exchange and aligns with recent evidence on knowledge sharing's mediating role in translating organizational and social resources into individual performance outcomes (Aisjah et al., 2024; Rahman et al., 2025). For internship programs, this implies that digital networking and structured knowledge-sharing mechanisms—such as peer learning sessions, mentoring programs, and collaborative project platforms—should be integrated to maximize career development impact. The partial—rather than full—mediation observed here is theoretically meaningful: digital social capital retains a strong direct effect because network resources such as referrals, mentorship, and professional visibility benefit interns' careers independently of knowledge exchange. This contrasts with settings in which mediation is full, as Irwan (2026) reports for job satisfaction in an Indonesian public-sector institution, indicating that in early-career internship contexts digital social capital operates simultaneously as a resource-access and a knowledge-generation mechanism.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this study makes three contributions. First, it extends social capital theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Adler & Kwon, 2002) into the digital internship context of an emerging economy, showing that the network mechanisms long documented for established employees also operate for early-career interns. Second, by evidencing a dual-pathway structure through partial mediation, it clarifies why digital social capital influences career success both directly and through knowledge sharing, thereby specifying the process—not merely the existence—of the effect. Third, it affirms the external validity of the digital social capital framework (Rahman et al., 2022) in a large-scale, government-coordinated internship setting. In practice, Government-sponsored internship program coordinators should embed peer-learning communities and cross-enterprise knowledge forums in program curricula; universities should integrate digital networking and knowledge-sharing competencies into career-preparation programs; and partner state-owned enterprises should cultivate organizational cultures that reward knowledge sharing among interns to amplify the developmental returns of internship placements.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of digital social capital on interns' career success, with knowledge sharing as a mediating variable, among 174 government-sponsored interns in Surabaya, analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 4. All four hypotheses were supported. Digital social capital had a large, positive effect on knowledge sharing (H1: $\beta = 0.722$), knowledge sharing significantly improved career success (H2: $\beta = 0.314$), and digital social capital exerted a significant direct effect on career success (H3: $\beta = 0.509$). Most importantly, knowledge sharing partially mediated the digital social capital–career success relationship (H4: indirect effect = 0.227; total effect = 0.736), revealing a dual-pathway mechanism in which digital social capital both directly provides career-enhancing resources and fosters knowledge sharing that further amplifies career success. The model explained 52.1% of the variance in knowledge sharing and 58.9% in career success.

Theoretically, the study extends social capital theory into the digital internship context of an emerging economy, elucidates a dual-pathway mechanism through the partial mediation of knowledge sharing, and affirms the external validity of the digital social capital framework developed

by Rahman et al. (2022) in government-sponsored internship settings. Practically, the findings indicate that Government-sponsored internship program coordinators should embed structured knowledge-sharing mechanisms—such as peer-learning communities, cross-enterprise knowledge forums, and digital collaboration platforms—alongside networking opportunities; universities should integrate digital networking and knowledge-sharing competencies into career-preparation programs; and partner state-owned enterprises should cultivate cultures that reward knowledge sharing among interns. This recommendation is reinforced by Pangaribuan & Satrya (2024), whose study of public-sector employees shows that knowledge management practices significantly enhance performance, underscoring the value of institutionalizing knowledge sharing within government-sponsored internship programs.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has several limitations that suggest directions for future research. First, its cross-sectional design cannot capture how interns' digital social capital, knowledge sharing, and perceptions of career success evolve over time, so longitudinal designs are recommended. Second, reliance on self-report measures may introduce common method bias; future studies could use supervisor or peer ratings of knowledge sharing for a more objective assessment. Third, the sample was limited to government-sponsored interns in Surabaya, so replication across other cities, program formats, and private-sector contexts is needed to test generalizability and identify program-specific factors. Finally, the model drew on a specific set of variables; incorporating additional mediators or moderators—such as digital literacy, organizational culture, mentoring quality, psychological safety, and AI-related career concerns amid growing automation—would yield a more comprehensive understanding of interns' career success.

REFERENCES

- Adler, P. S., & Kwon, S.-W. (2002). Social capital: Prospects for a new concept. *Academy of Management Review*, 27(1), 17–40. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2002.5922314>
- Ahmad, F., & Karim, M. (2019). Impacts of knowledge sharing: A review and directions for future research. In *Journal of Workplace Learning* (Vol. 31, Number 3, pp. 207–230). Emerald Group Holdings Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JWL-07-2018-0096>
- Aisjah, S., Prabandari, S. P., & Wati, C. R. (2024). Social capital on firm performance: The role of knowledge sharing behavior as mediation. *Journal of Law and Sustainable Development*, 12(1), e1100. <https://doi.org/10.55908/sdgs.v12i1.1100>
- Alecu, A., Helland, H., Hjellbrekke, J., & Jarness, V. (2022). Who you know: The classed structure of social capital. *British Journal of Sociology*, 73(3), 505–535. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12945>
- Andari, Nafiudin, & Pratami, E. I. (2026). Extrinsic motivation, knowledge sharing, and innovative behavior: A model for enhancing employee performance. *Jurnal Riset Bisnis dan Manajemen*, 19(1), 117–128. <https://doi.org/10.23969/jrbm.v19i1.34926>
- Arthur, P., & Koomson, S. (2024). Is student internship still beneficial today? The views of multi-parties in Ghana. *PSU Research Review*, 8(3), 609–632. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PRR-01-2022-0003>
- Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of*

- Personality and Social Psychology*, 51(6), 1173–1182. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.51.6.1173>
- Dayanti, P. R., & Yulianti, P. (2023). How do servant leadership and knowledge sharing trigger innovative work behaviors among millennials at start-up businesses? *Jurnal Manajemen Teori dan Terapan/ Journal of Theory and Applied Management*, 16(1), 95–106. <https://doi.org/10.20473/jmtt.v16i1.43224>
- Dhaneshwara, C. A., & Pusparini, E. S. (2023). Factors affecting innovative work behavior in pharmaceutical companies: The role of human capital, social capital, knowledge sharing, and creativity. *Jurnal Manajemen Bisnis*, 10(2), 939–953. <https://doi.org/10.33096/jmb.v10i1.468>
- Ellison, N. B., Vitak, J., Gray, R., & Lampe, C. (2014). Cultivating social resources on social network sites: Facebook relationship maintenance behaviors and their role in social capital processes. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 19(4), 855–870. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12078>
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224378101800104>
- García-Sánchez, P., Díaz-Díaz, N. L., & De Saá-Pérez, P. (2019). Social capital and knowledge sharing in academic research teams. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 85(1), 191–207. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852316689140>
- Gattiker, U. E., & Larwood, L. (1986). Subjective career success: A study of managers and support personnel. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 1(2), 78–94. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01018805>
- Greenhaus, J. H., Parasuraman, S., & Wormley, W. M. (1990). Effects of race on organizational experiences, job performance evaluations, and career outcomes. *Academy of Management Journal*, 33(1), 64–86. <https://doi.org/10.5465/256352>
- Gutiérrez-Pulido, H., & Orozco-Rodríguez, C. (2025). The contribution of professional internships to the academic development of engineering and science students: A case study. *Frontiers in Education*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1563361>
- Hair, J. F., Risher, J. J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C. M. (2019). When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. In *European Business Review* (Vol. 31, Number 1, pp. 2–24). Emerald Group Publishing Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-11-2018-0203>
- Ingarianti, T. M., Suhariadi, F., & Fajrianthi, F. (2022). Adaptasi alat ukur kesuksesan karier subjektif. *Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi Terapan*, 10(1), 300–309. <https://doi.org/10.22219/jipt.v10i1.19002>
- Irwan. (2026). Ability, motivation, and compensation on performance: Job satisfaction as mediator in mahkamah syar'iyah aceh. *Jurnal Manajemen Sains dan Organisasi*, 7(1), 56–68. <https://doi.org/10.52300/jmso.v7i1.25271>
- Jumhur, A. A., Avianti, R. A., Nurfitri, P. E., & Mahir, I. (2024). Implementation of problem-based learning to improve critical thinking ability of vocational students in Jakarta. *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy*, 5(5), 16–24. <https://doi.org/10.24018/ejedu.2024.5.5.860>
- Kistyanto, A. (2021). The digital social capital to career success and its implication to industrial revolution 4.0. *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Business and Management of Technology (ICONBMT 2020)*, 97–101. <https://doi.org/10.2991/aebmr.k.210510.018>
- Kistyanto, A., Rahman, M. F. W., Budiono, B., Indawati, N., Ramadhani, B. Y. A., & Nihaya, I. U. (2025). Digital social capital on career success in digital natives and digital immigrant employees. *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Information Technology*, 103(2), 761–772. www.jatit.org

- Lefebvre, V. M., Sorenson, D., Henchion, M., & Gellynck, X. (2016). Social capital and knowledge sharing performance of learning networks. *International Journal of Information Management*, 36(4), 570–579. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2015.11.008>
- Mayasari, Y., & Chandra, T. (2020). Social capital for knowledge management system of the creative industry. *Journal of Enterprising Communities*, 14(4), 481–494. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEC-01-2020-0008>
- Meitiana, Murniati, T. M., & Maruwan, S. (2020). Effect of organizational learning on knowledge sharing and performance of employees PT. Sentana Adidaya Pratama (Wilmar-Group) Sampit. *Jurnal Manajemen Sains dan Organisasi*, 1(1), 40–49.
- Nahapiet, J., & Ghoshal, S. (1998). Social capital, intellectual capital, and the organizational advantage. *Academy of Management Review*, 23(2), 242–266. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1998.533225>
- Nasrulloh, H., & Husain, M. (2025). Pengaruh knowledge sharing dan self-efficacy terhadap employee performance melalui job satisfaction pada karyawan. *Jurnal Ilmu Manajemen*, 13(4), 856–867. <https://doi.org/10.26740/jim.v13n4.p856-867>
- Nasution, R. A., & Saragih, I. S. (2023). The Influence of self-efficacy and organizational climate on employee performance. *Enrichment: Journal of Management*, 13(1), 127–134.
- Novelya, S., & Karuehni, I. (2023). The effect of competence and work experience on career development through work achievement as an intervening variable. *Jurnal Manajemen Sains dan Organisasi*, 4(2), 155–165. <https://doi.org/10.52300/jmso.v4i2.10106>
- Pangaribuan, L., & Satrya, A. (2024). The role of knowledge management, transformational leadership, and organizational commitment on employee performance: Empirical study in public sector. *Jurnal Manajemen Teori dan Terapan | Journal of Theory and Applied Management*, 17(3), 355–371. <https://doi.org/10.20473/jmtt.v17i3.56264>
- Pena-López, A., Rungo, P., & Sánchez-Santos, J. M. (2021). Inequality and individuals' social networks: The other face of social capital. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 45(4), 675–693. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cje/beab016>
- Pian, Q. Y., Jin, H., & Li, H. (2019). Linking knowledge sharing to innovative behavior: The moderating role of collectivism. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 23(8), 1652–1672. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JKM-12-2018-0753>
- Rahman, M. F. W., Kistyanto, A., & Surjanti, J. (2022). Does cyberloafing and person-organization fit affect employee performance? The mediating role of innovative work behavior. *Global Business and Organizational Excellence*, 41(5), 44–64. <https://doi.org/10.1002/joe.22159>
- Rahman, M. F. W., Peerzadah, S. A., Durman, T. Y., & Widiyanto, S. (2025). Game on for innovation: A cross-country study on how esports drive knowledge sharing and innovative behavior. *Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GKMC-07-2024-0430>
- Salimi, G., Heidari, E., Mehrvarz, M., & Safavi, A. A. (2022). Impact of online social capital on academic performance: Exploring the mediating role of online knowledge sharing. *Education and Information Technologies*, 27(5), 6599–6620. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-021-10881-w>
- Santi, E. (2025). The Impact of Green recruitment and selection practices mediated by innovative organizational culture on employee performance. *Jurnal Manajemen Sains dan Organisasi*, 6(2), 2685–4724. <https://e-journal.upr.ac.id/index.php/jmso>

- Santosa, D. F., Adil, A. S., Wikansari, R., & Oktariani, E. (2024). Improving the internship quality in supporting vocational college students job search success. *Jurnal Aplikasi Manajemen*, 22(1). <https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.jam.2024.022.01.13>
- Shi, D., & Maydeu-Olivares, A. (2020). The effect of estimation methods on SEM fit indices. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 80(3), 421–445. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013164419885164>
- Singh, A. (2022). Work engagement, affective commitment, and career satisfaction: The mediating role of knowledge sharing in context of SIEs. *Benchmarking*, 29(10), 3302–3332. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BIJ-01-2021-0016>
- Singh, S. K., Mazzucchelli, A., Vessal, S. R., & Solidoro, A. (2021). Knowledge-based HRM practices and innovation performance: Role of social capital and knowledge sharing. *Journal of International Management*, 27(1). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intman.2021.100830>
- Smith, C., Smith, J. B., & Shaw, E. (2017). Embracing digital networks: Entrepreneurs' social capital online. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 32(1), 18–34. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2016.10.003>
- Spottswood, E. L., & Wohn, D. Y. (2020). Online social capital: Recent trends in research. In *Current Opinion in Psychology* (Vol. 36, pp. 147–152). Elsevier B.V. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2020.07.031>
- Tsambou, A. D., Diallo, T. M., Kamga, B. F., & Asongu, S. A. (2024). Impact of employment support programs on the quality of youth employment: Evidence from Senegal's internship program. *Sustainable Development*, 32(5), 4606–4632. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.2913>
- Udin, & Shaikh, M. (2022). Transformational leadership and innovative work behavior: Testing the mediation role of knowledge sharing and work passion. *Jurnal Dinamika Manajemen*, 13(1), 146–160. <https://doi.org/10.15294/jdm.v13i1.34446>
- Widanarni, S. (2025). The influence of knowledge-oriented leadership on enhancing innovative green work behavior with green work engagement as a mediator. *Jurnal Manajemen Sains dan Organisasi*, 6(2), 121–133. <https://doi.org/10.52300/jmso.v6i2.21393>