

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In recent years, international internships have become an increasingly important component of higher education for Indonesian university students. Many students perceive overseas internships as a strategic pathway to enhance professional competence, intercultural awareness, and global employability (Ramadhani & Poedjiastutie, 2020). Among various destination countries, Japan has attracted considerable attention due to its advanced technology, disciplined work culture, and structured training systems. However, the differences between Indonesian and Japanese workplace norms often create adjustment difficulties for first-time interns. These differences are not only related to professional expectations but also to social interaction, communication styles, and daily living practices. Consequently, understanding the real conditions of internship life in Japan is essential before students depart for such programs (Arrasyid et al., 2025).

The growing participation of Indonesian students in Japanese internship programs reflects a broader trend of international academic and professional mobility (Rony et al., 2024). Educational institutions in Indonesia have increasingly encouraged students to gain global experience through programs such as internships, exchanges, and industrial training abroad. At the same time, Japanese companies have expanded opportunities for foreign trainees, particularly through structured technical internship schemes. Despite this growth, many prospective interns still rely on limited information from peers, social media, or informal testimonials. Such sources often present either overly positive or overly negative portrayals, which can lead to unrealistic expectations. Therefore, a more systematic and reliable representation of internship experiences is needed to support better student preparation (Rahayu et al., 2020).

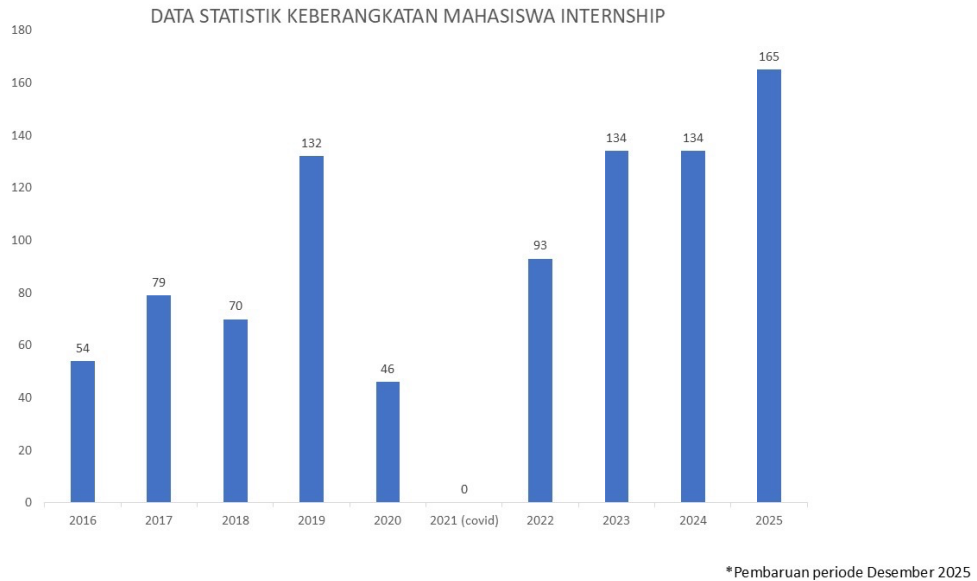


Figure 1. 1 Trends in the number of Indonesian students 2025
([www.jipa.co.id.internship](http://www.jipa.co.id/internship))

Based on data obtained from JIPA, an authorized sending organization that collaborates with Indonesian universities to facilitate student internship programs in Japan, Figure 1.1 shows an overall increase in the number of Indonesian university students participating in internship programs in Japan from 2016 to 2025. Although participation declined during the COVID-19 pandemic, the number reached its highest level of 165 students in 2025. This trend indicates growing interest among Indonesian students and highlights the urgency of providing adequate information and preparation for future participants. The substantial growth shown in Figure 1 suggests that internship programs in Japan are no longer a marginal opportunity but a mainstream option for Indonesian students. As participation increases, the potential impact of both positive and negative experiences also becomes more significant. Students who are unprepared for cultural and professional differences may experience stress,

miscommunication, or dissatisfaction. These challenges can affect their performance, confidence, and overall learning outcomes. Prior research suggests that language competence significantly influences cross-cultural adjustment and workplace integration (Ikhsan & Panjaitan, 2025). Previous studies have emphasized that cultural adaptation plays a crucial role in determining the success of international internships (Ramadhani & Poedjiastutie, 2020). Therefore, documenting authentic internship experiences is necessary to inform and guide future students more effectively (Munir et al., 2025). In addition, understanding the work environment and daily life experienced by interns in Japan is important to help students develop realistic expectations before departure. Such information can also help universities design more relevant pre-departure training programs (Yafi & Aria Yuliantri, 2024).

Cultural differences in communication styles further complicate the adaptation process for Indonesian students in Japan. Japanese workplace culture tends to emphasize indirect communication, hierarchical relationships, and group harmony, which contrasts with more flexible communication patterns in Indonesia (Munir et al., 2025). Interns initially struggle to interpret non-verbal cues, implicit expectations, and subtle workplace norms. Studies have shown that limited cultural understanding can lead to misunderstandings, anxiety, and social isolation (Arrasyid et al., 2025). As a result, providing visual and narrative representations of these experiences can help students anticipate and navigate such challenges.

Previous research on international internships has predominantly focused on measurable outcomes such as skill acquisition, employability, and academic performance. While these aspects are important, they do not fully capture the emotional and psychological dimensions of internship experiences (Ramadhani & Poedjiastutie, 2020). Qualitative studies have highlighted the value of personal narratives in understanding cultural adaptation, identity transformation, and emotional resilience (Munir et al., 2025). However, such insights are often presented in academic texts that

are less accessible to students. This creates a need for alternative media, such as documentary films, that can present lived experiences in a more engaging and relatable format.

This study employs the Research and Development (R&D) method to develop a short documentary film entitled *Step Away from Home* as an educational and informational medium about the internship experiences of Indonesian university students in Japan. The documentary is intended for prospective internship participants who require more authentic information regarding internship life in Japan. Unlike many existing internship-related videos that mainly focus on daily activities, this documentary presents not only internship experiences but also insights into how former interns continued their careers and returned to Japan after graduation. By applying the R&D method, this study is expected to produce a documentary film that serves as a useful reference for prospective Indonesian students who plan to undertake internships in Japan. The documentary was evaluated by Applied Foreign Languages students and international respondents to assess its effectiveness and accessibility.

1.2 Research questions

1. How was the process of producing the documentary film to effectively document and present the internship experiences of Indonesian students in Japan?
2. How can the documentary serve as a reference for prospective Indonesian students planning to undertake internships in Japan?

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To describe the process of producing the documentary film, including planning, filming, editing, and narration, to effectively document and present the internship experiences of Indonesian students in Japan.
2. To identify and analyze how the documentary can serve as a reference for prospective Indonesian students planning to undertake internships in Japan,

highlighting its usefulness in preparation and understanding of real internship experiences.

1.4 Significance of the study

1.4.1. Practical Contribution

1. For Prospective Interns

This study provides practical and realistic insights into the actual experiences of Indonesian students interning in Japan, helping prospective interns better prepare mentally, culturally, and professionally before departure.

2. For Indonesian Universities and Internship Coordinators

The findings and documentary output can serve as a reference for designing more effective pre-departure training programs, including cultural orientation and language preparation.

3. For Internship Program Providers and Japanese Host Institutions

The documentary can help institutions understand common challenges faced by Indonesian interns, enabling them to improve guidance, mentoring, and support systems.

4. For Career Development and Guidance Centers

The short documentary can be used as educational media to inform and guide students who are considering international internships, particularly in Japan.

5. For the Researcher and Filmmaking Practice

This study enhances the researcher's skills in applying the Research and Development (R&D) method and producing a documentary film based on empirical data and real-life experiences.

1.4.2. Theoretical Contribution

1. Contribution to Cross-Cultural Studies

This research enriches academic understanding of cross-cultural adaptation,

particularly in the context of Indonesian students working in Japanese cultural and professional environments.

2. Contribution to Internship and Experiential Learning Literature

The study provides empirical evidence regarding the challenges and learning experiences of international interns, supporting theories of experiential and workplace-based learning.

3. Contribution to Media and Documentary Studies

By utilizing documentary film as a research and educational tool, this study contributes to theoretical discussions on visual storytelling as a means of knowledge dissemination and qualitative documentation.

4. Development of R&D-Based Educational Media Framework

This research offers a model for integrating qualitative data with documentary filmmaking within an R&D framework, which can be adapted for similar studies in education and social sciences

1.5 Output

The primary output of this research is a short documentary film entitled *Step Away from Home* with a duration of 17 minutes and 38 seconds. The film presents the real internship experiences of Indonesian university students in Japan, covering workplace experiences, daily life, cultural adaptation, and personal development. It is designed as a practical reference for prospective internship participants, particularly Applied Foreign Languages students at Vocational College, Universitas Diponegoro. The documentary has been published on the YouTube channel *Bahasa Asing Terapan SV Undip* to increase accessibility and reach a wider audience.