Cotabato State University-College of Business and Public Administration Tracer Study

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Abstract

This study was conducted to trace the graduates of the College of Business and Public Administration (CBPA) of Cotabato State University (CSU) in terms of their personal characteristics, educational background, employment status, relevance of the curriculum, and the competencies acquired. Moreover, this study was conducted in Cotabato State University, Sinsuat Avenue, Cotabato City. The respondents were the graduates of the CBPA. It employed quantitative research and utilized descriptive research design. The statistical tools used were frequency, percentage, and ranking. The results revealed that more than half of the respondents are single, female, residing in the city, and region of origin is in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Moreover, the common reasons for taking the course or pursuing the degree were availability of course offering in chosen institution, strong passion for the profession, affordable for the family, and prospect for immediate employment. Majority of the respondents are currently employed and with present employment status of contractual and permanent/regular. Majority of the respondents replied positively that the curriculum has relevance to their first job.The top competencies answered by the respondents that are useful in their work areas were communication skills, human relation skills, problem solving skills, and critical thinking skills.

Keywords: curricular program, communication, human relation, problem solving and critical thinking

Introduction

Education is the most significant mechanism for the empowerment of the people towards social, economic, political and even technological advancement. The Higher Education Institutions (HEI) can contribute meaningfully to these advancements by taking cognizance of the creation of enabling learning environments that promote academic excellence. The Cotabato State University (CSU) aims to produce science and technology professionals; and peace and development advocates; promote and undertake research and extension; generate resources; and provide progressive leadership in the fields of specialization. Every year the CSU is continuously producing graduates in an increasing manner. With the steady increase in the number of college graduates, employment opportunities for the graduates have become even more competitive.

At present, providing employment is one of the greatest challenges in the country. The highlights of the July 2024 Labor Force Survey portrays that the unemployment rate was estimated at 4.7% higher than the reported unemployment rate in April 2024 at 4.0%. In terms of magnitude, the total number of unemployed individuals was registered at 2.38 million. On the other hand, the employment rate was 95.3% and in terms of level the total number of employed persons was estimated at 47.70 million (PSA, 2024).

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is an institution created to oversee the higher education system in the country. Moreover, this agency is also mandated to oversee graduates that are both locally and globally responsive and competitive; promote quality standards of higher education that is accessible and affordable for all. It is further reinforced by the Executive Order No. 83 series of 2012 that establishes the Philippines Qualification Framework which mandates the Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Philippine Regulatory Commission (PRC), and Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) to review the learning standards in basic education, technical skills development and higher education.

Tracer study provides information for the benefit of evaluating higher education outcomes; tracking the alumni after graduation; finding out how adequate and relevant is the knowledge, skills, and trainings provided by the university in the overall performance in their career. Moreover, tracer study can provide information needed to reform educational programs attuned to the needs of the industry. And thereby, tracer study can serve as the basis for future planning activities. It is for these purposes that this tracer study is conducted.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to trace the graduates of the CSU- CBPA. Specifically, it answered the following queries:

1. What are the profile characteristics of the respondents in terms of their:
a. Civil Status
b. Sex
c. Location of Residence
d. Region of Origin

2. What is the educational background of the respondents in terms of their:
a. Degree and Specialization
b. Year Graduated
c. Reasons for taking the course or pursuing the degree

3. What is the employment data of the respondents in terms of their:
a. Employment Opportunity
b. Reasons for Unemployment
c. Present Employment Status
d. Industry Classification of Company
e. Place of Present Work
f. First Job After College
g. Reasons for Staying the Job
h. Relationship of the course to the first job
i. Reasons for accepting the first job
j. Period of stay in the first job
k. Job Search
l. Searching Period
m. Job Level Position (First Job)
n. Job Level Position (Present Job)

4. How relevant is the curriculum in college to the first job?

5. What skills and competencies learned in college are useful in the first job?

Significance of the Study

The results of this tracer study can be useful to the school administrators for it can provide evidence-based recommendations to improve the graduates' employability in relation to industry needs. Moreover, the program heads can use the results of the study as basis for curriculum review, re-engineering and development. The faculty can also utilize the results of the study as a guide in planning activities that are relevant in enhancing the students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies to meet the demand of the society and industry. The students, alumni officers, guidance officers, and future researchers can take advantage of the results by fostering professional networking, coaching, and career path planning.

Review of Related Literature

Tracer study is a means of maintaining curriculum relevance and providing benefits to graduates to enhance the marketability of educational programs. Further, it can also provide information needed to reform educational programs to bring about the match between the requirements of the employment industry and society. In today's challenging economic situation, it is necessary for the graduates to gain necessary skills and competencies which can enhance their employment opportunities. The CHED is gathering data from the HEIs regarding Graduate Tracer Studies (GTS) to determine the career pathways pursued by the graduates.

Public Administration is a degree program that prepares the graduates for careers in public administration and governance for the public interest. It is also a formation course for the graduates who want to devout their life to public service in government and civil society. Further, the degree program aims to develop public servants with the required knowledge, values and skills to serve as professionals in government and civil society. On the other hand, the Business Administration Program utilizes an integrated approach to study the interrelationships among the different functional areas of business and examine how the effective orchestration of these different components of business operations can lead to organization success. Moreover, the program addresses contemporary organizational issues such as global competition, continuous quality improvement, good governance, and the relationship between organizations and various environmental forces which are key components of a global economy.

In today's reality, the demand for employment is rapidly changing due to the educational reforms and the emerging and disruptive technology that changes the nature of the Work (Asian Development Bank, 2018; McKinsey Global Institute, 2018). In addition, the so called "fourth industrial revolution" will bring extensive changes in the nature of the work (Ra et al., 2019). For these fast-paced changes, relevant work experience and skill play a vital role in terms of employability (Harris & Clayton, 2018). It is imperative that these skills are gradually developed among the students, thus, this would ensure career success.

Peeters et al (2019) proposed a three-dimension framework composed of job-related expertise and attitudes, development-related capital, and career-related employability capital. In relation, Romgens et al (2020) suggested a five-dimension framework which includes human capital, a reflection of self and organization, lifelong learning, social capital, and work-life balance.

The 4th Philippine Graduate Tracer Study conducted by Philippine Institute for Development Studies reported that graduates feel that they did not sufficiently develop communication, critical thinking, and problem solving (Tutor et al, 2019). This was supported that a few had inadequately acquired communication skills in the study of Caingcoy (2021). On the other hand, Negro et al (2017) reported that only the communication skills came on top among the surveyed skills.

Methodology

This study utilized descriptive research design because it describes a certain population and situation particularly the graduates of the CBPA. Specifically, descriptive-status was used in this study because it determines the profile characteristics of the respondents; their educational background; employment data; relevance of curriculum; and skills and competencies learned. The respondents were the graduates of the CBPA and a total of 140 respondents answered the survey. A survey questionnaire was distributed to the graduates during the Centennial Foundation Anniversary on February 8-19, 2024 and during the CSU Alumni Election on September 28, 2024. Further, online survey was also conducted and shared to the graduates via Facebook and Messenger. A face-to-face interview was also conducted in order to support the gathered data.

For the statistical treatment of data, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences Software or SPSS to organize, process, and generate results from the gathered data using frequency, percentage, and ranking. In the conduct of this research, the objectives of the research were fully explained to the respondents. They were requested to answer the survey questionnaire and they were not forced in any ways. It is further explained that any responses gathered from them were treated with utmost objectivity.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Table 1 shows the profile characteristics of the respondents in terms of their civil status, sex, location of residence, and region of origin. It clearly shows that more than half of the respondents are single and female with 64.3% and 65.7% respectively. Moreover, 60% of the respondents are residing in the city while 40% are residing in the municipality. As regards to their region of origin, majority of the respondents belong to the Bangsamoro Autonomous in Region Mindanao (BARMM).

Table 1. Profile Characteristics of the Respondents

Civil Status	Frequency	Percent
Single	90	64.3
Married	47	33.6
Separated	1	.7
Single	2	1.4
Total	140	100.0
Sex	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Male	48	34.3
Female	92	65.7
Total	140	100.0
Location of Residence	**Frequency**	**Percent**
City	84	60.0
Municipality	56	40.0
Total	154	100.0
Region of Origin	**Frequency**	**Percent**
BARMM	122	87.2
Region 12	11	7.9
Region 11	1	.7

Region 10	1	.7
Region 1	1	.7
NCR	3	2.1
CARAGA	1	.7
Total	140	100

Table 2.1 depicts the educational background of the respondents in terms of their degree and specialization. It shows that 55% of the respondents were graduates of Bachelor of Science in Business Administration major in Marketing Management followed by the Bachelor of Science in Public Administration major in Organizational Management with 19.3%. On the other hand, some of the respondents were graduates of Bachelor of Science in Business Administration major in Human Resource Management with 9.3%, Bachelor of Science in Public Administration major in Local and Regional Governance with 8.6%, and Bachelor of Science in Public Administration major in Public Policy and Program Administration with 7.8%.

Table 2.1 Educational Background in terms of Degree and Specialization

Degree and Specialization	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration major in Marketing Management	77	55.0
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration major in Human Resource Management	13	9.3
Bachelor of Science in Public Administration major in Organizational Management	27	19.3
Bachelor of Science in Public Administration major in Public Policy and Program Administration	11	7.8
Bachelor of Science in Public Administration major in Local and Regional Governance	12	8.6
Total	140	100

Table 2.2 indicates the respondents' year of graduation which varies from year 2000 to 2024. The graduates of year 2014 participated the most with 17.1% and followed by the year 2022 with 15.7%. Moreover, third on the list is year 2019 with 15.0%.

Table 2.2 Educational Background in terms of Year Graduated

Year Graduated	Frequency	Percent
2000	5	3.6
2003	1	.7
2012	2	1.4
2013	7	5.0
2014	24	17.1
2015	3	2.1
2016	9	6.4

2017	6	4.3
2018	5	3.6
2019	21	15.0
2020	7	5.0
2021	5	3.6
2022	22	15.7
2023	12	8.6
2024	11	7.9
Total	140	100

Table 2.3 shows the reasons of the respondents in taking the course or pursuing the degree. The common reasons of the respondents were availability of course offering in chosen institution (rank 1), strong passion for the profession (rank 2), affordable for the family (rank 3), and   prospect for immediate employment (rank 4). However, some of the least reasons for taking the course or pursuing the degree were prospect of attractive compensation, status or prestige of the profession.

Table 2.3 Educational Background in terms of Reasons for Taking the Course

Reason	Frequency	Rank
Availability of course offering in chosen institution	40	1
Strong passion for the profession	37	2
Affordable for the family	32	3
Prospect for immediate employment	31	4
Influence of parents or relatives	28	5
High grades in the course or subject area(s) related to the course	26	6
Good grades in high school	24	7
Inspired by a role model	24	7
Prospect of career advancement	17	8
Peer Influence	16	9
Opportunity for employment abroad	10	10
Prospect of attractive compensation	9	11
Status or prestige of the profession	8	12

Table 3.1 depicts the employment opportunity of the respondents which means it reflects if they are currently employed. Out of 140 respondents 122 answered that they are currently employed or 87.1%. In the contrary, 7.9% of the respondents stated that they are not employed while 5.0% replied that they are never employed after graduation.

Table 3.1 Employment Opportunity

Currently Employed	Frequency	Percent
Yes	122	87.1
No	11	7.9

Never Employed	7	5.0
Total	140	100

Table 3.2 represents the reasons for unemployment of the respondents. The most common reasons stated by the respondents are no job opportunity (rank 1), family concern and decided not to find for a job (rank 2), advance of further study (rank 3), and lack of work experience (rank 3).

Table 3.2 Reasons for Unemployment

Reasons	Frequency	Rank
No job opportunity	17	1
Family concern and decided not to find a job	11	2
Advance or further study	6	3
Lack of work experience	6	3
Health-related reason(s)	5	4
Did not look for a job	2	5

Table 3.3 shows the present employment status of the respondents. It can be seen that 32.8% of the respondents are with contractual employment status followed by the regular or permanent status with 31.1%. In addition, other employment statuses of the respondents are self-employed, temporary, and contractual with 19.7%, 10.7% and 5.7% respectively.

Table 3.3 Present Employment Status

Present Employment Status	Frequency	Percent
Regular or Permanent	38	31.1
Temporary	13	10.7
Casual	7	5.7
Contractual	40	32.8
Self-employed	24	19.7
Total	122	100

Table 3.4 depicts the industry classification of the respondents. The top 3 industry classifications of company are government (60.7%), wholesale/trade (12.3%), and banking and finance (12.3%). Based on the interview conducted, some of the respondents are connected with some of the agencies in the government like Ministry of Human Settlement and Development, Ministry of Social Services and Development, and academe. Moreover, some of the respondents are connected with the major car dealers like Mitsubishi and Toyota; major shopping centers in the city like Al-nor Mall, City Mall, South Seas Complex and Puregolds. On the other hand, some of them are connected in financial institutions like BDO Bank and money remittance companies like Palawan, M Lhuiller, and RD pawnshop.

Table 3.4 Industry Classification of Company

Industry Classification	Frequency	Percent
Wholesale/Trade	15	12.3

Government	74	60.7
Banking and Finance	15	12.3
Health Care	5	4.1
Business Process Outsourcing	9	7.4
Travel/Tourism	3	2.4
Manufacturing	1	.8
Total	122	100

Table 3.5 describes the place of present work of the respondents. They were asked if they are currently employed locally or in other country. As depicted in the table, almost all of the respondents are currently employed locally with 95.9% while others are working abroad which accounts to 4.1%.

Table 3.5 Place of Present Work

Place of Present Work	Frequency	Percent
Local	117	95.9
Abroad	5	4.1
Total	122	100

Table 3.6 provides data whether is it the first job of the respondents after college or not. As can be gleaned from the table, more than half of the respondents stated that their current job is not their first job after college with 68.9% while 31.1% of them expressed that it is their first job after college.

Table 3.6 First Job After College

First Job	Frequency	Percent
Yes	38	31.1
No	84	68.9
Total	122	100

Table 3.7 showcases the different reasons of the respondents for staying in their current job. The top reasons provided by the respondents are salaries and benefits (rank 1), career challenge (rank 2), related to special skill (rank 3), and related to course or program of study (rank 4).

Table 3.7 Reasons for Staying the Job

Reasons	Frequency	Rank
Salaries & benefits	68	1
Career challenge	31	2
Related to special skills	29	3
Related to course or program of study	19	4
Family influence	12	5
Proximity to residence	9	6
Peer influence	5	7

Table 3.8 provides information whether the first job of the respondents is related to their first job. It clearly shows that 74.6% of them answered that their first job is related to their degree. However, 25.4% of them respondents that their first job is not related to their course.

Table 3.8 Relationship of the Course to the First Job

Relationship of the Course	Frequency	Percent
Yes	91	74.6
No	31	25.4
Total	122	100

Table 3.9 shows the reasons of the respondents for accepting their first job after college. The following were the responses: salaries and benefits (rank 1), career challenge (rank 2), related to special skill (rank 3), and proximity to residence (rank 4).

Table 3.9 Reasons for Accepting the First Job

Reasons	Frequency	Rank
Salaries & benefits	62	1
Career challenge	41	2
Related to special skills	36	3
Proximity to residence	7	4

Table 3.10 describes the length of stay of the respondents on their first landed job. It shows that 33.6% of the respondents answered that they stayed for 3 years to less than 4 years followed by 1 month-6 months with 28.7%.

Table 3.10 Period of Stay in the First Job

Period	Frequency	Percent
Less than a month	3	2.5
1 to 6 months	35	28.7
7 to 11 months	6	4.9
1 year to less than 2 years	22	18.0
2 years to less than 3 years	15	12.3
3 years to less than 4 years	41	33.6
Total	122	100

Table 3.11 provides information on the sources of job opportunities or job search. It is clearly depicted that 36.1% of them searched for a job through the recommendation of someone followed by 30.3% as a walk-in applicant. In addition, they also gathered job opportunities from friends with 17.2%. However, the least source for job search was response to an advertisement with 3.3%.

Table 3.11 Job Search

Job Search	Frequency	Percent
Response to an advertisement	4	3.3
As walk-in applicant	37	30.3
Recommended by someone	44	36.1
Information from friends	21	17.2
Family business	7	5.7
Job Fair or Public Employment Service Office (PESO)	9	7.4
Total	122	100

Table 3.12 presents the length of time devoted by the respondents to search for their first job. It shows that 31.1% of the respondents took 1-2 years to search for their first job followed by 1-6 months with 29.6%. There were also respondents who made in with less than a month to look for their first job with 23%.

Table 3.12 Searching Period for the First Job

Searching Period	Frequency	Percent
Less than a month	28	23.0
1 to 6 months	36	29.6
7 to 11 months	6	4.9
1 year to less than 2 years	38	31.1
2 years to less than 3 years	7	5.7
3 years to less than 4 years	7	5.7
Total	122	100

Table 3.13 demonstrates the job level position of the respondents when they got their first job. As shown in the table more than half of the respondents were hired in an entry level as rank or clerical with 69.7%. In addition, 16.4% percent of them were hired as professional, technical or supervisory level.

Table 3.13 Job Level Position (First Job)

Job Level	Frequency	Percent
Rank or Clerical	85	69.7
Professional, Technical or Supervisory	20	16.4
Managerial or Executive	8	6.5
Self-employed	9	7.4
Total	122	100

Table 3.14 illustrates the job level position of the respondents for their current job. It is depicted in the table that 52.5% of the respondents are in a professional, technical or supervisory level. On the other hand, 31.1% of the respondents are in a rank or clerical position. It is also noted that 7.4% are in a managerial of executive position while 9% are self-employed. In connection, it was verified through the interview conducted that they manage their own established businesses.

Table 3.14 Job Level Position (Present Job)

Job Level	Frequency	Percent
Rank or Clerical	38	31.1
Professional, Technical or Supervisory	64	52.5
Managerial or Executive	9	7.4
Self-employed	11	9.0
Total	122	100

Table 4.1 provides data on the relevance of the curriculum to the first job of the respondents. Majority of the respondents replied positively that the curriculum has relevance to their first job with 80.3% while 19.7% said that the curriculum was not relevant to their first job.

Table 4.1 Relevance of Curriculum to the First Job

Relevance	Frequency	Percent
Yes	98	80.3
No	24	19.7
Total	122	100

Table 5.1 offers information regarding the competencies considered as useful in their work areas. The top competencies answered by the respondents were communication skills (rank 1), human relation skills (rank 2), problem solving skills (rank 3), and critical thinking skills (rank 4).

Table 5.1 Useful Competencies

Job Level	Frequency	Rank
Communication skills	81	1
Human Relations skills	56	2
Problem-solving skills	48	3
Critical Thinking skills	42	4
Entrepreneurial skills	34	5
Information Technology skills	27	6

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

1. The profile characteristics of the respondents resulted that more than half of the respondents are single, female, residing in the city. In addition, the region of origin of the majority of the respondents is in Bangsamoro Autonomous in Region Mindanao (BARMM).

2. More than half of the respondents were graduates of Bachelor of Science in Business Administration major in Marketing Management. The graduates of batch 2014 were the most numbered respondents in this survey. The common reasons for taking the course or pursuing the degree were availability of course offering in chosen institution, strong passion for the profession, affordable for the family, and prospect for immediate employment.

3. Majority of the respondents are currently employed. However, there are also respondents stated that they are unemployed for the following common reasons: no job opportunity, family concern and

decided not to find for a job, advance of further study, and lack of work experience. In terms of the present employment status of the respondents, one-third of them are contractual and another one-third are regular or permanent. The top 3 industry classification of the company are government, wholesale/trade, and banking and finance. Almost all of the respondents are currently employed locally. More than half of the respondents stated that their current job is not their first job after college. The top reasons provided by the respondents for staying in their current job are salaries and benefits, career challenge, related to special skill, and related to course or program of study. More than half of the respondents answered that their first job was related to their degree. The following were the reasons for accepting their first job after college: salaries and benefits, career challenge, related to special skill, and proximity to residence. One-third of the respondents answered that they stayed for their first job for 3 years to less than 4 years and searched for a job through recommendation of someone and as a walk-in applicant. One-third of the respondents took 1-2 year to search for their first job. More than half of the respondents were hired in an entry level as rank or clerical position for their first job and as professional, technical or supervisory level for their current job.

4. Majority of the respondents replied positively that the curriculum has relevance to their first job.
5. The top competencies answered by the respondents that are useful in their work areas were communication skills, human relation skills, problem solving skills, and critical thinking skills.

Recommendations

1. Develop linkages with the government agencies, private enterprises, and civil society organizations for collaborations that can provide employment opportunities to the CBPA Graduates.
2. Conduct research on the competencies required by the society and industry; factors affecting employability of the CBPA Graduates; performance of the CBPA Graduates; and evaluation of program goals.
3. Develop strategies to encourage graduates to pursue Master in Business Administration.
4. Review and upgrade curricular offerings to ensure the development of necessary competencies and improve the quality of teaching and learning.
5. The faculty can plan activities that are relevant in enhancing the students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies to meet the demand of the society and industry.
6. Suggest to the Guidance and Testing Office career guidance programs responsive to the needs of the people in educational, academic, social and economic domains. Moreover, to the Alumni Office to develop activities to foster professional networking, coaching, and career path planning.
7. Implement extension activities providing necessary information on entrepreneurial competencies and providing technical assistance in establishing their own business.

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