GRADUATE TRACER STUDY OF THE COLLEGE OF NURSING

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, finding employment is as hard as finding a needle in a haystack. Moreover, many nursing graduates are noted to have work that is not related to their course in college. Graduate Tracer studies are essential for understanding the relevance and quality of programs offered by the universities as well as the labour market. The study determined the current work status and employment data of the graduates of the University of Cebu Lapulapu and Mandaue (UCLM) College of Nursing of all batches from 2007 to 2014. The findings served as a basis for a report on the employment data of UCnian nursing graduates. The data for this tracer study was gathered through the Graduate Tracer Tool (GTT) patterned from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). In the data analysis, descriptive statistics was used. The employment data of the respondents showed the current work status of the nursing graduates. The majority of the respondents are employed. In their present occupation, most of the respondents assume professional work and the major line of business is in the health and social work sector. It was depicted that most of them are regular employees, have professional occupations and have local jobs in the health and social work field. Most are regular/permanently and are locally employed. More than a half got their jobs within 1 to 6 months and almost two-thirds of the respondents had jobs related to the course they took up in college. The competencies that the graduates find useful in their first job are communication skills, critical thinking skills and human relations skills.

Keywords : Tracer study, nursing graduates, current work status, general information, educational background, employment data

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, finding employment is very tough for which many nursing graduates are noted to have work that is not related to their course in college. In the 2008 Employment Summit, Commission of Higher Education observed that higher education institutions were producing "graduates who do not match the labour demand" (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2010).

A company, which must meet competition and maintain its leadership in the field, cannot leave the hiring and selection of its workers to chance. It needs people who can contribute to the company's business- people with ideas for new products, services or methods (Sison, 2005).

Only three out of ten college graduates (30%) looking for work may be able to find jobs if the government is unable to create sufficient jobs, according to a non-government research agency. The figure provided by IBON also does not include graduates who do find jobs but will probably take whatever work is available even if it is not related to their college degrees. The government's labor department, however, said unemployment is caused not by the lack of jobs but by the perceived mismatch between skills possessed by applicants and the demands of employers (GMA News Online, 2010).

According to a press release from the Philippine Nurses Association last July 2008, many licensed nurses are now underemployed or unemployed as a result of changes of policy in destination countries, the current situation of oversupply, and quality problems among others (Philippine Nurses Association, 2008). Health authorities in Central Visayas are more concerned about the employment of nurses in Cebu rather than the absence of Cebu nursing students in the

top 10 of last year's board exams (Cebu Daily News, 2012).

Recent graduates or nurses who have not practiced after graduation may have a limited idea of job opportunities. Their choice of the first job may be strongly influenced by their education, achievement level, geographical preference, salary, mate's occupation and peer pressure. They are likely to take several jobs before settling down. The dissatisfied employees are often not actively seeking other employment but are likely to be receptive to new openings or job offers (Tomey, 2005).

It is the recent trend of the nursing graduates of the University of Cebu – Lapulapu and Mandaue (UC-LM) to opt for volunteer work while waiting for employment. With fewer nurses being hired both in private and government hospitals, some nurses end up in industries not related to their practice such as call centres or in academies with English as second language For some hospitals, they require 78% board exam rating which makes most of the November 2009 passers ineligible to apply and other hospitals prefer to hire their own graduates.

According to Dr. Susana Madarieta, (Government agency in Manila, Philippines) the bigger concern lies in the employment of nurses since private, and government hospitals appear to be fully staffed. Nurses employed in private hospitals stand to earn P6, 000 to P7, 000 a month. If one nurse resigns, there is a list of nurses waiting to be hired. Government hospitals pay better salaries but on the Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center, at least 400 to 600 nurses are on the waiting list (Cebu Daily News, 2012). Nurses have left hospital nursing to work for managed care organizations, insurance companies, pharmaceutical firms, healthcare technology vendors, medical device vendors, consulting firms, and many others (Tomey, 2005).

The employability of graduates is now an essential concern as a competition for students, both local and overseas. The employment situation remains particularly challenging for all kinds of profession. As we leave the age of production and enter the age of knowledge, new careers are likely to develop; different skills will be needed, and certain industries will grow while others fade. New graduates are in a transition phase in their careers. One of the important and challenging issues many students are facing today is the rapidly changing world of work. Trends in the labour market should be paid close attention (Commission on Higher Education, 2012).

As of July 2015, the employment rate estimated in the Philippines was at 93.5 percent while the unemployment rate was 6.5 percent. Among the unemployed persons in July 2015, 62.1 percent were males. Of the total unemployed, the age group 15 to 24 years comprised 50.4 percent, while the age group 25 to 34, 29.5 percent. By educational attainment, 22.2 percent of the unemployed were college graduates, 13.5 percent were college undergraduates, and 33.2 percent were high school graduates (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015).

Graduate Tracer studies are essential as a way of understanding the relevance and quality of programs offered by the universities as well as the labor market. There is a demand for empirical evidence regarding the professional relevance of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) study programs using graduate tracer studies. HEIs require graduate tracer studies for accreditation of study programs. HEIs must be interested in feedback from their graduates on the quality of education (Obando & Shisanya, 2013).

Given the above statements, the researcher wanted to find out the current work status of nursing graduates and their employment data, whether they were able to find jobs related to their course or in some other fields.

The study was anchored on Robert Lent, Steven Brown, and Hackett's Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). Social cognitive career theory emphasizes on:

(1) Cognitive-Person variables that enable people to influence their career development; (2) extra-person variables that enhance or constrain personal agency.

SCCT, (Andersen & Vandehey, 2011) is divided into two complementary levels of theoretical analysis. (A) FIRST LEVEL-presented cognitive-person variables that enable people to exercise within their own career development; (B) SECOND LEVEL - considered the paths through which several additional sets of variables—such as (1) physical attributes; (2) features of the environment; (3)and particular learning experiences—influence career-related interests and

choice behavior.

Occupations are categorized by the interpersonal settings that people must function and their associated lifestyles. Another theory, John Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments, was utilized.

Holland's study as emphasized by Cavanaugh and Blanchard-Fields in 2011 that identifies six personality types that combine these factors, RIASEC, wherein each letter or code stands for a particular "type": (1) Realistic (Doers), (2) Investigative (Thinkers), (3) Artistic (Creators), (4) Social (Helpers), (5) Enterprising (Persuaders), and (6) Conventional (Organizers).

Individuals are initially attracted to a career by their personalities and other variables such as age, gender, culture, social class, intelligence, and level of education that constitute their personal background.

Finally, the study makes use of Frank Parson's Trait and Factor Theory, which refers to the assessment of the characteristics of the person and a job. Individuals have unique traits that can be objectively measured and matched against requirements of occupations. Choosing an occupation involves trying to match an individual to a job so that their needs will be met and their job performance will be satisfactory (Zunker, 2011). The terms traits and factor "refer to the assessment of characteristics of the person and the job performance. Traits were originally viewed as being biologically based and therefore unchanging, and later as learned and subject to change. The term "trait and factor" implies a matching between individuals and jobs, and career selection occurs as a result of understanding the relationship between knowledge about the occupation (Patton & McHamon, 2014).

The study determined the current work status and the employment data of the University of Cebu Lapu-Lapu and Mandaue (UCLM) College of Nursing graduates from all batches of 2007 to 2014 with the following objectives:

A. To check employment and unemployment situation of graduates;

B. To determine whether the graduates' specific work assignment are related to their study

C. Viewing whether competencies learned in college was useful in the employment

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized the descriptive research design to determine the employment status of the nursing graduates of University of Cebu Lapu-Lapu and Mandaue from 2007 to 2014. The findings were used as the basis for a report. The respondents of the study were nursing graduates of University of Cebu-Lapulapu and Mandaue batch 2007–2014. The number of respondents per batch is as follows: (A) 10 from Batch 2007, (B) 3 from Batch 2008, (C) 11 from Batch 2009, (D) 12 from Batch 2010, (E) 28 from Batch 2011, (F) 29 from Batch 2012, (G) 30 from Batch 2013, (H) 27 from Batch 2013. The total number of respondents equaled to n=150.

The researchers utilized the University of Cebu Lapulapu and Mandaue Graduate Tracer Study Tool. Part one is about general information. Part two is regarding the respondent's educational background. Part three is concerned about the training(s) and advanced studies they have attended after college. Finally, part four is about their employment data. These components were used to determine the graduate's current status.

The researchers asked permission first from the dean's office to conduct the study. Next, they requested from the Registrar's Office the lists of names, addresses, and contact numbers of the graduates. The administration of the questionnaire was done in three manners, namely: (1) the alumna was suggested to visit the college and answer the questionnaire, (2) the questionnaire was distributed through electronic mail and social media e.g. Facebook and Twitter and (3) Google forms were used to distribute the questionnaires directly via the internet. Simple Percentage was used to analyze and present the information coming from the respondents.

Some limitations of the study include: (1) Only a few graduates were accessible ; (2) Time Constraints; (3) Graduates answer the tool with a hurried pace, which makes some data unreliable; (4) The questionnaire is of a lengthy nature and the arrangement is confusing and (5) Lack of responsiveness in some subjects, leading to fewer number of respondents in some batches. In the data analysis, descriptive statistics was used. In the future

studies, the researchers must utilize an improved program tracer instrument, due to the improper design and poor grouping of constructs of the prior instrument.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As shown in Table 1, most of the respondents were females and the majority of the respondents were single.

According to an article entitled Single People, singles do more to maintain a diversity of interpersonal ties than married people do (De Paulo, Bella., 2011). Meanwhile, from Wharton's view, gender operates at all levels of social life which is deeply embedded in how work is organized, rewarded, and experienced. A more recent stream of literature in the gender and work area views gender as embedded within work structures and organizations (Wharton, 2013).

Table 1. Profile of the Graduates (n=150)

CIVIL STATUS	FREQUENCY	%
Single	141	94%
Married	8	5.33%
Consensual Union	1	0.67%
GENDER	FREQUENCY	%
Male	65	43.33%
Female	85	56.67%

Table 2 shows that the top reasons for taking the course or pursuing a degree are the following: influence by parents or relatives, an opportunity for employment abroad, the prospect for immediate employment. Furthermore, Table 2.1 presented the reason for pursuing advanced studies, 146 of 150 respondents answered that it is mainly for professional development. The advanced studies/pieces of training attended include BLS/ACLS and IV training, while only a few took up masters studies.

According to the findings of the study entitled, "Friendship Quality and Peer Attachment as Predictors of Adolescents' Subsequent Academic", friendship quality and peer attachment in early adolescence are predictive of relative changes in levels of academic

achievement over time (Spavins, 2010). Moreover as stated in another study, registered nurses reported transformative experiences when returning for their baccalaureate degree in nursing which included raising their potentials, changing their perspectives about nursing practice, and being able to finally "see the big picture." Although RNs felt they returned to school as skilled, knowledgeable and professional practitioners, they reported growing beyond their expectations in areas of knowledge and professionalism, which they felt led them to become more effective to bring about change and a better patient advocates (Orsolini-Hain, 2010).

Table 2. Reasons for taking the course or pursuing degree (n=150)

Reasons for taking the course or pursuing degree		
	FREQUENCY	%
High grades in the course or subject related to the course	6	4%
Good grades in high school	10	6.67%
Influence by parents or relatives	20	13.33%
Peer influence	10	6.67%
Inspired by a role model	11	7.33%
Strong passion for the profession	11	7.33%
Prospect for immediate employment	12	8%
Status or prestige of the profession	7	4.67%
Availability of course offering in chosen institution	11	7.33%
Prospect of career advancement	11	7.33%
Affordable for the family	7	4.67%
Prospect of attractive compensation	12	8%
Opportunity for employment abroad	18	12%
No particular choice or no better idea	4	2.67%

Table 2.1. Training(s) Advance Studies Attended After College (N=146)

Advanced Studies Attended	Frequency	%
BLS/ ACLS	86	58.90%
IV Training	54	36.99%
Masters	6	4.12%
What made you pursue advance studies?	**Frequency**	**%**
For promotion	49	33.56%
For professional development	97	66.44%

Table 3 presents the employment data of the graduates. The majority of the respondents were employed and less than one fifth is not presently employed. In lieu with these findings, Table 3.1, shows the reasons why they are not yet employed (n=28) which are: family concerns, a decision not to search for a job or pursuing for advance or future studies.

In Philippines, the First Global Summit of Filipino Nurses happened on January 15, 2014. Sec. Enrique T. Ona mentioned in his speech that the employment data from Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) reveals that out of the 526,897 registered nurses nation wide in 2012, 177, 414 nurses are employed abroad. Meanwhile, in the same year, the National Database of Human Resources for Health Information System reports that there are only 38,488 nurses employed in the country's government and private hospitals (DOH, 2014). At the latest count, there are more than 200,000 nurses in the country who are out of a job. Another 100,000 got employment not related to their profession. They either land as casino workers, waitresses in restaurants and hotels or call center agents (Sangil, 2014).

Table 3. Employment Data of the Graduates (n=150)

EMPLOYMENT DATA		
Are you presently employed?	**FREQUENCY**	**%**
Yes	121	80.67%
No	28	18.67%
Never employed	1	0.67%

Table 3.1. Reasons why you are not yet employed (n=28)

Please state reasons why you are not yet employed.	FREQUENCY	%
Advance or future studies	10	35.71%
Family concern and decided not to find a job	13	46.43%
Lack of work experience	1	3.57%
Did not look for a job	4	14.29%

Table 4 reveals the status of the employed graduates (n=121), in addition, it involves the present occupation, the major line of business, present employment status and place of work. In their present occupation, most of the respondents assume professional work and the major line of business is in the health and social work sector. Most of the respondents are regular/ permanently employed, a little less than a fifth are contractually and temporarily employed. Majority of the respondents are locally employed.

It is to be emphasized that nursing graduates are concerned about the fact that not getting experience will impact future employability. Some went so far so as to express willingness to "work for free" to gain needed experience. The new graduates also are worried that without work experience, they are going to lose the skills they have developed in nursing school or that those skills will be quickly outdated. Comments related to the high cost of baccalaureate education arise as the graduate is faced with not being able to find a job (Lippincott's Nursing Center, 2012).

With regards to employment status, in the Philippines, according to Alvin Ng, an economist at the University of Santo Tomas, labor mismatch impacts the economy in such a way that the time spent pursuing a particular course in college becomes a futile exercise for the student and brings about an oversupply of talents to a certain profession. A mismatch occurs because of the failure to generate the sufficient number of people needed by the economy.

Table 4. Status of the Employed Graduates (Present Occupation, Major Line of Business, Place of Work) (n=121)

Present Occupation (based on the Philippine Standard Occupational Classification)	FREQUENCY	%
Professional	96	79.34
Service Worker	11	9.1
Clerk	7	5.79
Officials of Government and Special-interest Organizations, Corporate Executives, Managers, Managing Proprietors and Supervisors	5	4.13
Technician and Associate Professionals	1	.83
Clerks	1	.83

Major line of business	FREQUENCY	%
Health and Social Work	81	66.94
Transport Storage& Communication	14	11.57
Education	12	9.92
Manufacturing	6	4.96
Hotels and Restaurants	1	.83
Transport storage and communication	2	1.65
Public administration and defense; compulsory and security	3	2.48
Private households with employed persons	1	.83
Extra-territorial organizations and bodies	1	.83
Present employment status	**FREQUENCY**	**%**
Regular or permanent	77	63.63
Temporary	18	14.88
Contractual	23	19
Self-employed	3	2.48
Place of Work	**Frequency**	**%**
Local	111	91.89
Abroad	10	8.11

Table 4.1: Gross monthly earning in first job after college

What is your initial gross monthly earning in your first job after college?	FREQUENCY N=121	%
Below P5,000.00	2	1.65
P5,000.00 to less than P10,000.00	98	80.99
P10,000.00 to less than P15,000.00	15	12.4
P15,000.00 to less than P20,000.00	3	2.48
P20,000.00 to less than P25,000.00	3	2.48
Relevance of job to the course taken in college	**FREQUENCY**	**%**
Relevant	87	71.9
Not Relevant	34	28.1

This part tackles on finding the first job of the respondents (n=121). Most of the respondents still had their first job after college, and the reason for staying in their first job is because of salaries and benefits. The initial gross monthly earning on the first job after college is Php 5,000 to less than Php 10,000. Almost two-thirds of the respondents had jobs related to the course they took up in college.

The competencies that the graduates find useful in their first job are as follows (Table 5): communicat ion skills (35.35%) considered the most important,

followed by critical thinking skills with less than a third (27.59%). Human relations skills are last with just over a tenth of a hundred (16.81%).

Table 5: Competencies learned in college that is useful in the first job (multiple responses)

What competencies learned in college did you find useful in your first job?	FREQUENCY	%
Communication skills	82	35.34
Human relations skills	39	16.81
Entrepreneurship skills	8	3.45
Information technology skills	12	5.17
Problem-solving skills	27	11.64
Critical thinking skills	64	27.59

CONCLUSION

The employment data of the respondents showed the current work status of the nursing graduates. The majority are employed. In their present occupation, most of the respondents assume professional work and the major line of business is in the health and social work sector. It was depicted that most of them are regular employees, have professional occupations and have local jobs in the health and social work field. Most of the respondents are regular/ permanently employed, only less than a fifth is contractually and temporarily employed accordingly. Most of the respondents are locally employed. For most of them, more than a half got their jobs within 1 to 6 months of graduation. Almost two-thirds of the respondents had jobs related to the course they took up in college. The competencies that the graduates find useful in their first job are communication skills, critical thinking skills and human relations skills.

The researchers recommend the following: the alumni office and placement office of UCLM should conduct campus job fairs and post hiring announcements on health care field through bulletin boards and websites; future studies should be done to gather information about the status of the graduates every three years; the guidance services must provide the graduates with career opportunities orientation, aside from the health sector so that they can be employed into another line of business. In line with this, Alumni Committees must be appointed by the college. They shall be responsible for keeping track of the status of the graduates; and, lastly, the College of Nursing should further develop programs on improving and enhancing student's communication skills, human relations skill, and critical thinking skills.

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