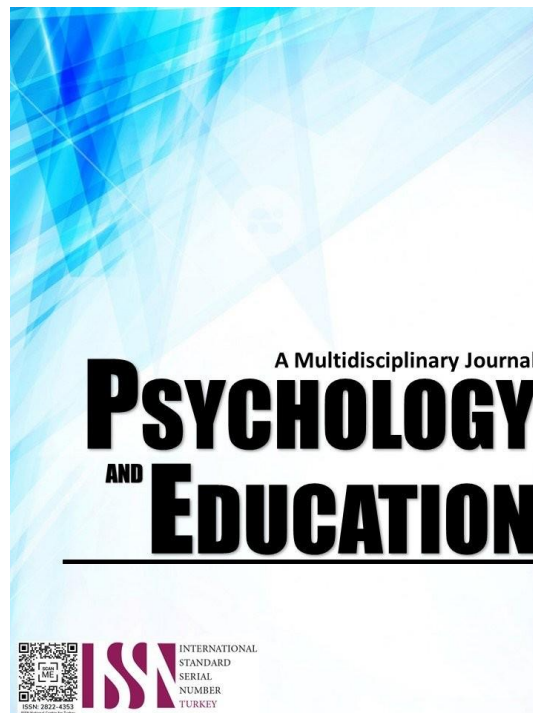


A TRACER STUDY ON THE 2019-2021 GRADUATES OF BACHELOR OF ARTS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM OF ILOILO SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY



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A Tracer Study on the 2019-2021 Graduates of Bachelor of Arts in Community Development Program of Iloilo Science and Technology University

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Abstract

This descriptive study aimed to determine the status and profile of Bachelor of Arts in Community Development (BACD) graduates of Iloilo Science and Technology University (ISAT U) 2019-2021. The data was gathered using a researcher-made, properly validated questionnaire. The researcher used Google Forms to gather data. Frequency counts and percentages were utilized as descriptive statistical tools. Data revealed that most of the BACD graduates are female, residing in towns, single, and have not taken examinations for career advancements. Most of them have not pursued graduate education. The study revealed that BACD graduates 2019-2021 have high employment rates and were able to land a job after graduation. The majority of the graduates are employed in the private sector and are holding permanent and temporary positions. Many of the graduates hold high-level positions, while others engage in social work. Most of the graduates find their job as walk-in applicants and through recommendations and referrals. Communication skills, organizing skills, and personal relations have helped the graduates find a job. Strengthening the services of the University Placement office and enhancement to the curricular structure are advanced by this study. To increase their employment prospects, it is also suggested that BACD students be exposed to several government agencies during their fieldwork and OJT. The graduates are highly encouraged to pursue graduate studies and relevant training for career enhancement. It also recommended to continue the conduct of tracer study.

Keywords: *tracer, community development, BACD graduates, fieldwork*

Introduction

The responsibility of higher education institutions (HEIs) in producing quality graduates does not end in that momentous ceremony called graduation but rather extends towards sustaining the careers of graduates as they seek for employment. In the challenges of 21st-century education, higher education stands out as one of the major keys to cope with reforms through instruction, research, and extension. The Philippine Higher Education Institutions continue to provide ways to cater these reforms. One way of addressing these concerns is by producing fully-equipped graduates who would use what they have learned in school and apply it in their respective work (Tertiary Education Commission, 2009). This is where the importance of tracer studies is engraved.

Monitoring the employment status of the graduates serves as a guide on skills anticipation and matching, covers the development and carrying out of tracer studies, and aims to contribute to the improvement of education through high-quality graduate surveys or tracer studies. Many countries are experiencing growing demand for tracer studies due to the requirements of accreditation and quality management. The conduct of tracer study is believed to identify the relevance of education/training for transition to a job and further vocational career in the first years after graduating. According to Abel et.al. (2014), graduates who are beginning to build their careers often need time to transition into the labor market that is why a college degree plays a significant role in determining whether a graduate would land a good job.

The impression of HEIs in the Philippines is likely tangled to its reputation of generating graduates who would undoubtedly acquire a good and stable job after graduation. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in the Philippines has mandated HEIs to conduct tracer studies as part of the definition of a center of excellence and center of development degree programs. The graduate profile is also one of the documentary requirements of the higher education accrediting body, e.g., the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Universities and Colleges in the Philippines (AACCUP), Inc. Data generated from a tracer study could re-evaluate the factors affecting and contributing to the status of employment of graduates. De Ocampo, et.al. (2012) as mentioned in the work of Cuadra et.al. (2019) asserted that tracer studies are common research methods for educational institutions to check on the employability of their graduates. Likewise, Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) is useful for policy and equity implication in higher education. Other studies also emphasized the importance of an institutionalized university-wide tracer study every school year.

It was emphasized further in the study of Kartika et.al. (2019) that it must always be ensured that universities establish relevance curriculum which are periodically updated in accordance with the current demands of the society. In this context Ministry of research, Technology, and Higher Education has stated that tracer study is a significant step to address this new challenge.

It is in this parlance that this study was conducted to determine the employment status and job experiences of the Bachelor of Arts in Community Development graduates 2019-2021 and to be able to enhance the curriculum based on the needs and demands of the industry. Moreover, this present research study is also pursued to serve as a valuable addition to the prevailing corpus of academic literature concerning graduate tracer studies.

Research Questions

This study aims to determine the employment status of the BACD graduates of the year 2019, 2020, and 2021. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the Bachelor of Arts in Community Development Graduates in 2019, 2020, and 2021 as to sex, residence, civil status, examinations passed, and advanced education?
2. What are the employment status and job experiences of the graduates?
3. What key points and recommendations can this study offer for the improvement of the tertiary education curriculum of the university?

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized the descriptive research design. A descriptive study involves collecting data in order to test hypothesis or to answer question concerning the current status of the subject of the study. The survey method was employed in gathering the necessary data such as the personal information, employment information, advanced education, and other related concerns of the respondents. The instrument used to gather the data needed for this study was validated by a group of experts in the field of research. Based from the validated instrument, Google forms were generated to administer the questionnaire via online.

Participants

The respondents of the study were based from the official list of graduates for batch 2019, 2020 and 2021 provided by the University Registrar's Office. A total of 115 BACD graduates served as the respondents of this research. Social media was used to gain access to the graduates.

Instruments

The frequencies was used to determine the number of participants to specified independent categories such as sex, residence, civil status, examinations passed and advanced studies. Percentage was used to determine the proportion of the respondents' population when classified according to the variables compared to the whole population. Frequencies was also used in determining the employment information and experiences of the respondents.

Procedure

A written request to conduct this study was secured from the Office of the President and the University Research and Extension Director. After the letter was approved, the Google forms were sent to the Bachelor of Arts in Community Development Batch of 2019, 2020, and 2021. Upon completion, the forms were recovered and examined. The remaining unresolved items in the instrument were completed by subsequent inquiries. The data gathered were converted into numerical codes and encoded in the computer with a backup file for processing and safe storage. After encoding, the data was treated with statistical tools for analysis and interpretation.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher obtained the necessary permission to carry out the study from the authorities via formal correspondence. The intervention materials utilized in the study were carefully crafted to exclude any offensive, discriminatory, or otherwise inappropriate wording. In order to safeguard the privacy of the participants, their identities and personal information were omitted from this study. The respondents' participation was also optional. The respondents were furnished with a Letter of Consent which is attached to the Google form used. The researcher ensured impartiality in examining and deliberating about the findings. All authors cited in this study were accurately referenced and duly recognized in the reference.

Results and Discussion

Respondents' Profile

This section describes the profile of the Bachelor of Arts in Community Development Batch 2019, 2020, and 2021 when taken as a whole and when classified according to sex, residence, civil status, examinations passed, and advanced education. Table 1 shows the profile of the respondents.

Table 1. *Profile of the Respondents*

Category	<i>f</i>	%
Entire Group	115	100
Sex		
Male	12	10.4
Female	103	89.6
Residence		
City	29	25.2
Town	86	74.8
Civil Status		
Single	101	87.8
Married	14	12.2
Examinations Passed		
Civil Service Exam	9	7.8
TESDA Exam	3	2.6
None	103	89.6
Advanced Education	<i>f</i>	%
Masters	3	2.6
Doctorate	0	0
None	112	97.4

The demographic profile of the one hundred fifteen (115) BACD students covered in this study is presented in Table 1. As to sex, 103 or 89.6% of the BACD graduates were females and 12 or 10.4% were male. This presents that there were more female respondents than their male counterparts. As to residence, 29 or 25.2% of the graduates are living in the city and 86 or 74.8% are from the towns. Most of the graduates of the program are from the towns of Iloilo province.

As to civil status, 101 or 87.8% are single and 14 or 12.2% are married. Notably, young adults are work-oriented and career-focused as shown in the distribution of the respondents about their civil status.

As to examinations passed, 9, or 7.8% have passed the Civil Service Eligibility Exam while 103 or 89.6% have not taken any examination at all. Three graduates or 2.6% were able to pass the TESDA exam.

As to advanced education, 3 or 2.6% have enrolled in the Master's degree program while 112 or 97.4% did not enroll in any post-graduate program. It can be inferred here that graduates focused more on their earnings for personal use rather than spending on advanced or graduate studies.

Employment Information

Table 2. *Employability of the Respondents*

Category	<i>f</i>	%
Entire Group	115	100
Employment		
Employed	82	71.3
Not Employed	33	28.7

Table 2 shows that 82 or 71.3% of the respondents are employed while 33 or 28.7% are not employed. Data shows that BACD graduates have high employment rates. This indicates that the University has achieved its mission and vision and its objectives to produce highly productive and employable graduates. This data further validates the assertion from the Woya 2019 study that higher education enhances students' job-related skills and competencies, preparing them to enter the labor market.

Table 3. *Employment Affiliation of the Respondents*

<i>Category</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Entire Group	82	100
Employment		
Government	18	22.0
Private	64	78.0

Out of 115 graduates of the BACD program, 82 are employed. Table 3 shows the employment affiliation of the respondents. Data shows that 18 or 22.0% are employed in the government while most of the graduates are employed in the private sector comprising 64 or 78.0%. The study's findings align with earlier statistics, indicating that a small number of BACD graduates have successfully completed and passed the Civil Service Eligibility Exam. This examination is a prerequisite for gaining admission into government employment. The statistics also suggest that private establishments, which provide greater access to jobs, attract a larger number of graduates.

Table 4. *Employment Status of the Respondents*

<i>Category</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Entire Group	82	100
Employment		
Permanent	33	40.2
Temporary	20	24.4
Casual	16	19.5
Job-hire	13	15.9

Table 4 shows that out 82 of employed respondents, 33 or 40.2% are having a permanent position. 20 or 24.4% are on temporary status. 16 or 19.5% are on a casual basis and 13 or 15.9% are job-hire employees. Data shows that most respondents enjoy employment on a more permanent basis compared to casual or job-hire employment. It can be inferred further that BACD graduates have gained stable and well-paid jobs.

Table 5. *Nature of Employment of the Respondents*

<i>Category</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Entire Group	82	100
Nature of Work		
Management	15	18.3
Social Work	13	15.9
Customer Service	12	14.6
Office Staff	11	13.4
Sales Associate	6	7.3
Teaching	5	6.1
Finance / Accounting Office	5	6.1
BPOs	5	6.1
Purchasing	3	3.7
Health Services	3	3.7
Agriculture	3	3.7
OFW	1	1.2

As to the nature of the work of the respondents, they are engaged in a variety of jobs. Table 5 shows that 15 or 18.3% of the respondents are engaged in managerial work. 13 or 15.9% are into social work. 12 or 14.6% are working in the customer service industry and 11 or 13.4% are working as office staff. 6 or 7.3% are sales associates. 5 or 6.1% are in the teaching profession and another 5 or 6.1% of the respondents are working in the finance or accounting office. 5 or 6.1% landed in BPO's. 3 or 3.7% are working as purchasers in a company. There are graduates who are employed in health services and agriculture comprising of 3 or 3.7%. One (1) or 1.2% is an Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW).

Many of the graduates are holding managerial positions which indicates that they are in the top-level job classification. A portion of the graduates are engaged in social work. This is a positive indication that the alumni of the BACD program have successfully obtained

employment that is in line with their program of study. The respondents' work in many occupations demonstrates their versatility and possession of a range of skills applicable to different job classifications.

Employment Experiences of the Respondents

Table 6. *Length of Time Spent Before Getting the First Job*

<i>Category</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Entire Group	82	100
Length of Time Before Getting the First Job		
Less than 1 month	26	31.7
1-6 months	32	39.0
7-11 months	13	15.9
1-2 years	11	13.4
More than 2 years	0	0

As shown in Table 6, most of the graduates spent lesser time in getting their first job. 26 or 31.7% of them got their first job in less than a month, 32 or 39% were employed in 1-6 months time. 13 or 15.9% had their job in 7-11 months. And 11 or 13.4% in 1-2 years. None of the graduates spent more than two years before getting their first job.

Evidence indicates that BACD graduates exhibit a strong resolve to secure employment. They possess a strong work ethic and are highly motivated to establish their professional career as soon as possible. Additionally, this data suggests that the respondents possess the necessary abilities as they were able to handle the requirements of work prospects effectively.

Table 7. *Length of Time Staying in First Job*

<i>Category</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Entire Group	82	100
Length of Time Staying in First Job		
Less than 1 month	5	6.1
1-6 months	24	29.3
7-11 months	9	11.0
1-2 years	33	40.2
More than 2 years	11	13.4

As to the length of time that BACD graduates stayed on their first job, Table 7 shows that 33 or 40.2% stayed for 1-2 years. 24 or 29.3% spent 1-6 months in their first job. 11 or 13.4% stayed for more than 2 years. 9 or 11.0% stayed for 7-11 months. And 5 or 6.1% have stayed in their first job for less than a month. It can be observed that the length of time spent by graduates in their first job varies.

The study conducted by Reyes et.al. (2019) offers insights into the reasons for employee attrition. The occurrence of this can be attributed to institutional, personal, and psycho-social factors. Most of the graduates have stayed in their first job for 1-2 years. This data result supports the previous findings that many among the graduates have landed into permanent jobs and that they were able to stay in their first job for a longer period of time.

Table 8 presents the manner by which CD graduates were able to find their first job. 28 or 34.1% were walk-in applicants while 23 or 28.0% were hired through a recommendation from someone. 9 or 11.0% landed a job through information coming from their friends. 8 or 9.8% find their job through advertisements. There were 8 graduates or 4.3% were absorbed by the agency where they had their fieldwork or OJT. 4 or 4.9% were hired through a job fair. 2 or 2.4% learned of job availability through social media. No graduate was able to find a job through the school's job placement office.

The research implies that the majority of CD graduates secure employment by their own efforts. Some of them were able to employ with the help of other persons or their friends. Some graduates were recruited based on their experience with various agencies during their fieldwork or on-the-job training, which can serve as a reliable measure of the program's curriculum structure. The connections to agencies where graduates completed their fieldwork or on-the-job training (OJT) should be strengthened. The data also indicates that

there is a need to enhance the school's job placement mechanism for CD graduates.

Table 8. *Manner of Finding First Job*

<i>Category</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Entire Group	82	100
Manner of Finding First Job		
Walk-in Applicant	28	34.1
Recommendation	23	28.0
Information from Friends	9	11.0
Advertisement	8	9.8
Absorbed by Agency	8	9.8
Job Fair	4	4.9
Social Media	2	2.4
School Job Placement	0	0

Table 9. *Skills Learned in the Program that Helped Graduates in Finding a Job*

<i>Category</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Entire Group	82	100
Helpful Skills		
Communication Skills	25	30.5
Organizing Skills	23	28.0
Personal Relations	19	23.2
Computer Literacy	10	12.2
Multi-Tasking Ability	5	6.1

Table 9 shows the skills that CD graduates have acquired in their course that have helped them find their job. 25 or 30.5% of them revealed that communication skills have helped them in their venture to find a job. 23 or 28.0% indicated that learning organizing skills is essential in their quest for placement. Personal relations is also important since 19 or 23.2% of the graduates used this in finding a job. 10 or 12.2% said that computer literacy greatly helped them in having a work. While 5 or 6.1% said that multi-tasking and self-confidence are also needed in job placement.

It can be deduced from these data that the CD curriculum had appropriately designed courses, both major and minor courses, which can be very beneficial to CD graduates. The curriculum has courses in Communication and Development, Seminar Education on Development Issues and Realities, and Technical Writing with Oral Communication which contribute to the enhancement of their communication skills. The curriculum also has designed a 5-unit course on Community Organizing (major course) which will prepare the graduates to field immersion. The study of Shah and Srivastava (2014) supports this finding. Factors such as analytical skills, communication skills, leadership and problem-solving ability are determinants of the graduates' employability.

Conclusion

Based on the results and the findings of the study, the following summary and conclusions were drawn. Majority of the BACD graduates are female, residing in towns, single, and have not taken examinations for career advancements. A few were able to pass the Civil Service Eligibility Examination. Most of them have not pursued graduate education. BACD graduates are highly employable. 71.3% of them are employed. Majority of the graduates are employed in the private sector. Only a handful are in the government service. Most of the BACD graduates employed have permanent/regular and temporary positions. Only a few are hired on a casual and job-hire status.

The nature of employment of the respondents is varied. There are graduates holding managerial positions. Others are hired as social workers. There are those who are working in the customer service industry and in Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) companies. The rest are hired in different fields of work such as encoders, purchasers, helpers, construction workers, staff, and sales.

BACD graduates were able to employ immediately after graduation. A few were employed for more than a year. Most of the

respondents stay in their first job in 1-2 years. Job opportunities are found by most of the graduates as walk-in applicants. Communicating and organizing skills are the prevalent skills found helpful by the BACD graduates in finding their job.

The following recommendations are advanced by this study: Taking of Civil Service Eligibility Exam for the BACD graduates is strongly suggested by this study. This will give them opportunities to enter government service. The graduates are also encouraged to pursue graduate studies, and other advanced studies, and take relevant training courses to enable them to successfully compete in the labor market.

Given that graduates are employed at the managerial level, this study recommends that graduates' skill sets be expanded to include technical capabilities, decision-making abilities, critical thinking, and the capacity to solve difficult problems. Curriculum review and enhancement is suggested by this research in order to align subject offerings with the necessary competencies and skills demanded in the arena of job placement. The study suggests also to widen the exposure of the students to different government and non-government agencies, especially in their fieldwork/OJT. Hence, a two-semester fieldwork/OJT is highly recommended. Strengthening the services offered by the School Job Placement Office is recommended to expand the job placement opportunities of the graduates.

For future researches, expanding the variables is suggested in order to capture more factors affecting the employability of the graduates. A life satisfaction survey can also be added in the instrument to be used.

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