

Original Article

Evaluation of College Graduate's Profile and Employment Profile in Wesleyan University-Philippines (WU-P), Aurora Campus

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Abstract: A worldwide financial crisis has been caused by COVID-19 that affects everyone at risk in regard to our well-being, occupations, careers, salaries, livelihoods, and the employment of millions of individuals all over the world. In any case, guaranteeing that the recuperation is fast and supported and modifying a more versatile and inclusive labour showcase are impressive challenges. The study was conducted at WU-P, Aurora, and sought to analyze the acquired skills, values, educational experiences, continuing professional development, and the employability profile of college graduates during the pandemic of Academic Years 2020 and 2021. The study utilized a descriptive-correlational study design through survey questionnaires. A total enumeration sampling procedure was used, and data were analysed using descriptive statistics. The results showed that graduates who found the curriculum relevant remained in their jobs longer, emphasizing the importance of aligning academic programs with industry needs. Key challenges graduates faced included tight competition, limited job vacancies, "plakasan" or reliance on personal connections, and lack of work experience. Graduates preferred gaining practical skills through training seminars rather than pursuing further academic studies. Skills development, particularly in technical and networking, was crucial for securing employment. The study also emphasized the importance of internships and hands-on projects in preparing students for real-world challenges. These findings suggest that improving career services, updating curricula to align with industry demands, and providing more opportunities for practical training would enhance graduate employability.

Keywords: curricular components, employability, skills and values development, job-seeking, problems and solutions.

1. INTRODUCTION

A worldwide financial crisis has been caused by COVID-19 that affects everyone at risk in regard to our well-being, occupations, careers, salaries, livelihoods, and the employment of millions of individuals all over the world. In any case, guaranteeing that the recuperation is fast and supported and modifying a more versatile and inclusive labour showcase are impressive challenges [1]. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented significant challenges and has had a profound impact on the education system. Parents, teachers, and students face new challenges and opportunities. Strictly, no face-to-face classes were implemented. In order to maintain and deliver quality education during lockdowns and community quarantines, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) released Memorandum Order No. 4, series of 2020, outlining guidelines for the implementation of Flexible Learning in both public and private

Higher Education Institutions. Assessing the success of alumni is essential for the growth and sustainability of an educational institution. One primary goal of a college education is to secure employment. Many parents, especially in the Philippines, invest in their children's education with the expectation that it will lead to stable and meaningful job opportunities, which they view as a key legacy and pathway to a better future. Joining the workforce marks a significant turning point in both the professional and personal lives of graduates. Transitioning from college to the professional world is not just a simple shift; it involves adapting to company cultures, unlocking individual potential, and pursuing career growth, building new social networks, and gaining independence. These experiences are key milestones in young people's lives, particularly in the challenging context of the pandemic. The importance and core of the university are to produce employable college graduates. It measures not only the individual potentials, accomplishments, and achievements of the graduates but also bears a resembling sound of success and triumphs to the university to deliver a work-ready employable graduate. All colleges and universities all over the country have the philosophy of reinforcing existing associations and strengthening networks to build linkages to the industry [2]. Wesleyan University – Philippines (WU-P), Aurora Campus, is an academic institution catering to the needs of the community both in education and services, as it always adheres to its mission that “undergirds scholarship, character, and service.” Before the pandemic, Academic Year (AY) 2018-2019, there were one hundred fifty-five graduates produced by WU-P Aurora. However, in 2019-2020, there were ninety-seven, and in 2020-2021, there were only forty-eight graduates [3]. With the mission and vision of Wesleyan University-Philippines to provide quality education and to produce competent and conscientious graduates through academic excellence, innovative study, and transformative leadership, it is deemed necessary to know the present employability status of the graduates’, especially the College Department of WUP-Aurora. The study aimed to collect empirical data to assess the employability of graduates and to examine the transition process these college graduates experienced as they moved from higher education to the workforce during the pandemic [4]. The study also helped the university improve, enhance, and enrich the different degree programs offered by the university that may demonstrate WU-P Aurora’s policy and decision-making in terms of curricular components, skills, and values development. WUP-Aurora is a private, non-sectarian institution, proudly recognized as the first university in the province of Aurora. Every year, the university graduates nearly a hundred students from various degree programs, who then enter the country’s workforce. An author [5] explained that students often choose schools closer to home to avoid the financial strain of moving, manage family responsibilities, and deal with limited transportation options. According to [6], students tend to choose universities with a well-established reputation in their communities, especially when they are looking for affordable, reliable, and familiar educational options and qualifications, and there is a low demand for job opportunities in the local community. The study of [7] supported that, showing that professionals in education and criminology often find employment due to the steady demand for their services. Additionally, government jobs in education and law enforcement offer long-term job security and career growth, which may influence graduates to pursue these fields instead of other options, such as Accountancy or technical fields like Computer Science, which may require additional certifications or face higher competition in the private sector [8]. An author [9] found that many students were under financial pressure due to job loss or fewer work hours, which made it even harder to stay enrolled and finish their degrees. The isolation caused by the pandemic also created a significant impact on students’ mental health, making it more difficult to manage academic responsibilities. These factors contributed to the lower number of graduates in 2021, showing how the pandemic had a profound impact on higher education and disrupted students' academic progress. The study by [10] supported these findings, showing that the decline in academic performance due to the pandemic is a widespread issue, not limited to one region. Students who have limited access to proper support or resources saw their performance drop, which likely contributed to the lower number of honours graduates in the study.

According to [11] and [12], the sudden shift to online learning created many challenges, such as issues with poor internet connections and not having the right devices, which made it hard for students to keep up with their classes. The lack of in-person interactions with classmates and teachers made things even harder, as students missed out on the support; they normally rely on to do well in their studies. An author [13] found that the pandemic caused a lot of stress and anxiety for students, making it difficult for them to stay focused and motivated. It aligns with the situation in the current study, where the lack of face-to-face engagement and the uncertainty about learning schedules increased anxiety, lowering academic performance. Since the shift to online learning was sudden, many students didn't have the resources or preparation they needed, which affected their ability to finish with honours. The study analysed the college graduates of WU-P Aurora acquired skills, values, educational experiences, continuing professional development, and their employment profile during the pandemic.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study used descriptive - correlational study design through a survey method using a questionnaire for data collection. The study was conducted at Wesleyan University-Philippines (WU-P), Aurora Campus. WU-P, Aurora Campus, is an academic institution catering to the needs of the community both in education and services, as it always adheres to its mission that "undergirds scholarship, character, and service." WU-P is a United Methodist Church (UMC)-related institution that is non-sectarian and is the Extension Campus of WU-P Cushman Campus in Cabanatuan City. WU-P Aurora Campus is the first university in the province of Aurora. It is a private educational institution, non-stock non-profit, and non-sectarian university located at Brgy. 01, Maria Aurora, Aurora. The respondents of the study were college graduates of WU-P Aurora Campus representing different degree programs. The study used and utilized the total enumeration sampling method in the study. There were ninety-seven (97) and forty-eight (48) college graduates of WU-P Aurora in 2020 and 2021, respectively, with a total of one hundred forty-five (145). Hence, two (2) graduates died, one (1) in 2020 and another one (1) in 2021, resulting to a total number of one hundred forty-three (143) graduates only. However, one hundred thirty-five (135) graduate respondents completely answered and returned the Google form and printed survey questionnaire. The main tool used in gathering data was a survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire is a combination of structured/closed and unstructured/open-ended items designed to attain the objectives of the study. The study sought the help of the university registrar with the approval of the campus administrator duly noted by the study adviser. I asked and borrowed the graduation program and yearbook, where the list of graduates with their specific addresses was recorded from the registrar's office. One way of data gathering is through a printed survey questionnaire distributed to the respondents residing within the vicinity of Población and in the nearby Barangay of Maria Aurora, Aurora. For respondents living in far-flung areas, the study identified and selected presently enrolled students who live in the same or nearby barangays where the respondents live. As such, the survey questionnaire was given and handled for effective data gathering to be ensured. With the aid of modern technology, the study communicated to the respondents through text and chat messages to ask and gather relevant data via a Google form. The link to the created Google form was sent through Facebook Messenger, Telegram, WhatsApp, e-mail, and other popular social networking sites. The study also used mobile phones through text or call and group chats to compose and send private messages to the WUP-Aurora college graduates so they to be informed of the survey questionnaire of the study to quickly answer and submit the questionnaire either printed or online. Upon the collection of the data, it was systematically processed, organized, and tabulated, followed by statistical analysis to address the study questions. All computations were computed using Microsoft Excel and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 01: Graduates' Profile

PARAMETERS	FREQUENCY n = 135	PERCENTAGE %
Address		
Maria Aurora	94	69.63
Dipaculao	21	15.56
Dinalungan	2	1.48
Dilasag	3	2.22
Baler	5	3.70
San Luis	8	5.93
Casiguran	1	0.74
Dingalan	0	0.00
Outside Aurora	1	0.74
Bachelor's degree		
Elementary Education	49	36.30
Accountancy	4	2.96
Accounting Technology	2	1.48
Business Administration	32	23.70
Criminology	39	28.89
Computer Science	9	6.67
Year Graduated		
2020	89	65.93
2021	46	34.07
Honours Received		
With honour's	4	2.96
Without honour's	131	97.04

An author [14] explained that students often choose schools closer to home to avoid the financial strain of moving, manage family responsibilities, and deal with limited transportation options. Moreover, WU-P Aurora's strong foundation and good reputation in the province likely influence students' decision to choose their preferred school.

Table 02: Continuing Professional Development

PARAMETERS	FREQUENCY n = 135	PERCENTAGE %
Graduate Study	50	37.04
Attending Seminar/Training	85	62.96

According to [15], both employees and employers value CPD because it offers a quick, cost-effective way to stay competitive in the workforce. Moreover, training and seminars focus on hands-on, practical skills that can be used right away, as [16] found that many professionals prefer short, relevant certifications to long academic degrees to keep their careers flexible. The growing popularity of CPD reflects broader labour market trends, where employers increasingly look for specific, measurable skills that contribute directly to job performance and career growth, as noted by [17].

Table 03: Skills and Values Development

PARAMETERS	MEAN	SD	DESCRIPTION
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Skills			
1. Grasp fundamental concepts, theories, and principles within the field of study.	3.47	0.59	Very Much
2. To be able to apply knowledge gained in school to work setting in a higher level of comprehension.	3.57	0.59	Very Much
3. Proficient and effective oral and written communication skills.	3.49	0.55	Very Much
4. Foster a culture of collaboration through share insights, experiences and enhance collective knowledge.	3.58	0.52	Very Much
5. Reflect on shared concerns critically, fostering innovative and ethical solutions to challenges.	3.45	0.59	Very Much
6. Interpersonal Social Skills - cultivate the ability to relate with colleagues and collaborate effectively within diverse groups.	3.57	0.52	Very Much
7. Recognize and embrace your identity while valuing individual differences in others.	3.59	0.56	Very Much
8. Problem-solving skills – the ability to think critically, analytically, and creatively to identify and resolve workplace issues.	3.57	0.55	Very Much
9. Decision-making skills – the ability to make informed decisions based on data and logical reasoning rather than emotional responses.	3.53	0.53	Very Much
10. Technical skills - proficiency in using computers and relevant technology effectively in the workplace.	3.45	0.57	Very Much
11. Work comfortably with existing and relevant techniques while also developing new adaptations and innovations.	3.48	0.55	Very Much
12. Participate in professional organizations to exchange knowledge and stay connected with industry trends.	3.45	0.59	Very Much
13. Commit to continuous self-improvement through reflection on personal culture, experiences, and professional practices.	3.55	0.55	Very Much
14. Perform tasks efficiently with minimal supervision by demonstrating reliability and initiative.	3.45	0.59	Very Much
15. To become confident in one's ability to perform a given task effectively.	3.59	0.54	Very Much
16. To commit for continuous personal and professional development through trainings, seminars, workshops and advanced studies.	3.57	0.55	Very Much
17. Engage in interdisciplinary projects that incorporate various fields of study, fostering adaptability in your skill set.	3.55	0.59	Very Much
18. Gain insights and skills from areas outside your primary field to enhance overall competence and creativity.	3.54	0.55	Very Much
19. Secure potential career opportunities to explore various career paths and enhance employability.	3.53	0.57	Very Much
20. Engage in academic activities such as reports, action study, and laboratory work enhances your ability to analyse information critically and think creatively.	3.45	0.69	Very Much

21. Attend academic conferences, participate in workshops, and collaborate on study projects to connect with professionals and peers in your field to build a professional network.	3.31	0.73	Very Much
22. Apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts through OJT and practicum increase practical knowledge and skills.	3.52	0.67	Very Much
23. Generate new ideas and approaches to problems, which can enhance innovation as teamwork in working together towards a common goal, leveraging each member's strengths and skills.	3.47	0.63	Very Much
24. Practice open-mindedness by considering multiple perspectives that cultivate a positive attitude toward change by viewing it as an opportunity for growth rather than a challenge.	3.66	0.52	Very Much
25. To be able to recover quickly from difficulties and setbacks, maintaining a positive outlook.	3.58	0.54	Very Much
Pooled Mean	3.52	0.43	Very Much
Values			
1. Equipped with cutting-edge knowledge and skills responsive to community and global development and exhibits appropriate behaviour in carrying-out activities in the school, community, and country.	3.55	0.55	Very Much
2. Dedicate myself to be responsive to the needs of the people within and beyond Wesleyan community	3.65	0.55	Very Much
3. Foster the spirit of harmony through mutual respect and understanding and is sensitive to individual, social, and cultural differences.	3.64	0.53	Very Much
4. Exemplify behaviour anchored on the wisdom and teaching of Jesus Christ and show adherence to ethical principles by upholding the truth.	3.70	0.49	Very Much
5. Uphold responsibility in all actions, serve as a steward in caring for environment by utilizing resources wisely, judiciously, and economically, and fulfil roles and capacities as models of service.	3.64	0.48	Very Much
Pooled Mean	3.64	0.45	Very Much

An author [18] highlighted that open-mindedness and adaptability are essential leadership skills for effective problem-solving in the workplace. These qualities are especially vital in today's fast-evolving industries, driven by technological progress and globalization. Their study suggests that leaders who welcome change and stay positive have a strong impact on their teams' engagement and overall performance. An author [19] emphasized that organizations that prioritize inclusivity and respect for individual differences often see higher levels of employee satisfaction and productivity.

Table 04: Curricular Components

PARAMETERS	MEAN	SD	DESCRIPTION
Academic Programs			
1. General Education (Social Sciences, English, Math, Natural Sciences)	3.47	0.67	Very Useful

2. Professional Subjects (major subjects)	3.57	0.61	Very Useful
3. Elective Subjects	3.41	0.66	Very Useful
Pooled Mean	3.48	0.53	Very Useful
Academic Works			
4. Doing study/feasibility, case study and term papers	3.42	0.73	Very Useful
5. Field work/OJT/Practicum/Practice Teaching	3.61	0.62	Very Useful
6. Doing projects	3.47	0.65	Very Useful
Pooled Mean	3.50	0.55	Very Useful
Extra-Curricular			
7. Joining student organizations and societies	3.42	0.77	Very Useful
8. Writing in student paper	3.30	0.87	Very Useful
9. Joining competitions (Quiz bee, poster making, etc.)	3.17	0.97	Moderately Useful
10. Christian Formation and Convocation	3.60	0.58	Very Useful
Pooled Mean	3.37	0.67	Very Useful

According to [20], when students take courses that are directly connected to what is needed in real jobs, it gives them a much better chance of getting hired. Similarly, [21] said that major subjects match students' future careers and help bridge the gap between what they learn in school and what they will actually do at work, making them more prepared and competitive in the workplace. Meanwhile, General Education (mean = 3.47) and General Education (mean = 3.47) are still very useful. It helps students develop skills such as critical thinking, global awareness, and problem-solving. Also, allow students to expand their intellectual abilities to build new skills for personal growth and bring creativity into their careers.

Table 05: Employment Profile

PARAMETERS	FREQUENCY n = 135	PERCENTAGE %
Status of employment		
Employed	133	98.52
Unemployed	2	1.48
Number of months in the current job		
< Mean No. of Months	70	51.85
≥ Mean No. of Months	65	48.15
Mean = 18.39~18		
SD = 12.26		
Monthly Salary		
< Mean Monthly Salary	80	59.26
≥ Mean Monthly Salary	55	40.74
Mean = 21,651		
SD = 9,021		
How many months did it take you to land your first job?		
< Mean No. of Months		
≥ Mean No. of Months	62	45.93
Mean = 8.82	73	54.07
SD = 2.82		

How did you find your first job?		
Response to advertisement	21	15.56
Recommended by someone	37	27.41
Walk-in applicant	44	32.59
Information from friends	13	9.63
Job Fair	12	8.89
University job placement	8	5.93

An author [22] noted, it's normal for some new graduates to go through short periods of unemployment while they're transitioning into the workforce. On the other hand, [23] pointed out that graduates are more likely to find jobs rapidly when their school programs are designed to match the needs of local industries. When universities offer courses that teach the necessary and practical skills employers are looking for, students are better prepared for the job market. It might help explain why so many graduates were able to get hired soon after finishing their studies. Furthermore, the Commission on Higher Education also shared that students are more likely to get hired when they have had hands-on training or internships while in school. These real-world experiences help them build the skills needed for the workplace and often lead to job offers, especially in areas where schools and local companies work closely together. The pandemic may have changed the way companies hire people.

Table 06: Relationship between the Graduate–Respondents' Profile, Continuing Professional Development, Skills and Values Development, and Curricular Components with Employment Profile

EMPLOYMENT PROFILE	PARAMETERS			
	Prof'l. Development	Skills Development	Values Development	Curricular Components
Status of employment	-0.080	-0.062	-0.090	-0.057
No. of months in the current job	-0.044	0.174	0.188	0.243*
Monthly salary	-0.042	0.053	-0.085	-0.148
No. of months to land their job	-0.063	-0.096	-0.103	-0.150
Means of finding the first job	0.064	-0.252*	-0.193	-0.191

A positive correlation was found between the curricular components and the number of months graduates have spent in their current jobs ($r = 0.243$, $p < 0.05$). It suggests that graduates who found the curricular components relevant and beneficial were more likely to remain longer in their current positions. It may indicate that a well-structured curriculum, aligned with industry needs, equips graduates with the necessary competencies and adaptability, fostering job stability and retention. Employers may value graduates with a strong curricular foundation, leading to better career sustainability. A negative correlation was observed between skills development and the means by which graduates secured their first job ($r = -0.243$, $p < 0.05$). It implies that graduates who reported higher skills development were less reliant on informal job-seeking methods, such as personal connections, and were more likely to secure employment through formal channels like job applications, competitive hiring processes, or career placement services. The finding highlights the importance of skills training

in enhancing employability, as well-developed competencies may give graduates a competitive edge in the job market, reducing their dependency on external networks for employment opportunities.

Table 07: Problems Encountered during the Job-seeking (Multiple Response)

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED	FREQUENCY n = 135	PERCENTAGE %
1. Tight Competition	66	48.89
2. Lacking in Qualifications	32	23.70
3. Inadequate Work-Related Experience	45	33.33
4. Personality Factors/Lacking in Self-Confidence	34	25.19
5. Few Jobs Vacancies/Lack of Position/Item	62	45.93
6. Job mismatch	20	14.81
7. Palakasan	46	34.07

Table 08: Suggested Possible Solutions during Job-seeking (Multiple Response)

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS	FREQUENCY n = 135	PERCENTAGE %
1. Trainings on English Proficiency to Improve Communication Skills	98	72.59
2. Enhance Internship Programs	60	44.44
3. Improve Job Training courses	83	61.48
4. Improve Laboratory Facilities	26	19.26
5. Career Guidance/Placement Seminar	0	0.00
6. Update Books in the Library	14	10.37
7. Revise and Enrich Curriculum	22	16.30

According to [24], English proficiency is a key factor for employers, especially in industries with frequent international communication. Their study shows that graduates with strong English skills are more competitive in the global job market and more likely to secure high-demand positions. It reflects the importance of English language training programs to enhance graduates' employability, especially in a global job market where English is essential for career advancement.

Table 09: Action Plan as Basis for Curriculum Improvement

Key Areas for Improvement	Objectives	Proposed Activities	Person Involved	Time Frame	Budget	Expected Output
1. Curriculum Review	Review and update existing programs in response to current trends and requirements (CMOs) and the actual demands of the industry	1. Identify the competencies and skills of graduates needed to meet the demands of the industry and integrate these into the	Academic Heads, Faculty, Students, Alumni, Partner Industries, and other	Continuous Implementation	30,000	Updated Curriculum

	in the 4 th and 5 th Industrial Revolutions.	curriculum (syllabus) 2. Enhance the internship program by establishing partnerships with host training establishments that can provide quality and relevant training programs.	stakeholders			
2. Continuing Professional Development	Offer short-term courses/certifications to provide graduates with continuous improvement opportunities, including personal, professional, and spiritual development through seminars, conferences, micro-credentials, and CPD training/workshops.	1. Do benchmark activities in setting up certifications and short-term courses 2. Establish WU-P Lifelong Learning Centre 3. Forge a partnership with known and established institutions offering CPD programs and certifications 4. Become a CPD/Certification Provider	Academic Heads, Faculty, Alumni, Students, Partner Industries	Next Academic year	50,000	Graduates gain a competitive edge through additional qualifications.
3. Lifelong Knowledge, skills, and Values Development	Capacitate graduates' lifelong knowledge, skills, and values. Enable them to face the challenges they will encounter in life and their future field of	1. Assessment of students' lifelong knowledge, skills, and values through study 2. The Guidance and Placement Office conducts diagnostic tests	Guidance and Placement Office, OSA, Chaplain's Office, Academic Heads, Graduate	Every year	50,000	Career Guidance Symposium and School Marketing

	professional practice.	and assessments of students' status of lifelong knowledge, skills and values. 3. Review and intensify On-the-Job Training and Simulated Learning Experiences 4. Coordinates with the different colleges on how On-the-Job training programs are intensified, ensuring that interns are provided with sufficient training programs that cultivate students' lifelong learning skills. 5. Maximize the availability and utilization of different learning resources that enable learners to simulate Real-work tasks. 6. Intentionally include a design thinking approach, project-based, and problem-based learning.	s and Students			
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		7. Develop and continuously implement intentional extra-curricular activities that evidently cultivate students' lifelong learning knowledge, skills, and values 8. The OSA, Chaplain's Office, and the Guidance Office plan and implement intentional extra-curricular activities (community exposure, service-learning symposia, excursions, campus ministry)				
4. Alumni and Community Involvement	Strengthen and empower alumni and community outreach program	1. Attend and Participate in the Alumni Homecoming and Community Outreach program 2. Partner with the government and NGOs to conduct a community needs assessment and analysis. 3. Construct extension programs relevant to the	Alumni, Academic Heads, Faculty, NGOs, and other stakeholders	Every year	50,000	School, Community, and Alumni Collaboration

		needs of the community. 4. Determine the appropriate extension activities based on the niche of the different colleges. 5. Conduct and implement the community outreach program 6. Evaluate the progress of the activities annually.				
5. Digital and Technological Innovation	Develop and upgrade the digital infrastructure to promote digital transformation initiatives that will enhance WU-P's presence in digital cyberspace and open virtual learning spaces.	1. Upgrade digital learning resources in the library 2. Provide/upgrade laboratory facilities for specific colleges/departments 3. Install Fiber optic backbone and firewall to speed up and secure internet services and a Wi-Fi school zone 4. Purchase additional computer units and install CCTV 5. Purchase hardware and	Faculty, ICT Department, Academic Heads, Librarian and Students	Next Academic year	1,000,000	Digitally skilled graduates for future jobs

		software for digitization and archiving.				
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4. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study directed to the rejection of the null hypothesis, which suggested that there were no significant relationships between continuing professional development, skills and values development, curricular components, and graduates' employment outcomes. The statistical analysis confirmed significant correlations between these factors, indicating that the development of skills, competencies, and values, along with a well-designed curriculum, plays a key role in graduates' ability to secure jobs and succeed in their careers. The problems encountered by the graduates during job-seeking highlight the complexities of the current employment landscape. The cited problems were tight competition, few job vacancies/lack of position/item, palakasan, inadequate work-related experience, personality, factors/lacking of self-confidence, lacking of qualifications, and job mismatch. Tight competition and a limited number of job openings indicate a saturated job market where the number of graduates exceeds the available positions. The results in prolonged job searches and, in some cases, graduates accepting positions outside their field of study due to financial pressures. The findings suggest that universities should focus on enhancing both technical and soft skills and work more closely with industry to align academic curricula with labour market needs. The study also found that reliance on personal connections, or "palakasan," is another significant barrier. Graduates without strong networks face more difficulties finding employment, reflecting broader inequalities in the hiring process. It underscores the need for more inclusive hiring practices that ensure equal opportunities for all graduates, regardless of their connections. Another major challenge is the lack of work-related experience. Graduates who did not have internships or practical experience struggled to compete with peers who had these opportunities. The highlights the importance of integrating hands-on learning experiences, such as internships, into academic programs to improve employability. Additionally, personal factors like low self-confidence were also identified as barriers to employment. Graduates who lacked confidence in job interviews, despite having the necessary qualifications, often struggled to secure jobs. The finding suggests that universities and career services should provide more support in areas like interview preparation, communication skills, and self-presentation. Finally, the issue of job mismatch, where graduates are employed in positions that do not align with their qualifications or career goals, was another key challenge. These points to the need for better alignment between academic programs and job market demands. It also highlights the importance of creating flexible career pathways to help graduates find roles that match their skills and aspirations. The solutions suggested by graduates to address the challenges they face in securing employment offer meaningful insights into key factors that can improve their job-seeking outcomes. A significant preference for English proficiency training reflects the importance of strong communication skills in the global job market. Graduates fluent in English are more competitive, especially for roles requiring cross-border communication. Therefore, enhancing English language training would better prepare graduates for international job opportunities and increase their employability in global markets. The call for improved job training courses highlights the need to bridge the gap between academic theory and practical workplace skills. Many graduates find it challenging to apply what they've learned in school to real-world situations. Job training programs that focus on both technical skills and soft skills can make graduates more adaptable and equipped to meet employer demands. These programs not only prepare graduates for specific industries but also enhance their overall employability by helping them face workplace challenges more effectively. The suggestion to expand internship programs reflects an increasing recognition of the importance of hands-on experience in securing employment. Internships

provide graduates with exposure to industry practices, offer valuable networking opportunities, and allow them to apply academic knowledge in professional settings. These experiences are crucial for improving job prospects, and incorporating more internship into academic curricula can help bridge the gap between education and industry needs.

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