

A Tracer Study of AB Psychology Graduates' Employment Outcomes for Batches 2017-2020: Effects of Pandemic and Bases for Program Enhancement

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Abstract

This study examined the employment outcomes of 53 AB Psychology graduates out of 98 from the University of Southern Mindanao in the Philippines between 2017 and 2020. The findings showed that 66.04% of the graduates secured full-time employment, with a majority working in private firms (50.94%) and government organizations (13.21%), mainly in Davao City. The most common job role for these graduates was an administrative assistant in human resources and related fields. Those who worked for themselves had an annual income of P100,000 or more, while overall incomes ranged from P100,000 to P200,000. The COVID-19 pandemic caused increased stress and difficulty in finding employment for graduates. Despite these challenges, the alumni appreciated the program's curriculum, extracurricular activities, interdisciplinary learning, and opportunities for gaining practical knowledge. Graduates aspiring to become licensed guidance counselors and psychologists pursued advanced degrees in psychology, such as MA in Guidance and Counseling or MS/MA in Psychology. The pandemic influenced the perspective of recent graduates regarding further education. This research highlights the importance of practical experience, interdisciplinary learning, and a curriculum that prepares students for the current job market challenges faced by AB Psychology graduates. To address the pandemic's impact on employment, it is crucial to implement program interventions like virtual internships, expand career counseling services, and establish connections with companies to increase job opportunities. Curriculum adjustments should also be made to meet evolving market demands and ensure graduates are ready for a changing labor market.

Keywords— Tracer study, AB Psychology graduates, employment outcomes, practical experience, and program relevance

I. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a pivotal role in driving economic, industrial, and social development. To achieve this, Philippine universities must aim to produce competitive graduates who can meet the demands of the future labor market. This can be achieved by raising academic standards and creating new learning and development opportunities. The increasing labor market demands and the high number of unprepared graduates have contributed to the higher rates of underemployment and unemployment in the country. According to Ramirez et al. (2014), most university students prioritize finding work after graduation to apply their abilities in the real world. Unfortunately, many graduates struggle to find employment not because of a lack of work history, but

because they lack industry-relevant skills. Higher education institutions play a crucial role in educating and training students, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other competencies (KSAOs) required in their chosen field of study (Javier, 2018). Ramirez et al., (2014) emphasize the critical role of higher education institutions in educating and training students who would become graduates with knowledge, skills, abilities, and other competencies in their field of study. Additionally, still in Ramirez et al., (2014) highlighted the need for universities to prioritize the development of industry-relevant skills to ensure graduates' employability.

Employers prefer to hire graduates with strong performance-boosting and goal-achieving skills, as highlighted by Abas and Imam (2016). It is essential to

assess the effectiveness of programs in producing graduates with the required competencies that match the needs of the labor market. For assessing the success of higher education initiatives, tracer studies have grown to be a crucial tool. According to Cuadra et al. (2019), tracer studies can help universities generate locally and globally competent graduates by analyzing the data on graduates' employment outcomes. The insights gained from tracer studies can be used by faculty and staff to create a sustainable learning environment that supports the continued professional development of previous students and the KSAOs of future students (Ramirez et al., 2014).

Through this study, it aims to contribute to the development of a sustainable learning environment for AB Psychology graduates' continued professional development. The results of this study will provide valuable insights for AB Psychology program developers at the instructors' University of Southern Mindanao to develop and implement effective programs that produce graduates with relevant skills and competencies to meet the demands of the labor market. The main objective of the study was to determine the personal and professional profiles of the graduates. Specifically, it sought to determine their (1) employment information (current work status, current job referrals, type of organization, address of employment organization, job setting, employment position, employment annual income, and annual income of the self-employed); (2) problems encountered in the present job of the graduates; (3) contributions of the AB Psychology program to the graduates' personal knowledge, skills, and attitudes; (4) strengths and weaknesses of the institutional program; and (5) educational professional development plan (program enrolled, university campus and address, and reasons for pursuing further studies).

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this study is based on the human capital theory and the employability skills model. The human capital theory posits that education and training are investments that individuals make to enhance their knowledge, skills, and abilities, which in turn increases their productivity and earning potential (Becker, 1964). The employability skills model focuses on the skills and attributes that graduates need to possess to be successful in the workforce, such as communication skills, problem-solving skills, teamwork, and adaptability (Hillage & Pollard, 1998).

According to this theory, people who invest in their education and training have a higher marketability and earning potential, which eventually results in better work outcomes. The study also makes use of the signaling theory (Spence, 1973), according to which education sends

signals to employers about a person's abilities and performance potential in the workplace. According to this notion, companies frequently use schooling as a method of screening to find candidates who possess desirable qualities.

The idea of employability refers to the degree to which people possess the information, skills, and attitudes required to seek and maintain employment, they have selected (Yorke and Knight, 2006). Hard skills and employability skills, such as communication, problem-solving, and teamwork, are both considered to be parts of the multidimensional construct known as employability. This idea is crucial for comprehending the career outcomes of AB Psychology graduates since it offers a framework for judging their marketability and preparedness.

The administration is quite concerned about the difficulty of finding jobs for a rising number of graduates, especially during a time of uncertainty. Thus, universities must guide, inform, and provide students with the required skills to prepare them for the workforce. School performance is evaluated via tracing studies, which follow graduates' job and career trajectories.

The CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) 19, series of 2012-Criterion 8 requires graduate tracer studies to determine if alumni are employed, have received awards or recognitions, and hold management positions in government, companies, and industries within the last five years. These studies provide reliable tools for universities to evaluate the quality of their graduates and the effectiveness of their educational services. Tracer studies also help institutions improve the content and delivery of their educational services by providing information on the extent to which the university's vision, mission, goals, program objectives, and students' learning outcomes have been achieved.

Numerous tracer studies have been conducted, quantifying graduates' employment status, career paths, work characteristics, applicable competencies, and professional orientation and experiences. For example, Gagalang et al., (2017) found that most respondents were young adult females who were offered jobs in private institutions due to many vacant positions related to their course. They were employed in contractual or casual status due to limited permanent positions in public and private institutions. Their first job titles were mostly HR Assistant/Staff, and they were involved in technical/professional work with opportunities for professional development. Cuadra and Gonzaga (2019) found that graduates were able to find jobs relevant to their degree programs and that the relevance of the degree program to professional requirements was one of the major strengths of the undergraduate curriculum.

III. METHOD

Identification of variables

The researcher used the descriptive survey method to find out the variables such as the graduate's employment information, problems encountered in the present job, contributions of the AB Psychology program to the graduates' personal knowledge, skills, and attitudes, strengths and weaknesses of the institutional program, and the educational development plan of the AB Psychology graduates batches 2017-2020 of the University of Southern Mindanao.

Population, sample, and sampling techniques

The participants of this study were the AB Psychology at the University of Southern Mindanao from batches 2017-2020. The researcher employed a quota sampling procedure to select 50% of the target graduates, ensuring a representative sample. The data indicates that 53 graduates participated in the survey, which represents 54% of the total number of graduates (98). Of the participants, 50.94% (27) were from Batch 2019, 13 were from Batch 2018, and 10 were from Batch 2017. The remaining three (3) participants were from the 2020 batch. Overall, the response rate was considered satisfactory, as more than half of the target participants participated in the study.

Table 1 contains the personal data of AB Psychology program alumni who took part in a tracer study from batches 2017 through 2020. Three personal data gathered included their address, gender, and year of graduation.

Table 1. Personal Information of the AB Psychology Graduates

Personal Information	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Year Graduated		
2020	3	5.66
2019	27	50.94
2018	13	24.53
2017	10	18.87
Sex		
Male	14	26.42
Female	39	73.58
Address		
Within Cotabato Province	35	66.04
Outside Cotabato Province	18	33.96

Due to travel restrictions, busy schedules, and inadequate internet connections, some graduates found it difficult to complete the online survey form for the Tracer

Study, but those who were able to participate had good internet connectivity. Participants' responses were divided into two categories: those who resided in Cotabato Province and those who lived outside of Cotabato Province. This suggests that the AB Psychology program at the University of Southern Mindanao in Kabacan, Cotabato has also attracted interest in the study of students who come from outside the province. The majority reside within Cotabato Province i.e., 35 of the participants (66.04%), while 18 participants (33.96%) reside outside Cotabato Province. The majority of the 53 participants were female graduates, who made up 39 (73.58%) of the total, while male graduates made up only 14 (26.42%). Given that women make up the majority of the AB in Psychology graduates in the study. This suggests that females are more likely than males to pursue careers in the field of psychology.

Data collection methods and tools

To gather data, the researcher obtained permission from the University Registrar to access the list of AB Psychology graduates from 2017-2020. The researcher used this directory to locate the graduates who reside in Kabacan, Cotabato, Tacurong City, Sultan Kudarat, Koronadal City, South Cotabato, Kidapawan City, and Davao City, the researcher gave the online survey questionnaires using Google Forms due to travel restrictions. This study used a survey questionnaire in the data gathering procedure or known as the Graduate Tracer Survey Questionnaire which was accessed from the official website of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). The questionnaire was designed based on the objective of the study formulated. The questionnaire was composed of three sections: the first division was composed of the demographic profile and employment profile, the second part was composed of the continuation of the employment profile, and the third part was composed of the factors that affect the choice of the job, the relevance of the AB Psychology program to the job that they were in the present.

Data analysis method

The researcher employed descriptive statistics, such as frequency counts and percentages to summarize and interpret the data.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Employment Information of the AB Psychology Graduates from 2017-2020 Batches

Current employment status

Table 2 shows the current employment status of the AB Psychology graduates from batches 2017-2020 at the University of Southern Mindanao, Kabacan, Cotabato.

The majority (35, 66.04%) of the 53 respondents are currently employed full-time. Only 3 respondents (5.66%) are self-employed, and also three (3) are employed part-time while looking for full-time work. While none of the respondents are now seeking full-time employment while also working part-time. Finally, 12 participants (22.64%) responded that they were unemployed and looking for work.

Based on the results shown in Table 2, it can be concluded that the University of Southern Mindanao's AB Psychology program is successful in giving its graduates the skills and knowledge required for employment because a substantial number of them have full-time work. However, the data also show that a sizable fraction of respondents (22.64%) are unemployed at the moment but looking for work, which could be attributed to the economic difficulties and uncertainties caused by the pandemic.

Unprecedented economic upheavals brought on by the COVID-19 epidemic have resulted in widespread job losses and financial insecurity for millions of people. The hospitality, transport, and retail industries were among the hardest hit, losing 114 million jobs as a result of the pandemic in 2020, according to the International Labour Organization or ILO (ILO, 2021). Additionally, according to data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the country's unemployment rate spiked from 3.5% in February 2020 to 14.8% in April 2020 before edging down to 4.2% in September 2021 (BLS, 2021).

Companies from a range of industries had to adapt to the changing economic landscape and put in place cost-cutting measures, such as lowering employee salaries. As a result of the epidemic, job seekers now face new obstacles such as a more competitive job market, altered recruiting procedures, and a move toward remote work. In their research, McKinsey & Company notes that the pandemic has hastened the adoption of remote work, with up to 25% more employees in advanced economies anticipated to work from home regularly by 2025 (McKinsey & Company, 2021). To match the needs of the current employment market, job seekers may also need to modify their skills or learn new ones.

Current employment referrals

In Table 3, data reveals that with 13 (29.55%) graduates, recommendations from friends were the most popular way to get a job. This was followed by getting information through relatives (7 (15.91%) and getting information through written inquiries (4 or 9.09%).

Table 2. Current Employment Status

Indicators	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Working full-time	35	66.04
Working part-time but seeking full-time work	3	5.66
Working part-time but not seeing full-time work	0	0.00
Self-employed	3	5.66
Not working but looking for a job	12	22.64

The findings imply that friends, family, and other personal relationships remain a substantial source of career prospects for individuals. This is consistent with earlier studies that have demonstrated the value of networking for job searchers. It is also worth noting that a sizeable percentage of survey participants acquired their jobs through other channels, like written inquiries. To maximize the likelihood of obtaining good work, it is critical to make use of personal contacts and aggressively seek out employment prospects through a variety of channels. Numerous following studies back up the conclusions. For instance, according to a study by Kram and Isabella (2018), networking was the most effective method of finding work, with personal connections responsible for 65% of all job offers.

Similarly, to this, a study by Di Fabio and Maree (2019) found that social networks were the primary source of employment information for young people. Additionally, a study by Davis and Wilkerson (2021) discovered that the most typical way job searchers discovered their present employers was through recommendations from friends and family. According to the study, people who used personal networks to find jobs reported better levels of job satisfaction and were more likely to remain with their employers over the long run.

Table 3. Current Employment Referrals

Indicators	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Through friends	13	29.55
Through relatives	7	15.91
Through written inquiries	4	9.09

In addition, a study by Verhaest and Omev (2020) discovered that job searchers who depended on personal networks had a better chance of getting accepted for an interview than those who did not. The study also discovered that among people who had been out of

employment for longer periods, the influence of personal networks was greater. Thus, these studies support the findings and imply that friends and family will likely continue to be a significant source of job information for job seekers.

Type of employment organizations

Table 4 displays the percentages of people who belong to each form of organization together with the number of people who belong to each type. The majority of graduates (27 or 50.94%) are employed by privately held companies. The other agencies and companies where the graduates work, are from governmental entities (seven or 13.21%), self-employed people (three or 5.66%), public organizations (three or 5.66%), and non-governmental organizations (one or 1.88%).

The table shows that among the graduates who were part of the study, private organizations are the most prevalent. There are several reasons for this, such as better working conditions, higher compensation, and more prospects for professional advancement as compared to other kinds of businesses.

Table 4. Type of Employment Organizations

Indicators	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Public	3	5.66
Private	27	50.94
NGO/ INGO	1	1.88
Self-employed	3	5.66
Government	7	13.21

The similarity in frequency between people who join public organizations and those who belong to organizations made up of independent contractors is interesting to note. This may indicate that people are less interested in working in the public sector than they previously were, maybe as a result of issues like concerns about job security and little prospects for career progression. The low percentage of individuals belonging to NGOs/INGOs is not surprising, as these organizations typically have a smaller workforce compared to other types of organizations. However, it is worth noting that the work of NGOs/INGOs is often crucial in addressing social and environmental issues, and their contributions should not be underestimated.

Numerous studies have looked at how people are distributed throughout various sorts of organizations. For instance, according to a study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in the United States, 129.8 million people work in the private sector, versus 22.4 million in the public sector, making up the majority of non-farm employment (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). The frequency distribution table that is presented, which demonstrates

that the majority of people belong to private groups, is consistent with this finding. According to a different study done in other countries like India, the private sector was the main driver of job growth there, with its percentage of total employment rising from 18.7% in 1991 to 28.9% in 2012 (Nayyar, 2018).

Address of the employment organizations

The AB Psychology graduates' places of employment are included in Table 5 for the batches 2017–2020. Of the 53 respondents, 25 (47.17%) work outside the province of Cotabato, while 28 (52.83%) are employed within it. Davao City has the most respondents (15, 28.30%) among the cities outside of Cotabato where the graduates are employed, followed by Kidapawan City with 3 (5.66%), and General Santos City with 2 (3.77%). With one response each, Makati City, Metro Manila, Maguindanao Province, and South Cotabato are other locations outside of Cotabato where the graduates are employed.

There was 52.83% of the respondents, who make up the majority, work in the province of Cotabato. This may imply that these graduates choose to work in their hometowns or that their options for employment outside of their province are limited. Outside of Cotabato, Davao City is where graduates are employed the most frequently. This can be a result of the city's accessibility to jobs and proximity to the province. On the other hand, the small percentage of respondents who reported having a job outside of Cotabato may be a sign of the province's lack of job possibilities outside its borders or that recent graduates prefer to work locally.

Education, healthcare, social services, and human resources are the top businesses in the Philippines that hire psychology graduates, according to a 2019 poll by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) and the Board of Psychology (Philippine News Agency, 2020). Since these businesses are frequently concentrated in cities, it may be understandable why so many psychology graduates look for work outside of their home province.

In addition, a study by the Philippine Association of Psychology Students (PAPS) discovered that psychology graduates' decisions on where to work are significantly influenced by job availability (Talaguit et al., 2020). Graduates frequently choose to work outside of their home provinces where there may be more employment options and higher pay.

Table 5. Address of Employment Organizations

Places	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Davao City	15	48.39
Digos City	3	9.68
Durooluman, Cotabato	1	3.23
General Santos City	2	6.45
Kabacan, Cotabato	2	6.45
Kidapawan City	3	9.68
Maguindanao Province	2	6.45
Makati City	1	3.23
Makilala, Cotabato	1	3.23
Metro Manila	1	3.23
Midsayap, Cotabato	1	3.23
South Cotabato	1	3.23

According to a poll conducted by Jobstreet.com in 2020, the Philippines' top two cities with the highest demand for jobs linked to psychology were Metro Manila and Cebu City (Velasco, 2020). This could be the reason why some University of Southern Mindanao alumni are employed in places like Davao, General Santos, and Makati.

Thus, even though there may not be a particular study on the work locations of University of Southern Mindanao AB Psychology graduates, there are general employment trends for psychology graduates in the Philippines that may aid in explaining their decisions regarding employment location.

Employment settings

Table 6 shows the employment setting of the graduates which includes private businesses, governmental institutions, and non-governmental organizations, the majority of graduates—60.38%—are employed. Four graduates, or 7.55%, are working in the educational sector. Only one (1) graduate, or 1.89% of all graduates, is employed in a clinical setting, and none are employed in a counseling setting.

The fact that the AB Psychology degree offers a wide variety of skills and knowledge that can be utilized in many organizational contexts may be the cause of the high percentage of alumni who are working in the organizational setting. Employers across industries place a high priority on program-related abilities including communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

However, there may be fewer opportunities in these fields on the local job market, which may account for the low proportion of graduates working in clinical and counseling settings, since the jobs relating to counseling would also require applicants to be Registered Guidance Counselors that require a Master's Degree in Guidance and Counselling. Additionally, some graduates might have

continued their education in these fields, which might require more time to complete than other employment options.

However, there may be room for improvement in terms of promoting opportunities in the clinical and counseling settings, which generally indicates that the AB Psychology program prepares graduates for a wide variety of job settings.

Based on the information provided, it appears that AB Psychology graduates have a high employment rate where the majority of them find work in a variety of organizational contexts. This can be a result of the broad range of abilities and expertise attained through the degree program, which are highly regarded by employers in various sectors.

The idea that companies greatly value the knowledge and skills acquired through psychology degrees has been validated by recent studies. The American Psychological Association, for instance, revealed in 2019 research that psychology students have a variety of talents that are highly appreciated by employers, such as communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork.

Table 6. Employment Settings

Settings	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Organizational Setting	32	60.38
Educational Setting	4	7.55
Clinical Setting	1	1.89
Counseling Setting	0	0.00

Employment positions

The positions held by AB Psychology graduate from batches 2017 to 2020 are shown in Table 7. There were 38 graduates in all, and of those, two graduates (5.26%) held the most common job title, human resource administrative assistant. There have also been reports of other human resources-related positions, including those for a human resource generalist, associate, officer, specialist, and supervisor.

The graduates reported jobs in customer service, such as Customer Service Representative and Account Advisor, in addition to human resources. Other positions included DILG Contact Tracer, Administrative Supervisor, Assistant Teacher, Associate Trainer, Clinic Supervisor, Guidance-Life Coach, Instructor, Monitoring Evaluation Assessment Researcher, Office Staff, Owner, Permanent-Regional Logistics/Jail, Quality Assurance Analyst, Recruiter - Talent Acquisition/HR Dep't., Recruitment Associate, Subject Matter Expert or SME, Supervisor, Talent Acquisition Specialist, and Teacher.

The findings revealed that many AB Psychology graduates from the University of Southern Mindanao were engaged in administrative and support roles, which are consistent with the abilities and information they had gained from their degree programs. Additionally, the variety of job openings demonstrates graduates with an AB in psychology's versatility to work in a range of fields, including both public and private organizations. Nevertheless, the results offer useful knowledge for upcoming AB psychology graduates who might be interested in pursuing positions in related fields.

Recent research has backed up the assertion that the most common job title held by AB Psychology graduates is a human resource administrative assistant. For example, a 2020 report by the Society for Human Resource Management found that entry-level human resource positions, such as administrative assistant, are common roles for recent college graduates with degrees in psychology. The report also found that human resource generalist and specialist positions are also popular among psychology graduates.

A study by Brown and Campion (2018) found that graduates of psychology programs have a variety of talents that are useful for human resource positions, including communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills. According to the study, these abilities are especially important for jobs that require hiring, developing, and overseeing staff members—common duties for human resource specialists (Brown & Campion, 2018). Graduates in psychology are therefore prepared for positions in human resources.

Graduates of AB Psychology can work in a variety of professions besides those related to human resources. Psychology graduates can work in a variety of fields, including education, healthcare, and social assistance, according to a 2019 report from the National Science Foundation.

Table 7. Employment Positions

Positions	Number of Graduates
Human Resource Generalist	1
Human Resource Associate	1
Human Resource Officer	1
Human Resource Specialist	1
Human Resource Supervisor	1
Human Resource Admin Assistant	2
Human Resource Staff	2
Customer Service Representative	2
DILG Contact Tracer	2
Account Advisor	1
Account Associate 2	1

Admin Supervisor	1
Administrative Aide III	1
Agent	1
Assistant Teacher	1
Assistant Warehouse In-charge	1
Associate Trainer	1
Clerk	1
Clinic Supervisor	1
Guidance-Life Coach	1
Instructor I	1
Monitoring Evaluation Assessment Researcher	1
Office Personnel	1
Office Staff	1
Business Owner	1
Permanent- Regional Logistics/Jail	1
Quality Assurance Analyst (QAA)	1
Recruiter - Talent Acquisition/HR Dep't.	1
Recruitment Associate	1
Subject Matter Expert (SME)	1
Supervisor	1
Talent Acquisition Specialist	1
Teacher	1
Team Supervisor	1

The study also found that psychology majors work in a variety of settings, including management, sales, and customer service.

Employment annual income

Table 12 shows that among the psychology graduates, 6 or 20.69% received income between P100,000 and P150,000, 11 or 37.93% received income between P100,000 and P200,000, 5 or 17.24% received income between P200,000 and P300,000, and 1 or 3.45% received income over P300,000.

It is interesting that one graduate received a salary of above P300,000, and that the majority of graduates (58.62%) earned P200,000 or less per year. This can imply that there are not many opportunities for high earners in the industry or job market where these graduates are employed.

Recent research on the prospective earnings of psychology graduates is consistent with the fact that the majority of AB Psychology graduates make P200,000 or less yearly. For instance, according to a 2019 survey by the American Psychological Association, the median yearly salary for those with a psychology bachelor's degree is \$51,000, or roughly P2,550,000. This is less than the

\$62,000, or roughly P3,100,000, median salary for all bachelor's degree holders.

In addition, a 2020 report by the National Center for Education Statistics discovered that the median wages for people with a bachelor's degree in psychology are \$43,000, or roughly P2,150,000, ten years after graduation. This is less than the median pay for all bachelor's degree holders, which is \$58,000, or approximately P2,900,000.

These findings suggest that there might not be many high-paying job opportunities for AB Psychology graduates. However, the earning potential can differ based on several factors, such as the industry, location, and years of experience. The non-financial benefits of a career, such as job satisfaction and growth opportunities, must be taken into account as well.

Table 8. Employed Annual Income

Annual Income Range	Number of Graduates	Percentage (%)
Up to P100,000.00	11	36.67
P100,000.00 - P150,000.00	6	20.00
P150,000.00 - P200,000.00	5	16.67
P200,000.00 - P300,000.00	6	20.00
Over P300,000.00	1	3.33

Self-employment annual income

Of the nine graduates, seven earn P100,000 or more annually or more. This suggests that the majority of fresh graduates with their businesses make a respectable income. One graduate who earns between P100,000 and P150,000 and five of the seven graduates who make P100,000 or more share a similar earning range. One graduate earns almost P300,000, which is significantly more than the earnings of the other graduates.

The results indicate that most of the graduates in this group had greater yearly incomes, with just a small percentage having incomes below P100,000, while none of the graduates earn between P150,000 and P300,000. This may suggest that there are fewer options for independent contractors in this salary bracket or that the graduates may need to acquire new skills or adopt new tactics to boost their earnings.

Table 9. Self-Employment Annual Income

Annual Income Range	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
P100,000.00 and up	7	70.00
P100,000.00 - P150,000.00	1	10.00
Between P150,000.00 - P300,000.00	0	0.00
Over P300,000.00	1	10.00
Total	10	100.00

Problems in employment assignments

As can be gleaned in Table 10, 39 graduates who responded to the question answered "no" to the existence of any problems 71.79% of the time. However, 28.21% of them acknowledged having a problem or problems.

This information sheds light on how common difficulties are among recent grads. There may be a sizable number of graduates who require help or assistance, as shown by the fact that more than a quarter of respondents acknowledged having a problem or problems. Depending on the type of their difficulty or problems, this may involve providing them with financial, emotional, or professional help.

Table 10. Problems Faced in Employment Assignments

Response to Question (Do you face any problems in your job assignments?)	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
No	28	71.79
Yes	11	28.21

Specific Problems

Graduates who are employed experience a variety of difficulties at work, which significantly affected their job satisfaction, productivity, and overall well-being. These obstacles can include everything from interpersonal difficulties with coworkers to problems related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Finding appropriate employment now is a challenge due to the pandemic's disruption of the labor market. High levels of stress can harm one's physical and mental health because of the pressure to perform well and fulfill deadlines.

These are possible reasons for the problems like the lack of experience working with people who have special needs presents graduates with another difficulty. Without the necessary training, graduates could find it difficult to accommodate those with special needs in the workplace. Overwhelming workloads can cause burnout and lower productivity. Overly relying on manual processes and systems can be time-consuming and error-prone. Processing work-related issues might be challenging due to travel restrictions and other pandemic-

related issues, which can cause delays and frustration. Low compensation might result in decreased job satisfaction and financial insecurity. Discrimination based on traits like gender, race, or religion can deteriorate mental health and foster a toxic work environment. The complexity and specific expertise needed for HR employment can be a barrier to admission and advancement.

Several recent studies have examined the challenges faced by graduates in the workplace, including those related to job satisfaction, productivity, and overall well-being. For example, a 2021 study published in the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* found that job stressors, such as heavy workloads, time pressure, and lack of job control, were negatively associated with job satisfaction and work engagement among employees.

Another study published in the *Journal of Career Assessment* in 2020 found that graduates with disabilities face multiple barriers to employment, including stigma, discrimination, and lack of accommodations. The authors suggest that addressing these barriers can improve employment outcomes for graduates with disabilities and promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

The COVID-19 epidemic has had an extensive impact on the labor market as well, with many graduates now competing more fiercely for fewer job openings. According to an ILO report from 2021, the pandemic has significantly increased underemployment and unemployment worldwide, especially among young people.

According to a 2021 study reported in the *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, graduates working in HR may furthermore encounter particular obstacles to admission and progress. According to the survey, some graduates may find it difficult to enter the field of HR because of the complexity and specialized knowledge needed for work in the industry.

AB Psychology Program's Contributions to Graduates' Personal Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes

Table 12 displays the graduates' assessments of the program's influence on their academic and professional development. The majority of graduates (25), followed by 18 who thought they had significantly improved, claimed they had improved their academic knowledge. In contrast, when asked how much they felt their problem-solving had improved, 24 of the graduates said they thought it had, while 8 were neutral. The graduates also demonstrated a high level of confidence in the development of their research skills, with 23 of them expressing this belief.

The graduates' opinions on their improvement in learning efficiency were equally distributed, with 23 saying they made significant improvements and 23 saying they made only minor ones. They did not significantly

improve, according to one of the few who stayed neutral. The graduates also agreed that the curriculum helped them communicate more effectively, with 29 of them opining that their communication skills had significantly improved.

The alumni did not feel as positively about the program's contribution in several areas, though. As an example, 5 of the graduates felt that their information technology skills had not greatly improved as a result of the training. While the majority felt they were very well honed in terms of meeting future and professional skills, some responded neutrally or somewhat honed.

Accordingly, the results imply that the program was successful in enhancing the graduates' academic knowledge, problem-solving skills, research skills, and communication skills. However, there is room for improvement in terms of enhancing graduates' information technology skills and making certain that all graduates believe the program has sharpened their future and professional skills.

Table 12. AB Psychology Program's Contributions to the Graduates' Personal Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes

Indicators	Very much improved	Somewhat improved	Neutral	Not much improved
Enhanced academic knowledge	18	25	10	-
Improved problem-solving	21	24	8	-
Improved research skills	23	18	10	2
Improved learning efficiency	23	23	6	1
Improved communication skills	29	18	5	1
Improved information tech. skills	18	21	9	5
Enhanced team spirit	36	15	2	-
Meeting future & professional skills	27	16	4	-

AB Psychology Program's Strengths and Weaknesses

Table 13 presents the findings on the different indicators of the program's strengths as rated by the graduates. The range of courses offered was rated as highly implemented by 23 graduates, with an additional 11 graduates rating it as very highly implemented. This signifies that the program provides a comprehensive list of courses to choose from, making it a great benefit.

A total of 23 graduates gave a positive rating to the number of optional courses, indicating that the program offers a good variety of courses to choose from. The relevance of the program to the professional requirements

was rated highly by 21 graduates, indicating that the program has established a good connection to the professional world, which is important for graduates to succeed in their respective fields.

Extracurricular activities were also rated highly by 21 graduates, indicating that the program has established a good balance between academic and non-academic activities. Interdisciplinary learning was rated highly by 22 graduates, indicating that the program provides opportunities for students to gain knowledge from various fields, which is essential in today's rapidly changing world.

Work placement/attachment was rated highly by 22 graduates, indicating that the program provides opportunities for students to gain practical experience in their respective fields. The teaching and learning environment was rated highly by 23 graduates, indicating that the program provides a conducive learning environment for students to thrive.

Lastly, the library/laboratory, etc. was rated highly by 18 graduates, indicating that the program has established good facilities for students to use. However, 10 graduates rated this indicator as poorly implemented, which suggests that there may be room for improvement in this area.

Table 13. AB Psychology Program's Strengths and Weaknesses

Indicators	Very Highly Implemented	Highly Implemented	Fairly Implemented	Poorly Implemented
Range of courses offered	11	23	14	3
Number of optional subjects	9	23	13	3
Relevance to professional requirements	14	21	13	3
Extracurricular activities	10	21	16	4
Interdisciplinary learning	18	22	10	1
Work placement/attachment	18	22	11	2

Teaching and learning environment	23	18	12	3
Library/Laboratory, etc.	11	18	14	10

Thus, the findings suggest that the program has several strengths, particularly in the range of courses offered, relevance to professional requirements, extracurricular activities, interdisciplinary learning, work placement/attachment, and teaching and learning environment. However, there are also areas for improvement, particularly in the library/laboratory, etc. indicator.

Educational development plan

Table 6 presents data on the educational/professional development plan of the graduates. It revealed that out of 53 graduates, eight (8) of them have been currently enrolled in further studies. The other 15 already had plans to enroll between the school years 2021-2023, while the other five (5) of them were not sure because of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The remaining 25 did not respond.

Table 11. Educational development plan

Year Enrolled and Plan to Enroll	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
On-going (2018 up to 2020)	8	15.09
Plan to enroll in 2021-2023	15	23.30
Not sure because of the COVID-19 Pandemic	5	9.43
No Response	25	47.17
TOTAL	53	100.00

It implies that despite the pandemic, 8 of the graduates were motivated enough to pursue and continue graduate studies, while the others still felt restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 7 showed that there were eight (8) of the graduates were enrolled in MS/ MA in Psychology, while 5 of them were enrolled in MA Guidance and Counselling. It means that there were 13 who were enrolled in Psychology-related fields. On the other hand, three (3) of the respondents were enrolled in non-Psychology-related fields, such as two (2) of them pursuing professional education courses and one (1) of them in culinary arts. The other five (5), may have had interest but were restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, while most of the graduates did not respond.

Program enrolled

Of the 53 responders, 25 (47.17%) are enrolled in degree programs relevant to psychology. Particularly, 5 (9.43%) are enrolled in an MA in Guidance and Counseling, and 10 (18.87%) are pursuing an MS/MA in Psychology. This may indicate that a sizeable number of the respondents were considering a career as a psychologist. Only 3 respondents (5.66%) are enrolled in degree programs unrelated to psychology. Two respondents (3.77%) are enrolled in professional education courses, compared to one respondent (1.89%) who was studying culinary arts. This shows that the majority of respondents had a stronger preference for careers in psychology. It is interesting to note that 5 (9.43%) respondents are not sure whether they would enroll in their degree program because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This demonstrates how the epidemic has affected the graduates' decision-making for graduate studies. Last but not least, 20 (37.74%) respondents chose not to respond to the question, demonstrating either a lack of interest in sharing their enrollment status or a refusal to disclose information.

Thus, the majority of respondents were enrolled in degree programs linked to psychology, indicating a growing interest in psychology-related careers. The COVID-19 pandemic has also had a big impact on how students make decisions because several respondents weren't sure if they would enroll or not.

Table 12. Program enrolled

Degree Program Enrolled as Further Study	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Psychology-Related		
MS/MA Psychology	10	
MA Guidance and Counselling	5	
Sub Total	25	47.17
Not Psychology-Related		
Culinary Arts	1	
Professional Education Course	2	
Sub Total	3	1.59
Not sure because of the COVID-19 Pandemic	5	
No Response	20	37.74
TOTAL	53	100.00

It implies that there were a few numbers of graduates who were currently enrolled in Psychology and allied fields, while others were restricted due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

University Campus and Addresses

Table 13 presents the findings for the campus/university the graduates are currently enrolled attending. It revealed that most or 9 out of 13 of the graduates who furthered their studies enrolled at the San Pedro College in Davao City and the other 4 of them were enrolled in Ateneo de Davao University.

Table 13. University Campus and Addresses

University Campus and Addresses	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Ateneo de Davao University, Davao City	4	7.54
Brokenshire College SOCCSARGEN, Inc., Gen. San.	1	1.89
Central Mindanao University, Kidapawan City	1	1.89
Davao Central College, Davao City	1	1.89
San Pedro College, Davao City	9	16.98
University of Southern Mindanao (Main Campus)	2	3.77
No Response	34	64.16
TOTAL	53	100.00

The other three (3) were enrolled in Brokenshire College, SOCCSARGEN, Inc. in General Santos City, Central Mindanao University in Kidapawan, and Davao Central College in Davao City.

Reasons for pursuing further studies

The comments of the graduates from the classes of 2017–2020 show a variety of reasons for continuing psychological education. Pursuing higher education is seen as a chance to further one's professional and personal development, build credibility, and increase one's knowledge and proficiency in psychology. Many recent graduates indicate a desire to increase their employment prospects and look into new directions for their professional growth. Additionally, seeking advanced education is a stepping stone toward careers in specialist disciplines like clinical psychology and counseling. Graduates seek to improve their abilities, complete their graduate studies, and further prepare for their intended careers. Graduates who pursue higher education in psychology are additionally motivated by their desire to better the lives of others, pursue a vocation that will last a lifetime, and learn more.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERVENTION AND PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT

Several major conclusions emerge from a study on the job outcomes of AB Psychology graduates from the University of Southern Mindanao in the Philippines between 2017 and 2020. The survey indicated that 66.04% of the 53 graduates who took part in the study were currently employed full-time. The majority of graduates (50.94%) were employed by private enterprises, followed by government agencies (13.21%), with a considerable concentration of work prospects in Davao City. Graduates were most commonly employed as administrative assistants in human resources or related areas. Graduates reported earning between P100,000 and P200,000 per year, with self-employed graduates earning at least P100,000.

However, the survey found that graduates had difficulty finding work, owing mostly to the pandemic's impact. As a result, the graduates experienced increased stress and discontent. Despite these obstacles, alumni praised the university's curriculum, extracurricular activities, interdisciplinary learning, and practical experience chances. This emphasizes the significance of a well-rounded education that includes practical experiences and multidisciplinary approaches in preparing graduates for future professions.

Furthermore, the survey discovered that graduates who went on to further their education primarily pursued psychology-related degree programs, such as an MA in Guidance and Counseling or an MS/MA in Psychology, to become registered guidance counselors and psychologists. It is worth noting that the epidemic influenced graduates' decisions about furthering their studies.

Several implications for intervention and enhancement can be inferred from these findings. To begin, there is a need to address the pandemic's issues by offering targeted support and resources to help graduates navigate the changing work market. Career counseling, mental health help, and networking opportunities are examples of this.

Second, the institution should continue to improve its practical experience and interdisciplinary learning possibilities to improve USM AB Psychology graduates' employability and adaptability. This might include increasing internship programs, collaborating with industry, and working on real-world initiatives. Furthermore, the institution should maintain tight relationships with key industries and organizations to ensure that the curriculum stays relevant and market-driven.

The study highlights the need of encouraging and supporting graduate education opportunities, especially in

fields connected to psychology. The university can offer advice on available postgraduate programs, financial aid, and professional development opportunities to encourage graduates to pursue specialized courses that align with their career ambitions.

Finally, this study emphasizes the difficulties that AB Psychology graduates confront in the contemporary work market, particularly in light of the pandemic. It emphasizes the importance of hands-on experience, interdisciplinary learning, and a relevant curriculum in preparing students for successful professions. The university can better prepare its graduates for the competitive labor market and contribute to their long-term success and pleasure in their chosen profession by implementing targeted interventions and upgrades based on these findings.

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