



# Graduate Tracer Study for the 12 Academic Programs in the Graduate School of San Pedro College, Davao City, Philippines

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## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

In response to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the accrediting agencies' requirement, the researchers realized the need for San Pedro College (SPC) Graduate School to conduct tracer studies on their graduates to gauge how well they perform this role, and how well the college performed in developing the competencies of its students and preparing them for the world of work. The study aimed to describe the graduates' profile, employment characteristics, transition to employment, impact, and extent on their personal and professional growth. Moreover, it also aimed to describe the graduates' overall evaluation of the degree completed and determine the extent to which the core values of SPC have influenced the graduates' personal and professional growth.

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This tracer study utilized the survey research design. The respondents were graduates of the master's and doctorate programs from the years 2015 to 2020. A validated questionnaire which is a modified version of the tracer study questionnaire from CHED and the University of Santo Tomas (UST) was used to gather the data. The majority of the respondents are female, single, and from Batch 2020. The highest number of graduates are from the Master in Psychology program which is a non-thesis program. Most graduates are employed in the private sector, working as full-time employees that are related to the degree, they earned at SPC Graduate School. They are currently working within five years, just starting their careers, and are locally employed. The majority were not promoted on the job after completing their degree, and some were promoted, and they have permanent status in their current employment. The highest monthly income of the respondents is in the range of 21,000-30,000 Php, and they were also working while earning their degrees in SPC Graduate School. Moreover, the results revealed that SPC Graduate School has a very high impact on the personal and professional growth of the graduates. The graduates generally regarded that their study program contributed to their personal and professional growth. Their overall evaluation of the degree/program they earned at SPC Graduate School is very good. Lastly, the results revealed that the SPC core values highly influenced the graduates' personal and professional growth.

*Keywords: Graduate tracer study; San Pedro College Graduate School; survey research design; personal and professional growth; SPC core values; Davao City; Philippines.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Graduate and post-graduate education play a vital role in developing human resources that can provide leadership to efforts geared towards national development. It molds the human resources required to propel at least two critical driving forces of development – education and research [1,2]. Graduate education is an investment in solutions for the future [3,4].

Tracer study is needed to understand how well a college or university has performed in developing the competencies of its students and preparing them for the world of work. Moreover, it was elucidated that a Graduate Tracer Survey (GTS) collects data on the graduate's experience – skills learned, quality of instruction, and how it relates to employability. GTS allows us to illuminate the relationship between school experience and labor market outcomes and formulate a course of action for the higher education sector. Indeed, the tracer study constitutes one form of empirical research that provides valuable information for evaluating a specific higher education institution's education and training. It enables the institution of higher education to get information in a given educational program which can serve as a basis for curricular improvement [1,5,6].

Graduate education plays an essential role in developing human resources that can provide

leadership to efforts geared towards national development, thus the need for Graduate School to do tracer studies on their graduates to gauge how well they perform this role. Furthermore, a graduate tracer study is one of the requirements by CHED and other accrediting agencies like Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA) and Commission on Higher Education Institutional Sustainability Assessment (CHED-ISA).

### 1.2 Significance of the Study

The results of this tracer study may serve as a guide in improving or enhancing the curriculum. Moreover, data obtained from this tracer study can also gauge the departments' performance. Graduate School Department was mandated to conduct this Tracer Study as a requirement SPC and external accrediting agencies PACUCOA, CHED, CHED-ISA, and other accrediting bodies. Thus, in response to the mandate, the Dean and the Program Coordinators took it among themselves to spearhead the conduct of the GTS to satisfy this mandate.

#### Objectives:

This tracer study fulfilled the following objectives:

1. To describe the graduates of masters and doctoral programs in terms of the following:

- a. Personal Profile
  - b. Employment Characteristics
  - c. Transition to Employment
2. To describe the impact of SPC Graduate School Education on their personal and professional growth.
  3. To determine the extent to which the program of study has contributed to the personal and professional growth of graduates in terms of the following:
    - a. Academic preparation
    - b. Research capability
    - c. Learning efficiency
    - d. Communication skills
    - e. People skills
    - f. Problem-solving skills
    - g. Information technology skills
    - h. Meetings present and future professional needs
    - i. Exposure related to community engagement/outreach applies to their specific field of specialization.
    - j. Exposure to the international community within the field of specialization
    - k. Critical thinking skills
    - l. Salary improvement and promotion
    - m. Opportunities abroad
    - n. Personality development
  4. To describe the graduates' overall evaluation of the degree/program completed in terms of the following:
    - a. Adequacy of course offerings for future practice
    - b. Relevance to one's profession
    - c. Extracurricular activities
    - d. Premium given to research
    - e. Interdisciplinary learning
    - f. Teaching and learning environment
    - g. Quality of instruction
    - h. Teacher-student relationship
    - i. Library resources
    - j. Laboratory resources
    - k. Class size
    - l. Professors' pedagogical expertise
    - m. Professors' knowledge of the subject matter
  5. To determine the extent to which the core values of SPC have influenced graduates' personal and professional growth.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Tracer Studies and the Labor Market

In the tracer study conducted by Albina and Sumagaysay [7] on the employability of Information Technology graduates of a state university in the Philippines, they recommended that the marketability of graduates can be enhanced by periodically reviewing the curriculum. This process must include all academe, alumni, and industry stakeholders. In this way, it is assured that graduates are ready with the essential knowledge and skills that their industry partners expect. Moreover, this finding corroborates the report in the graduate tracer study commissioned by the Government of Malta. The Research and Policy Unit of Malta's National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) recommended that educational institutions prepare students for the labor market by focusing on their entrepreneurial skills, work ethics, independent learning, and other generic skills. They can better respond to the labor market by continuously conducting labor market studies to identify the skills shortages and forecast the labor market demands [8]. In Ethiopia, Woya in 2019 reported in his tracer study on the employability of Statistics graduates in Bahir Dar University that it is necessary to address the current curriculum's strengths and weaknesses and its adequacy, quality, and competencies to respond to the labor market adequately.

In the 4th Philippine Graduate Tracer Study: Examining Higher Education as Pathway to Employment, Citizenship, and Life Satisfaction from Learners' Perspective published in 2019, Tutor, Orbeta, and Miraflor, who the Philippine Institute for Development Studies commissioned, reported that communication is a critical requirement to get hired. The study participants believed that they were not trained well in this aspect. Moreover, 40% of the participants felt that their course curriculum did not provide adequate training in occupational skills. In comparison, 30% of the participants also reported not much training on information technology. Educational institutions need to address this gap as occupational skills are directly related to their field of expertise. Furthermore, information technology is a critical requirement for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

In Kenya, Badiru and Wahome reported in 2016 the results of their study on Conducting Graduate

Tracer Studies for Quality Assurance in East African Universities: A Focus on Graduate Students' Voices on Quality Culture. The authors emphasized that universities can utilize intrinsic results from the graduate tracer studies to identify areas for improvement in the curriculum and how they deliver their services to stakeholders. The idea of entrenching graduate tracer studies in the quality assurance programs of universities must be strongly supported.

Sanchez and Diamante in 2017 recommended in their Graduate Tracer Study of a College of Nursing in Cebu, Philippines, that schools of nursing must improve and enhance further the nursing students' skills in communication, human relations, and critical thinking to meet the demands of the labor market adequately. This corroborates the findings of other tracer studies in the Philippines that identified these areas as weak in preparing graduates for their actual work after graduation.

## 2.2 Dissemination of Results in Tracer Studies

Most research manuscripts are just displayed on the shelves of educational institutions. Wahome, Egesah, and Wanyama [9] strongly suggested in their tracer study on Entrenching Quality Assurance Culture Through Graduate Tracer Studies in East Africa: Lessons Learnt, Challenges, and Prospects from Moi University that the findings in tracers must be shared with students, alumni, faculty, legislators, and administrators of universities. In addition, parents, employers, public, government and non-government organizations, other institutions of higher learning must also be covered in the dissemination process of research results. They further emphasized that platforms such as academic report writings, seminars, workshops, and research conferences, both local and international, must be utilized in sharing the results. Publications in newspapers, newsletters, radio, television, and the internet were also mentioned as possible venues. Improvement in the provision of quality of education must be one of the significant goals of tracer studies.

## 2.3 Benefits of Graduate Tracer Studies

In Ghana, Nudzor and Ansah [10] emphasized that one of the ways to enhance study program effectiveness in contemporary higher education

is the continuous conduct of graduate tracer studies. Their research on improving post-graduate program effectiveness tracer studies: the reflective accounts of Ghanaian nation-wide graduate tracer study researchers reported that reflective practices on challenges and lessons from graduate tracer studies are lacking. They concluded that reflective research exercises are essential to continually improve graduate tracer studies that are seldom conducted in the context of higher education in Ghana.

Brits and Steyn [11] clarified that knowledge of the outcomes of the experiences gained by students in the academe could be the basis to enhance the quality of their education. This concerns the Graduate Tracer Study at Vaal University of Technology (VUT) in South Africa. They gathered information on the educational experiences of their graduates and evaluated their abilities and skills in their place of employment. Their tracer study aimed to enhance the quality of their programs in the university and develop institutional remedial action plans.

In Agusan del Norte, Philippines, Abas, Alaba, Ganzan, and Destacamento [12] reported in their tracer study on Teacher Education graduates that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills are the most useful in the jobs they currently have. It was further revealed that English Language Proficiency Skills were less useful in their present work. Therefore, the researchers recommended that the institution continue improving its ICT facilities so that students will be provided with more relevant and effective training and skills that are relevant to their employment prospects after graduation.

## 3. METHODS

### 3.1 Research Design

This tracer study utilized the survey research design. Survey research is a quantitative method whereby a researcher poses predetermined questions to an entire group or sample of individuals. Survey research is valuable when a researcher describes or explains a huge group or group features. This method may also be used to quickly gain general details about one's population of interest to help prepare for a more focused, in-depth study using time-intensive methods such as in-depth interviews or field research. Through this design, the goals of this research to describe the graduates' profile

experiences and determine the contribution of their course to their profession can best be achieved.

### 3.2 Participants

This tracer study for the Graduate School Department involved graduates from various masters and doctorate programs from 2015 to 2020. Participants were reached out through their social media account (FB, Messenger), GS FB page, mobile numbers and emails.

### 3.3 Instruments

This tracer study utilized a questionnaire which is a modified version of the tracer study questionnaire from CHED and UST; it suited the needs of the SPC Graduate School. The questionnaire consists of different parts such as personal profile, educational background, employment information on the graduates, the program's contribution to their personal and professional growth, their overall evaluation of the program, and the influence of SPC core values on their personal, professional development.

The questionnaire was deployed through Google Forms, wherein the link was sent to all qualified participants.

### 3.4 Statistical Analysis

Data analysis in this study primarily employed frequency counts, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and ranking. Interpretations of means were based on the following scales (Chart 1).

### 3.5 Procedure

In conducting this tracer research study, the following protocols were observed:

1. The researchers submitted the proposal to the Research, Publication, and Innovation Center (RPIC) office for approval and budget allocation.
2. Upon approval of the RPIC Director / Research Council, the proposal was

submitted to the Research Ethics Committee (REC) for review. It was revised according to the comments and suggestions of the REC reviewers.

3. The questionnaire was subjected to content validity by three experts.
4. Due to the limitations brought about by Covid 19 pandemics, the questionnaire was administered via Google Forms.
5. No orientation was done to the participants; however, informed consent was incorporated as an introductory statement in the Google Link. A question to establish the eligibility of the participants to participate voluntarily was included in the google form.
6. The Program Coordinators and the Graduate School Staff communicated with the alumni and sent the questionnaire link to the alumni through their messenger and email. (Even before COVID – 19 pandemic, graduate school has already created the Facebook Page where all graduate school students are a part of this page. Also, emails were already obtained in the past. This was done for ease of communication between GS office and students or Program Coordinator and students or Professor and students).
7. Results of this tracer study were presented as a summary of all the responses. Personal data were kept in a secured cabinet, and an e-copy was protected with a password. Only the researchers (Dean, GS Staff, and Program Coordinators) had access to the data.
8. Aside from the usual distribution channels (email, personal message, SMS), the questionnaire google link was also sent out/distributed to different chat groups available on various social media platforms (GS Facebook, Viber, Instagram, etc.).
9. The responses were downloaded to an excel file, and any information that identified the specific respondent was deleted.
10. Collected data were temporarily stored in the personal laptop or external drive; then, after approval of the research, the data will be deleted permanently.

**Chart 1. Evaluation scale**

Scale	Extent of Contribution	Overall Evaluation	Extent of Influence
4.21 – 5.0	Extreme contribution	Excellent	Extremely influential
3.41 – 4.2	High contribution	Very Good	Highly influential
2.61 – 3.4	Moderate contribution	Good	Somewhat influential
1.81 – 2.6	Fair contribution	Fair	Slightly influential
1.0 – 1.8	Poor contribution	Poor	Not at all influential

11. The data were analyzed using software, and results were interpreted and discussed to answer the research objectives.
12. Final results were presented to the Research Council and technical panel; after the approval, results will be presented to the different conferences and fora.
13. SPC-REC may monitor the progress of the study.
14. After obtaining approval from the RPIC, post-approval from ethics will be processed.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and discussion of the Graduate School Tracer Study conducted among the graduate school department alumni from SY 2015-2020. One hundred ninety-six alumni responded.

**Objective #1:** *Describe the graduates of masters and doctoral programs personal profile, employment characteristics and transition to employment*

Table 1 shows that 69.9% of the respondents are female, while 30.1% are male. Based on the data, we can see that majority of the professionals taking graduate school are female. The results of this current study support Perry's [13] finding that majority who finished doctoral and master's degrees are women.

**Table 1. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to sex**

	Frequency	Percent
Female	137	69.9
Male	59	30.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 2. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to civil status**

	Frequency	Percent
Married	89	45.4
Separated	4	2
Single	103	52.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 2 shows that 52.6% of those who finished their graduate school degrees are single, 45.4% are married, and 2% are separated. Based on the results, most of those taking graduate school are single. Price [14] explained that the decision to delay marriage among those pursuing a graduate or post-graduate degree is that marriage will hinder successful work in graduate school.

Table 3 reveals that 24% of the responses come from Batch 2020. The lowest is 4.6% of those who graduated earlier than 2015. Most of the graduates earlier than 2015 could no longer be reached due to their unknown location locally or abroad. SPC Graduate School finds it challenging to elicit responses from them. A similar finding is reported in the Tracer Study conducted in 2016 to track the alumni of the Joint Japan-World Bank Graduate Scholarship Program (JJWBGSP), which revealed that current contact information is lacking among cohorts that belong to the past years because graduates are not updating their information records in the institution. Furthermore, the report stated that this is common among tracer studies. A "fatigue factor" was also mentioned in the report, which means that retired or in the advanced stage of their careers are less likely to respond to the tracer study.

**Table 3. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to batch of graduation**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Batch 2015	15	7.7
Batch 2016	17	8.7
Batch 2017	29	14.8
Batch 2018	38	19.4
Batch 2019	41	20.9
Batch 2020	47	24.0
Earlier than 2015	9	4.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4 reveals that the Master of Psychology (MP) has the highest number of graduates among the respondents, consisting of 28.6%. The lowest number of graduates among the respondents is the Master of Industrial Counseling (MAIC) which is 0.5%. The Graduate School's current records also reveal that it has been more than five years now that the MAIC program has not attracted new enrollees. Perhaps this may be attributed to the professionalization of both the MS Guidance and Counseling and MS Psychology programs.

Revealed in Table 5 is the distribution of respondents according to the type of organization where graduates are employed, the highest of which is the private sector at 48% and the lowest is 3.6% in Non-profit or Non-Government Organizations (NGOs).

This confirms the Asian Development Bank's 2011 report stating that the private sector in the Philippines employed 90% of the workforce all over the country since 2005 despite the financial crisis in 2008 causing a decline of registered private enterprises from 825,000 in 2001 to 761,409 in 2008.

Table 6 reveals that 85.71% are working full-time, the highest frequency among the respondents. The lowest is the business owner, which constitutes 0.51%. The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported in 2019 that full-time workers in the Philippine workforce comprised 71.7 of the total employed persons. Part-time workers in the Philippines comprised 27.7%, while the rest are unemployed (0.6%). PSA further stated that two-thirds of the total employed persons are full-time workers.

**Table 4. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to degree earned at SPC**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
MAGC	15	7.7
MAHA	23	11.7
MAIC	1	.5
MAN	31	15.8
MSMT	23	11.7
MSP	11	5.6
MGC	11	5.6
MIC	2	1.0
MN	7	3.6
MP	56	28.6
PhD GC	5	2.6
PhD N	11	5.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 5. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to type of organization graduates are employed**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Non-Profit/NGO	7	3.6
Private	94	48.0
Public	81	41.3
No Answer	14	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 6. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to nature of employment**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Business Owner	1	.51
Working Part-Time	13	6.63
Working Full-Time	168	85.71
No Answer	14	7.14
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Highlighted in Table 7 are the highest and lowest distribution of respondents in terms of occupation based on the Philippine Standard Occupational Classification (PSOC). Professionals comprise the highest, 42.8%, and the lowest in the Service and Sales Workers at 0.5%. The Department of Labor and Employment reported in 2012 that Filipino professionals had reached 3.2 million. Moreover, Statista [15] reported that registered healthcare professionals in the Philippines comprised 188,219.

Table 8 shows that 82.7% of the respondents are currently working in sectors that are related to the degree they earned at SPC Graduate School, while 10.2% are working in sectors that are not related to the degree they have earned,

confirming Robst's [16] report that 55% of individuals work in areas that are closely related to their field of study, while 25% report that their work and field of study are somewhat related. However, 20% reported working in unrelated industries to their field of study.

In Table 9, it is revealed that 51% of the respondents are currently working within five years and below in their company which consists got the highest frequency. The lowest is 6.6% which is 16-20 years of service in their current company. This indicates that the majority of our students are just starting their careers. In the current system, people get an entry-level job right after college or other training, usually when they're between 20 and 25.

**Table 7. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to occupation according to Philippine Standard Occupational Classification (PSOC)**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Clerical support workers	6	3.1
Faculty member/Teacher	5	2.6
Government Official and Special-Interest Organizations	7	3.6
Healthcare Worker	52	26.5
Managers	19	9.7
Managing Proprietor or Supervisor	7	3.6
Professionals	84	42.8
Service and sales workers	1	.5
No Answer	15	7.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>



**Table 8. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to relatedness of degree earned and employment**

	Frequency	Percent
Degree earned is not related to my work	20	10.2
Degree earned is related to my work	162	82.7
No Answer	14	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 9. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to years of service in the company**

	Frequency	Percent
5 years and below	100	51.0
6-10 years	35	17.9
11-15 years	20	10.2
16-20 years	13	6.6
21 years and above	14	7.1
No Answer	14	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

According to the place of work, Table 10 shows that 86.2% of the respondents are locally employed, and only 6.6% are working abroad. The Philippine Statistics Authority [17] reported a total of 2.2 million overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) based on the 2019 survey on OFWs who worked abroad at any time during the period from April to September of that year. Based on the data, it implies that the majority of our graduates are working locally; thus, we are honing students that will soon contribute to the development of our country.

In Table 11, it is revealed that 66.8% of the respondents have been working before completing their graduate degree at SPC. While 26% are currently employed, not in their first job after completing their degree at SPC Graduate School, and 26% are still working in the same job after graduation.

Table 12 shows that 31.1% of the respondents considered salaries and benefits the primary reason for employment. The lowest reasons for employment are a family-owned business, fear of not being able to find a better job at this time, the field of interest, flexible time, happiness, potential growth and freedom, assigned by general superior to take the job, waiting for retirement age, ministry; salary and benefits, and part of the Board of Directors at 0.5% each respectively. Cecilia [18] reported that job seekers prefer a higher starting basic salary; however, they can be influenced to work for companies with a broad base of benefits, incentives, bonuses, and allowances. This corroborates the findings that salaries and benefits are the significant reasons SPC Graduate School graduates work for companies.

**Table 10. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to place of work**

	Frequency	Percent
Abroad	13	6.6
Local	169	86.2
No Answer	14	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 11. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to whether it is their first job after finishing a graduate degree**

	Frequency	Percent
No	131	66.8
Yes	51	26.0
No Answer	14	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 12. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to reasons for employment**

	Frequency	Percent
For all reasons	4	2.0
Career Challenge	45	23.0
Family own business	1	.5
Fear of not being able to find a better job at this time	1	.5
Field of Interest	1	.5
Flexible time	1	.5
Happiness, potential growth and Freedom	1	.5
I am assigned by my General Superior to take the job	1	.5
Just waiting for retirement age	1	.5
Ministry; Salary and Benefits	1	.5
Part of Board of Director	1	.5
Proximity to residence	13	6.6
Related to special skills	28	14.3
Salaries and Benefits	61	31.1
Working environment	20	10.2
No Answer	16	8.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In Table 13, it is revealed that 48% of the respondents were not promoted in their job after attaining their degree at SPC Graduate School, while 44.9% were promoted in their job after attaining their degree. Taking a master's degree or upgrading educational qualification can make it easier to transition into higher or even managerial positions [19]. It was further stated that 74 percent of employers had raised educational standards in the US, with many companies looking to hire those with advanced degrees.

Table 14 shows that 77% of the respondents have permanent status in their current employment while the lowest is 1% are casual and consultants.

Table 15 reveals that the highest monthly income of the respondents is in the range of

21,000-30,000 Php, which is 31.6%, while the lowest is below 10,000 Php at 3.6%. Trading Economics [20] shared the International Labor Organization (ILO) report that in 2018 the wages in the Philippines increased to 13,487.30 Php per month in 2018 from 12,646 Php per month in 2017. Results imply that most of our students are earning above the average salary in the Philippines, which is above the poverty threshold.

Table 16 reveals that 91.8% were working while taking their graduate school degrees, 1.5% did not work, and 6.6% did not provide any information or did not answer. Results are very typical to graduate education, the majority of the students put in the hard work to earn their graduate degrees while working full-time.

**Table 13. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to obtaining promotion after attaining the degree**

	Frequency	Percent
No	94	48.0
Yes	88	44.9
No Answer	14	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 14. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to status of employment**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Casual	2	1.0
Consultant	2	1.0
Contractual	12	6.1
Permanent	151	77.0
Probationary	14	7.1
No Answer	15	7.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 15. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to monthly income**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Below 10,000	7	3.6
10,000 – 20,000	27	13.8
21,000 – 30,000	62	31.6
31,000 – 40,000	33	16.8
41,000 – 50,000	17	8.7
51,000 – 60,000	11	5.6
71,000 above	22	11.2
No Answer	17	8.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 16. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to working while studying**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	3	1.5
Yes	180	91.8
No Answer	13	6.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 17 portrays 18 students who, after obtaining their graduate degree, applied for another job. Results further illustrate that 33.3% obtained a job in less than a month, 33.3% obtained a job within 1 to 6 months, 22.2% obtained a job in less than two months, while only 11.2% were able to find a career in 2 but less than three years.

According to the graduates who were not employed, their inability to find a job was due to the following reasons advance or further study (Medicine, Postgraduate Studies, etc.), Concentrate on private practice, Family concern and decided not to find a job, Health-related reasons and lastly it was a choice not to look for a job to prepare for foreign examinations.

Moreover, the gap in finding a job right after obtaining their graduate school degrees was attributed to the following reasons: Oversupply of nurses, Insufficient time, Early marriage, decision

to take care of their children and family, Assisting Family Business, Financial constraints, On private practice, availability of plantilla position, preferred to work full time in church ministry and still deciding on what field to pursue.

**Objective #2:** *To describe the impact of SPC Graduate School Education on their personal and professional growth.*

Table 18 depicts that SPC Graduate School has a very high impact on the personal and professional growth of the graduates ( $x = 3.78$ ;  $Sd = .450$ ). Moreover, results further show that SPC – GS is able to facilitate its graduates in gaining new experiences and skills to positively impact their current position and any role they are likely to pursue in their career and personal life.

**Objective #3:** *To determine the extent to which the program of study has contributed to*

**Table 17. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to employment rate**

	Frequency	Percent
Less than a month	6	33.3
Within 1 to 6 months	6	33.3
Less than 2 months	4	22.2
2 years to less than 3 years	2	11.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 18. Impact of SPC graduate school on the graduates' personal and professional growth**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
Impact of SPC Graduate School Education to your Personal and Professional Growth.	196	3.78	.450	Very High

*the personal and professional growth of graduates.*

Table 19 uncovers that the graduates generally regarded that their study program has contributed highly to their personal and professional growth ( $x = 3.559$ ;  $Sd = .587$ ). Moreover, it can be gleaned from the results that their program of study has highly contributed to their personal and professional growth, specifically in the areas of Academic preparation, Research capability, Learning efficiency, Communication skills, People skills, Problem-solving skills, Meeting present and future professional needs, Exposure to the local community within the field of specialization, Critical thinking skills, and Personality Development. However, results also show that their program of study has only moderately contributed to their personal and professional growth, specifically in the area of Information technology skills confirming Tutor, Orbeta, and Mirafior's [21] observation that not much training is being done in information technology which is a critical skill in the 4th Industrial Revolution. Moderate contributions have also been noted in exposure to the international community within a specialization, Salary improvement and promotion, and Opportunities abroad. These results can serve as the basis on how to improve each program curriculum since excellence is our priority [22-25].

**Objective #4:** *To describe the graduates' overall evaluation of the degree/program completed.*

Table 20 demonstrates that the graduates' overall evaluation of the degree/program they

completed at SPC is very good ( $x = 3.58$ ;  $Sd = .566$ ). Results further present a very good evaluation in terms of Adequacy of course offerings for future practice, Relevance of their course to their profession, Extracurricular activities, Premium is given to research, Interdisciplinary learning, Teaching and learning environment, Quality of instruction, Teacher-student relationship, Library resources, Laboratory resources, Class size, Professors' pedagogical expertise, and Professors' knowledge of the subject matter. While the ratings are all very good, it is still our dream to have Quality and Excellence; results explain that we need to exert more efforts to improve the implementation of the graduate school programs. In particular, the areas on extracurricular activities ( $x=3.22$ ;  $Sd = .776$ ) and laboratory resources ( $x=3.20$ ;  $Sd = .721$ ) must be given much focus for improvement [26-30].

**Objective #5:** *Determine the extent to which the core values of SPC have influenced graduates' personal and professional growth.*

Table 21 reveals that SPC core values highly influenced the personal and professional growth of graduates ( $x = 3.709$ ;  $Sd = .43069$ ). In terms of the extent to which each core value of SPC has influenced graduates' personal and professional growth, Table 21 further reveals that Truth and Wisdom, Quality and Excellence, Family Spirit and Sense of Caring, Respect for the Uniqueness of Persons, Social Responsibility.

**Table 19. Descriptive statistics of program of study, contributed to the personal and professional growth of graduates**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Description</b>
Academic preparation	196	3.79	.436	High Contribution
Research capability	196	3.61	.594	High Contribution
Learning efficiency	196	3.77	.425	High Contribution
Communication skills	196	3.69	.486	High Contribution
People skills	196	3.72	.470	High Contribution
Problem-solving skills	196	3.66	.505	High Contribution
Information technology skills	196	3.31	.679	Moderate Contribution
Meetings present and future professional needs	196	3.73	.468	High Contribution
Exposure to the local community within the field of specialization	196	3.51	.652	High Contribution
Exposure to the international community within the field of specialization	196	3.17	.821	Moderate Contribution
Critical thinking skills	196	3.63	.524	High Contribution
Salary improvement and promotion	196	3.39	.799	Moderate Contribution
Opportunities abroad	196	3.10	.880	Moderate Contribution
Personality development	196	3.75	.479	High Contribution
Overall extent to which the program of study has contributed to the personal and professional growth of graduates	196	3.559	.587	High Contribution

4.21 – 5.0: Extreme contribution, 3.41 – 4.2: High contribution, 2.61 – 3.4: Moderate contribution, 1.81 – 2.6: Fair contribution, 1.0 – 1.8: Poor Contribution

**Table 20. Graduates' overall evaluation of the degree / program completed in terms of the following**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Description</b>
Academic preparation	196	3.79	.436	High Contribution
Research capability	196	3.61	.594	High Contribution
Learning efficiency	196	3.77	.425	High Contribution
Communication skills	196	3.69	.486	High Contribution
People skills	196	3.72	.470	High Contribution
Problem-solving skills	196	3.66	.505	High Contribution
Information technology skills	196	3.31	.679	Moderate Contribution
Meetings present and future professional needs	196	3.73	.468	High Contribution
Exposure to the local community within the field of specialization	196	3.51	.652	High Contribution
Exposure to the international community within the field of specialization	196	3.17	.821	Moderate Contribution
Critical thinking skills	196	3.63	.524	High Contribution
Salary improvement and promotion	196	3.39	.799	Moderate Contribution
Opportunities abroad	196	3.10	.880	Moderate Contribution
Personality development	196	3.75	.479	High Contribution
Overall extent to which the program of study has contributed to the personal and professional growth of graduates	196	3.559	.587	High Contribution

4.21 – 5.0: Excellent, 3.41 – 4.2: Very Good, 2.61 – 3.4: Good, 1.81 – 2.6: Fair, 1.0 – 1.8: Poor

**Table 21. The extent to which each core value of SPC has influenced the personal and professional growth of graduates**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
Truth and Wisdom	196	3.709	.4439	Highly Influential
Quality and Excellence	196	3.730	.4567	Highly Influential
Family Spirit and Sense of Caring	196	3.702	.4766	Highly Influential
Respect for the Uniqueness of Persons	196	3.717	.4752	Highly Influential
Social Responsibility	196	3.691	.4861	Highly Influential
Overall influence of SPC Core Values	196	3.7097	.43069	Highly Influential

4.21 – 5.0: Extremely influential, 3.41 – 4.2: Highly influential, 2.61 – 3.4: Somewhat influential, 1.81 – 2.6: Slightly influential, 1.0 – 1.8: Not at all influential

Moreover, it can be gleaned from the results that among the five core values, Quality and Excellence have the highest mean. Implying that San Pedro College has produced graduates which value quality of their work and performance wherever they may seek to establish their careers. Adding to that, the graduates are able strives for excellence in whatever task they may do and perform in honor to their alma mater.

**Synthesis of the Results:** Based on the analysis of the responses of the 196 alumni in the graduate school from batch 2015 – 2021, the following are the summary of the findings:

1. The majority, or 69.9%, of the graduate school professionals, are female, while 30.1% are male.
2. More than a half, or 52.6% of those who finished their graduate school degrees, are single, 45.4% are married, and 2% are separated.
3. Most, or 24% of the respondents were from Batch 2020, 20.9% were batch 2019, 19.4% were from Batch 2018, 14.8% were from Batch 2017, and less than 10% were from 2015 – 2016 batches.
4. The highest number of graduates among the respondents, consisting of 28.6%, from Master of Psychology (MP), a non-thesis program, while the lowest number of graduates among the respondents is the Master of Industrial Counseling (MAIC) which is 0.5%.
5. In terms of the distribution of respondents according to the type of organization where graduates are employed, the highest of

- which is the private sector at 48%, followed by 41.3% in the government or public sector, and the lowest is 3.6% in Non-profit or Non-government organizations (NGOs).
6. Eighty-five percent (85.71%) are working full-time, the highest frequency among the respondents, while only 6.63% work part-time. The lowest is the business owner, which constitutes 0.51%.
7. The distribution of respondents in terms of occupation based on the Philippine Standard Occupational Classification (PSOC) reveals that professionals comprise the highest, 42.8%, and the lowest in the Service and Sales Workers at 0.5%.
8. Almost eighty-three percent (82.7%) of the respondents are currently working in sectors related to the degree they earned at SPC Graduate School, while 10.2% are working in industries unrelated to the degree they have earned.
9. The majority or 51% of our students are just starting their careers; they are currently working within five years and below in their company which got the highest frequency. The lowest is 6.6% which is 16-20 years of service in their current company.
10. Eighty-six percent or 86.2% of the respondents are locally employed, and only 6.6% are working abroad.
11. Close to sixty-seven percent (66.8%) of the respondents have been working before completing their graduate degree at SPC. While 26% are currently employed, not in their first job after completing their degree at SPC Graduate School, and 26% are still working in the same job after graduation.

12. Thirty-one percent (31.1%) of the respondents considered salaries and benefits the primary reason for employment. The lowest reasons for employment are a family-owned business, fear of not being able to find a better job at this time, the field of interest, flexible time, happiness, potential growth and freedom, assigned by general superior to take the job, waiting for retirement age, ministry; salary and benefits, and part of the Board of Directors at 0.5% each respectively.
13. Forty-eight percent (48%) of the respondents were not promoted after attaining their degree at SPC Graduate School, while 44.9% were promoted in their job after earning their degree.
14. The majority, or 77% of the respondents, have permanent status in their current employment, 7.1% are still on probationary status, 6.1% are contractual, while the lowest is 1% are casual and consultants.
15. The highest monthly income of the respondents is in the range of 21,000-30,000 Php, which is 31.6%, while the lowest is below 10,000 Php at 3.6%.
16. Almost ninety-two percent (91.8%) were working while taking their graduate school degrees, 1.5% did not work, and 6.6% did not provide any information or did not answer.
17. Thirty-three percent (33.3%) obtained a job in less than a month, 33.3% obtained a job within 1 to 6 months, 22.2% got a job in less than two months, while only 11.2% were able to land a career in 2 but less than three years after finishing their degree.
18. SPC Graduate School has a very high impact on the personal and professional growth of the graduates ( $x = 3.78$ ;  $Sd = .450$ ). Moreover, results further show that SPC – GS is able to facilitate its graduates in gaining new experiences and skills to positively impact their current position and any role they are likely to pursue in their career and personal life.
19. Results reveal that the graduates generally regarded that their study program contributed to their personal and professional growth ( $x = 3.559$ ;  $Sd = .587$ ). Moreover, it can be gleaned from the results that their program of study has highly contributed to their personal and professional growth, specifically in the areas of Academic preparation, Research capability, Learning efficiency, Communication skills, People skills, Problem-solving skills, Meeting present and future professional needs, Exposure to the local community within the field of specialization, Critical thinking skills, and Personality Development. However, results also show that their program of study has only moderately contributed to their personal and professional growth, specifically in the area of Information technology skills.
20. Results reveals that the graduates' overall evaluation of the degree/program they completed at SPC is very good ( $x = 3.58$ ;  $Sd = .566$ ). Results further present a very good evaluation in terms of Adequacy of course offerings for future practice, Relevance of their course to their profession, Extracurricular activities, Premium is given to research, Interdisciplinary learning, Teaching and learning environment, Quality of instruction, Teacher-student relationship, Library resources, Laboratory resources, Class size, Professors' pedagogical expertise, and Professors' knowledge of the subject matter. While the ratings are all very good, it is still our dream to have Quality and Excellence; results explain that we need to exert more efforts to improve the implementation of the graduate school programs. In particular, the areas on extracurricular activities ( $x=3.22$ ;  $Sd = .776$ ) and laboratory resources ( $x=3.20$ ;  $Sd = .721$ ) must be given more focus for improvement.
21. Results reveal that SPC core values highly influenced graduates' personal and professional growth ( $x = 3.709$ ;  $Sd = .43069$ ). In terms of the extent to which each core value of SPC has influenced graduates' personal and professional growth, Table 21 further reveals that Truth and Wisdom, Quality and Excellence, Family Spirit and Sense of Caring, Respect for the Uniqueness of Persons, Social Responsibility. Moreover, it can be gleaned from the results that among the five core values, Quality and Excellence have the highest mean.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this Graduate School Tracer Study, the following are recommended:

1. The Dean and Program Coordinators may review the curriculum on the possibility of

incorporating an elective or topic that will hone the IT skills of graduate school students in this area.

2. The faculty or professors in each subject may enhance their syllabi to include international exposure or international linkages of graduate school students as their professional engagement requirement.
3. The Dean and Program Coordinators may propose that each program forge international links with foreign and local universities and colleges with equivalent programs in coordination with Interlink Office.
4. That the Program Coordinators and Practicum Coordinator intensify partnership with local and international industries to provide avenues for students seeking better employment.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this tracer study, it can be concluded that SPC Graduate School Department provided new experiences and skills to positively impact their current position and any role they are likely to pursue in their career and personal life. In addition, the SPC Graduate School department effectively and efficiently honed the skills of the graduates of the different programs Ph.D. in Nursing (PhDN), Ph.D. in Guidance and Counseling (PhDGC), MA in Guidance and Counseling (MAGC), Master in Guidance and Counseling (MGC), MA in Industrial Counseling (MAIC), Master in Industrial Counseling (MIC), MA in Hospital Administration (MAHA), MA in Nursing (MAN), Master in Nursing (MN), MS in Psychology (MSP), Master in Psychology (MP), and MS Medical Technology (MSMT) to become better person and practitioner. Moreover, SPC succeeded in the inculcation of the values to the graduates.

## ETHICAL APPROVAL AND CONSENT

Upon approval of the RPIC Director/Research Council, the proposal was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee (REC) for review. It was revised according to the comments and suggestions of the REC reviewers. The respondents gave informed consent by ticking through the Google link signifying that they voluntarily participated in the research. Confidentiality of the research data and the anonymity of the participants were strictly

adhered to by coding and deleting the identifiers in the data processing. Only the researchers had access to the data. Personal data were excluded in the analysis but were kept as part of the alumni record of the graduate school. Participants were also informed that they always have the right to refuse or withdraw their participation anytime without liabilities and accountabilities. Participants who wanted to access their responses after Submission were afforded such rights.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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