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EXPLORATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SUSTAINABILITY EXPERIENCES OF SELECTED INFORMAL ENTREPRENEURS

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic had taken a heavy toll on the daily lives of ordinary Filipinos and those trying to survive on what is left of the informal economy in the Philippines. This study intends to ascertain the sustainability experiences of the informal entrepreneurs in Talisay City, Cebu, and its accompanying challenges with the end view of formulating implications for practices. The study utilized the exploratory research design using a researcher-made questionnaire as the main instrument in data gathering, which had undergone content validation to ascertain their functionality and reliability. Qualitative data was used in exploring the sustainability experiences among selected informal entrepreneurs in Talisay City, Cebu. Ten (10) informants were informal entrepreneurs in the City of Talisay. They are the sidewalk vendors with 2 participants each who are fish vendors, fruit vendors, sari-sari store vendors, food vendors, and online sellers that are unregistered businesses operating in the different parts of the city. Convenience sampling was used in this study. Each individual was chosen entirely randomly. For data analysis, thematic analysis was applied. The sources of their business capitalization were *Personal and Informal Sources of Business Finance*, while the measures they have employed to sustain their financial health were to *Practice Effective Inventory Management System and Product Diversification*. They manage their daily smooth flow operation in consideration of the health and safety protocol imposed by the government by *Staying Out of Trouble from Authorities* and by *Taking Adequate Preparations*. They have also managed the additional hassles in the operations by *Adapting with Societal Changes*. On the aspect, if they have received any assistance from the government or have tried asking assistance from the government, it was confirmed that there was *Absence of Governmental Assistance*. Likewise, in their responses on how they comply with the legal requirements imposed by the government as part of the new normal, they conform by *Working in Harmony with Governmental Policies*. The main reasons for not registering their business were *Burdensome Governmental Regulations* and *Privation from Access to Economic Resources*. Moreover, their problems with authorities or institutions in the exercise of their business amid the pandemic they experienced were *Struggles of Moving from One Place into Another*. They had encountered economic challenges before and after implementing the Enhanced Community Quarantine were an *Economic Hardships: Traceable to People Movement Restrictions*. Furthermore, the measures

they have employed before and after implementing the Enhanced Community Quarantine were to *Form New Business Approach to be Sustainable*. On how they keep their customers continue to patronize their business, they *Ensure Customer Relationships Outlast Coronavirus*, and the strategies they have employed in their business to increase market exposure were to *Adapt Practical Marketing Approaches*. On the aspect of where they get help when they or a family member gets sick and if they have access to healthcare insurance, it was revealed that they *Depend on Publicly-Provided Healthcare Services*. Lastly, if they have received any financial assistance or free training from the local government to help them guarantee income security, especially during this health pandemic, it was long-established that *No Apparent Governmental Support*.

Keywords - Social science, informal sector, underground economy, COVID-19 business challenges, sustainability measures, exploratory, Talisay City, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The Philippines has many small businesses constituting the so-called informal economy. These business entities refer to the small-scale units in the national economy, producing and distributing goods and services without the benefit of the government's sanction or control. They are not registered and do not pay taxes. They operate their business beyond the arms of the law. They have little or no access to organized markets, credit institutions, educational or training centers, or public services. Although efforts are being made by the authorities to bring the informal economy to the surface, the nature of this sector makes it very difficult to gather and process statistics on them (Bitonio, 2012).

The COVID-19 pandemic and its financial impacts have made a global crisis unrivaled ever in history. The unfavorable economic impact of COVID-19 has generally been squeezing in the informal business entities. Pending the discovery of vaccines and treatments, physical distancing remains the best way to break the chain of transmission and secure vast segments of the population (Mukhtarova, 2020).

The lockdowns at country and sub-national levels, just as the limitations on the movement of individuals, have led to the closure of non-essential businesses with negative results on work markets around the world, especially in the informal economy. As the COVID-19 spreads across areas with enormous casual economies, it is expected that more informal workers will lose their jobs and face extreme poverty and food insecurity (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2020).

Having a substantial informal sector—estimated in the Philippines to represent around 40% of GDP—is that those organizations and laborers are by definition not registered with, and consequently undetectable, to the government. Consequently, remedial measures and assistance set up by the government to help firms and their laborers amid hardship are not likely to reach members therein (Habito, 2020).

Like the rest of the globe, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a monstrous negative effect on the Philippine economy and continues to unleash devastation as it stays unchecked and compromises the second wave in different regions (United Nations 2020). The most apparent impact of the COVID-19 emergency in the developed world has been the jobless, the independently employed, casual and gig-workers, and small-scale entrepreneurs and businesses,

which can be incompletely portrayed as those individuals and enterprises in the informal sector (Narula, 2020).

According to Weldeslassie et al. (2019), the significant obstructions of informal economic entities in the Philippines are the question of sustainability, lack of credit assistance, weak market linkage, insufficient training, reliance on government and spoon-feeding mentality, motions in government arrangements, value varieties, weak connections, and poor market and item improvement techniques.

The success and survival of informal economic entities rely on influencing the natural environment and society against economic benefits (Singh & Roy, 2019). The owners or entrepreneurs of the small businesses, especially those that belong to the informal category, are not exempt from the economic slump caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Lots of them failed to operate due to the restrictions imposed by the government, like the several months-long enhanced community quarantines (ECQ) where businesses were closed, social distancing, and prohibition of many consumer activities. This government restriction causes their illiquidity and even insolvency.

Thus, it is essential to analyze the core impact and the sustainability efforts adopted by the informal economic entities in the Philippines, specifically in Talisay City, where there are many informal economic entities.

Further, any businesses, whether registered or not, that closed, got bankrupt, displaced, diverted their assets, or still adjusted to the recession caused by the pandemic led to a helpless state of the employees who will lose their jobs. Moreover, some entrepreneurs may indulge in illegal business schemes like drug dealing as this is rampant in the city or resort to whatever jobs they could do to earn an income to feed their families. Due to the observable havoc caused by the pandemic, this study intends to explore the sustainability measures adopted by the informal economic entities in Talisay City as they are taking the most hard-hit effects of the crisis.

FRAMEWORK

This study adopted the three different theories on business sustainability, like the sustainable development theory, which explained the context of sustainable development by balancing the well-being of the people and earning profit to sustain the business. In addition, the resilience theory pertained to the ability of the firm to make the necessary adjustment in its operations when there are adverse changes in the external environment where the firm operates, while the dynamic capabilities theory, which pertained to the capacity of an enterprise to deliberately create, expand, or adjust its asset base to be in a competitive position. These theories provide deeper insights into the dynamics of the existence and operations of the business in an economy.

This study is anchored on sustainable development theory, which explains that sustainable development depends on needs and the concept of people in the future. The essence of the idea of sustainable development derives from the triple bottom line concept (three Ps) like people (well-being or life), planet (climate/environment), profit (sustainability), which suggest the amicability between three pillars of sustainability consisting of the environmental sustainability-focused on keeping up the quality of the environment. Complete sustainable development is accomplished through harmony between every one of these pillars. However, the necessary condition is challenging because, during the time spent accomplishing its objectives, every

mainstay of supportability must regard the interests of different pillars not to bring them into imbalance (Klarin, 2018).

Further, according to this theory, development refers to three major components of human existence: economic, ecological, and human. The first component is fundamental, as the aim of social and economic activity is to fulfill human necessities or wants, resulting in the three dimensions of human existence, which is known as biological (present in the cooperation with the natural environment), social (as an individual from some social groups), rational or psychological or spiritual (inner characteristics, particular to one human being) (Duran et al., 2015).

In its evolution, sustainable development has been advocated as an idea dependent on three dimensions or pillars of sustainability settled in equilibrium: an ecological, social, and economic pillar of sustainability. Accordingly, sustainable development requires the accomplishment of social sustainability, which include conserving the society and social character, regard of the social variety, safeguarding of social qualities, rules, and standards, assurance of fundamental liberties and equality in performing business and enterprise and economic sustainability which relates to maintaining the natural and social capital needed to achieve income and living standard while performing or operating an enterprise (Klarin, 2018).

Sustainable development is the advancement that addresses the present issues without bargaining the capacity of people in the future to address their issues. Sustainable development has kept on developing to ensure the world's assets while its actual agenda is to control its resources. Sustainable economic growth refers to economic development that addresses all without leaving people in the future with less average assets than those we appreciate today (Sustainable Development Unit, 2020).

Sustainable development balances our financial, natural, and social necessities, permitting prosperity for the present and people in the future. Sustainable development comprises a long-term, coordinated way to create and accomplish a solid network by tending to financial, natural, and social issues. Informal workers, on average, have earnings 19% lower than formal laborers and have restricted reserve funds (International Labour Organization, 2020). They are less likely to meet all requirements to qualify for government projects to help individuals and organizations through the crisis (Fleming, 2020).

The resilience theory states that the capacity of a dynamic system of an enterprise to adapt successfully to disturbances or environmental jolts threaten system or enterprise function, viability, or developmentally. Resilience is further characterized as a dynamic cycle encompassing positive adaptation with critical adversity. Two primary conditions should be met to be resilient: exposure to critical threat or severe adversity and the accomplishment of positive adaptation. This definition reflects that enterprises do not withstand risk but change to accommodate risk (Shean, 2015).

This theory states that resilience is the capacity of an enterprise to absorb disturbance, go through change, and hold a similar capacity, structure, character, and criticisms. It is a cycle connecting a set of versatile abilities to a positive trajectory of working and transformation after an unsettling influence wherein strength rises out of a set of versatile capacities. Resilience in an enterprise is the capacity to adopt an unsettling influence while holding its essential capacities. The term resilience infers both the capacity to adjust to typical or foreseen stresses and strains and to adjust to unexpected shocks and extraordinary demands (Carlson et al., 2012).

Further, resilience is supported or thwarted by direct effects of risks and resources and by moderating processes of protection, vulnerability, and differential susceptibility of the enterprise.

It is further characterized resilience as not impenetrable to push. Alternatively, flexibility is intended to mirror the limit concerning recuperation and keep up versatile conduct that may follow starting retreat or inadequacy after starting a distressing function. To be resilient, an enterprise must show functional adequacy as a measurement of resilient business or enterprise in times of financial or environmental jolts (Shean, 2015).

Resilience is the capacity of a local economy to withstand financial stuns and continue giving products and enterprises needed by consumers to accomplish an adequate quality of life. The informal sector is typically made out of small businesses that are not enlisted. They are infrequently run from business premises but from homes, walkways, or other informal squatter-like form business. Nations that lack foundations, enhanced economies, and comprehensive political frameworks are the most vulnerable. Therefore, extensive government consideration should be given to the change and advancement of everyday economic operations through socially inclusive approach methodologies; this will constantly yield a colossal outcome in encouraging the quick improvement of the economy. On the last note, any nation cannot be essential advancement if its urban communities are not resilient to crises or disasters. The country's improvement is genuinely tested if this cannot be done, leaving numerous nations battling for advancement (Fayomi et al., 2018).

The dynamic capabilities theory posits that dynamic capabilities empower enterprises to develop their resources to flourish in a wide range of unsteady business sectors or environmental shocks. This way, enterprises can develop new resources out of their present ones. Those are not, at this point, restricted to simply essential resources since they can likewise be intangible ones. Dynamic capabilities are made out of various sources. A few organizations create them out of lower-demand capacities by expanding, altering, or making standard capacities, empowering enterprises to manage their everyday schedules and issues. Others depend on organizational routines or measures by detecting, seizing, and reconfiguring standard abilities (Bremser et al., 2015).

During an environmental jolt, the quick and sudden change in the environment may regularly deliver existing methodologies outdated, leading to more crisis in every enterprise. However, enterprise resilience might be a component of pre-jolt anticipatory strategic actions, wherein firms create and convey resource configurations that permit persistence during environmental jolts. Enterprises working in dynamic environments can increase more prominent advantages from utilizing dynamic capabilities than in stable conditions since such capabilities empower the firm to change or adjust under the environment (Fainshmidt, 2014).

The dynamic capabilities theory states that the business or enterprise uses assets – explicitly the process to incorporate, reconfigure, add, and deliver assets – to coordinate or even make a market or environmental changes. Dynamic abilities along the organization are the authoritative and essential routines by which firms/enterprises accomplish new asset designs as business sectors develop, collide, split, evolve, and pass on. In addition, the dynamic capacity view takes a process perspective on execution and perceives the interchange among external and internal conditions of enterprise and perceives that capabilities can constantly develop, group, change, collaborate and decay over the long run because of or anticipation of these relevant changes in the market or environment (Bremser et al., 2015).

Bremser et al. (2015) further explained that this theory also notes that crisis circumstances are vital for enterprise business and impact the way capabilities are created. In addition, vulnerability due to emergency circumstances impacts the way systems are executed and, as an outcome, modify execution. Dynamic capabilities are needed during tempestuous economic

times to maintain positive enterprise performance. Firms discarding dynamic capabilities and the capacity to extract and use profound information from their stakeholders can endure a crisis while different enterprises wither and die.

With unreliable statistics, the informal sector remains inadequately comprehended in South-East Asia. In its first-ever evaluation or assessment of informal work in 2018, the International Labour Organization (ILO) assessed that more than two billion (61.2%) of the world's employed population is informal (Shaikh, 2020).

The coronavirus pandemic is a public health crisis that has kept on spreading across continents with no definite treatment or antibody yet requires a phenomenal arrangement of strategy reactions. A significant portion of the world economy is being closed down for general health reasons identified with Coronavirus. Companies operating in emerging markets face highly turbulent and complex environments like this pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020).

The COVID-19 crisis has uncovered previous cracks, imbalances, and injustices, at the base of the financial pyramid and indicated a focus on the commitments of frontline laborers, a considerable lot of whom are informally employed. Nevertheless, sometime before COVID-19, informal workers have been battling for equality, justice, and dignity. The current COVID-19 crisis, both the pandemic itself and the approach reaction, uncovered the injustices, inequities, and inequalities. The time has come to help them in their battle. Most informal workers attempt to make an honest living without social or legal protections, basic infrastructures, transport, social services, access to public space or public procurement offers, monetary or business development services, and without tax cuts and different motivations. Informal laborers explore these shortages notwithstanding fundamental separation and brutality by local authorities and the police and stigmatization and disregard by planners and strategy makers. Despite their pivotal contributions, the state is regularly plainly antagonistic to these laborers. To refer to only one of such a large number of models, road sellers around the globe should explore everyday badgering and pay-offs, frequent seizure of their merchandise, and successive removals by police and local authorities to earn a livelihood (Chen, 2020).

An informal sector is viewed as the piece of an economy that is neither burdened with tax nor monitored by the government or its offices. The informal sector refers to those laborers who are independently employed or who work for the individuals who are independently employed. Thirty years back, the International Labor Organization instituted the expression, the informal sector, to portray the exercises of the working poor. Today, this area represents almost 50% of all laborers globally, extending to developing and industrialized nations (Oruonye et al., 2020).

Moreover, the International Labor Organization, the informal economy, or the Philippines, comprises independent, independently employed, small-scale producers and wholesalers of merchandise and ventures. Almost 40% of the labor force in the Philippines is viewed as a vulnerable source of employment, which is an intermediary measure for the informal economy (Dreyer & Nygaard, 2020).

Most job losses and decreasing working hours will occur in the hardest-hit areas. It was assessed that those 1.25 billion workers, speaking to nearly 38 percent of the worldwide labor force, are utilized in areas that are presently confronting an extreme decrease in yield and severe danger of labor force relocation. Key areas include retail trade, accommodation, food services, and manufacturing. Especially in low and middle-income nations, hard-hit areas have many workers in informal sectors with restricted access to health services and social security (International Labour Organization, 2020).

Governments around the globe are making quick moves to help businesses endure the pandemic and keep the recession as short and shallow as could reasonably be expected while saving as many jobs as possible. Amid crisis, where the difficulties are systemic, and the reaction of each firm affects the others, the economic and social climate is especially significant. Along with employers' and workers' organizations, governments ought to rapidly actualize measures to support endeavors through the crisis, help them recuperate, and give social protection to workers in need (International Labour Organization, 2020).

Enterprises restructure for various reasons, including reaction to business declines, changing nature of the business, new work techniques, new advancements, new investments, consolidations and acquisitions, and diminishing costs. Also, there are various advantages, including resuscitating a declining business, expanding an organization's worth, setting up the organization available to be purchased, gaining a competitive advantage, or situating itself for development. To put it plainly, to maintain business survival and success (International Labour Organization, 2020). This further strengthened the dynamic capabilities theory of Bremser et al. (2015), which enables enterprises or businesses to develop their resources to thrive in a wide range of unstable markets or environmental shocks, and Fainshmidt (2014), who explained that enterprises working in a unique or dynamic environment could expand more prominent advantages from utilizing dynamic abilities than in stable conditions since such capabilities engage the firm to change or adjust following the environment and enterprise exposed to shocks tend to adjust and adapt the changes.

The effect of COVID-19 has been altogether multidimensional. The business sectors have shown their fragility, and an entire scope of financial weaknesses have been exploited throughout both the developed and developing world. At the coalface of this crisis are the informal economic entities who have been lopsidedly affected, as their financial reserves essentially do not stretch similar to large business and global companies (Tarbuck, 2020).

In the coming years, businesses should adjust to a large group of new ecological, social, and governance dangers or face extinction. It is not, at this point, whether or not it is essential to launch sustainable business practices, but instead how long it will require before consumers, investors, or governments rebuff organizations that do not adjust or adapt to changes. Sustainability is not a trend that will pass, yet another business reality (Berdak, 2020).

Because of the economic crisis made by the COVID-19 pandemic, practically 1.6 billion informal economy workers (representing the most vulnerable in the labor market, out of a worldwide total of two billion and a worldwide labor force of 3.3 billion, have endured excessive damage to their ability to earn a living. This is because of lockdown measures and works in the hardest-hit sectors. The preceding month of the crisis is assessed to have brought about a drop of 60% in the earnings of informal workers globally. Without another source of income, these workers and their families will have no way or means to endure or survive this crisis (International Labour Organization, 2020). Vast numbers of these laborers will probably lose their jobs and face extreme poverty and food instability as the sickness strengthens across massive informal economies (Shaikh, 2020).

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic is influencing each sector of the worldwide economy, and the informal economy encounters unique challenges as its members attempt to explore government organization and secure urgent aid. Lamentably, the informal entrepreneur's community encounters many vulnerabilities and battles through numerous boundaries as merchants attempt to get the assistance they require. Informality complicates day-to-day business for informal vendors. Informality implies that merchants battle to get reliable and regulated lines

of credit and secure enforceable contracts. Laborers lack pensions and experience precarious employment conditions. Informality can likewise sabotage the rule of law in the shrouded economy. Thus, they may depend on extreme strategies, for example, destructive marketplace closures (Goldstein, 2020).

One of the key advantages enjoyed by the formal economy is secured property rights. The informal economy lacks such property rights, implying that the public authority can close and destroy informal business sectors and punish informal markets in any capacity whatsoever with almost no notice. This arrangement presents much precarity into informal work. Informal vendors do not have a lawful response or a direct line to the public authority to appeal to various approaches since their property does not exist with the legal structure (Goldstein, 2020).

There remains vulnerability over this pandemic's length and effects, or whether the resulting waves will reappear in months and years to come. Its effect will, without a doubt, numerous prompt businesses to shut down or reduce their activities, and their development will be extraordinarily influenced for a long time. An increased debt burden and decreased markets or a considerable loss of income experienced by employers have just had "knock-on" multiplier effects on others, including their staff, suppliers, business partners, and communities. In contrast, the crisis may start a time of reinvention and adaptation for other businesses, driving them to thrive as they make the opportunities produced by the changes and challenges in the supply chain and consumer demand (Webb et al., 2020).

Mitigating the vulnerability and exposure to dangers of informal economy workers involves urgency to limit the far-reaching influences of the pandemic in developing nations and the imaginable declining of destitution and imbalance. Tragically, the pandemic is a form of a reminder that while putting resources into general social security and all-inclusive medical services can yield huge and enduring advantages, the expense of inaction will be gigantic. Nevertheless, it also brings a pre-existing and more fundamental problem to the forefront. Governments and their worldwide partners must address the root cause drivers of informality, from structural to institutional to behavioral factors (Gerdin & Kolev, 2020).

This investigation looked into the financial and operational measures adopted by the informal economic entities.

Financial. Financial capacity and sustainability comprise assets that enable an enterprise to take advantage of favorable breaks and respond to unforeseen dangers while keeping up the broad tasks of the enterprise. It further refers to the ability to maintain financial capacity over time. Regardless of an enterprise's status, the challenges of establishing financial capacity and financial sustainability are central to organizational function (Sontag-Padilla et al., 2012).

One of the significant economic difficulties most informal economic entities face is that a lack of working capital constrains them. The absence of adequate funding to maintain their business activities would imply profitability and the amount of income from their exercises (Nuru & Devi, 2016).

The livelihoods of particular informal laborers are in danger since various enterprises are being disturbed because of lockdowns and limitations of movement. The informal economic entities may fall back on negative adapting methodologies, such as distress sale of assets, loans from informal moneylenders, or youngster work. This will experience a further exacerbation of their vulnerability (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2020).

Numerous positions have no paid sick leaves. Informal sectors, including the individuals paid for each yield, are especially defenseless. Working from home is not possible for all workers, except jeepney drivers and service laborers. Swarming cannot be evaded in mass

vehicle frameworks. In emergency circumstances, marginalized individuals exorbitantly endure the worst part of financial stuns brought by this pandemic. Numerous informal, micro-, small-scale, and even up to medium-scale enterprises will endure the shot when contrasted with the more prominent and settled organizations. Many may need to stop operations or close down because they would not have the option to assimilate the stuns to the economy. For example, storing actual merchandise, cleanser, alcohol, and essential food things raises market costs and makes access obstructions. Loading up on food and prescriptions is outlandish for those without traditional livelihoods, reserve funds, the unbanked, or those without access to financial services. While it may not be true that COVID-19 is not the general reason for these fundamental issues, it is genuine that it undermines the all-around delicate social security nets of the Philippines (Adle, 2020).

Operational. Operational sustainability is a strategy for assessing whether a business can keep up existing practices without putting future assets in danger. Sustainability can refer to any one of a variety of areas. However, it is regularly connected to ecological assets. Operational sustainability is likewise centered around social or financial assets. (Leonard, 2020).

Emergencies and crises can cause far and wide damage to economies, often crippling businesses worldwide. The economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic has progressively severe outcomes. In any case, organizations that adjust to the new reality forced by the pandemic can guarantee operational sustainability. When an emergency strikes, one should be agile in adjusting to the new business plans forced by the crisis. To do this entails breaking down how the emergency impacts strategies and assumptions. The disturbance brought about by the crisis is likewise an excellent way to rethink the business techniques. Building operational sustainability may expect to extend the business sources. To have the option to quickly and precisely react to emergencies, one needs to continually review and adjust the arrangement to the developing crisis to keep it adoptive (Abad, 2020).

Operational sustainability is characterized as the set of capabilities that permits an enterprise to plan and deal with its operational processes and items to perform well on each of the three components of sustainable development, i.e., economic, environmental, and social performance. It incorporates the administration of human resources and works environment health and safety, just as managing enterprises' effects on local communities and the natural environment (Hajmohammad, 2015).

Pivots like remote work, changing supply chains, and significant reliance on online stores and virtual services could stay a piece of entrepreneurs' designs long after the pandemic. Some entrepreneurs said they were working irregular hours because of the impacts of COVID-19. Entrepreneurs additionally say they are working harder than at any other time to keep their business running efficiently with fewer assets as they are compelled to conform to a quickly changing financial scene. Entrepreneurs have needed to make the tremendous changes following—it found the preliminary test was keeping up income levels. Informal workers are centered around approaches to remain above water at present while additionally exploring the challenges of a steadily extending plan for the day (Zapier Editorial Team, 2020).

Legal. Legal measures involve various formal and procedural character standards, tending to how a community is governed. The proper standards concern the generality, lucidity, exposure, steadiness, and proceptivity of the standards that oversee a general public, organization, or enterprise (Waldron, 2020). A legal measure with sustainability criteria should contain regulations on which administrative bodies must be established to enforce the sustainability measures and the supervision and control of their agreements (Pavlovskaja, 2014).

However, large numbers of workers and entrepreneurs around the globe work in vulnerable circumstances in the informal economy, frequently not regulated, unprotected, and unrecognized. Informality is regularly projected regarding the feeble relationship to the law. The 2002 resolution concerning decent work and the informal economy stressed this absence of security by the law. It perceived that informality includes exercises by laborers and monetary units in law or practice, not covered or deficiently covered by formal courses of action. This might be because their exercises are excluded from the conventional reach of the law or because the law is not applied or then again not authorized, or because it is consistent with the law, imposes high costs, and procedures may be burdensome or inappropriate (International Labour Organization, 2002).

Informal workers are undocumented, which makes distinguishing and contacting them challenging. Informal laborers are spread across areas and occupations, from sidewalk vending to construction, domestic work, different types of travel, generally on short-term arrangements. In most cases, they acquire only a little over the poverty line and along these lines were viewed as not "poor enough" for social help plans before the pandemic, putting them off the public authority's radar. Because of their absence of documentation, little is thought about their conditions, making it challenging to know their identity, what they do, and how to contact them. Significantly, the public authority stays sensitive and receptive to the worries of informal workers – large numbers of whom have recently decided to remain unregistered – when building up a public information base that could follow their way of life and their financial movement. For instance, although informal laborers did not pay taxes similarly to their formal counterparts, they have frequently been taxed or burdened through different costs, such as bribes and rental charges for market slots (Octavia, 2020).

Informal firms are confronting particularly great dangers during the COVID-19 episode. These organizations are generally concentrated in the service sectors, which was the hardest hit by the boundless closures forced to control the spread of the infection. Given their more modest size and lower profitability, informal firms are regularly less ready for climate stuns than formal ventures. They additionally have less access to funds and government support. Most relief measures executed to relieve the economic effect of COVID-19 advantage formal firms, which are all the more effectively recognizable. For example, different types of help, such as liquidity infusions through soft loans from monetary establishments, help legal firms excessively because informal firms are regularly incapable of getting credit from traditional banks—even on great financial occasions. Moreover, keeping in mind that work cost support, tax alleviation, and facilitating requirement of guidelines may help numerous organizations, they are less pertinent to informal firms, which may not comply with payroll, tax assessment, and other business guidelines in any case. However, guaranteeing that help arrives at informal firms is basic. Despite governments' drawn-out positions on informality, neglecting to help informal firms during the emergency would intensify the monetary trouble that many individuals face. Notwithstanding supporting, in any case, feasible conventional firms to traverse liquidity emergencies—so they do not go out of business and become informal—assisting informal organizations can help speed recovery. Crises are not the best time to encourage formalization. Suitable formal businesses are being covered, leaving the informal economy the sole lifesaver for some (Qiang & Kuo, 2020).

Further, another aspect determined in this investigation delved into the challenges experienced by the informal economic business entities in governmental regulations, access to capital, maintaining accessible and permanent location, and social security protection.

Governmental Regulations. Governmental regulations are the instrument for conquering the impediments of flawed rivalry, lopsided market activity, missing business sectors, and bothersome market results (Pasko, 2018). High taxes, muddled regulations, bureaucratic obstacles, and corruption appear to be the main factors that drive an action to go underground. Be that as it may, in numerous nations, the idea of informality is significantly more near this present reality than the formal order (Bolívar, 2005).

Strict regulations frequently become a means to attempt to keep out the individuals who cannot afford to live up to acceptable standards, regardless of whether they wind up living and work in much more terrible conditions somewhere else when relations between local authorities and informal business and workers are terrible, utilizing environmental regulations to drive the economy in a green direction could force the informal economy further underground (Brown & McGranahan, 2016).

Local authorities are motivated to view informal vendors and producers as unlawful or even illicit, to the degree that their cycles and course of actions do not adapt to regulatory systems and may meddle with the formal economy. Informal vendors and producers tend to view local authorities as an obstacle instead of a partner to the degree they are treated without regard, particularly if they are regularly moved or fined. As the cast majority of the literature makes clear, however, informal workers and operators, many of whom also live in informal settlements, ought not to be viewed as evaders of regulations designed in the public interest (Brown & McGranahan, 2016).

If the most unfortunate inhabitants and laborers cannot adjust to governmental regulations, authorities may not uphold the guidelines since they sympathize with their money-related predicament. On the other hand, authorities can similarly be notoriously unsympathetic to those living and working in destitution. Formal guidelines can be a method for harassment. (Brown & McGranahan, 2016).

Developing countries are endeavoring to offer financial help bundles focusing on their SMEs, yet this informality makes it troublesome. For instance, numerous private ventures – from small undertakings that work as merchants to small eatery organizations – have no fuse and no recorded representatives with financial accounts. This presents developing countries with a vexing test: determining what instruments can rapidly convey financial help to these informal organizations and people and what strategies can target them successfully. This test takes steps to lessen the adequacy of the measures presently being established. There are disincentives for organizations in many developing countries to get formalized regarding cost, time, and danger. There is corruption at numerous levels of government, the frail standard of law, and unwieldy and hazy tax assessment rules, and formality can feel pointless – also dangerous. For some entrepreneurs, formalizing their endeavor implies paying different irregular assessments requested by dark government workplaces (Shemin & Dailey, 2020).

Access to Capital. Economic challenges are a time of the critical negative financial turn of events of an enterprise, whether formal or informal economy or a nation. It can cover one or more economies, one monetary branch globally, or the entire world economy. The economic crisis has consistently introduced an excellent economic theory and strategy test. Despite consistent research of crisis causes and consequences from financial economic theory, the crisis has been and will remain a social phenomenon (Hadziahmetovic et al., 2018).

It is progressively understood that the absence of solid measurements on the size, dissemination, and economic contribution of the informal sector, has been a significant problem of the informal sector, which prompts its disregard and leads to its neglect in development

planning. Despite growing literature in the informal sector, a few problematic issues demand an immediate consideration of the government be tended. These issues are the outcomes of the informal sectors and their challenges (Bhat & Yadav, 2017).

When a business chooses to work underground or informal, it can improve its operations and increase financial development decreases. Since numerous informal businesses are not legal entities, they rarely acquire formal credit foundations and instead depend on unlawful moneylenders that charge excessive rates and advance just modest amounts. Informal businesses cannot depend on the comprehensive set of laws to authorize their agreements, secure property rights, or resolve disputes, so it is unsafe to participate in exchanges with parties outside the immediate community. Also, working informally makes unreasonable disincentives for growth since a more significant business may pull in greater government scrutiny (Farrell, 2004).

The economic effects have dramatic impacts on the prosperity of families and communities. For vulnerable families, lost pay because of an episode can mean spikes in destitution, missed meals for youngsters, and diminished admittance to medical services a long way past COVID-19. The low-and middle-income nations imply that many economic effects may influence the world's most weak populaces. There is a direct financial effect from lives lost in outbreaks past human misfortune. Families and friends lose that income, and their in-kind contributions to family unit pay, for example, childcare. Even though less inclined to die from COVID-19, many working-age grown-ups still become sick, and their families will feel the monetary burden as they miss work for quite a long time or weeks. The majority of the economic effect of the infection will be, as we are now seeing, from aversion behavior, the moves individuals make to try not to get the infection. These activities influence all areas of the economy—the well-being area, assembling, retail and different services, exchange and transportation, training, and others. This way converts into discounted pay through the supply side (scaled-down creation drives up costs for shoppers) and the demand side (diminished interest from customers harms entrepreneurs and their representatives). Loss of limit of the economy to create direct and indirect economic impacts got from the withdrawal of informal laborers, and their separate creation and utilization, the deficiency of financial ability to produce impacts are more severe in the services sectors (Santos et al., 2020).

Maintaining Accessible and Permanent Locations. Market challenges comprise several unpredictable forces that encompass the business or enterprise. Examples of such powers include political and administrative issues, financial components, social and technological developments, health and environmental jolts. By intently checking or monitoring the changing business sector climate, the organizations could be in a situation to anticipate certain dangers or threats and may perhaps capitalize on any available opportunities in the market. They may do this if they reliably check and analyze their marketing environment (Camilleri, 2018).

Getting a decent spot for business activity was a significant challenge faced by more than half of the informal traders. Most informal economic entities perform their business in the open air and along the roadsides. Due to this fact, they are prone to the impacts of changing climate or market conditions. Business rivalry and the absence of a market gave off an impression of significant difficulties for informal economic entities to run their enterprise or business (Nuru & Devi, 2016).

The pandemic has changed the business climate for microenterprises and SMEs and decreased market interest for their products and services. At the sectoral level, supply and demand stagnation has been seen in numerous enterprises. Limitations on movement and control measures generally influence such services. Moreover, many microenterprises and independent

companies are in the informal economy, which the pandemic has seriously influenced. A great extent of microenterprises and SMEs have encountered hefty misfortunes in income, and numerous such undertakings are out of operations because of control measures. The pandemic has presented overwhelming difficulties to the survival of many microenterprises and informal sectors. Whether the closure will be temporary or lead to business closure or bankruptcy relies upon the span of restriction measures and the versatility of firms. Money is essential during an emergency. Without ideal external help, cash holdings generally decide the fate of firms. Private companies have few assets and a lower ability to adapt to sudden monetary stuns than giant firms. Such tiny firms regularly do not have broadened organizations, markets, providers, and external sources to use even with an emergency. Despite the difficulties experienced by firms, opportunities are arising out of the pandemic. From one perspective, short-term opportunities have shown up in expanded market demand for specific products and services, such as personal protection equipment, biodiversity-based items, medicinal plants, and other clinical items and services (United Nations, 2020).

Most laborers in the formal sector, especially the first class, commended the public authority for the means taken to guarantee individuals notice 'stay at home and 'social distancing measures. These measures that they declared yielded positive outcomes in restricting the pace of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The opposite side of the lockdown account is the upheaval of private area laborers; generally, traders in the informal sector, artisans, and business people who were worried about their economic upkeep on these troublesome occasions. Informal laborers, generally sidewalk vendors, and merchants in the s were probably powerless to bear the cost of the inability to afford food for sustenance for the three-week time frame artisans like urban communities red. At the same time, business visionaries were concerned about paying their staff on these occasions. The public authority choice to lift the lockdown was conceived out of economic trouble from tensions built by informal workers. During the lockdown time frame, the public authority's endeavors to take care of the urban poor were not extremely powerful, and individuals in the informal area expected to return to attempt to have the option to fight for themselves. The unrelenting cries from the informal laborers combined with the public authority's absence of solid intent to help them were the central point that impacted the choice to lift the lockdown. The COVID-19 pandemic has displayed the force of casual specialists to make governments impact a reason for the activity. The pandemic also shows the degree of disregard of the informal economic urban business entities. Notwithstanding the critical factor from city authorities and progressive governments, the informal area has been versatile, which is clarified by its unstructured nature that allows the formation of a few undertakings and different business openings with less rigid organization encompassing its plan and guideline. Even though the informal sector has been versatile before, the COVID-19 pandemic accompanies another test, and the area now likes never before (Akuoko et al., 2020).

Social Security Protection. The absence of social security establishes a critical source of vulnerability for laborers in the informal economy, on the off chance that they do not have access to medical care and, at the very least basic level of income security, they will probably be caught in an endless loop of vulnerability, poverty, and social exclusion. This comprises an enormous challenge not exclusively to their welfare and enjoyment regarding fundamental liberties (specifically the right to social security) yet additionally to their nations' financial and social development. To stretch out inclusion to laborers in the informal economy, legal systems should fit and adjust to both workers' and employers' necessities and urge the transition to the formal economy. Covering a bigger group of laborers requires social protection components to adjust to

work market realities and incorporate classifications of laborers outside an employment relationship. Extending social protection to informal laborers requires expanding lawful inclusion and extra measures to adjust social protection components to their particular circumstances (International Labour Office, 2019).

Individuals and family units around the globe have long coordinated themselves into informal organizations of mutual support to adapt to risk and vulnerability. In comparison, some proof focuses on the disintegration of informal social security over the long run because urbanization and global legal formal social protection assume a significant role in numerous parts of the world, particularly in settings where public alternatives are missing or restricted. Informal support systems keep on assuming a critical part for some people and family units in low-and middle-income nations, particularly in rural areas and those engaged with the informal economy (OECD and International Labour Organization, 2019).

International Labour Organization (ILO, 2020) studies interventions and recovery to support enterprises during the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery, presenting a policy scope to support enterprises in managing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and reaction measures. It centers around activities to empower business congruity and help undertakings lay the grounds for recovery, which are critical to alleviate anticipated huge work losses and pave the way out of the crisis. It was further stated that the support to enterprises should address the particular difficulties they are looking in the unique conditions of the pandemic and fit along with more extensive activities to help laborers who have lost their jobs, distinguishing collaborations where conceivable. Government strategy reactions to help ventures should address each of the three distinct phases of the COVID-19 crisis, such: general reduction in economic activity due to measures to prevent spreading re-activation of business activity once the virus is contained and (3) recovery of economic growth, promoting enterprise sustainability and resilience.

The International Labour Organization (2020) recommends establishing effective coordination and cooperation of different agencies, local government units, and among all other MSMEs or other informal economic entities. Coordination and cooperation are vital in achieving resilience and sustainability in times of crisis.

Another study of International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2020 pertained to the sustainability measures and challenges amid the COVID-19 crisis and the informal economy where there were immediate responses and policy challenges in the state of the informal economy and enterprises that are not registered, which makes it hard for public authorities to distinguish. Also, it makes those working in the informal economy fearful of the public authorities. It was found out that the laborers and enterprises in the informal economy lack the means to weather the consequences of the crisis. The study further states that the repercussions of the crisis call for rapid sustainability measures to protect the people, planet, and profit. Crucial aspects of any such measures, especially those in the informal economy, are solidarity, cooperation, participation, and resiliency towards sustainability amid excellent health, social, and financial crises.

The various theories and kinds of literature explained the challenges of the informal business entities amid the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on sustainability since they belong to the informal economy. These kinds of literature related to the external and internal environmental context in which these entities exist in the local economy.

DOMAIN OF INQUIRY

This study was conducted to explore the sustainability measures adopted by the informal economic entities in Talisay City. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following sub-questions: (1) the sustainability measures adopted by the informal economic entities in the City of Talisay in terms of financial, operational, and legal; and (2) challenges confronting the informal enterprises in the aspects of governmental regulations, access to capital, maintaining accessible and permanent location; and social security protection.

METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the research design, research environment, research participants, research instruments, research procedures, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

Research Design

This study utilized the exploratory research design, which pertained to gathering information in an informal and unstructured manner (Burns & Bush, 2006). This study used the interview guide to examine sustainability measures adopted by the informal economic entrepreneurs in the City of Talisay and the challenges encountered.

Exploratory research design is conducted for a research issue or problem when the researcher has no previous information or a couple of studies for reference. In some cases, this examination is informal and unstructured. It fills in as an apparatus for initial examination that gives a speculative or hypothetical thought of the exploration issue. It will not offer solid answers for the examination issue. The examination is directed to decide the idea of the issue and causes the researcher to build up a better understanding of the issue. Exploratory research is adaptable and gives the underlying basis for future research. Exploratory research requires the researcher to research various sources.

As the term proposes, exploratory research design manages to investigate the phenomenon. It is not utilized on most occasions to produce a course of action for decision-making. At the exploratory plan stage, the data is inexactly characterized. Exploratory research design gathers either auxiliary or essential information utilizing an unstructured organization or informal strategies to decipher them. It also consolidates minimal measures of logical strategy and thoroughness in view of points and structure.

Research Environment

This study was conducted at various barangays in the City of Talisay. The City of Talisay is a third-class component city in the Province of Cebu, Philippines. It is primarily a residential and trading center area outside Metro Cebu. The commerce in Talisay happens in the Tabunok area, where a few public business sectors, shopping centers, and business establishments are situated. There are numerous small (*sari-sari*) stores or informal economic business entities in the City. Talisay City and the Tabunok area serve as the commercial area for municipalities south of the City, the southern gateway to Cebu City. The researcher is a resident of Barangay Tabunok, the center of trade and commerce in the City of Talisay had observed multiple problems towards the businesses in the City, including informal economic entities in the aspect of social, economic,

and environmental brought about by the implementation of the community quarantine as measures to mitigate the wave of COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Participants

The research participants of this study were informal entrepreneurs in the City of Talisay. They are the sidewalk vendors consisting of two (2) participants: fish vendors, fruit vendors, sari-sari store vendors, food vendors, and online sellers. The selection of the research participants first considers those owners of business entities that are unregistered and were operating in the different parts of the City. Convenience sampling will be used in this study. Each individual will be chosen entirely by chance, and each member of the population has a known but possible non-equal chance of being included in the sample. Ten (10) participants will be from the various informal economic business entities operating in the City of Talisay.

Research Instrument

The research used the researcher-designed interview guide containing questions about the sustainability measures of the informal economic entities in the aspect of financial, operational, and legal as well as the challenges they encountered in the aspects of governmental regulations, access to capital, maintaining accessible and permanent location and social security protection. The contents of the self-made interview guide will undergo content validation by an expert about business. The comments and suggestions of the content expert will be the basis in revising the interview guide to ensure that the contents will be fitted to the target research participants.

Research Procedures

The researcher sent a transmittal letter to the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Talisay City, Cebu. After obtaining permission from the LGU, the proponent approached each sidewalk vendor or those doing their informal business outside the market. First, the researcher discussed the purpose of the study in the local dialect and asked them afterward whether or not they would be willing to be part of the study. Those who gave their affirmative response were asked to affix their signatures on the consent form after they had read and understood its contents. The interview proceedings were an audio-recorded interview with the consent of the research participants.

The respondents' responses were treated with utmost Confidentiality and stored on the computer with a password. The copy of the recording will be destroyed after six months.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was applied to analyze the participants' narratives regarding the sustainability measures they have adopted in the City of Talisay and related challenges they encountered in the business from various aspects. The data gathered was reviewed and transcribed, codes were developed to the phrases that were most mentioned or occurred several times during the conduct of the interviews via audio recording to form the common themes. The researcher intently inspected the information gathered and distinguished the common themes, thoughts, and patterns of meaning that came up repeatedly during the interview.

Ethical Considerations

The respondents' participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and they had the right to withdraw from any phase of the study. They were asked to sign the consent form that provides

adequate data and affirmations about the study to manifest the individual participants' permission to participate in the study, comprehend the ramifications of participation, and fully and freely decide whether to do so without any pressure or compulsion. Privacy and Anonymity of respondents were of paramount importance during the conduct of the investigation. All the participants' answers were respected and treated with equal share and fairness. All the information collected was treated with utmost Confidentiality. No individual identities were used in any reports or publications resulting from the study; instead, they were substituted by a number/code to hide their identity. After six months, all of the collected information was destroyed. Ethical considerations in research being utilized in gathering data and handling the study, it is imperative to consider first the informed consent - implies that the individual partaking in the research is completely informed about the research being conducted. Participants were made mindful of the purpose behind the undertaking. The primary reason for informed consent was that the participant could make an informed choice if they were interested in the research. The second was voluntary participation - which implies that individuals who partake in the research were free from pressure or coercion. Participants were allowed to pull out their cooperation at any time without contrarily affecting their contribution to future services or the current program. Third, not harm the participants either physically or mentally. Fourth, Confidentiality implies that any specific data is not made accessible to or got to by anybody yet the program researcher. Confidentiality additionally guarantees such recognizing data was prohibited from any reports or distributed archives. Fifth, Anonymity - was a stricter type of protection than privacy, as the participant's identity stays obscure to the research group yet the primary researcher.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the results and analysis of the data gathered from the selected informal entrepreneurs in the City of Talisay about the sustainability measures they adopted and the challenges confronting them in managing their business.

There are two (2) parts presented in this chapter. The first part reveals the sustainability measures adopted by the informal economic entities in Talisay City. The second part relates to the challenges they experienced.

In order to provide an in-depth explanation of the sustainability experiences among selected informal entrepreneurs in Talisay City, the qualitative data were gathered through one-on-one interviews while observing health and safety protocols. The narratives of the research participants were audio-recorded with their consent and transcribed and were subjected to thematic analysis.

1. Sustainability Measures Adopted by the Informal Economic Entities in the City of Talisay

This part presents the data on the sustainability measures adopted by informal entrepreneurs in Talisay City during the COVID-19 pandemic. The sustainability measures explored were within financial, operational, and legal aspects.

According to the Institut Veolia, all enterprises, including informal ones, should agree with international labor standards to be socially sustainable. The four core areas of work principles to

be considered in such a manner are freedom of association and collective bargaining, non-discrimination, and the absence of forced and child labor. Lamentably, no core areas of environmental standards exist with the goal for organizations to be considered sustainable (De Gobbi, 2012).

The participants adopted several measures to keep them afloat during this health pandemic, and they were being asked explicitly on the financial aspect with regards to their sources of business capitalization to sustain their business.

a. *Personal and Informal Sources of Business Finance.* With the nature of the informal economic entities, their access to the legal finance services or institutions has been significantly restricted fundamentally due to banks' hesitation and other formal monetary institutions to loan to such firms. Also, with the limited access to formal financial institutions, they are forced to utilize their hard-earned personal savings and even money intended for their food, and personal intents are being sacrificed. In addition to using their savings, they turn into pawning their things into cash, using it for additional capital for their business. When there are no other options, they access capital from informal financial institutions, like loan sharks, to help them sustain their business. It is convenient to avail of such financial services from this type of capital source. Thereby, informants 2, 7, and 10 said that:

“We have used our savings and some part for food and tuition of my son, because there is no other source of income especially now a days.”

“We just pawned some of our things to sustain from our daily expenditure and so that we have something to buy for the business. And sometimes we barrow money from my sister.

:We rely only to lending because it is not too hassle, and then the daily payment is not that big.”

Lack of access to finance is a crucial constraint for the informal sector and entrepreneurs, smothering efficiency and developing their businesses-nations where access to finance has a greater tendency to grow faster and have lower income inequality. Inclusion is critical as expanding the poor's access to financial services is regularly considered a viable instrument that can help reduce poverty and lower income inequality. Access to financial services, particularly credit, assumes a significant part in improving the informal sector. Financial services, for example, credit and investment funds, are the mainspring of economic development, and it is essential to put more noteworthy accentuation on these services if an ideal local area improvement is to be accomplished. Most informal sectors cannot be served by the formal financial sector and other monetary institutions as they are viewed as dangerous, unbanked, and unbeneficial and are, therefore, marginalized.

Informal finance is characterized as little, unstable, and short-in-maturity funding capital sourced from (1) private moneylender(s), (2) the family members and companions of the entrepreneurs, and (3) different ventures. Informal finance is discovered to be decidedly connected with firm development and execution in a few developing nations. Even though the significance of informal finance has been generally affirmed, we think minimal about the underlying mechanisms that lead to the choices to utilize this financing source. Past investigations seldom offer a clarification for the choices of small businesses to take out but to express that they are 'compelled to do as such. It prompts these organizations to make this 'irrational' choice is, unfortunately, unclear in the extant literature (Nguyen & Canh, 2020).

During this time of health pandemic, business decisions when it comes to financial health are very vital. The theme on the sustainability measures adopted by the informants on the

financial aspect of the strategies they have employed to sustain the financial health of their business is:

b. Practice Effective Inventory Management System and Product Diversification. Product diversification and prioritization is a system or strategy utilized by an organization or an enterprise to increase profitability and accomplish higher sales volume from new items or products. Diversification mitigates hazards or risks in case of an industry decline. It takes into consideration more assortment and choices for items and services. Enhancement can be utilized as a safeguard. A business can shield itself from other contending businesses by expanding items or services. They have to reduce the supply and prioritize products to sell to survive. Decreasing the purchased products and prioritizing them will also help them reduce the display time of their products and increase their income cycle. Along with prioritizing the fast-moving products or items to sell, it is also imperative that they diversify, not just to increase their income cycle but also to attend to customers' needs or demands. Thus, Informants 1 and 2 stated that:

"We have lessened the supply of our goods, we just buy those that are in demand because we don't have enough money, and some money will be used for home consumption."

"We sell merchandise that we don't usually sell before that are in demand, we sell butane, eggs, and spices to help with our income, because if we don't do that to our business, we will no longer exist."

Diversification and prioritization consider more variety and alternatives for products and services. Whenever done effectively, diversification gives a big lift to benefit. Diversification can be utilized as protection. A business can shield itself from other contending organizations by expanding items or administrations. Informants diversify and prioritize their products to sell to gain some advantage on the declining profit and low volume of customers. They believe that this strategy will help them with low capital investment and less shelf display time for products. They viewed product diversification and prioritization as a safety net against downturns or a way to grow their business. Diversity also helps them build stability.

In a changing and imaginative market, organizations that produce consumables exploit the developing areas to discover solutions that guarantee sustainable development. The diversification strategy is perhaps the most liked by organizations looking for the sustainable growth of their sales and profits in business sectors where items show up, grow in demand, and get fully grown dynamically quicker. The enterprise that looks for expansion may do so through activities unrelated to their present action or into new organizations identified with their present activities (Mendonça & Las Casas, 2013).

The government's imposition of the quarantine status and the health protocols has affected the operations of businesses, whether big or small, formal or informal, and it has significantly changed how they run their businesses. Here are some of the themes formed from the answers with regards to sustainability measures adopted by the informants on the operational aspect on how do they manage the daily smooth flow operation of their business in consideration of the health and safety protocol imposed by the government:

c.1. Stay Out of Trouble from Authorities. Staying out of trouble and avoiding hassles with the authorities by cooperating with the government's-imposed health and safety protocol is a sure way to maintain a smooth business flow, especially for those in the informal sector and considered vulnerable.

Being in accord with the government officials in implementing the health protocols is indeed a great help for the informants as they recognize that cooperation and in harmony with them will help them do their business without the risk of being put into an unfavorable position or at an unfair disadvantage and pay for fines. They understand the quarantine measures and the health protocols implemented for public safety. Thus, cooperation is needed to achieve the government's goal of containing the virus, and businesses may operate safely. Informants 5 and 8 responded from the interview that:

“We follow government protocols to avoid being infected with covid and along with our customers. The government laws are to keep all our customers and ourselves safe from the virus”.

“In order for the business to run smoothly, you must follow the health protocols because there is a risk of being penalized and then imprisoned, then you should always remind the shoppers to wear a mask and social distancing”.

Being in harmony with the authorities gives the informal economic entities the freedom to run their businesses even if they are unregistered. The informal economic entities believe in this as they have always been doing this practice and have proven to be effective, though it is very hassled on their part, being without a choice would make them stop complaining and start complying, thereby avoiding trouble with the authorities gives them a free ticket to do their business smoothly.

To a large extent, institutions bear the skewed legacy preferring larger enterprises to design assets and advantages. Therefore, the informal sector is poorly covered by institutional arrangements, particularly national registries, social protection systems, labor legislation, and access to productive resources. The informal sector, albeit at times abused, harassed, and frequently challenged, has tenaciously sought-after trades as they exude a spirit that deserves emulation (International Labour Office, 2020).

c.2. Take Adequate Preparation. Another way to manage the daily smooth flow operation of their business in consideration of the health and safety protocol imposed by the government is always to be prepared with the product stocks and planning as they can effectively stave off complicated and hassle operational business processes. Planning in advance and always being prepared has been adapted by the informants to run their business smoothly. Preparation is key to success in business. No matter the situation, it will always come in handy. Informant 2 stated that:

“For me to have no hassle with the business, and to run it smoothly, you have to have proper stocks to prevent from running out, because if there is another lockdown it will be very difficult to buy.”

Small business entrepreneurs value preparation. They give importance to being ready with their products and services by managing their time correctly. Furthermore, the advantage of the preparation is that they can oversee issues more rapidly and all the more productively because they will have the current arrangements fit to be executed. The significant factor here is time, and as most people know, time is money.

In business, it is fundamental to be ready for anything. No one can tell what could occur, from minor disturbances to the day-by-day activities to tremendous issues that could keep the business from running appropriately. If anything turns out badly or there is even the littlest hiccup in the business, being readied will permit the owner to alleviate any harm. However much

as could be expected and make a big difference for the business. One of the primary things that can interrupt the business is running out of essential supplies (The Human Factor, 2020).

Change occurs in many different aspects of life, not just in business. Adjusting and adapting to it is essential, mainly when most of the changes occur the least we expect it to happen. The theme hereunder is extracted from the responses of the informants on how they manage the additional hassles or changes in the operations brought about by the fear of transmission of COVID-19:

d. Adapt with Societal Changes. Adaptable people are not scared of change, as they will first make necessary plans to handle it. The informants understood their place very well as they could not avoid it, and the more they resisted change or resisted the additional hassles, the more challenging their life became. To adapt is to minimize and manage hassles in operating their business; adjusting to changes means growing with it. Extra hassles must be adapted to openly and smoothly run their business, thus, preventing more troubles. Additionally, informants also recognized that complaining and resisting government changes will not be beneficial to them, and this will not help the government either. They even went beyond adapting and made the health protocol part of their system. In this way, if it is already part of the operation, it will eventually be implemented and followed with ease. Informants 7, 8, and 9 said during the interview that:

“We just have to follow the health protocol so that we can avoid the disease and help the government, because if we continue to complain, we can't do anything and then we haven't helped. Also beware of social distancing, masks and shields.”

We really make the health protocol a part of our daily routines so that we don't get bothered and then our business can run smoothly.”

“We just have to adapt the hassles because the hassles implemented by the government are for our safety, and if we don't follow, we will be in trouble. We always disinfect our products if we received our supplies)”.

The informants positively accept that adaptability and a readiness to accept change will make them more significant in their business and more receptive than opposing it. Adjusting to change as often as possible requires successfully utilizing all their gained abilities. Sometimes, adjusting to change will require the utilization of different abilities, too, which they may not yet have dominated or even started to acquire! In a quickly changing market, especially during this health pandemic, abilities likewise become outdated. To manage change effectively, it is essential to build as many skills as they can before their use becomes essential for the survival of their business. They would prefer not to be gotten short in a crunch.

Change can come into our lives because of a crisis, decisions, or some coincidence. Regardless, we are entirely confronted with deciding – do we roll out the improvement or not? It is wiser to be ready for change since we have more authority over responding to the change we are looking for in our lives. At the point when the entrepreneurs are ill-equipped and impervious to change, at that point, they have no control or decision concerning how they need to carry on with life. There is no getting away from the effect that change can bring into life. Managing change in life is key to living a life where they are surviving and thriving (Sandford, 2021).

Labor standards and social protection do not fully cover informal sectors. Fundamental rights are human rights in the labor field. It should be enforced in all informal economies. The theme below emanated from the responses of the informants during the one-on-one interview

with regards to the legal aspect, specifically on the query if they have received any assistance or have tried asking assistance from the government:

e. *Absence of Governmental Assistance.* Inclusion creates people's engagement and a sense of belonging. For the government to have successful plans, they must embrace and encourage engagement. Along with the informal sector, organizations need to make sure they are diverse and have an inclusive environment. The practice or policy of not providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those informal sectors, will not help resolve any problems and prevent growth. With this lack of inclusiveness of assistance on the part of the government, the informants are left empty-handed during this crisis, their worth is not appreciated, and they are left behind not just in assistance inclusion but also in working with laws and regulations that would give them protection. Given that they are not qualified to receive assistance from the Department of Trade and Industry and the Local Government Unit, and knowing the type of sector they belong, they opted to struggle and rely on their own to keep them afloat during this pandemic divulged that even from the department that should look after their welfare is not a helping hand to them, there was the assistance given from the said department. However, to qualify for the said assistance, one should have a business permit, which invalidates all the informants' applications as they have none. Informants 1, 2, and 7 divulged that:

“No one approached us, we did not receive any assistance from the government except for rice and sardines, and in terms of helping the business, there was none also, and we never tried and asked because we were not registered”.

“There were people wandering around here from the city hall with forms being filled out from the DTI for their assistance, but I am not qualified because I needed a business permit so I didn't receive any help.”

“I haven't received any help from the government, and help has not come for those of us who aren't registered with the government, we're just trying to survive on our own because we have no other choice.”

The informal sector has remained largely forgotten in the Philippines. During the interview, the informants' responses have manifested that they have not received any help from the local government or the Department of Trade and Industry regarding their existing unregistered business. They feel that they are being left out and cannot do anything about it as they feel they do not have any rights because they belong to the informal sector. Consequently, policymakers neglect the capability of informal sector undertakings to fight against joblessness – just as the constraints that informal enterprises face, their vulnerability, and the policy support that could make them more practical and self-standing.

While inclusive growth discussions consider a concentration for the job of social strategy in protecting the vulnerable or the informal sector, there is a solid emphasis on moving beyond the call of the 'growth-redistribution dichotomy.' The emphasis is on including the poor as recipients of charity and social assistance and as producers, consumers, and entrepreneurs – in short, as agents of development rather than casualties. Inclusive growth cannot be reached basically by the state rearranging the gains from financial development. Policies for inclusion need to focus on the conditions under which little business people, including in the informal and rural sectors, produce their livelihoods, rearrangement of resources, and other freedoms to take an interest in developing measures states of occupations. Drawing value from well-disposed talks, it is contended that real consideration requires a move of the center from rearrangement to

primary change – changing the very cycles through which development happens with the end goal of extending business age and consolidating expanding informal economies. This includes reframing poverty and informality as a product of inadequate inclusion in markets instead of the imbalances in the manner markets work. Markets' absence of comprehensiveness can likewise be firmly connected to various market disappointments. For example, lousy business sectors (for credit and protection), flawed data, general merchandise, and externalities can cause markets to work in manners that prohibit poor people (Meagher, 2015).

Working with the authorities and the government would mean a win-win solution for both parties. Collaboration, cooperation, and partnerships are essential to long-term success. Thus, widely accepted by the informants. The extracted theme below is the answer coming from the informants on the interview question on how do they comply with the legal requirements imposed by the government as part of the new normal:

f. *Work in Harmony with Governmental Policies.* The informal sector turned into an integral element of something that showed the significance of coordinated effort, the readiness to pursue the common goal, the magnificence of being in tandem. They believe in the power of cooperation in achieving a shared goal with the authorities even though they belong to the informal sector. Cooperation and coordination are vital in achieving their shared goal with the government. All of the participants recognized full well that working towards a common goal with the authorities will serve the government and aid them in the performance of their businesses. Thus, informant 4 responded:

“We have to follow the new normal because that is the law, and it is for the benefit for us all.”

The research participants' responses shed light on their primary intention to cooperate with the authorities and work as one because clearly, they knew that this pandemic affects them and all. Thus, teamwork is being played by the research participants to have a win-win solution to the significant problem that they are facing. Teamwork is a mark of cooperation; mutual support, shared goals, cooperation, and encouragement provide a positive synergy for informal entities and the authorities.

Cooperation is significant because it permits individuals and gatherings to cooperate to accomplish a common goal or determine common advantages. Cooperation exists at numerous levels and happens among people and associations just as among states and nations. Cooperation permits members to trade significant data that assists the two sides with improving their insight bases and work in a time- and resource-efficient manner. Cooperation between and among parties is frequently alluded to as a cooperative relationship. Members in these relationships regularly share indispensable assets and information just as staff and faculty to achieve a particular undertaking. An illustration of cooperation is exhibited through the cooperation of informal sectors and local authorities to offer essential assistance to area residents in need and ensure their safety while implementing the health protocols (Reference, 2020).

2. Challenges Experienced by the Informal Economic Entities in the City of Talisay

This part exposes the data on the challenges experienced by the informal economic entities in the City of Talisay. Specifically, the challenges confronting the informal enterprises in governmental regulations, access to capital, maintaining accessible and permanent location, and social security protection.

The informal sector is, for the most part, perceived to allude to limited scope units delivering and distributing goods and services, including almost no capital, utilizing a low degree of innovation and abilities and hence working at a low degree of efficiency, and by a significant yielding low and sporadic wages. These units are generally unrecorded inaccurate insights; they will generally have next to zero admittance to coordinated business sectors, credit, preparing, or public conveniences. Neither perceived, upheld, nor directed by the public authority. They are constrained by conditions to work outside the structure of the law and of social protection. For the most part, their laborers live and work in shocking shanty-town conditions.

Informal sector activities take numerous structures. Toward one side of the relatively thriving small-scale manufacturing enterprise utilizing a few laborers, at the opposite end are road merchants, shoe-shiners, and others occupied with little assistance exercises that scarcely yield a resource pay. In the middle are informal transport services, little shops, and laundries. The area's presence on the edges of the law has regularly driven public authorities to mistake it for crimes and expose it to provocation. Government methodologies that have supported urban development and large capital-intensive enterprises have delivered inclinations that work to the drawback of the informal sector, however incidentally protect it (The Encyclopedia of World Problems & Human Potential, 2020).

The research participants experienced problems and challenges in governmental regulations on their main reasons for not registering their business. The following are the themes emanating from the experiences of the informants:

a.1. Burdensome Governmental Regulations. The research participants were discouraged from registering their businesses and making it formal because it is very hassled and time-consuming for them and thought it is not worthy of their time as their business is just small and the too complicated procedures will waste their time. The research participants attested to this claim that they agree with the many complicated or too hassle government procedures to register their business. They do not see the importance of registering their businesses. They see it as an additional burden other than beneficial. Furthermore, owners of underground business entities do not see the value of all the complex and hassle processes as they believe that they could still do business, even if there are no permits. Thus, making the formalization process insignificant for them. Informants 7 and 8 revealed that:

“One of the main reason sir is because we can do business even if we don't have that permit and it is so bothersome and very costly to get a permit, it's just hassle and expense.”

“It's a hassle sir because our business is just small and it has a little income and we then spend a lot of money for paper works and it's a lot of hassle to process and it is not worth it.”

The majority of the informants answered that the first reason for not registering their business is burdensome government regulations or processes; they view process to formality as a burden rather than a benefit on their part. They are discouraged from going into formal procedures because of high costs and complex government regulations, negatively impacting them.

Regulatory barriers are improper requirements originating from governments that try not to value the effect on firms (significantly smaller firms) of additional reporting, inspection, and other compliance procedures. As a result, the time business people need to keep up and develop their business is not valued. Various studies have recognized burdensome and costly government regulation as the most determinant of informality and a source of corruption. As a rule, long

periods of poor-quality law-making in developing nations have made a knot of complexity and inconsistency that presents a practically unconquerable deterrent to the undertakings looking for formality. Administrative barriers come from how guidelines are implemented. They include excessive paperwork, inefficiency/delayed decisions, inaccessibility of services, bureaucratic obstruction, and maltreatment of power. These obstructions have numerous sources, including over-complicated guidelines, outdated methods of working, lack of capacity, over-centralization of power, distrust of the private sector, and – connected to the entirety of this – corruption (OECD, 2007).

a.2. Privation from Access to Economic Resources. Fees, financial requirements, and the lack of access to financing are the main reasons the informants failed to register their businesses. Due to the nature of their business, they have difficulty securing loans for investments. Financial barriers are necessarily laced with administrative and authoritative barriers identified with the overall registration of business activity and licensing for tasks in specific sectors. The fundamental registration impediments are extreme expenses and time spent dealing with bureaucracy. This statement was being proved and personally experienced by the research participants. Informant 6 narrated during the interview and said that:

“We don’t have enough money and we have to go through a lot of paperwork, and so many additional payments, also we don’t have access to loan institutions that will help us with our business, if there are, we are not qualified.”

The rest of the informants answered that their reasons for not registering their business were due to a lack of economic resources. The lack of monetary access restricts services and credits for informal sectors. Needy individuals and small enterprises need to depend on their wealth or internal assets to put resources into their businesses, restricting their maximum capacity and prompting the pattern of determining imbalance and diminished growth.

Informal businesses may fail to grow due to a lack of financing. Every day businesses grow out of investments made out of the entrepreneurs' funds, financial backers' assets, or credit. On account of the informal organizations, those three choices are restricted. The business people's assets are scarce and are generally dedicated to survival matters, such as housing and meals, which need business financing. If something is left, it tends to be put resources into the business. Without assets to put resources into the business, generally, informal entrepreneurs rely on loans from families. Then again, the absence of formalization blocks the chance of investors financing tasks of the organizations. Investors face challenges and trust that ventures will yield returns. However, they need conviction. When the business is not registered, there is no data about that business, no legal structure for value interests in organizations elements, and no stock trade market, the financial backers neglect to make interests in other organizations. Those organizations pass up one chance to fund their tasks through other parties' investments. Informal entrepreneurs additionally have the chance of acquiring a personal loan. Nonetheless, in the informal sector, the credits accessible are scant (sometimes accessible just through pawn shops), ordinarily cover a tiny part of what is required, and charge exceptionally high interests (Bolívar, 2005).

Below is the theme developed out of the challenges experienced by the research participants in the aspect of governmental regulations, specifically in the aspect of the problems with authorities or institutions in the exercise of their business amid the pandemic:

b.1. Struggles of Moving from One Place into Another. Having an impermanent place to do business is a struggle for the informants who belong to the informal sector. They are easily moved from one place to another if they are told by the authorities, making it a struggle as they require people to gather to do their business. This assertion was confirmed during the one-on-one interview with the informants. Moving from one place into another is a struggle and stressful as it is not easy to move their merchandise. While some research participants said that there would be no problem with the authorities if they followed the governmental policies while accepting the reality of the nature of their business. Informants 1 and 8 expressed one's opinion and uttered that:

“We didn't have a problem with them, and to prevent the problem happening just avoid trouble all the time, just follow the law.”

“None, but sometimes they do the road clearing and then reprimand our customers because we're really on the sidewalk then it adds up to the hassle we experienced.”

Indeed, the level of vulnerability of informants and other informal sectors is always constant as they continually face this issue of no permanent place to do their business, thus giving them much exposure to abuses and corruption. Street vending and sidewalk vending take on additional challenges as the local governments strictly implement roadside clearing as ordered by the national government. This gives them an added hard time in doing their business. However, the research participants' determination to survive and make a living forced them to follow what the authorities told them. Thus, they face no problem with them.

In numerous urban areas, the legal and regulatory environments governing street vending hinder, as opposed to empowering, the development of a sound informal sector where road merchants can fulfill the need for their items. Road merchants may work from a fixed area (for example, a booth or walkway table) or portable. Some consolidate fixed and mobile vending. Each sort of work includes distinctive regulatory challenges. Local permitting laws may restrict market passage. Zoning ordinances regularly confine road sellers to territories that are inconvenient to both merchants and their clients. The regulatory systems governing where, when, and how sellers may work are regularly inconsistent, contradictory inside a solitary zone, or inconsistently enforced. Road sellers in numerous urban communities are compelled to pay bribes or excessive fines/fees to work. In urban planning decisions, the need of road merchants and their clients are frequently dismissed as insignificant to an advanced city's development. Road sellers are regularly removed forcibly when traditional vending sites overlap with sites for the proposed development. Furthermore, similar to individuals from numerous areas of the informal economy, road sellers are frequently left out concerning social security plans (WIEGO, 2014).

People's lives and financial activities have been stringently restricted to protect their well-being and control the spread of the infection, which brought more difficulties to the informal sectors. The extracted theme below is from the challenges experienced by the informants in the economic aspect regarding access to capital, specifically on the economic challenges that their business encountered before and after the implementation of Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ).

b.2. Economic Hardships: Traceable to People Movement Restrictions. As everyone might have expected, restrictions on individual mobility are associated with a drop in visits to the

marketplace or other business establishments. The research participants claimed that the effects of mobility restrictions are likely to have slowed the spread of the disease. At the same time, the significant drops in the visits to the workplace are likely to be associated with a regrettable loss of their income. Furthermore, movement restrictions do not only affect their businesses. This has also affected their children's employment, which eventually affected their income as a whole. The research participants have clearly stated that movement restrictions have resulted in the loss of their income or a significant reduction of their income compared to pre-pandemic time. Additionally, some informants expressed their lack of savings and financing to run their business. Informants 1, 7, and 9 divulged that:

“It is very difficult at this time because aside from our income has been affected because almost no one buys from us, my children's employment has been affected so we don't have any other income.”

“One of the biggest problems is because there is no money, and there is nothing that we can loan money from because we don't have something to guarantee in return to the loan. This is important to continue my business.”

“One of the big problems is movement because it is so much hassle if we take the supplies of our products because of it border controls, then there is no monetary assistance from the government.”

Undeniably, movements are fundamental for the economic success of each business. These movements bring the danger of the long-range spread of contamination, conceivably carrying the disease to already illness-free zones where the ensuing limited transmission can be wrecking. Nonetheless, it is more fitting to think about the economic burden, as movement limitations have significant ramifications for the financial income of the most vulnerable - The informal sector. The income of the informal sector is to a great extent dependent on the movement of people, either through selling food or services. Hence, embracing any movement restrictions may have substantive economic consequences for the informal economic sector, as evidently stated by the informants that they are having a tough time gaining profit due to movement restrictions.

There was a massive drop in income and employment with the lockdown declaration. While there is some recuperation with easing the lockdown, income at the survey time is still generously lower than its pre-lockdown level. With the biggest fall in pay and business, casual labor is the most affected. Without any income, the families needed to live off their savings or borrow money for their necessities. With rapidly draining investment funds, borrowing approached its cutoff points, and with the slow recovery of income, families may require significant government help to save them from hardship. The brunt of the COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown was unequally shared by the different areas, attributable to the unbalanced effect of the lockdown and COVID-19 outbreak across businesses and occupations. Individuals utilized in the non-essential sectors were the most exceedingly affected, particularly those who could not work from home. Lockdown caused a circumstance where an enormous segment of individuals thought it was hard to get by without help. For the most part, the study shows that individuals endure the lockdown by utilizing their reserve funds or borrowing. The government assistance played a minor part, aside from circulating ration during this period. A more significant part of families had effectively depleted their investment funds, and among the rest, just a little rate had enough to live off them for over a month. The condition of vulnerable categories is especially worrying in this regard. People reported that they might not expand such assistance if their income did not revive. High uncertainty makes individuals more prudent in their decision, and they are eliminating their use and are more careful in loaning financial assistance to other people.

With no help from the government, these individuals may slip into profound poverty, failing to fulfill even their basic needs (Singh et al., 2020).

The current pandemic prompts the change of existing businesses that do the current businesses out of nowhere travel from an auxiliary method to the critical way. This change carries trouble and difficulties to the informal sector, which they need to discover new methods and strategies to adjust. Below is the theme extracted from the interview answers on the challenges they experienced about access to capital and particularly on the measures that their business employed before and after the implementation of the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ):

c. Form a New Business Approach to be Sustainable. The informants acknowledge the reality. No panic. No denial. Coronavirus is exceptionally upsetting, and it will be for a long, undetermined time. The fact that they have no clear visible finish line adds to the vagueness and resultant strain. What has become clear is that this is a marathon and not a sprint in doing business. They will have to purposefully practice and try strategies to finish this "long haul adequately." Furthermore, being resilient while cooperating with the authorities plays a vital role before and after implementing Enhanced Community Quarantine. The research participants believe that adapting and building new strategies or methodologies against the economic crisis will help them adjust and sustain their business operations. Additionally, the informal business owners knew that cooperation with the authorities is vital in achieving something, especially during a crisis. Thus, adjusting to the new situation and doing business is needed to sustain their business further. Informants 5 and 9 opined that:

"We are just adjusting our methods that we are used to before the quarantine and after quarantine so that our business can adapt and sustain during these times."

"What I do is limit the cost and reduce the purchase of ingredients so as not to waste money, then prioritize spending on what to buy."

The research participants recognized that this is, for sure, a period for cooperation and partnerships to help address rising social pressures because of disparity and informality. Business and fair work can help add to emergency recuperation, harmony, and resilience. While the pandemic has uncovered genuine weaknesses in our society, extraordinarily with the informal sector, it likewise offers new opportunities for collective action and innovation and combines their efforts towards more inclusive, resilient, and peaceful societies.

Improving resilience has become imperative to prevent systemic collapse in response to the crisis. Nevertheless, while the pandemic has introduced misfortunes that challenge systems at all levels and areas, consideration within the current resilience imperative has to a great extent not considered resilience at systemic and holistic levels. Resilience is also improved through redundancy, which is accomplished when more stakeholders are engaged in multi-level governance – for instance, nearby governments can allot more assets and carry out more tough measures because of lack of resources or absence of authority from the public governments to organize activities. The covering organizations of governments serve to guarantee the preparation of the assets expected to recuperate from the emergency. They likewise empower the utilization of neighborhood information accessible at sub-public degrees of government. Therefore, cooperation and involvement of the stakeholders are very vital. The pandemic has featured the interdependencies between areas, institutions, and states and how over-dependence on the limit of a specific area or particular partner to retain the emergency and recuperate from it

is inadequate. Tailoring effective response measures requires the exertion of different covering actors. To this end, polycentric administration of strength offers high levels of cover and redundancy, which are urgent to co-produce decentralized recovery and transformation endeavors dependent on local needs and capabilities (Christine & Thinyane, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has obliged businesses to maintain and build relationships with consumers when their reality has been turned upside down. Organizations are currently confronting extraordinary pressure between generating sales during a time of outrageous financial difficulty and the dangers to life and job that have entirely changed consumer needs and preferences. The following is the theme taken out from the informant's answers in the interview question on the challenges they experienced in maintaining accessible and permanent location, particularly on accessible and permanent locations, particularly on how they keep their customers to continue patronizing their business.

d. Ensuring Customer Relationships Outlast Coronavirus. Keeping and preserving good marketing practices while taking good care of customers will help run a good business. A well-satisfied customer will surely take good care of the business also. Informal sectors are struggling to navigate the impact COVID-19 has on their businesses while juggling their business to keep it afloat and maintain their customers. Being a responsible vendor is one way of taking care of customers and the business itself. Likewise, the small entrepreneur believes that offering quality yet affordable products will help maintain a good marketing practice while keeping the customers patronizing their business. Hence, informants 1 and 9 shared this good practice that:

"Most of the customers now are scared because of our business and because of COVID but just wear a mask and face shield and always have an alcohol for customers to see that we are responsible vendors."

"Products should have a competitive price, cheap and of good quality because there is a lot of competition on social media, and to take care of the online customers."

"We continuously maintain our good service to our customers and maintaining honesty is giving the correct weights of the fish and it should be fresh for them to purchase, so that we can maintain our good number of customers."

The COVID-19 pandemic has constrained the informants to keep up and construct relationships with customers when their reality has been overturned. They are currently confronting the strain between creating deals during outrageous monetary difficulty and the dangers of life and occupation that have adjusted consumer priorities and preferences. This pressure is genuine, especially for more up-to-date entrepreneurs or more modest businesses that give optional items and might not have the assets to endure significant stretches of seriously reduced income. The Covid19 pandemic has changed enormously, more settled organizations in an absolute sense. For the time being, consumers and employees were advised to remain away because of the danger of spreading the COVID-19 virus. Such is the idea of business in the hour of a pandemic.

Some critical methodologies help organizations weather crises and preserve their bonds with consumers, like letting the consumers realize that the organization comprehends the desperate social conditions at play and often thinks about more than basically procuring benefit during this troublesome time. Also, another way is in informing them concerning all progressions to the activity, including new hours, office terminations, staff decreases, client care accessibility, and requesting choices, among others. While they can reference the unofficial crisis laws requiring

these changes, it is far superior if they are seen as proactive and roused by the clients' wellbeing. (Waldron & Wetherbe, 2020).

The COVID-19 crisis influences customer behavior and hence how marketing can be utilized. The utilization of marketing during and after the COVID-19 crisis shows and will keep on showing similarities with how promoting is completed during financial slumps. Customers are being tested to re-examine their life needs, which may bring about new qualities and spending measures. The subsequent theme below is drawn out from the challenges experienced by the informants in maintaining accessible and permanent location mainly on the strategies employed by their business in increasing their market exposure:

e. Adapt Practical Marketing Approaches. New predicaments need new approaches or strategies. For the informal sector to keep afloat, they need new ideas or innovations to maximize market exposure and learn to thrive with it. Learning new things during a crisis is a challenge already, but it is one of the components to keep business in operation. Finding new ways and means, respondents talked modestly of their noble efforts to keep their business afloat. They have tried different approaches but with one goal in mind. Informant 4 has stated that:

“Customers should be taken care of properly and not overly raise the price of the goods”.
“We go to places where there are many influxes of people but not crowded, and accessible to everyone, but if there are not much people around, we go around places to sell it.”

During this extraordinary time, as customers' buying behaviors and consumption change, the informants realized that it is significant for them to comprehend these arising patterns – just as to expect buyer needs. When individuals remain at home and work distantly, purchasing behaviors have been radically changed during these occasions. To endure the negative estimation and financial lull: strength, development, readiness, and compassion should be their tools. As customers' ways of life adjust to remaining at home, they should proactively reach out to them where they are. Thus, they have adopted different marketing strategies.

Numerous organizations basically cannot work as they have previously. What made an organization fruitful truly may presently do not be conceivable during or after the crisis. Clients may battle to pay. Channels may have drastically moved to oblige new necessities or workaround new constraints. A stable regulatory context may have changed, possibly setting out open doors that never existed. The presumptions that upheld long periods of steady, unsurprising development may at this point no longer be valid. Competitive advantages shift dynamically as plans of action adjust to new market fundamental factors, and the core capabilities that make an organization particular may out of nowhere be less differentiating. While the rise of digital has been mounting similar pressures for over ten years, the current crisis has fundamentally exacerbated and sped up its disruptive force. Today, countless companies see sensational movements in their profit pools and the financial aspects that help their operations. Crises like the one we are surviving today are turning points for organizations to Evolve (Bar Am et al., 2020).

The last part of the first question asked to the research participants pertained to the challenges they experienced in social security protection, particularly one where they seek help when they or a family member get sick or do they have access to healthcare insurance. Furthermore, this is the theme extracted from the interview with the research participants:

f. Depends on Publicly-Provided Healthcare Services. Social protection—like laborers' insurance, medical coverage, and social security systems to provide savings and pensions in old age—diminishes exposure to life dangers and shields them from falling into debt and poverty in the event of illness, as well as accidents. Since all of the informants interviewed cannot depend on the government's assistance regarding healthcare, they rely on their savings and other non-sustainable assistance like their relatives or the government's healthcare assistance. Informants 2 and 7 divulged this problem by saying that:

“We trust in the lord sir, and there is probably Malasakit Center of President Duterte and social worker at the hospital.”

When we get sick, we just ask for help from the government because there is Malasakit Center, or ask for help from the relatives.”

The failure to enlist with the health care coverage plan or pay for the expense of clinical benefits at the health facilities due to lack of money was also reported by informants as barriers influencing access to medical care services. The informants credited this to destitution or low profit basically because of the work they were occupied with, and most of the informants rely on deficient government medical service or from relatives in medical emergencies.

The informal sector held that factors like destitution, time spent at the health facility looking for medical care, the upsetting demeanor of health providers towards customers influenced their admittance to medical care services. They saw that poor organization and operations of the current health system and inadequate health care services provided under the public health care coverage scheme affected access to health care services as indicated by the informal sector. However, the sale of assets, family support, borrowed money from friends, and occasional employer support were the coping strategies used by informal workers to finance their health care needs (Akazili et al., 2018).

The second question on the last part of the interview that was asked to the research participants refers to the challenges they experienced in the aspect of social security protection, specifically on the question if they have received any financial assistance or free pieces of training from the local government to help them guarantee income security, especially during this health pandemic. The theme formed taken out from the interview responses of the informant is:

g. No Apparent Governmental Support. The repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic call for quick and viable measures to upgrade income security for workers in the informal economy – a group at the highest risk of economic hardship. Therefore, the government's support to the informal economy in keeping them afloat during the health and economic crisis is a matter of life and death for the informal economic entities. The informants unanimously claimed that they had not received any government assistance to help them during this pandemic, unlike the registered businesses that have received assistance to assist them in their business operations. Informant 1 has divulged that:

“We have not been given such assistance from the government; the registered businesses have received assistance from the DTI as I have heard from my colleague.”

The research participants attested that during their most needed financial and health crisis times, they could not expect any assistance from the government to assist them during the crucial times. They understand that the government has taken measures to mitigate the pandemic's effect

on enterprises, including embracing financial and money-related arrangements. Those actions may, notwithstanding, bypass informal enterprises since they often fall out of the purview of government policies and programs.

Governments have restricted levers at their disposal for alleviating the negative effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the informal sector compared to the formal sector. However, the inability to help informal workers and businesses can turn around a time of hard-won advancement in reducing poverty. Innovative methods of stretching out monetary help to the area are direly required. Lack of adequate social security aid has exacerbated economic frailty among helpless families. Some governments have additionally given social annuity advances to senior residents, widows, and people with incapacities. Informal sectors are excessively influenced as business orders are slowed down by limitations on mobility, delays in installments, and pricing distortions. They earnestly need a blend of monetary aid and loans to restart production and services and resume cash flows (Asian Development Bank, 2020).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Based on the study's findings, the following are advanced: There should be harmonization of laws that will help the informal economy. The policymakers should consider pondering if the laws formulated are implementable and realistic, as some of the difficulties of past years stem from inconsistencies and ambiguities in the laws themselves. Until we overcome our failures in Enforcement and implement these laws, move our country forward, and help, the informal economy will continue to be a formidable challenge.

As public reactions to COVID-19 are quickly changing, the effects on informal workers' livelihoods were sudden and severe and, in many cases, could prompt a perpetual loss of income. As the pandemic shifts over time, many economic effects on informal workers' livelihoods will stay pertinent as the nation progress from full lockdowns to semi-lockdowns or physical changes distancing. The uncertainty of the circumstance, the likelihood of cycles of both disease and measures to contain that contamination, will see large numbers of these effects continue and even worsen.

Whether or not informal workers were perceived as essential workers by their governments, the crisis has shone a spotlight on the importance of these workers. Across a broad scope of areas, including farming, street vending, childcare, and transport, they have been at the forefront of public responses to the pandemic. This acknowledgment highlights the significance of informal workers to our economies and our cultural capacity to address the difficulties of a significant emergency like COVID-19.

Albeit numerous informal workers are currently viewed as "essential workers," that was not generally the situation. Before the crisis, ongoing badgering by authorities, criticism in the media, and discrimination from the general population were typical. Their associations were regularly not perceived as stakeholders in urban governance and not counseled on dynamics affecting their livelihoods. They were treated as anything other than essential – regardless of the fundamental commitments, they have consistently made to urban food, care, and sanitation systems. Notwithstanding, the financial and public health crisis brought about by COVID-19 has made a shift – there is a developing acknowledgment among policymakers and the public that without these essential workers, entire urban systems could collapse. As a result, many cities have made special provisions for informal workers during mandatory lockdowns.

In the Philippines, many existing laws ensure and will benefit the informal sectors, as far as acknowledgment and advancement of the human rights of workers in the informal economy, Republic Act 8425 or the Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act is the central public enactment to recognize the informal sector, through its incorporation as one of the essential areas. Moreover, to direct the advancement of approaches, programs, and different interventions for the informal sector, the then National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB), through its Resolution No. 15 Series of 2002, embraced and operationalized an authoritative definition of the informal sector. In extending social protection to workers in the informal economy, Republic Act 10606 or the National Health Insurance Act of 2013 guarantees Philhealth inclusion for all Filipinos. Section 5 of the law commands the enrolment of individuals in the informal economy to avail of medical benefits with the assistance of the financial arrangements given by Philhealth. Likewise, laws work with or accommodate the progress of specific fragments or areas of the informal economy to the formal economy. These incorporate Republic Act 9178 or the Barangay Micro Business Enterprises (BMBEs) Act of 2002, which encourages the development and growth of BMBEs, which fill in as seedbeds of Filipino entrepreneurial talents and accommodate the coordinating of those in the informal sector to the mainstream economy. Republic Act 10644 or the Go Negosyo Act, which looks to strengthen micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to create more job opportunities, promote inclusive growth, and reduce poverty; and Republic Act 10361 or the Batas Kasambahay, which secures the rights and advance the government assistance of homegrown specialists or kasambahay by remembering them as like those in the formal sector. These laws have existed for various years yet have not been thoroughly carried out by the public authority or the Local government unit because of complexity and various reasons.

For its future practice, given the reason that existing laws are protecting the informal economy. The policy-making bodies must consider harmonizing their policies to prevent the difficulty of implementing vital laws to protect and benefit the informal economy and hating them for progress. Policymakers must also decide whether they can push the formal sector laws on the economy's informal sector. It is also imperative that the policy was implemented by bodies like the executive or the local government to look into the contributions of the informal sectors. Thus, implementing the Constitution's laws and equally implementing such laws will raise the informal sectors' standards while helping them get out of the poverty line.

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STATE OF STANDARD CLASS HOTELS' SERVICES: CUSTOMERS' ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study is to assess the customer satisfaction of the front desk services in selected standard hotels in Cebu City to devise an action plan. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following particularities: profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, nationality, and purpose of stay; the level of customer satisfaction on the front desk services in terms of the reservation process, registration process, bell desk, transportation service, information, concierge, telephone service, and cashier services; and problems encountered by the customers concerning the services. This descriptive correlational research used a researcher-made survey questionnaire to gather data from the three selected standard class hotels in Cebu City. Frequency count, percentage, weighted mean, and chi-square test of independence were applied for data analysis. The findings showed that the guests were very satisfied with the services in reservation, registration, bell desk, transportation, information concierge, telephone, and cashing. Yet, minor problems were encountered, especially when their requests and needs were not catered to quickly by the hotel staff. There is a significant relationship between the respondents' age and purpose of stay and their level of satisfaction with the transportation and concierge. There is also a significant relationship between the respondents' age and gender the problems they encountered with registration, cashing, and information services.

Keywords: Hospitality management, customer experiences, standard hotels, descriptive, Cebu City, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

According to Forbes, the biggest hotel chains in the world just keep getting larger (Touyalai, 2018). Their success is measured by several criteria, such as properties, rooms, market share, and profitability. Their hotel services are also regarded as “best in class” due to the reputation of their brands (Hotel News Now, 2015). Some of these leading hotel chains are found in the Asian region and the Philippines (Lorenciana, 2018).

In Cebu, Philippines, the homegrown hotel brands see the continued entry of international hotel chains not as “competition” but as an encouragement to level up and upgrade. According to the Hotel Resort and Restaurant Association of Cebu (HRRAC) official, the arrival of global names in the local hospitality scene contributes to skills and service standard improvements

(Sunstar, 2018). Indeed, lodging establishments would continuously raise their service level to please their clients.

Given this scenario of the ever-growing hospitality industry in Cebu, at the forefront are the standard class hotels catering to different kinds of travelers, wherein these standard hotels may not be as equipped as their luxury hotel counterparts in terms of services to guests. The Department of Tourism accredits and ranks hotels into different classifications such as the deluxe, first-class, standard, economy, and *Mabuhay* class, or, recently, by using a five-star to one-star rating - according to a point system scale established by the National Accommodation Standards (Calleja, 2014). However, many hotels have not submitted themselves for certification among the total lodging establishments in the city. A tourism operations officer explained that accreditation and ranking are not mandatory; however, such recognition may be a form of branding advantageous to the hotel property, whether internationally or in the local scene.

There are many cases wherein the customers complain about the hotel personnel's poor customer service, which subsequently affects their occupancy rate, revenues, and profitability. The hotel management should never neglect this situation since any dissatisfied customer will have a negative effect on the image and prestige of the hotel. In most cases, the customers will have negative reviews against the hotel in which prospective clients might be discouraged to book at the hotel. Hence, there is a need to emphasize front desk services and problems due to the perception and profound effect these can have on the customer; thus, they impact customer loyalty and, consequently, business success.

FRAMEWORK

This study is mainly anchored in theory on service performance by Cronin and Taylor (1994), which explains that the quality of service is measured by a customer's perception based on service performance. There is a need for customers to experience a service encounter to form judgments personally. If there is a perceived overall quality of service performance, customer satisfaction follows. The service performance model provides valuable information to managers for developing quality improvement strategies (Nadiri & Hussain, 2005). Relying on service performance measurement as an index of service quality entails recognizing and using several direct indicators of desired service quality.

The theory of service performance consists of five service dimensions: tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, reliability, and empathy. Tangibles are the physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of employees; reliability pertains to the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately; responsiveness refers to the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service; assurance relates to the knowledge and courtesy of personnel and their ability to inspire trust and confidence; and empathy means the caring, individualized attention the organization provides its customers (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

In customer value theory, Woodruff and Gardial posit that a customer is seemingly preferences for a product or service related to the attributes and performances that achieve their goals and purposes according to the specific situation. Since the appraisal is from the customer's perspective, the value depends on the customer's learned observations, personal preferences, and evaluations. Customer value is further described as being interactive and relativistic. It is formed through the interaction between customer and object (or service); and as a result of the customer's comparison with other similar objects (or services, varying from person to person, from moment to moment, and from place to place (Holbrook, 1999).

Customer value learning for a company becomes an in-depth understanding of their customers' specific use consequences and characteristics. A more qualitative measurement of customer value must be implemented rather than widely accepted quantitative methods that determine customer satisfaction alone. Nonetheless, superior customer value delivery becomes an antecedent of high customer satisfaction. Moreover, customer value must be assessed and defined relative to the market competition. Customer value information is helpful for companies in designing their competitive strategies (Woodruff & Gardial, 1996).

The front desk of a hotel establishment gives the first and often the most vital impression in a guest's hotel experience. While its workers primarily greet hotel guests and perform check-in procedures, the various stages of a guest's stay begin with the front office department functions. Among others, these are: complete the guest registration, assist with luggage, transportation, information about the hotel and the city and other service arrangements, complete their accommodation, food and beverage, and other accounts and receive payment from guests (Baker, Bradley & Huyton, 2001). The Front Office Department generally comprises the reservations, reception, cashier, bell service, transportation, concierge and information, telephone operators, executive club, and business center.

Moreover, the front office is fundamentally the "nerve center" in the entire hotel operations linking other components of the guest's experience such as food and beverage, housekeeping, sports and recreation, spa, and other requirements during his stay (Bardi, 2011). In order to support guest transactions and services, front office employees must therefore demonstrate efficiency, effectiveness, and warmth to ensure a smooth and profitable operation for the hotel. Customers are more discerning about getting what they pay for in today's increasingly competitive hospitality industry. Aside from the physical facilities and products of the hotel, like comfortable beds and wholesome food, guests expect good service, which may eventually influence their decision to return (Kasavana & Brooks, 1998). Not all the time do customers want low prices; instead, they consistently want the services to be worth the money they spend. Giving the guests value is the key to the success of any business (Kotler, 2003). Thus, it becomes meaningful to know if its guests regard the front desk services of a hotel as giving sufficient value regardless of the price paid.

Front desk services, functions, and roles are essential, being the first and last point of contact in a hotel for a customer. According to Andrews (2013), the front office department offers many varied services that support the guest's stay, such as the reservation process, registration or check-in, bell desk services, transportation, concierge services, information services, telephone and communication, and cashing. This front office department is headed by a Front Office Manager who directs the entire operations, while the supervisors assist him for each section providing those services on a 24-hour basis.

The reservation process starts when a potential hotel guest calls, writes, or speaks face to face to a reservations agent. All requirements such as the dates of stay, room category, bed types, and price are determined against availability; after that, the staff explains amenities and inclusions to the customer to complete the hotel booking (Baker et al., 2001). If there are hindrances like the room is not available on the preferred dates of stay, some options may be offered until the customer settles on a choice. The product knowledge and experience of the reservations agent are vital to the establishment's success to capture or "close a deal" instead of losing the potential guest if his needs are not met. Ideally, the reservation process must be swift, accurate, thorough, and with a personal touch (Kasavana & Brooks, 1998).

At the time of guest arrival at the airport, transport service may be provided to reach the hotel destination. The shuttle bus usage or private car service is often overseen by the bell captain, the head of the bell desk service and transportation section. Precise arrangements according to flight time, the number of persons, and any special instructions would have been relayed by the reservation agent to the bell staff to ensure an organized airport arrival experience. Frequently, an airport representative of the hotel waits for the guest, identifies and welcomes him, and assists with the luggage to the vehicle; at other times, the transportation personnel is trained well enough to meet the guest and proceed to the hotel (Ismail, 2002).

Once the guest sets foot in the hotel foyer, the guest experience truly begins. Front desk employees are positioned to greet incoming guests charmingly and offer assistance with the registration process. The reception staff gathers all information exhaustively at the time of check-in, which will enhance the ability of the hotel to satisfy his unique needs; thus, a guest profile is created. This will include the guest's complete contact details, personal preferences, financial and guest history records (Bardi, 2011). The guest profile also helps in the future marketing efforts and promotions of the hotel. Presently, the registration staff fulfills special requests involving guest rooms that were not known during reservation, for instance, the room location, view, bed type, and amenities that are particular to the purpose of stay, such as a child crib. Hence the efficiency, prompt attention, and follow-up of the staff in attending to these details are essential and pose long-term advantages (Ford et al., 2012).

After that, the front desk staff establishes the payment intention in credit card, cash deposit, or company account and requests the guest to affix his signature on the registration record. The room key to a clean and ready room is issued, providing access to the hotel room and other facilities. The staff's discretion must assure guest confidentiality and security; the room number must not be written on the key card if left behind in a public place (3G ELearning, 2015).

Meantime, the bell desk staff would coordinate the luggage for the guest while the registration process was taking place. Upon completion of registration, the Bellstaff politely escorts the guest with his luggage from the front desk to his room and explains the room features and hotel itself, called rooming-in of the guest (Ismail, 2002).

Shortly, the guest comes in contact with the telephone staff or operator. The telephone services section handles incoming calls and relevant messages for the guest. The operator can also provide personalized or automated wake-up calls, whichever is desired. Essentially, the telephone staff is trained to be a one-stop-shop that can coordinate any guest requests with the proper hotel department and follow through to completion (Baker et al., 2001).

During the guest's stay, information services provide ready information about the hotel, the city, weather, malls, tourist spots, local businesses, bus and church schedules, or any other guest inquiries. Regardless of hotel size, information services are a focal point for guests throughout their stay. Thus, it is indispensable for front desk employees handling information services to be organized and resourceful at all times (Woods et al., 2007).

Meantime, the concierge provides customized and personalized services to enhance the guest experience. Their duties range from making reservations for dining, securing tickets for shows or events, providing information on local attractions; to gratifying any other unusual requests for the demanding guest. They also handle airline or other ticket purchases and reconfirmations, secretarial or business center services, and small meeting requirements. Thus, the quick-wittedness and networking of a concierge staff can significantly help deliver a high standard of service for the hotel customer (Kasavana & Brooks, 1998).

Regarding hotel bills and payment, the guest avails of the cashiering services, typically located in the same front desk station as the registration. The cashier may perform currency exchange or small bills exchange for the guest and assist him with availing a safety deposit box. The cashier staff also arranges the guest charges so that at any time upon request or upon check out, she may present the guest's hotel bill, called a folio, to the guest for review. She then accepts payment and efficiently applies it to the guest's bill. Check-out is carried out in a friendly, fast, and seamless manner while inquiring about the stay so that any outstanding issues or problems may be resolved before hotel departure. The check-out process is usually the last opportunity for customer satisfaction; therefore, the front desk cashier must conclude the guest's stay with a lasting positive memory that may attract a return visit (Andrews, 2013).

The more common classification systems include "star" rating letter grading, from "A" to "F," such as hotels and motels. Systems using terms such as Deluxe/Luxury, First Class/Superior, Tourist Class/Standard, and Budget Class/Economic are more widely accepted as hotel types than hotel standards. Classification systems are in place to rate hospitality establishments on services, facilities, value for money, accommodation, cuisine, and overall experience. Its purpose is to rank establishments and provide this information to the public. In the Philippines, hotel classification is done through the process of accreditation. Hotels in the Philippines are classified before as De Luxe Class, First Class, Standard Class, and Economy Class. These classifications are graded according to the existence of an inventory checklist. Hotel classification is the ranking of hotels, usually using nomenclature such as stars (or diamonds), with one star denoting basic facilities and standards of comfort and five stars denoting luxury in facilities and services. Hotel classification is the ranking of hotels, usually using nomenclature such as stars (or diamonds), with one star denoting basic facilities and standards of comfort and five stars denoting luxury in facilities and services (Fleming, 2019).

The measure of service performance (SERVPERF) can be described in five dimensions: tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, reliability, and empathy. These determining factors are apparent in the different services provided by the front desk.

Tangibles are the physical attributes such as the hotel's front desk facilities, equipment, and personnel appearance. The front office may be regarded as the public face of the hotel (Essays UK, 2018). This not only refers to the grooming, professional appearance, and communication skills of the employees, but likewise, front desk associates must appear confident and project politeness, patience, and informal sincerity language when handling guests' queries (Lords Institute of Management, 2017).

Responsiveness is the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service. In the hotel setting, the customer service orientation of the staff, which manifests in a smile, welcome greeting, personal recognition, and offer of assistance, are fundamental to the guest. Having a positive attitude and prioritizing guests' interests will continuously create superior customer value (Kim, 2008).

Assurance pertains to the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence. Hotel product knowledge, information about the locality, attractions, businesses, etc., and familiarity with hotel procedures reassure customers that they are being given the best treatment that can be expected. For example, a full-service concierge's role is fast becoming a key to establishing the reputation of world-class and mid-range hotel properties (Kasavana & Brooks 1998).

Reliability refers to performing the promised service dependably, consistently, and accurately. This is equated to the hotel staff's efficiency and effectiveness which are vital to the

operations of a hotel or resort business establishment. Because the front desk is the crucial point of contact for a guest for anything that concerns him, all sections of this department must be efficient in their procedures and deliver on time (Baker et al., 2001).

Empathy means the degree of caring, individualized attention that the organization's staff provides to its customers. For example, problem resolution is a way for employees to show the guest that they care (Ulwick, 2005). Exceptional hotel service is provided by those who attend to the requestor's complaint and understand and relate to the guest. Staff empathy helps create an enjoyable guest experience and motivates them to write a positive review - both of which affect revenue (Odell, 2016).

Professional front office management is critical as it produces high service quality which its value can be more comprehensively measured to the customers (Rutherford & Falon, 2007). Huang and Tai (2003) stressed that value is more important than quality since consumers immediately consider value. The employees' handling of interactions with customers strongly influences the service value, the overall satisfaction, and the level of commitment a customer develops toward a service provider (Cheng, 2004).

Delivering value to customers is an operational objective of any service establishment. It is the primary means of convincing customers to purchase, therefore understanding what customers value is the first step that a company must take (Shanker, 2012).

In a "means-end" way, the customer value hierarchy places desired product attributes at the bottom, leading upwards to the desired consequences or benefits of the product, and at the top are the customer's goals and purposes (Bojanic, 2015). If using a product or service results in the desired consequences, the customer perceives high customer value. Similarly, the flow can be reversed from top to bottom; thus, companies use the customer value theory in marketing and branding strategy (McFarlane, 2013).

In the hotel situation, guests' opinion on the value of the services is shaped in every encounter with the staff. Ford and Sturman (2018) explained that these service encounters could be "moments of truth" that have the potential to make the guest experience extraordinary in a way that differentiates it from all the others – in order to create a competitive edge.

Good customer service by employees may be developed through proper training and orientation. According to Harter (1978), people become motivated by the perception of mastery. A mastery environment provided by trainers in sports, academia, or social relationships and the workplace stimulates trainee attempts at learning, repeated effort, cooperation, improvement, and a positive approach to mistakes (Horn, 2004). Work competence and motivation produce pleasant emotional states leading to achievement goals (Harter et al., 2002).

Dortyol et al. (2014) identified tourists' perceptions of services provided by hotels in Antalya/Turkey and explored hotel service quality dimensions. Results showed that tangibles, food quality, and reliability influenced the customer satisfaction level the most. In contrast, hotel employees and problem-solving, transportation, food quality, reliability, climate, hygiene, price level, tangibles, interaction with Turkish culture, and friendly, courteous, and helpful employees were the main dimensions that affected whether a guest would recommend a hotel. It must be noted that tangibles, interaction with Turkish culture, and price level were the most influential dimensions in terms of customers' intentions to revisit a hotel.

Bojanic (1996) examined the relationships between price, value, and satisfaction regarding hotel services. Results showed that price level has the following effects on customer expectations: firstly, the lower the price, the lower also is the perceived quality, and vice versa; and secondly, consumer expectations tended to decrease to some degree with the price level.

However, both low and high-priced hotels both enjoyed good perceived value ratings. Bojanic said that while it seems that luxury hotels charge higher prices to continue to maintain high levels of quality, budget hotels that charge only a fraction can still maintain the essential amenities which are regarded as necessary by their guests. Lastly, the study verified that when customers perceive that they obtained a good value, it is due to the hotel's meeting or exceeding their expectations, resulting in satisfied guests. The significance of the above research is in understanding that hotels at all levels need to manage guests' perceptions of value by recognizing how they feel about quality for the price paid. Moreover, hotels need to establish the quality indicators that matter the most to meet guests' expectations.

Levyda (2017) disclosed that the guests' perceived value among the four-star hotels in Jakarta was measured. Seven criteria were used as the basis: the functional values of the physical environment, guestrooms, hotel staff services, food and beverages, price, emotional value, and social value. The study revealed that the hotels were rated average value, but it disproved the assumption that guests perceived superior value in the four-star hotels.

Batra and Ahtola (1991) divided into the seven dimensions in his measuring instrument. However, they are very different from the SERVPERF model dimensions: the tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, reliability, and empathy. Levy also highlighted a "service blueprint" by Reid and Bojanic (2010), which mentions the guest cycle from reservations, arrival, check-in, occupancy, food, beverage activities, and check out.

Meanwhile, Sriyam's (2010) study also relates the service quality approach (SERVQUAL) to measure customer satisfaction at the Mercure Hotel Pattaya. It assessed customers' expectations minus perception level towards service quality of front office staff and analyzed the discrepancy between them. Sixty respondents had high expectations of assurance, while it was found out that they had a high perception rating of tangibles. The findings also showed that the hotel guests perceived service performance which exceeded expectations towards service quality of front office staff at the Mercure Hotel Pattaya.

Similarly, Abdullah et al. (2007) assessed the perception of Malaysian consumers of the quality of airline services using the service quality measurement. In detecting the existence of 'service gaps' in Malaysia's airline industry, findings showed that Malaysian consumers were generally satisfied with the services provided by the airlines. However, only in the responsiveness aspect did the airlines' performance exceed the five service quality dimensions. While the other aspects of tangibles, assurance, reliability, and empathy, scored lower in customer expectations. Even then, passengers were found to consider empathy as the most crucial indicator of their perception of service quality, uncovering the value that customers seek in choosing the airline in the study. One recommendation was that, through proper employee training, airline companies must endeavor to raise this aspect and further strategize to gain more loyal customers.

In 2012, Abdullah et al. investigated the performance standard of the airline services as seen by Malaysian passengers using service performance (SERVPERF). From 500 passengers departing from Kuala Lumpur International Airport, the data confirmed that three factors, namely, tangibility, reliability, and assurance, resulted in strong significance. The paper aimed to help the airline industries design marketing policies according to their consumers' preferences in a different cultural background.

From the customer perspective, another study by Yilmaz (2009) analyzed the service quality performance of three-star, four-star, and five-star hotels in Cappadocia. The study results disclosed that hotel customers looked forward to more improved services from the hotels in all

service quality dimensions; tangibles, assurance, responsiveness, empathy, and reliability. The lowest perception scores were on tangibles, while empathy is crucial in evaluating hotel customers' overall service quality.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study assessed the customer satisfaction of the front desk services of selected standard hotels in Cebu City to craft a proposed action plan. Specifically, this study seeks to present the: (1) the profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender; nationality, and purpose of stay; (2) the level of satisfaction of the customers on the front desk services in terms of the reservation process, registration process, bell desk, transportation service, information, concierge, telephone services, and cashier services; (3) the problems encountered by the customers about the services offered by the front desk in a standard hotel.

METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the research design, research environment, research respondents, research instruments, research procedures, research instrument, and ethical considerations.

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive correlational method of research using a researcher-made tool to assess the customers' satisfaction with the front desk services offered in a standard class hotel in Cebu.

Research Environment

The study was conducted in Cebu City, Cebu, the Philippines, in three selected standard class hotels in Cebu City that are currently listed among the accredited accommodations by the Department of Tourism (DOT) the Philippines. The system of classification of hotels that was followed since the 1990s was the economy, standard, first-class and deluxe. In 2012, according to the National Accommodations Standards (NAS), the star rating system was presented to conform to global standards and language (Calleja, 2014). The criteria comprise seven dimensions: arrival and departure; public area facilities; bedroom; bathroom; food and beverage; other amenities and services; and business practices. A hotel getting 551 to 700 points will be given a three-star rating with the new system. Three-star hotels usually offer a higher degree of hospitality and service than two-star or one-star hotels (Department of Tourism, 2019).

Hotel A is a 210-room property short driving distance to Cebu's key attractions. Due to its central location, the hotel presently caters to vacationers and business people alike. This hotel is part of a local chain found in a few other areas in the country.

Hotel B consists of 168 rooms, multiple function halls, and facilities. It has proximity to a large mall and the shipping port, making it ideal for local travelers and tourists. This hotel is fast becoming a landmark in the Cebu City area.

Hotel C is an uptown hotel with 427 rooms and a conference center; thus, it hosts conventions and big meetings. Its function rooms also serve private gatherings. It offers a good option in terms of affordability and style, whether for business trips, family vacations, or

staycations. The standard hotels chosen in this study are located in the Cebu City area and are approximately 5-10 kilometers apart. The establishments are equipped with ample facilities and services to promote the customer's stay experience.

Research Respondents

The study utilized random sampling in selecting its respondents. There were fifty (50) registered customers per chosen standard hotel who agreed to participate in this research to answer the questionnaire. The customers were either local or foreign guests who utilized the hotel during their travel. It was possible that the guests experienced the hotel for the first time or were already regular patrons. The answers of the total number of respondents were considered for this study.

Research Instrument

This study used a researcher-made instrument based on the hotel's services in the hotel's front desk. The said instrument consisted of three parts. The first part contained the respondent's profile in terms of age, gender, nationality, and purpose of stay. In contrast, the second part contained items to assess the customer's satisfaction on the front desk in terms of the reservation process, registration process, bell service, transportation, telephone services, concierge, information services, and cashier services; and part three contained items to determine problems encountered by the customers concerning the front desk services offered. The rating scale consisted of four possible scoring grades or categorical responses: 4 for very satisfied; 3 for moderately satisfied; 2 for less satisfied; and 1 for not satisfied. Prior to application, the credibility and reliability of the research instrument were established. A questionnaire draft was presented to two education professors for their review and suggestions. Fortunately, the criteria to be used to assess the front desk services were found to have clarity; therefore, the questionnaire was deemed credible. The researcher conducted a pilot testing of the questionnaire for reliability by administering it on ten (10) registered guests in a small city hotel.

Research Procedures

A letter request for approval was sent to the general manager of the selected standard hotels in Cebu to allow the researcher to conduct a research study. Upon receiving the duly approved letter request, the researcher administered the research survey questionnaires to the registered hotel customers in four weeks for the three (3) selected standard hotels in Cebu.

Research Instrument

After gathering data from the registered hotel customers, the accomplished research survey questionnaires were processed, analyzed, and interpreted. The statistical tools used in this study are as follows:

Frequency and Percentage were used to summarize, analyze and interpret the profile of the respondents.

Weighted Mean and ranking were used to summarize, analyze and interpret the customers' satisfaction with the front desk services offered in a standard class hotel in Cebu; and the problems that guests encountered.

Chi-square test of independence were then used to determine the significance of the relationship between the respondent's profile and the customers' satisfaction on the front desk

services and the significance of the relationship between the respondent's profile and the problems encountered concerning the services offered.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section shows the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data. Table present the respondents' profile in terms of age, gender, nationality, and purpose of stay.

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

Profile Indicators	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age (in years)		
50 & above	16	10.67
40 – 49	24	16.00
30 – 39	60	40.00
20 – 29	47	31.33
below 20	3	2.00
Gender		
Male	73	48.67
Female	77	51.33
Nationality		
US Citizen	8	5.33
Australian	10	6.67
Canadian	4	2.67
Chinese	11	7.33
Filipino	96	64.00
Japanese	2	1.33
Korean	6	4.00
Singaporean	1	0.67
British	6	4.00
German	4	2.67
Swedish	2	1.33
Purpose of Stay		
Tourist/Vacation	85	56.67
Business Travel	29	19.33
Attend Convention	2	1.33
Visit Friends & Relatives	23	15.33
Study	7	4.67
Honeymoon	4	2.67

Of the one hundred fifty (150) respondents, sixty (60) were between 30-39 years old, or 40% of the total sample. On the other hand, three (3) respondents, or 2% of the sample, were below 20 years old at the time of the survey. The majority of the customers included in the study have belonged to the adults' category.

The American Business Insights disclosed that the fastest-growing age segment of travelers is the millennials or Generation Y, who are currently in the 23-38 age range (Morissey, 2012). Travel spending by this younger generation rose 20 percent in 2010 and is still booming at the seams. This report supports the research findings of the young customers checking into standard hotels in Cebu, as they follow the global trend.

Major hotel brands like Hilton, Starwood, Marriott, and Intercontinental, have developed contemporary products targeted at young travelers (Jacobs, 2012). Upscaling and investing in what attracts the younger crowd – technology, social media, and design – is a wise move to capture this potential market segment. Indeed, the selected standard hotels in Cebu, built in recent years from 2012-to 2017, seem to draw the millennial generation. It can be inferred that these hotels have used market research, among others, to plan, design carefully, and offer their products and services that would be relevant and appealing. After all, the consumer decision-making process in hotel choice selection is influenced by hotel products or services, received information, and personal preferences (Baruca & Civre, 2012).

Moreover, seventy-seven (77) respondents, or 51.33%, were females, while seventy-three (73) were males or 48.67%. The mix of male and female respondents suggests that both men and women were similarly eager to answer the survey about customer satisfaction. Nonetheless, the female travel market has shown an 88% increase over the past few years (Condor Ferries Ltd, 2020). This proposes a shift in hotel policies and procedures to accommodate the particular wants and needs of the female tourist as compared to the traditional male traveler. In other words, gender profiling is helpful for customer relationship management and the development of customer retention strategies (Min et al., 2002). It will be confirmed in the later section of this study if there is a significant relationship between the gender profile of the customers and the level of satisfaction with the front desk services.

The majority of the research respondents were Filipinos, with a frequency of 96 (64%); while the remaining 54 or 36% comprised of other nationalities, such as: Chinese (11, 7.33%; Australian (10, 6.67%); US Citizen (8, 5.33%); Korean (6,4%), British (6, 4%) ; Canadian (4, 2.67%); German (4, 2.67) Swedish (2, 1.33%), Japanese (2, 1.33); and Singaporean (1, 0.67%)

A recent survey pointed out that the Philippines remains the top destination for local travelers, particularly appealing during long weekends (Matabuena, 2019). Filipino vacationers may revisit familiar places or seek new things to relax and unwind, whether with family, friends, or just alone. Department of Tourism report (2017) cites Cebu as the top domestic tourist destination out of 15 places. This supports the data that 64% of the sampled customers staying in the standard Cebu hotels were Filipinos. In the case of international tourist arrivals, the Department of Trade and Industry (2018) shared that out of 7.1 million visitors, Koreans were our country's chief market, followed by Chinese, then U.S., Japan, and Australia, in that order. These top tourist nationalities were also found in the standard hotels where the study was conducted.

Among the one hundred fifty (150) customers surveyed, their main purpose of stay were: vacation (85, 56.67%; business travel (29, 19.33%); visiting friends and relatives (23, 15.33%); study, (7, 4.67%); honeymoon, (4, 2.67%); and attending convention (2, 1.33%).

This finding links to the nationality profile data of the hotel guests who are mostly Filipinos and vacationing in the local tourist spots. Many factors are responsible for the increase in local tourism. Last year, DOT Region 7 director stated that Filipinos are now traveling more and spending more while exploring other places within the country. This was brought about by a combination of the thrust on the nation's development of local tourism; the high purchasing power of the younger working force such as those in call centers; extended weekend holidays; increase in modes of transportation, such as in cheap flights; empowered female tourists; popularity of the many "Instagram-able" destinations in the Philippines; and the surge of digital and social media (Dagooc, 2018).

The leisure segment comprised the most significant percentage of the customers sampled in the study; usually, they can be found in luxury hotels and resorts instead. It implies that the customers preferred some attributes found in the standard hotels that fit their requirements, and one would probably be the budgetary consideration (Baker et al., 2001). Also noteworthy is that business travelers and convention delegates combined still account for almost 21%. The standard hotels have tried to cater to guests on business by providing appropriate amenities for a comfortable and productive stay; these may range from excellent wifi connectivity to meeting spaces, business center services, transportation, and concierge. Interestingly, a service trait that business travelers appreciate most in hotels is the convenience of reservation, mainly due to requiring accommodation at short notice (Min et al., 2002). Therefore, as part of front desk services, the ease of reservation process and close customer ties must be always be assured for business clients.

Customer satisfaction involves the feeling of well-being and pleasure resulting from obtaining or using an appealing product or service. The customer satisfaction of the front desk services must be measured because it is vital for the hotel's growth and survival (Akbaba, 2006). Satisfied customers due to quality services become loyal customers; quality services likewise attract new customers, especially in competitive environments. Understanding to what extent the customers are satisfied can help the business think of managing and improving the quality and being more successful in the long run (Abishek, 2018).

Reservation is the first contact process wherein a prospective customer receives information from the hotel staff about location, hotel type, amenities and service diversity, and price (Baker et al., 2001). It consists of several service steps that lead to a successful hotel booking. It ensures that the guest will be accommodated and accorded the use of hotel facilities during a specific period of time. Most hotels require a reservation nowadays because it aids in planning and forecasting the operations. This benefits hotel customers in terms of being provided precisely what the hotel is prepared to deliver.

Table 2 presents the respondents' satisfaction regarding the reservation process as part of the front desk services offered in standard hotels.

Table 2. Respondents' Satisfaction on the Front Desk Services in Terms of Reservation Process

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1. Professional attitude and good communication skills of the reservation staff.	3.68	Very Satisfied	2
2. Staff gave pleasant greeting and maintained courtesy throughout the reservation process.	3.65	Very Satisfied	4
3. Handled inquiries on hotel reservation smoothly whether by phone, mail or in person.	3.64	Very Satisfied	6
4. Checked for room availability on specified dates; offered alternatives if hotel was fully booked.	3.66	Very Satisfied	3
5. Suggested room categories and amenities to fit the guest preferences or purpose of stay.	3.64	Very Satisfied	6
6. Efficiently handled special requests such as bed type, room view, location, pillows, extra bed, and others.	3.64	Very Satisfied	6
7. Offered and arranged airport transfer to hotel and other requests.	3.54	Very Satisfied	9
8. Reservations staff was very knowledgeable about room rates, discounts, specials, membership perks, and other promotions.	3.65	Very Satisfied	5
9. Anticipated and resolved problems for the guest, ex. certain room type not available or room size for number of persons, etc.	3.48	Very Satisfied	10
10. Staff showed expertise, organization and dependability.	3.69	Very Satisfied	1
Aggregate Mean	3.63	Very Satisfied	

The highest weighted mean of 3.69 indicates that the hotel customers were delighted with the reservation process since the staff showed expertise, organization, and dependability. This means that the customers in the standard hotels were being catered to well when they booked.

On the other hand, the lowest weighted mean of 3.48 indicates that the respondents were still satisfied when the hotel personnel anticipated and resolved problems for the guests line particular room type not available or room size for the number of persons. This indicates that the hotel person could address any issues during the accommodation of the newly-arrived guests.

The aggregate mean of 3.63 shows that the respondents were very satisfied with the reservation process in the standard class hotels. This means that the customers at the hotel were appropriately accommodated at the front desk upon their arrival, and their needs were cared for properly.

The reliability of the reservation process may be a direct result of the management's training efforts to ensure a high standard of service (Choi & Chu, 1999). Since the customer experience begins long before they arrive at the hotel, it is also essential to engage the customer pre-stay by forging a relationship beyond the physical property (Baruca & Civre, 2012). Some perceived lack of anticipation and extra attention to guests' personal needs may be attributed to the hotel's culture because a company culture of delighting the guest usually rubs off on its employees (Torres & Kline, 2013). Training focuses on improving these aspects, reviewing the staff workload, and intensified supervision might prove practical to address them.

The registration process involves properly assigning hotel rooms to the guest and obtaining all information pertinent to the guest's stay. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, hotels were required to keep a "register" where the guest customarily affixed his signature, after which the staff swiftly handed him a traditional room key (Lvy-Bonvin, 2003). Present times have changed this simple method into a full-scale procedure requiring the guest to fill out forms, submit proper identification, establish credit, and be briefed on the inclusions of stay. Furthermore, the technological era has enabled hotels to implement faster, paperless, online, or virtual check-in. Standard-class hotels may or may not possess these modern innovations much sought after by millennial customers (Richard, 2017).

Table 3 presents the respondents' satisfaction regarding the registration process as part of the front desk services offered in selected standard hotels.

The highest mean of 3.78 indicates that the respondents were very satisfied with the check-in/reception staff because they were well-groomed, professional, and had good communication skills. The front-desk personnel must possess a pleasing personality so that the guests will feel that they are adequately accommodated.

On the other hand, the lowest weighted mean of 3.55 specifies that the respondents were very satisfied with the registration process of the hotel because they were provided with individualized attention and care. In this case, the guest was given exclusive attention upon arrival at the hotel.

The aggregate mean of 3.62 indicates that the respondents were very satisfied with the registration process of the standard hotels in Cebu. It can be noted that the hotel staff was adequately groomed, possessed good communication skills, and the guests were provided personalized service for their convenience.

Table 3. Respondents' Satisfaction on the Front Desk Services in Terms of Registration Process

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1. The check-in/ reception staff appears well-groomed, professional and have good communication skills.	3.78	Very Satisfied	1
2. Prompt acknowledgement and welcome greeting by staff as you approached the front desk and polite offer of assistance.	3.64	Very Satisfied	3
3. Accurate retrieval of guest reservation. Ease of instructions and assistance to complete the registration process.	3.63	Very Satisfied	4
4. Courteous request of personal identification ex. Passport; establishing mode or guarantee of payment for hotel stay.	3.70	Very Satisfied	2
5. Efficiently handled special requests such as room preference, bed type, babysitting, early arrival, late check-out, etc.	3.60	Very Satisfied	6
6. Prompt issuance of room key and ensured guest room number confidentiality.	3.59	Very Satisfied	7
7. Advised the guest about breakfast venue and time, wifi and other included amenities.	3.62	Very Satisfied	5
8. Reception staff has sufficient knowledge about rates, hotel activities and promotions.	3.57	Very Satisfied	8
9. Anticipated and solved problems for the guest, ex. room is not ready so offered options while waiting.	3.56	Very Satisfied	9
10. Provided individualized attention and care in the registration process.	3.55	Very Satisfied	10
Aggregate Mean	3.62	Very Satisfied	

During the registration process, lasting impressions are formed by a professional image and making the guests feel welcome; thus, guests are pleased about their choice of hotel (Choi & Chu, 1999). The respondents appreciated the intelligent appearance and pleasing personality of the registration staff in the hotels studied. Employers manage this first impression through selective hiring policies and immaculate dress codes, among others (Tracey, Sturman & Tews, 2007). Upon acceptance of the selected employee, the hotel department is responsible for setting up procedures and conducting full training to develop efficiency so that each member can deliver quality services. A successful hotel must do whatever it can to ensure that the guest is satisfied with every aspect of registration offered (Ismail, 2002). Summarily, the findings denote that many of the above practices were present in the selected standard hotels, achieving excellent customer feedback on the registration process. Still, there is room for improvement, such as problem-handling and personalized service aspects, which may be managed by employee training.

The bell desk is chiefly responsible for storing, delivering, and collecting guests' luggage while assisting with errands and other guest requests. Although bell staff's tasks may be routine, they maintain the essential link between the guest and the lodging establishment. They also assist the concierge during busy periods by attending to inquiries and answering telephone calls. Due to their visibility and direct contact with hotel customers, bell service personnel are required to have an excellent uniformed appearance and demeanor at all times. Traits such as a sense of urgency, flexibility, and resourcefulness are also desired (Kasavana & Brooks, 1998).

Table 4 presents the respondents' satisfaction in terms of bell desk as part of the front desk services offered in selected standard hotels.

Table 4. Respondents' Satisfaction on the Front Desk Services in Terms of Bell Desk

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1. Neat uniformed appearance and good communication skills of the bell desk service staff.	3.48	Very Satisfied	7
2. Upon hotel arrival, Bell staff greeted and showed guests to the reception area and unloaded the luggage from transport services.	3.50	Very Satisfied	6
3. Bell staff properly attached luggage tags, gave matching tags to the guest and secured the luggage.	3.54	Very Satisfied	3
4. Efficient assistance and escort of guest with luggage to the room.	3.55	Very Satisfied	2
5. Bell staff conducted a complete orientation of the room to help guests settle in.	3.44	Very Satisfied	9
6. Properly handled any mails, parcels, newspaper, storage, and other needs or errands during guest's stay.	3.41	Very Satisfied	10
7. Upon check out, timely service and satisfactory handling of luggage from the room until hotel departure.	3.54	Very Satisfied	4
8. Knowledgeable about hotel and city information to aid in guest's stay.	3.51	Very Satisfied	5
9. Anticipate and solve problems for the guest, ex. missing luggage.	3.45	Very Satisfied	8
10. The staff conveyed trust and confidence when attending to the guest.	3.56	Very Satisfied	1
Aggregate Mean	3.50	Very Satisfied	

The highest weighted mean of mean, 3.56, indicates that the respondents were very satisfied with the bell desk because the staff conveyed trust and confidence when attending to the guest. The guests in the standard hotel felt that their privacy was respected adequately by the hotel staff.

On the other hand, the lowest weighted mean of 3.41 specifies that the respondents were also very satisfied with the bell desk because they properly handled any mails, parcels, newspaper, storage, and other needs or errands during guests' stay. In this manner, the hotel staff was able to attend to the service needs of the hotel.

The aggregate mean of 3.50 shows that the respondents were very satisfied with the bell desk services in the standard hotels. This results indicates that the the hotel personnel sucessfully provide the needs especially when there are cases that they request for errands and assistance.

The findings imply that by giving importance to the bell desk, the standard hotels have used a great opportunity to build customer loyalty, increase business and create alignment with the hotel brand (Radwa, 2018). Bellmen are carefully selected because only individuals with strong communication skills and who show a genuine interest in each guest are fit for the job. There is a need to focus on anticipation and resourcefulness skills in the trainings in order to delight guests further. Adequate orientation and in-house trainings on job tasks result in successful employees who are motivated to further improve their competency (Woodruff, 1997). A well-designed employee retention strategy could result in experienced staff who are able to cater to returning guests of the hotel.

The transportation desk handles the task of getting guests to and from the hotel and airport as well as other destinations depending on their purpose of stay. Bigger properties may have a shuttle bus service available, but most hotels provide chauffeured cars at best. Ground transportation requirements may be attended to as early as in the reservation process. Aside from offering convenience, hotel transportation is expected to deliver reliable and courteous service because it is considered as an extension of the front desk (Bardi, 2011). The safety and security

of the guests are also assured when the service is provided by the hotel's transportation desk, compared to outside transportation options.

Table 5 presents the respondents' satisfaction terms of hotel transportation of the front desk services offered in the selected standard hotels in.

Table 5. Respondents' Satisfaction on the Front Desk Services in Terms of Transportation Service

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1. Transportation staff had a neat uniformed appearance and communicated well.	3.42	Very Satisfied	5
2. Car staff/transport staff gave a welcome greeting and assistance while leading to the vehicle.	3.42	Very Satisfied	5
3. A clean and well-maintained vehicle was presented for the guest's comfort.	3.58	Very Satisfied	1
4. Transport staff secured the guest inside the vehicle and loaded the guest luggage after.	3.50	Very Satisfied	2
5. The transport staff offered information about the length of trip to the hotel and local weather.	3.30	Very Satisfied	9
6. Amenities such as bottled water, newspaper and standard car music were offered during the transport.	3.09	Moderately Satisfied	10
7. Transport staff used guest name if known; showed respect and courtesy during the trip.	3.38	Very Satisfied	8
8. Pleasant, organized and efficient transportation travel experience going to the hotel.	3.50	Very Satisfied	2
9. The staff was knowledgeable about hotel and city information to answer guest's inquiry.	3.39	Very Satisfied	7
10. Transport staff was helpful to solve any problems that the guest might have.	3.43	Very Satisfied	4
Aggregate Mean	3.40	Very Satisfied	

The highest mean of 3.58 indicates that the respondents were very satisfied with the transportation services provided by the hotel since the vehicle was in a clean and well-maintained condition for the guest's comfort.

On the other hand, the lowest weighted mean of 3.09 indicates that the respondents were also very satisfied with the hotel's transportation services since the amenities such as bottled water, newspaper, and standard car music were offered during the transport.

The aggregate mean score of 3.40 indicates that the respondents were very satisfied with the hotel transportation services in the standard hotels.

The presentation and efficiency of the transport services were handled very well by the hotels, as befitting because transport at tourist destinations is a part of the tourist experience (Kovacic & Milosevic, 2016). For practical reasons, hotels rely on a third-party company to supply the vehicles and human resources, which the guest identifies as still part of the hotel. High customer expectations were fulfilled by ensuring that transport staff was well-groomed and customer-oriented. Close coordination is maintained with the other front desk areas at all times (Andrews, 2013). Transport services are also a revenue-generator for the hotel; thus, they must be actively promoted (Kasavana & Brooks, 1998). In response to customers' evolving needs, a standard on the provision of amenities in the car should be established and maintained as part of an operations checklist each time a vehicle is dispatched for the guest.

Providing information is an essential service in the hospitality industry. There may not be a distinct information counter; thus, the front desk is the most likely place where hotel customers would direct their inquiries about the facilities, services, the locality, weather, and other

concerns. Ideally, all front desk staff, regardless of position, are fully trained to attend to guest queries or have access to a database, information technology system, or print material to aid them. When it comes to information services, the workers are not permitted "not to know;" they need to find the answers for the guest and get back to them immediately (Hai-yan & Baum, 2006).

Table 6 presents the respondents' satisfaction regarding the front desk information service offered in the selected standard hotels.

Table 6. Respondents' Satisfaction on the Front Desk Services in Terms of Information

Information	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1. Pleasant appearance and disposition of the Information staff; excellent communication skills.	3.53	Very Satisfied	5
2. Prompt response to guest inquiry and acted courteously throughout; used guest name if known.	3.58	Very Satisfied	1
3. Complete information was given on hotel activities and facilities including opening hours and fees, if any.	3.55	Very Satisfied	3
4. Excellent handling of inquiries about local tours, local events and attractions.	3.48	Very Satisfied	8
5. Provided ample supply of maps, brochures, and flyers.	3.39	Very Satisfied	9
6. Knowledgeable about common local destinations, malls, churches, directions, operating hours, dress code and other restrictions.	3.56	Very Satisfied	2
7. Information was offered on hotel loyalty program and other marketing promotions.	3.36	Very Satisfied	10
8. If information was not readily available, staff looked for resources and got back to the guest as promised.	3.54	Very Satisfied	4
9. Able to respond to complaints and found the appropriate solution to guest's specific problems.	3.51	Very Satisfied	6
10. Professional attitude was shown throughout the guest transaction.	3.49	Very Satisfied	7
Aggregate Mean	3.50	Very Satisfied	

The highest weighted mean of 3.58 indicates that the respondents were very satisfied with the front desk services due to the prompt response to guest inquiry and acted courteously throughout; used guest name if known. This data denotes that the front desk staff were able to provide appropriate service to the guest especially in providing information and in answering their queries.

On the other hand, the lowest weighted mean of 3.36 indicates that the respondents were very satisfied with the front desk services since the staff provided information offered hotel loyalty program and other marketing promotions. In this way, the guest felt that the hotel management valued them as customers since they are given the chance to avail discounts and perks with the loyalty and other promotional programs.

The aggregate mean of 3.50 signifies that the respondents were very satisfied with the information services of the front desk since the assigned staff were very satisfactory in providing appropriate information and accommodation to the guests' requests. Also, when there are concerns and problems that might arise from time to time, the staff were altruistic in exerting effort to resolve them. In any customer service encounter, the approachability and willingness to help by the attending staff are valued first before his or her technical capability.

Employees who are friendly, accommodating and problem-solvers are likely to delight the guest (Berry et al., 1985). Some of these traits may be tested during applicant interview. A company culture also plays a role in influencing behavior of the staff such as in empowering them to be proactive about guest situations and creatively find solutions (Torres & Kline, 2013). Training about product knowledge is particularly required such as available tours due to the majority of the customers being tourists. With regards to lack of familiarity with guest loyalty program, it was discovered that none of the hotels in the study had a formal guest loyalty program in place. Instead, only a guest recognition policy of giving special attention and amenities to returning guests was being implemented.

When a customer requires special services that cater to his personal needs, he is bound to look for the Concierge. Most clients will say that the main reason they use a concierge service is to save them time and stress. This allows them to start experiencing the things they enjoy instead of spending time researching and making their own arrangements (Thomas, 2012). Moreover, a hotel concierge aims to deliver a service above and beyond guest expectations, making sure that guests have a most wonderful stay. He accomplishes this by being one step ahead of the guests, thus surprising and delighting them in the process (Cooper, 2019).

Table 8 presents the respondents' satisfaction in terms of concierge as part of the front desk services offered in selected standard hotels.

Table 7. Respondents' Satisfaction on the Front Desk Services in Terms of Concierge

Concierge	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1. Concierge staff presented a professional appearance and manner; communication skills were excellent.	3.64	Very Satisfied	1
2. Prioritized guest needs; used guest name if known.	3.54	Very Satisfied	9
3. Recommendations and complete information given about the hotel; confirmed restaurant booking requests and other reservations.	3.64	Very Satisfied	1
4. Conversant about the city's history, structure, establishments, businesses; able to find a local tour guide for the guest, if needed.	3.60	Very Satisfied	4
5. Responded to requests for transportation services, and outside restaurant bookings in a timely and efficient manner.	3.64	Very Satisfied	1
6. Assisted with secretarial requirements, ex. Airline tickets, and other business center tasks.	3.51	Very Satisfied	10
7. Provided VIP services as per hotel policy or upon specific request.	3.54	Very Satisfied	8
8. Assisted satisfactorily with extraordinary requests; coordinated with other hotel departments as necessary to fulfil them.	3.59	Very Satisfied	5
9. Showed discretion and maintained guest privacy and confidentiality.	3.56	Very Satisfied	6
10. The staff resolved problems satisfactorily and showed that they have the guest's best interests at heart.	3.54	Very Satisfied	7
Aggregate Mean	3.58	Very Satisfied	

The highest weighted mean of 3.64 specifies that the respondents were very satisfied with the concierge of the hotels because the concierge staff made recommendations and completed information about the hotel, making confirmations on restaurant booking requests and other reservations. This means that the hotel staff assisted the guests when they requested assistance in making reservations for the restaurants and other services.

The highest weighted mean of 3.64 indicates that the respondents were very satisfied with the concierge of the hotels because the staff responded to requests for transportation services and

outside restaurant bookings in a timely and efficient manner. This data means that the guests had convenience in taking transportation and services because the hotel staff efficiently assisted them.

However, the lowest weighted mean of 3.51 indicates that the respondents were very satisfied with the concierge of the hotels because they were assisted with secretarial requirements, for example, airline tickets and other business center tasks. This result denotes that the guests were assisted in the hotel's services and on their travel itineraries and requirements.

The aggregate mean score of 3.58 shows that the respondents were very satisfied with the concierge services in the selected standard hotels. This data shows that the hotel guest had a wonderful and comfortable experience due to the hospitality and extra services.

A concierge desk depends on the hotel concept, service variety offering, budgetary constraint, and marketing strategy (Bellini & Convert, 2017). Only one of the standard hotels in this study had a separate area labeled "Concierge and Information Desk." Nevertheless, the hotels delegated some concierge tasks like local events access or airline ticket handling to the reception (registration) desk. A transport desk handled transportation needs. One establishment has a business center to cater to secretarial requirements. Another hotel provides a row of personal desk-top computers in a lobby section for easy guest access and research. At the same time, the personal assistance that is part of the concierge services is entrusted to a senior staff such as a manager. Utilizing such methods, concierge services expectations are still well-managed, as reflected in the positive responses of their customers.

The hotel telephone department also referred to as a private branch exchange or PBX handles all telephone operations and ensures a smooth communication flow. Telephone services must be very dependable because it is the internal and external link of the customer while staying at the hotel. The switchboard staff may have other responsibilities beyond answering calls, for instance, during emergencies (Kasavana & Brooks, 1998). Information technology applications have allowed telephone operators access to automatic wake-up call functions, smart call queuing, call accounting systems, and database management (Allah, 2009). Thus, in some fine hotels, it is now possible for them to multi-task, such as taking room service orders, lending assistance to group tours, or even assigning runners for housekeeping amenities and simple guest requests (Telephone Operator Job Description, 2009).

Table 8 presents the respondents' satisfaction regarding telephone services as part of the front desk services in selected standard hotels.

The highest weighted mean of 3.65 shows that the respondents were very satisfied with the telephone services of the hotels because the staff promptly answered the call with a cheerful greeting and identified themselves of their department, and offered assistance seamlessly. The quality of services provided by the telephone operators afforded the guests more convenience during their stay at the standard hotels.

On the other hand, the lowest weighted mean of 3.46 shows that the respondents were likewise very satisfied with the telephone services of the hotels because the staff was prompt in giving assistance to the guest request, taking ownership and responsibility (one-stop-shop). This data shows that the telephone operators exerted more effort in satisfying the guests' needs.

Table 8. Respondents' Satisfaction on the Front Desk Services in Terms of Telephone Services

Telephone Services	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1. Promptly answered the call with cheerful greeting; Identified self/ department and offered assistance seamlessly.	3.65	Very Satisfied	1
2. Clear speaking voice and well-modulated tone with inflection to show enthusiasm.	3.54	Very Satisfied	7
3. Addressed the guest by name and showed attention to detail throughout the call.	3.49	Very Satisfied	9
4. Prompt assistance on the guest request, taking ownership and responsibility (one-stop shop).	3.46	Very Satisfied	10
5. Showed good listening skills and understanding of guest's needs.	3.54	Very Satisfied	6
6. Knowledgeable about hotel information, weather, room service, city information, etc. to answer guest queries.	3.54	Very Satisfied	4
7. Anticipated guest need by following through ex. offered a wakeup call or car booking.	3.53	Very Satisfied	8
8. Able to resolve complaint such as a room defect or lacking amenities.	3.59	Very Satisfied	2
9. Capably activated "do not disturb" procedure upon guest request.	3.54	Very Satisfied	5
10. Promptly relayed any incoming messages to the guest.	3.58	Very Satisfied	3
Aggregate Mean	3.55	Very Satisfied	

The highest weighted mean of 3.65 shows that the respondents were very satisfied with the telephone services of the hotels because the staff promptly answered the call with a cheerful greeting and identified themselves of their department, and offered assistance seamlessly. The quality of services provided by the telephone operators afforded the guests more convenience during their stay at the standard hotels.

On the other hand, the lowest weighted mean, 3.46, shows that the respondents were likewise very satisfied with the telephone services of the hotels because the staff was prompt in giving assistance to the guest request, taking ownership and responsibility (one-stop-shop). This data shows that the telephone operators exerted more effort in satisfying their guests' needs.

The aggregate mean score of the data is 3.55, which reveals that the respondents were very satisfied with the telephone services in the standard class hotels. The satisfaction of the guests was based on the satisfactory services provided by the telephone operators in respondents to their calls for queries, assistance, and others.

Effective management of the telephone services was evident in the standard hotels studied. A good combination of staff attitude, knowledge and skills, and technologically-advanced equipment make a significant impact on the operations (Sheldon, 2003). All these gave benefits to the customers, including speed, accuracy, privacy, security, and some added features from the telecommunications software, like in-house entertainment. Staff performance is attributed to training focus which should be ongoing (Torres & Kline, 2013). Therefore, regarding some empathy lacking from the telephone attendants, more mentoring must be done on taking ownership of guest requests or complaints.

The guest account is the primary responsibility of the front desk cashier. There are many financial transactions needed to ensure their accuracy and veracity. Therefore, cashiers must be skillful at mathematics, accounting and record-keeping; and they must be experts in using the property's computer management system, which links to other departments. Being in the front-of-house and very accessible to guests, they must also have excellent customer handling

qualities. Many hotels nowadays have merged the tasks of the cashiers and registration into one, thus compounding the staff's workload (Ford & Sturman, 2018).

Table 9 presents the respondents' satisfaction regarding front desk cashier services offered in the selected standard hotels.

Table 9. Customer Satisfaction of the Front Desk Services in Terms of Cashier Services

Cashier Services	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1. Professional appearance and good communication skills of cashier staff.	3.68	Very Satisfied	2
2. Cashier acknowledged the guest promptly and gave polite offer of assistance.	3.64	Very Satisfied	6
3. Fast, efficient and accurate cash, credit card or foreign exchange transaction by staff.	3.62	Very Satisfied	8
4. Courteous assistance with safety deposit box with guest security information.	3.56	Very Satisfied	10
5. Accuracy in the guest account and able to provide clarifications on billing.	3.65	Very Satisfied	4
6. Staff has adequate cashiering skills and can answer queries about room rates, other hotel fees, and payment transactions.	3.66	Very Satisfied	3
7. Anticipate and solve problems for the guest; for example, applying discounts and other questions.	3.64	Very Satisfied	7
8. Staff provided reliable and trustworthy services in acceptable time frame.	3.58	Very Satisfied	9
9. Fast and hassle-free check out transaction.	3.70	Very Satisfied	1
10. Checked for guest satisfaction during stay and wished him to visit again.	3.65	Very Satisfied	4
Aggregate Mean	3.64	Very Satisfied	

The highest weighted mean of 3.70 shows that the respondents were very satisfied with the front desk cashier services because of its fast and hassle-free check-out transaction. This data indicates that the hotel guests did not experience a headache settling their bills.

The lowest weighted mean of 3.56 also shows that the respondents were satisfied with front desk cashier services because the personnel was courteous in assisting with the safety deposit box with guest security information. When the guests needed to place valuable items in the deposit box, the hotel personnel quickly assisted them which such service requests with ease.

The aggregate mean of 3.64 specifies that the respondents were very satisfied with the front desk cashier services since the hotel guest had a convenient experience every they requested services and assistance from the hotel personnel.

During check-out, cashier services are considered the last step of the guest's stay. It provides little room for mistakes; otherwise, this would delay the guest's departure (Baker et al., 2001). Using a property management system (PMS) and proper procedures contributed to an excellent check-out experience. The expectations on speed and efficiency, especially from the younger customers, were satisfied since they expect modern computerized technology to be adopted by the standard class hotels. Staff skills obtained during training are also a significant factor. Management planning and support, such as during peak periods, would decrease the possibility of complaints. Indeed, gone are the days when just putting an employee in front of a computer would guarantee guest satisfaction of the cashier services offered. Other strategies such as nightly ledger review, pre-departure meetings, and departure checking may account for success in this area.

After determining the level of customer satisfaction, it is essential to uncover the different problems encountered by the customers concerning the front desk services offered. The issues may arise from several reasons that the hotel management must give timely attention to. Service recovery is one strategy in converting an ordinary customer to a loyal customer, thereby increasing repeat patronage (Lewis & McCann, 2004). Eight functions of the front desk were presented for the respondents to indicate the particular problems they encountered, namely: reservation process, registration process, bell desk, hotel transportation, information, concierge services, telephone services, and cashier services.

Table 10 presents the data on the problems encountered by the respondents in terms of the front desk services in standard-class hotels..

Table 10. Problems Encountered by the Respondents

Problems Encountered	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Reservation Process		
1. Rude or impolite reservation agent/ staff.	1	0.67
2. Disorganized handing of reservations.	1	0.67
3. Staff was not knowledgeable about rates or aspects of the hotel.	2	1.33
4. Loyalty membership record not found or acknowledged.	2	1.33
5. Incorrect reservation details.	5	3.33
Registration Process		
1. Upon arrival no available room due to overbooked hotel.	10	6.67
2. Hotel booking could not be found.	5	3.33
3. Staff failed to explain room rate and/or package included.	4	2.67
4. Slow check-in service.	13	8.67
5. Staff was unprofessional.	1	0.67
Bell Desk		
1. Slow luggage service.	11	7.33
2. Luggage was missing or disorganized.	0	0.00
3. Luggage was damaged.	0	0.00
4. Mail, message or parcel was undelivered to the guest.	4	2.67
5. Staff was not attentive enough.	5	3.33
Transportation		
1. Incorrect or no transportation was arranged.	7	4.67
2. Transportation staff was discourteous.	1	0.67
3. Transportation charge was incorrect.	2	1.33
4. Transportation provided was insufficient.	1	0.67
5. Transport vehicle broke down or was defective.	1	0.67
Information		
1. Incomplete or wrong information was given.	1	0.67
2. Staff lacked initiative.	2	1.33
3. Information was disorganized.	1	0.67
4. Staff was not knowledgeable enough.	0	0.00
5. Print information was insufficient.	2	1.33
Concierge		
1. Concierge staff was unaccommodating.	2	1.33
2. Request was not completed satisfactorily.	1	0.67
3. Staff did not show attention to detail.	3	2.00
4. Inefficient handling ex. business center services.	1	0.67
5. Staff lacked discretion.	0	0.00
Telephone		
1. Call not answered promptly.	7	4.67
2. Rude or disrespectful telephone staff.	1	0.67

3. Call was transferred to wrong department, or cut off.	5	3.33
4. Missed wake-up call or message.	4	2.67
5. Staff unable to assist guest request or resolve complaint.	3	2.00
Cashiering Services		
1. Wrong room rate or other charges applied.	6	4.00
2. Prepayment or credits not reflected in the billing.	0	0.00
3. Double/ wrong charging ex. credit card.	1	0.67
4. Slow cashiering or check-out service.	2	1.33
5. Staff was not helpful enough.	0	0.00

The most significant reservation problems pertained to incorrect reservation details (5, 3.33%), while the slightest issue experienced by the respondents was the rudeness or impoliteness of the reservation staff (1, 0.67%) and disorganization in the handling of reservations (1, 0.67%). Based on experience, the issue that usually arises in reserving at the hotel was mistaken in the reservation details like time, type of room, size of the bed, dates, and others, especially during peak season.

The problems with the reservation process appear to be the procedural mistakes of the employees. Thus, focus on skills training is needed. Regular review of error and corrective coaching by the supervisor may prove helpful. Some customers expected a guest loyalty program, but none of the standard hotels in this study have any. This valuable guest-retention tool has a long-term positive effect on the hotel business and, therefore, must be looked into (Bolton, Kannan & Bramlett, 2000).

In the registration process, the most significant problem experienced by the respondents regards the slow check-in service (13, 8.67%), while the slightest issue was the lack of professionalism of the hotel staff (1, 0.67%). Slow check-in process inevitable during peak season. However, meeting staff who lack the appropriate customer service skills was very isolated as they are well-trained by the hotel management.

Several factors may affect the speed of check-in service, ranging from volume of guests, staff skills, manning, and scheduling; to systems and procedures. Having no room available for the guest requires a probe into room forecasting, pre-arrival planning, and coordination within the arrival team. Aside from the standard time of check-in being communicated to the guest, it is possible that the guest just wants some extra care and consideration should he arrive early in the hotel. It is also likely that poor staff attitude and failure result from job stress. These results relate to management's lack of support and supervision (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2006). All these areas need to be covered by effective systems, procedures, and training for an efficient operation.

The respondents experienced more with the slow luggage service (11, 7.33%), while they had the slightest concern with the undelivered mail, message, or parcel (4, 2.67%). During peak season, the hotel staff has to attend to the needs of each guest in which they would be overwhelmed, and they sometimes fail to quickly bring the luggage of the guest who checked to their assigned room. Nevertheless, it is unusual for the guests to stay at the hotel for an extended period of time and have their mails parcel or mails be delivered to them.

Too often, slow luggage service is caused by a lack of planning and organization. Some solutions would include intelligent scheduling of human resources, studying time and motion, proper assignment of the staff's errands, and sufficient equipment available. It is also helpful to review and anticipate the daily operations, such as the bulk of hotel arrivals and departures. Service failures may be avoided if the bell service personnel are trained and monitored by the supervisors. Task priorities must be clear to avoid guest complaints.

In the area of hotel transportation services, the most frequent problem faced by the guests pertained to incorrect or no transportation arranged (7, 4.67%), and the minor problems pertain to lack of courtesy of the staff (1, 0.67%), insufficient transportation (1, 0.67%), and defective vehicle or broke down (1, 0.67%). There were instances wherein the hotel staff would commit mistakes in booking the guests either they forgot or incorrectly took the wrong details. However, discomfort from the quality of the vehicle was the rare case for the hotels guest to experience.

If the transportation services are entrusted to a third-party provider, close coordination with the front office regarding bookings, schedules, and special guest requests cannot be over-emphasized. Active cooperation must be shown, such as in attending the daily briefings and constant communication during guest arrival.

The most significant information service problems encountered by the respondents were the lack of initiative of the hotel staff in providing services or in solving issues (2, 1.33%), while the minor issue concerned incomplete or wrong information (1, 0.67%), and disorganized information (1, 0.67%). There were some cases wherein the hotel staff could not solve the issues or complaints of the guests to the dissatisfaction of the latter.

Organization of the information services is essential and must be accomplished to prevent the fundamental problems cited. Instead of a travel desk, good brochures and other printed information materials may satisfy tourists and vacationers in the hotel. Staff must also be trained to go the extra mile to find out details which may not be available in the brochures or internet, for example, about local attractions. This conveys helpfulness and a personal touch which guests appreciate.

The hotel guests' problems with the concierge concerned when the staff did not show attention to detail (3, 2%), while the last issue relates to when the request was not completed satisfactorily (1, 0.67%) and inefficient handling services (1, 0.67%). The carelessness of the hotel staff in taking note of the guests' requests would lead to mistakes in improving the services, although they are rare to occur.

The problems about concierge may have arisen out of some guest confusion over who was providing what services and where. Regardless of having a visible concierge desk, problems may be avoided first by conducting a proper orientation to all front desk staff about the high expectations of guests from a concierge. Next, specific tasks may be assigned to individuals with the right persona and aim to delight. Such personnel would stand out and be remembered by the hotel customer. Finally, it would be wise to invest in specialized training that takes more time but will assure that the staff will do an excellent job every time.

On the aspect of telephone service, the most significant problem encountered by the respondents pertained to when their calls were not answered promptly by the hotel staff (7, 4.67%), while the minor issue pertains to the rude staff (1, 0.67%). During peak season or busy days, there are instances wherein the hotel staff cannot answer the class of the guests because they were still busy attending to the needs of other guests. However, rudeness of the staff might occur when they are facing irritating guests who become unreasonable with their requests and even demands.

Despite guest calls being distributed by automated private branch exchange applications to available operators to be answered in the quickest possible time, other factors may cause a delay of call pick up. These are human resources, scheduling, and poor planning. The supervisor's job is essential to ensure the manning component is sufficient, considering the peak times and extent of tasks. The staff training is also the supervisor's responsibility, which must be based on the

guest feedback. High-performing staff may result from continuous training, positive reinforcement, and constant monitoring.

For cashier services, the most significant problem pertained to wrong room rate or charges (6, 4%), while the least was on wrong charging, e.g., credit card (1, 0.67%). Also, the issue of the wrong charging may be encountered by the guest, especially if there was miscoordination between the cashier and the front desk staff.

Cashier training is complex because it involves many transactions and procedures, while the staff is also required to ensure a pleasant check-out experience for the guest. Nevertheless, supervisors must constantly monitor and encourage accuracy, speed, and efficiency. Checking and updating on hotel rates, charges, promotions, and how to apply them must be done regularly.

Table 11 shows the results of the significant relationship between the respondents' profile and their level of satisfaction with the front desk services.

Table 11. Relationship Between the Respondents' Profile and their Level of Satisfaction

	df	Computed Value	Critical Value	Decision on Ho	Interpretation	Strength
Age						
• Reservation	8	6.449	15.507	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
• Registration	8	14.32	15.507	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
• Bell Desk	12	14.333	21.026	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
• Transportation	12	32.713	21.026	Reject Ho	Significant	C = 0.42 (moderate)
• Information	12	16.977	21.026	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
• Concierge	12	21.787	21.026	Reject Ho	Significant	C=0.36 (slight)
• Telephone Services	12	8.410	21.026	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
• Cashiering Services	12	16.677	21.026	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Gender						
• Reservation	2	1.519	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
• Registration	2	1.421	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
• Bell Desk	3	3.461	7.815	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
• Transportation	3	3.493	7.815	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
• Information	3	5.085	7.815	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
• Concierge	3	7.050	7.815	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
• Telephone Services	3	4.105	7.815	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
• Cashiering Services	3	2.72	7.815	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Nationality						
• Reservation	4	8.351	9.488	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
• Registration	4	8.195	9.488	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
• Bell Desk	6	12.910	12.592	Reject Ho	Significant	C=0.28 (slight)
• Transportation	6	5.232	12.592	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
• Information	6	5.019	12.592	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
• Concierge	6	1.549	12.592	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
• Telephone Services	6	3.528	12.592	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
• Cashiering Services	6	7.781	12.592	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Purpose of Stay						
•Reservation	4	4.993	9.488	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
•Registration	4	1.853	9.488	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
•Bell Desk	6	7.100	12.592	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
•Transportation	6	14.986	12.592	Reject Ho	Significant	C=0.30 (slight)
•Information	6	6.415	12.592	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
•Concierge	6	3.697	12.592	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
•Telephone Services	6	7.020	12.592	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
•Cashiering Services	6	9.283	12.592	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	

The findings imply a moderately significant relationship between the respondents' age and their level of satisfaction with the transportation services. Although there was already a high level of satisfaction, transportation services could still be enhanced to fit the needs of the different hotel guests. After identifying the needs, various transportation packages with certain perks like discounts may be offered in response to those needs. The creativity of the offerings may appeal either to the younger or older generations of customers, thus increasing their level of satisfaction.

Meanwhile, there is a slightly significant relationship between the respondents' age and their level of satisfaction with the concierge services. Similarly, guests' requests in different age groups tend to vary; thus, the specific manner in which those problems are solved and the concierge fulfills errands must be studied carefully. The expertise and flexibility of the concierge are very much needed to ensure maximum customer satisfaction.

Likewise, there exists a slightly significant relationship between the respondents' nationality and their level of satisfaction with the bell desk services. This observation must be used to consider which features of the bell desk services are appreciated by each guest nationality and then develop them to achieve guest satisfaction. Because most of the respondents in this study are Filipino, the hotel may set this as the basis for an enhancement of the bell desk services.

There also exists a slightly significant relationship between the respondents' purpose of stay and their level of satisfaction with the transportation services. Customizing transport services to fit the purpose of stay is essential to serve the guest's requirements. Based on the purpose of stay results, which are tourist or vacation, business, visiting relatives and friends, study, honeymoon, and convention attendee, some attractive transportation promos may be put together to enhance customer satisfaction further. Also, from earlier findings, tangibles, reliability, and responsiveness must be enhanced. The service inclusions and amenities that they wish to enjoy will boost the experience of the guest experience.

Table 12 shows the results on the test of relationship between the respondents' profiles and their problems concerning the front desk services.

There exists a slightly significant relationship between the respondents' age and the problems encountered in the reservation process. Aside from maintaining accuracy in reservation details, the reservation staff must give attention to the specific customer's needs according to age group. Certain arrangements and amenities may be offered during the reservation process. It is crucial to deliver on guest requirements to ensure an enjoyable stay. Staff training must emphasize reservation procedures and hotel product knowledge.

Meanwhile, there is also a moderately significant relationship between the respondents' age and the problems encountered in cashiering services. This suggests that the main problems concerning erroneous charges and slow service may be approached by considering the characteristics of the millennial guests, such as being tech-savvy; therefore, they can easily understand billing details and may not want to wait in line too long; whereas, the older generation age group of guests would tend to scrutinize details, ask questions and therefore be slower in checking out. Thus, being flexible and efficient in serving different age groups of customers must be practiced. It is recommended that cashier staff continue to show friendliness, patience, and courtesy at all times.

Table 12. Relationship Between the Respondents' Profile and Problems Encountered

	df	Computed Value	Critical Value	Decision on Ho	Interpretation	Strength
Age						
Reservation	4	6.109	9.488	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	C=0.25 (slight)
Registration	4	10.356	9.488	Reject Ho	Significant	
Bell Desk	4	2.590	9.488	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Transportation	4	5.431	9.488	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Information	4	0.958	9.488	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Concierge	4	0.884	9.488	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	C=0.42 (moderate)
Telephone Services	4	3.058	9.488	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Cashiering Services	4	32.425	9.488	Reject Ho	Significant	
Gender						
Reservation	1	2.346	3.841	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	C=17 (negligible)
Registration	1	2.189	3.841	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Bell Desk	1	0.412	3.841	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Transportation	1	4.211	3.841	Reject Ho	Significant	
Information	1	6.592	3.841	Reject Ho	Significant	
Concierge	1	1.141	3.841	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	C=21 (negligible)
Telephone Services	1	0.011	3.841	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Cashiering Services	1	0.588	3.841	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Nationality						
Reservation	2	2.241	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Registration	2	0.636	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Bell Desk	2	0.780	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Transportation	2	3.214	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Information	2	1.298	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Concierge	2	2.028	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Telephone Services	2	0.682	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Cashiering Services	2	3.299	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Purpose of Stay						
Reservation	2	0.903	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	C=22 (slight)
Registration	2	0.194	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Bell Desk	2	7.411	5.991	Reject Ho	Significant	
Transportation	2	3.319	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Information	2	1.062	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Concierge	2	2.876	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Telephone Services	2	3.292	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	
Cashiering Services	2	1.262	5.991	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant	

There is a negligible relationship between the respondents' gender and the problems encountered in transportation services and information services. Thus, there is no need to distinguish male from female customers when it comes to solving problems of no transportation arranged or incorrect transportation. These may still be resolved by improving coordination between the transport desk and the reservations or front office. To avoid the failures of information services such as staff's lack of initiative and insufficient print information, male and female guests' satisfaction may be enhanced through intensified staff training and greater availability of printed tourist information such as travel brochures and others.

There is no significant relationship between the respondents' nationality profile and the problems encountered in the front desk services. Hence, different guest nationalities need not be considered when addressing any of the problems that surfaced; generally, suggested solutions may be applied to all so that problems are reduced or avoided.

A slightly significant relationship exists between the respondents' purpose of stay and the problems encountered at the bell desk. This gives the idea that the bell desk problems of slow

service and inattentive staff may be tackled using the guest's purpose of stay as a reference. For example, people on vacation generally have more time on their hands so that the bellman may accompany these tourists on a leisurely tour of the hotel on the way to their room. In contrast, business travelers are generally time-conscious; hence, bell staff must move faster in escorting and handling luggage for this type of guest.

CONCLUSIONS

The guests in the standard hotels in Cebu city expressed significant satisfaction with the various services like reservation, registration, bell desk, transportation, information concierge, telephone, and cashiering. Although, it was were cases wherein the hotel personnel committed mistakes in providing and accomodating the guest's requests. However, these were rare occurrences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher recommends the proposed action plan especially designed for the standard class hotels in Cebu City, which intends to enhance their existing front desk services in terms of the reservation process, registration process, bell desk, transportation services, information services, concierge, and cashier services. The plan tackles the lower-scored service performance dimensions that influenced the measure of customer satisfaction during the conduct of the study. The plan also intends to address the problems encountered so that high service quality may continue to be perceived by the customers. Hotel management is encouraged to review the suggested actions indicated. This plan includes objectives, strategies, responsibilities, as well as outcomes. It is highly adaptable and expandable as the hotel sees fit to implement.

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CLANDESTINE POLICE OPERATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of chief intelligence officers in Bohol. Specifically, sought to answer the following questions: the experiences of the informants as chief intelligence officers, the contribution of intelligence operation to the quality of criminal investigation and the aspirations of the informants for their personal and professional life.

Utilized the qualitative method of research employing the descriptive phenomenological approach using an interview guide questions with an open ended question for both individual and focus group discussion in exploring the lived experiences of the informants as chief intelligence officers. There were ten selected chief intelligence officers in the municipalities of the province, four of them had been interviewed individually and the rest of the six members of the focused group discussion. The locale of the study includes the town of Tagbilaran, Carmen, Loboc, Ubay, Loon, Inabanga, Jagna, Baclayon, Dauis and Panglao. I used an interview guide aided with the audio recorder for the basis of transcribing the response of the participants utilizing the Colaizzi's method or phenomenological analysis procedure in analyzing the responses of the informants during the conduct of interview.

For the experiences of the informants as chief intelligence officers emergent themes were created: *Work Under Wraps*, *Service with a Heart*, *Down in the Dumps*. For the contribution of intelligence operation to the quality of criminal investigation the created themes were *Embodiment of Esprit de Corps*, *Success is the Sum of Small Efforts*, *Watching the Watchmen*. Lastly, on the aspirations of the informants for their personal and professional life themes were created as follows; *Beyond Wildest Dreams*, *Strength of Character and When Every Centavo Counts*.

Keywords - Criminal justice, clandestine police operations, chief intelligence officers, lived experiences, phenomenology, Bohol, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Law enforcement intelligence operation policing strategies are coming to the fore throughout the world. Intelligence, as it relates to foreign sources, is the product resulting from

the collection, processing, integration, analysis, evaluation, and interpretation of available information concerning foreign countries or areas. It is also the information and knowledge about an adversary obtained through observation, investigation, analysis or understanding. Australian Customs Service Doctrine. (2000) defined intelligence as a value added product, derived from the collection and processing of all relevant information relating to client needs, which is immediately or potentially significant to client decision-making. The responsibility of every police officer is to serve the public and protect life and property. No police operation shall be conducted in order to serve or protect the illegal activity of a particular person, group or criminal syndicate.

The National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM) in Region 7 handed out commendations to the Provincial Director and 18 Bohol police officers for taking measures to intercept and stop the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) from sowing terror in Bohol. It may be recalled that as soon as intelligence reports came about the presence of heavily armed men in Barangay Napo, an inland barangay in Inabanga on April 11, 2017, Bohol authorities sent the maneuver groups. The Provincial Intelligence Branch were one among the departments which received the plaques of commendation who took quantitative measures to intercept and involve themselves in action during the encounter against the heavily armed terrorists belonging to the Abu Sayyaf Group.

Police job is among the most stressful work even in other countries, as the work is fraught with danger and officers are exposed to trauma causing work stress to fill into family life. According to Gentry (2010), critics of US intelligence focus extensively on the alleged inability and unwillingness of intelligence agencies to learn and adapt. Analysis of eight counterinsurgency wars suggests instead that external factors largely influence the intelligence-related performance of whole governments, including organizational structures, unit of effort and command, adequacy of resources, and leadership quality.

To be effective, police intelligence unit must be dynamic, developing outstanding effect and would give an impact of comprehensive basis in the dissemination of the outcome. This study provides a more extensive knowledge on the job performance of the police chief intelligence officers in the province of Bohol. Through this, the researcher being a faculty member of the Criminal Justice department will understand the concept of intelligence operation and can convey the importance of its work towards her students. Further, this study provides the full understanding of the lived experiences of police chief intelligence officers as head of operations in the performance of their duties and responsibilities.

The researcher therefore deemed it pertinent to conduct this study so that whatever findings may surface therefrom shall form the basis of a proposed strengthening measure.

RELATED LITERATURE

Members' behaviors can be categorized in taskwork and teamwork processes within teams. Marks et al. (2001) differentiated between the two by suggesting that taskwork represents what teams are doing, whereas teamwork describes how they are doing it with each other. Specifically, while taskwork involves the execution of core technical competencies within a given domain, teamwork refers to the range of interactive and interdependent behavioral processes among team members that convert team inputs that includes member characteristics,

organizational funding, team member composition into outcomes that are team performance and team member satisfaction.

Concerning regulating teamwork behaviors that occur before in preparation for team task performance, these include the active process of defining the team's overall purpose/mission, setting team goals, and formulating action plans/strategies for how goals and broader purposes will be achieved (McEwan et al., 2017).

Hackman and Katz (2010) posit that team effectiveness can be determined by examining the extent to which the team has achieved its a priori objectives. Since the general purpose of forming a team is to produce something of value, it is perhaps unsurprising that team effectiveness's most widely tested criterion have been team performance.

When faced with a specific task or job to perform, an employee's efficacy determines whether the necessary behavior will be initiated, how much effort will be expended and sustained, and how much persistence and resilience there will be when there are obstacles or even failure, this efficaciousness has been shown to strongly relate to work performance (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998).

It is more challenging to instill firm beliefs of personal efficacy by social persuasion alone than to undermine it. Disappointing results of one's efforts quickly disconfirm unreal boosts in efficacy. Nevertheless, people who have been persuaded that they lack capabilities tend to avoid challenging activities that cultivate potentialities and give up quickly in the face of difficulties. By constricting activities and undermining motivation, disbelief in one's capabilities creates behavioral validation (Schwarzer, 2014).

Successful efficacy builders do more than convey positive appraisals. In addition to raising people's beliefs in their capabilities, they structure situations to bring success and avoid placing people in situations prematurely where they are likely to fail often. They measure success in terms of self-improvement rather than by triumphs over others. People also partly rely on their somatic and emotional states to judge their capabilities. They interpret their stress reactions and tension as signs of vulnerability to poor performance. In activities involving strength and stamina, people judge their fatigue, aches, and pains as signs of physical debility. Mood also affects people's judgments of their efficacy. A positive mood enhances perceived self-efficacy; a despondent mood diminishes it. The fourth way of modifying self-beliefs of efficacy is to reduce people's stress reactions and alter their negative emotional proclivities and interpretations of their physical states (Schwarzer, 2014).

It is not the sheer intensity of emotional and physical reactions that is important but how they are perceived and interpreted. People with a high sense of efficacy are likely to view their state of affective arousal as an energizing facilitator of performance, whereas those beset by self-doubts regard their arousal as debilitation. Physiological indicators of efficacy play an incredibly influential role in health functioning and athletic and other physical activities (Locke, 1997).

A goal is defined as an ambition to pursue the desired result; goals also affect job performance. Lunenburg (2011) emphasizes that goals mobilize energy, lead to higher effort, and increase persistence. Goals motivate people to develop strategies that will enable them to perform at the required goal levels. Finally, accomplishing the goal can lead to satisfaction and further motivation, or frustration and lower motivation if the goal is not accomplished.

Based on hundreds of studies, the significant finding of goal setting is that individuals provided with specific, challenging, but attainable goals perform better than those given accessible, nonspecific, or no goals at all. At the same time, however, the individuals must have sufficient ability, accept the goals, and receive feedback related to performance (Latham, 2003).

Under the right conditions, goal setting can be a powerful technique for motivating organization members. The following are practical suggestions for managers to consider when using goal-setting to enhance motivation and performance (Dubrin, 2012; Greenberg, 2011; Newstrom, 2011). These include goals need to be specific, goals need to be difficult but attainable, goals must be accepted, feedback must be provided on goal attainment, goals are more effective when they are used to evaluate performance, deadlines improve the effectiveness of goals, a learning goal orientation leads to higher performance than a performance goal orientation, and most importantly group goal-setting is as important as the individual goal-setting.

The Republic Act 8551 (R.A. 8551), otherwise known as an act providing for the reform and reorganization of the Philippine National Police and other purposes, amending specific provisions of Republic Act 6975, Section 2, states that the Philippine National Police shall be a community and service-oriented agency responsible for the maintenance of peace and order and public safety. The PNP shall be organized to ensure accountability and uprightness in police exercise of discretion and achieve efficiency and effectiveness of its members and units in the performance of their functions.

Section 35 of R.A. 8551, the PNP shall be supported by administrative and operational support units. One of the twelve (12) operational support units is the police intelligence unit headed by a Director with the rank of the chief superintendent who manages the gathering or collating of intelligence objectives through effective management of all intelligence and counter-intelligence activities PNP. He also serves as the linkage of all foreigners with official transactions with the chief of PNP.

A resolution favored the Philippine National Police Regional Office and the Central Visayas Regional Development (RDC), the priority programs, activities, and projects (PAPS) of the PNP-Bohol provincial police office for the province of Bohol for inclusion in the C.Y. 2019 PNP budget proposal. Provincial Development Council EXECOM Resolution No., 09-2018, granting the Provincial Intelligence Branch the activities most likely are skills enhancement for educating our police intelligence through 3-day conduct of police intelligence orientation seminar, intelligence refresher course to equip the knowledge of police officer handling intelligence position and conduct of foreign national keeper network seminar/workshop to strengthen intelligence network with a foreign counterpart. Police officers need to be kept up-to-date because laws and developments on policing are constantly changing. Scott (2005) posited that several benefits could result from a quality police training program, increased productivity, more outstanding commitment from personnel, reduction in lawsuits, more efficient use of resources, and better delivery of services. Inadequate training can have a negative impact on the delivery of services, officer safety, police resources, and the ability of police executives to lead their agencies (Scott, 2005).

For state policing organizations, promoting warning intelligence will require establishing an intelligence fusion center. The Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative, sponsored by the Department of Justice, defines a fusion center as an effective and efficient mechanism to exchange information and intelligence, maximize resources, streamline operations, and improve the ability to fight crime and terrorism by merging data from various sources. The guidelines set forth for fusion centers intend to integrate law enforcement, public safety, and private sector entities to develop robust collaborative environments. The finished products from these intelligence centers will likely leverage opportunities for preventing, interdicting, and solving crimes (Guidetti, 2006).

Crime analysis has developed alongside the reliance on criminal intelligence to direct police activity, the growth of information technologies, and the requirement to monitor police performance (Gill, 2000). Assessment of the performance of U.S. intelligence since 9/11 indicates that the same variables influence the performance of U.S. intelligence, suggesting reform debate focuses too narrowly and on the wrong factors (Gentry, 2010). Director General Oscar Albayalde, the new chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP), has announced a zero-tolerance policy for misbehaving cops warned that officers could even expect the sack if they were found to be inefficient or lax (Martin, 2018). Long hours place further pressure on the officers, making them feel like they neglect their family roles (De Klerk & Mostert, 2010).

Green (2010) reiterates that the intelligence community plays a central role in helping law enforcement prevent terrorist attacks. Without tips from the intelligence department or leads developed internally, law enforcement has no hope of preventing most plots. Defensive measures and random preventative patrols are of limited utility; most defenses are prohibitively expensive, and patrols to deter terrorists cannot be everywhere at once. To be effective, local law enforcement agencies must be focused on threats by intelligence. The three (3) categories of intelligence are the following: tactical intelligence, which focuses on subject/operations and/or short term; strategic intelligence that deals with political, economic, and military capabilities and vulnerabilities of all nations; and counter-intelligence concerning security of information, personnel, material, and installation. The Police Intelligence Unit is manned by the Director, assisted by the Deputy Director of Police, and next in line is the Executive Officer. There are seven main branches: Project Management Section, Budget and Fiscal Section, Intelligence and Operation Division, Counter Security Division, Intelligence Research Center, Foreign Liaison Division, and Intelligence Training Group. Every unit of the PNP agency, particularly the intelligence unit, is manned by a certain chief aside from the station chief of every municipality. A leader generally called in standard terms leads by walking the talk and talking the walk. Achieving the respect of his personnel is one feature of a well-led workforce succeeding as a leader. Indeed, police capacity is a factor to lessen the opportunity and cases of crimes.

Casey and Mitchell (2007) stated that police are required to understand and effectively operate in a complex social, political and organizational environment. Vito and Higgins (2010) noted that senior police leaders should develop and share their vision for the organization, chart the journey by establishing strategic objectives, and practice collaboration and delegation. Furthermore, police leadership and administration focus on the police chief executive as a multi-dimensional leader creating a performance for the police station, according to Fyfe et al. (1997).

Rosenbaum et al. (1998) discoursed that the police are more effective in solving neighborhood problems when they use the resources available in the community than when they try to complete the task alone. It was noted that the emergence of community policing emphasized the co-production of public safety. In this framework, safety is viewed as a commodity produced by the joint efforts of the police and the community, working together in ways that were not envisioned or encouraged in the past. The individual police performance is measured using performance criteria such as quality and quantity of work (output), knowledge on law and vision, mission and objectives of PNP organization (job knowledge), law enforcement and maintenance of peace and order (work management), community-oriented-policing system (interpersonal relationship), and discipline (personality) (Dessler, 2013). These criteria indicate if the police officers have the proper knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies, traits, or attributes to do their jobs effectively to achieve the PNP organizational vision, mission, strategies, and objectives, depending on their recruitment and selection.

Eduardo and Gabriel (2017) opined that the entire organizational behavior is affected by numerous factors present in the external and international environment of the police station. One primary attribution to the function of policing among personnel is the leadership of the Chief of Police. The better the leadership capability of the Chief of Police, the better the organization performs its mandated duties.

Guibong (1994) noted that police officers were equipped with an inquisitive mind, good reasoning ability, observant imagination, and interrelating facts. All these attributes are concepts related to police leadership which in this study pertains to the decision-making ability of the head of the police intelligence unit and to identify the initiatives of its members quickly.

Galino (2002) revealed that the respondents perceived the role performance of Baguio City Police Office personnel as generally efficient and the role performance of the Baguio City residents as generally favorable. Both the police and community perceived police-community relations in Baguio City as harmonious. However, the study concluded that the Baguio City police had not reached its full potential in delivering police service to the people of Baguio City as far as peace and order maintenance and law enforcement are concerned. It likewise concluded that the residents of Baguio City seemed to have not fully realized the essence of social responsibility.

On the other perspective, Beck and Wilson (1997) found that police officers have relatively low levels of commitment in their study. This, according to them, is a result of a culmination of poor experiences they have had. Ireland and Miller (2004) stated that making the wrong decision can be fatal for the officer or other person.

Moreover, Fredrickson et al. (2003) disclosed that positive emotions were found to disrupt the experience of stress and help high resilient individuals to recover efficiently from daily stress. In this case, some argue that positive emotions help resilient people to construct psychological resources that are necessary for coping successfully with significant catastrophe, such as the September 11 attacks. As a result, positive emotion experienced by resilient people functions as a protective factor to moderate the magnitude of adversity to individuals and assists them to cope well in the future.

Shane (2010) examined the impact of organizational stressors on police performance. Evidence on police stress is mixed whether or not the nature of police work is inherently stressful. A growing body of research suggests police officers are no more stressed than other groups, and police work is not incredibly stressful. Instead, organizational stressors may be a more significant source of stress due to various structural arrangements, policies, and practices. Therefore, law enforcers, particularly the Philippine National Police, are mandated to ensure that the rule of law is implicated in the spirit of equality for all citizens.

Futher, Marks et al. (2001) differentiated between the two by suggesting that taskwork represents what teams are doing, whereas teamwork describes how they are doing it with each other. Specifically, while taskwork involves the execution of core technical competencies within a given domain, teamwork refers to the range of interactive and interdependent behavioral processes among team members that convert team inputs that includes member characteristics, organizational funding, team member composition into outcomes that are team performance and team member satisfaction.

DOMAIN OF INQUIRY

This study aimed at exploring the lived experiences of chief intelligence officers in Bohol, specifically, on the following issues: (1) the experiences as chief intelligence officers; (2) intelligence operations contribute to the quality of criminal investigation; and (3) aspirations for their personal and professional life.

METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the research design, research environment, research informants, research instruments, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

Research Design

This research utilized the descriptive - phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach investigates various reactions to or perceptions of a particular phenomenon to gain insight into the world of participants' lived experiences and to describe one's perception and reactions (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Smith et al. (2009) explained that interpretive phenomenological analysis is a qualitative research approach committed to examining how people make sense of their significant life experiences that explore experience in its terms. In similar terms, Groenwald (2004) explains that phenomenology should be utilized when the research calls for the internal experience of being conscious of something or the actual lived experiences of those involved with the issue investigated.

Research Environment

The study was conducted at the elected municipalities under the jurisdiction of Bohol, Region VII, Philippines. The locale of the study includes the town of Tagbilaran, Carmen, Loboc, Ubay, Loon, Inabanga, Jagna, Baclayon, Dauis, and Panglao.

Research Informants

Ten (10) police chief intelligence officers in selected municipalities in the province of Bohol who have rendered service as chief of police intelligence unit for at least five (5) years in respective police stations served as informants in the study. The chief intelligence officer is the head of the intelligence unit in their jurisdiction. Most importantly, the informants have undergone the introductory intelligence course, advanced intelligence course, and/or any other related training intelligence work.

Research Instrument

A researcher-made interview guide containing open-ended questions was used during the interviews. The interview guide consists of four parts: the preliminary part deals, which deals with the informants' circumstances; part I, delves with the informants' lived experiences as police chief intelligence officers; part II deals with the contribution of an intelligence operation to the quality of criminal investigation and part III, with the aspirations of the informants for their personal and professional life.

Research Procedure

Prior to the interview, permission to conduct the study to the Bohol Provincial PNP Director through the Intelligence Unit office was sought. After approval of the request, an in-depth interview was conducted, followed by the focus group discussions.

Data Analysis

The following steps represent Colaizzi's phenomenological data analysis (Morrow et al., 2015): (1) familiarization, the researcher familiarizes oneself with the data, by reading through all the participants' accounts several times; (2) identifying significant statements, the researcher identifies all statements in the accounts that are of direct relevance to the phenomenon under investigation; (3) formulating meanings, the researcher identifies meaning relevant to the phenomenon that arises from a careful consideration of the significant statements; (4) clustering themes, the researcher clusters the identified meanings into themes that are common across all accounts. Again, bracketing of pre-suppositions is crucial, especially to avoid any potential influence of existing theory; (5) developing a detailed description, the researcher writes a full and inclusive description of the phenomenon, incorporating all the themes produced at step 4; (6) producing the fundamental structure, the researcher condenses the detailed description down to a short, dense statement that captures just those aspects deemed to be essential to the structure of the phenomenon; and (7) seeking verification of the fundamental structure, the researcher returns the fundamental structure statement to all participants (or sometimes a sub-sample in more extensive studies) to ask whether it captures their experience. He or she may go back and modify earlier steps in the analysis in light of this feedback.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the themes that were developed from the narrations of the research informants from their experiences, the contribution of an intelligence operation to the quality of criminal investigation, and aspirations for personal and professional life.

I. Experiences of the Informants as Chief Intelligence Officers

Exploring the lived experiences of chief intelligence officers based on interviews was a great honor to hear such an account. The informants had not previously told anyone of their classified work experience until they conducted an interview when they knew the study and were interested in narrating their experiences that remain in the closet. It generated three (3) emergent themes that focused on the lived experiences of the informants. The following themes are:

a. Work Under Wraps. The first theme reflected the clandestine operation by chief intelligence officers. As keen observers as they are, their strategies in getting information are to establish rapport to influence community relationships to validate the facts of the case. Their personality is classified in nature, thus allowing them to penetrate illegal transactions secretly. The core of the intelligence unit is to gather information. Intelligence officers preempt atrocities that might happen by keeping track of illicit ventures. Informants 1, 2, 4 said that:

“As intelligence officer, you need to relate well with them and offer assistance when needed so they cannot refuse you for a favor to be done” (ID11:SS1).

“Our core task is to conduct surveillance. We do test buy operation first if there is a drug personality target” (IDI2:SS18).

“We have many civilian assets or informants from barangay intelligence networks, we utilize them during our operations for example in drug operation, they are also drug users” (IDI3:SS41).

“Before crime happens, you already predicted and preempt the possibility of what will happen, for example in drug operation. Moreover, the intelligence officer knows already the residents in their barangay, if they see new face in their surrounding that come and goes especially during nighttime then it is an indication that there is an illegal activity in the area” (IDI4:SS56).

The core of the intelligence unit is to gather information. Intelligence officers preempt atrocities that might happen by keeping track of illicit ventures. The informants also employ confidential assets to penetrate illegal activities and gather information.

b. Service with a Heart. The second theme delves into the positive experiences of the informants in their conduct of surveillance and intelligence operation successful. Incorporating a positive impact of the police station gives high morale to the intelligence unit when apprehension of perpetrators is the outcome of the operation. It gives them the satisfaction to acknowledge varied, multi-tasked, and not limited to specific duties in accomplishing the mission. Informants 1, 3, 6, and 8 revealed that:

“The people are happy and have a positive feedback when we can apprehend and accomplish our mission” (IDI1:SS6).

“We have lots of positive results and successful in our operation so far we did not have any casualty from our personnel” (IDI3:SS42).

“The feeling is positive and our morale is uplifted.”

“We’ll be very happy if we successfully achieve our mission” (FGD8:SS111).

With a good atmosphere, the work of intelligence officers is worthwhile, knowing that their colleagues survive when conducting clandestine operations.

c. Down in the Dumps. The third theme reflects the negative experience of the informants. Despite all the positive approaches experienced by the informants, there were unfavorable events encountered by chief intelligence officers. The unfortunate circumstances bequeath the dilemma of the informants for obstructing their operations in such a way that some citizens may not convince the work of their unit and would question their operations when apprehending suspected persons longer years of serving in the community; their identity is known to everyone compromising top secret position. Informants 1 and 2 stressed that:

“We cannot please everybody that sometimes when we could apprehend an offender, they would claim that this person is good and is not involved in selling drugs” (IDI1:SS7).

“The negative experience that I have is my own identity as chief. Everybody knows me as a police officer even in the public market, many would call me so I have to entertain and talk with them even if I don’t know them which can compromise also the situation” (IDI2:SS27).

“Yes, at risk! The life of a police officer is always in danger” (IDI4:SS63).

In every police operation, their life is always at risk considering the danger of their work.

II. Contribution of Intelligence Operation to the Quality of Criminal Investigation

a. *Embodiment of Esprit de Corps.* The contribution of one's unit truly impacts the success of the PNP organization. The Police intelligence unit in the framework of the Philippine National Police agency. Therefore, that is how the intelligence unit contributes to the quality of criminal investigation. Informant-focused grouped added another account about the intelligence unit's partnership and criminal investigation. Other informants focus-grouped nodded the close ties of the two units. This theme discusses the tandem between the two units. Informants 2, 8, and 10 shared that:

"Both the intel and investigation section are partners before conducting operation. The investigation section endorses to us the person, for example suspected of murder and it is our intel group that monitors and validates the truth of his involvement of the crime" (ID12:SS29). "For example, if a person robs something from the BQ mall, the investigator will be the one to investigate. It is the investigator's job. The investigator will inform the intelligence unit, they will tell us what happened and we will be the one to verify. Our idea is broad. Intelligence and investigation are associated with each other because just like the example I gave earlier, both units will work hand-in-hand" (FGD8:SS109).

"Broadly, intelligence is the highlight in the field of crime investigation. As an intelligence officer, we have a motto and I quote "you dance when the evil dances" end of quote" (FGD10:SS129).

Based on the participants' experiences, they focus on group operations and coordinate with other units.

b. *Success is the Sum of Small Efforts.* This theme describes the intelligence unit's concerted efforts as contributing factors to the criminal investigation unit to combat criminalities, especially the common issues of drug-related cases nowadays. Informants 7, 3, and 9 during the focus group discussion mentioned:

"It is important most especially in this present age, information regarding drugs are received by the intel officers and work on it" (FGD7:SS98).

"If you're an intel, you are also an investigator. Just like my fellow chief intel, it is important that both offices are associated but all sources came from the intelligence unit" (FGD9:SS118).

"The role of the intelligence section in terms of investigating the case is very important like for example in robbery incident, it is the intelligence who follows it up and more so if the place is far, it is assigned to them, and they are going to penetrate and conduct interview of those involved."

Informants cited the importance of intelligence in terms of investigations. In every operation of the criminal investigation unit, the intelligence unit is the frontline of operation since they are the primary source of information.

c. *Watching the Watchmen.* The framework of the Philippine National Police is the Police Intelligence unit for the provide instructions, guidance, and orders to the different departments of the agency. At the same time, they were held responsible for their subordinates' work, actions, and operations. Informants 1, 2, and 8 stated that:

"Whatever information we get, we report it to the investigator who will handle it. We only accompany them and help to validate or identify any suspect in case of theft" (ID11:SS9).

“There should be sufficient information before we conduct an operation. We have to set the approval of the court, we have to perform intel deponents before the court issues us the search warrant” (ID12:SS30).

“Intelligence officer will anticipate events” (FGD8:SS105).

Informants were impressed by their unit as how their working capability guarantees successful operations.

III. Aspirations for Personal and Professional Life

a. *Beyond Wildest Dreams.* This theme outlines the desires of chief intelligence in their battle for work. The informants sacrifice their personal life just to serve the community's people. They are twenty-four (24) hours on call for duty to possibly live a harmonious life, however as brave as they are, they must withstand a good balance between work life and personal life. Informants 8, 9, and 10 in the focused group anticipated the security of his family in connection with his intelligence work and shared that said:

“Mine is to have a peaceful town where you are assigned. If it is peaceful, people will always ask who the chief of police is, who the intel is, they will ask” (FGD8:SS110).

“The negative part of our job, setting aside our personal interest, our family, the security of our family because we cannot avoid the fact that we are encountering powerful people. The security of our family becomes uncertain because we are not there to protect them 24/7. That’s it, my family” (FGD10:SS127)

“The same with chief, regarding the security of our family. It’s hard to arrest well-known people. During the operation and serving the warrant most especially on the war against drugs” (FGD9:SS117).

The informants emphasized the importance of the balance of personal and professional life addressing the security of society. The security and safety of each individual are objectives of the informants advocating the police motto "to serve and to protect.

b. *Strength of Character.* This theme elucidates on the informants' willingness and the police intelligence officers to undergo intelligence courses. Informants 3, 5, and 9 during the focused group discussions stated that:

“Although we have lots of experiences, but we still need to undergo PIC, police intelligence course, seminars, PIS and other related intel update but no one will shoulder the budget” (DI3:SS50).

“It is already embedded in the basic training, but if you want to be assigned in intelligence unit, you need to undergo training in police intelligenc course.”

Probably more seminars to develop our skills” (FGD9:SS121).

The importance of intelligence courses improves the skills of the intelligence officers aside from their experience. This is the derivation of eliminating weak links within the unit.

c. *When Every Centavo Counts.* This theme was created to give importance to the need for monetary provisions and resources by the intelligence unit to conduct police operations. Lack of equipment needed in their work affects the successful accomplishment of the task at hand. Barangay intelligence network is also one of the primary concerns of chief intelligence officers. Informants 1, 2, and 6 stressed that:

"We recommend that we will be given intelligence materials like spy cam that we can use in police operation since we also do surveillance, so sufficient budget is needed" (ID12:SS34).

"The provincial level will facilitate due to lack of budget. It is also one of the factors why there is difficulty to establish reliable confidential asset because of lack of budget" (ID12:SS23).

"Lack of financial budget, haha." (FGD6:SS91).

The inability to rapidly move on strategic intelligence planning is a problem knowing that intelligence funds are limited and could curtail the ability to enact decisions.

Discussions and Analysis

a. *Work Under Wraps.* This theme reflects the experiences of the informants in their clandestine operations. Most of them conduct surveillance, assess and validate all circumstances, the identity of the suspects, witnesses for the veracity of their claims.

Some of the informants, especially during the focus group discussions, were reluctant to narrate the accounts of their work because they were fearful of spilling their classified functions. The core function of the intelligence unit is to prevent atrocities that may happen. Chief intelligence officers are responsible for analyzing and disseminating the final report to the chief of police in their respective stations.

According to Abudi (2010), many factors determine how quickly a team will evolve towards effectiveness, including its size, geographical spread, frequency and duration of meetings, the synergy of team types, stability of team membership, external influences and time pressures, and the nature of its activities and most importantly the leader's role is also a necessity.

Organizations need individuals highly in order to meet their goals, to deliver the products and services they specialize in, and finally to achieve competitive advantage. Performance is also essential for the individual. Accomplishing tasks and performing at a high level can be a source of satisfaction, with feelings of mastery and pride (VanScotter, Motowidlo, & Cross, 2000).

In addition, More et al. (2006), in their exploratory study on leadership behaviors, overall approach placed severe emphasis on management control, close supervision over subordinates, and the necessity of strong leadership from police chiefs while stressing the need for continually audit the activities of all personnel.

b. *Service with a Heart.* This theme described the positive experiences of the informants through the various activities they perform, from monitoring suspected persons to the dissemination of information to different units of the Philippine National Police. Chief intelligence officers recognize that their first responsibility is to make people happy at work by incorporating their colleagues that they are family. The community's positive feedback is also helpful in providing them with opportunities to work better. In this study, informants actively engage in their job optimistically even if there is a considerable risk on career path matters.

For some people, self-actualization can be achieved through creating works of art or literature, while for others through sport, in the classroom, or within a corporate setting.

c. *Down in the Dumps.* Another theme under the sub-problem presented the negative experiences of the informants concerning their job as chief intelligence officers. Informants felt a depressing environment when the community criticized their operations. Other government agencies

would intervene and question the detailed facts of the case, particularly when famous personalities are involved.

Unfortunately, the current trend is following this busy route where burnout is ingrained with modern corporate culture (Petersen, 2019).

Therefore, negative feedback motivates individuals to actively increase their performance (Fishback et al., 2010). They identified numerous difficulties faced in their work and a lack of support to help them cope with or manage issues. Nonetheless, they appeared open to new ideas and strategies.

Cannon and Edmondson (2001) argue that two capabilities increase the chances that teams will learn from failure: members must be able and willing to take risks, and they must be able to confront failure directly rather than cover it up.

d. *Embodiment of Esprit de Corps.* Team bonding can apply to any group of individuals that must successfully work together to function. This theme implies between the intelligence unit and the criminal investigation unit. Identifying the ability of the informants of their work influences the other unit to participate in solving crime issues. The intelligence unit serves as the framework of the PNP, which covers all criminalities; likewise, they are the frontline of all police operations. During the focused group interview, the informants addressed the principle of the intelligence unit, which is to learn from the past, manage the present, and anticipate the future. The need to collaborate between these units ensures that police operations become successful.

Team performance theory explains that a team is considered to be effective if its productive output meets or even exceeds the performance standards; if it enhances the capability of its members to work together on team tasks; and if the individual experience of being part of the group satisfies the personal needs of each member (Hackman, 1987).

This theme follows the management theory of Henri Fayol, suggested by Uzuegbu and Nnadozie (2015) that the number of jobs executed for a day can be more meaningful when divided among staff in various departments than when every staff member is clustered for each of the job elements, one after another. Therefore, permanent duties are assigned to staff, and they make daily reports on their performance. The essence of the principle of esprit de corps is team spirit and teamwork, where it is suggested that there should be a team spirit in the organization, and all the employees must consider themselves as member of the organization. This principle is that team contribution is always better than individual contribution.

Boyt et al. (2001) further suggested that an increased team spirit in an organization will yield better employee performance. Andreescu and Vito (2010) mentioned that police leadership attitude stresses the relationship between the chief and his or her followers in which both sides are influenced by the level of trust they have in each other and their experience and talents. Organizations increasingly implement teamwork and other group work arrangements (Ilgen, 1999).

e. *Success is the Sum of Small Efforts.* A reliable source of information provides a better plan for partner units to operate their work slowly but surely. This theme elucidates how the function of the intelligence unit contributes to the success of the criminal investigation. During my interview, one of the informants reiterated that when investigators missed a part of their criminal investigation, the latter would call for rescue from the intelligence section to tell them of more details or other vital aspects that are out of sight. This theme describes self-efficacy theory, which can be affected by a well carried out training that provides success experiences, finding role models to identify with, and

confidence yielding communicating from others, for example, a trainer or manager (Locke & Latham, 2002).

When the efforts to improve performance go unnoticed, the drive to identify best practices might be weakened (Prendergast, 2002). As Borman and Motowildo (1993) pointed out that performance is a multi-dimensional concept, they distinguish between task and contextual performance on the most basic level, wherein task performance refers to an individual's proficiency with which they perform activities that contribute to the organization's technical core. This contribution can be both direct in the case of production workers and indirect in the case of managers or staff personnel. Contextual performance manifests the activities that do not contribute to the technical core but support the organizational, social, and psychological environment in which organizational goals are pursued. Contextual performance includes behaviors such as helping co-workers, being a reliable member of the organization, and making suggestions about improving work procedures.

f. *Watching the Watchmen.* This presents the overall work of the intelligence unit in the conduct of police operations. The diversity of the work available to a police officer, particularly the intelligence officers, is incredibly dynamic. During the informants' interview, most of them stated that they go the extra mile for the community they serve, whether they are on duty or not. Their work is undoubtedly a unique profession wherein the people of the society dream also to serve the community by becoming police officers themselves. For the informants, the unique combination of being a chief intelligence officer creates a line of work that is often described as very fulfilling.

The theme parallels self-efficacy theory, where an individual with a high sense of self-efficacy has high motivation and sees complex tasks as challenges instead of obstacles (Zulkosky, 2009).

This also conforms to the study of Liberman et al. (2002), Magnavita and Garbarino (2013), and Paton et al. (2009), by its nature, police officers had been identified as one of the most demanding and stressful occupations worldwide because of the officers' exposure to a variety of acute and chronic stressful events at work. In the study of Hirschfeld, Jordan, Feild, Giles, and Armenakis (2006), ninety-two (92) teams participated in a United States Air Force officer development program to develop transportable teamwork knowledge and skills. They found that the average teamwork knowledge within a team was positively related to the team's performance in various tasks such as field operations, problem-solving exercises, physical tasks, and observer ratings of effective teamwork.

Bain et al. (2014) highlighted the need for more effective communication between the police and community to assist in policing strategies and to improve perceptions of police by community members.

g. *Beyond Wildest Dreams.* This theme reflects the sentiments and wishes of the informants managing their personal and professional life as dual personalities in the community. Two of the informants in the focused group honestly spoke about the security and safety of their family because it is difficult for them to choose and leave their work just to get to their loved ones. Self-efficacy theory concerns beliefs in one's ability to act to achieve desired outcomes: one's ability to cope, perform, and be successful (Judge & Bono, 2001).

According to Erdem (2007), self-efficacy postulates that human achievement depends on the interaction between one's behavior, personal factors such as thoughts, beliefs, and environmental conditions.

The social ethics, developmental practices, and the roles of the parents and other family members directly affect the development of each of its members. The role of the family is the first and foremost influence over a child's development, including his or her personality. The parents, specifically, are responsible for creating an environment that aids in developing a healthy personality. Bhatti (2011) also states that intellect, physique, and emotions are the raw materials of a personality; thus, parents should maintain a pleasant living environment that supports and motivates their children.

Montejo (2006) mentioned that safety is a state or condition of being protected against physical, social, spiritual, financial, political, emotional, occupational, psychological, educational, or other types or consequences of failure, damage, error, accidents, harm, or any other event which could be considered non-desirable. Safety can also be defined to be the control of recognized hazards to achieve an acceptable level of risk. This can take the form of being protected from the event or from exposure to something that causes health or economical losses. It can include the protection of people or possessions.

e. *Strength of Character.* This theme speaks the desperate necessity of the informants that they should have adequate trainings for the improvement of their work because they often lack the skills and aptitude necessary to perform their functions effectively. The intelligence fund is not enough to undergo a refresher course related to intelligence operations as the funds will be covered for their operational work. Some of the informants formally address the local government units to suffice their operational needs.

So, Locke and Latham (2019) mentioned that the level of motivation depends on the kind of goals set and how internal and external factors affecting the process from goal identification to goal achievement are managed. It was believed that a person who has found his goal will also find the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve it. It was found that the conditions necessary for goal accomplishment change based on feedback, goal commitment, ability, and task complexity. Learning is a process of acquiring knowledge, skill, attitudes, or other characteristics that change the potential for behavior (Ford & Kraiger, 1995).

Employee training more and more becomes a crucial element in organizations striving to keep up with the market where companies annually spend millions of dollars on training interventions to improve results (Blume et al., 2010).

Taylor (2015) stated that goal setting should occur before training due to the observed motivation, focus, and involvement during training, and you can allocate resources and plan for follow-up beforehand. Having set goals before training means that a person can measure learning transfer and ensure that they do not miss the mark/

f. *When Every Centavo Counts.* This theme coincides with every informant's demands of intelligence equipment for operational resources. Most informants stressed out that providing specialized equipment can cope with specific threats. The informants have difficulty operating classified work because even little and ordinary things they could not afford to make their work possible and practical.

In the study of Macari (2015), providing equipment and operational resources assert that they will increase police accountability and transparency, improve police officer conduct and citizen behavior, reduce unwarranted complaints against police officers, increase officer and citizen safety, decrease police use of force incidents, assist in criminal prosecutions, facilitate officer training, and build trust between the police and their communities.

This also gives the department a chance to assess and evaluate what the needs are for the department. For example, the department may see a group of officers interested in pursuing programs of interest, which may entail the establishment of a new division. Even though this may sound like more expenses for the department, it could lead to a much improved and safer workforce. Lack of funds can be problematic as well. Pittaro (2008) pointed out that budgetary constraints can lead to inadequate training and equipment, which can cause unsafe working conditions.

Furthermore, as of 2003, only a minority of agencies maintained computerized files on potentially valuable data such as criminal histories, use-of-force incidents, terrorism-related intelligence, and fingerprints. Less than one-third used computers for crucial functions such as crime analysis and dispatch, and most did not have in-field access to data systems on vehicles, driving records, warrants, and other information (Hickman & Reaves, 2006).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The chief intelligence officers must effectively coordinate all intelligence activities of that personnel under their command. This is to improve their communication towards their barangay intelligence networks so as not to divulge their work operations. They must protect their people by ensuring good treatment and fair judgment. Besides, undergo a rigorous refresher intelligence course to pursue their task and ensure effective and efficient delivery of administrative support operations.

In addition, the chief of police must provide multiple qualified intelligence officers with specified types of background and experience for working together effectively and develop comprehensive prevention plans to increase trust between the PNP station and particularly the police intelligence section. Philippine National Police should conduct police intelligence officers training nationwide annually, covering all aspects of intelligence to instill in the hearts of the intelligence unit their roles and functions in the police service.

The local government officials must see that the PNP personnel's funding, especially the intelligence fund, must be expanded for advanced training. There is a dire need for symposiums and seminars to be aware of criminalities.

For the community to trust the job of the police officers, they should help prevent crimes instead of reacting to crime. Community-driven policing should be strengthened in order for the work of the intelligence unit, especially the police agency, to be effective. This is an ideal opportunity for the community's people to expose and protect themselves from threats.

More importantly, the family of the police intelligence officers should help set their loved ones for success as the latter pursue an exciting and rewarding career in the law enforcement agency. All they need is to get support from their families for their job. The support of the respective family members contributes to the success of one's police officers career.

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DIPLOMA IN ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM: IMPLEMENTATION, PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED, BENEFITS AND SUPPORT

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ABSTRACT

Educational institutions are always moving forward to respond to the needs of the industry and commercial industry by producing competent and skilled graduates who will take the workforce in the engineering industry. The study's primary purpose is to assess the implementation of the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program as perceived by the students and teachers in the Center for Industrial Technology and Enterprise (CITE) Technical Institute, Inc. The descriptive research used the researcher-made survey questionnaire to assess the level of implementation of the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program as perceived by the respondents. Data gathered were then analyzed and interpreted by a statistician. The overall mean in the level of implementation fell between substantially implemented and fully implemented. There is no significant difference among the levels of implementation of the Diploma in Engineering Technology as perceived by the respondents. The test revealed that when comparing responses to both groups in terms of rankings, the views given by both groups were opposing each other, and some of the ranked data from the two groups based on their perceptions were dispersed. This result means that the two respondents' problems encountered, benefits, and support differed significantly.

Keywords: Education, Diploma in Engineering Technology Program, descriptive, CITE, Cebu city, Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

Formal education in the Philippines has been deemed as a progression of academic preparation from the get-go. One starts at the elementary level and moves towards the secondary and tertiary levels, including Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and higher education. New pathways and educational reforms have been made with the country's K to 12 curriculum implementation. The primary education now consists of six years of elementary education, four years of junior high school, and two years of senior high school. Education policies have also shifted towards learning outcomes-based education.

Moreover, the life-long learning framework gives a premium to applying knowledge and skills contextually. The Philippine TVET is no exception from this ongoing reform; however, its competency-based set-up and training system has been continually met with challenges despite being a frontline in implementing outcomes-based education. TVET's playing ground has remained uneven despite the policies in place. Its graduates have faced unprecedented setbacks such as stiff economic competition as it struggles to meet the labor market demand and offers better opportunities and personal advancement to unskilled Filipino workers. This prods institutions like CITE Technical Institute, Inc. to continually adapt to the education reforms equipping future technologists with the proper knowledge, skills, and attitude. Education is a type of business that never stops, and a frontier in the evolving field of discipline, technical jobs market niche of operating new program, Diploma in Engineering Technology (DIET). It is common knowledge that finishing Senior High School is not enough to land a stable job despite the pathways flung open for them, let alone a guarantee to acquire a job position. Most companies need at least a college-level education, extensive experience, or a specialized short-term program to work in the company because what they have learned in high school is still not a guarantee for a graduate to acquire a job position. Students will enroll in a technical program due to the socio-economic status of the parents, and their parents want education for their children that leads to employment immediately after graduation.

The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) is a governing body that gives permits through Unified TVET. Program Registration Accreditation System (UTPRAS) registration for a particular TVET institution to run. The assurance of acquiring nominal skills is their primary goal so that the trainees could be of excellent service in the company once they are exposed to work. All learners who undergo training in a particular TVET institution must take and pass the qualification known as National Certification (NC), which is administered and assessed by TESDA.

The Higher Education Institution (HEI) in the The Philippines is now offering a ladderized curriculum program in conformity to the Ladderized Education Act of 2014. With the the trend of providing ladderized courses among tertiary institutions, TVET institutions considered a ladderized scheme as a response to the mandate of HEI to offer learners with many alternatives and competencies as technically equipped, thus employable.

To meet these goals, the researcher, as a focal head of the program, Diploma in Engineering Technology, intends to assess the implementation, challenges, as well as the benefits and support of the course Diploma in Engineering Technology Program, offered at Center for Industrial Technology and Enterprise (CITE) Technical Institute, Inc.

The Diploma in Engineering Technology Program is under the Philippine Qualification Framework (QPF) level 5, and graduates expect to become technologists whose courses are tailored for technicians and skilled workers who can do tasks independently without supervision and show mastery of the performance required from the National Competency Standards set by TESDA; industry supervisors and managers who can do management functions in industrial organizations; and researchers who can conduct research for feasibility studies to solve problems in the industry and can perform higher-order thinking skills required by enterprises.

FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the self-determined learning theory by Mithaug et al. (2003) advances learning based on adjustment. Knowledge has factors, and it functions as a causal connection between opportunities to learn, engagement in those opportunities, and modifications to them. Self-determined learning theory, in a nutshell, explains why, how, and what people learn. When stimulated by an event that interrupts their goal pursuits (the why of learning), people learn. They engage the event by altering their expectations, choices, and actions to control the diversion (the how of learning). They adjust by changing their beliefs and patterns of responding to the event (the what of learning). Self-determined learning theory provides not just an appeal but, more importantly, great satisfaction. This theory represents a change from teacher-centered learning to learner-centered learning. In this approach, a learned person takes more as a facilitator or guide to how the desired knowledge might take place. If a formal assessment is required, the learned person assists in determining what will be an appropriate means of evaluation (Hase & Kenyon, 2013).

Self-determined learning theory played a universal beneficial role in autonomous motivation in support of many empirical results from diverse educational settings worldwide. It recognized students' basic needs for autonomy in learning environments, and the deterministic cultural models of socio-cultural differences obscured that need (Chirkov, 2009).

Promoting self-determined learning has been identified as best practice in transition services and as a means to support goal attainment. However, the efficacy of this approach can be achieved through access to the general education curriculum, though students varied in the patterns of goal attainment (Shogren et al., 2012)

Alsubaie (2016) expounded that a successful educational program and thus functional curriculum development should be to meet the needs and current demands of the culture, the society, and the expectations of the population being served.

Using Kirkpatrick's four-level evaluation model helps design, develop, implement, and evaluate training. Their value is directly related to how these tools help evaluate programs and achieve results. The four levels of reaction, learning, behavior, and results have been the standard for decades in assisting training professionals to develop and evaluate training programs. The four levels in learning evaluation assist a decision-maker in understanding the concept. For level 1 – reaction, a level involves collecting and analyzing data. Data is required to determine goals, priorities, and objectives. Trainees asked if they enjoyed the training and learned from it. For level 2 – learning, a level that involves the steps and resources needed to meet the new goals and objectives might include identifying successful external programs and materials and gathering information. If the purpose of a training program is to increase knowledge, an appropriate knowledge test should use to determine whether the trainees have learned from the training. Level 3 relates to behavior that helps understand how well people are applying their training, and this provides decision-makers with information about how well the program is implemented. In designing a curriculum in a program, Jnanesh and Hebbar (2008) suggested using quality function deployment as a management tool. This is used to identify customers' needs to provide those requirements with quality consciousness. Level 4 results are a way of measuring the actual outcomes and comparing them to the anticipated outcomes. Decision-makers are the ones to decide if the program should be continued, modified, or dropped altogether (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006).

Research is needed to develop a fully specified and researchable evaluation model. Such a model needs to determine outcomes correctly, account for intervening variables that affect outcomes, and indicate causal relationships (Holton, 1996).

Bates (2004) described the four-level as its fundamental limitations and potential risks. For summative assessment, it asked how practical the training is, and for formative assessment, it gave ways on how training can be modified to increase its potential for effectiveness. The existence of risk plus the inability of the model to ineffectively address both concerns would limit the capacity of training.

McDavid et al. (2019) described evaluation as a structured process that aims to create and synthesize information about interventions to make judgments regarding resultant changes, the desirability of a response, and the degree of fit between intended and unintended outcomes.

Gayudeen and Seasons (2016); Kiely and Dickins (2005) explained that there is a need to develop appropriate evaluation methodologies; create stronger linkages between program evaluation and evaluation in planning; examine the institutional and political contexts guiding the use (and misuse) for the assessment in practice, and the importance of training and educating planners on evaluation.

Assessment of educational effectiveness provides vitally essential feedback to the institution. It includes crucial information to external stakeholders. However, selecting appropriate indicators of the educational effectiveness of programs and institutions is a difficult task when criteria of efficiency are not well defined. The study proposed a comprehensive and systematic approach to aligning standards for educational effectiveness with specific indicators of achievement by adapting a popular organizational training evaluation framework, Kirkpatrick's four-level model (Praslova, 2010).

Meanwhile, the transformational learning theory of Sharan (2004) described the notion of development as changing over time or changing with age as the fundamental to adult learning theory and practice. The theory is a prime example of positive development and learning to interlock. For transformational learning to occur, one must critically reflect and engage in rational discourse; both of these activities are characteristic of higher levels of cognitive functioning.

Transformation is about change, so transformational learning must be related to education that produces change. This theory shapes people; they are different afterward, in ways they and others can recognize. The process can be gradual or sudden, and it can occur in a structured educational environment or the classroom of ordinary life (Clark, 1993). Transformational learning theory addresses the common teaching challenge and requires an environment that encourages and rewards intellectual openness. The theory describes the conditions and processes necessary for students to make the most significant kind of knowledge transformation. Students must recognize the limitations of their current knowledge and perspectives (McGonigal, 2005).

Crowded or uncomfortable school buildings lead to low morale and reduced effort for teachers and students, reduced community engagement with a school, and even less good school leadership forms.

Choy (2009) said that transformational learning theory remains one of the most effective methods in adult education. It epitomizes learning where sets of assumptions and expectations are examined and re-evaluated to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change. Transformative learning transcends skills acquisition to affect frames of reference because individuals and groups step out of their habits of mind.

Sira (2016) explained that learning is a continuous process for people to survive life's challenges. Reeves (2004) defined learning as a system that includes academic achievement scores and specific information on curriculum, teaching practices, and leadership practices.

Moreover, the Philippine Qualifications Framework (QPF) was institutionalized in the Philippine Qualifications Act 2017. QPF is the national policy that defines educational qualifications and sets the standard for qualification outcomes within the Philippine education system. In the QPF level 5 curriculums as mandated by TESDA through the accredited TVET institution, the learner has to comply with the prescribed academic standard and bundled required National Certification assessments so that by the time they will continue their bachelor's degree, all abstract pieces of training and obtained qualifications will be credited (Republic Act No. 10968, 2017). According to TVET and Higher education, to ensure the quality alignment of the program, there is a need to regularly improve it by internalizing the mission and vision of the tertiary program so that excellence will be achieved. This will link the QPF as its foundational standard for it to be delivered. This national policy describes the levels of educational qualification and sets the rules for qualification outcomes. It recognizes the awarding of criteria based on knowledge, skills, and values acquired in different ways and methods by learners and workers in the Philippines. Supovitz (2008) and Ndou (2004) said that the school must provide a wide array of assistance to schools to support instruction. Under the QPF, as seen in Figure 1, the Basic Education, TVET, and Higher Education components are harmonized, allowing an individual to progress between and among TVET diploma courses college programs and eventually obtain gainful employment in the future. This program is an opportunity to innovate something that will fit the demands of the global community.

Johnstone and Soares (2014) reiterated that the role of the developing technologies, institutional curriculum-design processes, and new delivery methods are keys in providing an excellent and affordable education.

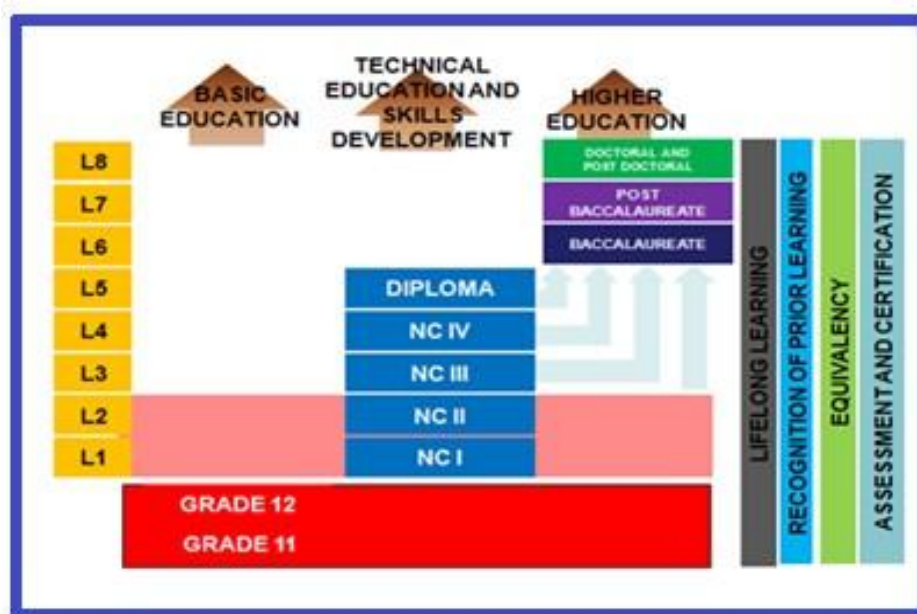


Figure 1. Philippine Qualification Framework (PQF)

The PQF has three objectives: to establish national standards and levels of learning outcomes of education; to support the development and maintenance of pathways and equivalences that enable access to qualifications, and to assist individuals in moving quickly and readily between the different education and training sectors and between these sectors and the labor market; and to align national standards with the international qualifications framework, thereby enhancing recognition of the value and comparability of Philippine qualifications and supporting the mobility of Filipino students and workers. As stated in the executive order, PQF is a quality assured national system for the development, recognition, and award of qualifications based on standards of knowledge, skills, and values acquired in different ways and methods by learners and workers of a particular country (The Philippine Qualification Framework, 2012).

The Sydney Accord is one of the recognized crediting agencies worldwide that govern PQF level V. It is an agreement for the international recognition of engineering technology qualifications. Accreditation protects the interests of students, their parents, the academic institutions themselves, and potential employers by ensuring that the educational programs offered have attained the benefits of mutual recognition to engineering technology academic programs (International Engineering Alliance, 2001).

In line with the constitutional guarantee to promote the right of all citizens to quality and accessible education at all levels, the following are declared in the policy: to institutionalize the ladderized interface between Technical - Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and higher education to open the pathways of opportunities for career and educational progression of students; workers to create a seamless and borderless system of education; to empower students and workers to exercise options or to choose when to enter and exit in the educational ladder; and to provide job platforms at every exit as well as the opportunity to earn income (Symaco, 2013).

To put everything in a whole perspective, the recognition and promotion of learners will link to the credit transfer system. The Philippine Credit Transfer System (PCTS) is part of the education reforms that are shaping the education system and is an integral part of this reform. The implementation of the PCTS intended to benefit the Philippine education system by creating a more seamless system of progression from primary education to TVET and higher education. In awarding the credit using the PCTS policy, it should base on the underpinning six principles: PCTS supports lifelong learning; PCTS is outcomes-based; PCTS is Learner-Centered, fair, and transparent; PCTS is Quality Assured; PCTS helps provide autonomy and academic freedom, and PCTS promotes cooperation (Republic Act No. 10647, 2014).

This study also supported the Dual Training System (DTS) as the training modality for enterprise-based training in completing the diploma program. The Dual Training System (DTS) is the approach in education and training that has been put to work in such country programs as apprenticeship, on-the-job training, supervised industry training, practicum, and internship. The German model of the DTS was first introduced in the Philippines in the 1980s through a joint project of the Southeast Asian Science Foundation and Hanins Seidel Foundations in the pioneer school – Dual-Tech Center (Republic Act No. 7686, 1994).

Philippine DTS was adopted and signed into law, known as the Dual Training System Act of 1994, which calls for the institutionalization of the DTS in accredited public and private educational institutions, training centers, and agricultural, industrial, and business establishments. Under the DTS Law, TESDA is mandated to promote, coordinate, and

administer the dual training system. Uline and Tschannen-Moran (2008) elaborated that poor school climate may contribute to low achievement when school facilities are inadequate.

The school-industry partnership component of the system is a vital determinant of program success and effectiveness. They start working together in crafting the training plan and determining the best way by which they can learn as much knowledge and skills during the training period (Yamauchi et al., 2017). To fully appreciate DTS, Alismail and McGuire (2015) elaborated how educators can link students' current knowledge with authentic experiences that motivate and allow them to create and collaborate using the latest technologies.

Furthermore, this study is also supported by program evaluation by Royse et al. (2010). According to him, a program evaluation is a systematic investigation to determine the success of a specific program. Program evaluation is a practical endeavor, not an academic exercise, and is not primarily an attempt to build theory or necessarily to develop social science knowledge.

Program evaluations can involve both quantitative and qualitative methods of social science. As expounded, stakeholders often want to know whether the programs they are funding, implementing, voting for, receiving, or objecting to are producing the intended effect (McDavid et al., 2019).

Belino (2014) said that the quality of the curriculum determines the quality of graduates. The curricular offering had a moderate influence on graduates' competencies. The facilities provided were adequate and provided reasonable satisfaction. The graduates were very satisfied with their in-school and in-plant training experiences.

For CITE Technical Institute, Inc., the goal is to equip the institution with many expert teachers, using digital technologies to enhance teaching and updated equipment for laboratory purposes. The Diploma in Engineering Technology Program would be the entry and exit points of learning opportunity, allowing a learner to move from a technical- vocational course to a college degree program using credit transfer. Students can use the diploma and qualifications they earn for employment after finishing the program.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study assessed the implementation of the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program as perceived by the students and teachers, Center for Industrial Technology and Enterprise (CITE) Technical Institute, Cebu City, SY 2019 - 2020. The findings served as the basis for a proposed action plan. Specifically, the study shows the following: (1) the profile of the students in terms of age, year level, (program enrolled and number of NCs earned; profile of the teacher in terms of age, length of service; highest educational attainment and number of NCs earned; the level of implementation of the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program as perceived by the respondents in terms of content, delivery, and resources; problems encountered by the respondents in the implementation of the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program; and benefits derived from the implementation of the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program; and forms of support given by the external support providers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the research design, research environment, research respondents, research instruments, and treatment of data.

Research Design

In the conduct of this study, the researcher utilized the descriptive method of research using the researcher-made questionnaire.

Research Environment

This study was conducted at the Center for Industrial Technology and Enterprise (CITE) Technical Institute, Inc. The school offers a three-year course Diploma in Engineering Technology Programs for any male graduates of Senior High School who passed in the screening process. The school is located at Purok 2, San Jose, Cebu City. The clients of CITE, also known as industry partners, were companies spread in major industrial zones of the city and provinces. The site is readily accessible to nearby-industrialized areas in the cities of Mandaue Lapu-Lapu, specifically, in Mactan Economic Zone (MEZ), Toledo, and Danao. CITE Technical Institute, Inc. is recognized for offering technical courses with equipped facilities on the four programs provided with an Enterprise-Based Training component, known as Dual Training Program (DTP), as its practical exposure before the students graduate.

Research Respondents

The respondents of this study were the thirty-five percent (35%) of students enrolled in the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program who had already experienced both full-time in school and the ongoing Dualized Training Program (DTP) and thirty-nine (39) teachers handling the program. Students' respondents were selected using the multi-stage random sampling technique (Calimorin & Calimorin, 2007). A total of 150 students were randomly selected from the second year and ITP Completers and thirty-nine (39) teachers. The ITP completers were the graduates of the Senior High School of CITE Technical Institute under the TVL track, which became the feeders of the diploma program. They enrolled in the program using the credit transfer of the previous subjects they had taken. First-year students were not included as respondents because they have not yet been exposed to industry for their Dualized Training Program (DTP). Sixty-seven (67) out of one hundred ninety-two (192) students were selected from the second year, and eighty-three (83) out of two hundred thirty-seven (237) from the ITP Completers. Hence the total sample size was one hundred eighty-nine (189).

Research Instrument

The researcher-made questionnaire was used in this study, consisting of two (2) parts. Part I pertains to the respondents' profile, and part II contains items about the implementation in terms of content, delivery, resources and problems encountered, and benefits and supports as perceived by the two groups of respondents.

The researcher conducted the pilot testing of the researcher-made test to the randomly selected 30 participants: twenty-five (25) students and five (5) teachers. They were not included as actual respondents; still, they were used only for validation purposes. The researcher has identified the number of respondents to be distributed to second-year students, ITP completers, and teachers. The researcher instructed the research respondents on how to answer the questionnaire

accurately. Clarifications from the respondents were adequately addressed to ensure the validity of the results. After the filled-up surveys were collected, the researchers kept the results in a secure place. The result of the pilot testing indicates that the questionnaire attained internal consistency and was usable for actual data gathering based on Cronbach's alpha value.

Research Procedure

Before the actual data gathering, the researcher sent a letter to the school's Executive Director asking permission to conduct the study. The researcher distributed the questionnaire personally to the students who were having their in-school training in random selection based on the target number of respondents. Teachers were approached during their vacant period in order not to disrupt classes. They were asked to answer the questionnaire privately and given ample time to answer the questions in the survey.

Treatment of Data

Frequency count and percent were used to summarize and analyze the respondents' profiles and the problems they had encountered.

Weighted Mean was used to calculate the overall average and analyze the levels of the implementation of the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program.

The *t*-test for two independent samples was used to determine the significant difference between the respondents' levels of implementation of the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine the significant difference in the perception of the students and teachers on the levels of implementation of the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter deals with the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data from the research respondents. Each section corresponds to the sub-problems of the study. The respondents were the students of CITE Technical Institute, Inc., who had already experienced both full-time in school and the ongoing Dualized Training Program (DTP), and teachers handling the program's subjects. Table 1 shows the profile of the students in terms of age, year level, diploma program enrolled, and number of national certifications (NCs) earned.

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

Indicators	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age		
18 year old	23	15.33
19 years old	62	41.33
20 years old	37	24.67
21 years old & above	28	18.67
Year Level		
2 nd Year	67	44.37
ITP Completers	83	55.33
Diploma Program Enrolled		
Electrical Engineering Technology	41	27.33
Electronics Engineering Technology	28	18.67
Mechanical Engineering Technology	60	40.00

Computer Engineering Technology	21	14.00
Number of NCs Earned		
None	104	69.33
One NC	43	28.37
Two NCs	3	2.00

Table 2 shows the profile of the students' respondents. As shown, the ages of the students were clustered into four (4) groups: 18 years old, 19 years old, 20 years old, and 21 years old and above. Nineteen (19) years of age got the highest percentage of students' respondents of about 41.33% or equivalent to 62 students, followed by 20 years old who got 24.67% or equivalent to thirty-seven (37) students. Among the one hundred (150) students as respondents, the majority of the age of students was 19 years old.

Students' respondents grouped according to their levels as second-year students and ITP completers. These groups were the students who did their ongoing Dualized Training Program (DTP). There were 67 students or equivalent to 44.67% from the second year group and 83 students or 55.33% from the ITP completers group. The ITP completers obtained the highest number of respondents compared to the second-year group when the selection was conducted. The results indicate that ITP completers were higher in terms of some students than the second-year students in the population.

The sample size was grouped according to the programs they enrolled in, wherein: 14% from the Diploma in Computer Engineering Technology, 18.67% from the Diploma in Electronics Engineering Technology, 27.33% from the Diploma in Electrical Engineering Technology, and 40% from the Diploma in Mechanical Engineering Technology. Of the four programs enrolled, Diploma in Mechanical Engineering Technology got the highest percentage of the distribution of 60 students, and Diploma in Computer Engineering Technology obtained the lowest number of distribution of 21 students. Results indicate that many students chose the Diploma in Mechanical Engineering Technology compared to the other programs.

The National Certification (NCs) earned shows that only 46 students out of 150 respondents were able to earn NCs. This data means that 69.33% or equivalent to 104 students were not able to take yet at least one of the National Certifications of TESDA. Diploma in Engineering Technology Program (DIETP) was positioned in the curriculum to acquire at least three standardized assessments or National Certification (NCs) before graduation.

Table 2 presents the profile of teachers in terms of age, length of service, highest educational attainment, and the number of National Certifications (NCs) earned.

Table 2. Profile of Teacher Respondents (n= 39)

Indicators	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age		
23-29	14	35.90
30-39	12	30.77
40-67	13	33.33
Length of Service		
1 – 5 years	12	30.77
6 – 10 years	5	12.82
11 – 15 years	8	20.51
16 years & above	14	35.90
Highest Educational Attainment		

TVET Graduate	11	28.21
College Graduate	22	56.41
Master's Degree Holder	4	10.26
Doctoral Degree Holder	2	5.13
Number of NCs Earned		
None	5	12.82
One NC	6	15.38
Two NCs	12	30.77
Three NCs	6	15.38

Table 2 presents the profile of teachers respondents. As shown in the table, ages of teachers were grouped into three (3) age brackets: fourteen (14) teachers or 35.90% from the age bracket 23 – 29; twelve (12) teachers or 30.77% from the age bracket 30 – 39; and thirteen (13) teachers or 33.33% from the age bracket 40 – 67. The results of the distribution of teachers' ages indicate that anyone from this age group of 40 – 67 plan to terminate their contract for any reason; there would be teachers, especially from the younger group, who can replace them.

Teachers-respondents were also grouped according to the length of service. There were 28.21% of the respondents who had served the school for 1 – 5 years. At the same time, 12.82% or five (5) teachers served the school for 6 to 10 years. The results indicate that the highest number of teachers came from teachers who stayed in the school for 16 years and above. This data indicates that this group was loyal to the school in terms of length of service, and they could also give mentoring activities, especially to the younger ones.

According to their educational attainment, the table also shows a group of teachers-respondents: 28.21% from a TVET graduate, 56.41% were college graduates, 10.26% were master's degree holders, and only 5.13% are doctoral degree holders. As seen on the data, most of the respondents were college graduates, and only a few from the teachers-respondents obtained the masters or doctoral degree. This indicates that the school administrator needs to focus on the professional growth of teachers by allowing their staff to continue college or enroll in graduate school for teacher's development.

From the same table, 61.54% or 24 teachers of the distribution had acquired their National Certification for teaching the core subjects. Earning the NCs and National TVET Trainer Certification for teachers was the requirement for a registered program. The remaining 38.46% or 15 teachers in the distribution handled basic and standard subjects that need not earn NC as a requirement.

Table 3 presents the respondents' preferences in the level of implementation of the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program (DIETP) in terms of content.

Table 3. Level of Implementation of the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program in Terms of Content

Content	Students	Interpretation	Rank	Teachers	Interpretation	Rank
1.Seting of learning objectives for learners in understandable and attainable	3.29	Fully Implemented	5	3.38	Fully Implemented	1
2.Using Competency-Based Learning Module (CBLM) or prepared learning material as the main content in achieving learning mastery for learners.	3.18	Substantially Implemented	7	2.90	Substantially Implemented	9
3.Aligning the learning content to practical activities appropriate for learners.	3.35	Fully Implemented	2	3.36	Fully Implemented	2
4.Aligning the learning content for learners appropriate to the industry's needs	3.39	Fully Implemented	1	3.33	Fully Implemented	3
5.Using assessment guide as evaluation	3.33	Fully	3	3.15	Substantially	5

tools to measure the extent of learning for learners.		Implemented			Implemented	
6.Implementing the training activities to achieve the learning outcomes based on learner's needs are in place.	3.30	Fully Implemented	4	3.18	Substantially Implemented	4
7.Covering and delivering all learning competencies as content relevant to the learning outcomes are achieved.	3.14	Substantially Implemented	8	3.08	Substantially Implemented	6
8.Aligning the content of training and preparing them for national assessment.	3.28	Fully Implemented	6	3.36	Fully Implemented	2
9.Checking of assessment result of the learners against the content of learning competencies.	3.12	Substantially Implemented	9	3.03	Substantially Implemented	8
10.Returning of formative and summative assessment results for learners as basis for content evaluation.	3.09	Substantially Implemented	10	3.05	Substantially Implemented	7
Factor Mean	3.25	Fully Implemented		3.18	Substantially Implemented	

Item number one (1) was the first rank from the teacher's preference with an average mean of 3.38. As stated in this item, learning objectives for learners are understandable and attainable, interpreted as *fully implemented*. From the group of students, item number four (4) was ranked top on the lists as their preferences with an average of 3.39 where the student respondent agreed that the need for aligning the learning content for learners appropriate to the industry's needs is *fully implemented*. Sira (2016) explained that developments and revisions are consistently implemented in the academe to meet the demands of the industry.

Some items need to be looked upon because they were in the lowest rank in the lists of indicators, such as item number ten (10) for the group of students with an average of 3.09 and item number two (2) for the group of teachers with an average of 2.9. They said that returning formative and summative assessment results for learners as a basis for content evaluation, using Competency-Based Learning Module (CBLM), or prepared to learn the material as the main content in achieving learning mastery. Both were interpreted as *substantially implemented*. The interpretation would mean that there is much evidence that the statement is true, but few practices could be strengthened.

Alismail and McGuire (2015) revealed that by allowing creative thinking and gauging understanding of content standards through a based portfolio system, students could display their concept retention while producing tangible and valuable outcomes. The students' future depends on flexibility and resourcefulness, not teaching to the test.

The second rank regarding preferences from the group of students on the level of implementation in terms of content was item number three (3). This item was also picked by the teachers as the second rank, although item number eight (8) was equally picked as their second rank among the ten indicators in terms of weighted mean result. They both said that aligning learning content to practical activities appropriate for learners was interpreted as *fully implemented*.

In the second-lowest rank, item number 9 was picked as shared preferences, with an average of 3.12 from the group of students and 3.05 from the group of teachers. They were both saying that checking of assessment results of the learners against the content of the learning competencies was interpreted as *substantially implemented*.

Responses revealed in Table 4 that the third rank for the group of students was on item 5, while the third preference was item 4. They had the same interpretation in the level of implementation in terms of content, which was interpreted as *fully implemented*.

Regarding the third-lowest rank, item 7 for students was identified as the third-lowest among the ten indicators, with a mean of 3.14. As stated in this item, covering and delivering all learning competencies as content relevant to the learning outcomes are achieved rated as *substantially implemented*.

However, item 10 for teachers obtained a mean of 3.05, indicating that returning formative and summative assessment results for learners as the basis for content evaluation is interpreted as *substantially implemented*.

Furthermore, the overall weighted mean of groups of students is 3.25 means that 25% of the group believed that the level of content was *substantially implemented*, and 75% of the group thought that the level of implementation was *fully implemented*.

From the teachers' respondents, the overall weighted mean of 3.18 means 18% of the group believed that the level of implementation in terms of content was *fully implemented*. The result says 82% of teachers thought that the program's implementation in terms of content was *substantially implemented*.

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics on the level of implementation of the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program in terms of delivery.

Table 4. Level of Implementation of the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program in Terms of Delivery

Content	Students	Interpretation	Rank	Teachers	Interpretation	Rank
1.Setting criteria on what to expect on the delivery of the course program.	3.27	Fully Implemented	5	3.26	Fully Implemented	6
2.Using of Audio-visual or multi-media learning as support for delivery of the course program.	3.39	Fully Implemented	2	3.41	Fully Implemented	2
3.Producing, disseminating and using educational content in hard or electronic copy format for learners development.	3.24	Substantially Implemented	6	3.28	Fully Implemented	4
4.Monitoring and communicating learner's performance regularly.	3.15	Substantially Implemented	8	2.97	Substantially Implemented	8
5.Providing remedial activities to the academically challenged learners	3.12	Substantially Implemented	9	3.08	Substantially Implemented	7
6.Utilizing progress chart in monitoring learning outcomes of learners.	3.04	Substantially Implemented	10	2.74	Substantially Implemented	9
7.Facilitating learning by maintaining good eye contact with the learners.	3.16	Substantially Implemented	7	3.28	Fully Implemented	5
8. Delivering of Competency-Based training or laboratory activities is consistent and based on the guidelines indicated in the manual or experiment guide.	3.32	Fully Implemented	3	3.31	Fully Implemented	3
9. Implementing the practice of 5 S is evident in the program.	3.55	Fully Implemented	1	3.49	Fully Implemented	1
10. Providing all learners enrolled in program a Competency-Based Learning Materials (CBLM) or prepared learning materials to check if the content is completely delivered.	3.28	Fully Implemented	4	2.69	Substantially Implemented	10
Factor Mean	3.25	Fully Implemented		3.15	Fully Implemented	

In curriculum development, the course plan, timetable, faculty allotment, and teaching materials were among the essential lists to consider in the curriculum delivery. To maintain the

process continuously would be the step to establish excellent teaching and environment (Jnanesh and Hebbar, 2008).

Group of students and teachers identified three identical items as highest in the rank in the program's implementation in terms of delivery, as presented in Table 5. The indicators were items 9, 2, and 8, whose average weighted mean for students' respondents was 3.55, 3.39, and 3.32 and 3.49, 3.41, and 3.31 as the teacher respondents. The top three (3) highest rank are implementing the practice of 5S is evident in the program; using of Audio-visual or multi-media learning materials as a support for delivery of the course program, and delivering of Competency-Based training or laboratory activities is consistent and based on the guidelines indicated in the manual or experiment guide. Those items were *fully implemented* as its interpretation.

Meanwhile, the lowest rank items were indicators 6, 5, and 4 from the group of students and indicators 10, 6, and 4 from the group of teachers. These items were summarized for students respondents: utilizing progress chart in monitoring learning outcomes of the learners, providing remedial activities to the academically challenged learners, and monitoring and communicating learner's performance regularly.

From the group of teachers respondents, the items were also arranged based on the three (3) lowest rank as follows: providing all learners enrolled in the program a Competency-Based Learning Materials (CBLM) or prepared learning materials to check whether the content is wholly delivered; utilizing progress chart in monitoring learning outcomes of the learners; and monitoring and communicating learner's performance regularly. These were the items that both groups said that the delivery was *substantially implemented*.

The overall weighted mean of student respondents is 3.25 and interpreted as *fully implemented*. The teacher respondents, the overall weighted mean is 3.15 and is interpreted as *substantially implemented*. The result implies that only 25% of the students said that in terms of delivery, the program was *substantially implemented*, which means 75% of the group assessed that the implementation was *fully implemented*. From the teachers' point of view, only 15% said that the delivery of the program was *fully implemented*, and 85% of the delivery of the program was *substantially implemented*.

Table 5 presents the level of implementation of the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program in terms of resources.

Table 5. Level of Implementation of the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program in Terms of Resources

Content	Students	Interpretation	Rank	Teachers	Interpretation	Rank
1. Posting the program learning outcomes as guide in completing the course.	3.34	Fully Implemented	6	2.92	Substantially Implemented	6
2. Providing venue conducive for theoretical and practical learning activities.	3.38	Fully Implemented	3	3.59	Fully Implemented	1
3. Providing accessible textbooks for learners for them to do research.	3.00	Substantially Implemented	10	2.46	Fully Implemented	9
4. Using updated and relevant tools and equipment to be used for laboratory activities.	3.17	Substantially Implemented	7	2.87	Substantially Implemented	7
5. Providing qualified teachers for technical skills	3.40	Fully Implemented	2	3.28	Fully Implemented	4
6. Providing physical laboratories for assessment to learners for institutional and national assessment.	3.35	Fully Implemented	4	3.38	Fully Implemented	3
7. Partnering with companies or linkages in the implementation of the program.	3.55	Fully Implemented	1	3.59	Fully Implemented	1

8. Providing designated mentor and qualified facilitator to learners.	3.35	Fully Implemented	5	3.54	Fully Implemented	2
9. Addressing properly concerns and issues about the program.	3.09	Substantially Implemented	9	3.10	Substantially Implemented	5
10. Conducting applied researches related to the program enrolled.	3.13	Substantially Implemented	8	2.74	Substantially Implemented	8
Overall Mean	3.28	Fully Implemented		3.19	Substantially Implemented	

The study of Uline and Tschannen-Moran (2008) confirmed a link between the quality of school facilities and student achievement in academics.

For the curriculum to be effective and schools successful, teachers must be involved in the development process. An effective curriculum should reflect the philosophy, goals, objectives, learning experiences, instructional resources, and assessments that comprise a specific educational program (Alsubaie, 2016).

From the group of students, item 7 was ranked number one (1) in the survey, which gave an average of 3.55. According to this item, partnering with companies or linkages in implementing the program was *fully implemented*. From the teacher respondents, items 2 and 7 were ranked number one (1) on the survey, which gave both an average of 3.59. This implies that providing a venue conducive for both theoretical and practical learning activities and partnering with companies or linkages in the program's implementation were interpreted as *fully implemented*.

Further, the second rank in the indicators from the group of students on the level of implementation was item 5. As stated in this item, providing qualified teachers for technical skills improvement of learners was *fully implemented*. From the group of teacher respondents, item 8 was also ranked second where it is weighted mean 3.54 and saying that providing a designated mentor and qualified

facilitator to learners was *fully implemented*.

In the same table, the third rank for the group of students was on item 2 with a weighted mean of 3.38. The item stated that providing a venue conducive to theoretical and practical learning

activities was *fully implemented*. For teachers respondents, item 8 was ranked third on the survey, whose weighted mean was 3.54. This item stated that providing physical laboratories for assessment to learners for institutional and national assessment was interpreted as *fully implemented*.

Item 3 was the lowest rank for both students and teachers, whose weighted average of 3.00 for students and 2.46 for teachers. According to this item, providing accessible textbooks for learners and doing research was *substantially implemented* from the student's point of view and *less implemented* from the group of teachers. This means that some evidence can justify that the statement is true. Similarly, this item should be on top of priorities when evaluating and inventorying the learning resources.

Item number 9 for students and 10 for teachers were the second-lowest among the ten (10) indicators. Their weighted means were 3.09 and 3.10, respectively. These items were both interpreted as *substantially implemented*. Item 10 was identified as the third-lowest among the ten (10) indicators, where the weighted mean is 3.13. As stated in this item, conducting applied research related to the program enrolled was *substantially implemented*. For teachers' responses, item 7 was ranked third on the survey regarding the level of implementation in terms of resources, and the mean is 2.87. The item described that using updated and relevant tools and equipment for laboratory activities were *substantially implemented*.

To finally answer both groups' implementation levels, overall weighted means were determined: 3.28 from the group of students and 3.19 from the group of teachers. It means that 28% of the students' respondents said that the program's implementation in terms of resources was *substantially implemented*. The 72% was on the full implementation when the students were surveyed. From the teachers' respondents, the survey presented that 19% of the said group was *fully implemented*, and about 81% of the group was *substantially implemented in terms of resources*.

Table 6 shows and reveals the findings on the problems encountered by the respondents in Diploma in Engineering Technology Program.

Table 6. Problems Encountered by the Respondents

Problems	Students (n=150)			Teachers (n=39)		
	f	%	Rank	f	%	Rank
1. Teachers are not ready in handling the new program.	46	30.67	5	10	25.64	6
2. No proper orientation for students before the program is implemented	63	42.00	3	18	46.15	3
3. Unavailability of CBLM or learning materials for students.	43	28.67	6	28	71.79	1
4. Unavailability of tools and equipment for laboratory activities.	50	33.33	4	10	25.64	6
5. Implementation was done merely for compliance	39	26.00	7	24	61.54	2
6. No institutionalize assessment was conducted for the qualification before the actual assessment	39	26.00	7	16	41.03	4
7. No proper criteria on the placement of learners for their Dualized Training Program (DTP)	64	42.67	2	7	17.95	7
8. Poor attendance of teachers in the class.	66	44.00	1	12	30.77	5
9. The school environment is not conducive for learning.	22	14.67	8	1	2.56	8

Evaluation will not only provide feedback on the effectiveness of a program but will also help to determine whether the program is appropriate for the target population, whether there are any problems with its implementation and support, and whether there are any ongoing concerns that need to resolve as the program implemented (Kiely & Dickins, 2005).

As depicted on the table from the group of students, item number eight (8) is considered the top list item among the options saying that one of the most problems they had encountered in the program was the poor attendance of teachers in the class. It was interpreted as the critical item as findings with a 44% rating, meaning 66 of the respondents picked that item as the areas of concern in the implementation. The teachers considered item number three (3) as the most critical item among the list where according to the findings, 71.77% of the distribution said that unavailability of CBLM or learning materials for students was the most area of concern to be looked on.

The second problem that the students had encountered was item number seven (7) about the lack of proper criteria on the placement of learners for their Dualized Training Program (DTP). About 42.67% of the distribution considered this one of the critical issues among the options listed. The teachers recognized item number five (5) on the list as the second pick of choice among the essential items.

There were 61.54% of the respondents who said that distribution said that DIET program implementation was merely for compliance.

The third problem that both respondents encountered falls on item number two (2). According to the findings, both groups said there was no proper orientation for students before the program was implemented. As to problems encountered seen in the options, there could be one item among the nine (9) issues presented that was eliminated because both groups agreed that it was in the lowest rank among in the list, which means that particular item did not belong to one of the options saying that the school environment is not conducive for learning.

Assessments for both groups of some items in the problems encountered contradict each other, specifically on item number 8. This means that the teacher respondents did not consider the poor attendance of teachers in the class as the most critical problem encountered compared to the student's point of view. Among the selections, only item number 2 that both groups agreed on ranked third in their choices. Number 2 is no proper orientation for students before the program is implemented.

Evaluation is a continuous process, and it is performed as the fundamental part of the program activities to attain data to conclude if there is a need to make changes or eliminations or accept something in it. Program evaluation checks the sufficiency of educational programs whose purpose is to contribute judgments about the worth of an evaluated program or to point to the value of the application or just a section of it (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006).

Table 7 describes the perceived benefits derived from implementing the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program for both students and teachers based on the picked items.

Table 7. Perceived Benefits Derived from the Implementation of Diploma in Engineering Technology Program

Problems	Students (n=150)			Teachers (n=39)		
	F	%	Rank	f	%	Rank
1. Students are equipped with both theoretical and practice training.	118	78.67	1	29	74.36	4
2. Graduates will possess competencies and skills relevant to the job market.	109	72.67	3	34	87.18	2
3. Graduates will be aligned to take engineering courses relevant to their field.	98	65.33	4	30	76.92	3
4. Students will obtain holistic information.	97	64.67	5	39	100.00	1
5. Students will obtain bundles of National Certifications (NC's) useful for employment.	110	73.33	2	30	76.92	3

The study of Rogers and Rogers (2005) claimed that technology education is essential in school curriculums, increasing students' technological literacy and promoting increased academic rigor and relevance were among the significant benefits of the inclusion of pre-engineering education in technology education.

The respondents had to pick five (5) options in multiple selections. The top three (3) on the list were selected among the five options. The group of students revealed that the DIET program would equip them with both theoretical and practical training with one-hundred eighteen (118) responses or equivalent to 78.67% of the sample size.

Rank second in the survey, and the student respondents perceived that they would obtain bundles of National Certifications (NCs) useful for employment with one-hundred ten (110) responses or equivalent to 73.33%.

Rank third is around one-hundred nine (109) or 72.67%, and respondents agreed that they would possess competencies and skills relevant to the job market after graduation.

On the other hand, from the group of teachers, it was revealed that thirty-nine (39) responses or 100% believed that the DIET program could adequately provide a holistic formation for the students. This idea followed the belief that graduates in this program will possess competencies and skills relevant to the job market, with thirty-four (34) responses or 87.18% of the respondents.

As reflected in the findings, items 3 and 5 have similar weights in terms of responses. From the data, thirty (30) of them, or 76.92%, said that graduates would be aligned to take engineering courses relevant to their field, and students will obtain bundles of National Certifications (NC's) valid for employment.

As explained in the Republic Act 10647, the State guarantees that ladderized education promotes the right of all citizens to quality and accessible education. The policy institutionalizes the interface between technical-vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education to open the pathways of career, and educational progression of students and workers create a seamless and borderless system of schooling (Republic Act No. 10647, 2014).

As findings, most students perceived that item number 1 was more beneficial to them, saying that the program can equip them with theoretical and practical training. Conversely, according to the data, the lowest rank of the findings was item number 4, saying that students will obtain holistic formation in the implementation of the program.

That item was viewed by the group of teachers as more beneficial to the students because all of them believed that the program could provide a holistic formation. The perception of students and teachers in the implementation based on the findings was opposing. The said item was in the lowest rank on the list from the students' point of view and the top list from the teachers' point of view.

Table 8 depicts the support from external providers.

Table 8. Support Given by the External Providers

Problems	Students (n=150)			Teachers (n=39)		
	F	%	Rank	f	%	Rank
1. Learners get services and activities that are in place and are fully functioning to facilitate the employment of the graduates.	101	67.33	2	25	64.10	4
2. Learners are placed in the industry with Dualized Training Program (DTP) of On-the-Job training	128	85.33	1	37	94.87	1
3. Career guidance services are provided to learner.	94	62.67	5	27	69.23	3
4. Scholarship or any forms of financial assistance is provided to learner.	100	66.67	3	28	71.79	2
5. Learners are given the opportunity to apply researches related to the program enrolled that will lead to improvements and innovations.	87	58.00	6	21	53.85	6
6. Learners are given opportunity to have a partial engagement in any entrepreneurship project.	97	64.67	4	24	61.54	5

Supovitz (2008) said that local government plays the role of authority in holding schools accountable for their activities and performance, supports in assisting school faculties to build their capacity to instruct students better, and acts as an intermediary between schools outside providers of service and materials.

The first-ranked item for both students' and teachers' preferences was number 2. Both respondents believed that learners placed in the industry with the Dualized Training Program (DTP) or On-the-Job Training, which indicates the highest percentage rating of 85.33% for students and 94.87% for teachers.

The second-ranked on the options for students' pick was item one (1). According to this option, learners get services and activities that are in place and are fully functioning to facilitate the graduates' employment. From the teachers' respondents, item number 4 was picked, stating that scholarship or any form of financial assistance is provided to the learner with a percentage rating of 71.79%.

Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act (UAQTEA) is a response from TESDA to offer scholarship grants to TVET institutions. The program aims to: provide adequate funding and such other mechanisms to increase the participation rate among all socioeconomic classes in tertiary education; provide all Filipinos with an equal opportunity to quality tertiary education in both private and public education institutions; give priority to learners who are technically-able and who come from low-income families; ensure the optimized utilization of government resources in education; provide adequate guidance and incentives in supporting young Filipinos with their career choices towards the proper development and use of human resources, and recognize the complementary roles of public and private TVIs in the tertiary education system (TESDA Circular No. 002, series 2019).

Rank third as presented is item 4 for student respondents tells that scholarship or any form of financial assistance is provided to the learner. While teachers' point of view in item 3 explains that career guidance services are provided to learners.

Among the six options presented in the table, item two (2) was identified as common responses for student and teacher respondents. They both agree that the program could provide an excellent opportunity to the learners, and this implies that having their training in the industry helps the students improve their technical know-how and have a prospective job in the future.

This section presents the results on the test of significant differences in the level of implementation of the aspects of the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program. Table 9 presents the results.

Table 9. Differences in the Levels of Implementation of the Aspects of Diploma in Engineering Technology Program

Variables	Mean	F-stat	p-Value	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Students' Perception					
Content	3.25	0.13	0.875	Failed to Reject Ho	No significant Differences
Delivery	3.25				
Resources	3.28				
Teachers' Perception					
Content	3.18	0.04	0.961	Failed to Reject Ho	No significant Differences
Delivery	3.15				
Resources	3.15				

The highest mean for students' perceptions of 3.28, followed by content and delivery, shows similar weighted mean results of 3.25. The results differ only to a few decimal points and their values look almost the same, so the gap in terms of difference is not significant.

From the teachers' responses, content got the highest weighted mean of 3.18, followed by delivery and resources, which also shows similar weighted mean results of 3.15. These results confirm no significant difference between the three aspects.

As seen on the table, their weighted mean values were very close to each other, although they have gaps when asked if the differences were significant, then the answer is no. No significant difference exists between the levels given by the student responses with a p-value of 0.875 and teachers' responses with a p-value of 0.961.

Reeves (2004) explained that accountability for learning equips teachers and leaders to transform educational accountability policies from destructive and demoralizing accounting drills into meaningful and constructive decision-making in the classroom and school. Teachers should take the lead in redefining and improving educational accountability.

As findings in the result in the level of implementation, the overall weighted mean, as recalled, had differences that fall between *fully implemented* and *substantially implemented*. The result implies no significant difference among the levels of implementation of Diploma in Engineering Technology as perceived by the respondents.

This section deals with results on the test of significant differences in the levels of implementation of the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program as perceived by the two groups of respondents. Table 10 shows the results.

Table 10. Differences in the Levels of Implementation of the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program as Perceived by the Two Groups of Respondents

Variables	Groups	Mean	t-stat	p-Value	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Content	Students	3.25	1.01	0.329	Failed to Reject Ho	No Significant Difference
	Teachers	3.18				
Delivery	Students	3.25	1.02	0.327	Failed to Reject Ho	No Significant Difference
	Teachers	3.15				
Resources	Students	3.28	0.95	0.362	Failed to Reject Ho	No Significant Difference
	Teachers	3.15				

Of the three aspects of levels of implementation of the diploma program as perceived by the two groups of respondents, content, delivery, and resources had almost similar weighted mean. All were interpreted as *substantially implemented* in terms of levels of implementation by the two groups of respondents.

Terano (2019) disclosed that student learning outcomes could be determined by how well an educational institution designs and implements the entire curriculum for a specific program. Several sources can influence the development of curriculum for educational programs. The program's goals could be defined based on the funding source, the community, and government, specifically in the education sector.

The curriculum should align with both industry and academic expectations. The process by which they are developed should be explicit and transparent. Program-level competencies should reflect the skills and knowledge that students will need at the following stages of their development, whether further education or employment. A program should allow students to progress through the curriculum at an individualized pace, which means that just-in-time academic assistance and other support must be provided to keep them motivated and academically on track (Johnstone and Soares, 2014).

There is no significant difference between the ratings given by the group of students and a group of teachers in three aspects of the DIET program in terms of p-values: the content of 0.329, delivery of 0.327, and resources of 0.362. All p-values were more significant than the significance level of 0.05. Though the results as recalled in the level of implementation were varied between *substantially implemented* and *fully implemented*, the differences in the level of

implementation of the Diploma in Engineering Technology as perceived by the two groups of respondents were not significant.

This section shows the results on the test of significant differences in the perceptions of the two groups in implementing the Diploma in Engineering Technology as to problems encountered, benefits, and support. Table 11 shows the results.

Table 11. Differences in the Perceptions of Two Groups in the Implementation of the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program as to Problems Encountered, Benefits, and Support

Variables	Groups	Median	t-stat	p-Value	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Problems Encountered	Students	46.00	124.00	0.0008	Reject Ho	Significantly Different
	Teachers	12.00				
Perceived Benefits	Students	109.00	40.00	0.0122	Reject Ho	Significantly Different
	Teachers	30.00				
Supports	Students	98.50	57.00	0.0051	Reject Ho	Significantly Different
	Teachers	26.00				

The study of Ndou (2004) suggested that private and public organizations have to reinvent themselves through ‘continuous non-linear innovation’ to sustain themselves and achieve strategic competitive advantage.

Comparing responses to both groups in terms of rankings as presented in Tables 7, 8, and 9, the views given by both groups were opposing each other. As recalled, the first item picked by the group of teachers was the last option from the group of students.

Those perceptions were the basis of checking if there were significant differences in the responses of the two groups in implementing the program as to problems encountered, benefits, and support. The values of their medians, as presented in the table, results were dispersed, meaning the arrangements of the data were ranked differently.

The test revealed that some of the ranked data from the two groups based on their perceptions were dispersed. The p-value of 0.008 for problems encountered, 0.0122 for benefits, and 0.0051 for support were marked to be less than the significance level of 0.05. This result means that the problems encountered, benefits, and support by the two groups of respondents was significantly different.

CONCLUSIONS

The students and teachers at the Center for Industrial Technology and Enterprise (CITE) Technical Institute, Inc. assessed that the Diploma in Engineering Technology Program was fully implemented and there were significant benefits derived with the offering of the program not only to the students but also to the industries needing the specialized engineering and technical skills. Also, the support provided by industry partners paved towards the success of the implementation. However, there were minimal problems that were encountered by the internal stakeholders of the educational institutions which is common in the early period of program implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the salient finding of this investigation, it is recommended that the proposed action plan contains a series of intervention activities to ensure the top management of the school shall adopt the program's success, and evaluation of each activity shall be conducted.

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RELEVANCE OF THE MASTER IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION CURRICULUM TO THE GRADUATES' JOB: A TRACER STUDY (S.Y. 2015-2018)

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ABSTRACT

This study utilized the descriptive research design using a standardized tool devised by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in tracing the employment data of the graduates of Master in Business Administration of the University of Cebu-Graduate School for the school years 2015-2018. The study was conducted at the University of Cebu Graduate School using the purposive sampling technique; two hundred ninety-three (293) graduates of Master in Business Administration served as respondents. The graduates of Master in Business Administration (MBA) of the University of Cebu Graduate School are employable in various fields of business, including education. Since career advancement was the reason for taking advanced or further studies in business, there are manifestations of career progression after the students obtain the graduate degree in terms of position, salary level, and benefits. Further, the MBA curriculum offers courses or subjects relevant to the performance of the graduates' job and leads them to attain promotion, coupled with advanced competencies in communications skills, human relations skills, problem-solving, and critical thinking ability.

Keywords - Business education, tracer study, employability, curriculum, descriptive, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Learning is always a significant part of the educational process that seeks to develop and strengthen every learner's knowledge, skills, and values. Academic institutions of higher learning

are constantly generating graduates capable of applying technology and knowledge-based information to the nature and demands of their work environment (Kearns & Sabherwal, 2006; Laguador & Dotong, 2013).

Graduate education is part of the most effective means of developing capacities related to doing research that will improve educational theory and practice in different aspects of the education process (Bueno, 2017). Recognizing the reality in today's academic world, the role of higher education institutions cannot only be limited to imparting knowledge but also to contribute to maintaining a competitive economy and, most important of all, to secure the dream of graduates to get jobs and become socially recognized and successful in their respective field of endeavors. On the other hand, one of the significant factors for underemployment and the difficulty in finding jobs is the inability of graduates to meet the necessary skills and competencies required by the industry (Menez, 2014).

Schomburg (2003) shares that graduate survey results are essential for analyzing the relationship between higher education and work. Moreover, Millington (2001) states that they provide quantitative structural data on employment and career, the character of work and related competencies, and information on their graduates' professional orientation and experiences. Witte and Kalleberg (1995) also noted that there is theoretical importance to the issue of education-job match, as it brings attention to the understanding of how and why individuals are matched to their employment, which is a concern of many labor market specialists.

In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education requires all HEIs to conduct a tracer study. It is equally reflected as one of the required documents by any higher education accrediting body such as the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACCUP), Inc. (Gines, 2014). This means that all of the HEIs that exist in the Philippines should conduct a study on tracing the employability of its graduates, their employment status, and the competencies they learned that they were able to apply in their job. Further, the programs offered in the Graduate School of an HEI are not exempted from this mandate.

One of the programs offered at the University of Graduate School is the Master in Business Administration degree. A Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree is a popular option for individuals looking to enhance their understanding of business. MBA programs typically feature courses in management, accounting, human resources, marketing, and operations. Some students may opt to keep their courses general, while others may specialize in a particular industry. Deciding to enroll in an MBA program is a significant step. Given that it is a post-graduate degree, there is a good chance that one may already have a successful career, familial commitments, or both, which can result in a full schedule. Thankfully, many institutions recognize that a typical MBA student's life is considerably different from an undergraduate's. Universities understand the need to craft MBA programs that can be worked into a student's already demanding professional and social calendar. While it is possible to earn an MBA and strike a healthy work-life balance, one may still wonder if the endeavor is worthwhile in terms of career prospects upon graduation. The good news is that employers continue to revere candidates with an MBA (Villanova School of Business, 2018).

In terms of salary, Graduate Management Admissions Council (GMAC) reported that the median salary of an MBA graduate is approximately \$88,000 per year. The figure is higher in Europe, where graduates can command almost \$95,000 per annum. MBA graduates are also rewarded with high salaries across Asia and South America, pointing to the plethora of international opportunities an MBA can unlock. According to Mihail (2006), analyzing

graduates' perceptions and attitudes, the findings indicate that MBA studies positively affect skills, employability, and compensation and have a much moderate effect on career advancement. An accredited MBA program seems to add value to graduates' managerial skills and employability in an ever- changing labor market.

The policies, standards, and guidelines for graduate programs in Business Administration, based on the Guidelines for the Implementation of CMO 46 series of 2012, implement the shift of learning competency-based standard/outcomes-based education. It specifies the core competencies expected of Masteral and Doctoral Programs in Business Administration graduates regardless of the type of HEI. However, in recognition of the spirit of outcomes-based education and alignment with the typology of HEIs, it provides ample space for HEIs to innovate their curriculum in line with the assessment on how best to achieve learning outcomes in their particular contexts and their respective missions (CHED Memorandum Order, 2016).

To enable the higher educational institutions (HEIs) to comply with the stipulations in the CHED Memorandum Order, there should be studies on the relevance of the existing curriculum to the graduates' success in the labor market so that the areas in the educational process that is currently provided in the Master in Business Administration that needs intervention should be addressed for the continuous quality of the educational services of the university. Thus, this study will determine the relevance of the Master in Business Administration curriculum towards the employability of the graduates. The findings of this study will serve as bases for a proposed program-level intervention scheme.

FRAMEWORK

This study anchor on the theory of credentialism that states that diplomas are intrinsically valuable, a situation described as credentialism (Bidner, 2010). The Weberian theory of educational credentialism views competition for credentials as a primary determinant of modern stratification systems. The elaborated vital issues include the relationship of educational expansion to economic growth, the relative importance of technical skills versus occupational status-group culture in degrees and recruitment, the significance of the formalization of degrees, and the peculiar dynamics of bureaucratic and professional credentialing markets (Brown, 2001).

The model overcomes an essential criticism of signaling models by mechanically tying workers' wages to their productivity. A worker's productivity is influenced by the skills of their coworkers, where such skills arise from an ability-augmenting investment that is made prior to matching with coworkers. A worker's credentials allow them to demonstrate their investment in the labor market, thereby allowing workers to match with high-skill coworkers in equilibrium. Despite the positive externality associated with a worker's investment, it shows how over-investment is pervasive in equilibrium (Bidner, 2010).

There are at least two interpretations of the dramatic increase in educational attainment experienced in the post-war period in many countries. The first is that it represents a natural response to the changing nature of work, including implementing new technologies that require highly skilled labor. A second perspective asserts that educational attainment is fueled, in part, by credentialism, whereby workers have an intrinsic demand for credentials. Proponents of this perspective assert that credentialing, not educating, has become the primary business of North American universities, that a resume without one or more degrees from a respected institution

will not be taken seriously enough even to be considered, no matter how able or informed the applicant may be (Jacobs, 2004) and that economic forces have made credentials the object rather than the byproduct of educational achievement (Labere, 1997).

The job-matching theory is based on the idea that the labor market is composed of jobs of many different skill and experience levels and workers of many different skill and experience levels. The most skilled workers (i.e., the most educated) should occupy the most skilled positions, and there is a mismatch if either the supply of educated workers or skilled positions surpass the other (Boudarbat & Chernoff, 2009). According to functionalist theory, economic and technological innovation generally raises the skill levels required to perform jobs. At the same time, manual labor jobs disappear as new knowledge-based jobs grow and the need for new knowledge increases within existing occupations. Thus, formal educational institutions must expand in order for individuals to learn the skills required for the more complex jobs (Rubinson & Browne, 1994). The technical, functional theory also asserts that education responds to industrial and economic growth. Educational institutions themselves become creators of new technologies and information, thereby increasing the complexity of jobs and sustaining educational growth (Walters, 2004).

Education in the broadest sense is essential for stimulating entrepreneurship for several reasons. First, education provides individuals with autonomy, independence, and self-confidence. These qualities are essential when starting a business. Second, education makes people aware of alternative career choices. Third, education broadens the horizons of individuals, thereby making people better equipped to perceive opportunities; and finally, education provides knowledge that individuals can use to develop new entrepreneurial opportunities (Hewitt, 2011). Therefore, if profitable opportunities for new economic activity exist, individuals with more or higher quality human capital should be better at perceiving them (Shepherd, 2003).

Hewitt (2011) further demonstrates the value of undertaking higher education, the fact that it leads to career success, and that learners that completed their higher education qualification are more likely to start their businesses. The productive potential that is considered human capital includes the right combination of knowledge, skills, and motivation to excel. These give the organization a competitive advantage (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2004). Human resources are the key to economic development. What the people consider meaningful goals in their lives- how they think about work, how creative or skillful they are, how intelligent and motivated they are- will determine whether their country will develop.

Labor is an essential resource. It is any form of human effort exerted to produce goods and services. Labor covers a wide range of skills, abilities, and characteristics. The supply of labor in a country is dependent on its production and on the percentage of its population that is willing to join the labor force. Naturally, a country with a high population growth rate is expected to develop a more extensive labor supply (Pagoso et al., 2013).

Human capital is the stock of competencies, knowledge, social and personality attributes, including cognitive creativity abilities, embodied in the ability to perform labor to produce economic value. It is an aggregate economic view of the human being acting within economies, which is an attempt to capture the social, biological, cultural, and psychological complexity as they interact in explicit and/or economic transactions. Formal education is one component of human capital that may assist in the accumulation of explicit knowledge that may provide skills valuable to graduates (Sorenson, 2015). Being educated, being more healthy, and so on, expand the lives directly and through their effects in making better resources for further production, thereby expanding the productivities and incomes. To correct what is missed in the narrower

perspective of human capital and human resource development, there is a need for a broader conception of development that concentrates on the enhancement of human lives and freedoms, no matter whether that enhancement is – or is not –intermediated through an expansion of commodity production (UNESCO, 2000).

Education is one of the principal means to build the defenses of peace in the mind of men and women everywhere. This is, therefore, a good moment for the international community to reflect on its understanding of, and commitment to, the right to education. Education is both a human right and a vital means of generally promoting peace and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. If its potential to build a more peaceful world is to be realized, education must be made universally available and equally accessible to all (UNESCO, 2000). The expansion of access to higher education and the proliferation of formal degree requirements for entry to employment have been enduring trends over the past century. The dominant U.S. ideology holds that this educational expansion and heightening of occupational entry requirements is necessary because of the increasingly complex demands of workplaces the need for skilled labor. The popular wisdom among the few critics of these expansion trends is that extensive links between schooling and vocational pursuits are neither necessary nor desirable because they lead to diminished academic inclinations among students who pursue degrees purely for their instrumental, sheepskin effects in job hunting (Brown, 2001).

As more and more employers are demanding postsecondary credentials for basic entry-level positions, many investigators are deeply concerned about whether postsecondary credentials are needed in the current labor market. Does a postsecondary education provide students with the skills they need to be successful (Walters, 2004)? Workers now require various skills to adapt to the constantly evolving requirements in the new knowledge-based and competitive economy (Walters, 2004). It is, therefore, important from a public policy perspective that graduates use their postsecondary education in their subsequent employment (Boudarbat & Chernoff, 2009).

Vertical mismatch of education (mismatch of the level of education and job) is not the only form of educational mismatch. Another essential form of mismatch is a horizontal mismatch (i.e., the field of study and job). Paying attention to the field of study is essential because it allows for analyzing different skills; education provides general human capital, and particular fields of study provide occupationally specific skills for the job market (Robst, 2007; Van de Werfhorst, 2002). Education mismatch can have significant labor market consequences for the mismatched individual, employers, and society (Boudarbat & Chernoff, 2009). Any educational institution aims to provide quality human resources acceptable to employers and society (Natarajan & Kumar, 2004; Orence & Laguador, 2013). Graduate Schools provide an environment for professionals to take advanced degree programs to intensify their chosen career paths. The Master in Business Administration (MBA) is among those professional degrees that prepare the student to enter the business world, and employability or professional advancement may be the desired outcome (MacKenzie, 2003).

Employees' perception confronts traditional views about higher education and raises questions of the point of having a higher degree is; course comprehension and understanding, or learning how to learn. This can lead to instability among academe anticipated to teach employability, skills, knowledge, and values in the classroom in line with modern European and international trends (Bueno, 2007). Graduate education is at the apex of the educational system. Graduate studies are one of the more effective means of improving the capacities of an education professional who aims to contribute to the continued improvement of teaching and learning in

the classrooms, delivery of student services, and management of educational programs. Graduate education is one of the most effective means of developing capacities related to doing research that will improve and practice in the many aspects of the educational process (CHED Memorandum Order No. 53, Series of 2007).

Employability contains different dimensions such as the actual competence of the individual, formal qualifications gained through educational activities, hard technical vocational employability skills, and soft skills, including transferable meta-competence and interpersonal skills. Employability is not only concerned with aspects that are also central to the understanding of the concept. Thus, when studying employability, it is essential to consider the following: 1) both soft and hard skills; 2) actual and formal competence; 3) personal characteristics; 4) attributes and talents of an individual; 5) social networks and structural factors; 6) the implicit and explicit requirement of the job; 7) the characteristics of the organization, and the 8) relations between them (Nilsson, 2010). According to Harvey & Knight (2003), employers generally value things in new graduates are those that most teachers in higher education generally value. This pertains to students who make an effort to fully participate in the total student experience related to academic, co-curricular, and work experience benefits from a well-rounded education that contributes fully to the life of the university and community.

At this point, the need for higher education has been thought of as an essential vehicle to alleviate a person's productivity and employability. This would lead him/her to generate more income, increase his prestige and power, and uplift his standard of living and social status. According to Arzu Akkoyunlu –Wigley and Simon-Wigley (2008), the value of education is commonly measured in terms of its ability to improve economic growth or the earnings of individuals. Education is becoming an even more prominent place in people's lives as its role among the forces at work in modern societies increases. There are several reasons for this. The traditional division of life into separate periods – childhood and youth devoted to schooling, adulthood and working life, and retirement – no longer corresponds to things as they are today and corresponds still less to the future demands. Today, no one can hope to amass an initial fund of knowledge during his or her youth that will serve for a lifetime. The swift changes taking place in the world call for knowledge to be continuously updated, and at the same time, the initial education of young people tends to become more protracted. A shorter working life, shorter working hours, and a longer expectancy of life after retirement also increase the time available for other activities (UNESCO, 2000).

Universities have taken different approaches in how they develop graduate employability skills. Therefore, the connection between higher education and employment has elicited keen interest among researchers as it takes up a significant share of the education budget. The significant output of an educational institution is its graduates. They can measure efficiency, but the total score is still on their employability and their inclusion in the workforce. The number of graduates and employment must be directly proportionate. However, the fewer employers have, the more challenging competition among the graduates becomes (Macatangay, 2013). There are many reasons for going to university, including – naturally – a love of the subject to be studied and the opportunity to experience a different way of life. Higher education is much more than a production line for work-ready graduates. Nevertheless, there is no denying that people see higher education as a stepping stone to a good job. People mainly value higher education as apprenticeships, further education, and adult and community learning.

While there are variations in the classification of employability, there is a broad understanding of what qualities, characteristics, skills, and knowledge constitute employability in

general and specifically for graduates. Employers expect graduates to have technical and discipline competencies from their degrees but require graduates to demonstrate a range of broader skills and attributes that include teamwork, communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem-solving, and managerial abilities. Arguably, specific definitions are less important than an agreed focus on approaches to promote such transferable skills and fostering attributes that will enable graduates to find appropriate employment, progress in their work and thus facilitate the success of their organizations and contribute to society and the economy (Lowden et al., 2011). Developing one's career is ultimately one's responsibility. No matter how careful an employer plans for employees in today's technologically and socially complex world, the chances of career mismanagement are substantial unless the employee takes an active role on his or her behalf (Rashid, 2005).

Employability enhancement is a burning topic in the present world. To sustain in this competitive world, every human needs the capacity to adapt themselves through their skills, efficiency, and knowledge. To build up a nation and improve one's capability, power of knowledge skill and education are the most vital part of every country. The economic development of a country comes through proper education. Education does not mean that one has to be a good scholar. Education is a power at work that molds people. They are being molded to rely on higher critical thinking (van der Heijden, 2002). The relevance and effectiveness of students' learning from the higher educational institutions where they graduate concerning their employability requires proper linkage between the economy and labor market to avoid mismatch of skills requirements and other qualifications. Therefore, the requirements of industries need to be communicated to higher educational institutions and the government to enable them to assist in developing future skills and career development policies (Macatangay, 2003).

The meaning of employability is individual, contextual, and relational (Clarke, 2008). What it means to be employable varies with the profession, individual prerequisites, and the competence requirements of the specific job. This is evident in the case of engineering as it is a heterogeneous profession, meaning that the graduate graduates from this educational program tend to end up in a wide array of positions on the labor market and are engaged in widely different kinds of work (Nilsson, 2010). For example, in different contexts, depending on the position, different kinds of hard and soft employability skills are needed. Some aspects of competence cannot be assumed to be deployed without problems arising but are instead shaped by the actual context of the work (Guile, 2002). Employability refers to attributes of the individual and is also developed through participation in different communities of practice.

Employability contains different dimensions such as the actual competence of the individual, formal qualifications gained through educational activities, hard technical vocational employability skills, and soft skills, including transferable meta-competence interpersonal skills. Employability is not only concerned with aspects associated with the individual. It is a relational concept, and contextual aspects are also central in understanding the concept. Thus, when studying employability, it is essential to consider both soft and hard skills, actual and formal competence, personal characteristics, attributes and talents of an individual, social networks, as well as structural factors, the implicit and explicit requirements of the job, the characteristics of the organization, and the relations between them (Nilsson, 2010).

Brown and Hesketh (2004) further argue that there is an apparent mismatch between individuals' expectations of employability and the realities posed by the labor market. Under these conditions, students will use several tactics in the labor market to maintain a competitive advantage.

Harvey and Knight (2003) opined that there are two broad approaches to defining employability; job getting and individual development attributes. The first relates to the ability of a graduate to get a job. These definitions include varying levels of qualification about the nature and timing of the job and the ability to retain and succeed in the job. In this sense, employability is defined on a range that varies from the ability to secure a job after graduation through; the ability to secure a graduate (or appropriate) job within a specified time after graduation; the ability to secure a graduate (or appropriate) job within a specified time after graduation, to retain the post and to develop and succeed within the chosen career.

Working life is characterized by complexities and insecurities an individual may experience due to, in part, the development of new knowledge, technological innovation, increased division of labor, deteriorating job security, internationalization, and competition associated with new professional and organizational demands (Nerland & Jensen, 2007). Predicting what competence one will need to become and remain a successful practitioner and effectively manage one's employability has become increasingly tricky (Barnett, 2004). Moreover, competencies can be considered along a spectrum; needed to survive in the workforce, to a range of advanced competencies needed to sustain employability, and advanced competencies needed to sustain employability and advance in one's career (Marquis & Huston, 2009).

Employees are more critical to success than the particular professional knowledge or skill. Indeed, more people fail because they do not adequately possess their trade skills. The higher a person climbs the ladder, the more he/she gets into the administrative or executive work, the greater the emphasis on the ability to work within the organization rather than on technical competence or professional knowledge (Drucker, 2005). People also need the opportunities to do things differently, access relevant training, and, most crucially, employment (Brown & Hesketh, 2004).

Menez (2014) explained that the Master of Business Administration is a program meant for those students who are preparing themselves with the skills and competency in functional areas such as business and law, accounting and finance, marketing and management, strategic decision-making process, and other matters about business and societal issues. As any graduate education of uncertain claimed that graduate school represents the apex of the entire educational system, a graduate program requires plenty of work in acquiring specialized skills to earn the degree Master in Business Administration.

Moreover, it is of practical importance that studies relating to credentialism and relevance of the curriculum and the graduates' jobs should also be considered. The following sections are the related studies that relate to the topic.

In his study, Walters (2004) cross-tabulates a question about whether employers requested a specific postsecondary credential for the job and compares this to whether graduates used the skills and knowledge they acquired in their postsecondary education on the job. The author finds a strong connection between occupationally specific disciplines but not general ones.

In the study of Bueno (2017) about ascertaining the curriculum relevance of the graduate school through tracer study in a Philippine private higher education institution, the graduates of the various programs in the graduate school were employed in regular or permanent status. They are now occupying supervisory and managerial positions and are highly satisfied with their basic salary. The graduate curricula respond to the needs of the various industries. Administration and governance, curriculum and instruction, research, professional and cognate courses, students services, library, internet laboratory, interdisciplinary learning, and teaching/learning

environment are the school-related factors relevant to the current employment of the graduates. Communication, human relations, entrepreneurship, information technology, problem-solving, critical thinking, research skills are relevant skills learned. Their workplaces are the values of love of God, honesty, punctuality, obedience to superiors, perseverance, creativity, professional integrity, unity, fairness, love for others, nationalism, and being eco-friendly. Thus, the graduate school is continuously nurturing and embracing the quality of education.

In the study conducted by Menez (2014), it was found out that 96 percent of the Masters in Business Administration graduates from 2008-2012 are gainfully employed locally with regular status and are holding professional and managerial positions. The MBA course has contributed to the graduate's professional advancement. Communication, human and technical skills, and the values of love of God, honesty, love for truth, perseverance, and hard work are very relevant to their job.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to trace the employment status of the Master in Business Administration (MBA) graduates of the University of Cebu Graduate School for the school years 2015-2018. The findings served as bases for a proposed program-level intervention plan. Specifically, this study seeks to determine the profile of the graduates; reasons of graduates for taking the undergraduate and graduate course; the employment status of the MBA graduates; for those graduates who are not employed, the reasons for unemployment, while for those who are employed, their employment data. It further shows reasons for staying in the job; the relatedness of the first job to the college course; and reasons for accepting the job for those whose job is their first job and for those whose job is not their first job; strategies used in finding the first job and length of time in landing the first job; job level position for their first job and current or present job, the gross monthly earnings in the first and current job; relevance of the curriculum in the first and current/present job; and promotions attained after finishing the Master in Business Administration.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the research design, research environment, research respondents, research instrument, research procedures and treatment of data.

Research Design

This study utilized the descriptive research design using a standardized tool devised by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in tracing the employment data of the graduates of Master in Business Administration of the University of Cebu-Graduate School for the school years 2015-2018.

Research Environment

The study was conducted at the University of Cebu is, a non-stock and non-profit corporation duly registered under the Securities and Exchange Commission. It is a private educational institution that provides quality education at low tuition fees. The main building is

located at Sanciangko Street, Cebu City. The Graduate School offers various programs such as Master in Business Administration (MBA), Doctor in Business Administration (DBA), Master in Criminal Justice (MSCJ), Doctor of Philosophy in Criminology major in Criminal Justice (Ph.D. Crim.), Master in Hotel and Restaurant Management (MSHRM), Master of Science in Teaching (MST), and Doctor in Education (EdD.).

Research Respondents

The respondents of this study were the graduates of Master in Business Administration of the University of Cebu Graduate School for the school years 2015-2018. Using the purposive sampling technique, two hundred ninety-three (293) graduates served as respondents in this study.

Research Instrument

The instrument utilized in this study was the Graduate Tracer Survey (GTS), a standardized tool designed by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). It has twelve (12) sections with 34 items.

Research Procedures

The researchers wrote a letter addressed to the Dean of the University of Cebu Graduate School asking permission to conduct the study. Another letter was sent to the Registrar's Office for the total number of graduates in the Master of Business Administration for the school years, 2015-2018, requesting assistance for their contact information. When all of the requests were approved, the survey tool was administered to graduates through the assistance of the Graduate School Office, who have more contact with the graduates, especially those who would request for the release of their scholastic records such as diploma and Transcript of Records (TOR).

Treatment of Data

The gathered data were collated, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted using the appropriate statistical tool. Simple percentages were used to determine the profile of the respondents and their employments data, and the rank was used to interpret the data relating to the questions that entail multiple responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents analyzes, and interprets data on the profile, employment data, relevance of the Master in Business Administration curriculum to the graduates' job of the school years 2015-2018. The data are presented in tabular form with corresponding analysis and interpretation. The data sources were the answers of the graduates in the Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) questionnaire.

The data in Table 1 shows that the majority of 67.60 % of the Master in Business Administration (MBA) graduates were still single at the time of the study.

On the other hand, only one (1) or equivalent to 0.30% of the total respondents were already widowed. This data relates to the current behavior manifested by the present generation of young adults who emphasized the importance of attaining career advancement while they are still single. So, it is the trend nowadays that those who have just graduated from college and have

newly been employed would enroll in the Master in Business Administration (MBA) program to find a job that offers a higher position and salary. The students in the MBA programs were within the age bracket of 22-20 years old.

Table 1. Profile of the Graduates (n=293)

Profile	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Civil Status		
Single	198	67.60
Married	77	26.30
Annulled/ Separated	2	0.70
Single Parent	15	5.10
Widowed	1	0.30
Gender		
Male	78	26.60
Female	215	73.40
Location of Residence		
City	164	56.00
Municipality	129	44.00

Therefore, gone are the days wherein those who will enroll in the master's program belong to the supervisory and managerial levels. The current generation is already interested in obtaining the MBA even though they are still in the rank-and-file position since they believe that they will find a better job or transfer to a higher position once they can get the diploma. Moreover, 56.00 % of the MBA graduates resided in Cebu City at the time of the survey, while the remaining 44.00 % or 129 graduates were already residents from the different municipalities and neighboring provinces of Cebu. It is expected that the graduates of MBA tend to stay and work in Cebu City since there are lots of job opportunities compared to other cities outside Manila. These graduates tend to venture into high-paying jobs that would fit and compensate for their capabilities and educational background.

Table 2.1. Reasons of the Under Graduate Course

Reasons for Taking the (Undergraduate) Course	Frequency (f)	Rank
1. High Grade in the Course	44	10
2. High Grade in Highschool	62	5
3. Parents/Relatives	80	3
4. Peer Influence	44	10
5. Inspired by Role Model	57	6
6. Passion for the Profession	87	1
7. Prospect for the Employment	85	2
8. Status/Prestige	44	10
9. Available Course	52	7
10. Career Advancement	63	4
11. Affordable	52	7
12. Attractive Compensation	47	9
13. Employment Abroad	36	13
14. No Particular Choice	15	14

* multiple response

On the other hand, the slightest reason for taking the course was that when they enroll for college, they do not have any particular choice in the school where they are convenient to study.

One of the culprits for this decision relates to their financial capability to afford a particular course. So, the tendency is to enroll in the course and school they can afford or their benefactor. Graduate education is part of the most effective means of developing capacities related to doing research that will improve educational theory and practice in different aspects of the education process (Bueno, 2017). Recognizing the reality in today's academic world, the role of higher education institutions cannot only be limited to imparting knowledge but also to contribute to maintaining a competitive economy and, most important of all, to secure the dream of graduates to get jobs and become socially recognized and successful in their respective field of endeavors (Menez, 2014).

Table 2.2. Reasons for Taking Master in Business Administration

Reasons	Frequency (f)	Rank
1. High Grade in the Course	32	11
2. High Grade in High School	22	13
3. Parents/Relatives	42	10
4. Peer Influence	66	8
5. Inspired by Role Model	88	6
6. Passion for the Profession	139	2
7. Prospect for Employment	96	5
8. Status/Prestige	109	4
9. Available Course	45	9
10. Career Advancement	209	1
11. Affordable	25	12
12. Attractive Compensation	120	3
13. Employment Abroad	71	7
14. No Particular Choice	12	14

Since the Master in Business Administration program accepts students with various undergraduate degrees, the students taking this course have various educational backgrounds with different working experiences across different industries. The data reveals that the respondents' foremost reason for enrolling in the MBA program was for career advancement. Amid stiff competition in the job market for business degree holders, having a master's degree is one stepping stone for being promoted and qualified for higher job positions. However, the most unpopular reason they took the MBA program was that they did not have any other particular choice. They probably place more consideration on convenience and financial capability just to obtain a master's degree.

According to Mihail (2006), analyzing graduates' perceptions and attitudes, MBA studies positively affect skills, employability, and compensation and have a much moderate effect on career advancement. An accredited MBA program seems to add value to graduates' managerial skills and employability in an ever- changing labor market.

The data contained in Table 4 shows that out of the two hundred nine-three (293) respondents, there were two hundred sixty-five (265) who were employed at the time of the administration of the survey, comprising 90.40%, while the remaining twenty-eight (28) or 9.60% were not employed. For those who were employed, 83.00 % had a regular employment status, while only six (6) or equivalent to 4.20 %, had temporary job status. It can be noted in the data that there were eleven (11) respondents who were self-employed or they already have their own business.

Table 3. Employment Status of the Graduates

Indicators	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Present Status (n=293)		
Employed	265	90.40
Unemployed	28	9.60
Present employment status (n=265)		
Regular or Permanent	220	83.00
Temporary	11	4.20
Casual	6	2.30
Contractual	17	6.40
Self-employed	11	4.20

In the study of Bueno (2017) about ascertaining the curriculum relevance of the graduate school through tracer study in a Philippine private higher education institution, the graduates of the various programs in the graduate school were employed in regular or permanent status. Moreover, education in the broadest sense is essential for stimulating entrepreneurship for several reasons. First, education provides individuals with autonomy, independence, and self-confidence. These qualities are essential when starting a business. Second, education makes people aware of alternative career choices. Third, education broadens the horizons of individuals, thereby making people better equipped to perceive opportunities; and finally, education provides knowledge that individuals can use to develop new entrepreneurial opportunities (Hewitt, 2011).

Table 4. Reasons for Unemployment

Indicators	Frequency (f)	Rank
Advance or further studies	4	1
Family Concentration	3	2
Health Reasons	1	3

**multiple response*

For the twenty-eight (28) respondents who were not working or unemployed at the time of the survey, their foremost reason was that they were still taking advanced or further studies (ranked first), followed by family consideration (ranked second), and for health reasons (3rd rank). Those four (4) respondents who did not work were those who focus on their masters' studies or are recipients of scholarship grants wherein they can avail of financial support without the need for them to work so that they can concrete in their study. Competencies can be considered along a spectrum; needed to survive in the workforce, to a range of advanced competencies needed to sustain employability and advanced competencies needed to sustain employability and advance in one career (Marquis & Huston, 2009).

So to be able to learn more competencies, employees have to undertake further studies to update and deepen their knowledge in business and management. In this manner, the employee will be assured that he/she can still be of value in the working arena. Some tend to concentrate on their family, especially those who have children who need more parents' attention and care. So, instead of working, a college graduate would sacrifice to concentrate on doing the household chores and taking care of the children. Moreover, some stopped working because they were suffering from health related-problems or any diseases. Some of them cannot even work anymore due to physical incapability caused by the disease.

The occupation of the majority (57.00 %) of Master in Business Administration graduates was as professionals or provision of professional service. On the other hand, one (1) answered

that his occupation relates to farming and fishery. With the implementation of the K to 12 Enhanced Basic Education System and an additional two (2) more years in the senior high school level, there had been increased hiring and demand for teachers in the Accounting, Business, and Management (ABM) Strand. So, a good number of those who already had a bachelor's degree in business, management, accounting, finance, and related fields took a Diploma in Professional Education (DPE) or and Certificate in Professional Education (CPE) and took the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). Once they obtained the license, they applied as a public senior high school teacher. Since they already have a professional license, their work already relates to providing professional service as teachers.

Table 5. Present Occupation of the Graduates and Major Line of Business of their Employer (n=265)

Indicators	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Present Occupation		
Government Office	63	23.80
Professional	151	57.00
Technical Association Professional	12	4.50
Clerk	16	6.00
Service Work	5	1.90
Farmer, Fishery	1	0.40
Trades and Related workers	4	1.50
Special Occupation	7	2.60
Did not indicate	6	2.30
Major line of business of the respondents' present employer		
Fishing	1	0.40
Mining	4	1.50
Manufacturing	20	7.50
Electric Water	1	0.40
Construction	10	3.80
Wholesale, Trade	21	7.90
Hotels and Restaurants	16	6.00
Transport	16	6.00
Financial	51	19.20
Real Estate	20	7.50
Public Advisory	6	2.30
Education	60	22.60
Health Science Work	6	2.30
Social Service	10	3.80
Private Household	1	0.40
Extra Territory	4	1.50
Did not Indicate	18	6.80

The occupation of the majority (57.00 %) of Master in Business Administration graduates was as professionals or provision of professional service. On the other hand, one (1) answered that his occupation relates to farming and fishery. With the implementation of the K to 12 Enhanced Basic Education System and an additional two (2) more years in the senior high school level, there had been increased hiring and demand for teachers in the Accounting, Business, and

Management (ABM) Strand. So, a good number of those who already had a bachelor's degree in business, management, accounting, finance, and related fields took a Diploma in Professional Education (DPE) or and Certificate in Professional Education (CPE) and took the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). Once they obtained the license, they applied as a public senior high school teacher. Since they already have a professional license, their work already relates to providing professional service as teachers.

On the other hand, working in the farming and fishing sector is not a common occupation of a degree holder in the business discipline. So, it is rare to find a graduate of MBA to concentrate in this sector or industry. In addition, there were sixty (60) respondents, comprising of 22.60%, who were working in the academe or education sector. These respondents were the faculty members teaching accounting, management, finance, entrepreneurship, marketing, and other business-related subjects or courses. The undergraduate degrees of these respondents are in the areas of accounting, business administration, hotel and restaurant management, and tourism since there is already a policy on vertical alignment between the undergraduate course and the masters' degree for the teachers in higher education institutions (HEIs).

Universities have taken different approaches in how they develop graduate employability skills. The significant output of an educational institution is its graduates. They can be a measure of efficiency, but the total score is still on their employability and inclusion in the workforce. The number of graduates and employment must be directly proportionate. However, the fewer employers have, the tough competition among the graduates becomes (Macatangay, 2013).

Table 6. Place of Work and Gross Monthly Earning (n=293)

Indicators	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Place of Work		
Local	265	100.0
Gross Monthly earning (1st Job)		
Below Php 5,000.00	13	4.44
Php 5,000.00 - below Php 10,000.00	123	41.98
Php 10,000.00 - below Php 15,000.00	95	32.42
Php 15,000.00 - below Php 20,000.00	33	11.26
Php 20,000.00 - below Php 25,000.00	8	2.73
Php 25,000.00 and above	9	3.07
Did not provide an answer	12	4.10

The data contained in Table 6 reveals that all of the two hundred sixty-five (265) respondents were working in the Philippines or locally. Further, one hundred twenty-three (123), comprising 41.98 %, earned within Php 5,000.00 and below Php 10,000.00. This income level could be considered as low against the current living standards in Cebu City since it is even below the minimum income level of Php 10,000.00 per month for 26-working days in a month. Based on the Philippine Statistics Authority, those who earned between Php 7,890.00 to Php 15,780.00 per month are the low-income earner but not poor (Albert et al., 2015).

On the other hand, eight (8) earned within Php 20,000.00 - below Php 25,000.00, while another nine (9) respondents self-reported that they were earning at Php 25,000.00 and above. This income level was for those who belonged to the lower-middle-income group. Albert et al. (2015) further explained that those who earned between Php 15, 780.00 to Php 31, 560.00 were considered lower-middle-income earners based on the calculations from the 2012 Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES) and Philippine Statistics Authority.

Table 7. Reasons for Staying in the Job

Indicators	Frequency (f)	Rank
Salary and benefits	65	1
Career challenge	60	2
Related to special skills	42	4
Related to course or program of study	51	3
Proximity to residence	26	5
Peer Influence	7	7
Family Influence	13	6

The data contained in Table 7 shows that the primary reason for the respondents to stay in their job was salary and benefits. These respondents received a salary level that was above the industry rate and the minimum wage rate. Ideally, if the employees perceive that their salary and benefits are commensurate with their competencies, skills, and abilities, they have a lesser propensity to resign and look for another job or employer. On the contrary, seven (7) respondents disclosed that their reason to remain in the job or employer was peer influence. However, this reason is so uncommon for employees to be loyal in the company since it is a natural human behavior that if a person is confronted with better opportunities to earn more income, benefit, and working conditions, then the person would grab such chance for the so-called “greener pastures.” This grouping formed by the employees forge bondage and connection beyond their job performance, yet it will give happiness and social support to each one of the employees whenever one experiences family and work-related problems.

Table 8. Relatedness of the Job to the College Course and Reasons for Accepting the Job (n=293)

Indicators	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Relatedness of the First Job to the College Course		
Yes	84	28.70
No	38	13.00
Did not Indicate	171	58.40
Reasons for accepting the job		
	Frequency	Rank
Salaries & benefits	49	2
Career Challenge	58	1
Related to special skills	44	3
Proximity to residence	21	4

**multiple response*

The data contained in Table 8 shows that out of the two hundred ninety-three (293) employees, there were eighty-two (84) or equivalent to 28.70 % who answered that their undergraduate course relates to their first job, while the thirty-eight (38) respondents answered that their course is not related to the first job. These employees work in a job that is not in the business sector, wherein the competencies taught in school were not applicable in the performance of their job. However, there were one hundred seven-one (171) respondents who did not provide an answer or information about the relatedness of the course to their job. Vertical mismatch of education (mismatch of the level of education and job) is not the only form of educational mismatch. Another essential form of mismatch is a horizontal mismatch (i.e., the field of study and job). Paying attention to the field of study is essential because it allows for analyzing different skills; education provides general human capital, and particular fields of study provide occupationally specific skills for the job market (Robst, 2007; Van de Werfhorst, 2002). Further, the data reveals the reasons for accepting the job. The primary reason why the

respondents accepted the job was for career challenges. Commonly, the new graduates or the younger working force are very aggressive in taking on challenging jobs since these people are very willing to learn new things.

Workers now require various skills to adapt to the constantly evolving requirements in the new knowledge-based and competitive economy (Walters, 2004). It is, therefore, important from a public policy perspective that graduates use their postsecondary education in their subsequent employment (Boudarbat & Chernoff, 2009). Additionally, twenty-one (21) respondents considered more on the proximity of the place of work to their residence. Accessibility of the employer's location from the place of residence of the employee is understandably a valid reason for accepting the job, especially if the payor's salary is within the minimum wage level or a little way above. The employee can save on transportation costs and traveling time to work every day. Another consideration is the worsening traffic congestion, especially in Cebu due to the increasing population, the number of vehicles, and business establishments. So choosing to work in a company near the residence is an efficient manner of thinking.

Table 9. Reasons for Changing Job

Indicators	Frequency (f)	Rank
Reason(s) for Changing Job		
Salaries & benefits	155	2
Career challenge	171	1
Related to special skills	51	3
Proximity to residence	47	4
<i>* multiple response</i>		
Length of time in staying in the first job		
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1 to 1month	4	1.50
1 to 6 months	53	20.00
7 to 11 months	24	9.06
1 year to less than 2 years	59	22.26
2 years to less than 3 years	47	17.76
3 years to less than 4 years	41	15.47
Did not indicate	37	13.96

The data contained in Table 9 reveals that career challenge was the primary reason why they changed jobs or transferred to another employee. Usually, those younger and single employees have a high probability of hopping from one job to the other in their quest for a higher salary, better benefits, and good working conditions. Aside from that, they are also at the stage where they look for more challenges to learn those skills and aspects that they could learn in school. The current generation of the workforce tends to be more adventurous before settling in a job after many years of changing from one employer to the other. Nonetheless, the less common reason for changing jobs was the proximity of the workplace to the residence of the workers. Ideally, when the employee can find a job that is nearer to his/her place of residence, he/she has more inclination to resign and move to another company or employer where the fare and transit time would be lesser.

Regarding the length of time that the respondents stayed in the first job, more stayed for one year and less than two (2) years. This length of service is relative. It means that the employees only stayed for more than six (6) months after their regularization since the probationary period in the Philippines as stipulated in the Labor Code is six (6) months also.

However, an employer cannot stop an employee from resigning and transferring to another job as long as such employee abides by the 30 days-notice and other provisions of the law.

Table 10. Strategies Used to Find the First Job and Length of Time in Finding the First Job (n=293)

Indicators	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Strategies Used to Find the First Job		
Advertisement	54	18.40
As walk-in Applicant	93	31.70
Someone Recommended	93	31.70
Information from friends	25	8.50
School Job Fair	11	3.80
Family Business	6	2.00
PESO (Public Employment Service Office)	8	2.70
Others	3	1.00
Length of Time to Land the First Job		
Less than a month	153	52.20
1 to 6 months	100	34.10
7 to 11 months	5	1.70
1 year to less than 2 years	10	3.40
2 years less than 3 years	3	1.00
3 years less than 4 years	2	0.70
Did not indicate	20	6.80

The data shows that out of the two hundred ninety-three (293) respondents, there were ninety-three (93) or 31.70 % who was able to find a job as a walk-in applicant to the company or business enterprises, while another ninety-three (93) or equivalent to 31.70 % was able to land in a job through recommendation by someone. This data denotes that for a graduate of any business course, one can find a job by directly applying to the company since they are different positions he/she can fill in since these courses encompass various disciplines in business, management, accounting, and other related fields of work. Another effective means of finding a job is through recommendation by a friend, since most, if not all of the employers, would ask for applicants through endorsement from somebody they know and are reliable, of known probity and integrity.

Any educational institution aims to provide quality human resources acceptable to employers and society (Natarajan & Kumar, 2004; Orence & Laguador, 2013). Some graduates were able to work in the family business. This means their employer is related to them either through consanguinity or affinity. The employer could have their parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunties, cousins, or other distant relatives in the current scenario. In this arrangement, they are already given higher management responsibility in managing the financial and human resources in the organization since they are already trusted employees.

Further, the majority of 52.20 % of the employees could find a job in less than a month, while there were only two (2) graduates who landed a job in three (3) years or less than four years. This means that the graduates of any business-related degree are highly employable in various nature of the business activity, in the academe, and other business enterprises, so it would be easy for them to be employed. However, it is quite intriguing why a few took them three years to work for the first time after graduating from college. These graduates choose for voluntary employment, or it is their personal intention of not finding a job for various reasons.

Table 11. Job Level Position (n=293)

Indicators	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Job Level Position in the First Job		
Rank or clerical	192	65.5
Professional, technical or Supervisory	72	24.6
Managerial or Executive	9	3.1
Proprietor	1	0.3
Did not indicate	19	6.5
Job Level Position in the Current or Present Job		
Rank or Clerical	79	29.8
Professional, Technical or Supervisory	132	49.8
Managerial or executive	45	17.0
Self-employed	9	3.4

The data in Table 11 shows that out of all the respondents in this survey, 65.50 % (192 respondents) were able to work as rank-and-file employees, wherein the nature of their job was more clerical. It is prevalent that before an employee rises to higher ranks or positions in the organization, they will experience the lower-level job position so that they will be able to learn different types of jobs before being given any supervisory or managerial position. One (1) respondent is the proprietor of his or her own business. A proprietor is an entrepreneur who owns and manages a single or sole proprietorship business. This means that he or she makes changes in all the aspects of the operations of the enterprises' business.

Furthermore, there were one hundred thirty-two (132) whose current job relates to professional, technical, or supervisor level. This means that there were more graduates of MBA who were already in a higher job level position. This result indicates that the respondents were able to attain their purpose of pursuing graduate studies, that is, for career advancement, passion for the profession, and also attained high status or prestige. It can be noted that there were nine (9) or 3.40 % who were already self-employed. So, the data denotes that after taking graduate studies, additional respondents ventured into business.

Human capital is the stock of competencies, knowledge, social and personality attributes, including cognitive creativity abilities, embodied in the ability to perform labor to produce economic value. It is an aggregate economic view of human beings acting within economies to capture the social, biological, cultural, and psychological complexity as they interact in explicit and/or economic transactions. Formal education is one component of human capital that may assist in accumulating explicit knowledge that may provide skills practical to graduates (Sorenson, 2015).

Table 12. Gross Monthly Earnings

Income Range	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
<i>Initial Gross Monthly Earning in the First Job After College (n=293)</i>		
Below 5, 000.00	13	4.40
Php 5,000.00 to less than Php10,000.00	123	42.00
Php 10,000.00 to less than Php15,000.00	95	32.40
Php 15,000.00 to less than Php 20,000.00	33	11.30
Php 20,000.00 to less than Php 25,000.00	8	2.70
Php 25, 000.00 and above	9	3.10
Did not indicate the answer	12	4.10
<i>Gross Monthly Earnings in the Current Job (n=265)</i>		
Below 5, 000	1	0.40
P5,000.00 to less than P10,000.00	12	4.50
P10,000.00 to less than P15,000.00	62	23.40
P15,000.00 to less than P20,000.00	64	24.20
P20,000.00 to less than P25,000.00	51	19.20
P25, 000.00 and above	75	28.30

Table 12 shows that one hundred twenty-three (123) or equivalent to 42.00% who earned a salary of P 5,000 to less than 10,000 during their first job. It is understood that a new graduate will be employed as a rank-and-file and earned within the minimum wage level. However, nine (9) have received a monthly salary of Php 25,000.00 and above. In the current job of the graduates, there were seventy-five (75), comprising 28.30 % who earned at Php 25,000.00 and above, while there was only one (1) who earned below Php 5,000.00. This data clearly shows that having an MBA degree can be a vehicle in uplifting one job position and the income or income level. In the study of Bueno (2017) about ascertaining the curriculum relevance of the graduate school through tracer study in a Philippine private higher education institution, the graduates of the various programs in the graduate school were employed in regular or permanent status. They are now occupying supervisory and managerial positions and are highly satisfied with their basic salary. According to Arzu Akkoyunlu –Wigley and SimonWigley (2008), the value of education is commonly measured in terms of its ability to improve economic growth or the earnings of individuals.

Table 13.1 displays the data that the majority (225 respondents), or equivalent to 76.80%, answered that the undergraduate degree of the respondents was relevant to their first job. This means that their learning in the subjects that they enrolled in college was helpful in their performance in their job or assigned. However, fifty-seven (57) or 19.50 % responded that their college curriculum was related to their job. Understandably, these respondents were those whose jobs were not directly related to the business. They cannot say that what they had learned in college was directly helpful in the performance of their first job.

Table 13.1. Relevance of the Curriculum in College to the Job and Competencies Learned

Indicators	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
Relevance of the Curriculum to the First Job		
Yes	225	76.80
No	57	19.50
Did not indicate answer	11	3.80
Competencies Learned in that are Useful in the First Job		
Communication Skills	218	1
Human Relations Skills	201	2
Entrepreneurial Skills	102	6
Information Technology Skills	112	5
Problem Solving Skills	181	4
Critical Thinking Skills	182	3

* multiple response

Communication skills were foremost in terms of the competencies they learned in college, while entrepreneurial skills were the least. In the business arena, communication skills are beneficial to land a job since it entails an employee to converse with the customers/clients and their co-employees. So, during the interview process, those graduates with communication skills would likely be hired. On the other hand, the entrepreneurial ability cannot be expected from a fresh graduate unless they are already exposed to the world of business through family business or in a job while still studying. While there are variations in the classification of employability, there is a broad understanding of what qualities, characteristics, skills, and knowledge constitute employability in general and specifically for graduates. Employers expect graduates to have technical and discipline competencies from their degrees but require graduates to demonstrate a range of broader skills and attributes that include team-working, communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem-solving, and managerial abilities. Arguably, specific definitions are less important than an agreed focus on approaches to promote such transferable skills and fostering attributes that will enable graduates to find appropriate employment, progress in their work and thus facilitate the success of their organizations and contribute to society and the economy (Lowden et al., 2011).

Table 13.2. Relevance of the MBA Curriculum to the Job and Competencies Learned

Indicators	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Relevance of the MBA Curriculum to the First Job		
Yes	254	95.80
No	11	4.20
Competencies Learned in the Graduate School that are Useful in your Current Job		
	Frequency	Rank
Communication Skill	220	2
Human Relations Skill	224	1
Entrepreneurial Skill	151	5
Information Technology Skills	110	6
Problem Solving	209	3
Critical Thinking Skill	209	3
Others	2	7

Table 13.2 shows that the majority, comprising 95.80 % of the respondents, considered that the Master in Business Administration curriculum was relevant to their current job. This means that their learning in the different courses they took in graduate school was relevant in their present job. Only (11) respondents disclosed that there was no relevance of the MBA curriculum concerning their job. A worker's productivity is influenced by the skills of their coworkers, where such skills arise from an ability-augmenting investment that is made prior to matching with coworkers. A worker's credentials allow them to demonstrate their investment in the labor market, thereby allowing workers to match with high-skill coworkers in equilibrium. Despite the positive externality associated with a worker's investment, it shows how over-investment is pervasive in equilibrium (Bidner, 2010).

Table 14. Promotion After Finishing Master in Business Administration (n=293)

Indicators	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
No	69	23.5
Yes	145	49.5
Did not indicate an answer	79	27.0

One hundred forty-five (145) or 49.50% of those who had finished graduate degrees were not promoted to a higher job position. On the other hand, sixty-nine (69) or 23.50% answered that they were not promoted to a higher job position after finishing the Master in Business Administration degree. Further, there were seventy-nine (79) or 27.00 % who did not provide an answer as to whether they get promoted once they obtain the master's degree. The Weberian theory of educational credentialism views competition for credentials as a primary determinant of modern stratification systems. The elaborated vital issues include the relationship of educational expansion to economic growth, the relative importance of technical skills versus occupational status-group culture in degrees and recruitment, the significance of the formalization of degrees, and the peculiar dynamics of bureaucratic and professional credentialing markets (Brown, 2001).

CONCLUSIONS

Graduate schools are apparently employable in various fields of business, including education. Since career advancement was the reason for taking advance or further studies in business, expectedly, there are manifestations of career progression after the students obtained the graduate degree in terms of position and salary level, as well as benefits. Further, the Master in Business Administration (MBA) curriculum offers courses or subjects that are relevant in the performance of the graduates' job and leads them to attain promotion, coupled with advanced competencies in communications skills, human relations skills, problem-solving, and critical thinking ability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

So, there is a need to undertake intervention schemes to reinforce the enhancement of the students to acquire and be developed in various areas in business and industry. In the context of the results of the study, the following recommendations are made: 1) that the proposed program level intervention plan should be implemented in the University of Cebu Graduate School; 2) that the academic administrators of the University of Cebu Graduate School consider the implementation of various intervention activities that would expand the skills and abilities of the students in the aspect of business communication, human relation, problem-solving, and critical thinking which are essential in attaining success in the corporate business ladder; 3) that the contents of the proposed intervention scheme be cascaded to all academic units of the University of Cebu system to ensure that the students of the graduate school will be equipped with extensive knowledge and skills before they graduate; 4) that a follow-up study on the impact of the program level intervention plan.

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RELEVANCE OF THE MASTER OF SCIENCE TEACHING (MST) PROGRAM TO THE EMPLOYABILITY OF THE GRADUATES

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the relevance of the current Master of Science Teaching (MST) program to employability from the perspective of the graduates in the University of Cebu (UC) for School Years 2014 – 2018, with the end view of devising a proposed action plan to improve the quality of educational services provided to students. Both quantitative and qualitative descriptive correlational survey research designs were used in this study. It described the employment status of the graduates the relationship to the financial income, and it explored ideas on how better to improve the students' engagement in the curriculum. There were fifty-four (54) graduates of the program who made transactions in the office and were informed about the study to answer the graduate tracer study questionnaires adopted from CHED voluntarily. Data were tabulated and organized through simple percentages and Chi-square test of independence. Results showed that most of the graduates were female, married, 25 to 39 years old. The top reasons for changing jobs were salaries and benefits and career challenges. A more significant number of them were promoted after graduating from the program, and few were not due to no vacancies, available items, or were still at the probationary period. The topmost competencies and skills learned by the graduates from the study program were critical thinking, communication, and human relations skills. The majority of the graduates suggested hiring a resident expert in every field of specialization. The Master of Science Teaching (MST) program is still significantly relevant to the employability of the graduates. The result of this study supported the human development and human capital theories. Thus, pursuing advanced studies like master's and doctorate degrees would give one a bigger employability and better income chance.

Keywords - Employability, tracer study, master of science in teaching, multi, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

There is a more excellent knowledge among industry practitioners of a shift in what it means to work and the moving realization that they need to have an increasingly varied understanding of what it means to be employable. Smith (2010) articulated employability as an individualistic concept. Knight and York (20014) defined employability as a set of achievements, understandings, and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations. Nevertheless, there is an aggressive opposition between individuals, and each needs to ensure that he/she has the skills, knowledge, resilience, focus, and tenacity to stay marketable and be the equivalent of the desired commodity.

A comprehensive understanding of what qualities, characteristics, skills, and knowledge constitute employability. In some cases, employers expect graduates to have technical and discipline competencies from their degrees and require graduates to demonstrate a wide range of broader skills and attributes. However, employability is not the same as employment. Graduates often mistake a degree as proof of employability. Employability is about the employer's knowledge, skills, and social capital that an individual can offer. To get a job, keep a job, and get on in a job require all those three facets, even if only in limited quantities (Rich, 2016).

The problem of graduates' employability remains a continuous policy priority of higher education institutions. This concern has been renewed in the current broader labor market uncertainty climate. Higher education institutions continue to emphasize the importance of employability skills for graduates to be fully equipped to meet the challenges of an increasing labor market. This challenges colleges and universities to ensure that the curriculum embraces the requirements of knowledge, skills, and competencies. Thus, this study reviews some of the critical areas of graduate employability of the Graduate School Education program over the past four years in order for the department to facilitate ways for graduates' access to desired forms of employment by the labor market.

FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on two theoretical paradigms, namely the Human Development and Human Capital Theory by Adam Smith in the 18th century (Jonck & Van der Walt, 2015). The first mentioned theory considers the supply side and focuses on various skills but is not limited to knowledge generation, professional preparation, cultural knowledge, and the enlightenment of the public sphere (McLean et al., 2015). The human capital theory underscores education as a primary economic enabler (Bridgstock, 2009) in which labor is seen as a factor of production (Mohr & Seymore, 2012). Within the human capital theory framework, the term human capital refers to the quality of labor, thus the skills, knowledge, and health of employees (Morh & Seymore, 2012). Consequently, it can be deduced that the term human capital is similar to the definition of employability skills which refers to the knowledge, skills, and commercial understanding of labor (Omar et al., 2012).

Tomer (2016) stated that integrating human capital with human development is the path to a more productive and human economy. Empirical evidence of the human capital model was identified, and findings reveal that investment in education positively correlates with economic growth and development in any country (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008). Thus, education must be of high quality to meet the skill-demand needs of the economy. In recent years, the function

of higher education has been increasingly tied to economic growth and national productivity (Cummings, 2010). Consequently, an essential function of higher education is to increase the total factor productivity of a country, inducing growth and ultimately reducing poverty ((Jonck & Van der Walt, 2015). Those mentioned above underscore the importance of employability, which is currently an international concern ascribed to graduate unemployment ((Jonck & Van der Walt, 2015). Employability has been investigated in various countries, such as India (Mohan, 2013), Taiwan (Pan & Lee, 2011), Nigeria (Asuquo & Inaja, 2013), and the United Kingdom (Benson et al., 2013), to mention a few.

According to Benson et al. (2013), social skills and inherited personality traits are deemed more important than technical skills or a degree of qualification as these traits are pivotal to ensure career development. While, Asuquo and Inaja (2013) reported that continuous learning, networking, teamwork, persistence, organizational skills, risk-taking, optimism, and flexibility were the essential qualities that graduates should possess. Freire Seoane et al. (2011) found that the most valued competencies such as communication, leadership, customer service, understanding, and emotional intelligence were valued characteristics needed for work performance. Rivera and colleagues (2012) asserted that the most valued characteristics needed to find employment are interpersonal skills, teamwork, people skills, responsibility, effort, and willingness to learn.

Crossman and Clarke (2010) regard employability as a psycho-social construct comprising a range of individual characteristics, facilitating overt adaptive behavior to maintain employment in a rapidly changing economic landscape. For this article, employability will be seen as having four (4) broad interrelated components, namely (1) skillful practices (communication, and management of time, self, and resources), (2) specialization in a field of knowledge (academic skills), (4) self-efficacy subsuming personal identity and self-worth, and (4) meta-cognition (self-awareness, and the ability to reflect on actions) as defined by Yorke and Knight (2006). These components of employability are similar to the notion of applied competence (Parker & Griesel, 2009). The current study sought to investigate the relevance of the graduate program to the employability of its graduates as guided by the theory of human capital and development.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study assessed the relevance of the current Master of Science Teaching (MST) program to their employability from the perspective of the graduates in the University of Cebu (UC) for the S. Y. 2014 to 2018 to devise a proposed action plan to improve the quality of educational services provided to students. Specifically, this study aims to present the following: (1) demographic profile of the graduates in terms of civil status, sex, age, province of origin, and location of residence; (2) academic profile of the graduates in terms of educational attainment, professional examination passed, and trainings or advanced studies; (3) reasons of the graduates for pursuing advanced studies; (4) employment and unemployment factors influencing the graduate's employability in terms of the present occupation and employment status, place of work and significant line of business of the company or institution; reasons for accepting and staying for the job, reasons for changing the job; methods of finding the first job, longevity in finding and staying the first job; levels of job position in the first and the current job; gross monthly income in the first and current job; relatedness of the first job and current job to degree earned; reasons for promotion and no promotion after graduating the program; reasons of not

employed; and suggestions in order to further improve the curriculum of the program; and (5) relevant competencies and skills learned from the program were found most helpful by the graduates in getting a job.

METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the research design, research environment, research respondents, research instrument, and treatment of data.

Research Design

This study utilized multi-research design to describe the employment status of the graduates, the skills they used in getting and staying their job, and the relationship between their academic profile and their employment data.

Research Environment

This study was conducted at the Graduate School Department of the University of Cebu – Main Campus located at the Mezzanine floor of the college building along Sanciango Street, Cebu City. It offers Doctor of Education (Ed. D.), Doctor of Philosophy in Criminal Justice with specialization in Criminology (Ph. D.), Doctor in Business Administration, Master of Business Administration (MBA) – thesis and non-thesis program, Master of Science in Elementary Management (MSEM), Master of Science in Criminal Justice with Specialization in Criminology (MSCJ), Master of Arts in Nursing (MAN), and Master of Science in Teaching (MST). These graduate school programs were PACUCOA level II accredited.

Research Respondents

The respondents of this study were the graduates of the Master of Science Teaching (MST) of the academic years 2014 to 2018. Fifty-four graduates (54) submitted the accomplished Graduate Tracer Survey (GTS) questionnaires at the University of Cebu Graduate School Office, which was considered self-selection sampling where they took part on their own accord. Of this number, fourteen (14) were married and males and the nineteen (19) were also married females (19).

Research Instrument

The study utilized a standardized instrument called Graduate Tracer Survey (GTS), constructed by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). The tool has four (4) parts with 34 questions. The first part is general information, including the permanent address, contact number, civil status, gender, birthdate, region of origin, and province. The second part of the questionnaire pertains to the educational background of the respondents. The third part includes the training and advanced studies attended after college. The fourth or the last part is the employment data of the respondents and their suggestions to improve the course curriculum further.

Research Procedures

The researchers wrote letters to the Campus Researcher Director, the dean of the department, for the approval of the conduct of the tracer study. After the approval, the

researchers, together with the dean's secretary and staff, facilitated the distribution of the questionnaires when those specified graduates went to the office for some transactions and were informed of the said tracer study to take part in it voluntarily and as such is a self-selection sampling method.

Treatment of Data

The data were collated, decoded, and tabulated for the analysis and interpretation of the data. The following are the statistical measures used to analyze and interpret the data for an informed decision. A simple percentage was used to describe the summary of the demographic, academic profiles, the employment and unemployment of the graduates. Chi-square test of Independence was used to determine the significant relationship between the academic profiles and the employment data of the respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the analyses and interpretations of the data gathered from the Master of Science Teaching (MST) graduates in this institution for the school years, 2014 – 2018. It begins with the distribution of the demographic profile of the respondents, academic achievements, reasons for pursuing advanced studies, discusses the employability factors and relevance of the job to the degree earned.

Table 1. Distribution of Demographic Profiles of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Civil Status		
Single	18	33
Married	33	61
Single Parent	3	6
Sex		
Male	21	39
Female	33	61
Age Range (Years)		
25-29	9	17
30-34	12	22
35-39	9	17
40-44	5	9
45-49	7	13
50-54	4	7
55-59	4	7
60-64	2	4
65-69	2	4
Region Origin		
VI	1	2
VII	42	79
VIII	4	8
IX	2	4
X	1	2
XI	1	2
XII	1	2
XIII	1	2

Residence Location		
6.1	2	4
7.1	34	69
7.2	1	2
8.1	7	14
9.1	2	4
10.1	1	2
11.1	1	2
13.1	1	2

A tracer study is conducted to collect information on the experiences of the graduates in the workplace to inform the relevance and improvement of an academic program. A total of fifty-four (54) graduates were included in this study. Table 1 below shows the distribution of the demographic profile of the respondents. More than half of the respondents, 33 out of 54 (61%), were married, 18 (33%) were still single, while there were 3 (6%) were single parents. So, the dominant civil status among the respondents is married. It is very typical since they are already at the post-graduate level. The majority of the respondents were females (61%) compared to males (39%). This is supported by the USA Council of Graduate School (CGS) annual report that women who earned the majority of doctoral degrees in 2016 or 8th straight years outnumbered men in the graduate school 135 to 100 (Perry, 2017). The age range in years provided here is based on the Socio-Demographic Profile Population Age Group released in 2010 from Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). As shown below, most of the respondents (22%) belong to 30-34 years old, followed by age groups with equal percentages (17%) for 25-29 and 35-39 years old. Some age groups have percentages of 45-49 (13%), 40-44 (9%), 50-54, and 55-59; both have the same proportion (7%). Likewise, the age groups 60-64 and 65-69 constitute equal percentages (4%). In other words, the respondents are combinations with fresh graduates and experienced in education.

On the other hand, there was an overwhelming majority of the respondents coming from Region VII, which is the Central Visayas (42 or 79%), who were mainly coming from metro Cebu and few were from south and north of Cebu, some were from Negros Oriental and few from Bohol. This is followed by Region VIII, the Eastern Visayas (4 or 8%), from Leyte, and thirdly followed by Region IX (2 or 4%), the Zamboanga Peninsula. The rest of the respondents were equally distributed (1 or 2%) to Regions VI – Western Visayas; Regions X- Northern Mindanao; Region XI – Davao; Region XII – Socsargen, that is South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani Province, and General Santos City and Region XIII – Caraga, Surigao del Sur. The majority of the residents of the respondents (34 or 69%) resided just around Metro Cebu and its provinces. This was followed by the respondents residing in Leyte and Negros and down to Bohol, Surigao, Davao, Lanao and Zamboanga in Mindanao. Therefore, the graduate school department of this institution is serving and training professionals in education from the Visayas to the Mindanao regions. It is a great pride and honor to this department and this institution that our respondents chose here to invest their education.

About the academic profile of the respondents presented in Table 2 below, 85% or 46 of the respondents were master's graduates already. Only 13% or 7 were at undergraduate levels, and only 2% or 1 had a doctoral degree already. This means respondents are generally at the masteral level already. More than 3 in 5 (62%) of the graduates were Licensed Teachers, but over 1 in 5 (21%) were non-licensed. Then over 1 in 10 (11%) were Licensed Marine Engineers, 1 in 25 (4%) passed the civil service exam, and 1 in 50 (2%) was a Licensed Electronics

Communication Engineer. From these data, we learned that those graduates in education are pursuing an MST program and among the engineers in their different fields of specializations.

Table 2. Academic Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Educational Attainment		
College	7	13
Master	46	85
Doctor	1	2
Professional Exam Passed		
PBET, LET, B LEPT	33	62
Lic. Marine Engr	6	11
Civil Service Prof.	2	4
ECE	1	2
None	11	21
Training/ Advanced Studies		
None	32	60
TESDA NC	8	15
DepEd Training	4	8
PAGE 7 Grad Sch Org	1	2
Computer	1	2
Bachelor of Law	1	2
Science/Physics	1	2
Engineering	3	6
Admin Training	2	4

As seen in table 2, 3 in 5 (60%) of the graduates received no training or advanced studies, about 1 in 7 (15%) had TESDA National Certificate, about 1 in 12 (8%) with DepEd training, and the rests were around 1 in 50 (2%) administrative, computer, engineering, physics and even taken units for Bachelor of Law and other degree and non degree programs. Generally, many of the respondents lack of training in their field of discipline. Thus, the graduate school department offers different programs to bring enough trainings and advanced studies for the graduates.

Table 3. Reasons for Pursuing Advanced Studies

14	Reasons for taking the course or Pursuing degree(s)	Frequency (f)	Percentag (%)
14.10	Prospect of career advancement	39	72
14.6	Strong passion for the profession	35	65
14.12	Prospect of attractive compensation	30	56
14.7	Prospect for immediate employment	23	43
14.8	Status/prestige of the profession	23	43
14.1	High grades in the course/subject area related to the course	16	30
14.5	Inspired by a role model	16	30
14.9	Availability of course offering in chosen institution	13	24
14.13	Opportunity for employment abroad	11	20
14.2	Good grades in high school	9	17
14.4	Peer influence	7	13
14.3	Influence of parents or relatives	4	7
14.11	Affordable for the family	4	7
14.14	No particular choice or no better idea	1	2

As reported in Table 3 above, the top five (5) reasons for Pursuing Advanced studies according to the respondents are: first, the prospect of career advancement (39 or 72%); second, Strong passion for the profession (35 or 65%); third, the prospect of attractive compensation (30 or 56%); fourth, the prospect of immediate employment (23 or 43%); and fifth, status or prestige of the profession (23 or 43%). If others specify, they said, “No age limit and for accreditation” are their reasons for pursuing graduate studies. Thus, their main reasons for enrolling in graduate school are professional growth, the prospect of employment, attractive compensation, and the requirement for the school’s accreditation. At the same time, good grades in the course, parents or peer influence, and affordability ranked low in pursuing graduate studies.

Table 4.1 reveals the present occupation and employment status of the respondents. Almost all (94%) of them were employed. Most (90%) of them belonged to professionals, followed by government employees (8%), and the least (2%) as clerks. About 3 in 4 (74%) were regular in their employment status, and 1 in 10 (10%) were contractual or casual. In other words, the respondents are generally employed as professionals in regular status.

Table 4.1. Present Occupation and Employment Status

Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Graduates who are		
Employed	50	94
Unemployed	3	6
Present Line of Occupation		
Professional	45	90
Government Office	4	8
Clerk	1	2
Employment Status		
Regular	36	74
Temporary	3	6
Casual	5	10
Contractual	5	10

In Table 4.2 below, most (19 or 37%) of the respondent's place of work was at DepEd, and it is followed at UC schools (19 or 31%). There were also outside UC schools (10 or 20%), outside Cebu Schools (5 or 10%), and from Cebu Gems Innovation (1 or 2%). These imply that all the respondents' places of work were in schools, and of course, the primary line of business is education, and none is working in any schools or institutions outside the Philippines.

Table 4.2. Present Place of Work and Major Line of Business

Place of work	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
DepEd	19	37
UC schools	16	31
Outside Uc schools	10	20
Outside Cebu schools	5	10
Cebu gems innovation	1	2

Table 4.3 below presents the reasons for accepting and staying in the first job. As shown, only a few (11 or 21%) of the respondents did not change their job after college, and many (41 or 79%) did change their first job. This means only a few of the respondents got the right job after

college graduation, and so they hope for a better job opportunity. Their significant reasons for accepting the first job were career challenges (9 or 38%) and related to their particular skills (7 or 29%). They were not concerned about salaries or benefits (6 or 25%) and residence proximity (2 or 8%). This means that the respondents wanted a challenging job related to their degree earned to accept their first job. On the other hand, the primary reasons for staying the first job were the salaries and benefits (10 or 26%) and career challenge (10 or 26%). The relatedness of the program of study (8 or 21%), special skills (7 or 18%), and residence proximity (4 or 10%) did not matter anymore as the reasons for staying the job.

Table 4.3. Reasons for Accepting and Staying the First Job

Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
First Or Not First Job		
First Job	11	21
Not First Job	41	79
Reasons Accepting First The Job		
Career Challenge	9	38
Related Special Skill	7	29
Salaries & Benefits	6	25
Residence Proximity	2	8
Reasons For Staying First Job		
Salaries & Benefits	10	26
Career Challenge	10	26
Related Program Study	8	21
Related Special Skill	7	18
Residence Proximity	4	10

Thus, career challenges and salaries and benefits are the respondents' core reasons for accepting and staying in the job. One has to be happy with his job, and the salary received to accept and stay with the job.

As also shown in Table 4.4 below, the main reasons for changing jobs are the salaries and benefits (29 or 36%) followed by career challenges (22 or 28%). This result is consistent with reasons for staying the job. Therefore, one has to stay with the job if he or she is satisfied with the salaries and benefits received and still excited with the current job.\

Table 4.4. Reasons for Changing Job

Reasons For Changing Job	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Salaries & Benefits	29	36
Career Challenge	22	28
Related Special Skill	12	15
Residence Proximity	17	21

Table 4.5 below reflects the respondents' methods of finding their first job. Most (21 or 38%) of them found their job just as a walk-in applicant, and some (16 or 29%) through someone's recommendation. There are few (7 or 13%) through the response of advertisement and friend's information, very minimal (2 or 4%) by school officer's job fair and by the family business, and none through Public Employment Service Office (PESO). Therefore, the respondents regularly obtained their first job by personally tendering their applications and friend referrals.

Table 4.5. Methods of Finding First Job

Methods Of Finding First Job	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
As walk-in Applicant	21	38
Someone Recommended	16	29
Response to Advertisement	7	13
Friend Information	7	13
School's Officer Job Fair	2	4
Family Business	2	4
PESO	0	0

Table 4.6 below displays the longevity in finding and staying the first job. Most (19 or 40%) of the respondents were employed in their first job less than a month after graduation. Some (15 or 32%) took 1 - 6 months, and sometimes (8 or 17%) took one year to less than two years. The graduates can obtain a job within two years right after graduation.

Table 4.6. Longevity in Finding and Staying the First Job

Longevity Range	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
< 1 month	19	40
1-6 month	15	32
7-11 month	4	9
1 year - < 2 year	8	1
3 year- > 4 year	1	2
< 1 month	0	0
1-6 months	7	15
7-11 months	1	2
1 year- < 2 years	9	20
2 years- < 3 years	7	15
3 years - < 4 years	8	17
> 4 years	14	30

Most (14 or 30%) of the respondents stayed for their first job for more than four years. Next in the majority (9 or 20%) were those who stayed in 1 year to less than two years and followed (8 or 17%) who stayed three years to less than four years. In other words, the longevity of the respondents' first job ranged from around one year to more than four years. This implies that the respondents generally became regular to the first job of their career.

In Table 4.7, the majority (31 or 66%) of the respondent's first job position was professional, technical, and supervisory. The second-highest proportion (13 or 28%) was the clerical job position. Some were in managerial (2 or 4%) positions and were self-employed (1 or 2%). This was also true with respondents' current job positions; however, there was an increase in proportion (42 or 86%) in professional, technical, and supervisory job level positions and a decrease in clerical positions. This is due to knowledge, skills, attitudes, experiences, and beliefs developed in their graduate school program.

Table 4.7. Level of Job Position in First and Current Job

Job Level Position	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
First Job		
Rank/Clerical	13	28
Professional, Technical, supervisory	31	66
Managerial/Executive	2	4
Self-employed	1	2
Current Job		
Rank/Clerical	4	8
Professional/Technical/supervisory	42	86
Managerial/Executive	2	4
Self-employed	1	2

Based on Table 4.8 below majority (18 or 37%) of the respondents' monthly income range from ₱5,000 to less than ₱10,000 and followed (11 or 22%) by ₱10,000 to less than ₱15,000. There were respondents (9 or 18%) who had less than ₱5,000 as a monthly income, and there were (6 or 12%) too had income ₱25,000 and above.

Table 4.8. Gross Monthly Income for First and Current Job

Monthly Income	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
First Job		
₱5,000.00	9	18
₱5,000.00-₱10,000.00	18	37
₱10,000.00-₱15,000.00	11	22
₱15,000.00-₱20,000.00	2	4
₱20,000.00-₱25,000.00	3	6
₱25,000.00 & >	6	12
Current Job		
₱5,000.00-₱10,000.00	1	2
₱10,000.00-₱15,000.00	4	8
₱15,000.00-₱20,000.00	11	21
₱20,000.00-₱25,000.00	22	42
₱25,000.00 & >	15	28

These data give around an average of ₱10,000 as a monthly income for the respondents' first job after graduation, which is considered low nowadays. However, the majority (22 or 42%) of the respondent's current jobs had an income range of ₱20,000 to less than ₱25,000, and there were (15 or 28%) even plenty of respondents who had income over ₱25,000.

In comparison, more than twice (₱10,000 to ₱25,000) increased the respondents' monthly income from the first job to the current job. Thus, we can deduce an increasing trend of income after college graduation and after the graduate program. Benjamin Franklin stated that an investment in knowledge pays the best interest.

Table 4.9. Relatedness of First and Current Job to Degree Earned

Curriculum	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
College, First Job		
Yes	42	84
No	8	16
Graduate School, Current Job		
Yes	52	100
No	0	0

As shown in Table 4.9 above, 42 in 50 (84%) respondents replied “YES” that their college curriculum was relevant to their first job and only 8 (16%) replied “NO” or not relevant. However, all the 52 (100%) respondents said “YES” that their current job is relevant to their degree in graduate school studies. This means that the respondents became very employable after they got a degree in the graduate school program. Therefore, the Master of Science Teaching (MST) program is very relevant to the world of works.

Table 4.10.1 Distribution of Promotion or No Promotion after Graduating the Program

No. of Graduates who are:	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Promoted	30	60
Not Promoted	20	40

In Table 4.10 above, 30 or 60% of the respondents were promoted to a higher job position after finishing their program in graduate school, and 20 or 40% of them were not promoted in their respective current job. More than half of the respondents were rewarded with job promotions after graduating with their Master’s degree. Thus, the Master of Science Teaching (MST) has been equipping its graduates with knowledge, skill, and attitude fit in their workplace.

Table 4.10.2 below presented the data about the reasons why they were not promoted

Table 4.10.2 Reasons for No Job Promotion after Graduating the Program

Themes	Codes	Utterances	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
No Vacancy	S1	<i>Already the Chairperson of the Mar. E. Program</i>	9	47
	S12	<i>Moore Senior employers to be prioritized</i>		
	S13	<i>No available job positions</i>		
	S14	<i>No vacancies Freeze hiring</i>		
	S18	<i>There is no available item for the master teachers in the SHS</i>		
	S19	<i>They already have the best people Around</i>		
	S15	<i>Our school practices simplicity</i>		
	S11	<i>Let God decide my life & promotion</i>		
Not Regular	S5	<i>I decided to resign in my current job because I have a special training to undergo</i>	4	21
	S2	<i>Casual/contractual, part time</i>		
	S4	<i>I am considered a new teacher and still have to render 3 years in public Sch.</i>		
	S7	<i>I have to be regular employee for 3 years</i>		
	S10	<i>Lack of papers</i>		
Just Finished	S16	<i>Ranking schedule for promotion will be on the first month of every school year</i>	6	32
	S17	<i>Ranking schedule for promotion will be on the first quarter of the year</i>		

S8	<i>I just Finished my grad. School</i>
S9	<i>I just finished my graduate studies</i>
S6	<i>I have just finished the prog. But I will be using my latest TOR for the application of promotion</i>
S3	<i>Currently applying for the SHS slot</i>

Almost one-half (47%) of the respondents rated the **"No Vacancy"** theme as their main reason for not being promoted in their current job. This is validated by the following statements made by some of the respondents; S14 said, *"No vacancies Freeze hiring."* S13, *"No available job positions."* S18, *"There is no available item for the master teachers in the SHS."* S12, *"Moore Senior employers to be prioritized."* S19, *"They already have the best people around."* This means that there is no available higher job position as of the moment, that is why they were not promoted yet. In addition, S1 said, *"Already the Chairperson of the Mar. E. Program."* It means that there are no more available higher job positions since they are already a chairperson in the department. Whereas, S15, *"Our school practices simplicity,"* S11, *"Let God decide my life & promotion,"* and S5, *"I decided to resign from my current job because I have a special training to undergo."* Here, these respondents are already contented and do not think so much about their job promotion. In other words, the graduates are already qualified, but there is just no vacancy yet for such a next higher job position.

About one-third (32%) of the respondents used the **"Just finished"** theme as their reason for not being promoted in their current job position. The statements of these respondents support this; S8, S9, and S10 said, *"I just finished my grad. School,"* *"I just finished my graduate studies,"* *"I have just finished the prog,"* and *"But I will be using my latest TOR for the application of promotion,"* respectively. Furthermore, S16 and S19 stated, *"Ranking schedule for promotion will be on the first month of every school year"* and *"Ranking schedule for promotion will be on the first quarter of the year."* These statements imply that they cannot apply for job promotion since they just have graduated from their graduate studies and waited for their ranking schedules.

Moreover, more than one-fifth (21%) of the respondents responded "Not Regular" theme as their reason for not being promoted in their current job. The following respondents stressed; S7, *"I have to be a regular employee for three years."*, S4, *"I am considered a new teacher and still have to render three years in public school."* S2, *"Casual/contractual, part-time"*, and S10, *"lack of papers."* So, they cannot be promoted by rule or law since they are still probationary, contractual, and not qualified for lack of necessary papers.

Therefore, the degree of reasons for not being promoted in their current job position is in the order from No vacancy, Just finished, and to Not regular. In other words, these minority (40%) of respondents have not promoted was not the reason for not being qualified in the workplace. The graduates are qualified and experts already in their respective fields of specializations but have to wait for the right time and place.

Table 4.11 below presents the respondents' suggestions to improve the graduate school curriculum and the department. There are four (4) emerging themes: Faculty expertise, Doctorate program, Pedagogical training, and it is just all right.

The majority (30%) of the respondents uttered more about the theme of "Faculty expertise." This claim is validated by the following respondents who suggested; S17, *"Resident experts in the field (Main)."* S1, *"Assign effective teacher that will handle research classes,"* S20, *"To hire more qualified seafarers to handle subjects major in Nautical (maritime),"* S4, *"Designate a total person (professor for MST),"* S3, *"Consistency of the correction in thesis, much better only one*

person who correct and approve," and S13, "More Open Schedule." This means that the respondents were not satisfied with the faculty's mastery in both content and pedagogy in handling their courses. There is also a need to look into the system in these proposal and defense procedures and plotting class schedules convenient to students.

Table 4.11. Suggestions to Improve the Curriculum

Themes	Codes	Utterances	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Faculty Expertise	S1	Assign effective teacher that will handle research classes	6	30
	S20	To hire more qualified seafarers to handle subjects major in Nautical (maritime)		
	S17	Resident experts in the field (Main)		
	S4	Designate a total person (professor for MST)		
	S3	Consistency of the correction in thesis, much better only one person who correct and approve		
Doctorate Program	S13	More open schedule	5	25
	S8	GS should cater open University program, GS should offer PhD-Mathematics		
	S9	GS should offer doctoral Programs for English language & literature other than Administration related programs		
	S10	Have doctorate courses vertical to science		
	S15	Please offer doctorate Programs: PhD. In Maritime Education, PhD. In Maritime Administration & Supervision		
Degree Title	S7	Focus on the major field of specialization	3	15
	S2	Change the current title of MST to MAED or M. Ed, coz According to sources the title MST is very old already		
	S16	Recommended that we should be able to change the program to MSIT or MIT		
	S12	May I know what's the true course or program title for MST is it master of science in teaching? Or Master in		
Pedagogical Training	S18	Separate elementary and secondary science in the MST program	4	20
	S6	Elementary and Secondary School shall be separated, there is a difficulty in the flow of the lessons		
	S5	Educational exposure or Immersion perhaps		
All Right	S14	More technological advance, more localization & contextualization, more trainings / seminars	2	10
	S19	The curriculum is perfectly all right		
	S11	I have experienced the best educational all throughout the duration of my Grad. Studies		

The suggestion theme with the following higher proportion (25%) is the "Doctorate Program." Respondents saying; S9, *"GS should offer doctoral Programs for English language & literature other than Administration related programs,"* S8, *"GS should cater open University program, GS should offer Ph.D.- Mathematics,"* S10, *"Have doctorate courses vertical to science,"* S15, *"Please offer doctorate Programs: PhD. In Maritime Education, PhD. In Maritime Administration & Supervision,"* and S7, *"Focus on the major field of specialization."* Thus, there is a need to offer more doctorate programs in different specialization fields if this is easier said than done.

The third theme in proportion is "Pedagogical Training" as sustained by the following suggestions; S14, *"More technological advance, more localization & contextualization, more training/seminars,"* and S5, *"Educational exposure or Immersion perhaps."* This means that

respondents need more creativity and innovation in pedagogy or andragogy that may be done in class or through seminars that have to also learn from their professors and be applied in their respective workplaces. Another, S6, *“Elementary and Secondary School shall be separated, there is a difficulty in the flow of the lessons,”* and S18, *“Separate elementary and secondary science in the MST program.”* This means that respondents need more differentiated instruction to cater to individual needs.

The fourth emerging theme according to proportion is “Degree Title.” As suggested; S2, *“Change the current title of MST to MAED or M. Ed, coz According to sources the title MST is very old already,”* S16, *“Recommended that we should be able to change the program to MSIT or MIT,”* and S12, *“May I know what the proper course or program title for MST is it Master of science in teaching? Or Master in “.* Those suggestions gave insights into making degree titles similar nationwide for better conception upon talking academic achievements.

Lastly, the fifth theme that emerged is “All Right.” Students S19 and S11 respectively said, *“The curriculum is perfectly all right”* and *“I have experienced the best education throughout my Grad. Studies.”* This means that respondents are satisfied and are even appreciated the best curriculum offered in the department.

Table 5 below manifests the relevant competencies and skills learned in college and graduate school useful in their job. It is seen that critical thinking skills (39 or 22%) topped the most valuable competencies used in college. This is followed by both Communication skills (38 or 21%) and Human relations skills (38 or 21%). These were followed by Problem Solving Skills (36 or 20%), Information Technology Skills (24 or 12%), and Entrepreneurial Skills (9 or 4%). On the other hand, the same order and proportion of competencies in college as in Graduate school are helpful in their jobs. However, there is a noticeable increase (12% to 17%) in the information technology skills learned in graduate school that are useful in their jobs. This means the online research skills learned in graduate school are also helpful in their jobs. Thus, the same competencies to be developed in college and graduate school are helpful in the workplace.

Table 5. Relevant Competencies and Skills Learned in College and Graduate School

Competencies Useful In First Job	College	Percentage	Graduate	Percentage
Critical Thinking Skills	39	22	45	22
Communication Skills	38	21	41	20
Human Relation Skills	38	21	40	19
Problem Solving Skills	36	20	36	17
Information Technology Skills	24	12	35	17
Entrepreneurial Skills	9	4	9	4
Total	184	100	206	100

Teachers have to emphasize the development of students' critical thinking skills, communication skills, and human relation skills as vital for success in society. The problem-solving skills are built-in in developing critical thinking skills, Information technology skills are essential skills in this digital age, and entrepreneurial skills are not the focused skills in the Master of Science Teaching (MST) program. Overall, educators have to educate our children for the future, not only the past and the present, by enhancing their critical thinking skills.

Table 6. Relationship Between Academic Profile and Employment Data of the Respondents

Variables	Df	Chi-Square Value	p-Value	Effect Size	Verbal Interpretation
Educational Attainment Vs.					
Employment Status	6	5.476	0.484	.188	Not Significant
Promotion After Graduation	2	1.920	.383	.178	Not Significant
Gross Monthly Income	8	4.613	.798	.194	Not Significant
Professional Exam Passed Vs.					
Employment Status	9	5.922	.748	.179	Not Significant
Promotion After Graduation	3	1.155	.764	.150	Not Significant
Gross Monthly Income	16	24.736	.045	.342	<i>*Significant</i>
Training/Advanced Studies Vs.					
Employment Status	18	21.580	.426	.387	Not Significant
Promotion After Graduation	7	12.05	.049	.436	<i>*Significant</i>
Gross Monthly Income	28	43.238	.033	.669	<i>*Significant</i>

**Significant: $\alpha = .05$; Cramer's V (effect size)*

Table 6 presents the relationship between the academic profile and the graduates' employment data in the Master of Science Teaching (MST). It was found out that the educational attainment of the graduates was not significantly correlated with their employment status (.484), with job promotion (.383), and with gross monthly income (.798). This means that the level of educational status of the graduates is not associated with the employment status, job promotion after graduation, and similarly to the amount of salary they received. While the Professional Examination Passed has no relationship with the graduates' employment status (.748) and job promotion (.764). This is the same result with the tracer study of Amparado et al. (2011) at the University of Cebu – Lapu-Lapu Mandaue Campus that professional examination is not significantly associated with employment status. However, it has a significant positive relationship (.045) with 34.2% effects on the graduates' gross monthly income. This implies that graduates who passed their professional examinations have a significantly higher income than those who had none. This result was supported in the Employability study of Mendoza et al. (2012) at the University of Cebu – Banilad, where there was a significant relationship among colleges in Education, Commerce, Hotel and Restaurant Management, Nursing, Criminology, and Engineering between professional examination and current job level which is logically proportional to the income level. Those licensed to teach have the chance to stay in the job and augment their financial income.

On the other hand, the training and advanced studies were not significantly related to graduates' employment status (.426). Attending training and taking advanced studies does not guarantee a regular employment status. However, it is positively associated with job promotion (.049) and gross monthly income (.033), with effect sizes 43.6 % and 66.9 %, respectively. As we can see, taking and finishing advanced studies like professional training and national certificate skills training would impact job positions and eventually augment monthly income. These results strengthen the human capital theory that educating oneself is a primary economic enabler and employability.

CONCLUSION

The Master of Science Teaching (MST) program is still significantly relevant to the employability of the graduates. This study strengthened the human development and human capital in the education sector of the country. Thus, pursuing advanced studies like master's and doctorate degrees strengthen the employability of the students and lead to earning higher income.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the researchers recommend the following:

(1) The dean and program chairperson have to review and improve the Master of Science Teaching (MST) curriculum, including the syllabi, for better relevance to the time, especially in the advent of information technology. They have to create more training and seminars for professional development for students and professors.

(2) The research culture of the graduate school has to be inculcated to the minds of students and professors that they are mandated to produce quality research papers periodically. (3) Conduct extension activities to private and public schools like tutorials and shared books for their library to create linkages for employability and trust to the institution's name, and their teachers are enticed to enroll in Masteral or doctoral degrees.

(3) Alumni office or the evaluation office should create a database for all the university graduates so that saturation for the sample size of every tracer study is satisfied for more valid and reliable results in the study. (4) Lastly, the researchers recommend a longitudinal tracer study of the graduates with a more significant number of respondents and a well-modified survey instrument.

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WHERE ARE THE GRADUATES? TRACER STUDY FOR MASTER OF ARTS IN NURSING (MAN) PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

The offshoot of nursing schools in the country is the primary reason why the paradox of nurses' supply and demand ever existed. At the dawn of this phenomenon are those educators who strive to finish advanced coursework to win their job. This study delves into the employability of the graduates at the University of Cebu – Graduate School with foci of interest on their employability. This study utilized a descriptive research design adopting a standardized CHED tracer survey questionnaire. The respondents are the eleven university graduates above from 2015-2017. The collected data are treated using frequency, simple percentage, and ranking with statistical techniques. Analyses of the data reveal that most respondents are 31-35 years old, married, and female. Learning is indeed a continuous process. Based on the study's findings, the University of Cebu Graduate School graduates demonstrated improved knowledge, skills, and attitudes after Graduate School, thus employable at a 72.7 % rate.

Keywords - Tracer study, nursing program, graduate school, descriptive, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The rise of employability as a central feature of working life has put the ‘unleashing’ of human resourcefulness on center stage. Whether employed or not, individuals are called upon to develop new and innovative ways to outstrip others in the pursuit of, what in all likelihood will be, an unrealizable, ideal ‘employable self’ (Southwood, 2011). Employability has become a pervasive preoccupation in the global labor and educational markets, thus placing individuals in a constant stage of development and revamping their skill-set to seamlessly negotiate their

perpetual shift from one job or organization to another. At the same time, demand-side labor market policies have been viewed as rubber-stamping work's ephemerality and precariousness in an era that keenly acclaims employability as the answer to many of society's ills. It is against this background that maintains that, now, 'to be employed is to be at risk and to be employable is to be secure' (Peck & Theodore, 2000).

Graduate employability has become an increasingly important issue for higher education over the past 20 years, with universities under increasing pressure to address employability in the curriculum. However, approaches to enhancing and embedding employability vary widely across the sector, and there is a lack of consensus on how best to approach this aspect of students' development. Perhaps more importantly, the discourse of employability has raised some fundamental questions about the role of higher education in modern society and the extent to which 'employability' represents an attack on academic freedom. Based on extensive literature review and empirical research, these fundamental questions are addressed, and some guidance is offered for higher education institutions interested in enhancing the employability of their students (Maher & Graves, 2009).

The Philippines is considered one of the fastest-growing economies in Asia next to China (World Bank Report, 2014) or even pegged as the next tiger economy of Asia (Heydarian, 2014); its workforce situation today is quite the extreme opposite of the labor spectrum. The report observed that many graduates find themselves unemployed after earning a degree despite education's high value and expectations. Thousands of young university or college graduates can be seen lining up in job fairs around the country, searching for elusive employment opportunities. The economy's difficulty absorbing the high number of new entrants to the labor force is a familiar refrain. Graduates voice their frustration at not being able to land a well-paid and secured job (World Bank Report, 2014).

Two major nationwide surveys done by the Fund for Assistance to Private Education (FAPE) in collaboration with the International Institute for Educational Planning (UNESCO) resulted in two studies known as HELMS 1 and II (Higher Education and Labor Manpower Survey) one can state that graduates pay a personal cost for their poor education. The Philippines has many graduates of colleges and universities, but in most cases, these graduates barely approach "junior college" qualifications in developed countries. Graduates taking jobs lower than their paper qualifications would seem appropriate, but the paper qualifications do not justify more than low-level employment (Altbach, 2014).

Graduate employability has become a critical issue for institutions (McNair, 2003). This is because of the changing nature of the graduate labor market, mass participation in Higher Education, pressures on student finance, competition to recruit students, and expectations of students, employers, parents, and government (Maher & Graves, 2009). Five to ten years ago, Filipino graduates migrated to other countries seeking the so-called greener pastures, especially in the USA and the Middle East countries. However, the world's labor market has changed considerably, i.e., the release of visas in the United States has declined due to oversubscription thus, a phenomenon known as retrogression occurs; and employers in the Middle East which did not require experiences previously now needs at least one to two years of work experience (World Bank Report, 2014).

Employability skills are essential because the labor market is intensely competitive, and employers are looking for flexible people who take the initiative and can undertake a variety of tasks in different environments. The polarity of technological changes and conventionalities of education creates disequilibrium, tipping off balance between curricular offering and the needed

demand for competent global graduates. The realization of harmonizing market demand and curriculum relevance demands urgency, and this has to be addressed by both CHED and the Institution of Higher Education by keeping the invisible hand of demand and supply in the market at a steady pace (Greatbatch & Lewis, 2007).

One pressing concern of HEI is to evaluate the quality of its graduates once they finish their degrees by tracking them if they are working in the line of their specialized fields. The tedious task of doing this is to conduct a tracer study among its graduates for data banking. Among the many recognized and accredited HEIs is The University of Cebu, a prime mover of change in education is not remiss in its mission to provide relevant and quality education in the region and the country. It is constantly heeding the call for institutional development by reviewing its curriculum offering, thereby adhering to CHED's quality assurance mandate.

The researchers, being instructors themselves of the largest university in Cebu, with more than forty-five thousand students, have also observed and received feedback of unemployed and underemployed graduates; thus, in line with fulfilling the institution's vision, mission, and goals, the researchers aim to improve the quality of educational services.

FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on Parsons' Trait and Factor Theory on Occupational Choice. The concept of job matching is the primary tenet of his theoretical framework. He contends that a person will do the job well when it is best fitted to his/her skills. Further, he states that correct job placement occurs when the following are done: an accurate understanding of their traits (aptitudes, interests, personal abilities), knowledge of jobs and the labor market, and making a rational and objective judgment about the relationship between their traits and the labor market. He posited that the talents/skills of an individual can be measured or is measurable vis-à-vis the attributes of the job/career. Every person has a unique pattern of traits made up of their interests, values, abilities, and personality characteristics; these traits can be objectively identified and profiled to represent an individual's potential (Bimrose et al., 2011).

This three-part theory still governs most current practices. The trait and factor theory operates under the premise that it is possible to measure individual talents and the attributes required in particular jobs, which can be matched to a "good fit" occupation. When individuals are in jobs best suited to their abilities, they perform best, and their productivity is highest. In his book, 'Choosing a Vocation,' Parsons maintains that personal counsel is fundamental to career searching. Matching assumes a degree of stability within the labor market. However, the reality is that the market's volatility means individuals must be prepared to change and adapt to their circumstances. The theory further posits that every occupation is made up of factors required for the successful performance of that occupation. These factors can be objectively identified and represented as an occupational profile. It is possible to identify a fit or match between individual traits and job factors using a straightforward problem-solving/decision-making process. The closer the match between personal traits and job factors, the greater the likelihood of successful job performance and satisfaction (Nathanson, 2013).

Hillage and Pollard (1998) define employability as the capability to gain initial employment, maintain employment and obtain new employment. It is capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work, more comprehensively, is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labor market to realize potential through sustainable employment. Employability is widely considered the key

to success in the labor market. It is seen as something that individuals inevitably strive for and manage throughout their (working) lives (Knight & Yorke, 2000). However, this attractive picture of employability, as used by employers, recruitment agents, policy-makers, mainstream research, universities, and the media does not say much about how the concern for employability is entangled with broader societal changes or how individual subjectivities are affected by the concept of employability (Chertkovskaya et al., 2013).

Employability is not just about students making deposits in a bank of skills (Morley, 2001). These are: 1) the educational conception relating to the ability of graduates to tackle 'graduate' jobs. The notion of 'capability' means that employability of graduates relates to their being equipped for a job and capable of being employed, rather than job acquisition (Harvey, 2010). "The ability of the graduate to get a job – any job" is used by the Government in the construction of the Employability Performance Indicators (EPIs) (Section 12.0), but it is the first concept that most practitioners in Higher Education are primarily concerned with. Good student learning and the curriculum, teaching, and assessment that goes with it, describe 'education for employability' well (Knight & Yorke, 2000).

This implies that curricula designed to enhance students' employability are also desirable on purely educational grounds. It draws on empirical evidence from two studies that suggest that what young people want are fundamental, practical skills that are directly transferable to the world of work and fulfill the promise of high-pay, high-skill work in a knowledge economy. The article concludes that in a world where many young people are increasingly marginalized in terms of education and employment, only an education that provides the skills the young people aspire to and which has real exchange value in the labor marketplace can confer any real advantage to them. Current approaches to employability skills education, far from achieving this, are little more than an exercise in social control resulting in new forms of class and labor (re)production, as already marginalized young people are socialized into particular forms of casual and low-pay, low-skill employment (Atkins, 2013).

The concept of employability is analyzed, and the prevailing tendency to create employability measures based on outcomes is critiqued. The outcome approach results in employability as being construed as an institutional achievement rather than the propensity of the individual student to get employment. The operationalization of employability as a concept is examined, and the implicit 'magic bullet' notion of employability-development opportunities is revealed. An alternative, more complex model is outlined, but its applicability is subverted by the 'irrational' activities of graduate recruiters, which render useless any employability indicator based on the proportion of graduates obtaining work. An alternative approach, based on an audit of employability-development within institutions, is explored, and some methodological pitfalls are outlined. The conclusion suggests that any employability evaluation needs clearly to indicate areas for internal improvement rather than simply ranking institutions. From the employers' point of view, employability is the propensity of the graduate to exhibit attributes that employers anticipate will be necessary for the future effective functioning of their organization. Increasingly, graduates need to be more flexible in response to the growing number of career changes experienced through life for many people because of the increase in short-term contracts, part-time work, outsourcing, and home-working (Harvey, 2010). Employment and employability are not the same things. Being employed means having a job; and being employable means having the qualities needed to maintain employment and progress in the workplace. Employability from the perspective of HEIs is, therefore, about producing graduates who are capable and able, and these impacts upon all areas of university life in terms of the

delivery of academic programs and extra-curricular activities (McNay, 2005). Coopers and Lybrand (1998) define 'employability skills' in terms of four key areas: traditional intellectual skills – e.g., critical evaluation, logical argument; key skills – communication, IT, etc.; personal attributes – motivation, self-reliance; and knowledge of organizations and how they work. There are several synonyms - core, key, generic, personal transferable skills, common, work, or employment-related skills – this is why it is difficult to conceptualize what is meant by employability skills. Additionally, skills are often referred to as capabilities, competencies or attributes, levels, or learning outcomes, thus compounding the sense of confusion. Dearing (1997) regarded critical skills to consist of four components: 1communication, numeracy, information technology, and learning how to learn and proposed that it was essential that these were developed at the undergraduate level. The Department for Education and Skills (DES) adds teamwork and problem solving to this list. There are many different lists of critical skills, although there is general agreement about the importance of communication, numeracy, teamwork, IT, and problem-solving. These are considered generic skills as they represent skills that can be used to support study in any discipline (Dunne et al., 2000).

For example, possessing some essential skills – IT numeracy, will facilitate the acquisition of subject understanding (Yorke, 2001), as using IT for research will enable students to learn more about their discipline. Personal Qualities/ self-efficacy beliefs, the inclusion of 'personal qualities' into the concept of employability is considered to be of great importance to the 'Skills plus Project' (Knight & Yorke 2000; Yorke, 2001) as these can have a considerable bearing on a students' success.

Yorke (2001) considers that it is not enough to have a range of cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral sub-skills, but these have to be integrated into the challenges faced. Therefore, perceived self-efficacy or ability will play an essential role in choosing a degree program, career choice, and personal development and is thus significant for an individual's employability. Personal qualities are also important in acquiring subject understanding and the development of skills. A willingness to learn – often from mistakes – implies a preparedness to tolerate a degree of stress to achieve success (Yorke, 2001; Knight & Yorke, 2000).

The self-efficacious student will probably have a series of sub-goals that can be a milestone. Academic perspectives will need to be convinced that an institutions' insistence on incorporating employability skills into their teaching is not an attack on academic freedom in terms of content but a request that academics consider how they teach their subject. This is similar to the Skills plus Project's perspective that concerns employability as supportive of good learning rather than in opposition to it. Empowering learners gives students control over the educational process and their post-educational lives (Harvey, 2010).

Harvey (2010) suggested that it is debatable how serious academia is in achieving these ends. Any changes to the curriculum must be owned by the staff delivering the modules if they are to be successfully implemented. Atlay and Harris (2000) comment that individualism is essential to academia; the responses vary unpredictably; little can be achieved without staff commitment to work with the institution's culture and values and Higher Education itself. A culture that strives to improve the learning environment for the benefit of students and staff is essential for the successful implementation of change.

However, De la Harpe et al. (2000) conclude that in the anarchy of accompanied by an agreed change process, the purpose of Higher Education is to help students improve their higher-level competencies and skills to enhance their long-term employability. Knight and Yorke (2000) argue that the notion of employability can be embedded in any academic subject in Higher

Education without compromising core academic freedoms. The methods chosen for teaching a subject will, to varying extents, assist students in developing key and other skills. The development of critical skills will facilitate learning of the subject through, for example, the use of IT for information retrieval. So it is a two-way dialogue between subject and skills (Yorke, 2001). Knight and Yorke (2000) warn against making four common mistakes regarding curriculum change for employability: 1) rational curriculum planning, which begins with statements of goals and learning outcomes. 2) scorched earth change, when the old is thrown out for the new: 3) Fast change. 4) Paper changes – change, without change. However, it seems that this trend is set to change with graduates considering the type of career they may enter when they choose a program of study.

Cryer (1997) believes that raising a research student's awareness of their employability should help increase their self-esteem and enable them to fulfill their potential. Harvey (2010) regards employability as a subset of and fundamentally contingent on transformative lifelong learning. The undergraduate experience as a one-stop shop for developing employability skills, terminating in graduation. However, in the role of Higher Education, improving the performance of employees, the concept of lifelong learning offers more scope by enabling students to develop skills that will give them a foundation and basis for future learning and development (Atkins, 1999; Dearing, 1997) sees. The recent approach to lifelong learning is more than a second chance at education – it sees a well-educated and trained population is essential for future economic prosperity, innovation, social and political cohesion. However, there is still ambiguity about what lifelong learning means for Higher Education in practice, so lifelong learning tends to be associated with the employability agenda. The broader democratic agenda does not appear to be at the forefront of development (Harvey, 2010).

Coffield (2000) suggests that Government plans to create a new culture of lifelong learning without developing a theory of learning or even recognizing that one is required (Dunne et al. 2000). Work experience opportunities need to be well managed to be educationally valuable, but good work experience can enhance learning and employability. Work-based learning requires learners to manage their learning, create learning opportunities to achieve outcomes, and provide satisfactory evidence. (Knight & Yorke, 2000).

Holmes (2001) suggested that if work experience is not a formal part of the degree program, tasks should be set that explicitly and intentionally relate to the workplace. For example, students may be asked to write a report from the stance of an employee of a particular position within a particular organization. This will enable students to focus upon practices relevant to the typically entered occupations. This enables students to develop more than just 'skills' but can be viewed as a rehearsal for 'the real thing'. Increasingly, students are working more than the 15 hours maximum recommended to support them while studying at university. There needs to be a progress of employment as students go through their degree program, as they increasingly need to minimize hours of work and at the same time increase their income (Bibby et al., 2000). A large percentage of students have to work to support themselves while studying at university because of tuition fees, the lack of grants, and increased expectations of the standard of living that students have (Shabi, 2002).

Liu and Chen (2013) synthesized that under the background of a traditional career, individual professional skills are a deciding factor for an individual to be adequate to his job. Professional competence is often a key factor of individual promotion and reuse. However, under the mode of boundaryless career, employability becomes a deciding factor for individual success. Cultivating talents is not "making machines." As colleges cultivate students' professional

knowledge and professional skills, they should pay much attention to the cultivation of employability, especially in core employability, resulting in the sustained employment of students across different organizations. This is more in accord with a boundaryless career. Must center on improving employability, innovate system mechanism of talents training, deepen the innovations of talents training mode, especially make whole reform and innovate on teaching content, teaching method, teaching technology, teaching environment, teaching value, and etc. (Liu & Chen, 2013).

As formerly taught that competencies are critical determinants to employability (Holmes and Coughlin, 2008), the following skills are greatly valued for students in higher education, namely: communication skills, human relations skills, entrepreneurial skills, information technology skills, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking skills. Communication skills are geared towards sending clear and convincing messages. People with this competence are influential in giving and taking, registering emotional cues in attuning their message; dealing with complex issues straightforwardly; listening well, seeking mutual understanding, and welcoming sharing of information fully; and fostering open communication and staying receptive to bad news as well as good (OPM, 2013).

A person with human relations skills shows understanding, friendliness, courtesy, tact, empathy, concern, and politeness to others; develops and maintains effective relationships with others; may include effectively dealing with individuals who are difficult, hostile, or distressed; relates well to people from varied backgrounds and different situations; is sensitive to cultural diversity, race, gender, disabilities and other individual differences (OPM, 2013). Entrepreneurial skills display the ability to recognize and envision taking advantage of opportunities; lead, monitor, develop and organize the internal and external resources; have clear goals to achieve; build a context of cooperation and trust; take proactive actions towards duties and responsibilities; and make cognitive and analytical thinking (Xiang, 2009). Information technology skills indicate computers, software applications, databases, and automated systems to accomplish work (OPM, 2013).

In most organizations, promotions appear to be the most basic form of performance pay, especially in hierarchical, white-collar firms. They are the primary means workers can increase their long-run compensation (Lazear, 1992). They are usually given to the best performers (Medoff & Abraham, 1980; Gibbs, 1993). Therefore, promotions should generate substantial motivation in many settings. Moreover, there often does not seem to be substantial pay for performance within jobs, which only increases the apparent importance of promotions for organizational incentives (Hedstrom, 1987). In all these contexts, 'employability' holds largely positive connotations. It is not only positioned as the key for one's well-being in the labor market but also, and somewhat ironically, as the same condition since the late 1980s, the dominant way in which employability has been referred to, it seems, is through 'initiative employability'; an understanding that has also become central to the relationships between employers and individuals, as well as governments and citizens. This notion implies a very different relationship between employability and employment and a different role of 'ability' compared to the previous conceptualizations of employability. Within 'initiative employability,' individuals are positioned as responsible for labor market outcomes they find themselves in while employers and governments become 'enablers,' making it possible for the individual to make necessary choices to become employable but not guaranteeing employment (Fejes, 2010).

Characteristics such as age, social background, gender, disability, and ethnicity make some groups much less likely to be employed than others (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Brown &

Hesketh, 2004; Morley, 2001; Smetherham, 2006). The first way employability can be challenged, then, is that it promotes social exclusion rather than overcomes exclusion. Through rhetoric that places an increasing demand on the individual, marginalized groups are more likely to be excluded from labor market positions than the non-marginalized, as the social mechanisms contributing to their exclusion are silenced. When the problems of social exclusion in connection with employability are emphasized, it is often implied that there is nothing wrong with employability as a concept, but rather 'unequal accesses to employability that is the problem. We disagree with this, as we see the very concept of employability as part of the problem (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005).

However, there is some evidence of resistance to employability among academics and teachers (Kalfa & Taksa, 2012; Komulainen et al., 2011). Indeed, many academics see employability as an intrusive managerial challenge to the traditional ideals of higher education, which one frequently hears in daily conversations. However, even in higher education institutions, the picture is not that hopeful. While employability may be lamented loudly by some, aspects of employability, such as the rhetoric of skills and prospects, are often actively embraced by the same people. Employability has become a standard mode of discourse – not only for the media and government ministers but also academics marketing their institution on parent-centered University Open Days'. It must also be considered. Giving notice to employability higher education being positioned as a central site for developing one's employability, resistance (and indeed critical thought itself) is increasingly subjugated. With students 'investing' increasing amounts of money for the promises bound up in educational accreditation, the mere suggestion of resistance runs counter to the ethos many bring to university in the first place (Chertkovskaya et al., 2013).

To keep abreast with the recent trend in the amalgamation of Asian countries in terms of a shared curriculum both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, universities need to keep track of their graduates whether there is a higher probability of global employability of its graduate school graduates and whether there is an increased income, movement in terms of rank promotion and professional development. The usefulness of the tracer study offers a more significant opportunity for the different stakeholders to track the objectives of their existing curricular programs. Tracer study is an approach widely used in most organizations, primarily in educational institutions, to track and keep a record of their students once they have graduated from the institution. It is the follow-up of graduates of higher education or institutes. It aims to evaluate one's progress up to the time they get a job. This study assesses the availability and quality of graduates. It is developed to answer the change in the industry and corporate world by integrating higher education institutions with the labor market and is seen as a management tool for planning and monitoring training programs. A simple tool designed to measure the relevance of vocational training. Tracer study is a form of development or longitudinal study.

Tracer study is essential; it is a way of understanding the relevance and quality of programs offered by the universities and the labor market. It constitutes an essential tool for educational planners, as they can provide valuable information for evaluating the results of the higher education and training institutions. This information may be used for minimizing any possible deficits in a given educational program in terms of content, delivery, and relevance and for further development of the institution in the context of quality assurance (Cohen, 2004). Tracer study will benefit every institution, most especially the DepEd and the schools, because it will help them know the status of their products after graduating to their institution may lead to the discovery of trends or effectiveness of programs and institutions. Through tracer study, an

institution can evaluate the quality of education given to their graduates by knowing the graduates' placements and positions in the society which later can use as a benchmark in producing more qualified and competitive graduates (Arcelo, 2005).

Tracer studies are an essential source of information to know what happened to graduates of academic programs in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Further findings of tracer studies can be used to define/redefine HEIs mission and market niche and show how academic programs and course offerings can be adjusted to reflect institutional goals. Stakeholders can also use findings in deciding where to look for skills. Lastly, the evaluation shall provide a basis for further improving existing and or developing a new teacher education curriculum and implementation process (Gines, 2014)

It is in this context that after the approval of the curriculum in April 2005 and its implementation in June of the same year, a tracer study was conducted on these undergraduate batches of graduates for 2009, 2010, and 2011) to provide data for the review and evaluation of the curricular programs of PNU. Schomburg (2003) shares that graduate survey results are essential for "analyzing the relationship between higher education and work." Moreover, Millington (2008) states that "they provide quantitative structural data on employment and career, the character of work and related competencies, and information on the professional orientation, and experiences of their graduates." Additionally, the collected data is an essential indicator of the quality of higher education (Arcelo, 2005).

In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education requires all HEIs to conduct a tracer study. It is equally reflected as one of the required documents by any higher education accrediting body such as the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines [AACCUP], Inc. By conducting a survey on the cohort of graduates from a specific institution, profession, discipline, level of education, their employment characteristics, competencies, and skills development, and have a comparative analysis, the information gained from these can be used by the graduate's alma mater and other education stakeholders for curriculum development and other emerging reforms (Gines, 2014).

The University has conducted numerous tracer studies tracking graduates on how they fare in their endeavors. Spearheading the University's academic advancement is its' Graduate School program, taking the call of change through the initial step in tracing the graduates of four (4) master's programs, namely: Master of Arts in Nursing, Master in Business Administration, Master of Science in Teaching and Master of Science in Criminal Justice, from 2014-2017.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study determined the employability of the University of Cebu Graduate School Master of Nursing program graduates. The findings of the study served as bases for a proposed action plan. Specifically, this aims to present the following: 1) profile of the respondents as to age, civil status, gender, region of origin, location of residence, province; highest educational attainment; and professional examination passed; 2) respondents' reasons for taking the course (undergraduate graduate degree, advanced studies; 3) employment data in terms of present employment status, present occupation, major line of business of the company the respondents' are employed in, and place of work; 4) current job his/her first job after college; 5) reasons for accepting the first job after college; staying on the first job after college; and changing on the job; 6) for those respondents who are not employed or never employed, their reasons for

unemployment; 7) competencies learned in college that were useful in the first job; and 8) competencies learned in the graduate school that is useful in the current job.

METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the research design, research environment, research respondents, research instruments, and treatment of data.

Research Design

This study utilized the descriptive research design adopting the Commission on Higher Education Tracer Survey questionnaire.

Research Environment

The research locale is the University of Cebu Main Campus, a non-sectarian institution located in Sanciango Street, Cebu City. It has a population of approximately forty thousand students. This is the first established campus of the UC system. The Graduate School is located at the Mezzanine floor of the UC Main building. It has forty-one (41) faculty member and four hundred seventy-one (471) students. The Graduate School offers six (6) programs: Master of Arts in Nursing, Master in Business Administration, Master in Science in Teaching, and Master of Science in Criminal Justice. Doctorate programs for Business Administration and Education.

Research Respondents

The respondents of this tracer study were graduates of the University of Cebu Graduate School Master of Arts in Nursing progra, from 2014 to 2017. Out of the twelve (12) graduates, only one (1) was not contacted, a total of 91.66 %.

Research Respondents

This study adopted the tracer study form from the Commission on Higher Education to get relevant information from the respondents. This questionnaire consisted of two parts: Part 1 – is the general information covering a) personal data, b) educational background, c) employment characteristics, d) employment history, e) professional achievement, f) and transition. Part II - is about the postgraduate studies. The tracing process involved the identification of graduates from two (2) departments.

Research Procedures

Graduate students' records contained the permanent addresses of all graduates during registration and were kept by the faculty members especially contact telephone numbers. The contact addresses of the graduates were also updated using records from the graduation ceremony. Lists of Graduates from school years 2015-2017 were taken from the Registrar's Office to identify graduates who will be the target respondents. The graduate respondents were then contacted through their phone numbers, fellow alumni, snail-mail, and Google form to complete the survey instrument. Some graduates completed the survey instrument when filing for transcript of records (TOR) and diploma.

Research Respondents

Frequency and simple percentages were used to describe the demographic profile of the survey respondents in terms of age, gender, civil status, region of origin, province, and location of residence, educational background information and employment data were used the same. The ranking was applied to a few data such as the reasons for pursuing the degree/advance studies, competencies learned invaluable college in the first job, and others.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section shows the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data. Table 1 presents the respondents' profile in terms of age, civil status, and gender.

Table 1. Respondents' Demographic Profile (11)

Indicators	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Age				
26-35 years old	4	36.40	36.40	36.40
36—45 years old	3	27.27	27.27	63.67
46-55 years old	4	36.40	36.00	100.00
Civil Status				
Single	4	36.40	36.40	36.40
Married	7	63.60	63.60	100.00
Gender				
Male	4	36.40	36.40	36.40
Female	7	63.60	63.60	100.00

Table 1 shows the age of the respondents, which ranges from 26 to 53 years old. The majority of the respondents are between 26-35 years and 46- 53, with a frequency of 4 (36.4%), respectively. The researchers are safe to conclude that most of the populations are young to middle adults.

According to Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development, the age of the respondents corresponds to the stage between intimacy and isolation, wherein young adults learn to develop commitments to others and life or career (Daniels, 2004). This further implies that they have learned to become independent from family and any financial obligations while engaging in filial affairs. A similar percentage (36.4%) also corresponds to the stage between generativity vs. stagnation which explains the desire of the graduates to find a fulfilling job that goes beyond monetary compensation. Productivity becomes a measure of success.

The civil status of the respondents pointed out to be mostly married with a frequency of 7 and a percentage of more than 60. Moreover, the data show that the numbers of married respondents are almost twice that of the single ones. This result entirely supported the age findings of this study that they now look for commitment with others in marriage. It is also expected that they are now settled down at 26 and beyond. In terms of gender, more females were part of this study than their male counterparts. This result is consistent with the fact that more females take nursing education than males. Societal misperceptions labeling nursing as a "feminine" profession have hindered recruiting and retaining men in nursing (Jeffreys, 2004).

Table 2. Respondents' Geographic Profile (11)

	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Region of Origin				
Region VII	8	72.7	72.7	72.7
Region VIII	1	9.1	9.1	81.8
National Capital Region (NCR)	1	9.1	9.1	90.9
CARAGA	1	9.1	9.1	100.0
Location of Residence				
City	6	54.5	54.5	54.5
Municipality	5	45.5	45.5	100.0

Table 2 reflected that most of the respondents come from Region 7 with a frequency of 8 (72.98%), which is comprehensible enough because they all studied at the University of Cebu Graduate School. Often, people prefer to work or study around areas near their residences for convenience or practical reasons. Notably, the rest of the participants are from Region VIII, NCR, and Caraga areas and mainly live within the city with almost 55 % and a frequency of 6.

Table 3. Respondents' Profile as to the Province of the Respondents (11)

	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Province				
Cebu	9	81.8	100.0	100.0
Undisclosed	2	18.2		

The previous table reflected that Region 7 is where most of the respondents come from. Table 3 greatly supported this, and that specifically, the majority reside from and around Cebu City, reflecting a frequency of 9 and is more than 80 % of the total population. The University of Cebu Graduate School is strategically located at the Queen City of the South, the center of commerce and education in Central Visayas.

Table 4. Respondents' Undergraduate Study Data (11)

	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
College				
BSN	11	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 4 shows that all participants were Bachelor of Science in Nursing graduates. This is because only graduates of a BSN curriculum are admitted to the Graduate school.

Table 5. Graduate Study Data (11)

	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Masters				
MAN	7	63.3	87.5	87.5
MN	1	9.1	12.5	100.0
Undisclosed	3	27.3		

Needless to say, since this study was conducted at the University of Cebu Graduate School, all of the respondents finished their master's degree program in this institution. A good majority

(63.3%) finished their various fields of interest in master's degree programs from 2015 to 2017. The respondents did not specify the area of specialization. From this, the researchers can safely deduce that most of the respondents just recently completed their master's degree program. This implied further that there might be other factors that played a role in the completion delay, which can be marriage or building a new family.

Table 6. Respondents' Post-Graduate Data

	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Doctoral				
Others	2	18.2	100.0	100.0
Undisclosed	9	81.8		
Total	11	100.0		

Table 6 depicted that only two (2) or 18 % of the respondents have post-graduate study credentials and revealed that most of them did not take post-graduate studies (99.8 %). However, the researchers contended that contributing factors might delay career advancements, such as family, financial constraints, and contentment (complacency).

Table 7. Examinations Taken by the Respondents (11)

	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Professional Examination				
NLE	9	81.8	90.0	90.0
LET	1	9.1	10.0	100.0
Others	1	9.1		
Total	11	100.0	100.0	
RATING				
75.0	3	27.3	60.0	60.0
78.0	1	9.1	20.0	80.0
78.4	1	9.1	20.0	100.0
Missing System	6	54.5		

The preceding Table 7 displayed the respondents' professional examinations taken and passed. Data show that most of them (81.8 %) took and passed the NLE, 18.2 % took other examinations. The board ratings of these passers range from 75 – 78%.

Table 8. Reasons for Taking the Course

	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Influence of Parents or Relatives				
Undergraduate/AB/BS	2	18.20	40.00	40.00
Graduate/MS/MA/PhD	2	18.20	40.00	80.00
Both	1	9.10	20.00	100.00
Missing system	6	54.50		
Total	11	100.00		
High Grades in the Course or Subject Related to the Course				
Graduate/MS/MA/PhD	2	18.20	50.00	50.00
Both	2	18.20	50.00	100.00
Total	4	36.40	100.00	
Missing System	7	63.60		
Total	11	100.00	100.00	

Good Grades in High School				
Undergraduate/AB/BS	3	27.30	60.00	60.00
Graduate/MS/MA/PhD	2	18.20	40.00	100.00
Total	5	45.50	100.00	
Missing system	6	54.50		
Total	11	100.00		
Peer Influence				
Undergraduate/AB/BS	1	9.10	33.30	33.30
Graduate/MS/MA/PhD	2	18.20	66.70	100.00
Missing system	8	72.70		
Total	11	100.00	100.00	
Inspired by a Role Model				
Graduate/MS/MA/PhD	4	36.40	50.00	50.00
Both	3	27.30	37.50	87.50
Others	1	9.10	12.50	100.0
Missing system	3	27.30		
Total	11	100.00		
Strong Passion for the Profession				
Graduate/MS/MA/PhD	6	54.50	66.70	66.70
Both	3	27.30	33.30	100.00
Total	9	81.80	100.00	
Missing system	2	18.20		
Total	11	100.00		

In contrast, for the respondents who pursued graduate studies, the prospect for immediate employment ranked first, followed by an intense passion for the profession (2), and third is that a good role model inspires them. The highest percentage is on the reason for immediate employment; this indirectly meant that they now have realized the value of educational qualification to landing a good job which can contribute to better self-esteem, thus a job satisfaction. They also have learned to love the profession without being pragmatic with the thought of monetary gains such as a big paycheck. This affirms Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, which states that before progressing on to meet the higher-level growth needs, prior needs have been reasonably satisfied, one must be able to reach the highest level called self-actualization (Tay & Diener, 2011).

Table 9. Respondents' Reasons for Pursuing Advance Studies

	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percentage
For professional development	7	63.6	70.0	70.0
Both	3	27.3	30.0	100.0
Total	10	90.9	100	
Missing system	1	9.1		

The above data reflects the reasons for doing advanced studies taken by the respondents. This incredibly confirmed the data that the respondents have more profound reasons to enhance themselves in the practice of their profession and not merely for compliance to the standard requirement of renewal of licenses which is to acquire a specific Continuing Professional Education (CPE) unit. The respondents saw this advancement as relevant to the progress of their profession. Further research may deal with why most respondents opted to delay their doctoral degree, which may propel career advancement.

Table 10. Respondents' Employment Data

Employment Condition	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Valid Percentage
Employment Status	8	72.7	
Employed			
Unemployed	3		
Type of Employment Status			
Regular/permanent	3	27.3	33.3
Temporary	1	9.1	44.4
Contractual	4	36.4	88.9
Others	1	9.1	11.1
Total	9	81.8	100.0
Undisclosed	2	18.2	

More than 70 % of the respondents are presently employed, as reflected in the preceding table. Reasons for unemployment are not mentioned, but they might be due to family concerns or no desirable job position. It is significant to note that only three of the respondents (27.3%) hold a permanent /regular job, and the majority work on a temporary or contractual basis. Somehow, this reflects that most of them show instability in their work status.

Table 11. Respondents' Employment Information

Occupation Classification	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Valid Percentage
Corporate/Executive/Managers/Supervisors	2	18.2	25.0
Professionals	6	54.5	75.0
Total	8	72.7	100.0
Missing system	3	27.3	
Total	11	100.0	
Name of Company/Organization			
CARAGA	7	63.6	63.6
Others - Regional Hospital	1	9.1	9.1
UCLM	1	9.1	9.1
CIT	2	18.2	18.2

As shown in Table 11, the general occupation of the respondents is that most of them are professionals with 75 good percent. They are primarily employed in government hospitals (63.6%), and the remaining respondents are employed in institutions of higher learning or academe. Both the government hospitals and the academe offer better salaries in the Philippines, explaining the data gathered. Also, both the government hospitals offer more considerable weight from one's educational qualification for promotion and salary increases. Based on CMO requirements of, the minimum educational requirement for a Clinical Instructor should be a master's degree holder, so they are mandated to pursue graduate study.

Table 12. Respondents' Employment Information

Major Line of Business	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Valid Percent
Public administration & defense			
Compulsory social security	1	9.1	12.5
Education	3	27.3	37.5
Health and social work	4	36.4	50.0
Undisclosed	3	27.3	

The majority of the participants are in line with health and social work, which accounted for about 48 %, followed closely with a line in education as the line of business they are associated with. This implied that most of them work as nurses in government hospital facilities.

Table 13. Respondents' Employment Information

Place of Work	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Valid Percent
Local	8	72.7	100.0
Abroad	0	0	
Undisclosed	3	27.3	
	11	100.0	

Most (8, 72.7%) of the respondents were working locally.

Table 14. Respondents' Current Job is the First Job After College

	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	3	27.3	30.0	30.0
No	7	63.6	70.0	100.0
Total	10	90.9	100.0	
Undisclosed	1	9.1		

This is not their first job right after finishing college. It implied that they had another work already prior to finding this current job.

Table 15. Respondents' Reasons for Accepting the Job

	Responses		Percent of Cases	Rank
	f	Percent		
Salaries and Benefits	5	31.3	55.6	2
Career challenge	1	6.3	11.1	4.5
Related to Special Skill	2	12.5	22.2	3
Proximity to Residence	7	43.8	77.8	1
Family Influence	1	6.3	11.1	4.5
Total	16	100.0	177.8	

*Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Reasons for accepting the first job are the following: proximity to residence (ranked first), salaries and benefits (ranked second), and their job was related to their particular skill (ranked third).

Table 16. Reasons for Staying on the Job*

	Responses			Rank
	f	Percent	Percent of Cases	
Salaries and Benefits	3	25.0	75.0	1.5
Career challenge	2	16.7	50.0	2.33
Related to Special Skill	2	16.7	50.0	2.33
Related to course or program of study	3	25.0	75.0	1.5
Proximity to Residence	2	16.7	50.0	2.33

Total	12	100.0	300.0
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*Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

The primary reasons for staying on the job after college are as follows: first, salaries and benefits were also related to their course or study, 2nd in the ranking were career challenges, and related to their particular skill and the proximity to where they live. This further affirmed that they had landed a job relevant to their college curriculum. This may be because of the brutal training that the nurses had in the undergraduate and the cost of the nursing program; they will make use of it by finding a job in line with the course they have finished. In the case of the nursing program, these findings refut.

Greatbatch and Lewis (2007) sais that the polarity of technological changes and conventionalities of education creates disequilibrium, tipping off-balance between curricular offering and the needed demand for competent global graduates. The realization of harmonizing market demand and curriculum relevance demands urgency, and this has to be addressed by both CHED and the Institution of Higher Education by keeping the invisible hand of demand and supply in the market at a steady pace.

Table 17. Reasons for Changing on the Job*

	Responses			Rank
	f	Percent	Percent of Cases	
Career challenge	3	33.3	75.0	1
Related to Special Skill	2	22.2	50.0	2.5
Related to course or program of study	2	22.2	50.0	2.5
Proximity to Residence	1	11.1	25.0	3.5
Peer Influence	1	11.1	25.0	3.5
Total	9	100.0	225.0	

*Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

The first reason they change jobs is firstly career challenge; second is that the offered job is related to their particular skill and program of study, and the last is that the job is proximity to residence and peer influence.

Table 18. Reasons of Unemployment (11)

	f	%	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Family concern	1	9.1	33.3	33.3
Did not look for a job	1	9.1	33.3	66.7
Others	1	9.1	33.3	100.0
Total	3	27.3	100.0	
Undisclosed	8	72.7		

Reasons for unemployment were pegged on advanced or further studies, family concern, and no job opportunity, with a ranking score of 2.5 each. Also, more than half of the studied population is regular or permanent employees.

Table 19. Competencies Learned in College Useful on First Job*

	Responses		Percent of cases	Rank
	f	Percent		
Communication skills	8	30.8	88.9	1
Human Relation skills	6	23.1	66.7	2.5
Entrepreneurial skills	1	3.8	11.1	4

Problem-solving skills	6	23.1	66.7	2.5
Critical Thinking Skills	5	19.2	55.6	3
Total	26	100.0	288.9	

As reflected in Table 19, the top three competencies learned in college that were useful on the first job were communication (1st), human relations (2nd), and critical thinking skills (3rd).

Table 20. Competencies Learned in Graduate School Useful in the Current Job

	Responses		Percent of cases	Rank
	N	Percent		
Communication skills	5	19.2	62.5	2
Human Relation skills	6	23.1	75.0	1.33
Entrepreneurial skills	2	7.7	25.0	3
Problem-solving skills	6	23.1	75.0	1.33
Critical Thinking Skills	6	23.1	75.0	1.33
IT Skills	1	3.8	12.5	4
Total	26	100.0	288.9	

*Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Competencies learned in the graduate school valuable curriculum in the current job were the same as previously learned in the college (communication, human relations, and critical thinking skills) with problem-solving (4) and information technology skills (5). These known facts translated to the idea that additional skills may improve over time as the students further their studies. Masteral degree would need a lot of problem-solving and computer-related activities (information technology), mainly due to the research process. This further affirms Benner's Novice- Expert theory.

CONCLUSION

The graduates Master of Arts in Nursing of the University of Cebu Graduate School expressed improved knowledge, skills, and attitudes after obtaining the graduate degree, thus employable at 72.7 % rate, however, a little bit lower than that of Tracer study 2014 results due to the limited number of samples.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Grounded on the significant findings of the study, the following recommendations are indicated: (1) Regular revisit to the Graduate school curriculum; (2) Re-enforce on the competencies that the graduates found helpful at work.

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GRADUATE SCHOOL STUDENTS' ASSESSMENT ON THE SERVICE QUALITY OF STUDENT SERVICES AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT UNITS

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ABSTRACT

This research assessed the service quality of student services and academic support units from the graduate school students' perspectives in the University of Cebu during School Year 2018-2019. The objectives of this research were to determine the students' satisfaction towards the services provided by the student services and academic support units of the university, analyze the relationship between the graduate programs and students' satisfaction with the service provided, and identify areas that need improvement on students' perceptions. The research followed an applied research approach. The methodologies used were descriptive and correlational. The results indicated a very satisfactory rating in almost all support services provided by the university. However, the students still presented areas that can be improved in terms of facilities, customer interaction, office systems of operations, records management systems, and integration of information technology in the delivery of services. Statistically, there is no significant mean rank difference in the graduate students' satisfaction levels across degree programs. The main conclusion drawn from this is that student services and academic support units must continue to innovate in providing quality services attuned to the demands of the times.

Keywords - Student personnel services, academic support, service satisfaction, descriptive, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Student satisfaction is the subsequent outcome of an institution's administrative as well as educational system's performance (Zeithaml, 1988). The students will be more comfortable and inspired to complete their studies if the institution provides an environment that facilitates conducive learning. Every interaction the university staff has with the current and prospective students can significantly impact whether a student decides to enroll and whether they remain in the university for the entire program duration.

Having a team dedicated to customer service is the best way to ensure that there is always someone available to help and that a qualified person answers each inquiry quickly and efficiently.

This study determined the student's opinions regarding the student services and academic support services provided by a higher education institution. Focusing on student satisfaction has been one of the means to intensify service quality. The university needs to satisfy its customers, especially its students.

RELATED LITERATURE

The students school performance depends on the quality of student service provided by a university. Rowley (1996) mentioned that universities providing quality student service tends to produce students who are adept, productive and good performers. Levy and Weitz (2007) define satisfaction as assessing how much the trader can meet or surpass customers' satisfaction. In the academic setting, the traders are the owners usually represented by the university staff, and the customers are the university students. The Expectation-Confirmation theory or alternatively known as Expectation Disconfirmation theory (Oliver et al., 1997), postulates that expectations coupled with perceived performance led to post-purchase satisfaction. Thus, satisfaction results from the comparison process between the expectations and perceived service performance. Furthermore, satisfaction is incidentally influenced by both expectations and perceived performance through a mediational relationship that passes through the disconfirmation construct and is openly influenced by disconfirmation of beliefs and perceived performance.

Given the disconfirmation paradigm (Cassidy-Smith and Boudreaux, 2004), perceptions of a service encounter are considered by either confirmation or disconfirmation of expectancies. When a service is accomplished as expected, this leads to confirmation.

Disconfirmation is when there is an alteration between performance and expectations. A study conducted by Hefer and Cant (2014) that looked into the student's satisfaction towards service quality rendered by higher educational institutions in terms of physical facilities, equipment, staff, and communication materials, indicated that studies on student's opinion of service quality provided by schools could help administrators distribute their resources consequently. The study also emphasized that schools need to provide excellent quality service to get a competitive advantage above other higher educational institutions.

Haque et al. (2011) emphasized in their research that all aspects of higher education are essential to attract and retain students and to motivate them to recommend the institution for future students. These variables include quality of teaching, teachers availability for students' academic advising, research facility for students, library collection and service, campus infrastructure, campus canteen facility, group discussion facility for students, sports facility for the students on the campus, classrooms comfortability for teaching and learning, classrooms multimedia and internet facilities, good computers for students use, ICT (PC and Internet) facility, student support for co-curricular and extra-curricular activities and lab facilities for conducting lab oriented courses. However, the study was conducted with tertiary school students whose needs may differ from graduate school students. Khalil et al. (2018) examined the quality dimensions most important to students in a developing country. Their study recommended that private schools increase effort in getting a quality education and give attention to student feedback.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of graduate school students of the University of Cebu regarding the service quality of student service and academic support units during School Year 2018-2019.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the research design, research environment, research participants, research instruments, research procedures, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

Research Design

The study employed the descriptive- correlational research design. The descriptive method was used to characterize the respondents, the effectiveness of the services provided by the student services and academic support units, and recommendations coming from the respondents to improve service delivery. The correlational method was applied to determine the relationship of graduate programs to the extent of effectiveness of student services.

Research Environment

This investigation was conducted at the University of Cebu covering the the Student Personnel Services (SPS), which include the following offices: Guidance, Civil Security Unit (CSU), Building Maintenance and General Services, Library, and Canteen. The Academic Support Unit composed of the Cashier/Accounting Office, Electronic Data Processing (EDP), and Registrar.

Research Respondents

The respondents were the students of the University of Cebu Graduate School enrolled in the doctoral and master programs, such as: Doctor in Business Administrations (DBA), Master of Science in Criminal Justice (MSCJ), Master of Arts in Nursing (MAN), Master of Science in Teaching (MST), Master in Business Administration (MBA), Master of Science in Educational

Management (MSEM), and Master of Hotel and Restaurant Management (MSHRM). There were three hundred sixty-six (366) respondents for this study, in which one hundred eighty-four (184) respondents from the academic support unit. At the same time, one hundred eighty-two (182) respondents from the student services unit. The research instrument was pre-tested and was subject to modification.

Research Instrument

This study adopted the structure of close and open-ended and the Likert-scale four-point measure questionnaire. This research has three parts and 51 indicators. The first part contains the profile of the respondents, which includes the age, gender, religion, and program enrolled. The second part contains the respondent's level of satisfaction. Each item is given a 4-point scale with 4 = very satisfied, 3 = satisfied, 2 = less satisfied and 1 = not satisfied. The third part contains the recommendations for each service department.

Treatment of Data

The collected data were compiled and analyzed using the Statistical Packaged for the Social Science (SPSS) version 2.0. The SPSS used descriptive analysis and correlation analysis to test the hypothesis. In order to accomplish the objectives of this study, different statistical tests such as frequencies and means of scores were used. The Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test was also used to find the difference of K independent samples from different populations if they significantly differ (Paler-Calmorin, 2010).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section shows the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data. Table present the respondents' profile in terms of gender, age, program, and religion.

Table 1. Respondents' Demographic Profile of (Academic Support Unit) (184)

Characteristics		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	57	31.0
	Female	127	69.0
Age	20-29 years old	115	63.2
	30-39 years old	50	27.5
	40-49 years old	16	8.8
	50-59 years old	1	.5
	Mean =29.07, SD = 6.6	n = 182	Max-Min (21, 51)
Program	DBA	13	7.1
	MSCJ	12	6.5
	MAN	6	3.3
	MST	16	8.7
	MBA	114	62.0
	MSEM	3	1.6
	MSHRM	20	10.9
Religion			

Roman Catholic	158	86.8
Bible Baptist	4	2.2
Born Again Christian	11	6.0
Iglesia Ni Cristo	1	.5
7th Day Adventist	1	.5
Islam / Muslim	4	2.2
Mormons	2	1.1
Evangelical	1	.5

Based on data gathered, more than half (127 or 69%) of the respondents were female graduate students ranging from 20 to 39 years old (165 or 90.7%) or the average age of 29.07 with a 6.6 standard deviation. The majority (114 or 62%) enrolled in Master in Business Administratio (MBA)MBA, and very few were from other programs. Likewise, Roman Catholics are the dominant religion (158 or 86.8) among the graduate students, followed by Born-Again Christians (11 or 6%). This means that the results of this study were mostly accounted for females, young adults, Master in Business Administratio (MBA) enrolled, and Catholic graduate students. Thus, another survey is recommended where each graduate program has significant representatives for balanced perspectives in this satisfaction area.

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Respondents (Student Services Unit) (n=366)

Sex	Characteristics	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age	Male	52	29.5
	Female	124	70.5
		n = 176	
	20-29	112	64.0
	30-39	46	26.3
	40-49	16	9.1
Program	50-59	1	.6
	Mean =29.10, SD = 6.88	n = 175	Max-Min (21, 51)
	DBA	13	7.3
	MSCJ	12	6.8
	MAN	6	3.4
	MST	16	9.0
	MBA	108	61.0
	MSEM	3	1.7
	MSHRM	19	10.7
Religion		n = 177	
	Roman Catholic	153	86.9
	Bible Baptist	5	2.8
	Born Again Christian	10	5.7
	7th Day Adventist	1	.6
	Islam / Muslim	4	2.3
	Mormons	2	1.1
	Evangelical	1	.6
		n = 182	

Table 2 shows the demographics of the respondents. The majority (124 or 70.5%) were females aged from 20 to 29 years old (112 or 64%). They were primarily enrolled at MBA (108 or 61.0%) and were Roman Catholics (153 or 86.9%). This means the outcomes of this survey would mirror much about them.

Table 3. Students' Satisfaction of Cashier/Accounting Services (n=366)

Items	Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
7	Confidentiality of student's data is maintained and respected	3.49	Very Satisfied
6	Department provides accurate computation of school fees	3.46	Very Satisfied
4	Department's office is accessible	3.46	Very Satisfied
3	Staff are organized/systematic in carrying out the task	3.37	Very Satisfied
2	Staff are committed, dependable, and trustworthy	3.33	Very Satisfied
9	Addresses problems in assessment and payments immediately	3.32	Very Satisfied
8	Provide fast transactions regarding student assessment to avoid overcrowding	3.27	Very Satisfied
5	Department has sufficient facilities like chairs, teller windows and writing materials	3.25	Very Satisfied
10	Department has enough personnel to attend to students	3.24	Satisfied
1	Staff are friendly, approachable, & accommodating	3.23	Satisfied
	Totality	3.34	Very Satisfied

Table 3 shows the students' satisfaction level with the Cashier or Accounting services. As seen on the table, the overall satisfaction level among the graduate students is very satisfactory. The top three (3) indicators are; confidentiality of students' data is maintained and respected (3.49), it provides accurate computation of school fees (3.46), and department office is accessible (3.46). The lowest two (2) indicators were rated just satisfied are; the office has enough personnel to attend to students (3.24) and staff are friendly, approachable, and accommodating (3.23). In other words, the graduate students were delighted on the very function of the office but less on the care side of the clients. This has to be addressed, so the students are delighted with their experiences in the graduate school department.

Table 4. Students' Satisfaction of Electronic Data Processing (EDP) Services (n=366)

Items	Indicators	Interpretation
4	Department is accessible	Very Satisfied
2	Staff are committed, dependable, and trustworthy	Very Satisfied
3	Staff are organized/systematics in carrying out task	Very Satisfied
1	Staff are friendly, approachable, and accommodating	Satisfied
5	Dept. has sufficient facilities like chairs, tables, teller windows and writing materials	Satisfied
6	Dept has enough personnel to attend to students' concern	Satisfied
7	Dept has enough personnel to attend to students' concern	Satisfied
	Overall Mean:	Very Satisfied

Table 4 presents the students' satisfaction with the Electronic Data Processing services. Based on the table, graduate students were delighted with the accessibility of the EDP (3.39), the staff is committed, dependable, and trustworthy ($\mu=3.32$), and staff is organized or systematic in carrying out their tasks ($\mu=3.30$). On the other hand, satisfied only with the following; staff is friendly, approachable, and accommodating ($\mu=3.24$); has sufficient facilities ($\mu=3.24$), with enough facilities ($\mu=3.24$), and enough number of personnel ($\mu=3.20$). However, very satisfied is

the overall satisfaction on the services of this office. Therefore, the office is serving at its optimum but only satisfactory soft personnel skills.

Table 5. Students' Satisfaction of Registrar's Services (n=366)

Items	Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
3	Department is accessible	3.46	Very Satisfied
5	Dept. has complete & accurate records of students' credentials	3.44	Very Satisfied
2	Staff are committed, dependable, & trustworthy	3.36	Very Satisfied
4	Dept is well-lighted, well-ventilated and conducive for transactions	3.35	Very Satisfied
1	Staff are friendly, approachable, & accommodating	3.31	Very Satisfied
8	Department has systematic procedure in processing requested documents	3.29	Very Satisfied
6	Prompt release of school records	3.24	Satisfied
7	Department has enough personnel to attend clients' concern	3.24	Satisfied
	Totality	3.34	Very Satisfied

Table 5 presents the students' satisfaction levels with the Registrar's services. As shown in the table, the overall satisfaction level of the graduate students is delighted with a weighted mean of 3.34. The top two (2) indicators of delighted satisfaction are; the department is accessible ($\mu=3.46$), and the department has completed and accurate records of students' credentials ($\mu=3.44$). However, on satisfying level for the bottom two (2) indicators; prompt release of school records ($\mu=3.24$) and the department has enough personnel to attend to clients' concerns. This means the Registrar is serving satisfactory functions except on the immediate release of the students' requested records. Thus, it is recommended to increase the efficiency of this office in terms of releasing the students' scholastic records.

Table 6. Students' Satisfaction of Guidance Services (n=366)

Item	Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
3	The department deals with students' concern with confidentiality.	3.48	Very Satisfied
2	The department is accessible	3.47	Very Satisfied
5	The personnel show professionalism and courteousness in attending to student's concern during entrance examination.	3.45	Very Satisfied
1	Staff are friendly, approachable, and accommodating.	3.43	Very Satisfied
7	There are enough spaces for counseling or during entrance examination.	3.39	Very Satisfied
4	There are enough personnel to accommodate students' queries.	3.35	Very Satisfied
6	Makes result of test available.	3.31	Very Satisfied
	Overall Mean:	3.44	Very Satisfied

Table 6 presents the students' satisfaction level with the guidance office services. As shown in the table, the students rated all the items very satisfied. The items with the highest weighted means are; the department deals with students' concern with confidentiality ($\mu=3.48$), the department is accessible ($\mu=3.47$), the personnel show professionalism and courteousness ($\mu=3.45$), and the staff is friendly, approachable, and accommodating ($\mu=3.43$). This means the graduate students were delighted with the services rendered by the guidance office.

Table 7. Students' Satisfaction of Civil Security Unit (CSU) (n=366)

Items	Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1	The department ensures safety and security of persons and property in the campus.	3.49	Very Satisfied
4	The staff maintains peace and order in the campus.	3.47	Very Satisfied
3	The staff are positioned in strategic areas of the school.	3.42	Very Satisfied
5	The department has enough number of competent security guards that can attend to the clients' needs.	3.42	Very Satisfied
2	Treats all clients fair in terms of entry / exit requirements.	3.37	Very Satisfied
	Overall Mean	3.43	Very Satisfied

Table 7 presents the students' satisfaction level towards Civil Security Unit (CSU) services. As indicated, the students rated all the statement indicators with very satisfaction. The indicators with the highest weighted mean are: department ensures safety and security of persons and property in the campus ($\mu=3.49$) and staff maintains peace and order in the campus ($\mu=3.47$). As a whole, the graduate students were delighted with the services rendered by the CSU.

Table 8. Student's Satisfaction of Building Maintenance & General Services (n=366)

Items	Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
5	Facilities (DLP, Smart TV, etc.) are in good condition.	3.49	Very Satisfied
2	The department provides a good learning and study environment for the students.	3.43	Very Satisfied
4	Classrooms are conducive for learning and spacious.	3.42	Very Satisfied
1	The department facilitates and monitors general cleanliness of the University building.	3.24	Satisfied
3	Restrooms are clean.	2.98	Satisfied
	Overall Mean:	3.32	Very Satisfied

Table 8 presents the Building Maintenance and general services level of satisfaction of the graduate students. As indicated, delighted is the students' overall satisfaction level towards this department. However, satisfied only for the general cleanliness of the University building, including its restrooms. Thus, it is recommended to improve the overall cleanliness of the building.

Table 9. Student's Satisfaction of Library Services (n=366)

Items	Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
4	Library is accessible and a very comfortable area for studying and conducting research.	3.58	Very Satisfied
2	Staff are organized/systematic in carrying out task and provides various forms of assistance to students.	3.52	Very Satisfied
5	The library has spaces for books and other library collections.	3.51	Very Satisfied
3	Staff assist students and other library users promptly and properly.	3.49	Very Satisfied
1	Staff are very friendly, approachable, and accommodating.	3.47	Very Satisfied
6	The library has wide variety of book collections, periodicals and journals.	3.41	Very Satisfied
7	There are enough table and chairs in the library.	3.41	Very Satisfied
8	There are enough computers in the library.	3.16	Satisfied
	Overall Mean	3.45	Very Satisfied

Table 9 presents the students' satisfaction level with Library Services. The students rated all the item indicators very satisfied, except item 8 only satisfied the library's number of computers. The top-ranked items are rated as very satisfied were; the library is accessible and very

comfortable are for studying and conducting research ($\mu=3.58$); staff is organized or systematic in carrying out a task and provides various forms of assistance to students ($\mu=3.52$), and the library has spaces for books and other library collections ($\mu=3.51$). Overall, the students were delighted with the library services except for enough computers in the library. Thus, it is recommended to increase the number of computers at the graduate school library.

Table 10. Student's Satisfaction of Canteen Services

Items	Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
5	The canteen is accessible.	3.42	Very Satisfied
1	Staff are friendly, approachable, and accommodating.	3.33	Very Satisfied
3	Foods are prepared in a sanitary and well-supervised kitchen.	3.23	Satisfied
2	The department provides a wide variety of well-balanced and nutritious foods.	3.19	Satisfied
4	Food prices are reasonable.	3.17	Satisfied
6	The canteen is well-lighted, well-ventilated, and conducive.	3.12	Satisfied
7	The canteen has sufficient facilities like chairs, tables, and equipment.	3.10	Satisfied
8	The department has clean, sanitary, and well-ventilated area for dining.	3.07	Satisfied
Totally		3.21	Satisfied

Table 10 presents the students' satisfaction level for the Canteen. As shown, the students rated delighted only with the accessibility of the Canteen ($\mu=3.42$) and staff being friendly, approachable, and accommodating ($\mu=3.33$). The rest of the items were just satisfied for food sanitation; well-balanced and nutritious foods; reasonable prices; well-lighted, ventilated, and conducive; sufficient chairs, tables, and equipment; and clean, sanitary well-ventilated area for dining. Thus, the graduate students' overall satisfaction level with the canteen services is satisfactory. Those things need to be addressed for better support services to graduate students.

Table 11. Students' Level of Satisfaction Significantly Different across Programs and Curriculums for Cashier/Accounting, EDP, and Registrar Services

Program Group	N	Mean rank	Mean	Sd	Test statistic	P-value	Remarks
MBA, DBA	127	88.36	3.24	0.52	3.706	0.295	No Significant difference
MSCJ	12	88.92					
MST	16	111.28					
MAN, MSEM, MSHRM	29	101.76					
Total	184	Df = 3	Independent-samples kruskal-wallis h test				

Legend: Significance level is $\alpha = .05$.

Table 11 shows the results on the test of signi difference in Cashier/Accounting, EDP, and Registrar satisfaction among graduate students across degree programs. It is found that there is no significant mean rank difference ($p\text{-value} = .025$) in the satisfaction levels across degree programs by the graduate students. However, numerically, MST ($\mu=111.28$) and MAN, MSEM, and MSHRM ($\mu=101.76$) had higher mean rank satisfaction levels. This means their satisfaction levels do not differ significantly, and thus, they have at least the same level of opinions regarding the services of these three (3) mentioned offices. They probably coordinate since their services are very much related and sequential.

Table 12. Students' Level of Satisfaction Significantly Different across Programs and Curriculums for Guidance, CSU, Building Maintenance & General Services, Library, & Canteen Services

for Guidance, CSC, Building, Maintenance & General Services, Library, & Canteen Services							
Program	N	Mean Rank	Mean	SD	Test Statistic	p-Valued	Remarks
MBA, DBA	121	86.06	3.47	0.45	3.042	0.385	No Significant Difference
MSCJ	12	78.13					
MST	16	97.75					
MAN, MSEM, MSHRM	28	101.38					
Total	177	df = 3	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis H Test				

Legend: Significance level is $\alpha = .05$.

Table 12 presents the graduate student's satisfaction levels to Guidance, Civil Security Unit (CSU), Building Maintenance and General Services, Library, and Canteen. As shown there, statistically, there is no significant mean rank difference (p -value = .385) in the graduate students' satisfaction levels across degree programs. However, numerically, the MAN, MSEM, & MSHRM (101.38) and MST (97.75) have higher satisfaction levels compared to other degree programs regardless of the number of students. This means satisfaction levels across degree programs have at least the same perceptions on the services provided by those offices. However, quantitatively the MAN, MSEM, & MSHRM tend to have higher than MST and the rest of the degree programs in the satisfaction levels to these support services offices. Therefore, their services offered to the graduate students are the same since their functions are very related and sequential.

Table 13. Areas that Need Improvement Based on Student's Perceptions

Academic Support Unit	Areas that Need Improvement
Cashier	- Support offices requiring transactions with cashier office be located adjacently to one another. - Improved customer interactions. - Provision of additional staff especially on weekends. - Installation of additional ATM machines in the campus and have online mode of transaction (debit and credit cards).
EDP	- Improved customer interactions. - Checking students' names before printing. - Proper arrangement of tables and chairs in the enrollment area for easier access to the EDP counter.
Registrar	- Have a separate line or counter exclusive for graduate school students rather than mixing them with other programs. - Consult the graduate school department before finalizing the submission of application for graduation. - Consider the schedule of revalida set by the Graduate School on the deadline of application for graduation. - Find ways to digitalize process of managing documents. - Have available services on Saturdays since most of the graduate school students are working on weekdays. - Have close coordination with the Registrar Offices in all - UC Campuses to expedite the transfer of credentials.
Student Service Unit	Areas that Need Improvement

<i>Guidance</i>	• Information dissemination of the guidance services for the graduate school students. • Improvement of the customer interactions.
<i>CSU</i>	• Have enough security guards in the Accounting department.
<i>Building Maintenance & General Services</i>	• Maintain cleanliness in every rest room inside the school premises and open the rest room nearest the Graduate School classrooms especially on weekends.
<i>Library</i>	• Purchase of additional books for the Graduate School. • Provide the requested books of graduate school students.
<i>Canteen</i>	• Available services on Sundays in order to accommodate the MBA students. • A well-ventilated and more spacious canteen.

Table 13 presents areas that need to be improved in each student service and academic support unit as perceived by students. It can be noted that the students' recommendations range from facilities, customer interaction, office systems of operations, records management systems, and integration of information technology in the delivery of services. Thus, the student service and academic support units have to continue striving for excellence in providing students' basic needs and other students services.

CONCLUSION

The respondents assessed that they were very satisfied with the student personnel services and the services of the academic support units like the Cashier or Accounting Office, Electronic Data Processing (EDP), Registrar's Office, Guidance Center, Civil Security Unit (CSU), Building Maintenance, and Library, except for the canteen services where they were only. The satisfaction rating difference among the graduate students across the degree programs does not differ significantly. They have at least the same level of perceptions regarding the services offered by the eight (8) offices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As student service and academic support providers, there is a need to sustain the drive in innovating efforts to come about with best practices that are more effective, efficient, significant, proper and accustomed to the needs of the times. The respective student service and academic support units should develop an action plan in response to the result of the study. School management provides the necessary resources to meet service quality. Other academic programs in the university should use the measurement scale to trace the progress and measure service quality for constant service improvement. The university may consider an online student satisfaction survey for future research. Another survey is recommended where each graduate

program has a significant number of representatives for balanced perspectives in this area of satisfaction and other student services units, which this study failed to cover.

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