GRADUATE TRACER OF THE COLLEGE OF NURSING- EXCERPTS FROM THE PREVIOUS FINDINGS TO PRESENT: A LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Education and training systems have a key role to play in ensuring that ensuring opportunities are provided for all individuals to develop their skills continually in a lifelong learning perspective, enabling them to adapt to rapidly changing labor market requirements and conditions. Graduate Tracer studies are essential for understanding the relevance and quality of programs offered by the universities as well as the labor market. The present study re-evaluated the University of Cebu Lapulapu and Mandaue (UCLM)-College of Nursing's current work status and employment data. Excerpts were taken from the previous tracer study findings by Sanchez and Diamante (2007-2014). Based on the findings, highlights are presented to help improve UCLM-CN's endeavor. Majority of the graduates (93%) have not pursued graduate studies. This implies that they have not placed importance on continuing education. Emphasis must be placed on the CORE VALUE of UC in the curriculum where research and innovation are needed even as you graduate course. An upward trend of migration to other countries to seek employment was detected. The emphasis on service to the community/community extension must be inculcated in the learning of the students to help control this phenomenon of mass migration. The top training/advanced studies attended after college and relevant to the course are (1) Basic life support (BLS); (2) Advanced cardiac life support (ACLS); and (3) Intravenous Therapy (IV) training. The improve their chances of having these certificates/licenses, the core concepts of these skills must be enhanced. Currently, as viewed by the graduates, the competencies learned in college which is the most useful in the industry are (1) basic nursing skills; (2) communication skills; (3) decision-making skills; (4) human relation skills; and (5) problem-solving skills.

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INTRODUCTION

Education and training systems have a key role to play in ensuring that ensuring opportunities are provided for all individuals to develop their skills continually in a lifelong learning perspective, enabling them to adapt to rapidly changing labor market requirements and conditions.Tracer studies provide information that is valuable for graduates/alumni; and this helps to inspire education, training and employment policies, curricula of education, and training courses, guidance to help individuals decide on their education or training paths, and clearer judgments about (re)-skilling the labor force (European Training Foundation, 2017). It is a very powerful tool that can provide valuable information for evaluating the whereabouts and performance of graduates in the workplace (Cuadra et al., 2019)

Many researchers have utilized tracer studies in various ways that could benefit the graduates/alumni, the faculty, the University, and stakeholders. For example, a study by Millington, (2003) on online and distance learning proposed making modifications in the educational process that could enhance their students' chances of achieving success after a tracer study. Similarly, an article by Garcia et al., (2016) did tracer studies for continual improvement of their bachelor program. Another purpose done by Guinid et al., (2016), assessed the employment status of their graduates, thereby creating recommendations to the University. Finally, another example is a study by Lesaca et al., (2021) to suggests improvement of their learning plan to the faculty of nursing. Based on this related literature, the researchers feel the need of conducting and updating their very own tracer study for the University of Cebu Lapulapu and Mandaue- College of Nursing (UCLM-CN).

Concerning the previous findings of the tracer study of UCLM-CN, the employment data of the respondents showed the current work status of the nursing graduates. The majority are employed. In their present occupation, most of the respondents assume professional work and the major line of business is in the health and social work sector. It was depicted that most of them are regular employees, have professional occupations and have local jobs in the health and social work field. Most of the respondents are regular/ permanently employed, only less than a fifth is contractually and temporarily employed accordingly. Most of the respondents are locally employed. For most of them, more than half got their jobs in 1 to 6 months. Almost two-thirds of the respondents had jobs related to the course they took up in college. The competencies that the graduates find useful in their first job are communication skills, critical thinking skills, and human relations skills (Sanchez, M.P.R.; Diamante, 2016, 2017). Despite these results, a more recent trend or update must be done to prove whether these findings will still be relevant in our current time. The current curriculum of UCLM-CN is tailored under the "2012 NATIONAL NURSING CORE COMPETENCY STANDARDS,") and the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PFQ) (Atty. Manzala, 2013), a quality-assured national system for the development, recognition, and award of

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qualifications based on standards of knowledge, skills, and values acquired in different ways and methods by learners and workers in the country. Due to this, tracer studies are necessary whether the curriculum coincides with the needs of the industry or clinical setting. The employability of graduates is now an essential concern as a competition for students, both local and overseas. (Commission on Higher Education, 2012).

As of July 2015, the employment rate estimated in the Philippines was 93.5 percent while the unemployment rate was 6.5 percent. Among the unemployed persons in July 2015, 62.1 percent were males. Of the total unemployed, the age group 15 to 24 years comprised 50.4 percent, while the age group 25 to 34, 29.5 percent (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2016). In 2022, the Labor Force Survey reported employment, underemployment, and unemployment rates. In a general view, the statistics reflect a steady rate from 2021-2022- Table 1 (*Employment Rate, Philippine Statistics Authority*,).

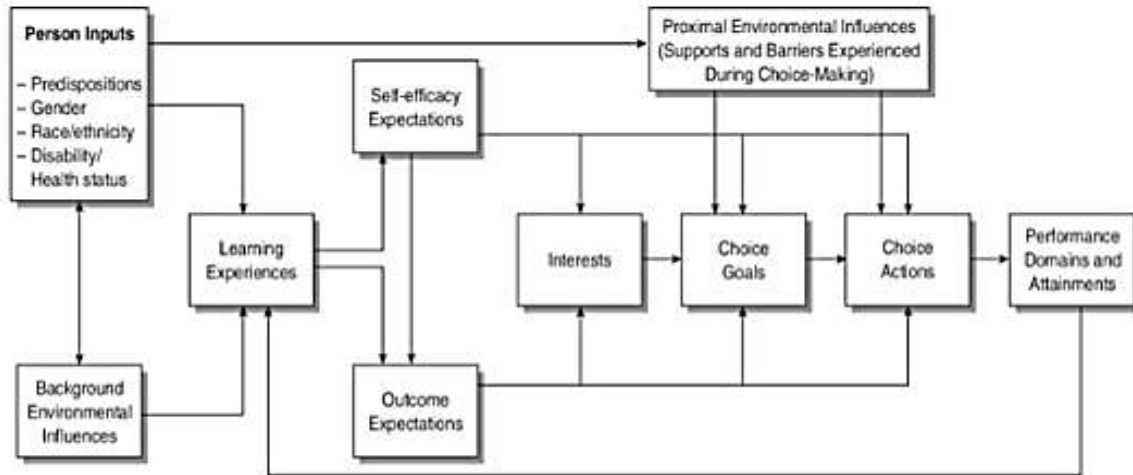**Table 1. Results from June 2022 Labor Force Survey (LFS)**

Philippines	June 2021	Jan. 2022	Feb. 2022	Mar. 2022	Apr. 2022	May 2022	June 2022
Local Force Participation Rate (%)	65.1	60.5	63.8	65.4	63.4	64.0	64.8
Employment Rate (%)	92.3	93.6	93.6	94.2	94.3	94.0	94.0
Underemployment Rate (%)	14.2	14.9	14.0	15.8	14.0	14.5	12.6
Unemployment Rate (%)	7.7	6.4	6.4	5.8	5.7	6.0	6.0

Graduate Tracer studies are essential as a way of understanding the relevance and quality of programs offered by the universities as well as the labor market. There is a demand for empirical evidence regarding the professional relevance of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) study programs using graduate tracer studies. HEIs require graduate tracer studies for accreditation of study programs. HEIs must be interested in feedback from their graduates on the quality of education (Obando & Shisanya, 2013).

The study was anchored on Robert Lent, Steven Brown, and Hackett's Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)(Yusoff et al., 2019). Social cognitive career theory emphasizes (*A Simplified View of How Career-Related Interests and Choices Develop Diagram*, n.d.):

SCCT, (Andersen & Vandehey, 2011; Kelly, 2009)) is divided into two complementary levels of theoretical analysis. (A) FIRST LEVEL- presented cognitive-person variables that enable people to exercise within their career development; (B) SECOND LEVEL -considered the paths through which several additional sets of variables—such as (1) physical attributes; (2) features of the environment; (3) and particular learning experiences—influence career-related interests and choice behavior.

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Figure 1: A simplified view of how career-related interests and choices develop over time, according to SCCT SOURCE: Adapted from Lent, R.W., Brown, S.D. and Hackett, G 1994. " Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance". Journal of Vocational Behavior 45:79-122

Finally, the study makes use of Frank Parson's Trait and Factor Theory, which refers to the assessment of the characteristics of a person and a job. Individuals have unique traits that can be objectively measured and matched against the requirements of occupations. Choosing an occupation involves trying to match an individual to a job so that their needs will be met and their job performance will be satisfactory (Zunker, 2011). The terms traits and factor "refer to the assessment of characteristics of the person and the job performance (Patton & McHamon, 2014).

Given the above statements, the researcher wanted to find out the current work status of nursing graduates and their employment data, whether they were able to find jobs related to their course or in some other fields. The following are the research questions addressed in this tracer study:
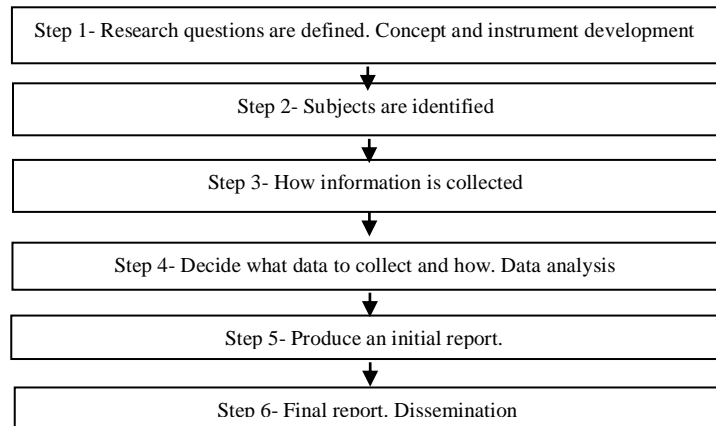
A. What is the employment and unemployment situation of graduates/alumni?
B. What are the graduate/alumni-specific work assignments? Are these related to the course?
C. Are the skills and competencies acquired in their education/training useful in employment?
D. What are the skills and competencies required by the industry?

METHODOLOGY

The current research utilized descriptive statistics, employing simple percentages, and frequency distribution to analyze trends of employment of the graduates/alumna. The resulting output will be presented in charts, tables, graphs, etc., for easy facilitation and understanding of these trends. There are no fixed steps for conducting a tracer study, however, several studies were sought to establish a framework/ guidance for conducting this study. The process described below

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(Figure 2) contains the elements that are common to most tracer studies (European Training Foundation, 2017; Selaolo, 1998).

Figure 2. Conduct of tracer studies flowchart

| Step 1- Research questions are defined. Concept and instrument development |
| Step 2- Subjects are identified |
| Step 3- How information is collected |
| Step 4- Decide what data to collect and how. Data analysis |
| Step 5- Produce an initial report. |
| Step 6- Final report. Dissemination |

This study was primarily conducted at the UCLM as initiated by the College of Nursing. For walk-in respondents, the questionnaire will be administered face-to-face. Supplementary strategies were done just like the inclusion of social media platforms (Facebook messenger, e-mails, Google forms, etc.) to gather data from as many respondents as possible. Excerpts were taken from the previous tracer study research findings (Sanchez, M.P.R.; Diamante, 2016, 2017). The findings were incorporated into the current research to accomplish a longitudinal analysis. The researchers included previous students from 2015-2021. Convenient sampling techniques were utilized in the census of the alumni which is not that many and is easily identified by the researchers. The sample size is computed based on established guidelines and is reflected in Table 2 (Fox & Hunn, 2009; Madow, 1968; Morse, 2000). The researcher utilized a 5% margin of error appropriate for the sample size. The confidence level is 95% and a response distribution of 50%. These factors were used to get statistically significant results for the population.

Table 2. Sample size computation

Batch	# of graduates	Sample size (n)
2015-2021	129	97

A standardized questionnaire from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) entitled Graduate Tracer Study Tool (GTS) was utilized but with some parts modified to make it suitable to the purpose of the study and to answer the research questions as well. Part one is about general information. Part two is regarding the respondent's educational background. Part three is concerned with the training(s) and advanced studies they have attended after college. Finally, part four is about their employment data (*CHED Graduate Tracer Study* n.d.).

Descriptive statistics in general will be the main statistical treatment for this current study. Simple percentages, and frequency distribution to analyze trends of employment of the

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graduates/alumna. The resulting output will be presented via infographics for easy facilitation and understanding of the analyzed trends with the guidance of an established source (Ferreira, 2014).
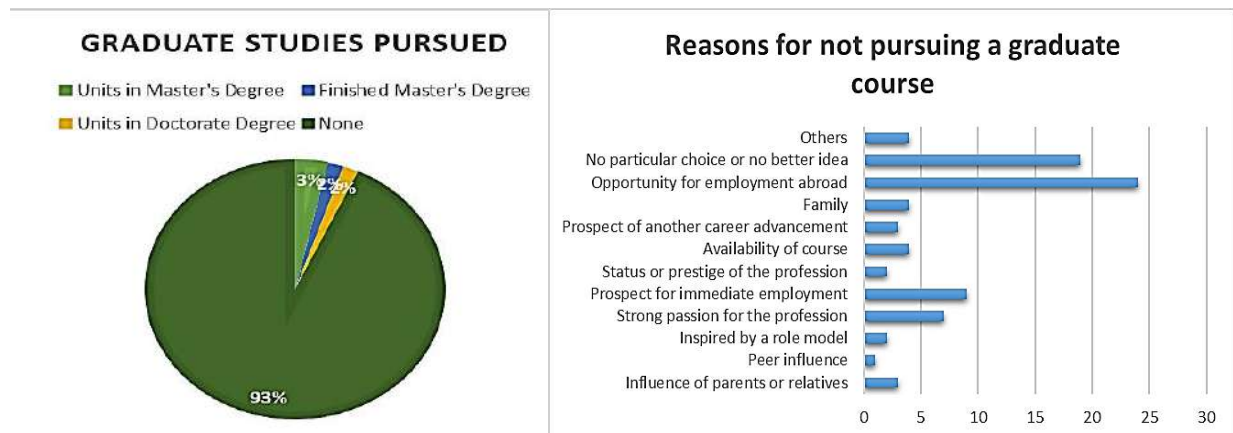
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section objectively reports what is being reflected by the respondents. This contains the main findings of the research comprising of the previous tracer study by Sanchez, Marc Patrich R.; Diamante (2016, 2017), and this recent tracer study. The findings are organized based on the following categories: (A)Profile of respondents; (B) Educational background; (C) Employment data; and (D) Points of improvement.

A. Profile of respondents

CIVIL STATUS	Previous findings (%)	Current findings (%)
Single	92.75%	82.7%
Married	5.8%	17.2%
Consensual Union	1.45%	-
Divorced	-	1.7%
GENDER	**Previous findings (%)**	**Current findings (%)**
Male	26%	29.3%
Female	74%	69%

As shown in the table, generally, most of the respondents were females and only a third of the respondents were males as exhibited in both timelines. Most of the respondents are single, however, an increase in married status in the current findings was noted (17.2%).

This section reflects the current country of residence of the respondents. Although most are still in their mother country(Philippines 90%), this follows an upward trajectory of migration to other countries to seek employment (Cuevas, 2021). The migration of skilled professionals, particularly healthcare workers, is often cited as a key concern for many developing countries
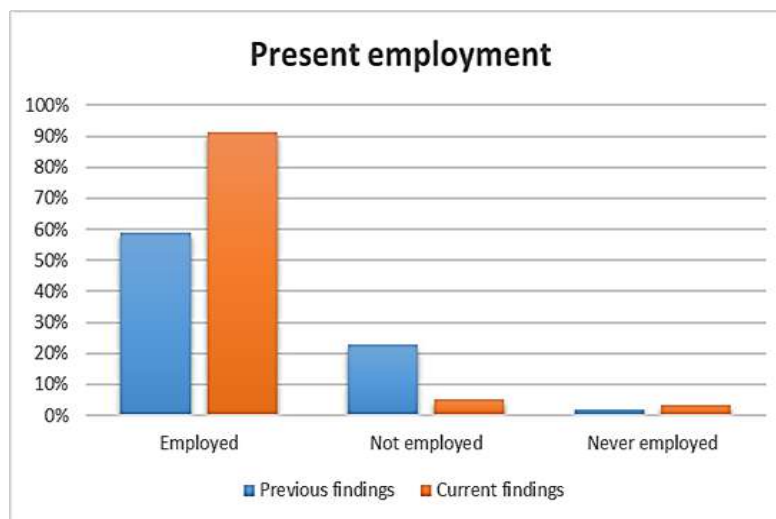
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because of its potential to deplete the number of skilled workers in the local economy (Theoharides, 2018)

B. Educational Background

For their educational background, the majority of the graduates (93%) have not pursued graduate studies. Only 3% have units in the master's degree course and 2% have finished the course. The reasons for not pursuing a course due to better opportunities abroad have not been thought of that idea, probably due to the prospect of immediate employment, family reasons, etc. According to Gorczyca, (2013), some barriers influencing the graduate education of registered nurses include situational barriers of work-life balance and financial impact with a subtheme of age and personal and family commitments, institutional barriers related to the application process, and dispositional concerns around returning to study. This phenomenon is common to healthcare practitioners. Those who proceeded with a master's degree because of promotion and for professional development. The current findings conformed to the previous and had a similar database.

The top training/advanced studies attended after college and relevant to the course are (1) Basic life support (BLS); (2) Advanced cardiac life support (ACLS); and (3) Intravenous Therapy (IV) training. Healthcare professionals are expected to know about current basic and advanced cardiac life support (BLS/ACLS) to help in different emergencies in the hospital/clinical setting (Nambiar et al., 2016). Inadequate knowledge of emergency-saving principles among healthcare professionals could be detrimental to the life and death of patients. The findings accorded with the World Health Organization's patient safety curriculum, "Safe and Quality Nursing Care" competency appraised as the most used in their area of nurse work.
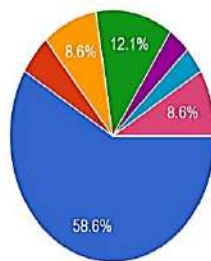
C. Employment data

Contrary to the previous findings, the majority of the alumni are currently employed (91.4%). Those not employed and never employed pursued advanced studies and opted to prepare for licensure examinations abroad. This trend has been expected and is confirmed by the

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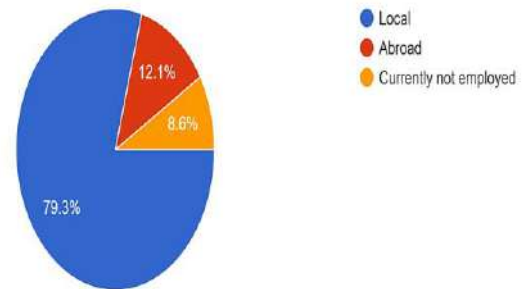*AGPE The Royal Gondwana Research Journal of History, Science, Economic, Political and Social science*

International Council of Nurses (ICN). Currently, there is a global nursing shortage even before the COVID-19 pandemic. The increase in employment could be related to an increase in nursing demand. According to the first State of the World's Nursing (SOWN) report published by the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2020 was revealed that the global nursing workforce was at 27.9 million, and estimated there was a global shortfall of 5.9 million nurses. Evidence showed that 89% of these nurse shortages were concentrated in low- and lower-income countries, with huge gaps in countries in the African, Southeast Asia, and Eastern Mediterranean WHO regions (ICN, 2020).

More than half of the graduates (58.6%) are working as hospital staff nurses, followed by Company/Industrial Nursing (12.1%) and Public health/Community health nursing (8.8%). 80% of them are locally employed while 12.1% are already employed abroad.
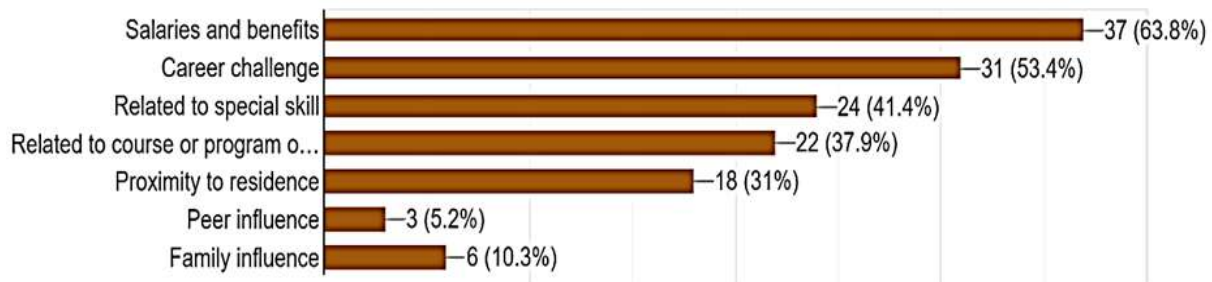
Current employment- Status of work

Place of employment

- Hospital- Staff nurs
- Clinic
- Community Health/
- Company /Industria
- in a University as S
- in a University as C
- Currently not empl

- Local
- Abroad
- Currently not employed

What are the reason (s) for accepting/ staying on the job? You may check (/) more than one answer.

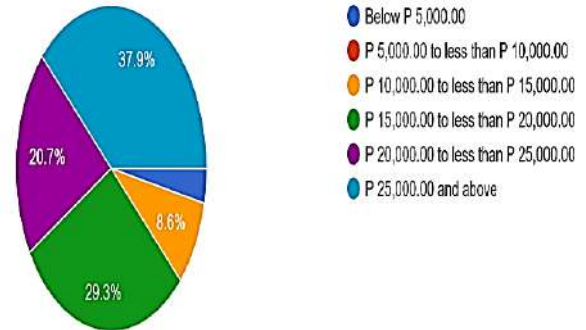| Reason	Value
Salaries and benefits	—37 (63.8%)
Career challenge	—31 (53.4%)
Related to special skill	—24 (41.4%)
Related to course or program o…	—22 (37.9%)
Proximity to residence	—18 (31%)
Peer influence	—3 (5.2%)
Family influence	—6 (10.3%)

Most of the graduates (63.8%) stayed in their current job because of salaries and benefits. Second in rank is because of career challenges (53.4%). Other reasons include relatedness to special skills and the course or program (41.4%) and (37.9%) respectively. The previous study by Sanchez,
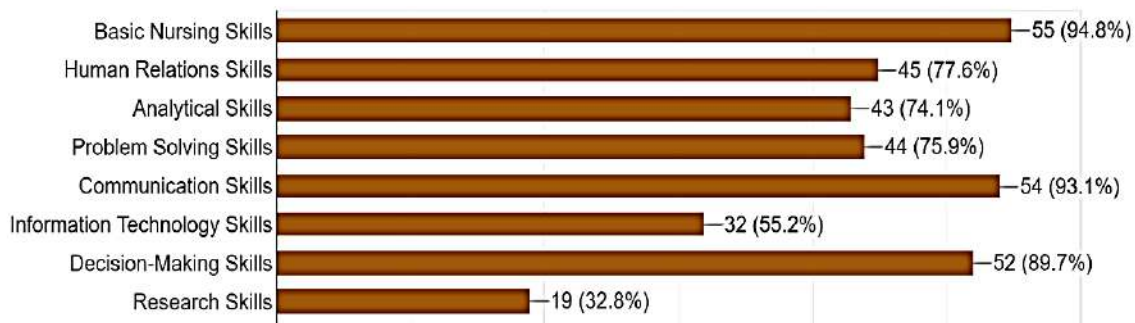
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Marc Patrich R.; Diamante, (2016, 2017) shows virtually the same reason for the respondents for accepting and staying on the job they have chosen. They accepted the job because of: related special skills (35%), salaries and benefits (27%), and career challenges (23%). Additionally, in the previous findings, they stayed on the job for the reason of salaries and benefits (29%), related to the course or program of study (21%). A similar study by Lesaca et al., (2021) is comparable which showed that the majority of the respondents were employed full-time in a government facility, as well as with satisfaction in their work as a nurse ascribable to monetary remuneration.

What is your gross monthly earning in your current job?

- Below P 5,000.00
- P 5,000.00 to less than P 10,000.00
- P 10,000.00 to less than P 15,000.00
- P 15,000.00 to less than P 20,000.00
- P 20,000.00 to less than P 25,000.00
- P 25,000.00 and above

Currently, as viewed by the graduates, the competencies learned in college which is the most useful in the industry are (1) basic nursing skills; (2) communication skills; (3) decision-making skills; (4) human relation skills; and (5) problem-solving skills. Although the previous findings still showed some of these competencies (communication skills=25%, human relations skills=25%, and critical thinking skills=20%)(Sanchez, Marc Patrich R.; Diamante, 2016, 2017)), the priorities shifted probably related to the demands of the industry. In a study by Du (2019), the graduates attested that their University had prepared them to perform as required

what competencies learned in college did you find very useful in your job? You may check (/) more than one answer.

for an entry-level practitioner with highly developed interpersonal skills. They believe that motivation to perform efficiently and effectively has been so far the best that they have achieved in learning (Du, 2019).

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CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the abovementioned findings, highlights are presented to help improve UCLM-CN's endeavor. The utilization of the findings depends on whichever suits the needs of the University as it involves responses from their graduates.

The researchers recommend the following:

1. Majority of the graduates (93%) have not pursued graduate studies. This implies that they have not placed importance on continuing education. Emphasis must be placed on the CORE VALUE of UC in the curriculum where research and innovation are needed.

2. An upward trend of migration to other countries to seek employment was detected. The emphasis on service to the community/community extension must be inculcated in the learning of the students to help control this phenomenon of mass migration.

3. The top training/advanced studies attended after college and relevant to the course are (1) Basic life support (BLS); (2) Advanced cardiac life support (ACLS); and (3) Intravenous Therapy (IV) training. The improve their chances of having these certificates/licenses, the core concepts of these skills must be enhanced.

4. Currently, as viewed by the graduates, the competencies learned in college which is the most useful in the industry are (1) basic nursing skills; (2) communication skills; (3) decision-making skills; (4) human relation skills; and (5) problem-solving skills. Primarily, the University should provide support to the college of nursing by procuring the latest equipment/ gadgets to help train the students in basic nursing skills. Moreover, attention must be placed on other competencies to equip students with the demands of the industry.

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