

## BSBA-MM graduate employment outcomes: A tracer study at Northwest Samar State University

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### ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions produce graduates who are competitive in the dynamic labor market. This study aimed to determine the employability of the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration major in Marketing Management of the College of Management of Northwest Samar State University in batches 2022 and 2023. Specifically, this study sought to determine the employability of graduates in terms of sex, frequency of employment, percentage of employment, location of employment of the graduates, and whether they are employed or not. A descriptive research design was employed in the conduct of the study. The researchers gathered the data with the use of questionnaires and interviews. The researchers used total quota sampling as their sampling technique. A total of 28 graduates from batch 2022 and 58 from batch 2023 were the respondents of the study. Results revealed that, for batch 2022, the majority of the employed graduates are working within Calbayog City and few are working in other areas. The majority of employed graduates are females from batch 2022. The findings also revealed that among the graduates of batch 2023, only one male was employed and working outside Calbayog City. The researchers recommend conducting periodic tracing of graduate employability, enhancing curriculum to help graduates become more competitive in the labor market, indulging faculty members in industry immersion programs, considering other variables in future graduate tracer studies, and making use of this research as the basis for future conclusive research.

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### 1. Introduction

The Philippine Statistics Authority (2022) reported that there are about 2.93 million or 6.4% of Filipinos were unemployed. Unemployment often stems from a lack of employment opportunities, a lack of skills and competencies, and poor education. Since the labor market in the Philippines has become more and more competitive in recent years, Filipinos need to have a proper education that is aligned with their target jobs. According to Albina and Sumagaysay (2020), schools must provide trainings that cope with the industry standards. It is important to consider that firms do not just hire anyone with a completed degree in college, but also consider the relevance of the degree to their standards.

It cannot be denied that unemployment is a major factor that contributes to a bad economy. In Eastern Visayas, the unemployment rate grew higher than before. According to

Leyte-Samar Daily Express (2023), the unemployment rate recorded in July of 2023, which was 5.1% was higher compared to 4.5% in July of 2022, which was an equivalent of a total of 96,000 unemployed Filipinos. Addressing the unemployment issues in Eastern Visayas and other parts of the country requires a comprehensive approach, thus the work of universities and colleges to update curricular offerings.

Higher Education Institutions should align their academic programs to the needs of both local and global industries by producing quality graduates (Camuyong et al., 2023). It is highly necessary that the universities, through their graduates, to meet the current needs of firms in the industry. However, in reality, most of the expectations from different firms were not met.

The Northwest Samar State University (herein referred to as NwSSU) is a state university located in Calbayog City with an annex campus in the municipality of San Jorge in the province of Samar, Philippines. One of the programs at NwSSU is the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration major in Marketing Management (herein referred to as BSBA-MM). The BSBA-MM program “prepares the graduate for careers in marketing, market research, advertising, and public relations. The curriculum provides the graduate with both technical skills and competencies required in the field, but also the flexible mindset that is necessary to stay competitive in a constantly changing business environment” (CHED, 2017, p. 03).

The BSBA-MM graduates were easily able to find jobs compared to other fields. A study conducted by Ajoc (2020) shows that 42.16% of BSBA graduates were able to land job opportunities within 01 to 06 months after their graduating, 33.33% got employed for almost a year, while the remaining percentage of graduates were employed in less than 01 month. Considering the competition in the labor market, these trends are easily considered good once after graduation. This is affirmed by the study of Catacutan, Maramag, Bartolome, Hiquiana, and Mendezabal (2020), revealing that most BSBA graduates land a job for an average of four months after their graduation. The findings of Victoriano et al. (2022) further affirmed this as revealed in their study that 33.3% of the graduates were hired in less than a month after graduation while another 33.3% were employed within 01 to 06 months, 22.2% were employed in less than 02 months, while the remaining 11.2% were hired within 02 to less than 03 years. This aligns with this study as 53.57% of the graduates of batch 2022 were hired within 01 year after their graduation.

When it comes to employment rate, The BSBA-MM graduates of Northwest Samar State University fell short when compared to the Bachelor of Science in Industrial Technology major in Architectural Drafting Technology (BSIT-ADT) but was better when compared to the Bachelor of Science in Computer Science (BSCS). The study of Sira, Celda, Valenciana, and Sobrepeña (2018) revealed that BSIT-ADT had an employment rate of 74% of their graduates. On the other hand, according to Malahay and Saing (2018), only 45.70% of the BSCS graduates from year 2014 to year 2018 were employed. The results of these studies do not mean that one higher education program is better than the other. This shows that market demands for every specialization are different. Despite all these, the findings of the study of De Leon et al. (2021) found a gap in terms of underemployment of BSBA graduates showing that some of them were functioning in positions that do not require a completed degree from a university.

The need for a tracer study is highly necessary to assess the employability of graduates and calibrate the program curriculum of BSBA-MM. Hence, this study was conducted with the aim to assess the employability of BSBA-MM graduates of NwSSU from the years 2022 to 2023. Specifically, this study sought to determine the employability of graduates in terms of sex,

frequency of employment, percentage of employment, location of employment of the graduates, and whether they are employed or not.

## **2. Literature review**

The following literatures and studies were reviewed to further enrich and broaden the researchers' perception in terms of the area under study.

Tertiary education plays a great deal in helping many individuals advance in their chosen professions in different industries by equipping them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and experiences (Tun, 2020). It is evident that getting a degree is considered by many as a personal investment rather than a personal choice. With this, is important for students to consider the most appropriate and in-demand higher education program that they will take. Failure to choose the most in-demand program may result in unemployment or underemployment. The study of Victoriano et al. (2022) reveals that the graduates regarded their chosen higher education program as a major contributor to their personal and professional growth.

Many career possibilities exist as the labor market becomes more competitive and employees extend the qualifications and options for hiring new employees. A graduate tracer should be conducted to evaluate the linkage and match between the educational system and with the firms' needs for competent employees (Lukman, Rizal, & Tiara, 2023). The employability of graduates mainly depends on the demand of their chosen higher education program. One factor is the consideration of having higher grades because it shows that a graduate is promising and will be productive when hired. Having exceptionally high grades in the transcript of records can be used as an alternative to relevant experience (Lumina, 2022).

Graduate tracer studies are being conducted by different higher education institutions to determine and understand the status of the graduates. The conduct of a graduate tracer study will help assess the effectiveness of a higher education program, improve its curriculum, and align it with the needs of the industry. Different industries expect graduates to fully exhibit the acquired expertise from their colleges and universities (Camuyong et al., 2023).

A tracer study is necessary to have a basis for understanding the performance of a university in preparing and equipping students for future careers. A graduate tracer study provides the relationship between the university or college experience and education and labor market outcomes to develop a better course of action for education (Victoriano et al., 2022). Hence, a graduate tracer study is used as a basis for future improvements and developments of curriculum to make the graduates more prepared and competitive in the labor market. The conduct of tracer studies can address the job opportunity gaps while the industry prepares for job seekers (Andari, Setiawan, Windasari, & Rifqi, 2021).

Although the study was about nursing graduates and curriculum, the recommendation of Lesaca et al. (2021) is that curriculum development must consider including an increase in critical thinking skills for the graduates essential also for other programs. Further, it should be noted that employers prefer certain skills of graduates. According to the study of Briones, Apat, Lorica, and Valenzuela (2021), leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills are the major skill sets employers are looking for from potential employees. This is mainly because these skill sets are the foundations for creating a collaborative, positive, and productive work environment while contributing to the overall success and sustainability of a business. This is broadened in the findings of the study of Catacutan et al. (2020) revealing that the major soft skills or

competencies useful in the jobs of the graduates are communications skills, human relation skills, decision-making skills, problem-solving skills, computer skills, creative thinking skills, critical thinking skills, teamwork, work ethics, analytical skills, commitment to work, resource management skills, self-directed learning, flexibility, and supervisory skills. This affirms that the employability of graduates is dependent on the skills demanded by the labor market. In addition, an increase in critical thinking skills will enable the graduates to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate necessary information while promoting inquisitive learning. An increase in critical thinking skills in curriculum development will help the graduates adapt to diverse perspectives in the industry and help them develop better communication skills that are crucial in their professional interactions.

One of the major challenges of fresh graduates is that more employers are looking for those applicants with work experience. Alera and Codod (2023) affirmed that firms prefer to hire applicants with work experiences even for a short period of time. With this, it becomes harder for the graduates to compete in the labor market and land a desirable job aligned with their studies. Tracer studies were instruments that enable higher education institutions to the actual industry needs by responding to the demands of the employers through curriculum reviews, evaluations, and calibrations (Deblois, 2021).

This study is related to the study conducted by Hallasgo and Taja-on (2023) on the professional trajectories of Bachelor of Science in Business Administration graduates of San Isidro College. Their study aimed to track the employment outcomes and career paths of their BSBA graduates. The results of their study in terms of the sex of graduates are similar to this study, showing the gender of male and female graduates and the employment rate of graduates, which lead to the proper course of action to be undertaken in the academic program offering. This shows that the conduct of a graduate tracer study is necessary to calibrate an academic program offering and produce quality graduates as a response to the industry demands.

The study of Lopena and Madrigal (2023) also shows the importance of conducting a tracer study by providing the responses on the graduates and making use of the said responses as baseline data for curriculum calibration. Graduate tracer studies should be used as a foundation for academic strategic planning. In addition, a tracer study enables curriculum review and evaluation of a particular higher education academic program (Osei, Dontwi, Otchere, & Singye, 2015). Furthermore, according to Heryanda, Made, and Ariani (2018), the conduct of a graduate tracer study allows higher education institutions to obtain data and identify deficiencies in the current curricular program offering. The results of a graduate tracer study can help improve and align the program goals to those of the industry needs.

All of the cited literatures and studies relate to this study in terms of objective view on the conduct of a graduate tracer study. The cited literatures and studies shed light to this study on BSBA-MM graduates of NwSSU and were also considered as baseline ideas in conducting this study.

### **3. Methodology**

#### ***3.1. Research design, participants, and sampling***

The researchers employed descriptive research design in the conduct of this graduate tracer study. The participants of this study were the graduates of BSBA-MM of the College of Management of Northwest Samar State University. There were 28 BSBA-MM students who graduated in the year 2022. Fifteen of them were employed while the remaining 13 were

unemployed. Twenty-six of the said graduates were females while the remaining two were males. On the other hand, there are 60 BSBA-MM students who graduated in the year 2023. Among these graduates, 02 were not traced, while 57 were unemployed, and only one was employed. Forty-seven of the traced graduates were females while 11 were males. There were no BSBA-MM graduates from 2020 to 2021 since it was affected by the transition of the old high school curriculum to K-12 04 years prior.

The researchers employed total quota sampling in the conduct of this study. This sampling fits the study because all of the BSBA-MM students who graduated in the years 2022 and 2023 were considered respondents. In addition, this sampling technique is often used when the population is small. This sampling technique also aims to gather data from every member of the population. For this reason, the researchers decided to use this sampling technique.

### ***3.2. Instrumentation, data collection, and analysis***

The researchers made use of a structured questionnaire made with Google form already available in the College of Management of NwSSU. The questionnaire was validated and reliability tested by experts in the College of Management of NwSSU.

The questionnaire was posted on the Facebook page of the College of Management. The researchers also contacted the respondents directly through their social media accounts and requested the graduates to answer the questionnaire. One hundred percent of the students who graduated in the year 2022 responded to this study, while 96.67 percent of the graduates in the year 2023 responded mainly because the remaining 3.3% were not traced. The data were analyzed using SPSS 29.

### **4. Ethical considerations**

The researchers provided detailed information about the purpose, procedures, and benefits to the respondents by being part of this study. All respondents were approached fairly to ensure no biases influenced their responses. The researchers adhere to the Data Privacy Act of 2012 of the Republic of the Philippines.

### **5. Result and discussion**

This section shows the tracing and employability of BSBA-MM graduates for the years 2022 and 2023.

#### ***5.1. Result***

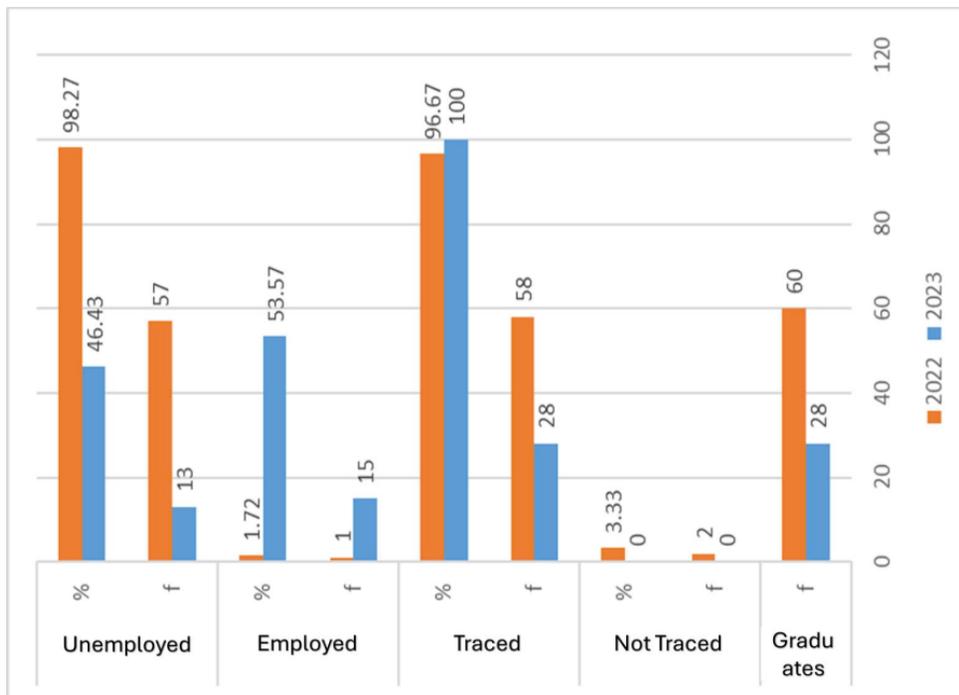
To interpret the employability of the BSBA-MM graduates, frequency and percentage distribution were applied. Graphical presentations of the data were also used.

**Table 1**  
Tracing and employability of BSBA-MM graduates

Program	Batch	Graduates		Not Traced		Traced		Employed		Unemployed	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
BSBA-MM	2022	28	100.00	0	0.00	28	100.00	15	53.57	13	46.43
	2023	60	96.67	2	3.33	58	96.67	1	1.72	57	98.27

Source: BSBA-MM graduate employment outcomes: A tracer study at Northwest Samar State University (Data Gathering & Analyses)

Table 1 shows the tracing and employability of BSBA-MM graduates. The researchers were able to trace 100% (28 out of 28) of the graduates of the BSBA-MM of batch 2022 while only 96.67% (58 out of 60) graduates were traced out of the batch 2023 graduates. Among the graduates of batch 2022, 53.57% (15 out of 28) of the graduates were traced as employed, while 46.43 (13 out of 28) were traced as not employed at the time this study was conducted. Only 1.72% (1 out of 58) of the traced graduates were revealed as employed, while 98.27% (57 out of 58) were revealed as not employed.



**Figure 1.** Tracing and employability of BSBA-MM graduates

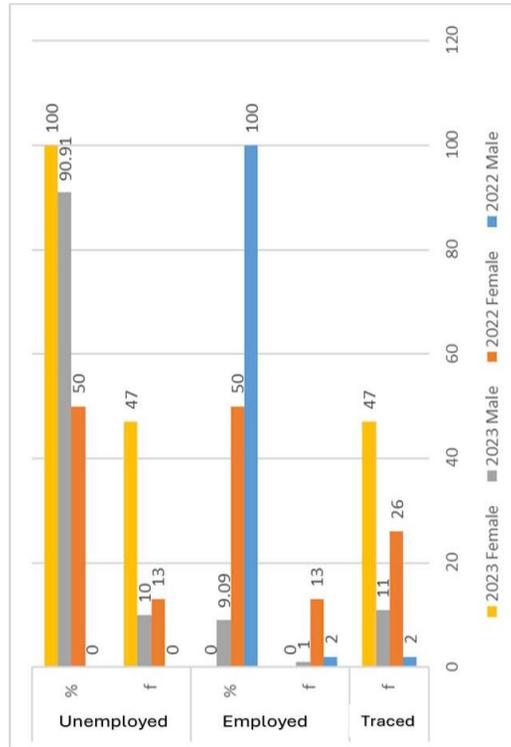
**Table 2**

Employability of BSBA graduates according to sex

Batch	Sex	Traced		Employed		Unemployed	
		f	f	%	f	%	
2022	Male	2	2	100.00	0	0.00	
	Female	26	13	50.00	13	50.00	
2023	Male	11	1	9.09	10	90.91	
	Female	47	0	0.00	47	100.00	

Source: BSBA-MM graduate employment outcomes: A tracer study at Northwest Samar State University (Data Gathering & Analyses)

Table 2 reveals the employability of graduates according to their sex. The table reveals that 50% (13 out of 26) of the female graduates of batch 2022 were traced as already employed. All the male graduates of batch 2022 were all employed. On the other hand, 100% (47 out of 47) of the female graduates of batch 2023 were traced as not employed, while only 9.09% (01 out of 11) of male graduates were employed. This may be due to the fact that these fresh graduates are still taking their time to find a job that would suit them.



**Figure 2.** Employability of BSBA-MM graduates

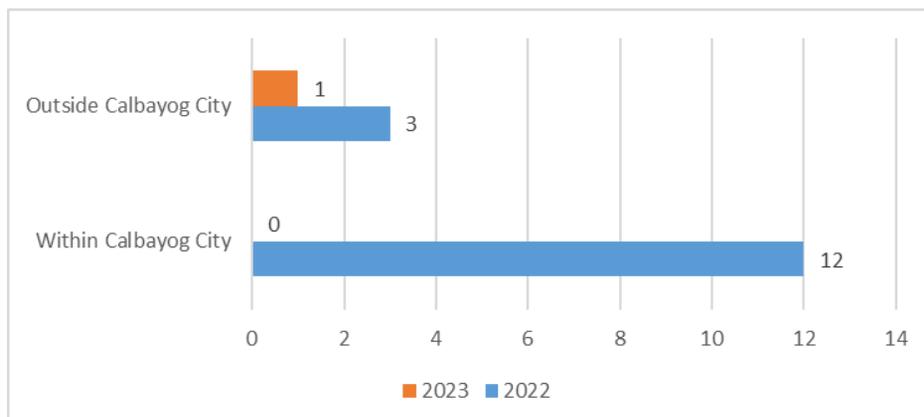
**Table 3**

Location of employment of BSBA-MM graduates

Batch	Location of Employment	
	Within Calbayog City	Outside Calbayog City
2022	12	3
2023	0	1

Source: BSBA-MM graduate employment outcomes: A tracer study at Northwest Samar State University (Data Gathering & Analyses)

Table 3 shows the location of employment of the traced BSBA-MM graduates. Among the graduates of batch 2022 who were traced as employed, 12 were working within Calbayog City and only 03 were working in outside of Calbayog City. No graduates from batch 2023 were working in Calbayog City while only one among them was working outside of the city.



**Figure 3.** Location of employment of BSBA-MM graduates

## 5.2. Discussion

Tracing the graduates is important in improving the curricular offerings of a program to make graduates more competitive in the labor market. As can be seen in the results, the BSBA-MM graduates are not that competitive in the labor market.

### 5.2.1. Tracing and employability of BSBA-MM graduates

All of the BSBA-MM students who graduated last year, 2022, were traced. The majority of the graduates were employed. The percentage of employability of the said graduates, as found in the conduct of this study, is lower compared to the study of Albina and Sumagaysay (2020), which reported 78.53% employed graduates. This is because the population of the graduates of the year 2022 was only 28. The study by Penera, Beduya, Mantos, and Gulbe (2021) also shows high employability of the graduates from their universities as indicated by the 93.41% employability of their graduates from years 2015 to 2019. These studies show that their graduates were competitive enough in the labor market and that their curricula were good enough to help equip and prepare their graduates.

On the other hand, the findings of the study of Corpuz (2020) show similarities to this study in terms of the employment of batch 2018 of BSBA from Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (Atate Campus) with 58.33% (14 graduates) employment rate and 41.67% (10 graduates) unemployment rate. In addition, the results of this study are similar to the study of Llanes, Bundoc, and Malcaba (2022) wherein the employed graduates of batch 2015 - 2016 of BSBA major in Human Resource Development Management of University of Northern Philippines had a total graduate of 172 with 56.98% (98 graduates) employed, 8.75% (15 graduates) self-employed, and 34.30% (59 graduates) unemployed. Although the findings from the said studies can be considered close to the findings of this study, it was still clear that the BSBA-MM graduates from Northwest Samar State University fall behind in the labor market as shown by results with only 53.57% employment rate and 46.43% unemployment rate. However, this may also be attributed to the fact the graduates from NwSSU were more recent as compared to the stated studies.

On the other hand, no studies were compared to the results of employability of BSBA-MM batch 2023 because they were more recent and therefore understandable that most of them were not yet employed. However, it may be observed in the coming years that their employability rate will increase.

### 5.2.2. Employability of graduates according to sex

For the BSBA-MM graduates batch 2022, 98.86 % (26 out of 28) were females while the remaining 7.14% (02 out of 28) were males. For the traced graduates of batch 2023, 81.0.3% (47 out of 58) were females, while the remaining 18.96% (11 out of 58) were males.

It is evident that there were more females than males for batches 2022 and 2023 graduates of BSBA-MM. This is also consistent with the other universities. The study of Vicera, Cruz, Fabon, Galigo, and Aboratigue (2023) is also consistent with this study on the distribution of respondents in terms of sex, showing that 78.6% (22 out of 28) were females, while the remaining 21.4% (06 out of 28) were males. Another research that is similar to this study on the distribution of respondents in terms of sex is the study of Ali and Ali (2020), wherein 63.0% (97 out of 154) of the graduates of the College of Business and Public Administration under the program of Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the year 2012 - 2019 were females, and the remaining 37.0% (57 out of 154) were males. The greater gender distribution of female BSBA graduates was also reflected in the study of De Guzman, Abalos, Cabaluna, and Ventayen (2020),

showing that 69.33% of them were females while the remaining 30.67% were males.

With this, it is evident that the BSBA program was dominated by female students. This implies that, nowadays, many women are considering and finding growth and opportunities in the business world. The gender gap in higher education is evident. As stated by Bryant (2022), by the end of the 2021 - 2022 academic year, women accounted for nearly 60% of all college students, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. This is also reflected in the report of Statista (2019), showing that the ratio of female to male students in tertiary education in the Philippines is 1 to 1.32 as of 2017. The gender gap between female and male BSBA-MM graduates is likely to continue in the coming years at Northwest Samar State University. It is observable that more and more females are interested in enrolling in BSBA-MM. Because of this, a more gender-balanced program improvement and development may be done at the university.

### *5.2.3. Location of Employment of the traced BSBA-MM graduates*

Twelve out of the 15 traced BSBA-MM graduates of batch 2012 were found to be working within Calbayog City. This shows that the program effectively produces professionals readily employed locally. This also indicates a strong local network and job demand in the city. In addition, fresh graduates tend to work in their locality for a period of time before finding new opportunities in other areas. This is affirmed by the findings of the study by Catacutan et al. (2020), showing that 94.54% of BSBA graduates preferred working locally rather than going directly to other locations after graduating from college. Working in the locality provides advantages to workers such as comfort with the local culture and language and shorter commutes, which leads to significant time and cost savings and career stability. This is supported by the results of the DOLE-Jobstreet.com study showing that 03 out of 04 individuals prefer to work in their locality (Jobstreet, 2022).

Generally, this implies that the BSBA-MM graduates of NwSSU, although graduates were basically competing locally in the labor market, need to have further knowledge, experience, and skill sets to be hired in a more competitive landscape outside of Calbayog City. This also implies that the preferences of the graduates vary for choosing to seek jobs. It can be considered that the majority of the fresh graduates may be prioritizing adding to their credentials from their local job market before finding better opportunities somewhere else. Being accustomed to the culture of the locality and its social norms may also be a factor why the majority of graduates preferred to work locally.

On the other hand, 03 out of 15 employed graduates of batch 2022 preferred to work outside of the city. Those graduates who prefer to work in other places may be looking for better-paying and well-founded working conditions in a favorable economic and political situation. According to Kunal and John (2023), graduates prefer to apply for jobs in areas with high economic growth, more opportunities to find better jobs and good quality of life.

## **6. Theoretical implications**

One of the major targets of NwSSU is to produce graduates who are globally competitive and responsive to the needs of any industry. This study offers practical implications for further development of the BSBA-MM curriculum of the NwSSU by aligning its courses to the actual needs of firms. The conduct of this study provided relevant information on the actual employability of BSBA-MM graduates of years 2022 and 2023 of NwSSU. This study can be used as the basis for further curriculum development of BSBA-MM. Aligning the different courses under the BSBA-MM program will help the graduates become more competitive in the

labor market. Furthermore, this study also contributes to studies in relation to workforce diversity which may involve gender, ethnicity, and demographic factors.

The study is aligned with the human capital theory by economists Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz in the 1960s. This theory stresses that an individual's education and training are essential factors that will contribute to better, productive workforce. Graduates from different universities should be competitive enough in the labor market and productive when hired by employers. According to Rafiq, Hashim, Wahab, and Yunus (2019), investing in education leads to work productivity and better working environment. Moreover, the perceived value of education is highly regarded by firms when hiring individuals.

This study is also aligned with the neoclassical growth theory, which emphasizes the economic growth rate. The neoclassical growth theory shows that the economic growth rate is based on factors such as labor, capital, and technology (Gordon, 2023). This theory further stresses on the labor productivity. By ensuring that the graduates are well-equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge, they can contribute to the workforce productivity of a firm. Businesses are only interested in hiring graduates who can help them grow.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the understanding of how advanced learnings from universities and colleges lead to better chances of graduates being hired. Producing quality graduates through continuous improvements in curriculum will lead to better workforce productivity that will contribute to a better and faster economic growth.

## **7. Conclusions & recommendations**

This study shows the employability of the BSBA-MM graduates of batches 2022 and 2023. There are a total of 88 respondents in the conduct of this study. The researchers managed to trace all of the graduates from batch 2022 and failed to trace 02 graduates from batch 2023. Batch 2022 has 30 respondents, while Batch 2023 has 58 respondents.

The researchers conclude that the majority of the graduates of batch 2022 are already employed. Furthermore, the majority of them preferred to work within Calbayog City. On the other hand, almost 100% of 2023 graduates are still unemployed. Some of them are still looking for jobs that might suit their interest in relation to BSBA.

In terms of sex, all of the male graduates who graduated in 2023 are employed, while for the females, 50% of them are employed. Unfortunately, only 1 male graduate of 2023 is employed while all of the females are unemployed. However, this doesn't mean that these graduates failed to be accepted by the firms. Most of them opted not to get a job at the moment and some are just starting to look for jobs within and outside Calbayog City since they are fresh graduates.

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommend (1) conducting a periodic tracing of the employability of BSBA-MM graduates to get continuous updates on their status, (2) involving the alumni and industry representatives in the periodic review of the BSBA-MM curriculum to enhance the curriculum and help graduates land better jobs, (3) realize the conduct of industry immersion of the BSBA-MM faculty members of the College of Management of NwSSU to identify emerging and changing needs and competencies as requirements of the different firms in the industry, and (4) revise the BSBA-MM curriculum based on the actual needs and situation.

Furthermore, it is also important to consider different factors concerning the graduates such as, but not limited to, effects of unemployment, average salaries provided by firms,

frequency of job hopping, type of employment, waiting time before being hired, relatedness of jobs to the BSBA-MM program, job satisfaction, and perception of employers on the graduates' skills and competencies. In addition, this study may be used as the basis for further conclusive research in relation to the program.

### **8. Limitations and future directions**

This study recognizes many limitations. Only graduates of batch 2022 and 2023 were included in this study. This study focuses only on the number of employability rate, gender gap, and location of employment. Further studies could be done, including another factor that may affect the employability of graduates, such as average salaries, job hopping frequency, waiting time before being hired, job satisfaction, relatedness of job to the academic program, and perception of employers on the BSBA-MM graduates of NwSSU. The employability of the graduates before the Covid-19 pandemic may also be explored.

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