Vol. 2, No. 03, pp. 130-142

Journal of Organizational and Human Resource Development Strategies
journal.iistr.org/index.php/OHDS
DOI: .56741/ohds.v2i03.1231

Employment Trajectories and Skill Proficiency of Nursing Graduates from Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges, Philippines

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history
Received 9 July 2025
Revised 1 September 2025
Accepted 7 September 2025

ABSTRACT

This tracer study investigated the employment outcomes and competencies of the 2020 Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) graduates from Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges (CSPC). The study aimed to determine the graduates' employment status, professional engagements, and the extent to which the college contributed to their soft and professional competencies. Using a descriptive-correlational design, data were collected via a validated survey administered to 27 out of 29 graduates, achieving a 93% response rate. Results indicated that 96% of graduates are employed in roles aligned with their nursing education, with 81% in regular positions, primarily in hospital settings. The majority found employment within three months of licensure. Graduates assessed the institution's contribution to soft (e.g., communication, critical thinking) and professional competencies (client care, leadership, research) to be "to a great extent," based on a 4-point Likert scale. A significant correlation was found between employment status and competency development. The findings underscore the relevance of CSPC's nursing curriculum in preparing graduates for the workforce and highlight opportunities to expand international placement, postgraduate engagement, and advanced clinical training.

Keywords
Employment Trajectories
Nursing Graduates
Philippines
Skill Proficiency

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Introduction

One of the most pressing challenges faced by nursing graduates after completing their degree was finding appropriate employment. Despite acquiring their academic credentials and even passing the nursing licensure examination, a considerable number of graduates were either underemployed or engaged in jobs unrelated to their chosen profession. This disconnection between educational background and career placement could be attributed to several factors, including personal choices, lack of job opportunities, and the level of preparedness imparted by the institution. The academic institution plays a vital role in shaping not only the skills and knowledge of its graduates but also their employability and readiness for real-world professional responsibilities.

To address this concern and to evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs, higher education institutions have conducted graduate tracer studies. These studies tracked the career paths of alumni to determine how well their education aligned with industry demands. Employability, which refers to the ability of a graduate to secure and maintain employment over time, was used as a key metric in evaluating the performance of an educational institution. As noted by Du [1], an institution's success could be partly measured by the professional integration of its graduates, especially in the field for which they were trained such as nursing.

Tracer studies have provided important feedback that allowed institutions to examine the relevance, quality, and outcomes of their academic offerings. These studies yielded insights into whether graduates were employed within their field, the nature of their job roles, their levels of job satisfaction, and the extent to which their academic experiences supported their careers. Studies conducted by Cuadra et al.[2], Campiseno et al.[3], and Sanchez et al.[4] emphasized the importance of tracer studies in understanding the alignment between institutional objectives, the competencies acquired by students, and the eventual professional outcomes of graduates. These insights served as the basis for refining curricula, designing more effective instructional strategies, and identifying areas for institutional growth. In line with national mandates and policies, the role of higher education institutions in ensuring graduate employability has been reinforced through the implementation of Republic Act No. 7722, also known as the Higher Education Act of 1994. This act empowered the Commission on Higher Education (CHED)[5] to oversee and set standards for programs such as the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN). CHED required institutions to produce graduates who were not only knowledgeable but also globally competent and capable of providing high-quality health care services in diverse professional settings.

CSPC, particularly its College of Health Sciences (CHS), had long demonstrated a commitment to producing highly skilled, ethical, and service-oriented nursing professionals. The college was guided by its institutional vision, mission, and core values, which emphasized academic excellence, compassion, and competence. Through faculty development, regular program review, and practical training, the CHS sought to equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in various health care environments, including hospitals, clinics, and community-based settings. Faculty members ensured that instruction remained current by participating in continuous professional development and incorporating emerging trends in nursing into their teaching.

As an institution responsible for producing future nursing professionals, CSPC recognized the importance of evaluating the outcomes of its BSN program through a graduate tracer study. The researchers conducted this study not only to monitor the employment status of BSN graduates but also to assess how effectively the college contributed to the development of their competencies. Moreover, the study aimed to provide a benchmark for the institution's performance and offer evidence-based recommendations that could enhance its academic and support services. This tracer study was considered essential as it provided insights beneficial to various stakeholders. For students, the findings served as an eye-opener regarding the realities of employment after graduation. It helped them understand the level of preparation and effort required to qualify for jobs in their field and encouraged them to improve their academic and clinical performance while still in school. For faculty members, the study offered important feedback about the effectiveness of instructional approaches and curricular components. It enabled them to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses in delivering nursing education and to realign their teaching strategies to better support student success. Furthermore, the data gathered from graduates served as a guide in identifying areas for professional development among the teaching staff. For CHS administrators, the results of the study helped evaluate the impact of existing programs and activities on student competencies. The findings allowed them to identify which interventions worked and which areas required improvement to ensure that future graduates were better equipped to meet the demands of the healthcare industry. The study also proved valuable to CSPC administrators, as it provided a solid evidence base for curriculum review, policy development, and strategic planning. The results supported the institution in its efforts to enhance the quality of its BSN program, improve student outcomes, and strengthen its overall competitiveness in the higher education landscape.

This study focused on the Bachelor of Science in Nursing graduates of Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges, Batch 2020. It specifically covered the graduates' personal, professional, and employment profiles, and evaluated the extent to which the college contributed to the

development of their soft and professional competencies. The research utilized a descriptive-correlational method and employed a modified survey questionnaire as the main tool for data collection. Due to the geographical distance between the researchers and the respondents, the data gathering was conducted online using Google Forms. The study involved all 29 BSN graduates from the 2020 batch, and was conducted over a period of five months, from December 2022 to April 2023.

This graduate tracer study aimed to determine the personal, professional, and employment profile of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing graduates, Batch 2020; evaluate the extent of the contribution of the college in the development of both soft and professional competencies of the graduates; test whether a significant relationship existed between the employment profile of the respondents and the extent of the college's contribution to their competency development; and to propose a plan for enhancing the competencies and employability of Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) graduates from Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges (CSPC).

Materials and Methods

A. Research Method

The study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design, which allowed the researchers to describe the current conditions and explore potential relationships between variables. As explained by Panda [6], correlational research seeks to identify and explain associations between two or more variables. In this study, the descriptive component was used to analyze the personal, professional, and employment profiles of the BSN Batch 2020 graduates. It also examined the extent to which the college contributed to the development of their core nursing competencies. Meanwhile, the correlational aspect aimed to determine whether a significant relationship existed between the graduates' employment profiles and the college's contribution to the development of their soft and professional competencies specifically in the domains of client care, research, leadership, and management.

B. Respondents of the Study

The participants of the study were the 29 graduates of the BSN Batch 2020 from CSPC. After securing the official list of graduates from the Office of the Registrar through a formal letter approved by the Nursing Research instructor and the College Dean. The researchers decided to use total enumeration due to the manageable size of the target population. This means all 29 graduates were invited to participate in the study.

C. Research Instrument

To effectively gather and measure relevant data, the researchers utilized a modified survey questionnaire. This instrument was based on two sources: the Commission on Higher

Education's (CHED) Graduate Tracer Study Format and the Nursing Core Competency Standards outlined in CHED Memorandum Order No. 15, Series of 2017, which prescribes the policies, standards, and guidelines for the BSN program in the Philippines. A questionnaire as defined by Timmins [7] is a standard data collection tool used in quantitative research, particularly in nursing, as it enables the efficient gathering of information from a large number of participants. In this study, the questionnaire was disseminated electronically via Google Forms to reach the respondents regardless of their location. The instrument was divided into two main sections. Part I collected demographic data and the personal, professional, and employment profiles of the graduates. Part II assessed the extent of the college's contribution to the development of professional competencies.

To ensure the instrument's reliability, a pilot test was conducted among five randomly selected BSN graduates from CSPC. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was then tested using the Cronbach's alpha method. The reliability scores were 0.956 for soft competencies and 0.979 for professional competencies, both of which fall under the "excellent" category, indicating a high level of reliability.

D. Data Gathering Procedure

Following the validation of the instrument, the researchers sought formal approval to begin data collection. A letter requesting the list of BSN graduates was submitted to the Office of the Registrar and endorsed by the College Dean and Nursing Research instructor. Once approved, the researchers contacted the graduates individually and asked for their consent to participate in the study. The survey was conducted online through a Google Form, ensuring convenience for both the researchers and respondents. The questionnaire link was sent to each graduate, with regular follow ups conducted to maximize the response rate. Out of the 29 graduates invited, 27 responded, yielding a 93% response rate, which is considered acceptable for data analysis. The researchers carefully reviewed each submission to ensure completeness and accuracy. Data gathered were organized and tabulated in preparation for statistical treatment.

E. Statistical Treatment of Data

To analyze the data, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Descriptive statistics, including percentages and weighted mean, were employed to summarize the respondents' profiles and assess the extent of the college's contribution to graduate competencies. To determine whether there was a statistically significant relationship between the employment profiles and the perceived contribution of the college to graduates' competencies, the Chi-Square Test of Independence was applied. This allowed the researchers to identify potential correlations between categorical variables and assess the research hypotheses with statistical rigor.

Percentage technique describes the relationship of a part to its whole. This was used to determine the proportionate number of respondents' personal, professional, and employment profiles. Weighted mean represents the average of the given data. In the current study, it was used to determine the extent of contribution of the college in the development of both soft and professional competencies of the BSN graduates. To quantify the responses, weighted mean points were assigned to the options. Weighted points that there is a correspondence between weighted points. The greater the number the more positive is the reaction on the value scale. A four-point Likert Scale was used to measure the extent of contribution of the college in the development of competencies of the BSN graduates. Chi Square Test of Independence was utilized to know if there is a relationship between the employment profile of the respondents and the extent of contribution of the college in the development of both soft and professional competencies of the BSN graduates.

Results and Discussion

A. Profile of the Graduates

This section discusses the analysis and interpretation of the gathered data on the respondent's profile. This includes the personal, professional, and employment profile of the respondents.

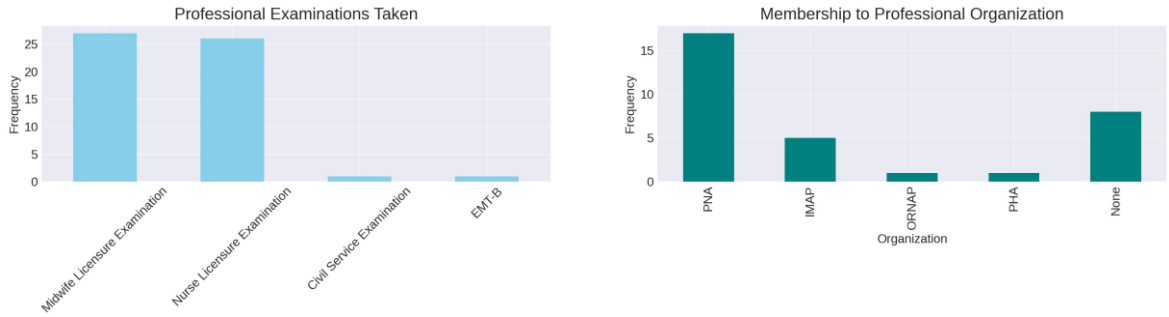


Fig. 1. Personal and Professional Profile of the Respondents

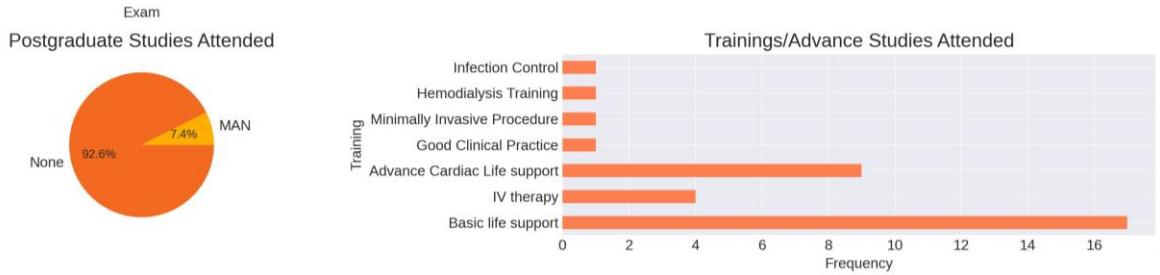


Fig. 2. Educational Background and Trainings attended by the Respondents

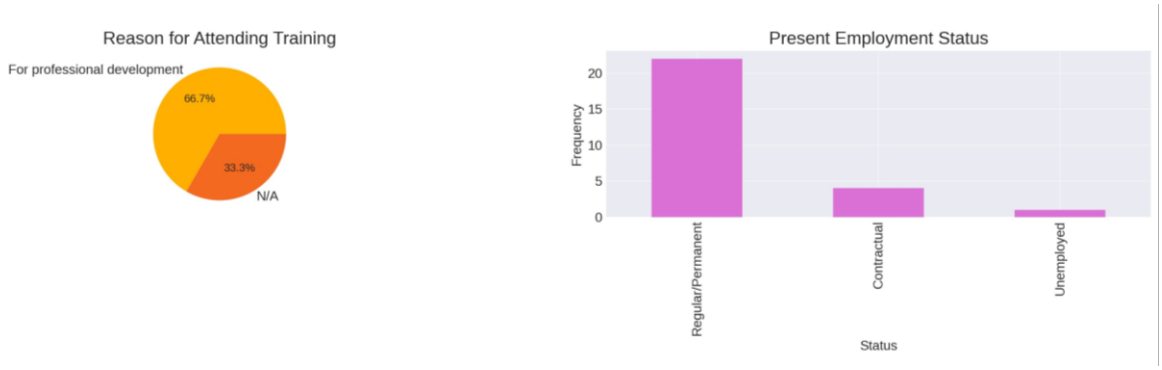


Fig. 3. The Employment Status of the Respondents

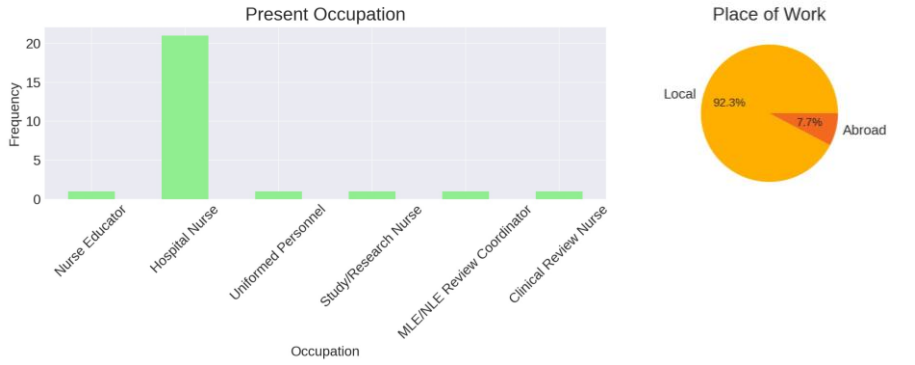


Fig. 4. Present Occupation and Place of Work of the Respondents

B. Relationship between Employment Profile and the Professional Competencies

Table 1 presents the statistical relationship between the employment profile of the respondents and the perceived extent of the college's contribution to the development of their professional competencies in the area of client care. Using the chi-square test of independence, all computed p-values ranging from 0.102 to 1.000 were found to be greater than the 0.05 level of significance. As a result, the null hypothesis is accepted across all indicators, signifying that there is no significant relationship between employment variables (such as current employment status, occupation, place of work, years of service, income, and time to first employment) and the college's contribution to professional competencies related to client care.

Table 1. Relationship Between the Employment Profile and the Professional Competencies of the Graduates Along Client Care

Indicators	P-value @ 0.05	Decision on Ho	Verbal Interpretation
Present employment status	0.611	Accepted	Not significant
Present Occupation	1.000	Accepted	Not significant
Place of Work	0.474	Accepted	Not significant
Number of Years in the Present Job	0.687	Accepted	Not significant
Monthly Income	0.102	Accepted	Not significant
Time Spent in Landing the First Job	0.115	Accepted	Not significant

This finding implies that the professional competencies developed in college such as safe and ethical nursing practice, client assessment, care planning, and patient education did not statistically influence the graduates' employment status or characteristics. This suggests that while the college effectively equipped students with essential client care skills, these competencies alone did not determine employability or job retention. Instead, factors such as hiring protocols, healthcare facility needs, regional job availability, and even networking may play more substantial roles in determining employment outcomes.

This result echoes the findings of Oducado et al. [8], who argued that while nursing competencies are foundational, actual employment is frequently driven by external dynamics beyond academic preparation. Similarly, Dorji and Singh [9] emphasized that labor market conditions and institutional hiring preferences often dictate employment opportunities, regardless of individual competence levels.

Table 2 presents the analysis of the relationship between the employment profile of nursing graduates and the perceived extent of the college's contribution to their professional competencies along leadership and management. The chi-square test of independence revealed that all computed p-values ranging from 0.102 to 1.000 are greater than the 0.05 level of significance. Consequently, the null hypothesis is accepted for all variables, indicating no statistically significant relationship between the graduates' employment profile (e.g., employment status, job position, workplace, tenure, income, and time to first employment) and the college's influence in developing their leadership and management competencies.

Table 2. Relationship Between the Employment Profile and the Professional Competencies of the Graduates along with Leadership and Management

Indicators	P-value @ 0.05	Decision on Ho	Verbal Interpretation
Present employment status	0.611	Accepted	Not significant
Present Occupation	1.000	Accepted	Not significant
Place of Work	0.474	Accepted	Not significant
Number of Years in the Present Job	0.687	Accepted	Not significant
Monthly Income	0.102	Accepted	Not significant
Time Spent in Landing the First Job	0.115	Accepted	Not significant

This result suggests that while the college may have successfully nurtured leadership skills and managerial capacity among its nursing graduates, these competencies did not necessarily translate into advantages in employment outcomes. Graduates' job attainment, stability, and income levels were not significantly influenced by how well they developed leadership and management capabilities during their academic training. This finding implies that other non-academic factors such as organizational hierarchies, availability of leadership roles,

institutional promotion policies, or networking may have had more influence on employment outcomes than the graduates' preparedness in leadership.

This aligns with the study of Brits and Steyn [10], who found that although leadership development is a key component of nursing education, the practical application and recognition of such competencies in the workplace often depend on post-employment opportunities, mentorship, and institutional structures. It also reflects Ofoha and Wuchukwu's [11] findings that employers may prioritize immediate clinical competencies over leadership attributes when hiring entry-level nursing professionals.

Table 3 presents the results of the chi-square test of independence used to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the employment profile of the nursing graduates and the extent of the college's contribution to their professional competencies along research. The p-values for all variables such as employment status (0.403), occupation (1.000), place of work (0.529), job tenure (0.766), monthly income (0.300), and time to first employment (0.413) are all above the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted in each case, indicating no significant relationship between the employment profile and the research competencies developed during college.

Table 3. Relationship Between the Employment Profile and the Professional Competencies of the Graduates along with Research

Indicators	P-value @ 0.05	Decision on Ho	Verbal Interpretation
Present employment status	0.403	Accepted	Not significant
Present Occupation	1.000	Accepted	Not significant
Place of Work	0.529	Accepted	Not significant
Number of Years in the Present Job	0.766	Accepted	Not significant
Monthly Income	0.300	Accepted	Not significant
Time Spent in Landing the First Job	0.413	Accepted	Not significant

This finding implies that although the college may have adequately equipped the graduates with research competencies (as reflected in earlier results showing a high extent of contribution), these competencies do not appear to have a direct influence on employment-related outcomes. In other words, possessing strong research skills did not necessarily lead to faster employment, better job positions, higher income, or longer job tenure. This could be due to the nature of most nursing roles in clinical settings, where research skills may not be immediately prioritized or visible in entry-level or bedside roles.

These results are consistent with the findings of Lesaca [12], who noted that while nursing graduates may have developed strong academic and research foundations, many healthcare institutions place greater emphasis on direct clinical experience rather than research engagement. Furthermore, Cuadra et al. [2] emphasized that integrating research into actual

practice often occurs later in a nurse's career or in specific roles such as education, quality improvement, or management. Thus, while research competencies remain crucial for evidence-based practice and long-term professional development, their impact on initial employment outcomes may be limited unless the graduate specifically pursues roles in education, research, or policy.

Employment trajectories and skill proficiency of nursing graduates from CSPC reflect broader national and international trends in the nursing profession. Tracer studies in the Philippines and other contexts have consistently revealed that while many nursing graduates find employment in health-related fields, others struggle with underemployment or mismatches between academic preparation and workplace demands [13]-[16]. The situation is compounded by the strong global demand for Filipino nurses, which creates opportunities for international employment but also heightens the need for globally recognized skills and certifications [17][18]. Similar findings across Southeast Asia suggest that graduates' career outcomes are closely tied to both institutional preparation and the adaptability of their skills to diverse healthcare settings [19][20].

Skill proficiency remains a critical factor in determining employability and career advancement. Employers often highlight competencies such as clinical decision-making, communication, and adaptability as essential beyond theoretical knowledge [21][22]. Studies from other Philippine universities show that while most nursing graduates demonstrate strong technical knowledge, some lack advanced proficiencies required in international practice [15][16][23]. At CSPC, earlier tracer studies in related disciplines, such as Food Service Management, indicate that the institution has established a foundation for aligning curricula with labor market needs [24]. However, nursing graduates face unique pressures from both local and global healthcare systems, where professional organizations and continuous training significantly enhance employability [22][25].

Overall, employment outcomes for CSPC nursing graduates are shaped by a combination of educational preparation, institutional support, and the broader healthcare labor market. Graduate tracer studies remain valuable tools in assessing the alignment between academic programs and employment demands [26] [27]. Continuous curriculum review, exposure to professional networks, and integration of global competencies are key to improving long-term career trajectories [7][24]. Moreover, the persistence of gendered dynamics in healthcare professions further underscores the need for equitable opportunities for male and female graduates [29]. Addressing these factors will not only improve employability but also strengthen the overall contribution of CSPC graduates to both local and international healthcare systems.

Conclusion

The analysis indicated no statistically significant relationship between the employment profile of BSN graduates and the extent of the college's contribution to their professional competencies, as all p-values exceeded the 0.05 threshold. Despite the graduates' high regard for the institution's role in developing their skills, these competencies did not directly translate into employment outcomes, suggesting that factors beyond academic preparation (such as labor market dynamics, access to professional networks, and individual circumstances) may also shape employability. Nevertheless, the high employment rates and favorable competency assessments affirm that CSPC's BSN program remains responsive to local healthcare demands. To further elevate its impact and global relevance, the institution may consider enhancing postgraduate pathways, fostering specialization, and strengthening graduates' preparedness for international opportunities.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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