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From Classroom to Community: Assessing the Professional Journey of WUP Bachelor of Science in Social Work (BSSW) Graduates

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Abstract

This study, entitled "From Classroom to Community: Assessing the Professional Journey of WUP Bachelor of Science in Social Work (BSSW) Graduates," examined the career outcomes of graduates from Wesleyan University Philippines (WUP). Using a descriptive survey, 100 social work alumni from 2014 to 2024 who live in Nueva Ecija and are currently working were asked about their job experiences and how useful their education has been. Results showed that most graduates from 2017 to 2019 and 2022 found their first jobs within three to six months, primarily through recommendations. They faced challenges like a lack of work experience and the need for connections to get jobs. The majority of the respondents work full-time in government or social service positions, including roles as social workers and development officers, and receive an

average monthly salary of ₱30,827.

A lot of the alumni also seek graduate degrees, training, and seminars to advance their careers. They also engage actively in community activities like medical missions and livelihood programs. According to the alumni, their education helped them develop critical skills, specifically the capacity to communicate, resolve issues, and work autonomously. They found their curriculum useful, especially fieldwork, professional courses, and organizational engagement. The research also revealed that WUP values of scholarship, service, and character are greatly instilled in graduates. Essentially, the research sets out how WUP's curriculum equips social work graduates to excel and contribute to their communities.

Keywords: Community Service, Professional Journey, Social Services, Social Workers, Tracer Study

Introduction

Crafted specifically for the graduates of the Wesleyan University-Philippines' (WUP) Bachelor of Science in Social Work (BSSW) Program, the Graduate Tracer Survey Tool by Agustin & Subia (2024) aims to gather valuable information on the professional development and career advancement of its graduates (Adeniran *et al.*, 2013) ^[1]. This survey measured how well the BSSW program trains its graduates to meet the challenges of the social work profession through the development of critical skills such as empathy, communication, problem-solving, and moral judgment. The instrument gathers extensive post-graduation information in a bid to measure the practical application of the program's curriculum within real environments as well as the graduates' academic and professional success (Dhuli *et al.*, 2023) ^[3].

Issues concerning the nature of their work, the effectiveness of their BSSW education in developing them for key social work competencies, and engagement in ongoing professional development are all encompassed within this study, which is directed at BSSW graduates. The survey also investigates graduates' employment through employers by inquiring about the nature of their employment, challenges they faced when finding a job, and how long they took to find a job in their field. The survey also gauges how suitable their profession is with the mainstream social work values.

Additionally, the tracer study examines the specific courses, field experiences, and extra-curricular activities of the BSSW program that the graduates found to have the most influence on their professional careers. Whether through internships, community activities, or scholarly research, knowing what aspects of the curriculum assisted graduates in their careers is essential to fine-tuning the program and making the program relevant in an ever-changing social work environment (Nordesjö, 2020; Lindeberg *et al.*, 2022) ^[9, 6].

Along with professional achievements, this research also discusses the contribution of Wesleyan University's emphasis on scholarship, service, and character. Graduates are encouraged to think about how these qualities have shaped their careers as

social workers, particularly in ethical practice, community engagement, and their development in the profession. Through determining the degree to which the program has developed these fundamental values, the survey seeks to establish the role of WUP in developing socially responsible, empathetic, and skilled professionals.

The results of this tracer study ultimately provided priceless input for enhancing the Bachelor of Science in Social Work program, and WUP can keep turning out top-notch, socially conscious professionals who are not only prepared to meet the demands of the social work field but also capable of creating a long-lasting, constructive impact on the communities they serve (Rosas *et al.*, 2020) ^[11].

Methodology

This research utilized a descriptive quantitative research design. According to Sirisilla (2023) ^[12], “Descriptive research design is a powerful tool used by scientists and researchers to gather information about a particular group or phenomenon. This type of research provides a detailed and accurate picture of the characteristics and behaviors of a particular population or subject.” A total of 100 purposively chosen (Subia, 2018) ^[14] social work alumni became respondents based on the following criteria: 1. graduate of BSSW at WUP during SY 2014 to 2024; 2. currently working; 3. a resident of Nueva Ecija. The instrument used in this study is a graduate tracer survey tool crafted by Agustin and Subia in 2024. The instrument covers the profile of the respondents and their work experiences. Also covered in the questionnaire are the skills learned at WUP, which are essentials in their current work, the usefulness of their curriculum, and the graduate attributes that were evident in the alumni based on the WUP principles of scholarship, service and character. The study covers one year only.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents (Part 1)

Year of Graduation	Frequency	Percent
2014 to 2016	15	15.0
2017 to 2019	35	35.0
2020 to 2022	35	35.0
2023 to 2024	15	15.0
Total	100	100.0
Time it Takes to Land the First Job	Frequency	Percent
1 to 3 months	37	37.0
4 to 6 months	21	21.0
7 to 9 months	12	12.0
10 to 12 months	2	2.0
1 year and above	28	28.0
Total	100	100.0
Means of Securing First Job	Frequency	Percent
Information from Friends	11	11.0
Job Fair	3	3.0
Recommended by Someone	54	54.0
Response to Advertisements	7	7.0
Walk-in Applicant	25	25.0
Total	100	100.0
Problems Encountered During Job Hunting	Frequency	Percent
Competition with other job seekers	5	5.0
Backer system	19	19.0
Discrimination	8	8.0
Educational Attainment	2	2.0
Financial Expenses	4	4.0
Work Experience	43	43.0

Job Vacancy	9	9.0
Qualification	6	6.0
Personal Matter	3	3.0
Work Schedule Conflict	1	1.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 1 shows the profile of the respondents in terms of their year of graduation, the time it takes them to land their first job and different means of securing their first jobs and the problems they have encountered during job hunting.

It can be noted on the table that most of the respondents graduated from the years 2017-2019 and 2022, both having a frequency of 35 or a total of 70 (70 %) social worker respondents. Most of them secured a job from 1 to 3 months (37) to 4 to 6 months (21). As to the means of securing their jobs, more than 50% of them are recommended by someone, and 25% are walk-in applicants. The common problems they have encountered during job hunting are their lack of work experience (43) and backer system (19).

The results in Table 1 suggest that most social work graduates from 2017 to 2019 and 2022 found jobs within six months, primarily through personal recommendations. However, many faced challenges like a lack of work experience and the need for connections to get hired, showing the need for better job preparation and fairer hiring practices (Djonko-Moore, 2022) ^[4].

Table 2: Profile of the Respondents (Part 2)

Current Employment Status	Frequency	Percent
Permanent/Regular	58	58.0
Probationary	42	42.0
Total	100	100.0
Nature of the Company	Frequency	Percent
Academe	8	8.0
Government Service	43	43.0
Medical and Health Service	13	13.0
Social Service	36	36.0
Total	100	100.0
Current Work	Frequency	Percent
Staff/Administrative Staff	8	8.0
Project Development Officer	14	14.0
Teacher	5	5.0
Request Service Officer	2	2.0
Medical Social Worker	7	7.0
Human Development Facilitator	2	2.0
Area Supervisor	2	2.0
Social Worker Officer	24	24.0
Maintenance Supervisor	1	1.0
Job Order	5	5.0
Social Welfare Officer	12	12.0
Call Center Agent	3	3.0
OIC-MSWDO	2	2.0
Auxiliary Supervisor	2	2.0
Disability Affairs Officer	2	2.0
College Faculty	2	2.0
Retail Sales Coordinator	1	1.0
Researcher/Documenter	2	2.0
Fire Officer	4	4.0
Total	100	100.0
Monthly Salary	Frequency	Percent
Less than P15,000	11	11.0
P15,000 to less than P30,000	30	30.0
P30,000 to less than P60,000	53	53.0
P60,000 to less than P90,000	4	4.0
P90,000 and above	2	2.0
Total	100	100.0
Mean Salary = P30, 827		

Table 2 presents the profile of the respondents in terms of current employment, nature of company, current work and monthly salary. It can be observed from the table that 58% of the respondents are permanent or tenured in their work. The majority of them work in the government (43%) and social services (36%) as social workers (24%), social welfare officers (12%) and project development officers (14%). More than half of the respondents are earning P30,000 to less than P60,000 monthly, with an overall mean salary of P30,827 for 100 respondents.

The findings imply that most social work graduates have achieved stable employment, with 58% holding permanent or tenured positions, mainly in government and social service sectors. Their roles, such as social workers, social welfare officers, and project development officers, reflect alignment with their field of study. Additionally, the average monthly salary of P30,827 indicates a moderate-income level, suggesting that while the profession offers job security, there may still be room for growth in terms of financial compensation and career advancement opportunities (Smithwick, 2023) [13].

Table 3: Continuing Professional Education and Community Projects Involvement

Continuing Professional Education	Frequency	Percent
Graduate Study	31	31.0
Attending Seminars/Trainings	59	59.0
None	10	10.0
Total	100	100.0
Community Projects Involvement	Frequency	Percent
Community Welfare Development	7	7.0
Conducting Training	11	11.0
Livelihood projects	26	26.0
Medical/Dental mission	13	13.0
Social Service	3	3.0
None	40	40.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 3 shows the continuing professional education and community involvement done or participated in by the respondents upon graduating from the BSSW course. It can be seen on the table that 59% attended seminars and trainings, and 31% attended graduate study for their continuing professional education. As to their community projects involvement, 26% are engaged in livelihood projects, 13% are involved in medical/dental mission, and 11% are conducting training.

With 31% continuing graduate courses and 59% attending seminars and trainings, the results suggest that most social work graduates actively seek professional development following graduation. The long-lasting effects of their social work education are highlighted by their participation in community projects like livelihood programs, medical/dental missions, and training exercises, which demonstrate their ongoing dedication to helping communities and using their skills in practical settings (Loakimidis & Sookraj, 2021; Reith-Hall & Montgomery, 2022) [7, 10].

Table 4: Skills Developed While Studying at WUP

S. No	Skills	Wm	Verbal Description
1	Ability to apply knowledge gained in school to work setting.	3.62	Very Much
2	Written communication skills.	3.52	Very Much

3	Oral communication skills	3.65	Very Much
4	Interpersonal/Social Skills – the ability to relate with co-workers and work with a group.	3.64	Very Much
5	Problem-solving skills – the ability to analyze work problems and apply appropriate solutions.	3.67	Very Much
6	Decision-making skills - the ability to make sound decisions based on facts rather than emotion	3.60	Very Much
7	Ability to perform a task with minimum supervision.	3.65	Very Much
8	Confidence in one's ability to perform a given task effectively.	3.63	Very Much
9	Technical skills (use of computers and other technical gadgets in a work setting)	3.60	Very Much
10	Desire for continuous learning, like attending trainings, seminars, and graduate study	3.81	Very Much
	Overall Weighted Mean	3.64	Very Much

Table 4 presents the skills that were developed as a result of the respondents' education in WUP. It can be observed on the table that the highest rated skills that were developed very much were their: "Desire for continuous learning like attending trainings, seminars, graduate study (Wm=3.81)"; "Problem solving skills – the ability to analyze work problems and apply appropriate solutions (Wm=3.67)"; and their "Oral communication skills and ability to perform task with minimum supervision (Wm=3.65)".

The findings show that the respondents gained important skills from their education at WUP, with the most developed being their desire for continuous learning, such as attending trainings, seminars, and graduate studies. They also rated their problem-solving skills and ability to communicate effectively and work independently as highly developed. This suggests that WUP's social work program successfully equips its graduates with key competencies needed for professional growth and effective job performance (Elsafty & Oraby, 2022) [5].

Table 5: Usefulness of the Curriculum to the Current Work

S. No	A. Academic Programs	Wm	Verbal Description
1	General Education (Social Sciences, English, Math, Natural Sciences)	3.46	Very Useful
2	Professional Subjects (major subjects)	3.75	Very Useful
3	Elective Subjects	3.39	Very Useful
	B. Academic Works		
4	Doing Research, Term Papers	3.54	Very Useful
5	Field work\OJT\Practicum	3.77	Very Useful
6	Doing Projects	3.56	Very Useful
	C. Extra-curricular		
7	Joining Student Organizations and Societies	3.35	Very Useful
8	Writing in Student Paper	3.22	Moderately Useful
9	Joining Competitions (Quiz bees, cultural and sports, etc..)	3.15	Moderately Useful
	Overall Weighted Mean	3.47	Very Useful

Table 5 presents the usefulness of the following components of the curriculum, such as academic programs, academic works and extra-curricular activities, to the works of the Social Work Alumni. In terms of academic program, the very useful component is the professional or major subjects (Wm=3.75). For Academic works, their highest rated

component, which is very useful in their current work, is the Field work or On-the-Job training (Wm=3.77) while in the extra-curricular activities, joining organizations and societies was very useful in their current work (Wm=3.55). Overall, the components of the curriculum were very useful in their current work (Wm=3.47).

The results demonstrate that a number of the curriculum's elements were highly beneficial to the social work graduates' current jobs. Fieldwork or on-the-job training was considered the most beneficial academic activity, while professional or major subjects were the most valued among academic programs. Among extracurricular activities, involvement in groups and organizations was also considered beneficial. All things considered, these findings imply that the curriculum successfully equipped the graduates for their professions by offering real-world experience and pertinent information (Nascimento Souto, 2019) [8].

Table 6: Attributes that were visible to Wesleyan Graduates

S. No	A. Character	Wm	Verbal Description
1	Wesleyanians consistently demonstrate integrity in their actions and decisions.	3.59	Agree
2	Wesleyanians treat others with respect and empathy, regardless of their background or beliefs.	3.60	Agree
3	Wesleyanians take responsibility for their mistakes and learn from them.	3.53	Agree
B. Service			
1	Wesleyanians are actively involved in serving the community.	3.58	Agree
2	Wesleyanians are committed to using their skills and knowledge to make a positive impact on society.	3.72	Agree
3	Wesleyanians seek opportunities to help those in need.	3.60	Agree
C. Scholarship			
1	Wesleyanians are dedicated to lifelong learning and intellectual growth.	3.57	Agree
2	Wesleyanians strive for excellence in their academic pursuits.	3.69	Agree
3	Wesleyanians actively seek out opportunities to expand their knowledge and skills.	3.71	Agree
Overall Weighted Mean		3.62	Agree

Table 6 shows the attributes that were visible to the social work graduates as rated by the respondents. In terms of character, "Wesleyanisms treat others with respect and empathy, regardless of their background or beliefs" (Wm=3.60). As to service, "the Alumni are committed to using their skills and knowledge to make a positive impact on society" (Wm=3.72) while for the scholarship, "They actively seek out opportunities to expand their knowledge and skills" (Wm=3.71).

The findings imply that the social work graduates of WUP demonstrate strong core values shaped by their education, particularly in character, service, and scholarship. Their respect and empathy toward others, commitment to making a positive societal impact, and continuous pursuit of learning reflect the effectiveness of the institution in instilling the principles of Wesleyanism. These attributes are essential for social work professionals, suggesting that WUP successfully prepares its graduates to be compassionate, service-oriented, and lifelong learners (Boon, 2024) [2].

Conclusions

The following conclusions are derived based on the findings of the study:

1. The majority of social work graduates between 2017–2019 and 2022 found their first employment within six months, mostly through referrals, with insufficient work experience and the use of the backer system as the primary obstacle in job hunting.
2. Most respondents are employed full-time in government and social services, including jobs as social workers and development officers, and most have a monthly income of P30,000 to P60,000 and an average income of P30,827.
3. Most respondents acquired continuing professional education through seminars, trainings, and graduate school, while their community engagement was most concentrated on livelihood activities, medical/dental missions, and conducting trainings.
4. The respondents pointed out a clear growth of skills through their WUP education, specifically in wanting to learn continuously, solving problems, and oral communication skills, with the ability to work independently.
5. The respondents discovered the curriculum very helpful to their present work, particularly the professional courses, field work or on-the-job training, and involvement in organizations and societies.
6. The respondents identified key characteristics among the social work graduates, including their firm commitment to service, ongoing quest for learning, and courteous, understanding treatment of others.

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