

**Employment tracer study of the Bachelor of Public Administration graduates  
of a state university in the Philippines**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study traced the employability of Bachelor of Public Administration (BPA) graduates of Kalinga State University (KSU) from the batch SY 2023-2024 to SY 2024-2025. Offering a comprehensive snapshot of their demographics, academic achievements, career choices, professional licenses, professional development, employment, gross monthly rate, and skills they acquired during their stay in college. The majority of the respondents were aged 21-25 years old, predominantly single females. The study also reveals that only a few of them are seeking advanced studies and pursuing law school. The highest percentage of graduates holds no license or eligibility due to lack of financial support, lack of preparation, or pursuing earning units. Moreover, this study shows that a small portion of respondents are pursuing post-graduate studies; financial limitations, personal considerations, and career goals strongly influence this decision. On the other hand, this study also reveals that there were 55 who are employed, 12 of them are self-employed and managing their businesses. However, data shows that 76 of the respondents are unemployed. This indicates that lack of eligibility, insufficient work experience, and limited job openings contribute to this high unemployment rate. There are still graduates whose jobs are not relevant to their bachelor's degree; data shows that a small portion of respondents face degree-to-job relevance issues. Suggest that this occurs due to limited job opportunities in their field, career progression not being a priority, and mismatched skills. The study shows that the highest number of graduates got their jobs within the Cordillera Administrative Region. Subsequently, the result shows that respondents rate their research skills relatively low. Suggest this is due to a lack of mentorship, limited practical research experience, and minimal exposure to research tools and training. It is recommended that Kalinga State University strengthen its career guidance and job placement programs to assist graduates in securing employment more quickly after graduation. The university may enhance training in research and data analysis skills through additional coursework, seminars, and practical research activities.

**Keywords:** Employability, tracer study, Public Administration graduates, career trajectories, curriculum enhancement, professional development.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED), as one of the objectives in the Strategic Plan for 2011 to 2016, lays the foundation for a more efficient and effective system in delivering quality public higher education services and for a more flexible regulatory framework for private higher education provision. This will help produce highly competent and competitive graduates. Hence, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are encouraged by CHED to offer programs that are in demand and responsive to the needs of industry, both local and international. Meanwhile, the unprecedented change for Philippine education is shaped by aggressive reform measures from within, with the full implementation of the new K to 12 system in 2016, and rapidly International Journal of Recent Innovations in Academic Research 17 advancing movements from without, as the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015. The five-year period between 2016 and 2021, often referred to as the K to 12 transitions, presents significant challenges not just to the basic education sector but also causes a ripple effect on other sectors as well. It is also a once-in-a-generation window of opportunity for the reform of the country's entire education landscape (CHED, 2021).

Moreover, tracer research surveys are a valuable method used by educational institutions, organizations and industries to track and evaluate the results and impact of programs, courses and training activities (Cuadra, et al., 2019). This includes contacting individuals who have completed a particular program or course to collect information regarding their current status, employment status, and the extent to which the program or course is impacting their personal and professional development includes (Kilag, et al., 2023).

The Bachelor of Public Administration of the Kalinga-Apayao State College also known as Kalinga State University had its first graduates on April 5, 2003 as confirmed by BOT Res. No. 410. It was offered as a degree program under the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) which offered Bachelor of Arts major in Political Science and Public Administration, Bachelor of Science in Biology and Psychology. In line with the recommendation of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to pool all related courses into one college the CAS was turned into Institute of Arts and Sciences on June 2006. By this time, the Bachelor of Arts major in Public Administration became Bachelor of Science in Public Administration authorized by BOT Res. No. 607, s. 2007. On June 2013, the Bachelor of Science in Public Administration was transferred to the main campus (Bulanao) and merged to B.S. in Criminology forming now the Institute of Criminal Justice Education and Public Administration (ICJEPA). At present the program is operating under CMO No. 06, s. 2010 and BOT Res. No. 828 s. 2011 naming the program Bachelor of Public Administration. By December 2015, this program will be accredited to its level 2 by the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACCUP). This continuing growth of the Bachelor of Public Administration is brought about by the increasing needs and development challenges of local communities. The following are the program objectives (BOT Res. No. 828 s. 2011):

To provide relevant knowledge in the field of Public Administration that is responsive to the needs and development challenges of local communities, the region and the nation as a whole thru advanced quality of instruction towards excellence; to train the students to become competent Public Administrators who are imbued with positive leadership, service oriented, nationalism, democratic, dedicated and globally competitive agents of change; and to develop in the students, the leadership and management skills and other appropriate abilities such as efficiency and effectiveness in administering public affairs, ability to think critically and make

objective and sound decisions and expertise in public affairs and management. (Buslig, S.MC., 2021).

The alumni of an institution are deemed to be the visible evidence of its efficacy in providing service to its constituents. Hence, it is its liability to trace the employability and the whereabouts of its graduates to ascertain its impact and accountability to the institution and the country as a whole. With the ever-changing society, it is therefore important that every institution should know what are the trends and the needs of the community in order to ensure that the programs they are implementing are still related to current requirements. With this, they will produce graduates capable of coping with the dynamic.

Moreover, this Tracer Study of the Bachelor of Public Administration Graduates of Kalinga State University, covering the school year 2023 to 2025, seeks to trace the career trajectories of its alumni, assess their employment status, and measure the relevance of the program to their professional and personal development. Through the analysis of employment data, occupational classifications, job relevance, and income levels, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how effectively the BPA program prepares graduates for careers in governance and public service. Moreover, the study evaluates graduates' perceptions of the program's contributions to their development of critical skills, such as leadership, problem-solving, communication, and community engagement. By doing so, it offers insights into how the BPA program has shaped their professional success and personal growth, providing valuable feedback for program improvement. As such, this tracer study not only reflects the achievements of the BPA program but also informs academic leaders and policymakers on how to further enhance public administration education to meet the evolving demands of public service.

On the other hand, this study will employ a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research techniques to gather data from Public Administration graduates of Kalinga State University. The findings will provide valuable insights into the current state of College of Public Administration and Indigenous Governance, and identify areas for improvement in offering the course Bachelor of Public Administration. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the development of strategies for enhancing its curriculum offering.

#### Statement of the problem

This study aims to track the employability of Bachelor of Public Administration graduates of Kalinga State University. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, and civil status
2. What is the educational background of the respondents in terms of year graduated, educational attainment and development, awards or honors received, professional examinations taken or passed, and factors influencing the choice of their postgraduate program?
3. What is the employment profile of the respondents in terms of employment status, present occupation, period of seeking the first job after college, nature of job, relevance of college degree to the present job, location of current work, gross monthly rate, first job level position, and tenure or length of service in the first job?
4. What skills are acquired by the graduates in terms of soft skills and hard skills?

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this study presents a comprehensive and systematic approach to the collection and analysis of pertinent data, structured within a mixed-method framework that integrates both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Specifically, the study utilized a mixed-method research design, adopting an explanatory sequential design as articulated by Creswell and Plano Clark (2003), who defined mixed methods as a research design encompassing philosophical assumptions alongside methods of inquiry. This approach involved guiding principles that directed both the collection and analysis of data while integrating quantitative and qualitative data within a single study. In this design, quantitative data were initially gathered and analyzed, followed by qualitative data collection and analysis to further explain and enrich the quantitative findings, thereby ensuring a more holistic understanding of the research problem.

The participants of the study consisted of graduates from the Bachelor of Public Administration program of Kalinga State University from the academic years 2023-2025. The study employed purposive sampling as its sampling technique, wherein respondents were intentionally selected from the population based on their relevance to the research objectives. A total of 80% of the population was included in the sample. For the academic year 2023-2024, 80% of the 92 graduates, equivalent to  $n=74$ , were selected as respondents. For the academic year 2024-2025, 80% of the 115 graduates, equivalent to  $n=92$ , were included. In total, 166 respondents constituted the sample, representing 80% of the overall population of 207 graduates. This distribution reflects that for the academic year 2023-2024, the total number of graduates was 92, with 74 actual respondents, while for the academic year 2024-2025, the total number of graduates was 115, with 92 actual respondents, resulting in an overall total of 207 graduates and 166 respondents.

The research instrument utilized in the study was adapted from the standardized tracer survey questionnaire developed by the Commission for Higher Education. This instrument was specifically designed to collect data and information regarding graduates of higher education institutions in the Philippines and their transition from school to work. The questionnaire was lifted and modified to align with the objectives and contextual requirements of the present study. It consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions to facilitate the collection of quantitative and qualitative data. The instrument was structured into four parts. Part I focused on the profile of the respondents, including age, civil status, and sex. Part II examined educational aspects such as year graduated, educational attainment and development, awards or honors received, and professional examinations passed, as well as factors influencing the choice of graduate programs. Part III addressed the employment profile of the respondents, while Part IV explored the skills acquired by the graduates during their college education.

Data gathering commenced immediately upon the approval of the research adviser. Following approval, a transmittal letter was sent to the registrar to request the official list of Bachelor of Public Administration graduates for the academic years 2023-2025. The survey instrument was administered primarily through online platforms, taking into consideration the availability and preferences of the graduates. To facilitate accessibility and encourage participation, the questionnaire was converted into Google Forms, enabling respondents to conveniently complete the survey online. In addition, Facebook messages were utilized to distribute the survey questionnaire, accompanied by a letter explaining the purpose of the study and inviting participation. The voluntary nature of participation was explicitly emphasized. The data collection period spanned from December 2025 to February 2026. Upon completion of data gathering, the researcher systematically tallied the collected responses in preparation for quantification and subsequent analysis.

Throughout the conduct of the study, ethical considerations were rigorously observed, guided by the four ethical principles of autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, and justice, as well as the four ethical rules of veracity, privacy, confidentiality, and fidelity. The research was conducted solely for educational purposes as part of the requirements for the Degree of Master in Public Administration. The researcher adhered strictly to standard operating procedures by notifying appropriate authorities prior to the conduct of the study and securing informed consent from all respondents. Participants signed consent forms indicating their voluntary willingness to participate. The study excluded vulnerable populations, including individuals with terminal illnesses, minorities, and the elderly, among others. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their data, and none were held liable for the outcomes of the study. No direct compensation was provided to participants; however, they were informed of their right to request a copy of the completed study. The findings were intended to avoid placing participants at any social disadvantage and instead to serve as a basis for curriculum enhancement, particularly within the College of Public Administration and Indigenous Governance of Kalinga State University, as well as for the advancement of the bachelor's degree offering. Furthermore, the study did not involve collaboration with any private or public associations, rendering terms of reference for collaborative research inapplicable.

Following data collection, the data were collated, tabulated, and stored for analysis. The researcher employed descriptive statistical measures, including frequency count, simple percentage, and frequency count ranking, to examine the distribution of respondents based on their profile, educational background, employment data, and acquired skills. These statistical techniques enabled a systematic presentation and interpretation of quantitative data. In addition, qualitative responses were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify meaningful themes, patterns, and categories. This qualitative analysis complemented the quantitative findings by providing deeper insights and contextual understanding, thereby supporting a comprehensive interpretation of the results in alignment with the objectives of the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Results and Discussion section is grounded in the data gathered from 142 respondents and is interpreted directly in relation to the objectives of the study. The analysis integrates descriptive quantitative results with qualitative explanatory evidence drawn from the qualitative explanatory phase, thereby allowing the numerical findings to be clarified and deepened through respondents' narratives. Using frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, weighted mean, ranking, and interpretive descriptions, the discussion presents the respondents' demographic, educational, and employment characteristics, the factors shaping their postgraduate decisions, the skills they acquired, and the explanatory themes that account for the patterns observed in the quantitative results. In keeping with the objectives of the study, the discussion combines statistical description and interpretive analysis in a unified narrative so that the findings may be understood not only in terms of magnitude and distribution, but also in terms of their professional, educational, and labor market implications.

The demographic profile showed that the respondents were predominantly young adults. In terms of age, 92 or 64.8% were 21 to 25 yr. old, 42 or 29.6% were 26 to 30 yrs. old, and 8 or 5.6% were 31-39 yrs. old. These results indicate that most of the respondents were in the young-adult phase, suggesting that the findings of the study were shaped largely by the views, life experiences, and career orientations of individuals who are still in the early stages of career building, postgraduate preparation, and professional growth. Their age profile also suggests a group that may be more adaptive to new systems, technologies, and learning

environments. This interpretation is consistent with Arnett (2020), who described ages 18-29 as a period of emerging adulthood characterized by identity formation, educational pursuit, and career exploration, and with UNESCO (2021), which noted the strong involvement of young adults in higher education and early-career pathways.

In terms of sex, 93 of 142 respondents or 65.5% were female, while 49 or 34.5% were male. The higher proportion of women indicates that the findings may reflect female perspectives more strongly, particularly in relation to educational participation, professional motivation, and career engagement. The result may also reflect the increasing involvement of women in higher education and professional development. This is consistent with UNESCO (2022), which reported an increase in the proportion of higher education graduates who are women worldwide, and with the World Bank (2020), which noted the substantial growth of women's participation in tertiary education and professional and academic fields.

With respect to civil status, 126 or 88.7% were single and 16 or 11.3% were married. This means that the majority of respondents had not yet entered marriage commitments, which may have allowed them greater flexibility in prioritizing career growth, further study, and employment opportunities. Since single individuals may face fewer family-related constraints, they may be better positioned to engage in training, professional examinations, and early employment mobility. This finding aligns with Bianchi and Vohs (2020), who reported that single young adults tend to prioritize personal development and career growth before marriage, and with Pew Research Center (2021), which observed that younger generations increasingly delay marriage in order to focus on education and work.

The educational background of the respondents further clarified their position as recent graduates navigating early professional life. In terms of year graduated, 64 or 45.1% graduated in S.Y. 2023-2024, while 78 or 54.9% graduated in S.Y. 2024-2025. This indicates that the majority were new graduates, suggesting that they possessed recent academic knowledge and updated skills that could support engagement in career-related and professional opportunities. At the same time, the result also implies that many were still in the transition period from education to employment. This observation is consistent with Tomlinson (2020), who emphasized the career exploration patterns of recent graduates, and with OECD (2021), which noted that those who recently graduated from tertiary education are more likely to seek employment and professional development opportunities.

In terms of educational attainment and development, 140 or 95.9% had a Bachelor's Degree, 5 or 3.42% were taking their Master's Degree, and 1 or 0.68% was pursuing Law School after a Bachelor's Degree. These figures show that the respondents were mostly holders of Bachelor's degrees, indicating that undergraduate education remained their principal academic qualification. The very small number engaged in graduate education suggests limited advanced academic specialization within the group. While a Bachelor's degree is the standard entry qualification for many professions, the low representation of graduate-level study may also suggest that additional specialization has not yet been widely pursued. This supports the World Bank (2020), which stated that many young professionals in developing countries enter the labor market with bachelor's degrees as their primary qualification, and UNESCO (2021), which noted that undergraduate education remains the most widespread form of tertiary education among early-career practitioners.

Awards and honors received likewise reflected the profile of the respondents. A total of 118 or 81.94% reported receiving none, 12 or 8.33% received Leadership Awards, 11 or 7.63% received Service Awards, and 3 or 2.1% received Sports Awards. The predominance of respondents without awards suggests that formal recognition was not common within the group, although the presence of leadership, service, and sports awardees still indicates diversity in achievement and engagement. The low proportion of recognized graduates may reflect limited recognition opportunities or competitive selection processes. This is comparable to Kuh

et al. (2020), who emphasized that not every student receives awards despite possessing competence and potential, and Astin and Antonio (2021), who observed that educational recognition programs typically acknowledge only a small percentage of students.

The data on professional examinations passed revealed that 82 or 53.94% had passed none, 34 or 22.36% had passed the Civil Service Examination, 26 or 17.10% had passed the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET), and 10 or 6.6% had passed the NAPOLCOM Examination/SAF. These results show that more than half of the respondents had not yet obtained professional eligibility or licensure. This implies that many were still at the beginning of their careers and may not yet have been ready to take certification or licensure examinations. Since professional examinations often serve as gateways to employment in specialized fields, not taking them may reduce immediate employment options. This finding is consistent with the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2021), which found that many young graduates postpone licensure because of occupational transitions or waiting periods, and OECD (2022), which observed that professional certification is important in improving employment opportunities and occupational advancement.

The factors influencing the choice of postgraduate program showed that Personal interest had the highest frequency with 53 or 24.53%, followed by Career Advancement opportunities with 50 or 23.15%. Professional or Licensure requirements accounted for 21 or 9.72%, Availability of the program and Promotion or salary increase prospect each had 14 or 6.48%, Academic performance in undergraduate studies, Financial Consideration, and Alignment with current job or position each had 12 or 5.55%, Scholarship or sponsorship opportunities had 9 or 4.2%, Recommendation of supervisors or mentors and Relevance to undergraduate degree each had 8 or 3.70%, Schedule flexibility had 2 or 0.93%, and Institutional Reputation had 1 or 0.46%. These findings indicate that the decision to pursue postgraduate studies was shaped primarily by intrinsic motivation and career-related aspirations, with personal interest and career advancement emerging as the strongest drivers. At the same time, the role of professional requirements, financial conditions, scholarship access, program availability, and workplace relevance demonstrates that postgraduate decisions are also shaped by practical and structural considerations. The findings therefore suggest that postgraduate program decisions are influenced by both internal motivations and external career or institutional conditions, and that some respondents considered multiple influencing factors such as promotion or salary increase prospects, recommendation of supervisors or mentors, scholarship opportunities, alignment with current job, and relevance to undergraduate degree. This supports Nguyen and Le (2021), who found that personal interest and career development are among the strongest motivations for postgraduate study, Soria and Stebleton (2020), who reported that students pursue graduate education to enhance career prospects, gain specialized knowledge, and achieve advancement, OECD (2022), which highlighted employability and salary potential as important motives for graduate study, and UNESCO (2021), which emphasized that access conditions such as program availability and financial support affect decisions to enroll. Taken together, the results imply that institutions offering postgraduate programs should design their offerings in ways that respond to students' interests, career development needs, workplace relevance, scholarship access, flexible schedules, and financial assistance, while also strengthening mentorship and career guidance to support more informed academic and professional decisions.

The employment profile revealed that 76 or 53.14% were Not employed, 55 or 38.46% were Employed, and 12 or 8.4% were Self-employed/Entrepreneur. These results indicate that the largest group consisted of unemployed respondents who were still seeking employment after completing their academic programs. The proportion of those already employed suggests that a substantial number had entered the workforce, while the presence of 8.4% self-employed

or entrepreneurial respondents shows that some graduates were pursuing independent economic activity rather than traditional employment. The findings imply that many graduates experience a transition period between graduation and employment and that this transition may be influenced by labor market competition, skill requirements, and the availability of suitable positions. The attractiveness of government and stable sector employment may also help explain the occupational choices of those who are already employed. This finding is supported by the International Labour Organization (2021), which reported that many recent graduates pass through a period of unemployment or job searching after graduation, Montenegro and Patrinos (2020), who explained that delays in labor market entry are common among young graduates in developing countries because of qualification and demand mismatches, the World Bank (2022), which highlighted the attractiveness of government work because of stability and benefits, and OECD (2023), which emphasized that some graduates pursue entrepreneurship or further study while seeking employment.

Present occupation data further detailed these pathways. Of the respondents, 66 or 46.5% were Job seeker, 23 or 16.19% were Public Administration Officer, 21 or 14.8% were Entrepreneur/Business Owner, 9 or 6.33% were Teacher, 7 or 4.93% were Barangay Worker, 7 or 4.92% were Military Personnel/Armed Forces Officer, 6 or 4.22% were OFW, and 3 or 2.1% were Barangay Official. The distribution suggests that nearly half of the graduates were still actively searching for work, while others had entered public administration, entrepreneurship, teaching, barangay service, military service, and overseas work. This shows that graduates were navigating multiple post-college pathways, including waiting for formal employment, entering public service, and creating their own livelihood opportunities. The presence of entrepreneurs indicates that some graduates are exploring alternatives beyond conventional salaried work. This interpretation is aligned with the International Labour Organization (2022), which noted that young graduates commonly go through a transition period after college in which they either search for employment or enter entrepreneurial activities before obtaining stable jobs.

The period of seeking the first job after college also reflected this transition. A total of 41 or 28.9% were Still seeking first job, 34 or 23.9% found employment within 3-6 months, 31 or 21.8% found employment in Less than 3 Months, 16 or 11.3% found employment in 1-2 years, 14 or 9.9% found employment in 7-12 months, and 6 or 4.2% took More than 2 years. These results indicate that while a sizeable group secured employment within the first six months after graduation, the largest single group remained in search of a first job. This suggests that the transition from education to employment is uneven and that many graduates face delays caused by labor market competition, limited job openings, and lack of experience. The result underscores the value of career guidance, job placement programs, and employability skills development in shortening the transition period. This is consistent with the International Labour Organization (2021), which explained that job search duration among youth is shaped by economic conditions, employment opportunity availability, and the alignment between graduate skills and employer requirements.

The nature of job among those employed showed that Administrative/Clerical work was the most common at 29 or 31.9%, followed by Field/Community Work with 22 or 24.2%, Managerial/Supervisory with 9 or 9.9%, Policy-Making/Planning with 9 or 9.9%, Teaching/Training with 9 or 9.9%, Law Enforcement/Military Service with 7 or 7.7%, Technical Specialist with 4 or 4.4%, and Research/Data Analysis with 2 or 2.2%. The concentration in administrative and community-related work suggests that many graduates entered roles requiring organizational, support, and field-based service functions. The smaller proportions in research and technical roles may indicate fewer openings in these areas or lower preparedness for highly specialized tasks.

This pattern corresponds closely with job preferences. Administrative/Clerical jobs were the most preferred at 19 or 36.5%, followed by Teaching/Training with 11 or 21.2%, Field/Community Work with 7 or 13.5%, Managerial/Supervisory with 6 or 11.5%, Law Enforcement/Military Service with 4 or 7.7%, Policy-Making/Planning with 3 or 5.8%, and Research/Data Analysis with 2 or 3.8%. These figures indicate that the respondents largely preferred work settings that offer structure, stability, and prospects for career progression, while teaching or training was also a significant career interest. The low preference for research/data analysis mirrors the low actual involvement in such roles and is consistent with the later finding that research skills received the lowest mean among the skill indicators. This finding aligns with Soria and Stebleton (2020), who found that graduates tend to prefer careers associated with job stability, professional growth, and congruence with their academic preparation.

With respect to degree relevance to present job, 56 or 47.1% reported that their degree was Relevant, 51 or 42.9% reported that it was Very Relevant, and 12 or 10.1% reported that it was Not Relevant. These results show that the majority of respondents perceived a connection between their college degree and their current job, which suggests that higher education had provided them with knowledge and competencies applicable to their employment. At the same time, the existence of 10.1% whose work was not relevant to their degree indicates that degree-job mismatch was present for a minority of respondents. This is consistent with Tomlinson (2020), who argued that higher education equips graduates with competencies that increase the likelihood of relevance between degree and job, even though perfect alignment is not always achieved in actual labor markets.

The national distribution of employed respondents showed that within the Philippines, 95 or 88.0% were working in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), 5 or 4.6% in Region II (Cagayan Valley), 3 or 2.8% in NCR (National Capital Region), 3 or 2.8% in Region III (Central Luzon), and 2 or 1.8% in Region 1 (Ilocos Region). These findings show that the overwhelming majority of respondents who were employed nationally remained in CAR, while smaller numbers relocated to nearby or economically active regions. This suggests that local employment absorption remained strong, but that some graduates were also willing to relocate in search of opportunities. Regions such as NCR and Central Luzon may attract graduates because of higher concentrations of industries, government offices, and business establishments, while nearby regions may be preferred because of geographical proximity and familiarity. This pattern is supported by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS, 2021), which reported that many Filipino graduates move to economically active regions in search of better employment opportunities.

Outside the country, 1 respondent or 100.0% among those classified under Regional (ASEAN) was working in Singapore. Under International, there were 3 respondents, with 1 respondent or 33.3% each in Canada, China, and Japan. Although these numbers are very small, they indicate that some graduates were able to secure employment beyond the Philippines. This suggests that a portion of the graduates possessed competencies that allowed them to compete for international opportunities and that working abroad may have been motivated by better salaries, broader experience, and stronger employment demand. This observation is consistent with the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (2021), which reported that Filipino professionals continue to work in countries such as Canada, Japan, and China because of stronger labor demand and better employment prospects.

Gross Monthly Rate data showed that 69 or 48.6% earned ₱Below 10,100, 44 or 31.0% earned ₱10,100-₱19,000, 17 or 12.0% earned ₱20,000-₱29,999, 8 or 5.6% earned ₱30,000-₱39,999, 1 or 0.7% earned ₱40,000-₱49,999, and 3 or 2.1% earned ₱50,000 and above. The concentration of respondents in the lowest income brackets indicates that most were still in the

early stage of their careers, where salaries are generally modest. The very small number earning beyond ₱30,000 suggests that higher earnings were not yet typical in this group. This result implies that experience, qualifications, and time in the workforce are still crucial to improving salary levels. This is consistent with the Philippine Statistics Authority (2023), which noted that recent graduates and young workers often begin with lower salaries because they are still building workplace experience and professional competencies.

The First Job Level Position further supports this interpretation. A total of 84 or 86.6% started in Entry Level/Junior Staff positions, 8 or 8.2% started in Managerial/Senior-Level positions, and 5 or 5.2% held Supervisory/Mid-level positions in their first job. The dominance of entry-level placement indicates that most graduates began in foundational roles where they could acquire practical skills, workplace experience, and professional socialization before advancing to higher-level positions. This pattern is consistent with the International Labour Organization (2020), which reported that most young graduates enter the workforce through entry-level positions before moving to supervisory or managerial roles.

Tenure or length of service in the first job showed that 58 or 56.3% stayed for Less than 6 months, 27 or 26.2% stayed for 6 months-1 year, 13 or 12.6% stayed for 1-2 years, 4 or 3.9% stayed for 3-4 years, and 1 or 1.0% stayed for 5 years and above. The short tenure of the majority suggests that many graduates used their first employment as a temporary or transitional step rather than as a long-term occupational destination. This may reflect probationary periods, career exploration, dissatisfaction, or a search for positions better aligned with qualifications and aspirations. The finding is consistent with the World Economic Forum (2021), which reported that early-career professionals often change jobs within the first years of employment while exploring career paths and seeking better matches.

The qualitative explanatory phase deepened the interpretation of these quantitative employment and educational patterns. For Low Participation in professional Exams, the quantitative result was 53.94%, and the explanatory themes were Lack of Financial Support, Lack of preparation, and Pursuing earning units. Respondents explained this through statements such as R1: "I did not take the licensure exam right away due to financial constraints, insufficient preparation, and low confidence." R2: "Lack of financial support and preparations." and R3: "No, I don't have eligibility but I'm studying Earning Unit." These responses confirm that the low participation in professional examinations was not merely a matter of disinterest, but was tied to systemic and personal barriers involving finances, preparedness, and academic priorities. The integrated interpretation suggests that although graduates had completed their academic programs, many still faced constraints that prevented them from immediately sitting for licensure examinations. This supports Ortega and Banal (2021), who identified financial constraints as a major barrier to professional examination participation, and Dumlao (2020), who emphasized that inadequate preparation lowers confidence and reduces graduates' willingness to take licensure examinations.

For Post graduate decision factors, the quantitative result was 24.53%, and the explanatory themes were Lack of financial, Personal reason, and Career-related factors. The respondents stated, R4: "The factor influenced my decision not to pursue postgraduate studies after graduation is due to financial problem." R5: "It's the financial thing that's why I choose to work and grab every opportunity." R6: "financial status and personal reasons." R7: "Personal reasons" R8: "I choose not to pursue postgraduate studies due to financial constraints, work experience needs, and career goals." and R9: "My decision was mainly influenced by financial and career-related factors. I chose to work first to gain practical experience and support my needs, while considering postgraduates studies in the future when I am more financially stable and aligned with my career goals." These narratives show that the relatively low proportion of respondents who pursued or intended to pursue postgraduate education was shaped by a complex combination of economic pressures, personal circumstances, and strategic career

considerations. Thus, postgraduate decision-making was not based only on academic preference, but also on financial sustainability and career timing. This interpretation agrees with Alvarez and Santos (2021), who argued that financial capacity and career alignment are central to postgraduate decision-making, and Garcia (2020), who highlighted the strong influence of personal factors on post-college educational choices.

For High Unemployment, the quantitative result was 53.14%, and the qualitative themes were No eligibility, No experience, and Limited job opportunities. The respondents explained, R10: "No Eligibility and also no experience" R11: "Lack of Eligibility and I am looking for a stable job that can support me and my family in the future." R12: "The specific barriers that have prevented me from securing employment after graduation is because of lack of experience and at the same time because of limited job opportunities." R13: "Limited job opportunities" and R14: "After graduation, I struggled to find a job mainly due to lack of experience, limited job opportunities along with strong competition from other applicants." These statements strongly reinforce the quantitative finding that unemployment among respondents was not due to a single cause, but rather to the combined effect of eligibility barriers, limited practical experience, and external labor market constraints. The result highlights the need for schools to strengthen internship programs, practical preparation, and employability support systems. This interpretation is consistent with Reyes and Cruz (2022), who associated graduate unemployment with lack of work experience and job mismatch, and Torres (2021), who emphasized the role of limited job opportunities in shaping graduate employability outcomes.

For Delay in getting First Job, the quantitative result was 28.9%, and the qualitative themes were No eligibility, No job vacancy, and Have other plans. Respondents stated, R15: "The main reason it took me time to look at my first job after graduation is because I don't have any license (LPT, CS passer)" R16: "The main reason that it took me time to obtain my first job after graduation is that; I am still taking civil service and I opt to wait for the result before I proceed or take another step." R17: "The main reason why it took time to obtain my job is that there is no job vacancy in the province that suits my field." and R18: "I am preparing for training for marine." These data indicate that delayed entry into employment was shaped not only by deficiencies in qualification and the scarcity of suitable vacancies, but also by respondents' strategic decisions to wait for examination results or pursue other planned pathways. The finding therefore reflects both structural and personal dimensions of delayed labor market entry. This agrees with Mendoza (2020), who explained that lack of job opportunities and ineligibility are common causes of employment delay, and with Villanueva and Perez (2021), who noted that career planning and additional study can influence the timing of employment.

For Degree-Job relevance issues, the quantitative result was 10.1%, and the qualitative themes were Limited job opportunities in the field, Career progression is not the main priority, and Skills Mismatch. The respondents explained, R19: "Yes is not fully aligned with my college degree because of limited job opportunities in my field, the demand in other industries, and the need to gain experience while exploring available career options." R20: "not aligned yet since career progression isn't the main priority right now." and R21: "For a college graduate working as a factory worker in Taiwan, the alignment between education and employment is often driven by a mix of economic necessity, structural labor market gaps, and foreign policies, rather than a direct application of academic skills." These responses demonstrate that the 10.1% reporting lack of relevance between degree and current job were affected by labor market limitations, shifting career priorities, and structural mismatches between acquired skills and available work. The result suggests that degree-job mismatch, while affecting only a minority, remains an important issue in graduate employment because it reflects the interaction between

individual priorities and labor market conditions. This supports Navarro and Lim (2022), who defined job mismatch as a condition in which acquired skills do not correspond to labor market requirements, and Flores (2020), who observed that limited field opportunities push graduates into unrelated employment.

For Low Salary Levels, the quantitative result was 31.0%, and the explanatory themes were Experience, Qualifications, and Location of work. Respondents explained, R22: “Job type, experience and qualifications because they need a staff who has experience to manage the work flexible and can finish the work quickly.” R23: “My salary is affected by limited job options, lack of experience, and the need for flexible work near home.” R24: “my job position is entry level because I am not yet qualified to get promoted because I am not qualified yet.” and R25: “My salary as a graduate is influenced by my job type, limited experience, work location, and qualifications.” These qualitative accounts clarify that low salary levels were shaped by a combination of entry-level positioning, insufficient experience, limited qualifications for promotion, job type, and the location of employment. The results therefore indicate that low income among graduates reflects both personal career stage and structural labor market realities. This supports Castro and Dela Peña (2021), who identified work experience and educational background as major influences on salary, and Ramos (2020), who found that job location also contributes to wage differences.

For Short Job Tenure, the quantitative result was 56.3%, and the explanatory themes were Not aligned with the degree, Pursue another path, and Position did not fully matched my career. Respondents stated, R26: “I left my first job to seek new challenges and opportunities that would allow me to grow professionally and I want to apply what I finish in college.” R27: “The main reason is to have an experience, and I just wanted to learn and grow in my bachelor’s degree.” R28: “I begun to pursue my dream as a uniform personnel soon. As of now, the PNP recruitment begun so I need to leave my job and sacrifice for it.” and R29: “I stayed in my first job for only a short period because the position did not fully match my career goals and filed of specialization.” These statements show that short job tenure was largely explained by career exploration, degree-job misalignment, and the active pursuit of alternative career paths, especially those more closely related to long-term aspirations. The finding suggests that short tenure should not be viewed only as instability, but also as evidence of agency and strategic career movement among graduates seeking better alignment between education, vocation, and ambition. This interpretation agrees with Lopez and Garcia (2022), who identified job mismatch and career dissatisfaction as major causes of short employment duration, and Santos (2021), who observed that fresh graduates often change jobs during periods of exploration and adjustment.

The section on skills acquired further clarified how respondents evaluated the contribution of their academic program to professional competence. The interpretive scale used in the study classified 3.26-4.00 as Highly Develop (HD), 2.51-3.25 as Develop (D), 1.75-2.50 as Moderately Develop (MD), and 1.0 -1.75 as Not develop (ND). Based on this scale, the Total average Weighted Mean was 3.38, interpreted as HD, indicating that the respondents generally perceived their acquired skills as highly developed. Among soft skills, Developed communication skills obtained the highest mean of 3.49 with interpretation HD and Rank 1. Developed intrapersonal skills followed with 3.45, HD, Rank 2; Enhanced interpersonal skills had 3.44, HD, Rank 3; Enhanced Human Relations skills had 3.42, HD, Rank 4; Improved problem-solving and decision-making skills had 3.37, HD, Rank 7; and Strengthened critical thinking skills had 3.38, HD, Rank 6. Among hard skills, Improved policy analysis and planning skills had 3.40, HD, Rank 5; Strengthened public speaking and communication skills had 3.40, HD, Rank 5; Developed technical skills had 3.35, HD, Rank 8; Enhanced teaching and training skills had 3.35, HD, Rank 8; Gained experience in project management skills had 3.34, HD, Rank 9; Acquired administrative and clerical skills had 3.32, HD, Rank 10; and

Gained experience in research and data analysis had 3.24, D, Rank 11. These results indicate that the program was generally effective in developing essential graduate competencies, particularly in communication, self-management, interpersonal relations, public speaking, policy analysis, and workplace-related functions. The fact that communication skills ranked first with 3.49 suggests strong confidence in graduates' ability to express ideas effectively, while the high ratings for intrapersonal, interpersonal, and human relations skills reflect readiness for collaboration, teamwork, leadership, and professional interaction. The lower rating for research and data analysis, even though still interpreted as D at 3.24, indicates that this is the area most in need of strengthening within the program. This suggests that while the academic experience successfully cultivated broad professional competence, it may have provided comparatively less intensive preparation in research-based and evidence-oriented tasks. The interpretation supports Jackson (2020), who emphasized communication, interpersonal, and critical thinking as central higher education outcomes valued by employers, Succi and Canovi (2020), who found that communication, teamwork, and interpersonal abilities are essential graduate attributes linked to employability, and the World Economic Forum (2023), which highlighted communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving as top workforce competencies.

The qualitative explanatory phase on skills acquired reinforced this point. For Low research skills, the quantitative result was 3.24, and the explanatory themes were lack of mentorship, limited hands-on research experience, more on theoretical, and minimal exposure to research tools, short research courses. Respondents stated, R30: "We have no proper discussions and proper guidance" R31: "My academic training focused more on theory than practical application, which limited my exposure to real research and data analysis. However, I am currently improving these skills through self-learning and experience." R32: "Certain aspects of my academic training limited the development of my research and data analysis skills. while my program in Public Administration provided a strong foundation in governance, policy, and administrative processes, it offered fewer opportunities for hands-on research projects and advanced data analysis exercises." and R33: "Limited hands-on projects, minimal exposure to research tools, short research courses, and lack of mentorship." These narratives clearly explain why research and data analysis received the lowest mean among all skill indicators. The result does not necessarily indicate absence of research learning, but rather insufficient practical exposure, mentorship, and tool-based training relative to other competencies. This means that graduates may be less prepared for research-related tasks and data-driven work than for communication, administrative, or interpersonal responsibilities. The implication is that schools should strengthen research training through more hands-on projects, stronger guidance, deeper exposure to tools, and more sustained practical application. This interpretation aligns with Diaz and Cruz (2020), who argued that research skills improve through proper guidance and exposure, and Morales (2022), who emphasized the importance of hands-on research activities in developing student competencies.

Overall, the Results and Discussion demonstrate that the 142 respondents were largely young, single, and recently graduated individuals whose educational, employment, and professional trajectories were shaped by early-career realities. The findings showed that most had Bachelor's degrees, few had graduate-level specialization, most had not yet passed professional examinations, and a majority were still unemployed or transitioning into work. Administrative and clerical roles emerged as the most common and most preferred employment type, degree-job relevance was generally positive for most respondents, and the majority remained employed within CAR, with only a few working in ASEAN or international locations. Income levels were concentrated in lower salary brackets, first jobs were mostly entry-level, and job tenure was generally short. The qualitative explanatory phase clarified that

these patterns were driven by financial constraints, lack of eligibility, lack of experience, limited job opportunities, career redirection, and degree-job alignment concerns. At the same time, the skill acquisition findings showed that the graduates perceived themselves as highly developed in most soft and hard skills, especially communication, intrapersonal, and interpersonal competencies, while research and data analysis remained the least developed area at 3.24, interpreted as D. Taken together, these findings address the objectives of the study by showing how graduate employability outcomes are shaped by the combined effects of educational preparation, licensure participation, postgraduate decision-making, labor market conditions, and acquired competencies. The study contributes to a clearer understanding of the transition from higher education to work and points to the need for stronger career guidance, more accessible postgraduate support, enhanced research training, practical experience opportunities, and institutional mechanisms that better prepare graduates for licensure, employment entry, salary growth, and long-term career alignment. These integrated findings provide a strong basis for the next section of the manuscript, particularly in formulating conclusions, recommendations, and institutional interventions responsive to the actual conditions faced by graduates.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of the study provide a comprehensive understanding of the employability profile and early career trajectories of graduates of the Bachelor of Science in Public Administration program, revealing patterns that reflect both the strengths of the academic preparation and the realities of the contemporary labor market. The results indicate that the majority of graduates are young adults situated in the early stages of their professional careers, with most being single and female, which suggests a demographic composition typical of newly transitioned graduates entering the workforce. In terms of educational attainment, most graduates possess only a bachelor's degree and have not yet pursued advanced education or obtained professional licensure, indicating that a substantial proportion of them remain in the initial phase of professional development and credential accumulation.

The employment status of the graduates further underscores the transitional nature of this stage, as a considerable number are still seeking employment, while those who have secured jobs are predominantly employed in government offices, administrative roles, and public service-related positions that align with the core competencies of the program. Although many graduates are able to obtain employment within a few months after graduation, the findings also highlight that some experience delays, which may be attributed to job market competition and the limited availability of opportunities in specific sectors. Moreover, the majority of employed graduates begin their careers in entry level positions with relatively low starting salaries, a condition that reflects the standard entry point for recent graduates and reinforces the importance of career progression and continuous professional development over time.

Despite these challenges, the study affirms the effectiveness of the Bachelor of Science in Public Administration program in equipping graduates with essential professional competencies. In particular, the development of communication, interpersonal, and human relations skills emerges as a significant strength, as these competencies are critical for navigating workplace environments and fulfilling the demands of public service roles. This alignment between acquired skills and employment contexts demonstrates the program's relevance and its contribution to preparing graduates for meaningful participation in the workforce.

In light of these findings, it becomes evident that strategic enhancements in both institutional support and graduate initiatives are necessary to further improve employability

outcomes. Strengthening career guidance and job placement services within Kalinga State University can facilitate a smoother transition from education to employment by providing graduates with timely access to job opportunities and career counseling. At the same time, expanding training in research and data analysis through additional coursework, seminars, and practical research engagements can enrich the graduates' skill sets and increase their competitiveness in a data driven professional environment. Encouraging graduates to take professional examinations such as the Civil Service Examination or other relevant licensure tests can further enhance their employability and open pathways to more stable and higher-level positions, particularly within the government sector.

Furthermore, increasing opportunities for internships, industry partnerships, and on-the-job training can provide students with valuable practical experience prior to graduation, thereby improving their readiness for employment and reducing the adjustment period upon entering the workforce. The promotion of postgraduate education is likewise essential, as advanced qualifications can significantly contribute to career advancement and professional growth. In addition, the integration of Civil Service-related subjects within the curriculum should be strengthened to better prepare students for government service and to support their attainment of professional eligibility. Finally, future research is encouraged to extend the scope of inquiry by involving larger samples or by examining graduates from other academic programs, thereby generating broader insights into the employability outcomes of university graduates and informing continuous program development.

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