

**Exploring the graduate school inclination of liberal arts graduates:
Trends and influences**

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the inclination of liberal arts graduates toward pursuing graduate studies, focusing on trends and influencing factors. A descriptive-quantitative research design was employed, utilizing a structured questionnaire administered to 41 liberal arts graduates. The instrument measured respondents' demographic profile, level of graduate school inclination, and factors influencing their decision to pursue further studies. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Chi-square test. Findings revealed that respondents generally exhibited a moderate inclination toward graduate studies, with the strongest agreement on the belief that postgraduate education enhances career opportunities. Personal career goals and the desire for academic growth and specialization emerged as the most influential factors, while financial considerations and undergraduate academic performance were less influential. Inferential analysis showed that there was no significant difference in graduate school inclination across age groups, as indicated by the ANOVA result ($F = 2.14$, $p = 0.115$). Likewise, the Chi-square test revealed no significant relationship between employment status and graduate school inclination ($\chi^2 = 6.27$, $p = 0.182$). These results suggest that inclination toward graduate education is consistent across demographic categories and is more strongly influenced by intrinsic motivations rather than external conditions. The findings support existing literature that highlights career advancement and specialization as primary drivers of postgraduate study (Mullen et al., 2003; Perna, 2004), while also emphasizing the role of personal aspirations in the Philippine context (Villanueva & Garcia, 2019). Overall, the study concludes that liberal arts graduates are motivated to pursue graduate education, but their decisions are shaped by practical considerations that require institutional support and accessible learning opportunities.

Keywords: Graduate School Inclination, Liberal Arts Graduates, career motivation, influencing factors, postgraduate education.

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INTRODUCTION

It is well-known that professional development is a central element in creating effective educators and, thus, student achievement. Later on the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2019) it was stated that “professional development supports teachers to keep their knowledge up to date, improve their pedagogical competencies, and adjust to new educational demands.” The focus on continuous learning is especially significant for educators, whose curriculum and modes of teaching often shift as the years go by.

In much the same way, it was (UNESCO, 2020) argued that “effective teachers are those who undertake continual professional learning and reflective practice.” This emphasizes that what constitutes effective teaching is not a static concept but one which develops through ongoing participation in training, collective sharing of good practice and engagement with reflective practices. For LSB instructors, availability of this opportunity is crucial for them to be competent and performing their functions effectively.

A separate study has shown that according to Linda Darling-Hammond (2017) “high-quality professional development is sustained, collaborative and directly related to practice in the classroom.” This means effectively finding ways to put professional development in context and enable teachers to use what they learn as soon as possible. In the absence of this alignment, though, professional development may fail to result in enhanced pedagogies.

Furthermore, John Hattie (2009) reiterated that “teacher effectiveness is one of the largest influences on student achievement.” This finding underscores the need to support teachers through professional development, as learners’ academic outcomes are inherently linked to teacher performance. Training LSB teachers in specific competencies will provide them the proficiency necessary for impact.

Classroom management is also a key element of teaching effectiveness. As Harry Wong and Rosemary Wong (2018) put it, “Effective classroom management will ensure that there is an environment for learning to take place efficiently and without unnecessary disruptions.” It is especially relevant in public elementary schools that training in classroom management gives teachers effective strategies for addressing and controlling the diverse learners that they receive as well as maintaining a healthy/proper learning culture.

In the domain of assessment, Dylan Wiliam wrote (2011) “When implemented effectively, formative assessment greatly maximizes student learning.” Hence, it is all the more important to train teachers on assessment and evaluation skills so that they can assess learner progress and offer constructive feedback.

During the pandemic, technology integration became an essential part of teaching. According to International Society for Technology in Education (2016), “These teachers need to be well prepared to use technology effectively through meaningful and purposeful ways in order to maximize teaching and learning” In this regard is much left for ICT integration and thus LSB teachers need to be trained in the same so that they can adapt to the challenging environment of digital learning.

DepEd (2020) reminds us, for example, that “professional development programs are necessary to improve teacher quality and learner outcomes” locally. The agency is still at the forefront of providing different avenues for the professional growth of teachers like in-service training and Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions.

Moreover, DepEd (2017) emphasized “It is expected from teachers to continually improve their practice through professional development” under the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). Additionally, this standard applies to all teachers (LSB teachers as well), and emphasizes the need for continuous training and support.

In the Philippine context, graduate education is often associated with improved job prospects, career mobility, and social prestige. However, barriers such as “financial limitations, work commitments, and limited access to graduate programs” may hinder graduates from pursuing further studies (Villanueva & Garcia, 2019; Reyes, 2018). Understanding these factors is essential in designing interventions that encourage and support postgraduate education.

This study aims to explore the inclination of liberal arts graduates toward graduate studies and identify the factors that influence their decision-making. By examining both descriptive and inferential data, the study contributes to the understanding of postgraduate aspirations in the Philippine educational setting.

Statement of the problem

This study aimed to examine the inclination of liberal arts graduates toward pursuing graduate education by analyzing both their demographic characteristics and the factors influencing their decisions. Specifically, it sought to describe the respondents in terms of age, sex, civil status, year graduated, employment status, and monthly income. It also aimed to determine the level of graduate school inclination among the respondents and identify the key factors that influence their decision to pursue further studies. In addition, the study intended to assess whether there is a significant difference in graduate school inclination when respondents are grouped according to age, and to examine whether a significant relationship exists between employment status and graduate school inclination.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-quantitative research design to examine the inclination of liberal arts graduates toward graduate studies. A structured questionnaire was used as the primary data collection tool, consisting of three parts: demographic profile, graduate school inclination, and influencing factors.

A total of 41 respondents participated in the study. These were liberal arts graduates selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through both face-to-face and online survey distribution.

Statistical tools used included frequency and percentage to describe respondent profiles, weighted mean to assess inclination and influencing factors, analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test differences in inclination across age groups, and Chi-square test to examine the relationship between employment status and inclination. All inferential tests were conducted at a 0.05 level of significance.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed of the purpose of the research prior to answering the questionnaire. Informed consent was obtained, ensuring that participants had the freedom to decline or withdraw at any point without any consequences. The anonymity and confidentiality of respondents were maintained by not requiring personal identifiers, and all collected data were used solely for academic purposes. Additionally, the researcher ensured that the study adhered to ethical standards in data handling, reporting, and interpretation, avoiding any form of bias or misrepresentation of results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that the majority of respondents were young, female, and single, indicating that most participants were in the early stages of their careers. A large proportion were either employed full-time or pursuing further studies, although a notable number remained unemployed. Most respondents reported low-income levels, suggesting financial limitations among liberal arts graduates.

In terms of graduate school inclination, respondents generally expressed a moderate level of agreement, indicating interest in pursuing postgraduate education. The highest-rated item was the belief that “graduate school enhances career opportunities”, supporting previous findings that career advancement is a primary motivation (Mullen et al., 2003). Female respondents demonstrated slightly higher inclination compared to males, although both groups shared similar perspectives.

Regarding influencing factors, personal career goals and desire for academic growth and specialization were identified as the most influential. This supports the idea that intrinsic motivations are stronger determinants of postgraduate decisions than external factors such as financial aid. Work and family responsibilities were also significant, reflecting practical constraints faced by graduates.

Inferential analysis showed that age does not significantly affect graduate school inclination ($F = 2.14$, $p = 0.115$). Similarly, employment status was not significantly related to inclination ($\chi^2 = 6.27$, $p = 0.182$). These findings suggest that inclination toward graduate studies is consistent across demographic groups and is not determined by age or employment conditions.

These results align with existing literature emphasizing the role of personal aspirations and career motivations in graduate school decisions (Perna, 2004). However, they also highlight the Philippine context, where “financial limitations and accessibility issues remain challenges” (Reyes, 2018; Villanueva & Garcia, 2019).

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that liberal arts graduates are generally inclined to pursue graduate education, primarily driven by career advancement and the desire for specialization. Intrinsic motivations, such as personal goals and academic growth, play a more significant role than external factors. Although financial constraints and responsibilities are present, they do not entirely deter graduates from considering postgraduate studies.

Also, degree of thought put towards addressing graduate school does not differ significantly by age group nor is there an impact to be found in employment status, suggesting postgraduate ambitions are democratic amongst demographic categories. This highlights the critical need for accessible, flexible graduate programming options to better meet diverse needs.

In general terms, the study emphasizes the relevance of institutional support mechanisms, provision of financial aid and flexible learning pathways to help graduates convert their dreams into real paths towards enrollment.

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