

Employability tracer study of Bachelor of Science in nursing graduates from a catholic university in the Philippines



Original article

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Abstract: Objective: To assess the employability of Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) graduates from a Catholic university in the Philippines, focusing on identifying program strengths, weaknesses, and relevance in preparing graduates for the nursing profession. Nursing education plays a crucial role in shaping the employability and competence of graduates, particularly in the dynamic healthcare landscape of the Philippines. Evaluating the employability of BSN graduates provides essential insights into program effectiveness and relevance, contributing to ongoing discussions in nursing education and practice.

Methods: Employing a mixed-methods approach, this study involved surveying recent BSN graduates to profile their employment status, employer types, positions held, workplace characteristics, job search experiences, income levels, and alignment of current jobs with the BSN program. Additionally, the study evaluated the relevance of BSN competencies and gathered feedback from graduates to identify program strengths and weaknesses. The study utilized a survey instrument and qualitative analysis techniques to analyze the data.

Results: The findings indicate that a majority of BSN graduates secured regular employment, predominantly in private institutions as staff nurses, both nationally and internationally. Most graduates attained employment within 6 months of graduation, with favorable income levels and job roles aligning with the BSN program's objectives. The competencies acquired during the BSN program were found to align with contemporary nursing demands, highlighting the program's effectiveness. Notable strengths included patient-centered care and critical thinking skills, while weaknesses encompassed limited clinical exposure and faculty support.

Conclusions: The study highlights the importance of nursing education in facilitating the employability of graduates and meeting the evolving demands of the healthcare sector. It affirms the relevance and effectiveness of the BSN program at the Catholic university studied. Recommendations include allocating resources to address identified weaknesses and further strengthen program strengths, ultimately enhancing nursing education and practice.

Keywords: Bachelor of Science in Nursing • employability • nursing education • Philippines • program evaluation

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1. Introduction

The success of higher educational institutions (HEIs) is often measured by the employability of their graduates, which serves as a critical indicator of both individual and institutional effectiveness. Employability reflects the

quality of education provided and the preparedness of graduates to excel in their professional fields.¹

Despite the importance of employability, the transition from education to employment is complex and

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influenced by various factors.² The landscape for nursing graduates, in particular, has shifted from a surplus of graduates to a high demand for healthcare professionals due to a shrinking workforce.³

Globally, the nursing profession has expanded significantly. For example, the number of registered nurses in the United States exceeded 3.1 million in 2018.⁴ This growth contrasts with earlier trends where many nurses sought opportunities abroad due to limited local prospects.⁵ The early 2000s saw a significant number of nurses pursuing international placements, leading to imbalances in nurse-patient ratios.⁵

The concept of employability has evolved to influence curriculum development, recruitment strategies, and retention policies within academic institutions.⁶ Modern education aims to produce graduates who not only possess knowledge and skills but also exhibit employability attributes necessary for success in a dynamic job market.

In the Philippines, the employment landscape has undergone significant changes. The unemployment rate dropped to 5.50% in the second quarter of 2018 and further to 5.2% in January 2019, highlighting the need for education to prepare graduates for a competitive job market.^{7,8} In 2022, the unemployment rate was 5.4%, with 2.67 million people unemployed.⁹ These shifts underscore the critical role of education in equipping graduates to succeed in the job market.¹⁰

The increasing competition in both domestic and international labor markets has made employability a key consideration for students and parents when choosing educational paths.⁸ Educational institutions must align their offerings with the demands of employability to prepare graduates for successful careers.

Employability extends beyond technical knowledge and skills to include employability skills, which are essential for workforce integration.^{11,12} Collaboration with employers to identify these skills and tailor curricula accordingly is crucial.¹³

Graduate tracer studies (GTS) have become essential tools for assessing employability. These studies evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of educational programs and ensure alignment with societal and employer needs.¹⁴ European universities use tracer studies to accredit programs, link education with job markets, and inform higher education management decisions.¹⁵

Previous studies have highlighted the relevance of various programs to employability. For instance, Plaza et al.¹⁶ found that Information Technology (IT) programs were highly relevant to employability in terms of competencies, curricular structure, and skills. Similarly, Albina and Sumagaysay¹⁷ and Celis et al.¹⁸ examined the employability of graduates from IT and Hotel and

Restaurant Management (HRM) programs, respectively, highlighting factors such as job alignment and skills relevance.

These studies have informed recommendations to improve the employability of graduates and enhance curriculum relevance. The present study aims to assess the employability of Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) graduates from a Catholic university in the Philippines, focusing on program strengths, weaknesses, and relevance.

The study investigates the employment profile of BSN graduates, the relevance of learned competencies, and the program's alignment with industry expectations. The findings will serve as a foundation for advancing the nursing program and preparing globally competitive Filipino professionals.

2. Methods

2.1. Research design

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to gain comprehensive insights into the employability of BSN graduates from a Catholic university in the Philippines. The study utilized a descriptive research design to determine the employment profile of BSN graduates and to evaluate the relevance of competencies learned in the BSN program. Additionally, a descriptive evaluative research design was employed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the BSN program based on feedback from graduates.

2.2. Setting and samples

The study was conducted at a Catholic university in Northern Philippines, which has grown to be a significant institution in the country's educational landscape. The university offers various undergraduate and graduate programs, including the BSN.

The target population for this study included all BSN graduates from the selected Catholic university who completed their studies from Academic Year 2017 to 2022. A total of 235 graduates were included in the study, providing a diverse range of experiences and insights into employability and gained competencies. Data collection was carried out from 27 September 2023, to 27 January 2024, achieving a response rate of 28.94%.

Most respondents (85%) were aged between 23 years to 26 years, reflecting the typical early career stage in nursing. The majority of respondents were female (85%), consistent with the gender distribution in the nursing profession. Over 90% of respondents were

single, indicating a focus on career and professional growth without family responsibilities. The distribution of graduates across academic years was balanced, with a slight majority graduating between 2017 and 2019, suggesting a consistent influx of graduates into the job market in recent years.

2.3. Measurement and data collection

This study utilized a researcher-made online survey questionnaire to collect data. The development of this questionnaire followed a rigorous process to ensure its reliability and validity. Below is a detailed explanation of the research tools and the steps taken to supplement their reliability and validity.

2.3.1. Research tools

The primary tool for data collection was an online survey questionnaire, structured into 3 main sections. The first section, Personal and Employment Profiles, gathered demographic and employment-related information such as age, sex, civil status, year of graduation, employment status, reasons for unemployment, type of employer, current position, place of work, duration of job search, gross monthly income, and the relationship of the current job to the BSN program. The second section, Relevance of Competencies, assessed the relevance of the competencies acquired in the BSN program. These competencies were derived from a systematic review by Nehrir et al.¹⁹ and respondents rated their relevance on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not relevant) to 5 (very much relevant). The final section, Strengths and Weaknesses of the BSN Program, included open-ended questions aimed at collecting qualitative feedback on the program's strengths and weaknesses.

2.3.2. Reliability and validity

To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, several measures were implemented. First, content validity was addressed by developing the questionnaire items through an extensive literature review and consultations with experts in nursing education and instrument development. The competencies section was specifically based on the systematic review by Nehrir et al.¹⁹ guaranteeing that the items were relevant and comprehensive. Additionally, an expert review was conducted by a panel of experts, including experienced nursing education faculty members and researchers with survey design expertise. They assessed the content for relevance, clarity, and comprehensiveness,

and their feedback was used to refine the questionnaire items.

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, several steps were taken. First, pilot testing was conducted with a small group of BSN graduates who were not part of the main study sample. The pilot test aimed to identify any issues with the questionnaire's clarity, format, and overall design. Based on feedback from this test, necessary adjustments were made to improve the questionnaire. Additionally, the internal consistency of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha for the competency-related items. This statistical measure evaluates the internal consistency of the questionnaire, ensuring that the items within each section consistently measure the same construct. For this study, the Cronbach's alpha value was 0.89, indicating high reliability.

2.4. Data collection procedures

The research team collaborated with the Alumni Affairs Office of the university to disseminate the questionnaire, following specific procedures for data collection. Firstly, participant recruitment involved the Alumni Affairs Office sending official communications, including study details and an invitation to participate, to BSN graduates through their usual communication channels. Graduates who agreed to participate were given instructions to access the online survey questionnaire. Secondly, an informed consent process was conducted online using a Google Form, where participants reviewed the study details, had the opportunity to ask questions, and provided electronic consent before proceeding to the questionnaire. Lastly, confidentiality and anonymization were ensured. Participation was voluntary, and collected data underwent anonymization, with identifying information replaced by unique codes or pseudonyms to protect participants' privacy. Data was securely stored using encryption and access controls, accessible only to authorized team members.

2.5. Data analysis

The quantitative data analysis was conducted to address the study's objectives. For the first objective, the employment profile of BSN graduates was analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, measures of central tendency, and measures of variation. To address the second objective, the relevance of competencies learned in the BSN program was evaluated using mean scores, standard deviations, and adjectival ratings. The level of relevance was presented according to a pre-defined scale.

The qualitative data analysis aimed to address the third objective by examining responses to open-ended questions using thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke.²⁰ This involved several steps:

- (1) Familiarization with the data: Reading and re-reading the responses to gain a thorough understanding of the content.
- (2) Generating initial codes: Identifying patterns or themes within the data and noting them.
- (3) Searching for themes: Organizing the initial codes into potential themes and collating the relevant data for each theme.
- (4) Reviewing themes: Refining the themes by cross-checking them against the entire dataset.
- (5) Defining and naming themes: Clearly defining each theme and assigning appropriate names.
- (6) Producing the report: Compiling the findings into a coherent narrative that addresses the research objectives.

2.6. Ethical considerations

This study adheres to ethical principles to safeguard the rights and well-being of participants and ensure the integrity of the research process.

2.6.1. Informed consent

Participants were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits before their participation. They were assured of their voluntary participation and the confidentiality of their responses. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study.

2.6.2. Protection of privacy and confidentiality

The confidentiality of participants' information was strictly maintained throughout the study. All data collected were anonymized, and participants were assured that their responses would be used solely for research purposes. Data storage and handling adhered to stringent security measures to prevent unauthorized access.

2.6.3. Management of vulnerability

Acknowledging the potential vulnerability of research participants, particularly in discussing past employment experiences, the research team ensured that participants were treated with respect and provided with appropriate support. Participants were encouraged to withdraw from the study at any point without consequences.

2.6.4. Ethics clearance

This study received approval from the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board (SMUREB) to ensure compliance with ethical guidelines. The ethics clearance reference number for this study is SMUREB Code: 2023 0424.

3. Results

3.1. Section 1: Employment profile

Approximately 56% of respondents are in regular employment, indicating stable positions within their respective workplaces. This is a positive sign of the employability of nursing graduates. The reasons for unemployment among respondents vary. Some are engaged in further studies to enhance their qualifications or explore new career paths. Others cite family concerns, prioritizing responsibilities such as caregiving. Health-related issues are also a factor, affecting the ability to work temporarily or permanently. Some respondents face challenges in finding job opportunities due to economic conditions. Additionally, a portion of respondents have chosen to defer job searching for personal reasons or are preparing for professional licensing exams like the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX RN) or contemplating immigration to other countries.

The majority of graduates are employed in private institutions, consistent with the distribution of healthcare facilities in the Philippines, where private hospitals often outnumber public ones.

The most common position among respondents is "Staff Nurse," which is expected, given the nursing background of the graduates. Other positions, such as Clinical Instructor/Faculty and Occupational Health Nurse, also reflect the diverse career paths available to nursing professionals.

Most graduates find employment within the Philippines, reflecting the significant demand for nursing professionals within the local healthcare industry. The diverse range of healthcare institutions, including hospitals, medical centers, and specialist facilities, highlights the varied career paths available to nursing graduates within the country. It also highlights the role of nursing professionals in providing essential healthcare services to the Filipino population.

A notable proportion of graduates pursue career opportunities internationally, indicating the global recognition and demand for Filipino nursing talent. International placements offer graduates the opportunity to gain diverse experiences, exposure to different healthcare

systems, and potentially higher remuneration. The presence of graduates in countries such as Canada, the USA, and the United Kingdom emphasizes the global relevance and competitiveness of nursing education from the Catholic University in the Philippines.

A significant portion of graduates found employment relatively quickly, with over 60% securing jobs in less than 6 months. However, about 29% of respondents took more than 6 months to find employment, highlighting the challenges some graduates face in entering the workforce.

The majority of respondents earn more than Php 25,000.00 per month, which is a relatively decent income considering the average salary levels in the Philippines. This suggests that nursing remains a lucrative profession in the country.

All respondents indicated that their current job is related to the BSN program, highlighting the alignment between their education and professional practice.

3.2. Section 2: Relevance of competencies learned in the BSN program

In this study, the perceived relevance of various competencies among BSN program graduates was examined. Findings depicted in Table 1 reveal that critical thinking and problem-solving skills garnered the highest mean score of 4.82. This indicates the graduates' acknowledgment of the paramount importance of these competencies in navigating the complex healthcare landscape, where swift and effective decision-making is imperative.

Similarly, reflective practice and effective communication and collaboration obtained high mean scores of 4.66 and 4.79, respectively, underscoring their significant relevance. Reflective practice emphasizes the importance of self-awareness and continuous improvement, essential for delivering high-quality patient care.

Indicators	Mean	Stdev.	Qualitative description
Critical thinking and problem solving	4.82	0.42	Very much relevant
Reflective practice	4.66	0.56	Very much relevant
Effective communication and collaboration	4.79	0.51	Very much relevant
Strategic planning and innovation	4.66	0.64	Very much relevant
Average for educational-based competency	4.84	0.37	Very much relevant

Note: BSN, Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

Table 1. Relevance of educational-based competency learned in the BSN program

Effective communication and collaboration play crucial roles in interdisciplinary teamwork, ensuring efficient coordination and optimal patient outcomes.

Although slightly lower, strategic planning and innovation still received a mean score of 4.66, signaling their perceived relevance. These competencies highlight forward thinking and adaptability in addressing evolving healthcare needs and challenges.

The overall average score for educational-based competencies was 4.84, reinforcing graduates' belief in the relevance of skills acquired during their BSN program. This suggests the program's efficacy in equipping students with competencies essential for their roles as competent and adaptable healthcare professionals.

In Table 2, mean scores and standard deviations for indicators of cultural-based competencies from a BSN program are presented alongside qualitative descriptions. Notably, all indicators received consistently high mean scores, ranging from 4.54 to 4.72, indicating strong perceived relevance among respondents.

Culturally competent care delivery received a mean score of 4.68, highlighting graduates' recognition of its importance. This competency stresses understanding and respecting diverse cultural beliefs in healthcare, enhancing patient satisfaction and outcomes.

Effective cross-cultural communication, with a mean score of 4.59, is also deemed highly relevant. It ensures accurate information exchange between nurses and patients from various backgrounds, fostering trust and rapport.

Cultural leadership and workforce development, slightly lower at 4.54, still signify significant relevance. This competency promotes diversity and inclusion in healthcare, which is vital for meeting the diverse needs of patients.

Cultural awareness and health equity advocacy garnered the highest mean score of 4.72, underscoring its

Indicators	Mean	Stdev.	Qualitative description
Culturally competent care delivery	4.68	0.58	Very much relevant
Effective cross-cultural communication	4.59	0.65	Very much relevant
Cultural leadership and workforce development	4.54	0.70	Very much relevant
Cultural awareness and health equity advocacy	4.72	0.54	Very much relevant
Average cultural-based competency	4.71	0.55	Very much relevant

Note: BSN, Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

Table 2. Relevance of cultural-based competency learned in the BSN program.

importance. Nurses advocate for health equity, addressing disparities based on cultural and socioeconomic factors.

The average score for culture-based competencies is 4.71, indicating high perceived relevance. Graduates emphasize the importance of cultural competence in nursing practice and advocate for ongoing professional development.

Table 3 illustrates the mean scores for self-directed learning and growth, clinical judgment and decision-making, ethical and professional integrity, and collaborative and reflective practice. These competencies received mean scores ranging from 4.68 to 4.84, indicating their significant relevance.

Self-directed learning and growth, with a mean score of 4.68, emphasize nurses' initiative in professional development, seeking opportunities autonomously.

Clinical judgment and decision-making, scoring 4.76, underscore nurses' ability to critically analyze situations, assess patient needs, and make evidence-based decisions for effective and safe care.

Ethical and professional integrity, earning a mean score of 4.84, highlight the importance of upholding ethical principles and professional standards in nursing practice.

Collaborative and reflective practice, with a mean score of 4.81, emphasizes teamwork and self-reflection for continuous improvement.

The average score for individualized-based competencies is 4.82, reaffirming their high relevance. BSN graduates recognize these competencies for quality patient care, emphasizing the need for lifelong learning and professional development.

In Table 4, the indicator of investigatory and analytic thinking garnered a mean score of 4.51, highlighting its significant relevance. Respondents view this competency as crucial, emphasizing nurses' ability to critically analyze research findings and apply evidence-based practices for improved patient care and outcomes.

Additionally, the nursing process received a mean score of 4.72, further underscoring its perceived relevance. This competency emphasizes the systematic approach to nursing care, enabling nurses to deliver comprehensive and individualized care across health-care settings.

The average score for research-based competencies is 4.74, reinforcing their importance in professional practice. BSN graduates recognize the significance of research competencies for delivering evidence-based care.

Table 5 illustrates that the indicator interprofessional collaboration and communication received a mean score of 4.75, indicating high relevance. Graduates recognize the importance of effective teamwork with

other healthcare professionals for optimal patient care outcomes.

Similarly, professional development and lifelong learning, ethical decision-making, and quality improvement all scored mean scores of 4.78 or 4.79, demonstrating significant perceived relevance. Graduates

Indicators	Mean	Stdev.	Qualitative description
Self-directed learning and growth	4.68	0.61	Very much relevant
Clinical judgment and decision-making	4.76	0.49	Very much relevant
Ethical and professional integrity	4.84	0.41	Very much relevant
Collaborative and reflective practice	4.81	0.43	Very much relevant
Average of individualized-based competency	4.82	0.38	Very much relevant

Note: BSN, Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

Table 3. Relevance of individualized-based competency learned in the BSN program.

Indicators	Mean	Stdev.	Qualitative description
Investigatory and analytic thinking	4.51	0.70	Very much relevant
Nursing process	4.72	0.51	Very much relevant
Average for research-based competency	4.74	0.48	Very much relevant

Note: BSN, Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

Table 4. Relevance of research-based competency learned in the BSN program.

Indicators	Mean	Stdev.	Qualitative description
Interprofessional and collaboration and communication	4.75	0.53	Very much relevant
Professional development and lifelong learning	4.78	0.48	Very much relevant
Ethical decision-making	4.79	0.44	Very much relevant
Quality improvement	4.79	0.48	Very much relevant
Role clarity and professional autonomy	4.75	0.56	Very much relevant
Mentoring and reciprocal supervision	4.60	0.74	Very much relevant
Average of professional and interprofessional-based competency	4.79	0.48	Very much relevant

Note: BSN, Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

Table 5. Relevance of professional and interprofessional-based competency learned in the BSN program.

value ongoing growth, ethical practice, and quality enhancement in their nursing roles.

Furthermore, role clarity and professional autonomy, with a mean score of 4.75, also indicate strong relevance. Graduates appreciate understanding their professional responsibilities and having autonomy within their practice scope.

Lastly, mentoring and reciprocal supervision, with a mean score of 4.60, still demonstrate high perceived relevance. Graduates recognize the importance of mentorship and supervision for professional growth and development.

The average score for professional and interprofessional-based competencies is 4.79, highlighting their essentiality in successful nursing practice and interprofessional collaboration. This stresses the importance of fostering a collaborative culture among healthcare professionals to enhance patient care outcomes.

Table 6 reveals that the indicator patient-centered care and communication received a mean score of 4.72, indicating high relevance. Graduates recognize effective communication and personalized care's importance in fostering positive patient outcomes and experiences.

Similarly, safety and quality improvement scored a mean of 4.84, underlining their significant perceived relevance. Prioritizing patient safety and continuous quality improvement ensures excellence in care delivery.

Additionally, clinical leadership and management, clinical judgment and critical thinking, holistic patient care and therapeutics, and educational and informative practices all received mean scores above 4.65, further highlighting their perceived relevance. Graduates understand these competencies' importance in providing comprehensive and effective patient care.

Indicators	Mean	Stdev.	Qualitative description
Patient-centered care and communication	4.72	0.64	Very much relevant
Safety and quality improvement	4.84	0.44	Very much relevant
Clinical leadership and management	4.65	0.62	Very much relevant
Clinical judgment and critical thinking	4.75	0.53	Very much relevant
Holistic patient care and therapeutics	4.66	0.68	Very much relevant
Educational and informative practices	4.76	0.58	Very much relevant
Average of clinical and practical-based competency	4.79	0.48	Very much relevant

Note: BSN, Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

Table 6. Relevance of clinical and practical-based competency learned in the BSN program.

The average score for clinical and practical-based competencies is 4.79, reinforcing their importance in successful nursing practice and high-quality care delivery.

These findings emphasize the need to integrate clinical and practical-based competencies into nursing curricula, ensuring graduates are well prepared for clinical practice. Patient-centered care, safety, and quality improvement are crucial for positive patient outcomes. Critical thinking, holistic care approaches, and educational practices enhance nursing practice and promote excellence in patient care.

3.3. Section 3: Strengths and weaknesses of BSN program

3.3.1. Strengths of the BSN program

The strengths of the BSN program can be elaborated upon to enhance its effectiveness in preparing students for their roles as competent and compassionate nurses. The emphasis of the program on patient-centered care is evident through its cultivation of independent learning among students, as revealed by the respondents. This is in line with the high computed mean for the competencies such as culturally competent care, effective communication, and collaborative practice, as delineated in Table 1.

Moreover, teachers are known for their strict yet beneficial approach to lectures, encouraging students to strive for excellence rather than settling for mediocrity. This commitment to academic rigor ensures that students are well equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary for decision-making in clinical practice.

Moreover, they identified that the program provides detailed and time-bound resources, facilitating effective learning and skill development. Through technological integration, students enhance their communication skills, deliver care with compassion, and improve critical thinking and competencies, essential qualities for nursing professionals.

Clinical experiences are vital in the program, as highlighted by the respondents. Exposure to various scenarios and test questions refines critical thinking and clinical judgment skills under experienced instructors' guidance. This hands-on approach extends to community and hospital setups, where students gain proficiency in nursing theories and leadership skills. The dedication to patient-centered care is emphasized through case studies and simulations, fostering confidence in critical thinking and clinical judgment.

Moreover, the program cultivates resilience and independence in learning, preparing students for continuous improvement in nursing practice. The focus on practical skills, compassionate care, and professional

development shapes competent and holistic nurses capable of meeting diverse patient and community needs.

3.3.2. Weaknesses of the BSN program

Weaknesses within the BSN program encompass various educational and systemic challenges. One significant issue is the limited clinical exposure and experience, with students voicing concerns about restricted opportunities in diverse hospital settings and procedures. Additionally, a lack of hands-on experience with medical equipment and procedures may hinder readiness for nursing practice. Outdated equipment and a theory-focused curriculum are noted, potentially leaving students ill prepared for practical demands. Moreover, gaps in teaching essential skills and concepts persist, exacerbated by pandemic-related challenges.

Faculty shortages impact instruction quality, with some instructors reportedly inadequately preparing students for clinical settings or exhibiting biases. Students express a need for more guidance and debriefing before clinical placements to address feelings of unpreparedness or scrutiny from clinical instructors.

Emotional and mental health support emerges as a pressing concern. Students feel ill equipped to handle the emotional aspects of the nursing profession, such as burnout and compassion fatigue, emphasizing the need for proactive support systems within the program. Suggestions for initiatives like support clubs or platforms for emotional expression and advice are proposed to address these challenges.

Financial considerations also weigh heavily on students, with the high cost of the program causing financial strain for some. The absence of financial literacy education within the curriculum compounds these concerns. Administrative and organizational issues, such as overlapping schedules and challenges with time management, further contribute to the strain experienced by students.

4. Discussions

The employment profile of BSN program graduates from the catholic university in the Philippines reflects positive indicators of employability and career prospects. The majority of graduates secure stable employment in both private and public healthcare institutions, with positions ranging from staff nurses to clinical instructors. The distribution of graduates across different age groups, genders, and academic years emphasizes the diverse nature of the nursing profession and the accessibility of career opportunities for individuals from various backgrounds.

The relatively quick job search duration for a significant portion of graduates suggests a favorable employment landscape for nursing professionals in the Philippines. However, the presence of some graduates who took more than 6 months to find employment highlights the importance of continuous career support and guidance from academic institutions and professional networks.

The distribution of income levels among employed graduates reflects the financial stability and rewards associated with a career in nursing. While the majority of graduates earn decent salaries, there is room for improvement in ensuring equitable compensation and benefits for all nursing professionals, especially considering the demanding nature of their work.

The high relevance of current jobs to the BSN program accentuates the effectiveness of the university's curriculum and training in preparing graduates for the demands of the healthcare industry. This alignment between education and professional practice is essential for producing competent and skilled nursing professionals who can contribute effectively to patient care and healthcare delivery.

The employment profile of BSN program graduates from the catholic university in the Philippines demonstrates positive outcomes in terms of employability, career advancement, and program relevance. However, continuous efforts are needed to address challenges such as job search duration and income disparities, ensuring the sustained success and competitiveness of nursing graduates in the ever-evolving healthcare landscape.

The perceived significance of competencies such as critical thinking, problem-solving, reflective practice, effective communication, collaboration, strategic planning, and innovation among BSN graduates resonates with established literature in nursing education and practice. Shin et al.²¹ underscore the essential role of critical thinking in nursing, linking it to enhanced clinical judgment and patient outcomes. Similarly, Jiménez-Gomez et al.²² highlight reflective practice as a catalyst for nurses' self-awareness and professional development, ultimately enhancing patient care quality.

The notable performance of BSN graduates in education-based competencies reinforces the efficacy of the program in furnishing graduates with the requisite skills and knowledge for their professional endeavors. This observation aligns with scholarly discourse emphasizing the critical role of nursing education in preparing graduates for the intricacies of modern healthcare practice.²³

This study's findings dovetail with existing literature accentuating the importance of cultural competence in nursing practice. Alu²⁴ stresses the impact of

culturally sensitive care delivery on patient outcomes and satisfaction.

The perceived relevance of culture-based competencies among BSN graduates accentuates the imperative for nursing education programs to integrate cultural competence training into their curricula. By equipping graduates with the skills and knowledge to address diverse patient needs and preferences, nursing programs can bolster the delivery of patient-centered care and mitigate healthcare disparities.

The study's outcomes corroborate prior research on individualized-based competencies in nursing practice. Self-directed learning and growth constitute cornerstone elements of lifelong learning in nursing.²⁵ Nurses must adeptly identify learning needs, avail themselves of resources, and engage in continuous professional development to navigate the evolving healthcare landscape effectively.

Critical judgment and decision-making emerge as fundamental competencies in nursing practice.²⁶ Nurses must adeptly amalgamate critical thinking, evidence-based practice, and clinical acumen to navigate complex decision-making scenarios, thereby fostering patient safety and favorable outcomes.

Ethical and professional integrity represent foundational tenets in nursing ethics.²⁷ Upholding ethical standards and professional integrity is paramount for bolstering trust and confidence in the nursing profession, thereby safeguarding patient welfare.

The discoveries concerning research-based competencies resonate with the dynamic framework of evidence-based practice in nursing. Analytical thinking and investigatory skills are indispensable for nurses to meticulously evaluate research findings and integrate evidence into clinical decision-making processes.²⁸ It is imperative for nurses to possess the capacity to scrutinize the validity and relevance of research findings, thereby informing their practice and enhancing patient outcomes.

The nursing process serves as a fundamental blueprint for nursing practice, steering nurses through systematic and holistic patient care delivery.²⁹ By adhering to the sequential steps of assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation, and evaluation, nurses can ensure the provision of comprehensive and personalized care tailored to address the distinct needs of each patient.

The noteworthy performance in research-based competencies accentuates the critical need to integrate research and evidence-based practice into nursing education curricula.³⁰ Nurses are increasingly charged with embracing evidence-based practice to ameliorate patient outcomes, enhance healthcare quality, and propel professional advancement.

The revelations regarding professional and interprofessional-based competencies align with the evolving landscape of healthcare delivery, accentuating the imperative of interprofessional collaboration and lifelong learning in nursing practice.³¹ Interprofessional collaboration and effective communication are vital for fostering patient-centered care and enhancing healthcare outcomes.

Professional development and lifelong learning constitute indispensable elements for nurses to remain abreast of healthcare advancements and uphold competency in their practice.³² Ethical decision-making and quality improvement represent integral facets of nursing practice, ensuring adherence to ethical norms and the delivery of top-tier care.³³

These findings underscore the significance of professional and interprofessional-based competencies in nursing practice, emphasizing the necessity for nursing education programs to prioritize the cultivation of these competencies to equip graduates for the complexities inherent in contemporary healthcare settings.

BSN program graduates regard clinical and practical-based competencies as indispensable for efficacious nursing practice and the provision of high-quality care.

These findings carry multifaceted implications for nursing education and practice, emphasizing the imperative of integrating clinical and practical-based competencies into nursing curricula to furnish graduates with the requisite preparedness to navigate clinical settings adeptly. Moreover, they underscore the paramount importance of patient-centered care, safety, and quality improvement in achieving favorable patient outcomes. Furthermore, they accentuate the central roles of critical thinking, holistic care approaches, and educational strategies in augmenting nursing practice and fostering excellence in patient care.

The revelations concerning clinical and practical-based competencies align harmoniously with the core tenets of nursing practice and the evolving contours of healthcare delivery. Patient-centered care and effective communication represent cornerstone elements of nursing practice, underscoring the significance of empathy, active listening, and collaboration in fostering favorable patient outcomes.³⁴

Safety and quality improvement stand as cornerstone principles in nursing practice, embodying the commitment to delivering care that is safe, effective, and patient-centered.³⁵ Clinical leadership and management are indispensable for nurses, enabling them to adeptly coordinate care, delegate responsibilities, and champion patient advocacy within interdisciplinary teams.³⁶

The BSN program equips graduates with a robust array of competencies vital for success in contemporary

healthcare landscapes. BSN graduates perceive these competencies as highly pertinent across various domains. Educational-based competencies such as critical thinking, reflective practice, effective communication, and strategic planning are deemed essential for navigating the intricacies of patient care. Similarly, cultural-based competencies underscore the importance of comprehending and honoring diverse cultural backgrounds to deliver culturally sensitive care. Individualized-based competencies underscore the significance of self-directed learning, clinical judgment, and ethical integrity in fostering professional growth and ensuring high-quality care. Research-based competencies highlight the importance of evidence-based practice and the ability to critically evaluate research findings. Furthermore, professional and interprofessional-based competencies stress collaboration, lifelong learning, ethical decision-making, and leadership skills necessary for effective teamwork and patient advocacy. Finally, clinical and practical-based competencies prioritize patient-centered care, safety, quality improvement, clinical leadership, and holistic patient management. Collectively, these competencies mirror the holistic preparation furnished by BSN programs, guaranteeing that graduates are well prepared to confront the dynamic challenges of nursing practice and deliver exceptional patient care in diverse healthcare settings.

The identified strengths within the BSN program closely align with the core competencies for nursing practice. The emphasis on patient-centered care, exemplified through independent learning opportunities, resonates with contemporary nursing frameworks that prioritize holistic patient care. Additionally, the rigorous academic approach adopted by faculty members ensures that students are adequately equipped with the requisite knowledge and skills for clinical decision-making. These findings hold scientific significance as they reaffirm the importance of nurturing critical thinking, effective communication, and collaborative practice in nursing education to address evolving healthcare needs.

However, the study also illuminates several weaknesses within the BSN program, including limited clinical exposure, faculty shortages, and inadequate emotional support for students. These findings underscore the imperative for ongoing improvement in nursing education to tackle systemic challenges that may impede students' readiness for nursing practice. From a scientific standpoint, addressing these weaknesses is key to guaranteeing that nursing graduates possess the capabilities to adeptly navigate modern healthcare environments.

While the findings of this study corroborate existing literature on BSN program strengths and weaknesses, they also offer unique insights into specific challenges and opportunities within the program. For instance, the

identification of outdated equipment and theory-focused curricula as weaknesses highlights areas necessitating targeted interventions to align the program with contemporary healthcare practices. Additionally, the emphasis on emotional and mental health support for nursing students represents a relatively underexplored facet of nursing education that warrants further attention from educators and policymakers.

By addressing the identified challenges and leveraging existing strengths, nursing educators can ensure that graduates are suitably equipped to deliver compassionate, high-quality care in varied healthcare settings. Looking ahead, sustained research and collaboration are imperative for advancing nursing education and ultimately enhancing patient outcomes.

4.1. Implication

The study emphasizes the critical importance of continuously evaluating nursing programs to ensure their ongoing relevance and effectiveness in preparing graduates for the multifaceted demands of the nursing profession. By discerning program strengths and weaknesses, institutions can strategically allocate resources to enhance curriculum design, augment clinical exposure opportunities, and bolster faculty support, thereby better aligning educational offerings with the evolving needs of students and the healthcare sector.

Comprehending the employability of BSN graduates furnishes valuable insights into the efficacy of nursing education in facilitating seamless transitions from academia to professional practice. The study findings indicate that the BSN program under scrutiny adeptly equips graduates for diverse nursing roles, both domestically and internationally, underscoring the program's competence in addressing industry demands effectively.

The study illuminates the paramount importance of aligning nursing education with contemporary healthcare imperatives. The competencies identified as acquired during the BSN program, notably patient-centered care and critical thinking skills, resonate harmoniously with the evolving requirements of the healthcare landscape. Such alignment is crucial for ensuring that graduates are aptly prepared to confront prevailing healthcare challenges and deliver superlative patient care.

Policymakers can leverage these findings to inform decisions about nursing education standards and accreditation processes. Acknowledging the effectiveness of the examined BSN program may catalyze the adoption of analogous methodologies in other educational institutions, thereby fostering enhancements in the overall quality of nursing education on a national scale.

The study's incorporation of international employment outcomes offers invaluable insights for

policymakers and educators alike, facilitating a deeper understanding of the global mobility of nursing graduates. This perspective assumes particular relevance in light of escalating globalization trends and the internationalization of healthcare workforce dynamics, thereby informing strategic planning efforts in nursing education and workforce development initiatives.

4.2. Limitations

The study focuses on BSN graduates from a specific Catholic university in the Philippines, limiting the generalizability of findings to other institutions or regions with potentially different program structures and resources.

While surveys provide valuable quantitative data, they may not capture the full complexity of graduates' experiences and perspectives. Complementing survey data with focus groups could offer a deeper understanding of employability factors and program strengths and weaknesses.

The study's reliance on self-reported data from graduates may introduce response bias, as respondents may provide socially desirable answers or have differing interpretations of survey questions.

Addressing these limitations through diversified research methodologies and longitudinal approaches can further enhance the study's relevance and applicability to nursing practices and policies.

5. Conclusions

1. The majority of the respondents are in regular employment, predominantly within private

institutions, holding staff nurse positions both nationally and internationally. The job search duration varied, with most securing employment within 6 months and their gross monthly income was generally favorable, with all current jobs directly related to the BSN program.

2. Competencies acquired through the BSN program align closely with the demands of contemporary nursing practice, reaffirming the effectiveness of the program in preparing graduates for their roles as competent and compassionate healthcare professionals.
3. While the BSN program demonstrates several strengths in fostering patient-centered care, independent learning, and critical thinking development, there are notable weaknesses that include limited clinical exposure, shortages in faculty and instructional support, insufficient emotional and mental health support, and financial strain.

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Ethical approval

Ethical issues are not involved in this paper.

Conflicts of interest

All contributing authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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