

Employability, Career Outcomes, and Academic Preparation of Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management Graduates: A Tracer Study of a Local College in Olongapo City, 2020 and 2022–2025

Jenny Mae Lagman^{1*}, Lizette Ann Sia², Mychale Williams³, Leandro Dasig⁴
College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Gordon College, Philippines

Corresponding Author: Jenny Mae Lagman,

lagman.jennymae@gordoncollege.edu.ph

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the employability and career outcomes of graduates with a Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management (BSTM) from a local college in Olongapo City, spanning cohorts from 2020 and 2022–2025, through a graduate tracer study. Its objectives encompassed assessing graduates' employment status, career profiles, the relevance of their education, and the usefulness of the competencies acquired in college to inform curriculum enhancement and institutional quality improvement. A quantitative descriptive research design was employed, utilizing a modified CHED Graduate Tracer Study questionnaire administered to all 350 traced graduates. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings indicated that the majority of graduates were employed in tourism-related occupations and regarded their college education as highly pertinent to their professional roles. The results provide evidence to support curriculum development, industry partnerships, and initiatives aimed at improving graduate employability.

INTRODUCTION

Tracer studies have emerged as a widely recognized mechanism within higher education for assessing graduate outcomes and evaluating the effectiveness of academic programs in delivering employable, industry-ready graduates. According to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), tracer studies constitute essential tools for quality assurance and ongoing program enhancement, as they furnish empirical evidence on graduates' employment status, job relevance, and competency alignment with labor market demands (CHED, as cited in Magboo-Campo, 2025). Consequently, tracer studies not only reflect institutional performance but also inform curriculum improvement and policy development within higher education institutions.

The Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management (BSTM) program at Gordon College, Olongapo City, plays a pivotal role in preparing graduates for the dynamic, service-oriented tourism and hospitality sector. Given that the Philippines is among the most tourism-reliant economies in Southeast Asia, it requires a workforce proficient in customer service, communication, cultural awareness, and operational management. Nonetheless, research indicates that tourism graduates experience diverse employment trajectories, including placements outside the tourism sector, contractual positions, and delayed job matching after graduation, signaling potential gaps between academic preparation and labor market expectations (Melchor et al., 2025). This underscores the importance of systematically examining graduate outcomes to ensure alignment between higher education curricular and industry requirements.

Recent tracer study literature emphasizes that graduate employability is shaped not only by academic achievement but also by the relevance of acquired competencies, the quality of institutional training, and exposure to practical experiences such as internships and industry immersion (Campo, 2025; Sarsale et al., 2024). Furthermore, the employment outcomes of tourism graduates in the Philippines reveal diverse career trajectories, including positions in tourism-related establishments, business process outsourcing (BPO) industries, retail, and entrepreneurship, particularly in contexts affected by economic disruptions and evolving labor market conditions (Melchor et al., 2025). These findings imply that tracer studies are essential for understanding not only employability rates but also the flexibility and adaptability of tourism graduates across various sectors.

Despite the growing number of tracer studies conducted in Philippine higher education institutions, a research gap persists regarding localized data for Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management graduates from local colleges in Olongapo City. Given Olongapo City's distinctive economic environment and its proximity to the Subic Bay Freeport Zone—a major hub for tourism, hospitality, and service industries—it is crucial to investigate how graduates from local institutions transition into employment and how their academic preparation supports their career progression. This localized tracer study contributes to knowledge by capturing a niche population of BSTM graduates from 2020 and 2022–2025, providing contextualized evidence that may inform curriculum

development, strengthen industry-academe partnerships, and enhance institutional graduate employability strategies.

In this context, the study aims to establish the demographic profile of BSTM graduates from 2022, 2022-2025, evaluate their employment status and job characteristics, assess the relevance of their academic preparation and competencies to their present employment, identify factors affecting their employment outcomes, and propose recommendations for curriculum enhancement and institutional improvements intended to strengthen graduates' employability and career readiness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Human Capital

According to the Human Capital Theory, education is an investment that improves a person's skills, knowledge, and competences, which raises productivity and employability in the job market. Becker (1964) highlighted that because of their enhanced human capital, people with higher levels of education are more likely to get better jobs and earn more money. According to this idea, graduates of Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management (BSTM) programs who have obtained industry-relevant skills, technical abilities, and experiential learning through internships are more likely to find jobs in tourism-related sectors. After the hypothesis section, if your study is quantitative, please provide a contextual framework here, or your mind map, if qualitative. This statement is supported by recent tracer studies, which demonstrate that graduates with great academic preparation and real-world experience are more likely to get jobs related to their degree programs. For example, employment rates for tourism graduates in the Philippines were found to be moderate to high, especially when colleges offer robust internship programs and industry immersion experiences (Melchor et al., 2025). The complete realization of human capital investment returns is challenged by the fact that a sizable portion of tourism graduates work in non-tourism industries, according to certain studies. This suggests a partial mismatch between education and job outcomes.

H1: The job situation of BSTM graduates is significantly correlated with their degree of academic preparation (human capital development).

Framework Employability Skills

The Employability Skills Framework highlights that transferable skills like communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, and digital literacy are just as important for graduates to succeed in the workforce as academic knowledge. According to Yorke (2006) and later research, employability is a blend of practical skills, personal qualities, and cognitive abilities that allow graduates to function well in the job.

Because the tourism and hospitality industries are service-oriented, employability skills are very important. Employers value adaptability, customer service focus, and interpersonal skills more than academic achievement alone, according to studies. Tracer studies, however, show that certain graduates continue to face skill mismatches, which result in underemployment or

employment in unrelated industries because academic preparation does not entirely meet industry expectations.

H2: The career outcomes (job position level and job relevance) of BSTM graduates are significantly correlated with employability skills.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design using a graduate tracer survey to determine the employability and career outcomes of Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management (BSTM) graduates of a local college in Olongapo City from **2020 and 2022–2025**. A descriptive tracer study is appropriate for gathering information on graduates' demographic characteristics, employment status, career progression, job relevance, and perceptions of the competencies acquired during their academic preparation (Schomburg, 2003). The design enabled the researchers to systematically describe graduates' employment experiences and evaluate the alignment between the BSTM curriculum and labor market requirements.

The target population consisted of all BSTM graduates from the identified graduating batches (2020 and 2022–2025). A complete enumeration (census) was employed whenever possible to maximize representation and ensure comprehensive graduate feedback. If some graduates could not be contacted or declined participation, only those who voluntarily responded to the survey were included in the final analysis. Graduate contact information was obtained from the college alumni office, registrar, and program records.

Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire adapted from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Graduate Tracer Study Instrument and modified to suit the objectives of the study. The questionnaire consisted of four sections: (1) demographic profile, (2) employment characteristics, (3) relevance of academic preparation and acquired competencies, and (4) factors influencing employability and career development. Prior to data collection, the instrument underwent expert validation by specialists in tourism education and research and was pilot-tested to ensure clarity, content validity, and reliability.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the purpose of the research before providing their consent. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants were maintained by excluding personally identifiable information from the dataset. The collected data were used solely for academic and research purposes in accordance with the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173).

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive analysis. Frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, and standard deviations were used to describe the demographic profile, employment characteristics, and competency assessments of the graduates.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents when grouped according to Age

Age	Frequency	Percent
20-23	125	35.71
23-25	149	42.57
25-28	61	17.42
28-30	15	4.30
Total	350	100.00

Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents according to age. The majority of the BSTM graduates were 23–25 years old (149, 42.57%), followed by those aged 20–23 years (125, 35.71%). Respondents aged 25–28 years comprised 17.42% (61), while only 4.30% (15) were 28–30 years old. These findings indicate that most respondents are young adults who have recently completed their degree and are in the early stages of their professional careers, making them an appropriate population for assessing graduate employability and career outcomes through a tracer study.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents when grouped according to Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	105	30.00
Female	245	70.00
Total	350	100.00

The frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents by sex are shown in Table 2. According to the results, 105 (30.00%) of the respondents were men and 245 (70.00%) were women. This suggests that most responders were female graduates, which is consistent with the larger proportion of women in the Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management program.

Table 3. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents when grouped according to Civil Status

Civil Status	Frequency	Percent
Single	330	94.28
Married	20	5.72
Total	350	100.00

The frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents by civil status are shown in Table 3. According to the findings, only 20 respondents (5.72%) were married, while most of respondents (330, 94.28%) were single. Given that the majority of BSTM graduates are young adults and in the early phases of their professions, it is not surprising that many of them are single.

Table 4. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents when grouped according to Number of Graduates

Year Graduated	No. of Graduates	No. of Graduates Traced	Percentage
2020	6	6	1.72
2022	53	53	15.14
2023	107	107	30.57
2024	107	107	30.57
2025	77	77	22
Total	350	350	100.00

The distribution of respondents by year of graduation is shown in Table 4. With 107 responders (30.57%) apiece, 2023 and 2024 had the most tracked graduates, followed by 2025 with 77 (22.00%), 2022 with 53 (15.14%), and 2020 with 6 (1.72%). All 350 graduates (100%) from the designated batches were successfully located, demonstrating that the study's target group was adequately covered.

Table 5. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents when grouped according to Highest Educational Attainment

Highest Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor's Degree	335	95.70
Master Degree	15	4.30
Doctorate Degree	0	0.00
Total	350	100

The respondents' greatest level of education is shown in Table 5. The findings indicate that 15 (4.30%) of the respondents had earned a master's degree, while 335 (95.70%) had earned a bachelor's degree as their greatest level of education. Not a single respondent held a PhD. These results show that only a tiny percentage of BSTM graduates continued postgraduate courses, whereas the majority entered the workforce after earning their bachelor's degree.

Table 6. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents when grouped according to Eligibility

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Computer System Servicing National Certificate	1	0.28
Professional Civil Service Passer	75	21.42
Licensed Professional Teacher	4	1.17
Tourism Promotion National Certificate II	269	76.85
Japanese Foundation Test	1	0.28
Total	350	100

The professional eligibility and certifications of the responders are shown in Table 6. The results show that 269 (76.85%) of the respondents had the Tourism Promotion National Certificate II, while 75 (21.42%) were Professional Civil Service Passers. Just one (0.28%) of the respondents had both a Japanese Foundation Test certification and a Computer System Servicing National Certificate, and just four (1.17%) were Licensed Professional Teachers. These findings imply that majority of graduates earned industry-related certificates that improve their credentials and employability in the travel and tourism industry.

Table 7. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents when grouped according to Employment Status

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	225	64.28
No	75	21.42
Self-Employed	50	14.30
Total	350	100

The employment status of the respondents is shown in Table 7. The findings show that 225 (64.28%) of the respondents had jobs, while 75 (21.42%) did not. In contrast, 50 people (14.30%) worked for themselves. According to these results, the majority of BSTM graduates have successfully entered the workforce, indicating that their employability outcomes have been favorable.

Table 8. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents when grouped according to Present Occupation

Designation	Frequency	Percentage
Administrative Officer	10	2.86
Assistant Manager	4	1.14
Legal Associate	1	0.29
*Bartender/Barista	4	1.14
Teller	2	0.57
Business Field	8	2.29
Finance Clerk	2	0.57
Call Center Agent	16	4.57
*Casino Dealer	2	0.57
Client Service Associate	6	1.71
College Instructor	2	0.57
*Cook	1	0.29
Data Encoder	7	2.00
*Entrepreneur	28	8.00
*Event Coordinator	10	3.63
Fashion Model	1	6.29
*Flight Attendant	22	6.57
*Front Desk Officer	23	8.36
*Front Office Supervisor	5	1.43
Human Resources Staff	5	0.29

Manager	1	0.29
Manpower Agent	1	1.14
Performer	1	5.71
Public Teacher	4	1.14
*Reservation Officer	16	5.08
*Sales and Marketing Officer	9	3.27
*Sales Coordinator	10	3.64
Sangguniang Kabataan Chairperson	1	2.57
Social Worker	2	4.29
Supervisor	10	8.29
*Tour Guide	15	4.86
*Travel Agent	39	14.18
Waiter	7	2.55
Total:	275	100

The respondents' current occupation is shown in Table 8. With 39 (14.18%) respondents, travel agent was the most prevalent occupation, followed by entrepreneur with 28 (10.18%), front desk officer with 23 (8.36%), and flight attendant with 22 (8.00%). Other noteworthy professions included tour guide with 15 (5.45%) replies, and sales coordinator and reservation officer with 16 (5.82%) apiece. The findings show how versatile the degree program is, with the majority of employed BSTM alumni working in tourism and hospitality-related roles, but others have followed jobs in business, education, government, and various service industries.

Table 9. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents when grouped according to Salary Income

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 10, 000	25	9.0
Php10, 000 – Php29, 999	89	32.36
Php30, 000 – Php49, 999	150	54.54
Php50,000 – Php69, 999	11	4.1
Php70, 000 – Php89,999	0	0.00
Php90, 000 or more	0	0.00
Total	275	100

The monthly income of the respondents is shown in Table 9. According to the findings, 150 (54.54%) of the hired graduates made between Php30,000 and Php49,999 per month, while 89 (32.36%) made between Php10,000 and Php29,999. In the meantime, 11 (4.00%) made between Php50,000 and Php69,999 per month, while 25 (9.09%) made less than Php10,000. Not a single respondent stated they made Php70,000 or more. According to these results, the majority of BSTM graduates earn a reasonable monthly salary, which is indicative of good job outcomes in the tourism and allied industries.

Table 10. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents when grouped according to Reasons for not being employed

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
End of Contract	15	20.00
Currently having advanced or further study	15	20.00
Family concern and decided not to find a job	5	6.67
Health related reason	14	18.67
No job opportunity	15	20.00
Did not look for job	11	14.66
Total	75	100

The causes of unemployment among the respondents are shown in Table 10. The results show that the most frequent causes of unemployment, with 15 (20.00%) respondents each, were contract termination, currently pursuing advanced or further education, and a lack of employment opportunities. After that, 14 (18.67%) respondents cited health-related reasons, while 11 (14.66%) said they were not seeking for work. In the meantime, 5 (6.67%) said that their unemployment was due to family issues. These results imply that personal circumstances, ongoing education, and the state of the labor market have a greater impact on graduates' unemployment than a lack of qualifications.

Table 11. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents when grouped according to Education and Training Relevance in Terms of Evaluation of the Usefulness of Overall Training Acquired in College

Usefulness	Frequency	Percentage
80 - 100	199	56.85
60 - 79	75	21.42
50 - 59	44	12.57
less than 50	32	9.16
Total	350	100

The respondents' assessment of the total value of their college education is seen in Table 11. According to the results, the majority of respondents – 199, or 56.85% – rated the value of their college education between 80 and 100, showing a high degree of satisfaction with the skills and information they had gained. In contrast, 32 (9.16%) rated it below 50, 44 (12.57%) between 50 and 59, and 75 (21.42%) between 60 and 79. These findings imply that the majority of BSTM graduates thought their undergraduate education and training were extremely applicable and helpful in preparing them for their professional employment.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The tracer study indicates that most graduates of the Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management from a local college in Olongapo City are young, unmarried, and predominantly female. A large portion of these graduates are employed or self-employed, reflecting favorable employability outcomes for the program. A notable share are engaged in tourism- and hospitality-related roles, especially as travel agents, front desk officers, and flight attendants, with others pursuing careers in business, government, education, and other service sectors. Among those employed, salaries typically ranged from Php 30,000 to Php 49,999 per month, implying competitive employment prospects for tourism graduates. Additionally, the majority of respondents regarded the education and training received in college as highly useful in preparing them for their professional careers. In light of these findings, the institution should continually review and enhance the Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management curriculum to ensure alignment with prevailing industry trends and workforce requirements. Strengthening partnerships with tourism and hospitality organizations, expanding internship and placement opportunities, and offering industry-recognized certification programs may further enhance graduate employability. Career development initiatives, alumni engagement, and regular graduate tracer studies should likewise be sustained to monitor employment outcomes and support ongoing quality improvement.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This study focused on graduates of the Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management from a single local college in Olongapo City, specifically those from the graduating classes of 2020 and 2022–2025. The results relied on self-reported data, which may reflect respondents' perceptions and experiences at the time of data collection. Future research should include graduates from multiple higher education institutions to enable broader comparisons of employability outcomes. Additionally, researchers could examine employer satisfaction, competency gaps, career progression, job satisfaction, and the long-term effects of curriculum innovations using mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to yield a more comprehensive understanding of graduate employability.

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