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## Employability, Career Alignment, and Sustainable Futures of MA Sociology Graduates in Mindanao State University- Iligan Institute of Technology

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### ABSTRACT

This study describes the employment status of individuals who obtained a Master of Arts in Sociology from MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology in Iligan City. Employing a descriptive method, the research tracked down 42 out of 52 graduates spanning the years 1990 to 2023. The study adapted the Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) by CHED, modifying the data collection instrument for its purposes, through a survey.

The findings indicated that all respondents were gainfully employed during the data gathering period, with occupations aligned with their sociology degree. A significant number of participants held the same positions as their initial jobs, often as teachers, faculty members, or instructors. The majority were engaged in full-time employment within the public or government sector. Additionally, many respondents were pursuing further education, both locally and internationally. The respondents overwhelmingly expressed a positive attitude toward the MA Sociology program, highlighting its impact on their personal development and careers. Overall assessments of program elements and physical facilities received exceptionally high ratings.

However, to enhance the program's attractiveness and improve graduates' prospects, the study put forth recommendations derived from respondents' feedback. Suggestions included refining the curriculum by incorporating more immersive activities, organizing additional workshops to enhance research technical skills, and introducing new courses. Furthermore, respondents recommended enhancements to facilities and resources to better support the program and its graduates.

### KEYWORDS

tracer study; MA Sociology, employability, state university, intersectionality

## INTRODUCTION

Academic institutions aim to produce skilled and competitive graduates for both local and global markets. A tracer study is a crucial tool for assessing graduates' employment status and performance, as it evaluates the relevance of the curriculum and the effectiveness of the skills acquired. However, many graduates struggle to find jobs that align with their education, often due to gaps between the skills they have and those required by employers (Cuadra et al. 2019; The World Bank 2017).

To address evolving societal and labor market demands, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has promoted reforms to enhance education efficiency and develop graduates' skills, social capital, and competencies (CMO #46 s. 2012). Following the College of Arts and Social Sciences' (CASS) Level IV Accreditation from AACUP and the Department of Sociology's recognition as a CHED Center of Development in 2016, conducting a graduate tracer study is essential for evaluating the program's effectiveness. Despite being established in 1987, the MA Sociology program has not yet conducted a tracer study of its graduates.

A graduate tracer study in sociology offers a valuable opportunity to assess how well the program aligns with labor market demands and whether the knowledge and skills gained translate into meaningful careers. It also helps evaluate the professionalization of sociology, a field in the Philippines that faces challenges in public recognition and career advancement. According to Erwin Rafael (2014), sociology lacks formal structures supporting its professional status, which affects graduates' job prospects and career growth. A tracer study not only tracks employment outcomes but also provides insights into how sociology is evolving as a discipline and its role in local and global development. This information is crucial for improving academic programs and advocating for greater recognition of sociology in various sectors, including government, NGOs, research, and business.

This study builds on the work of Embornas and Ponce (2024) which focused on the employability of BA Sociology graduates from MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology. While the previous study examined undergraduate outcomes, this research expands to include MA Sociology graduates, offering a broader perspective on how sociology education aligns with the labor market. Both studies aim to assess career trajectories and the relevance of academic preparation, with this study placing additional emphasis on the effectiveness of the MA program in fostering marketable skills and competencies.

The study also continues the discussion on the professionalization of sociology in the Philippines, exploring how the discipline is evolving and its role in various sectors. By tracking graduate outcomes, this research helps to provide a clearer understanding of the preparedness of sociology graduates and the program's alignment with employer needs.

Abuso (2018) examined the career trajectories of AB Sociology graduates from Xavier University in Cagayan de Oro, highlighting their employment in diverse sectors such as corporate, communications, and government. The article challenges the traditional view that sociology graduates are limited to teaching or research, showing that their degree is relevant and valuable in a variety of occupations.

In other disciplines, the study by Lopena and Madrigal (2023) found that ethical, entrepreneurial, and problem-solving skills significantly helped graduates make business decisions and remain relevant in the workplace. For education program graduates (BEED & BSED), skills learned were rated as very useful, though some skills were not fully utilized or lacked effectiveness. Similarly, Canizares (2015) found that education graduates from San Carlos University developed good teaching skills but not at an excellent level.

The tracer study of Teacher Education graduates from Western Philippines University revealed that graduates faced challenges with employment standards and many clerical jobs in teaching. It also found that graduates often pursued advanced studies for professional development rather than promotion, unlike previous findings for mathematics education graduates who sought advanced studies for career advancement (Pentang et al. 2022). Meanwhile, Cheng et al. (2022) noted that in the UK, responsibility for employability has shifted to higher education institutions, though effective employability requires collaboration among all stakeholders. Both local and international studies highlight that employability is a global issue requiring joint efforts from governments and HEIs.

This study collected necessary information concerning the employment profile of graduates, their graduate school experience, the first and current jobs of the graduates, and the significance of their educational background and skills in their job. In addition, information on the relevance of the curriculum and graduates' level of satisfaction of their academic preparation was also collected.

By obtaining this information, the Department of Sociology and CASS as well as the Center for Advanced Education and Lifelong Learning (CAELL), can show the success of its educational efforts pertaining to its graduates, the labor market and employers. Through this, the institution can identify the areas for growth and development in the context of quality assurance and the provision of relevant preparation and training. Possible enhancements in the program offering in terms of administration, content, delivery and relevance can be established and improved. Sociology in the Philippines is still working toward professionalization (Rafael, 2014). A tracer study can provide insights into the careers of sociology graduates and the challenges they face, helping to build professional networks and advocate for better job recognition. The data from such a study can support policies that establish clearer career pathways and professional standards for sociology.

### *1.1 Objectives*

This study assessed the Master of Arts in Sociology graduates of Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT) from 1990 to 2023, aiming to inform potential interventions in the MA Sociology curriculum. The primary objectives were to examine the graduates' demographic characteristics, including age, gender, civil status, and source of income, and to analyze their occupational profiles, focusing on their first employment after graduation, current positions, income levels, and employment sector.

Additionally, the study sought to determine the incidence of self-employment, unemployment, and further education among graduates, as well as their perceptions of the program's adequacy in terms of curriculum and physical facilities. Lastly, it aimed to identify the skills and competencies graduates believe are necessary for making the MA Sociology program more relevant to current job market demands.

### *1.2 Conceptual Framework of the study*

This study utilized the systems analysis perspective of the input-process-output (IPO) model as outlined by Harald Schomburg (Schomburg 2016). The framework, based on classic systems theory, posits that the general structure of a system is as crucial to its effectiveness as its individual components. In this model, outputs are causally linked to group processes, which are influenced by various input variables.

In this study, the input is the curriculum content of the MA Sociology program. The processes refer to the interactions in the teaching and learning strategies, which ultimately produce the outputs: the knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired by the graduates. These three stages lead to outcomes observable after graduation. The outcomes are measured by the graduates' transition from academia to the workforce, the duration of their job search, and their success in securing their first job, as well as their current employment status.

A variation of the basic IPO model incorporates dynamic change by adding feedback loops. These loops primarily originate from the outcomes and feed back into the inputs or processes, as described by Igen, Johnson, and Judt (2005).

## METHODOLOGY

### *2.1 Research Design*

To address the objectives of this study, a descriptive-correlational method of research where a questionnaire was patterned from previous research on graduate tracer studies was used to gather the primary data needed. This research design describes the variables and the relationships that occur naturally between and among them (Sousa et al., 2007). This study used a descriptive-correlational method to give further description about the relationship between the quality education of the master's degree in Sociology and the employability of the graduate students in the labor market using the knowledge and skills they acquired from the program.

### *2.2 Tracing the participants*

Tracing the participants for this study involved collaboration with the university administration, alumni offices, and faculty to obtain accurate contact details, such as email addresses and social media accounts, of graduates. A multi-channel outreach strategy was employed, utilizing email, social media, messenger apps, as well as in-person surveys and online forms to reach the graduates. A personalized approach was also applied to locate harder-to-reach graduates by reaching out through peers and sending follow-up reminders via email or SMS. The follow-up strategy was key to maximizing the response rate. Additionally, the strong alumni network played a vital role in tracking down participants, while alumni also served as ambassadors, encouraging their peers to participate.

Despite challenges such as outdated contact details and busy schedules, 42 out of the 52 listed graduates (or 80.76%) participated in the study. This high response rate demonstrates the effectiveness of the recruitment methods, which included online surveys, personal interviews, and extensive efforts to connect with graduates via social media and alumni networks. While some graduates, particularly from the 1990-1992 cohorts, were untraceable, the responses from the more recent graduates provide valuable and representative data on the outcomes of the MA Sociology program. Table 1 below outlines the distribution of graduates from 1993 to 2023.

**Table 1.** Response Rate of MA Sociology graduates from 1993-2023

Year Graduated	No. of graduates	Respondents who participated	%
1993-1995	2	2	3.85
1996-1998	0	0	0
1999-2001	1	0	0
2002-2004	2	1	1.92
2005-2007	5	4	7.69
2008-2010	14	10	19.23
2011-2013	4	4	7.69
2014-2016	5	5	9.62
2017-2019	4	2	3.85
2020-2022	9	9	17.31
2023	6	5	9.62
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>80.76</b>

### *2.2 Data Gathering Procedure*

A modified questionnaire patterned from previous research on graduate tracer studies such as the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CMO # 46 s. 2012) was used to gather the primary data. The questionnaire contained six parts: Part I – Sociodemographic Profile, Part II – Occupational Profile, Part III – Incidence of self-employment, unemployment, and further education among the graduates, Part IV – adequacy of the program elements and physical facilities of the MA Sociology program as perceived by the graduates, Part V - problems encountered by the respondents in the pursuit of their graduate degree, and Part VI - skills and competencies recommended by the graduates to make the MA Sociology program more relevant to current jobs.

The questionnaire was administered personally for those living in Iligan City while those outside of Iligan were sent an electronic questionnaire through Google Form questionnaire, email or through their Facebook messenger.

### *2.3 Statistical Treatment of Data*

After the data collection, the data were recorded and tabulated for analysis. The descriptive statistical measurements such as frequency count and percentage were used to explore the distribution of respondents according to profile, employment characteristics, and learned graduate attributes. The analysis was done using Excel.

### 2.4 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were carefully observed during this study. Participation was entirely voluntary, with respondents completing the questionnaire of their own accord. Each participant also signed an informed consent form, affirming their voluntary involvement. Additionally, the study maintained the anonymity of respondents, ensuring that their identities and any disclosed information were used solely for research purposes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Profile of Alumni Respondents

Table 2 presents the MA graduates in Sociology in terms of their socio-demographic profile: age, sex, civil status, and source of income.

**Table 2.** Profile of MA Sociology Graduates

Socio-Demographic Characteristics	f	%
<b>Age</b>		
below 24	1	2.38
25-30	9	21.43
31-36	6	14.29
37-42	10	23.81
43-48	6	14.29
49-54	6	14.29
55-60	1	2.38
61-66	3	7.14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	28	66.67
Male	14	33.33
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Civil Status</b>		
Single	21	50.0
Married	18	42.86
Separated	2	4.76
Widow	1	2.38
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Source of Income</b>		
Teaching	30	71.43



Research	3	7.14
Government	3	7.14
Private company	2	4.76
Humanitarian work	2	4.76
Administrative	1	2.38
Freelance/ online job	1.	2.38
TOTAL	42	100.0

Table 2 reveals that the most common age range among MA Sociology graduates is 37 to 42 years old, representing 23.81% of graduates, followed by 25 to 30 years old at 21.43%. Other age ranges (31-36, 43-48, 49-54) each make up 14.29%, while those under 25 and between 55-60 are the least represented at 2.38% each.

In terms of sex, 66.67% of graduates are female, indicating that women dominate the program. Similar to the findings from other tracer studies (Dela Cruz et al. 2024; Pentang et al. 2022; Cuadra 2019), there is a higher number of female graduates compared to male graduates. Regarding civil status, 50% of graduates are single, 42.86% are married, 4.76% are separated, and 2.38% are widowed. Similar to Canizares (2015), where single individuals were the majority, Cempron and Palompon (2011) also found that single respondents predominated. This suggests that single individuals, due to fewer responsibilities, may be more persistent in completing their degrees.

The majority of graduates, 71.43%, work in academia, followed by 7.14% in research or government roles. Graduates in private companies and humanitarian sectors each account for 4.76%, while freelance/online jobs and administrative work each represent 2.38%.

### *3.2 Occupational profile*

First employment after graduation. MA Sociology graduates have pursued various careers, with 23.80% entering academia as university teachers, and 7.14% working in humanitarian roles. Additionally, 4.76% have become freelancers or taken on online jobs. Some graduates (2.38% each) are employed in research roles, government positions, or the business sector. Notably, 47.62% of graduates did not specify their initial employment, as their first job is still their current one.

Nature of employment. The majority of MA Sociology graduates, 92.86%, work full-time. A small portion, 4.76%, are working part-time but wish to transition to full-time, while 2.38% are currently content with part-time work.

Workforce sector affiliation. The majority of MA Sociology graduates, 76.19%, are employed in the public sector, suggesting a strong inclination toward public service and stable careers. In contrast, 19.05% work in the private sector, and only 4.76% are employed by non-governmental

organizations. This is in contrast to the findings by Cuadra et al. (2019) where there is an issue of mismatch between skills and employment.

**Current position/designation.** The faculty workforce among MA Sociology graduates increased from 23.80% to 71.43%, indicating a strong presence in academia and satisfaction with their teaching careers. This vertical mobility may be due to the fulfillment and demand for Sociology educators with master's degrees. Additionally, 7.14% of graduates work in research, while others are employed in various roles, including HR, local governance, community development, and social media.

**Present monthly income.** The finding that 30.95% of MA Sociology graduates earn between P30,000 to P42,000 monthly, and 19.04% earn between P42,000 to P48,000, supports the broader trend that advanced degrees generally lead to higher earning potential. Studies, such as the National Center for Education Statistics (2024), show that individuals with master's degrees earn 20% more than those with bachelor's degree. While sociology may not yield the same high wages as fields like business or engineering, advanced degrees still enhance earning potential, especially in academia, government, and NGOs. However, the specific field and labor market demand also play key roles in determining earnings, with fields like STEM or business offer higher returns compared to social sciences.

**MA graduation and first employment time gap.** Over 74% of MA Sociology graduates were already employed before earning their degrees. However, 6.98% experienced job gaps due to a lack of vacancies, and 4.65% cited time management issues. Other reasons for delays in employment included job alignment with passion, financial problems, pursuing further specialization, work requirements, scholarship ineligibility, and study leave, each affecting 2.33% of the graduates.

**Current employment status.** A significant 73.80% of graduates hold permanent employment, indicating stability and commitment to their organizations. Additionally, 23.80% are contractual employees, while 2.38% are casual workers.

**Number of years in the current company.** The majority of graduates (35.71%) have 1 to 5 years of service in their workplaces. This is followed by 21.42% with 11 to 15 years, 19.04% with 6 to 10 years, and 14.28% with 16 to 20 years. Additionally, 9.52% have over 25 years of service.

**Reasons for staying in the job.** Graduates cited alignment of interest and specialization (20.41%) as the top reason for staying in their jobs, followed by good compensation (18.37%), passion for teaching, and job stability (10.20% each). Other factors include career development, a positive work environment, personal growth, flexible hours, job relevance to their degree, proximity to home, and finding their work purposeful and inspiring (4.08% to 8.16%).

### 3.3. Incidence of self-employment, unemployment, and further education

Table 3 shows that among 41 employed respondents, 95.83% (23 individuals) pursued further studies, indicating that they continued their education with a doctoral degree while working full-time. Only 1 respondent is self-employed.

**Table 3.** Incidence of self-employment, unemployment, and further education

Incidence	f	%
Self-Employed	1	4.17
Unemployed	0	0
Proceeded to further studies	23	95.83
TOTAL	24	100.0

Graduate programs taken after MA Sociology. Many graduates pursued PhD programs related to sociology, while others chose not to continue their studies immediately. This choice does not imply unemployment; some are taking time to recuperate or plan to pursue further education later while starting their careers.

Specifically, over half of the respondents (54.75%) pursued further education, with 42% choosing a Ph.D. in Sociology. Other degrees included Ph.D. in SDS (4.76%), MA History (2.38%), MBA (2.38%), and Ph.D. in Peace and Conflict Studies (2.38%).

Institutions. A majority of MA Sociology graduates (33.33%) continued their studies at MSU-IIT. Other institutions for Ph.D. studies included Xavier University (7.14%) and the University of the Philippines (4.76%). Some graduates also pursued further education abroad at the University of Victoria, Deakin University, and Mahidol University, each representing 2.38%.

Reasons for pursuing further studies. The primary reason for pursuing a Ph.D. among MA Sociology graduates is professional growth (39.47%), followed by personal growth (15.79%). Other motivations include seeking higher academic learning (13.16%), aiming for promotion (10.52%), improving qualifications for job applications (7.89%), exploring broader career options (5.26%), and enhancing competency (5.26%). A small percentage pursued further studies to take advantage of available scholarships (2.63%).

### 3.4. Adequacy of the program elements and physical facilities of the MA Sociology program

Most respondents reported a high or very high level of satisfaction with the program's contribution, its elements, and the physical facilities.

Contribution of the program. Majority of the respondents rated the MA Sociology program's contribution to their professional life positively, with academic preparation receiving the highest praise. However, some areas showed lower satisfaction, including information technology, salary improvement and promotion, and opportunities abroad, indicating room for improvement in these aspects.

Sumade et al. (2022) and Lopena and Madrigal (2023) emphasizes the importance of specific skills—such as information literacy, ethical awareness, entrepreneurship, and problem-solving—particularly in professional environments like business. Lopena and Madrigal note that these skills are crucial for MBA graduates in making effective decisions and staying relevant in the workplace.

While the MA Sociology program is praised for academic preparation, the feedback about lower satisfaction in information technology suggests that the program may not be fully addressing the need for technical and modern workplace competencies, as highlighted by the research from Sumade et al. and Lopena and Madrigal. These findings point to the idea that graduates might need more exposure to practical, contemporary skills—like information technology or entrepreneurial abilities—to remain competitive and succeed in their professional lives. Thus, it is important to recognize that academic programs need to evolve to incorporate both traditional academic strengths and practical, modern skills that are increasingly valued in the workplace.

**Table 4.** Weighted mean distribution of contribution of the program to the professional life of the graduate

Contribution of the Program	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Academic Profession	3.9	Very Highly
Research Capability	3.85	Very Highly
Learning Efficiency	3.9	Very Highly
Communication Skills	3.88	Very Highly
People Skills	3.88	Very Highly
Problem-solving Skills	3.83	Very Highly
Information Technology	3.5	Very Highly
Meeting Present and Future Needs	3.8	Very Highly
Exposure to community within field of specialization	3.8	Very Highly
Critical Thinking Skills	3.85	Very Highly
Salary Improvement and Promotion	3.69	Very Highly

Opportunities Abroad	3.33	Very Highly
Personality Development	3.8	Very Highly
MSU-IIT Values Information	3.9	Very Highly
N = 42	3.77	Very Highly

Elements of the program. Respondents overwhelmingly rated the program as highly or very highly adequate, reflecting their strong agreement that the Department of Sociology delivers high educational quality. The top-rated element was "Professor's pedagogical expertise and knowledge of subject matter," with 41 respondents rating it very highly and 1 as highly. "Quality of instruction" followed closely, with 40 rating it very highly and 2 highly. "Teacher-student relationships," "Relevance to profession," and "Teaching and environment" also received high ratings, underscoring the program's overall excellence.

These findings align with the tracer study conducted by Almejas et al. (2017), supporting the notion that graduates perceive the program as having competent faculty, employing diverse teaching techniques and strategies, possessing excellent teaching abilities, and offering very adequate knowledge, skills, and abilities.

**Table 5.** Weighted mean distribution of elements of the program

Program Elements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Range of course	3.78	Very Highly
Relevance to profession	3.8	Very Highly
Extracurricular activities	3.47	Very Highly
Premium given to research	3.69	Very Highly
Interdisciplinary learning	3.76	Very Highly
Teaching and environment	3.83	Very Highly
Quality of instruction	3.95	Very Highly
Teacher-student relationships	3.92	Very Highly
Professor's pedagogical expertise	3.97	Very Highly
Professor's knowledge to subject matter	3.97	Very Highly
N = 42	3.81	Very Highly

Physical facilities. In the tracer study, respondents assessed the adequacy of the MA Sociology program's physical facilities, with most rating them as very highly or highly adequate. Classroom size received the highest rating (3.71 weighted mean), followed by the computer laboratory (3.57) and library sources (3.4). The canteen (3.23), internet connection (3.21), and dormitory (2.85) were rated as highly adequate, though dormitories had the lowest score, with some respondents rating them poorly adequate. The department should advocate for improved graduate housing to address this issue. The need for dormitories in the school is crucial, as the MA Sociology

program not only admits applicants from Iligan City, but also from across Mindanao, and potentially even from all over the country.

**Table 6.** Weighted mean distribution of the physical facilities of the program

Physical Facilities	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Library resources	3.4	Very Highly
Computer laboratory resources	3.57	Very Highly
Classroom size	3.71	Very Highly
Internet connection	3.21	Highly
Canteen	3.23	Highly
Dormitory	2.85	Highly
n=42	3.32	Very Highly

### 3.5 Problems encountered by the respondents in the pursuit of their graduate degree

When asked about challenges during their graduate studies, 29.26% of respondents cited time management as the primary issue. Additionally, 9.75% mentioned resource limitations and the distance to the university. Other challenges included financial constraints (4.87%), difficulties in completing studies on time (2.43%), and the impact of COVID-19 (2.43%).

A range of similar challenges were reported by graduate students, including time management, financial difficulties, language barriers, and the dissertation process (Schlemper 2011; Kuo 2011). These challenges were often accompanied by feelings of stress, anxiety, and loneliness. However, students also developed coping strategies to address these issues, such as seeking financial aid, improving English proficiency, and seeking support from faculty and peers.

### 3.6 Skills and competencies the graduates recommend to make the MA Sociology program more relevant to current jobs

Respondents suggested several improvements for the MA Sociology program to enhance its relevance to current and future jobs. The top recommendations include more research exposure (26.19%), such as publishing in Scopus-indexed journals and participating in conferences; increased community immersions (14.28%) for broader engagement; and additional research technical skills (11.90%) like SPSS and qualitative analysis. Other suggestions include strengthening network-building (4.76%), integrating Organizational Behavior, conflict resolution, computer-driven teaching methods, and fostering key attitudes like resilience and achievement orientation (each 2.38%).

Similar tracer studies suggest that the MA Sociology program could be improved by emphasizing research methods, managerial and communication skills, and practical experience. Enhancing students' understanding of transferable skills, linking their studies to career roles, and providing practical experience are key. Developing critical sociological thinking and aligning skills with career interests is also important (Ciabattari, 2018). Adding a careers and professional development course could boost students' confidence and job application skills (Senter, 2020).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study used the input-process-output (IPO) model by Harald Schomburg (2016) to understand the relationship between the MA Sociology program's curriculum, teaching methods, and the outcomes for graduates. The IPO model views educational programs as interconnected systems, emphasizing that the effectiveness of a program depends not just on individual components (curriculum, teaching, outcomes), but on how they interact within the system.

The input of curriculum content plays a vital role in preparing graduates for the workforce. The study recommended integrating more career-oriented courses, aligning the program with job market needs, as suggested by the IPO model.

In terms of the process, effective teaching methods and student engagement are crucial in equipping graduates with relevant skills. The study found that graduates who felt well-prepared by the program were more likely to find satisfying employment, supporting the IPO model's emphasis on the importance of strong teaching processes.

For the output on graduate competencies and employment outcomes, the study's findings on employment outcomes—such as high job placement in government, NGOs, and research sectors—validate the link between curriculum quality and graduate success. The IPO model shows that the competencies gained through the program directly influence graduates' transition to the workforce and employment status.

The study also incorporated feedback loops (Igen, Johnson, & Judt, 2005), where alumni feedback and employment outcomes inform curriculum adjustments. Feedback on the usefulness of certain skills, like research, suggests areas for improvement, creating a continuous cycle of curriculum refinement.

Using the IPO model, the study emphasizes that curriculum design, teaching methods, and graduate outcomes are interconnected. Positive graduate outcomes highlight the program's effectiveness, but feedback loops point to areas for continuous improvement. The study advocates for integrating alumni feedback into curriculum development and higher education policies to ensure the program remains relevant and responsive to

evolving labor market demands. The IPO framework provides a guide for ongoing strategic improvements to support graduate success.

The MA Sociology tracer study at MSU-IIT highlights several key areas:

**Program Evaluation:** The study reveals that the MA Sociology program positively influences graduates, equipping them with skills and knowledge for successful careers.

**Curriculum Improvement:** The recommendations to include courses like organizational studies and conflict resolution, alongside more research and community engagement opportunities, are highly relevant for preparing sociology graduates for diverse and evolving career paths in the academe, government, and other sectors. These additional subjects align with the needs of both the academic and government sectors, where graduates often find employment.

Given that many respondents are employed in government and NGOs, incorporating organizational studies into the curriculum is essential for preparing sociology graduates to navigate and improve organizational structures. This knowledge helps in bureaucratic management and program leadership. Similarly, conflict resolution training is crucial for addressing social, political, and community issues, fostering collaboration, and facilitating dialogue, especially in government and NGO roles.

Additionally, enhancing research skills in both quantitative and qualitative methods is vital for evidence-based decision-making in public administration and social services. Finally, strengthening community engagement competencies will enable graduates to work effectively with local populations, shaping policies and programs that address community needs.

**Career Guidance:** Insights from the study can significantly enhance career counseling by providing key data to help students make informed decisions based on real-world outcomes. The study highlights the diverse career paths of MA Sociology graduates, with roles in government, NGOs, education, and research, demonstrating the broad applicability of the degree beyond academia. The study reveals how well graduates feel their education has prepared them for roles in program management and policy analysis, offering insight into job satisfaction and the relevance of their degree.

Additionally, findings on self-employment encourage students to consider entrepreneurial paths, while data on graduates pursuing further education highlights the benefits of additional certifications or advanced degrees. The study also sheds light on career challenges, such as limited job opportunities for advancement in specific sectors, helping students anticipate obstacles and consider alternative pathways, including international opportunities or related fields. Overall, these insights provide actionable guidance for students to identify viable career options, understand sector realities, and make more informed career decisions.



**Employability Enhancement:** To address job market challenges, the study suggests adding professional development workshops and industry partnerships.

**Marketing and Recruitment:** The positive outcomes from this study can play a key role in attracting prospective students and enhancing the reputation of the MA Sociology program. Graduates are employed across diverse sectors, including government, NGOs, education, research institutions, and social enterprises, highlighting the versatility and wide applicability of a sociology degree. This demonstrates the program's ability to open doors to various career paths, appealing to students interested in public administration, social work, policy research, and community development.

Additionally, the high levels of job satisfaction and the relevance of the education to graduates' current roles further enhance the program's appeal. This demonstrates that the program equips students with practical, job-ready skills, making them more competitive in the workforce.

The study also reveals that some graduates have ventured into self-employment or launched social enterprises, which may attract entrepreneurial students. Furthermore, many graduates have pursued further education or professional development, indicating the program's potential to serve as a stepping stone for continued learning and career advancement.

The program's focus on graduates working in community-driven initiatives and NGOs showcases the potential for social impact, attracting students motivated by the desire to make a difference. By emphasizing these positive outcomes—career opportunities, competitive income, high job satisfaction, entrepreneurial success, and further education—the program can effectively market its value to prospective students seeking meaningful careers with broad societal impact.

**Policy Recommendations:** The study identifies financial challenges faced by graduate students, particularly in covering tuition, research costs, and other expenses. To address these issues, it is recommended that CHED and MSU-IIT implement policies to provide more financial support. Expanding scholarship programs for sociology graduate students based on merit, need, or social development potential would ease financial burdens and allow students to focus on their studies.

Additionally, establishing research grants specifically for graduate students could help cover the costs of fieldwork, data collection, and research tools. Flexible tuition payment plans would support students balancing work and studies, while work-study opportunities within the university would provide both financial assistance and valuable work experience.

CHED could also collaborate with financial institutions to offer loans with favorable terms for graduate students. Furthermore, partnerships with NGOs and government agencies could offer funding and internships, helping students gain experience while alleviating financial concerns. By addressing these financial needs, CHED and MSU-IIT can create a more supportive

environment, enabling students to complete their degrees and contribute to societal development.

Continuous Monitoring: Ongoing tracer studies are recommended for adapting to changes and maintaining program relevance.

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