

# Overcoming Career-Entry Dilemmas: A Phenomenological Analysis of Graduating Psychology Students' Perception Towards College-to Professional Transition

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## ABSTRACT

The transition from education into employment is confronted with uncertainties and worries. Studies have been focused on investigating discrepancies between students' skills and level of preparedness and the demands of the modern business landscape. However, little research has been done on the factors that contribute to these gaps on the individual level. The study aims to understand perceived dilemmas and describe strategies employed in the college-to-career transition. The phenomenological qualitative design was utilized, and five graduating psychology students were considered as participants in the study. Structured interview was used as the main research method and thematic analysis as the primary analytical tool. Based on the relevant findings, the study concluded that graduating psychology students perceive the shift toward the professional world as challenging and difficult as it is characterized by uncertainties and adjustments yet a fulfilling process that fosters a sense of hope that regardless of what the future holds, college have prepared them for the life that they are going to have after graduation. Additionally, the main career-entry worry of graduating psychology students in transitioning was finding a decent workplace coupled with the stressful urgency to land an entry-job position after graduation. Generally, graduating psychology students overcome these perceived difficulties by seeking work-based experiences to prepare themselves for how things work in the professional world and maximizing their time in the internship to expand their network. These findings would be of great benefit to the development of intervention programs that will better prepare students for the college-to-career transition.

**Keywords:** transition, college life, professional world, psychology, perception

## INTRODUCTION

The experience of moving from school to work may be accompanied by feelings of professional insecurity and poor coping, both of which are crucial aspects of young professionals' mental health (Geirdal et al., 2019). The academic life in the Philippines might be different for all Filipino students. However, certain trends govern this aspect of life for the young generation, especially for those students who are closer to the transition toward the professional world. When self-efficacy and academic motivation are observed among graduating students, a study by Yapo et al. (2021) states that according to the results of the study, due to their great internal desire, college students are inspired to continue their studies despite the difficulties of the global health crisis.

This certain transition is mostly understood by laypeople as being responsible and efficient. Quite frequently, the academic life of the applicant is also investigated by potential employers. For this reason, the transitioning aspect remains crucial for students. Not only will it prepare them, but it can also make them more appealing to employers. Despite the reality of the essence of proper transitioning from the academic to

the professional world, Filipinos also acknowledge the difficulty in doing so. Guison (2022) states that it is understandable if a student chooses not to look for employment during their final month of classes. Casciano (2022) states that switching from school to work can be challenging. Students are habituated to the college system, which consists of predetermined objectives, teachers, grades, and weekly breaks for each semester. This set-up will not be the same in the professional world, and it could take a toll on someone who has not transitioned well enough.

Among the issues in the transitioning from the academic to the professional world of students are their fears. Springboard Philippines (2021) listed five common fears of graduating students during the aforementioned transition. Most people complete college to find rewarding employment, therefore it could be disheartening for them if it takes too long to locate a job (Springboard Philippines, 2021). It is common to question whether these can be applied in the actual workplace as they are changing their status from student to employee, but due to online learning, these ideas are now more apparent.

This paper will look into how students perceive the transition from academic life to the professional world. It is high time that institutions become aware of how their students think of the transition and what needs they have that are to be addressed. This paper seeks to determine the challenges and adjustments encountered and made by the students as they transition from their academic life to their professional endeavors. Specifically, the paper also aims to determine the students' dilemmas as they transition, their perceptions, and their ways of overcoming the dilemmas they identified. When these inquiries are provided with information, the paper can determine the overall perception of students.

This study will help bridge the gap in the literature on the transition phase of Filipino students from school to work setup, especially in the new normal education brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. With data to support the results, more Filipino students will be enlightened on how they could act and what certain practices and procedures could be done for a smooth transition from their academic to professional life. This could help eradicate the fears of graduating students as they embark on a new journey towards achieving their greater goals in life.

## **Transitioning**

According to the study of Molinsky (2019) and Prisma (2019), the recent graduates transitioning from being a student to being a professional is tougher than they have imagined, as it can be mentally and physically draining for them. Many young professionals felt confused and overwhelmed by how the "real world" welcomes them; there are many reasons why they struggled in their years of being new to the environment. The timeframe in the workplace can be different from what the student used to have in college (Molinsky, 2019). As highlighted by Prisma (2019), cultural transition also contributes to the struggle graduating college students are faced with on top of the already burdensome process of completing requirements. In addition, the grading system in workplaces differs from that in educational institutions, where grades are the standard measure of performance. In the workplace, requirements may vary depending on the organization and its management. The lack of consistent requirements in the workplace compared to the structured environment of educational institutions can pose challenges for new graduates. Decisions in the workplace often rely on the discretion of higher-ups or the organization's policies, contrasting with the clear guidelines and assessments prevalent in academic settings. The new graduates must be physically and mentally prepared as the new environment awaits them. The pressure of being a new graduate and finding a new job can be their first challenge, as they can be unemployed for a year. The pressure from the surroundings of a new graduate is everywhere. In the Philippines, fresh graduates tend to find a job at once after or before graduating, as their family needs help (Arnaldo, 2023). Mental preparedness is something that everyone needs to adapt to a pristine environment, as it can also be applied to students who are transitioning to a newer and tougher environment, as said in a study by Blokker et al. (2022). Successful transitioning from being a student to being a professional is essential for a greater future as it will dictate someone's future. By

having a successful transition, the mental burden of a new professional would motivate one to strive to be a better workmate and an employee.

### **University to workplace in the Philippines**

The first challenge in transitioning is to find a decent workplace that will suit someone's personality and skills (Prudente, 2022). Many recent graduates feel pressured to get a job right after finishing college because of fear of being unemployed within a few months of being a new graduate (Krosel et al., 2022). Moreover, in the study of Lina (2019), it was underscored that only 35 to 40 percent of new graduates in the Philippines land a job, and the rest will be unemployed for a year or will pursue other fields. It is an unacceptable reality for everyone as the new graduates celebrate their success in studying. There will be a tougher challenge that waits for them. As said in the article of Frahm (2021), the major development of the new graduates is necessary for them as there will be many changes in their unique environment. After finding a decent job, the transition from college to a professional career will officially start (Piwiec, 2022). There will be much adjustment for a young professional wherein there will be possible discrimination in the few years of being new to the workplace wherein the seniors can pass their work to their newly hired employee as it will serve as their duties of being new in the workplace (Fasbender & Gerpott, 2021). Furthermore, in the study of Apaydin (2021), it was stated that the development of preparedness in the transition from college to the workplace is getting better. The changes in the curriculum and activities in college are becoming a workplace-oriented setup that can prepare students to transition from college to the workplace. To lessen the pressure or the challenge for new graduates, colleges or universities should educate the students on how to prepare for the workplace (Juliani, 2021) and be prepared for anything that can happen. In the Philippines, some universities prepare their students for the workplace by giving them a no-vacation schedule or quarterterm setup (Cruz, 2021). These changes can help the student to get better and prepare for the schedules in the workplace where employees can only have left and no vacation that students used to have in college. By having a schedule of no vacation, the workload for students can be slightly compared to the actual workplace, wherein it can pressure the student not to cram their work and always do their work before the deadlines as it can affect their performance or grading in college (Cruz, 2021). According to Bonsaksen (2019), preparedness for transitioning can be prevention from mistakes that a newly graduate employee can commit. Being prepared for things that can be met in the future can be an advantage and a factor in career success.

### **Academic and Professional World**

According to Swenson (2019) there are four differences between college life and joining the workforce; in a professional setting, there is no grade where students depend on their performance and efforts, and the result of the evaluation can dictate the salary and position of someone wherein it can also be a success and failure. There is no month-long vacation in the workplace, unlike in college. Some schools have a vacation every summer, and students can rest and prepare for the upcoming semester. There is no room for a month-long break, so everyone needs to adjust and improve while working or under pressure (Swenson, 2019). In the workplace, employees need to be productive and have the best quality of their work in every project compared to school, where students tend to do activities to meet deadlines and will choose the quantity of work or compliance with the deadline over focusing on the quality of their work (Tucker, 2018). Most students in college choose their school based on how it would be convenient for them, while when they work, everyone needs to adapt whether they will take a higher salary job but live far from their hometown or choose to live there and have limited choices in taking a decent job (Swenson, 2019). There are many more differences between college life and the workplace, but there is one thing for sure: new graduates can choose whatever opportunities wait for them; it would take them years to adapt to a new environment as it can also be their lifetime choices wherein, they will find themselves a good life there and will call it a path-to success process in life. According to Reed (2018) there 3 are similarities between college life and work

life. Money is one of the main factors on why someone is working. Pursuing a greater goal can also result in many fortunes in someone's life, both in college and at work. It needs to be balanced to enjoy life. Social development is also an essential thing for someone. It can help them be more confident as they embark on a new chapter of their lives; it can be a critical point for them as the transition from college to professional can be tough. In work and college, someone can gain friends or colleagues that can be part of their path to success as they grow. They will lose and gain many people, giving them many lessons for someone (Reed, 2018). Both are now using digital technology, which everyone can use as an advantage. Life is much easier now as the technology is getting better and more accessible for most people.

### **Perception of Students during Transitioning**

Santisi et al. (2018) discussed that students who are satisfied with their chosen courses and aware that they are coherent with their professional expectations, values, and interests are motivated to move forward and ready to face their university-to-work transition. On the other hand, students who do not develop a career identity or "internal compass" will probably face difficulties not just in university-to-work transition but also in finding a meaningful career and a job. Furthermore, according to Mitchell (2019) students plan their career paths based on internalized expectations of others (i.e., expectations from family, colleagues, and employers) and personal knowledge acquired along their path. Parents' level of involvement regardless of their education status has an important role. It positively impacts the students' practices, decisions, and career preparation (i.e., resume assistance, job leads, relocation assistance, and advice). This is consistent with the studies of Aracil et al. (2018) where the findings reveal that parents' education does not impact their offspring's expectations about transitioning to work successfully. Furthermore, Mitchell (2019) stated that work-related experiences using methodological and practical competencies promote positive perceptions of the students about their preparedness in transitioning to the workplace.

On the contrary, according to Aracil et al. (2018) working experiences during and before studies excluding internship, do not impact the students' perception of their preparedness in transitioning to the workplace. This does not mean that work experiences cannot help students to be prepared for their transition to work but rather it is not sufficient for the students' preparedness in transitioning to the workplace. Furthermore, they stated in their study that internships were excluded from not having an impact on students' perceptions of their preparedness (Aracil et al., 2018), this was explained by Anjum (2020) that internship programs have an impact on professional growth and skills of the students. Also, encouraging students to be more active in a collaborative approach could improve their perception of preparedness for work. (Aracil et al., 2018).

### **Synthesis**

In recent studies by Molinsky (2019), Pisma (2019), and Arnaldo (2023), it becomes evident that the transition from being a student to a young professional is a challenging journey, both mentally and physically. Graduates often find themselves overwhelmed by the stark contrast between the structured world of academia and the dynamic demands of the workplace. Work schedules shift, and breaks no longer offer the same respite as in college. Cultural adjustments play a role too, with the shift from grades dictating success to workplace expectations set by superiors. This transition pressure is particularly pronounced in places like the Philippines, where family expectations add an extra layer of urgency. Mental preparedness, as highlighted by Blokker (2023) and Bonsaksen (2019), emerges as a crucial factor for success in this challenging journey.

The preparation for transitioning from college to the professional world is evolving, as Apaydin (2021) points out, with colleges beginning to adopt more workplace-oriented curricula. To ease the pressure on new graduates, universities must educate students on workplace readiness, as suggested by Juliani (2021). Some institutions, like those mentioned by Cruz (2021), are already implementing changes to mimic workplace

conditions. Overall, being prepared for this transition is crucial, as it not only prevents mistakes but also sets the stage for a successful career, as underscored by Bonsaksen (2019).

Moving from academic life to a professional setting entails several differences, as Swenson (2019) and Tucker (2017) point out. There is no more grading; instead, your performance dictates your position and salary. Extended vacations become rare, and work demands continuous adjustment and improvement. The choices you make regarding job location and convenience become critical decisions. However, as Reed (2018) highlights, some similarities remain in pursuing financial stability, personal growth, and the importance of social development. Both college and work now rely heavily on digital technology, making life easier and more accessible. In this transitioning journey, one can choose their path to success but must adapt and learn.

Generally, recent studies underscored the gap between the demands of the professional world and the competencies acquired by job applicants in their college years. Moreover, most studies in the present review were conducted internationally and little has been done locally. Furthermore, there is a present evidence gap on the topic of academic-to-professional life transition in the Philippines; while international attention is salient to the topic, addressing it on the national level is a crucial addition to the existing body of knowledge about the topic. Additionally, there has been little qualitative research done on the factors affecting the transition on the individual level. In order to fill these gaps, this study seeks to explore how students perceive the transition from academic life to the professional world.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The sudden shift from college life to the professional world is confronted with uncertainties and worries. Studies have been focused on investigating the discrepancies between students' skills and level of preparedness and the demands of the modern business landscape. However, little has been done on the varying factors that contribute to these gaps on the individual level. A deeper understanding of the perceived dilemmas and coping strategies employed in the process of transition would be of great benefit to the teachers and school administrators in developing intervention programs that will better prepare students for their chosen careers.

### **Central Question:**

(1) How do graduating psychology students cope with the perceived challenges as they enter the professional world?

### **Specific Questions:**

(1) How do 4th-year psychology students perceive the shift toward the professional world?

(2) What are the career-entry worries/dilemmas of 4th-year psychology students? and

(3) How do 4th-year psychology students overcome these deficiencies/dilemmas?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study utilized the phenomenological qualitative research design. According to Creswell (2007), the objective of this inquiry strategy is to emphasize the description of the meaning of the lived experiences of a particular group of individuals. This research method allows the current researchers to explore the



participants' experiences of a phenomenon without the interference of any theoretical assumption, prejudice, or supposition (Van Manen, 2007). Moreover, it also enables participants to describe "what they have experienced" and "how they experienced it" (Creswell, 2007, p.58). Accordingly, interviews are often utilized as the main data collection technique and the foundation source to understand the phenomenon under study (Giorgi, 1985; Van Manen, 1990; Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological qualitative research design permits the study to explore the meaning of experience and perception of fourth-year students towards transitioning from academic life into the professional world.

## **Participants**

The number of participants in a qualitative interview may vary depending on the subject of investigation, the level of thematic saturation, and the unique methodology (Brouwer, et al., 2020). In this phenomenological study, the participants are composed of five (5) fourth-year students from the Psychology Department actively engaged in their internship program. The selection of this relatively small sample size aligns with the principles of phenomenological research, which emphasize the depth and richness of individual experiences and allow the achievement of saturation where no more new themes are emerging.

Purposive sampling is utilized as it focuses on population characteristics based on their ability to provide necessary data, enabling the researchers to answer their research questions. The rationale for choosing this approach was that the researchers sought knowledge about the challenges experienced by graduating college students and the adjustments they make as they enter the professional world, which the participants would provide by virtue of their experience. Participants are included in the study if they are pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and are in their final year of college. Conversely, participants are excluded from the study if they are currently enrolled in the internship program to maintain the study's focus on this pivotal academic-to-professional transition period.

## **Instruments**

Expert-validated structured interview was the main data collection technique for the study. The structured interview guide questions undergo a content-validity ratio, a form of inter-rater reliability, to be evaluated by three panel experts. The interview guide was developed by the researchers by constructing questions grounded on the research objectives. To gather appropriate and pertinent information needed for the interpretation and analysis of data, the content validity ratio is tested by thoroughly examining the content and format of the interview questions to determine whether each item assesses the appropriate and necessary knowledge or skill needed in the study. The instrument went through several changes and revisions until the final copy is produced and reproduced with the help of the panel experts. All of these contributed to the improvement of the interview questions which enabled the researchers to explore how students perceive the transition from academic life to the professional world.

## **Data Gathering Procedure**

The data gathering procedure will start with the creation of informed consent to be sent to the participants of the study. After the instrument is established to be valid and reliable, the researchers will also send a letter of consent to the program chair of the psychology department to allow the students to participate in the study and to permit the researchers to visit their classrooms during their free time. Participants are asked about their vacant time wherein they are free to be interviewed to conduct an appointment. The selected students receive a participant's informed consent for their approval to participate in the face-to-face interview. The informed consent contains the purpose of the study, expected time commitment, and data treatment.

The face-to-face interview will take place on the agreed appointment by the participants and the researchers.

Interviews will be conducted based on questions listed in the Interview Guide. However, the study participants were allowed the freedom to talk about their experiences in a way they would feel more comfortable and convenient. With written and verbal permission from the participants, the interviews will be audio-recorded. The entire interview will be audio recorded for the generation of transcripts and data interpretation. Moreover, the researcher will take notes while the interview is ongoing to make sure that the information gathered is complete and accurate. Some personal information about the participant will also be asked to better understand particular population characteristics and their ability to provide necessary data which will enable the researchers to answer their research questions. After the interviews with all the participants, qualitative data will then be generated through the interview transcripts.

### **Data Analysis**

The researchers utilized thematic analysis as the primary analytical tool of the study, which is an appropriate method for understanding experiences, thoughts, or behaviors across a data set (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Specifically, the inductive approach was utilized in the current study. This type of thematic analysis derives themes from the researcher's data (Varpio et al. 2019). Since these themes are data driven, they might not mirror the exact questions asked of participants (e.g. if participants veered off topic), and they are not necessarily reflective of the researcher's own interests or beliefs on the subject. This approach provides a broader, more expansive analysis of the entire body of data. After the generation of initial codes, themes – ideas, topics and patterns of meaning that emerged repeatedly – were identified and interpreted. These themes are actively constructed patterns (or meanings) derived from the data set that answer the research question, as opposed to mere summaries or categorizations of codes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Finally, the themes that come up and their implications were described in the findings section.

### **Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

The researchers treated every statement from the participants as equally important and relevant (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In this phase, the researchers immerse in the raw data, the unfiltered narratives of the fourth year college students. As the researchers read through their transcripts, they remember that each word, each sentence, bears significance. The researchers refrain from making premature judgments or prioritizing certain statements over others, ensuring that the data collection process is rigorous, thorough, and free from undue influence or prioritization of certain statements, thus bolstering the credibility of the research.

#### **Dependability**

Clustering and organizing data contributes to dependability by providing a structured and systematic approach to data analysis. Clustering guided the researchers in organizing the data by grouping similar statements into themes or categories. Clustering similar statements into themes or categories is a systematic approach that helps ensure dependability (Creswell & Poth, 2017). It allows researchers to organize and categorize data in a consistent and replicable manner. As the researchers identify patterns and themes within the narratives, the researchers discern the common threads that weave through the students' experiences. For instance, when students share common fears or concerns about their transition, the researchers recognize and connect these shared experiences.

#### **Transferability**

This encompasses providing ample information about the participants, the setting, and the methods used for data collection. In the case of psychology students transitioning into the professional world, a thorough portrayal of the academic environment, the institutions involved, and the specific challenges these students

face is essential. The researchers compared the research findings with existing related literature on similar topics that highlight the unique aspects of the said study. By placing the findings in the context of the broader literature, the researchers demonstrate how this study contributes to the ongoing conversation on psychology students' transitions.

### **Confirmability**

The researchers continually examined and double-checked the data throughout the study process to maintain confirmability and guarantee the accuracy of the findings. The researchers protect the integrity of the study's findings by taking a strict and objective stance, ensuring they accurately reflect the participants' true experiences and perceptions without undue bias. The researchers used bracketing, an essential process that compels researchers to set aside their biases and assumptions, allowing them to focus solely on the data.

### **Ethical Considerations**

In this study, several ethical considerations were taken into account. The researchers ensured that informed consents were obtained from the participants. Personal information and responses were handled with strict confidentiality and in accordance with the existing provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Any identifying information were protected from unauthorized disclosure and removed from the data and reports. Moreover, respect for the dignity of participants was prioritized in the study. The entire data collection procedure was done with honesty and transparency which includes the prevention of any sort of misleading information and misrepresentation of findings. Ethical considerations were constantly maintained throughout the data collection and analysis to ensure the participant's privacy and confidentiality of data.

## **RESULTS**

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Fourth Year Psychology Students

N = 5

| <b>Category</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Age</b>      |                  |                   |
| 20              | 1                | 20%               |
| 21              | 2                | 40%               |
| 22              | 2                | 40%               |
| <b>Gender</b>   |                  |                   |
| Female          | 3                | 60%               |
| Male            | 2                | 40%               |

Table 1 presents the demographic information of the participants, particularly their age and gender. The participants, specifically the fourth-year psychology students were selected through purposive sampling. A total of five students participated in the interview.



Table 2. Students’ Perception of College-to-Career Transition

| Domains   | Themes                   | Subthemes   |
|---|--------------------------|---|
| <i>Perception Towards the Transition from the Academic Life to the Professional World</i> | Challenge                | (1) Uncertainty<br>(2) Exclusivity<br>(3) Ill-prepared<br>(4) Competition |
|   | Preparedness             | (1) Well-prepared<br>(2) Equipped   |
|   | Program Applicability    | (1) Relevance<br>(2) Applied Knowledge                                    |
|   | Direct Observation       | (1) Peers<br>(2) Direct Observation                                       |
|   | Professional Development | (1) Adaptability<br>(2) Networking<br>(3) Continuous Learning             |
|   | Resilience               | (1) Uncertainty;<br>(2) Preparedness                                      |

**Challenge.** Every action they take, both in their personal lives and in their chosen profession, will have a significant impact. Navigating and managing the consequences of their actions is a constant challenge, emphasizing the responsibility and influence their behavior has on their lives and work.

Uncertainty. The participant describes uncertainty by expressing difficulty and doubt about their future career path in psychology. They highlight the uncertainty of whether they will ultimately pursue a career in psychology despite being students in the field.

As stated by Participant 1 *“we’re not sure if we are really going for the field of psychology when we work.”*

Exclusivity. Psychology education is exclusive, mainly preparing individuals for specific paths within psychology, such as clinical work, and may not adequately prepare for diverse career options outside the field.

Participant 2 stated, *“I don’t think psychology actually prepares you to go into the line of work that you are not expecting. It prepares you to go for psychology.”*

**Ill-prepared:** Despite additional educational units related to other lines of work in psychology, the BS Psychology program still lacks adequate preparation for careers that are related to psychology but not exclusively within the field.

Participant 1 stated, “...*practically speaking, I don’t think students are actually prepared to go for work that are not psychology related.*”

**Competition:** They emphasize the significance of having credentials before entering the workforce, suggesting a competitive environment where individuals vie for employment opportunities.

Participant 4 stated, “*You know, the employment status of the Philippines is not as high as other countries, it is really a competition when it comes to work.*”

**Preparedness.** It is essential to be adequately prepared for after graduation life. The advice given by educators should be regarded as valuable assistance that could help one’s preparedness for the professional world.

**Well-prepared:** The participant conveys confidence in the preparation by expressing a high level of readiness and anticipation for their chosen field of work.

Participant 2 denotes “*Very easy question, very prepared, psychology prepares me really well.*”

**Equipped:** The participant highlighted the direct application of psychological tests learned in school to their OJT, indicating that students are well-prepared and possess the necessary skills for their future work in the field.

As Participant 2 stated “*all the psychological tests that we encountered in school were all useful in the OJT, we were able to administer, even the scoring, and we were also able to interpret tas at the same time*”

**Program Applicability.** Gaining familiarity with potential future experiences aids students in effectively managing their expectations.

**Relevance:** The program’s relevance in enhancing communication skills, citing specific examples such as learning about the hiring process and receiving guidance on creating a professional CV.

As Participant 3 stated “*we have a course that talks about hiring, right?? So it kind of gives you heads-up on the things you have to do during the job process.*”

**Applied Knowledge:** Knowledge becomes beneficial when applying for jobs, indicating a practical application of the skills and information gained from their psychology education, specifically in job application processes and interviews.

Participant 3 stated that “*we were taught in one of our subjects how to properly construct a CV...it is an advantage as a psych student, that you have an idea what questions might be asked during the interview when you apply for a job.*”

**Professional Development.** Professionalism extends beyond the absence of heavy workload and involves active engagement and learning opportunities in a supportive environment.

**Adaptability:** Participant stated that through internships, they acquired skills and the ability to adapt to new environments. This implies that the participant recognizes the importance of being flexible and adept at

navigating different work settings and situations, emphasizing the role of adaptability in the college-to-career transition.

Participant 4 stated *“internships, acquired skills and ability to adapt sa new environments.”*

**Networking:** The participant recognizes the importance of establishing connections and relationships, which can contribute to effective career planning and facilitate a smoother transition into the professional world.

Participant 4 stated *“strong professional network or internships nga can have a significant impact on the smooth transition from college to career.”*

**Continuous Learning:** participant recognizes that maintaining a commitment to learning is crucial for a successful transition from college to a career.

Participant 4 denoted that *“staying informed about industry trends and industry developing skills is crucial and adapting to the dynamic culture of jobs in the present.”*

**Resilience.** The capacity to withstand challenges and adaptable to changes.

**Uncertainty:** Many students may experience feelings of uncertainty over themselves and their ability to deal with the many challenges in the transition they encounter.

According to the statement made by Participant 2, *“...the culture shock that they experience from immersing themselves in the real world causes them to develop low self-esteem.”*

**Preparedness:** The participants consider it essential to be adequately prepared for after graduation life. The advice given by educators should be regarded as valuable assistance that could help one’s preparedness for the professional world.

As said by Participant 2, *“it is crucial that students are being prepared, the key there is, when the profess or say something, take it as a life lesson.”*

Table 3. Students’ Career-Entry Worries

| Domains  | Themes          | Subthemes   |
|--|-----------------|---|
| <b><i>Challenges Encountered by Graduating College Students During the Academic-to-Professional Transition</i></b> | Requirements    | (1) Validity; (2) Document Processing; (3) Early Preparation                    |
|  | Job search      | (1) Pre-employment Screening; (2) Legitimacy                                    |
|  | Competition     | (1) Communication Skills; (2) Pleasing Personality; (3) Interpersonal Skills    |
|  | Time management | (1) Adaptation; (2) Managing Responsibilities; (3) Scheduling; (4) Maximization |
|  | Pressure        | (1) Board Examination; (2) Meeting Expectations; (3) Fear of Failure            |

**Requirements.** The bulk of documents that graduating college students need to settle before and after they finished their degrees is one of the main causes of worry as they enter the career life. It entails a lot of time and effort to acquire and complete these requirements and be able to land a job. Thus, it is crucial for

students to accomplish these while handling their school tasks so as to avoid adding further burden to the already difficult task of earning a diploma and getting a job.

**Validity:** One of the main challenges underscored by the students was handling anxiousness about the validity of the requirements they acquired. Participant 1 mentioned the inconvenience of processing requirements after graduation. In addition, the participant described how crucial it is to settle documents while in college to avoid the hassle of applying for IDs and worrying about job interviews simultaneously.

Participant 1 said *“that’s the most troublesome part because you won’t just be worrying about the interview; you’ll also be concerned if the credentials and IDs you obtained are actually valid.”*

**Document Processing:** Although there is a law that states that document processing is free for fresh graduates according to one of the participants, going to offices to process requirements was the difficult part of it. In addition, the same set of documents is required by companies they will send a job application to, and going back and forth to submit and settle papers tremendously adds to the burden of graduating students who are still amid internships and reviews for board examinations.

Participant 1 emphasized *“the hassle of going back and forth to offices like this just to, you know, process something doesn’t really go away.”*

**Early Preparation:** The participants stressed how early preparation could be an edge among other graduates. They are well-aware of the fact that they have a lot of competitors in the field of work that they are eyeing, and it will be of great advantage to them if they are already primed about the things to expect and requirements to accomplish.

Participant 3 said, *“it’s like you have a lot of competitors in the field. So, knowing what you’re going to do is like an advantage. So, maybe, if I could go back, I would prepare earlier.”*

**Job Search.** Just as how students’ academic experience is filled with abundance of ups and downs, searching for a job after finishing studies is like embarking on a journey of chances and uncertainties. Nothing can be ascertained, and nobody knows what the future holds. Graduates can only bank on the knowledge and skills that they have acquired in all the years they have spent in school, hoping that all of which will take them through the next chapter of their lives – the career life.

**Legitimacy:** While directories and online recruitment companies are helpful for graduates in finding jobs, the legitimacy of these databases is not guaranteed especially if you are not completely familiar with the company. One of the students emphasized how challenging it is to work in a company if you are not certain about the system, consequently how you will thrive in such arrangement.

Participant 1 said, *“you are not sure about the apparent benefits, consequences, and compliance when you enter that company, especially if you don’t know it well.”*

**Pre-employment Screening:** Maintaining a job is much easier and less stressful compared to the procedures that fresh graduates have to go through during the pre-employment screening. According to one of the students who participated in the interview, the only struggle of employed graduates is how they will thrive and foster harmony in the workplace, whereas the unemployed ones would have to deal with the stressful process of submitting requirements, preparing for interviews, and other prerequisite for graduation.

Participant 1 underscored, *“it’s like the challenge is, those procedures are already there, because it’s not really difficult once you get into the work. The difficult part there is just that you need to maintain your work.”*

**Competition.** Graduating students are not oblivious to the fact that they are not the only ones who are going through the same phase and struggles. A lot of aspiring applicants in their field are also making their own strategies to land a position. They are not just conquering their fears and weaknesses, but it is also a competition between and other graduates in their field.

Communication Skills: The difficult part about getting a job is the competition among college graduates who are all struggling with the requirements and most importantly with how they will present themselves in order to get hired. This is challenging particularly for students who has problems with their communication skills

Participant 2 said, “...because the design of the interviews and job selection seems to be, you know, appropriated for extroverted people.”

Pleasing Personality: While a pleasing personality is deemed a great advantage in interviews, some think it is not necessary. The first stages of the interview are crucial to employment, people who are good at self-expression are more likely to get accepted. compared to those who are just skilled. Hence, communication and interpersonal skills are more imperative than a pleasing personality alone.

Participant 3 asserted, “so, in an interview, having a pleasant personality is like, no, your personality should really be pleasant, but I don’t think it’s actually necessary to have a pleasant personality.”

Interpersonal Skills: According to one of the participants, applicants with good interpersonal skills are more likely to get hired by companies. Employers prefer employees who are good at communicating with people especially if they are in a field of work that involves a lot of interaction with customers like call center, marketing, and sales,

Participant 2 emphasized, “it’s rare to find a job that doesn’t involve dealing with people. I mean, ideally, if you can handle a secretarial or clerical job, you would just deal with papers, money, and such. But it still requires, let’s say, communicating with your boss and co-employees.”

**Time Management.** Graduates identified time management as one of their weaknesses, hence a challenge that they need to overcome to make a successful transition from college life to the professional world. It requires a lot of discipline to be able to accomplish their duties and responsibilities within the given timeframe.

Adaptation: The transition from college to the workplace also implies adjustments to a new environment, colleagues, arrangement, and responsibilities. According to the students, it’s like going to school for the first time again, they don’t know what to expect and how they will navigate the challenges and complexities of life in the professional world.

Participant 4 mentioned, “personally, the adjustment to our current workplace and of course, being relatively new, comes with fear about the expectations and the necessary adjustments that need to be made.”

Managing Responsibilities: One of the challenges emphasized by the graduating psychology students was the weight of responsibilities that they need to handle as they go through the career life. it is a completely different world filled with challenges of varying complexity and students have to adjust effectively to these changes to be able to thrive in their new environment.



Participant 4 said, *“adapting to a faster-paced environment is also crucial. Balancing work-life expectations, managing increased possibilities, and navigating potential job uncertainties are common challenges as well.”*

**Scheduling:** The participants have also mentioned how the preparations and decisions they had made so far contributed to some of the perceived challenges that graduating students will face during the transition. This includes scheduling; the students wished they had scheduled their thesis prior to their internship so that they wouldn't have to think about while they are in the middle of preparation for their training and other academic requirements.

Participant 1 said, *“the hassle I'm currently facing involves juggling both my thesis and my on-the-job training (OJT). It's like I have this divided part, where I need to academically prepare and, at the same time, prepare for my on-the-job training.”*

**Maximization:** The students were not able to accomplish their thesis prior to their on-the-job training. Consequently, they cannot maximize their internship experience. However, they are they are doing their best to juggle their tasks and be used to handling multiple tasks at a time as this is more or less that same exact arrangement that they will have once they work.

Participant 1 underscored, *“I can't fully experience it because of my thesis, but I'm doing the best that I can because I'm pretty sure that if I start working, I might get overloaded or overwhelmed.”*

**Pressure.** The urgency brought by the necessity of landing a job after finishing college is one of the perceived difficulties that graduating college students need to overcome during the transition. They have also talked about the sources of this feeling and how the current mindsets towards fresh graduates' employability contribute and hinder them from the path that they want to take.

**Board Examination:** One of the main sources of pressure according to the students is the board examination. They have that there is this notion that if you pass and get a license, a lot of opportunities will come your way, and if you don't, it will be difficult for you to have a spot in the field. This thinking elicited a sense of worry and fear among students, but despite that they are hopeful that they can still find a decent job regardless of the results of the licensure examination.

Participant 2 emphasized, *“because it serves as a stepping stone, if one can't pass the board exam initially, they can still work. However, some people have the mindset that without a license, there may not be good opportunities. In reality, there are still other possibilities, so just keep trying until you pass the board exam.”*

**Meeting Expectations:** When it comes to the expectations that needs to be met, the participants described how the new environment that are about to move into as they embrace their new role bolster a sense of fear among them. They emphasized how their unfamiliarity with how it is like working full-time and that thought that they are going to be responsible for all the actions and decisions the moment they set foot into the workplace contributed to that fear.

Participant 4 said, *“and then, of course, we also experience anxiety, like, what should I do, what if it's like this, those 'what ifs' and such.”*

**Fear of Failure:** With all the preparations that they have been making, graduating students expressed their fear of not measuring up despite all of those. They have received failing grades in some of the courses that they took, and it entails a great deal of motivation to be able to push through after facing setbacks which the participants acknowledged and put emphasis on during the interview.

Participant 6 mentioned, *“the number of students failing in subjects and grades is increasing, and I feel that what they need is an adjustment in motivation. It’s like, even if they fail, they shouldn’t easily give up. They should look for something that will strengthen them to continue in the field they entered.”*

Table 3. Students’ Coping Strategies

| Domains  | Themes             | Subthemes  |
|--|--------------------|--|
| <b>Graduating Psychology Students’ Strategies to Overcome Perceived Difficulties</b> | Persistence        | (1) Diversion; (2) Head-on; (3) Self-discipline; (4) Consistency; (5) Determination; (6) Effect to Personal Life |
|  | Career Preparation | (1) Readiness; (2) Positive Outlook; (3) Engaging; (4) Being Open  |
|  | Uncertainty        | (1) Unprepared; (2) Doubts   |
|  | Employment         | (1) Part-time job; (2) Priming; (3) Networking; (4) Focus  |
|  | Skill Development  | (1) Readiness; (2) Self-Preparation; (3) Discipline; (4) Curiosity; (5) Enthusiastic                             |

**Persistence.** The practice of firmness emerges as a central theme, reflecting participants’ varied strategies and mindsets in navigating the transition from academic life to the professional world.

Diversion: This subtheme signifies a coping strategy where individuals temporarily shift their focus from existential stressors. Indicates that some individuals engage in social activities or diversionary measures to alleviate stress, allowing them to return to their challenges with a refreshed perspective.

Participant 1’s observation, *“before settling with whatever existential crisis they have, they go to parties, they go to bars, get drunk.”*

Head-on: This reflects a proactive approach to challenges, addressing challenges directly and immediately. This approach indicates a readiness to confront issues, showcasing a sense of responsibility and urgency in dealing with the uncertainties of the transition.

Participant 1 notes, *“some prefer to solve it immediately. They think, ‘Okay, I need to solve this now. I need to know what to do next so I won’t have to worry about it next time.’”*

Self-Discipline: Nurturing healthy habits emerges as a subtheme, it is evident as participants employ structured systems, such as reward and punishment, to manage their tasks during the transition. This approach signifies a commitment to a systematic and organized coping strategy, emphasizing long term solutions.

Participant 2 exemplifies this, *“I’m a bookworm. What I do is I have a reward and punishment system.”*

Consistency: Stability is a key subtheme, as observed in participants who persistently pursue their academic and career goals, applying coping mechanisms with regularity. This subtheme highlights the importance of repeated efforts and dedication in achieving a smooth transition.

Participant 5 stated, *“others review the whole day, and their personal life is affected. Some, however, live as if this is their life already, so they can be ready for their future.”*

Determination: It shines through participants who maintain a positive mindset and persevere in the face of

challenges. This subtheme underscores the resilience and resolve exhibited by individuals as they navigate the complexities of transitioning to the professional world.

Participant 3 shares her coping mechanism, *“so, always stay positive. That’s my coping mechanism.”*

**Effect on Personal Life:** It explores how coping mechanisms can influence individuals’ personal lives, either leading to functional or dysfunctional outcomes. This dimension emphasizes the interplay between coping strategies and overall well-being during the transition.

Participant 1 reflects, *“others may solve each problem, but if everything becomes a problem for them, it becomes dysfunctional. You can see that their coping mechanism is not effective.”*

**Career Preparation.** It serves as a vital theme, encompassing participants’ proactive approaches to ready themselves for the professional world.

**Readiness:** It involves participants actively preparing for potential scenarios and challenges in the job market. This subtheme highlights the importance of anticipating and familiarizing oneself with the demands of the professional world.

Participant 3 shares, *“as a graduating student, my strategy is to familiarize myself with possible scenarios because now, I’m sending out my CVs online.”*

**Positive Outlook:** Maintaining an optimistic narrative on our mind is crucial for a smooth transition, this subtheme underscores the importance of cultivating a positive mindset and embracing new experiences as essential elements in fostering adaptability and resilience during the transition phase.

Participant 4 stated, *“maintaining a positive mindset and being open to new experiences can contribute to a smooth transition.”*

**Engaging:** Engaging participants actively seek mentorship, internships, and professional development opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge. This approach underscores the importance of practical experiences and networking in facilitating a smooth transition to the professional realm.

Participant 4 notes, *“seeking mentorship and participating in internships, OJT, and engaging in professional development opportunities can contribute to a smooth transition.”*

**Being Open:** Open to new experiences emerges as a positive trait among participants, emphasizing adaptability and willingness to embrace change. This subtheme underscores the importance of flexibility and openness in navigating the uncertainties of the transition.

Participant 4 suggests, *“cultivating adaptability, maintaining a positive mindset, and being open to new experiences can contribute to a smooth transition.”*

**Uncertainty.** It captures the prevailing sentiment among participants as they approach the post graduation phase. This theme reflects the acknowledgment of an unknown future and the challenges associated with the transition. Participants openly express doubts, worries, and a sense of being unprepared for what lies ahead.

**Unprepared:** This reflects participants’ acknowledgment of their current state of readiness for post-graduation life. This subtheme encapsulates the participants’ recognition of the need for further preparation and the uncertainty that comes with the transition from student life to the professional world.

Participant 1 candidly states, *“I am not prepared, but I am preparing.”*

**Doubts:** As challenges arise, doubts emerge as a subtheme, expressing participants’ apprehensions about the future. This subtheme underscores the participants’ concerns about their capabilities and the potential challenges they may face after graduation.

Participant 5’s response illustrates this uncertainty, *“I might suddenly doubt myself because what if I fail immediately, just on the first try.”*

**Employment.** Employment marks the culmination of a student’s academic journey and signifies the transition into the professional world. As fourth-year students prepare for this phase, they engage in various strategies encompassed by four key subcategories; Part-time Job, Priming, Networking, and Focus. Through these subcategories, fourth-year students equip themselves with the skills, connections, and mindset necessary to enter the workforce confidently and effectively after completing their degree.

**Part-time Job:** Exposing oneself to a part-time job while studying contributes in nurturing essential skills for the future career of students.

As Participant 1 said, *“so now, I am taking on various roles. Even though I’m working on my thesis, doing my OJT, I am also taking part-time jobs like tutoring and doing commissions.”*

**Priming:** Participants emphasized that priming embodies the proactive steps taken to prepare oneself for future endeavors. This preparation encompasses individuals in building connections, establishing networks, acquiring essential knowledge, and learning budgeting skills. By engaging in priming activities, individuals aim to alleviate uncertainties, ensuring a smoother transition into the professional realm by equipping themselves with the necessary tools and resources.

As Participant 1 highlighted, *“...so that’s what I’m doing for preparation now because I don’t want to be surprised that when I start working, I have no connections, I don’t know anyone, I don’t know what I’ll do, I don’t know how to budget.”*

**Networking:** Participants highlighted that networking encompasses deliberate efforts to expand one’s circle of professional connections and relationships. It involves building meaningful connections, fostering relationships, and creating opportunities for collaboration or career advancement.

As Participant 1 said, *“...what I do is, I go almost everywhere, like malls, museums, bars. I don’t just socialize; I’m expanding my network.”*

**Focus:** Participants emphasized on concentrating on what truly matters for their future plans and prioritizing major concerns such as job acceptance, salary considerations, and familiarity with the prospective. This deliberate focus allows for efficient decision-making and effective preparation without being sidetracked by less critical details.

As Participant 1 highlighted, *“...no, I don’t have to worry about minor things, and the major things I have to worry about are if I’ll be accepted for the job, how much my salary will be, if I know the company I’m entering. Those are the things I want to worry about when I prepare properly.”*

**Skill Development.** Skill Development stands as a one of the pivotal strategies employed by fourth-year students to effectively manage their time amidst transitional phases. This main category encompasses several subcategories—Readiness, Self-preparation, Discipline, Curiosity, and Enthusiastic—each

contributing uniquely to their time management strategies during transitioning.

**Readiness:** Readiness approach extends beyond mere preparation for a specific outcome; it involves a proactive mindset open to multiple potential paths. By familiarizing participants with work scenarios, exploring various options, and considering alternative career routes, they equip themselves with a versatile readiness to adapt and thrive in an ever-evolving professional landscape.

As Participant 3 said, *“I prepare in a way that, as I mentioned earlier, I familiarize myself with work scenarios, how the application process goes, the possible things that might happen. For example, if I’m not hired or something like that. I also look at different possibilities. Like, should I study right away, should I pursue a master’s degree right away, or should I apply to a clinic or should I apply as an HR. I look at different paths that I can take.”*

**Self-preparation:** Participants’ approach to self-preparation involves leveraging their current internship experience to not only learn technical skills but also to cultivate the necessary mental and emotional fortitude needed for their future professional endeavors. This intentional self-preparation enables them to adapt and thrive in challenging work settings they might encounter in their future careers.

As Participant 4 expressed, *“now, because I’m interning, I’m really hustling, preparing myself for the future, what my life will be like, what kind of work I’ll have. So I’m training myself in my current internship, even though it’s toxic.”*

**Discipline:** Participants maintaining a disciplined approach during their OJT indicates their reliability and dedication to professional conduct. This discipline likely sets the foundation for their future career endeavors, ensuring a strong work ethic and consistent performance in their professional journey.

As Participant 4 said, *“and maybe after graduating, in terms of OJT, I really follow. I follow as much as possible.”*

**Curiosity:** Participants’ demonstration of curiosity through seeking guidance and clarity exhibits their proactive attitude toward learning and understanding their role. This inquisitive approach fosters a deeper understanding of their tasks, responsibilities, and expectations, contributing to their growth and success in their professional journey.

As Participant 4 highlights, *“...as our SHRM professor said, we really should ask what we should do with our supervisors, and that’s what I did.”*

**Enthusiastic:** Participant’s inclination towards enthusiasm suggests a desire to actively participate, contribute, and foster a positive atmosphere in their workplace. Their proactive approach aims to create a more engaging and collaborative environment, fostering better relationships and potentially enhancing overall productivity and morale among colleagues.

As Participant 4 said, *“I try to stand out as much as possible because they say it’s better to stand out than for your workmates not to feel your presence.”*

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this phenomenological qualitative study have provided pertinent data and insights into the perception of graduating psychology students towards the transition from academic life to the professional world. This study sought to explore the strategies employed to overcome the perceived challenges in the



transition phase through an interview conducted with five (5) graduating psychology students. Thematic analysis was used in analyzing the data gathered. The results should be presented with caution due to the limitations of the research. The limitations of the design and potential implications for the interpretation of the results are discussed in this chapter.

The findings from the participants' responses provide valuable insights into the challenges and perceptions students face during the transition from academic life to the professional world. The participants articulate concerns regarding the limited scope of their psychology degree, underscoring the necessity for a more comprehensive education that transcends conventional career trajectories within the field (Guison, 2022). This aligns with the notion that students often encounter challenges during the transition when their academic specialization is excessively narrow and neglects to encompass a broader array of skills applicable across various professional domains (Casciano, 2022). While some express confidence in their readiness and anticipation for their chosen fields, others highlight the need for a more comprehensive and adaptable skill set (Molinsky & Pisman, 2019). The participants' recognition of the direct application of knowledge gained from their course, particularly in job application processes, mirrors the findings of Mitchell (2019), who emphasized the positive impact of work-related experiences on students' perceptions of their preparedness for the workplace. Participants underscored the importance of adaptability, networking, and continuous learning, aligning with existing literature emphasizing these qualities for a successful transition from college to a career (Mitchell, 2019; Aracil et al., 2018). Their focus on adaptability resonates with the recognition of sudden adjustments and challenges in the shift from academic to professional environments, as noted by Molinsky (2019) and Arnaldo (2023). Networking's importance, highlighted by participants, aligns with Mitchell's (2019) findings, emphasizing the social influence and support crucial during transitions. The participants' acknowledgment of the significance of maintaining a commitment to learning reflects the broader emphasis on continuous professional development to meet evolving workplace demands, as outlined by Mitchell (2019).

The challenges illuminated by participants concerning accountability, dependence, and stability harmonize with extant literature, notably underscoring the challenges students confront in assuming responsibility and making autonomous decisions during the transitional phase (Molinsky & Pisman, 2019). Their cognizance of the imperative for stability and readiness across mental, emotional, and physical dimensions corresponds with established research accentuating the importance of psychological preparedness for the college-to-career transition (Blokker et al., 2022). Furthermore, participants' emphasis on resilience and acknowledgment of the psychological facets of transitioning align with broader studies in the field, including those highlighting the pivotal role of internal motivation and external support in inspiring students to pursue further studies despite adversities (Geirdal et al., 2019). Concerning career preparation, participants' stress on professionalism, adaptability, networking, and continuous learning aligns with contemporary workforce expectations, as outlined in the literature (Mitchell, 2019). Their acknowledgment of the practical application of knowledge, surpassing mere acquisition, mirrors the educational shift towards emphasizing experiential learning and real-world applicability (Mitchell, 2019). Participants' insights on skill development, accountability, and resilience contribute to the ongoing discourse advocating for a holistic educational approach. This approach aims to equip students not only academically but also psychologically and professionally, preparing them comprehensively for the challenges posed by the professional world (Geirdal et al., 2019; Molinsky & Pisman, 2019).

Moreover, the participants identified requirements, job search, competition, time management, and pressure as the main dilemmas that graduating college students must overcome as they transition to the professional world. The processing of documents like valid IDs was deemed a challenge for the students who were in the middle of an internship and preparing for the board examination at the same time. According to Bonsaksen (2019), preparedness for transitioning can be prevention from mistakes that can be committed by a newly grad employee, being prepared for things that can be encountered in the future can be an advantage and a

factor of success in a career. Furthermore, the results revealed that searching for jobs was one of the main causes of worry for graduating students. The participants underscored that submitting requirements, preparing for interviews, and looking for companies with the best benefits was the most stressful part. This result is parallel to the study of Prudente (2022), wherein it was emphasized that the first challenge in transitioning is to find a decent workplace that will suit someone's personality and skills. In addition, it was explained that the intense competition among graduates often results in increased pressure and difficulty in finding a job (Chande, V., 2023). These findings are parallel to the current study where competition among college graduates was identified as one of their career-entry worries. They acknowledged that they are not the only ones struggling with the requirements and how they will present themselves to the employers. Good interpersonal skills were emphasized as a key advantage when applying for a job, specifically during an interview. People skilled at communicating and establishing connections with others are more likely to get hired by companies than those who are not. Moreover, the transition from college to the workplace also implies adjustments to a new environment, colleagues, arrangements, and responsibilities. The findings revealed that these changes have fostered a sense of worry among graduating college students as the workplace environment entails a new set of colleagues, arrangements, and responsibilities. It is a completely different world filled with challenges of varying complexity and students must adjust effectively to these changes to be able to thrive in their new environment. The results complement the recent study of Casciano (2022), which states that switching from school to work can be challenging. Students are habituated to the college system, which consists of predetermined objectives, teachers, grades, and weekly breaks for each semester. Lastly, the pressure to land a job after finishing college is one of the perceived difficulties that graduating college students need to overcome during the transition. Similarly, it was stated in a research article authored by Krosel et. al. (2022), revealed that many recent graduates are being challenged with this by coming from a college to a new environment wherein there will be pressure for them to be unemployed in the few months of being a new graduate.

In addition, the participants explored the coping mechanisms, career preparation strategies, and time and self-management approaches employed by 4th-year students navigating the transition from the academic to the professional world. Participants exhibited persistence aligning with existing literature that underscores the importance of resilience and perseverance during transitional phases (Blokker et al., 2022). The use of diversion and social engagement paralleled findings specifically in promoting psychological well-being during critical points in their lives. Career preparation strategies such as readiness for challenges and seeking mentorship, correlated with existing studies emphasizing the importance of anticipating professional demands and practical experiences. This signifies active engagement in opportunities aligned with literature aligned to the agency in post-graduation dilemmas. (Juliani, 2021). Time and self-management, recognizing the need for skill development, echoed the broader emphasis on adaptability in the professional workplace. Culminating academic journeys through part-time jobs and networking aligned with literature nurturing essential skills, deliberate planning corresponded to studies of strategic approaches to transitions (Swenson, 2019). Overall, the findings contribute to existing literature while offering practical insights for educational institutions and policymakers in supporting effective transitions (Mitchell, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the relevant findings, the study concluded that graduating psychology students perceive the shift toward the professional world as challenging as it is characterized by uncertainties and adjustments yet a fulfilling process that fosters a sense of hope that regardless of what the future holds, college has prepared them for the life that they are going to have after graduation. The students' experiences during internships, peer influence, and direct observation all contributed to their overall perception of the transition process.

Moreover, the main career-entry worry of graduating psychology students in transitioning was finding a decent workplace coupled with the stressful urgency to land an entry-job position after graduation. The

competition among fresh graduates contributed to the increased pressure and difficulty in starting their first job. Similarly, poor interpersonal skills were seen as an impediment to obtaining employment. In addition, the transition from college to the workplace also implies adjustments to a new environment, colleagues, arrangement, and responsibilities which tremendously bolstered a sense of worry among the students. The professional world is a completely different sphere filled with challenges of varying complexity and students must adjust effectively to these changes to be able to thrive in their new environment.

Furthermore, graduating psychology students overcome the abovementioned difficulties by seeking work-based experiences to prepare themselves for how things work in the professional world. They are maximizing their time in the internship to expand their network and familiarize themselves with the workplace environment. Students are capitalizing on the knowledge and skills that they have acquired in all the years they have spent in college and use it as a strong foundation to exceed their limitations and explore possibilities. Change is surrounded by uncertainties and inconveniences and entails a huge amount of discipline to overcome such dilemmas. Some preferred to seek distraction amid stressful situations and delay the search for solutions while others confronted the problem head-on. Regardless of the strategy that students employ, there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all approach, what works should be continued, and what doesn't should be ruled out.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To further improve the study, future research on the topic may improve the generalizability of the results by increasing the sample and include students from different programs.

Furthermore, the study placed emphasis on the presence of coping mechanisms and strategies employed by participants during the transitional phase. To investigate further their effectiveness, the researchers recommend conducting in-depth investigations into specific coping mechanisms. A focused investigation into the experiences and efficacy of coping strategies can offer valuable insights. This approach to acquisition is paralleled with the call for more examinations of coping mechanisms to identify practical and effective strategies for navigating this critical phase from the educational to the occupational world.

Ultimately, the results of the study highly suggest a need to strengthen career preparation programs. Providing guidance to adopt a proactive approach, providing students with real-world insights and practical skills essential for their chosen professions. This is mirrored by the participants' emphasis on professionalism, adaptability, networking, and continuous learning (Mitchell, 2019). By incorporating real-world scenarios, mentorship opportunities, and industry exposure, educational institutions can better equip students with the skills and knowledge essential for a seamless and competent transition.

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