

Exploring the Effect on the Employability of Criminology Graduates Amidst Rising Noncriminology Demand

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the employment opportunities of criminology graduates were significantly affected by the increasing number of non-criminology graduates entering law enforcement. This study looked at the challenges criminology graduates face during job-seeking. In data analyzing, the researchers used Collaizzi's seven-step method. Twelve participants engaged in an in-depth face-to-face interview based on a questionnaire made by the researchers. This included a criminologist who graduated within 2020 – 2024 who are employed within or outside the field provided they have experience applying within the field. Six cluster themes emerged: motivation and educational background in criminology, expectation vs. realities of employment, challenges in employment application process, competition from non-criminology graduates, factors behind preference for noncriminology graduates, and strategies for criminology graduates to stay competitive. The findings revealed that participants generally have high confidence that they could easily enter any law enforcement agency, however several factors proved to be a persistent hinder in their employment. They lacked verbal and communication skills as well as educational software literacy. They also reportedly experienced psychological and financial constraints; and the hiring standards of law enforcement agencies proved to be rigorous, adding to the fact that the agencies recently preferred employing non-criminology graduates due to changing needs of the society. Such setbacks made the job market become highly competitive limiting their employment opportunities thus, creating a huge barrier in their career growth. Based on these findings, the researchers suggest that institutions should implement interactive career orientation, integrate the Information and Technology Literacy in the curriculum, and check on their employability status within the last two to three years. The criminology graduates should likewise focus in preparing their financial, physical, and mental capabilities while strengthening their qualifications through gaining extra certification and professional networking.

Keywords: motivations, employment expectations, employment challenges, hiring preference, strategies

INTRODUCTION

Rationale of the Study

Modern job market is becoming a battlefield. While criminology programs traditionally prepare students for careers in law enforcement, the labor market has been undergoing significant shifts. As stated knowledge, information, and technology are the main three unstoppable forces that direct our economy (Abas & Imam, 2019). Likewise, technological developments and cybersecurity drives the country's law enforcement agencies (Kulkarni, et. al., 2024).

The effect of globalization has brought unexpected developments. Along with it, the nature of crime has correspondingly evolved, making law enforcement agencies to seek for graduates with flexible skill sets that extend beyond criminology. Due to this, non-criminology graduates were instead put into limelight in the law enforcement field as they have the skills and specialization needed to adapt. In particular, the Philippine National Police (PNP) has been employing individuals with a degree in education, accountancy, and information technology (Dapitan et. al., 2023). According to R.A. 9263, Section 6, the Bureau of Fire

Protection (BFP) and Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) offers lateral entry positions for commissioned officers including but not limited to specialized and technical qualifications such as engineers, nurses, teachers, doctor of medicine, attorneys and etc. with criminologists included only in the lateral position for BFP (Lawphil, 2004; Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, n.d.). The Armed Forces of the Philippines likewise accepts any applicants through Candidate Soldier Course (CSC) or Officer Candidate Course (OCC) provided they meet the standard requirements for height, age, and physical aspects as cited in R.A. 291 or the "Armed Forces Officer Personnel Act of 1948." Furthermore, a Filipino job posting website announced the priority courses of Philippine Coast Guard for their 2025 quota for commissionship and enlistment which was cited from the official Facebook page of PCG entitled "Coast Guard Human Resource Management Command (CGHRMC)". Among the many priority courses, the Bachelor of Science in Criminology was not included (NewsToGov, 2025). This inclusivity of other courses positively affects the law enforcement agencies since there will be a wide range of skills and perspectives (Refugia, 2021). However, this could mean in contrast for criminology graduates as it indicates higher competition but lower job vacancies, raising significant issue about the possible consequences for the future of criminology as a profession.

In a tracer study conducted in a university in Misamis Occidental, Philippines criminology graduates of 2018 to 2023 faced significant decrease in employment opportunities where the unemployment rate ranges from 50.72% to 95.91%, with graduates from 2018-2019 having relatively higher employment rate (49.28%) than recent graduates (2021-2023) who has an alarmingly low employment rate of 4.09 % to 5. 27% (Ates, et. al., 2024). It was reported that an estimated 23% of jobs were expected to be affected by industry shifts and changes in consumer demand (World Economic Forum, 2023). Moreover, the study conducted in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India highlighted the need for criminology graduates to address skills gap as well as the need for acquiring specialization and certification programs (Kulkarni, et al., 2024).

This mismatch between academic preparation and employment trends raises critical questions about the adaptability of criminology graduates and the responsiveness of higher education institutions. Despite the wide range of studies exploring the employability of criminology graduates, there are only few who investigated the challenges experienced by criminology graduates during employment as most of them focuses only on challenges encountered during internship or understanding science related subjects of the degree. Additionally, the increased presence of non-criminology graduates in criminology-related jobs has not been studied yet, particularly how it affects the employment opportunities of criminology graduates. Finally, while there are studies that suggest improving employability, there is a lack of practical and experience-based strategies that directly respond to the current demand of the field.

This study seeks to discover the employment experiences of criminology graduates and how do they compare to their initial job expectations, the challenges and common obstacles they encounter in securing job in the field, the employment opportunities of criminology graduates as to how the increasing presence of non-criminology graduates affected them, and the strategies in enhancing the criminology graduates' competency and maintaining relevance in the job market. The constructive understanding of these gaps aim to address the recurring issue with regard to the employability of criminology graduates during the era of shifting agency demands particularly through posting awareness in recent job market changes and challenges, and guiding in developing enhanced practical skills and competencies that can efficiently keep up with the increasing tight competition in the evolving job market trends.

METHODS

This study follows the qualitative research design applying Collaizi's phenomenological method to explore the lived experiences of individuals through identifying significant statements and meanings from the transcription (Praveena & Sasikamura, 2021). This design was employed to undertake a comprehensive study on the lived experiences of criminology graduates, particularly, regarding their employment expectations, motivations, challenges, and strategies to maintain relevance in the field amongst competition from non-criminology graduates. This study was conducted at the capital town of Misamis Occidental which is a province in northern Mindanao, Philippines. As the provincial hub for administration and politics, the location offers a manageable population and streamlined access to government data. The presence of cooperative local agencies further establishes its suitability as a primary research site.

The participants included twelve selected criminology graduates which were chosen based on the specific criteria: must have earned a bachelor's degree in criminology, must have passed the criminology licensure examination (CLE), graduated within 2020–2024, and either employed in a criminology-related job or in a field not related to criminology provided they have an experience applying to any criminology-related jobs. Data was collected by face-to-face in-depth interview utilizing a semi-structured instrument.

In analyzing the data, Collaizi's distinctive seven step method was employed which comprised of the following: familiarization to engross the researchers with the data by its repetitive accounting of the participants transcript; identifying significant statements to ascertain the direct relevance of these statements to the phenomenon under investigation; formulating meanings to reduce the significant statement in a conclusion by bracketing personal assumptions to mitigate bias; clustering themes to determine common patterns among the lived experience of participants by organizing formulated meanings into themes; developing an exhaustive description to create a comprehensive and inclusive illustration of the phenomenon while integrating all of the cluster themes; producing the fundamental structure to encapsulate the exhaustive description in a clear and concise statement; seeking verification of the fundamental structure to confirm data accuracy by seeking for participants' feedback. The ethical considerations of the study were guided by Resnik's Ethical Principles of Research (Resnik, 2015) and the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173), upholding participants' autonomy and confidentiality, as well as the data's truthfulness, objectivity, integrity, and accuracy.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research explored the navigational journeys of twelve employed criminologists who graduated within the school year 2020 until 2024, among which, six were employed in the tri-bureau, PCG, and AFP while the other six were employed outside of these agencies. Each participant shared their employment journey highlighting the effect on their employability amidst rising non-criminology demand. Six key themes emerged from the qualitative analysis, all of which essentially captured the participants lived experiences pre and post-graduation. This comprised of motivation and educational background in criminology, expectation vs. realities of employment, challenges in employment application process, competition from non-criminology graduates, factors behind preference for non-criminology graduates, and strategies for criminology graduates to stay competitive.

Motivation and educational background in criminology highlighted that family and personal aspiration served as driving force in their career decision. Participants shared their personal interests and career motivations, noting their viewpoint on the course as a bridge into serving the society and into securing a stable employment. Student motivation comes from intrinsic or personal preference and extrinsic or social-environmental influence (Salce, 2025). This phenomenon is further explained stating that the significant relationship between motivation and environment operate in close association, producing a graduate who has high level of confidence, competence, and preparedness (Nadhiroh & Kurniawan, 2025). Meanwhile, the expectations and realities of their employment showed stark contrast. The participants generally held high expectation for the program, expecting to easily secure a career in law enforcement and other allied agencies (Magracia, et.al., 2022). However, hiring standard proved to be strict, personal, and financial constraints affected their employment efforts, and the new qualifications set by the agencies were beyond with the ones they acquired through their course since the agencies are now looking for Information Technology, accounting, or education graduates (Refugia, 2021; Dapitan et. al., 2023).

Furthermore, a tracer study conducted in a university in Misamis Occidental, Philippines found out that there appears to be a steady decline in employment as observed among criminology graduates of class 2018 until 2023. Such declination posed that there has been challenges in their employment application process (Ates et. al., 2024). Passing the neuropsychiatric and medical examination became barriers alongside with insufficient skills, mismatch of educational qualification, and lack of professional connections (Refugia, 2021). The financial and psychological constraint proved to be a hindrance too. Additionally, recruitment process has been highly selective and equally challenging since the number of applicants have been greater than the number of quota in the Tri-Bureau per year thus, making the number of successful candidates relatively smaller (Aguilar et. al., 2024). This made recent criminology graduates frequently believe that their specialized education does not fit in the job requirements of law enforcement agencies nowadays causing psychological tension and diminished confidence in every job rejection (Cosmas et. al., 2023). This theme particularly emerged as a significant one, emphasizing that law enforcement is no longer exclusive to criminology graduates.

The participants were fully aware of their competition among applicants from other academic fields. Several non-criminology degree holders increasingly enter the law enforcement agencies with some of them reaching executive positions. (Dapitan et. al., 2023). This preference for non-criminology graduates was further investigated. Determining factors emerged behind the phenomena which were the following: the needs of the agency's evolved due to globalization and technology; there are skills deficits among criminology graduates such as lack of communication and literacy skills as well as poor navigational skills in educational software including Microsoft, PowerPoint, Excel, Canva, & Google Workspace. (Larsson, Malmros, & Betts, 2025; Berondo et. al., 2025; Lagutom, 2025). There also appears to be a stagnation in the field of criminology due to weak and vague research as evident in the persistent problems rendering over the years (Ducate et, al., 2024). However, the theme strategies for criminology graduates to stay competitive illustrated a counter to these challenges. It includes focusing on proactive preparation in terms of physical, mental, financial and selfdevelopment such as building qualifications and professional connections and as well as maintaining resilience and faith to God (Buazon & Dr. Moyao, 2023). This study centered in exploring the effect on the employability of criminology graduates amidst rising non-criminology demand emphasizing the former's employment experiences and challenges encountered, the determination of which can help formulate strategies to maintain relevance and competence, addressing the recurring issue within the field of criminology.

CONCLUSION

The study found that criminology graduates hold ideas about their future jobs that does not match with what is really needed in the modern-day law enforcement. They hope to be a part of the field, but they quickly learn that just having a degree is not enough. Furthermore, they face repeated rejections since they lack of modern technical skills. This mismatch leads to disappointment when they start looking for work. Oftentimes, it turns into financial and emotional stress hindering their career growth.

Additionally, the growing need for non-criminology graduates resulted from humans being technologically – dependent and globally developed since these fields offer the technical skills that employers now highly value. Graduates from areas like IT, engineering, nursing, education, and public administration are more preferred because of their specialized and up-to-date skills. Because of this, criminology graduates have fewer job opportunities and faces more competition. This shows that a traditional criminology degree is less competitive in today's job market, one which values digital skills.

Ultimately, the importance of being physically, mentally, and financially capable for a job has been highly stressed among the participants. Building professional relationships, earning extra credentials and gaining on the-job experience is also a key. Also, having strong faith, high morale, and clear long-term goal helps them to overcome their challenges and turn it into a steppingstone into the law enforcement field.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Outlining the results and conclusion drawn from this research, several recommendations were constructed which aimed at improving the quality of criminology graduates to enhance their competency and preparedness. First, the institution should establish an interactive career orientation to students which connects their motivation with the realistic employment opportunities. It is best to have coordination with the personnel from different law enforcement agencies and receive assistance from the alumni to provide students with a list of possible careers and to be informed of the latest recruitment procedure. In addition, the institution should check on the employability status of the criminology graduates at least every two to three years to get possible updates regarding their experience or to discover new changes in the job-market. In conducting this, the interactive career orientation should be updated at the same time making the proactive measure more efficient. Furthermore, the curriculum should either add the Information and Technology Literacy as a separate minor subject or integrate it in the English Proficiency class. This should be strictly implemented from freshmen until sophomore criminology students to strengthen their technical and comprehension skills.

On the other hand, the criminology graduates are recommended to build a healthy balance with their physical and mental capabilities. An equity in these both aspects should unlock high levels of preparedness. They should also improve their credentials either through academe endeavor such as earning a master's or doctor's degree; or gaining certificates such as acquiring a National Certificate II (NC II) in whichever skill that is

highly valued nowadays. Likewise, they should set a clear long-term goal for their developing career. This includes taking their theoretical practice more seriously at the same time preparing for future financial expenses. Above all, an equipped mind with a prepared body should be paired with a resilient soul only then a setback will be viewed as a gateway to development and reorientation towards future success.

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