



GRADUATE EDUCATION AND ALUMNI OUTCOMES: A TRACER STUDY OF SAINT THERESA COLLEGE OF TANDAG, INC.

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ABSTRACT

Graduate education plays an important role in strengthening professionals' knowledge, competencies, values, and career opportunities. This study conducted on December 2020 which examined the role and relevance of the graduate education programs of Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc. (STC) in the personal and professional growth of its alumni and traced their employment characteristics and job experiences after completing their master's degrees. A quantitative-correlational research design was employed using a graduate tracer study questionnaire adapted from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Informal interviews were likewise conducted to verify selected information provided by the respondents. The study covered 126 alumni who completed Master of Arts in Education (MAED) and Master in Business Administration (MBA) programs from Academic Year 2005–2019, of whom 110 or 87% participated in the study. Data were analyzed using frequency and percentage, weighted mean, and Pearson product-moment correlation. Findings showed that 109 respondents (99.09%) reported that their current employment was related to their completed master's degree, while all respondents were locally employed in permanent positions. The graduate programs were perceived to contribute strongly to the alumni's personal and professional growth, particularly in Theresian values formation, academic and professional competencies, research capability, communication and people skills, problem-solving, critical thinking, personality development, and career advancement. The alumni also rated the STC graduate programs very highly, with an overall weighted mean of 4.42. Teacher–student relationship received the highest rating (4.65), while library and laboratory resources received the lowest, although still highly rated (4.02). A significant positive relationship was found between the alumni's ratings of the graduate programs and their perceived personal and professional growth ($r = .759$, $p = .001$). The findings indicate that STC's

graduate education programs were highly relevant to the professional and personal development of its alumni and provide a basis for continuing program enhancement and institutional quality improvement.

Keywords: *graduate education, tracer study, alumni outcomes, personal growth, professional growth, employability, graduate programs, Saint Theresa College of Tandag*

INTRODUCTION

Graduate education has become increasingly important in preparing professionals to respond to changing workplace demands, strengthen specialized competencies, and pursue career advancement. Beyond the acquisition of an advanced academic credential, graduate programs are expected to develop professional knowledge, leadership abilities, research competence, communication skills, critical thinking, and other transferable competencies that graduates can apply in their workplaces. In this context, Tutor et al. (2021) emphasized that higher education experiences are associated not only with employment outcomes but also with broader post-college outcomes such as employability and life satisfaction. In the Philippine context, this underscores the importance of examining whether educational experiences continue to provide meaningful benefits after graduation, particularly in relation to employment and professional development.

One important mechanism for determining the relevance of higher education is the graduate tracer study. Tracer studies provide institutions with systematic information about graduates' employment status, career trajectories, degree-job alignment, competencies, and perceptions of their academic programs. Dela Cruz and Dela Cruz (2023) demonstrated the value of tracing graduate school alumni by examining their employment, employability skills, application of competencies, and perceptions of graduate program offerings. Their findings showed that graduate school alumni demonstrated high employability, substantial application of skills acquired during graduate education, and high satisfaction with institutional offerings. These findings suggest that tracer studies can serve as an evidence-based mechanism for evaluating the responsiveness and continuing relevance of graduate programs.

Recent Philippine tracer studies likewise demonstrate the value of connecting graduates' educational experiences with their subsequent professional outcomes. Basabe et al. (2023) found that alumni considered their academic program relevant to their employment, particularly in relation to the skills and competencies acquired during their studies. The researchers further noted that tracer-study findings can provide a basis for curricular improvements and stronger alumni engagement. Similarly, Buenvenida et al. (2023) reported that graduates of a Doctor of Education program perceived their degree as contributing to leadership development, communication skills, confidence, stakeholder engagement, and professional advancement. Collectively, these studies indicate that the effectiveness of graduate education should be assessed not only through program completion but also through the extent to which graduates are able to translate academic learning into professional practice and career progression (Basabe et al., 2023).

The continuing relevance of graduate education can also be examined through alumni career experiences and the relationship between educational preparation and employment. Jamili (2026) reported that a graduate tracer study can provide important evidence concerning graduates' career paths, professional experiences, employability, and the relevance of their educational preparation to their careers. Such evidence is particularly valuable to higher education institutions because alumni outcomes provide an external perspective on whether academic programs have successfully prepared graduates for professional responsibilities. Thus, tracing alumni experiences provides institutions with information that can guide curriculum review, program development, student support, and institutional quality assurance.

Against this background, the graduate education programs of Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc. (STC) warrant systematic examination. The present study traced the role and relevance of STC's graduate education in the personal and professional growth of its alumni who completed graduate programs during Academic Years 2005–2019. The study particularly considered alumni characteristics, employment experiences, the perceived contribution of graduate education to personal and professional growth, and alumni assessments of the graduate programs. The original study conceptualized personal and professional growth in terms of Theresian values formation, academic performance, research capability, learning efficiency, communication skills, people skills, problem-solving skills, information technology skills, professional needs, community and international exposure, critical thinking, salary improvement and promotion, opportunities abroad, and personality development. It likewise considers the relevance of the graduate programs in terms of professional relevance, teaching and learning environment, quality of instruction, teacher–student relationship, extracurricular activities, professors' pedagogical expertise, and library and laboratory resources.

The need for such an inquiry is reinforced by the increasing expectation that graduate schools demonstrate tangible outcomes beyond the awarding of degrees. While national and institutional tracer studies have documented employment, employability, skills application, professional advancement, and program relevance, evidence remains institution-specific and must therefore be examined within the particular educational, organizational, and community context of each higher education institution. The STC tracer study addressed this need by examining the experiences of its own alumni and determining whether the graduate education they received remains relevant to their personal and professional development. The study also sought to provide empirical evidence that can inform the continued enhancement of STC's graduate degree programs and institutional quality improvement. This orientation is consistent with the broader purpose of tracer studies as tools for evaluating curriculum responsiveness and using alumni outcomes to guide institutional development (Basabe et al., 2023; Dela Cruz & Dela Cruz, 2023).

Importantly, the study did not merely describe the employment status of graduates; it also examined the relationship between alumni ratings of their completed graduate degree programs and the perceived contributions of those programs to personal and professional growth. This correlational perspective provided a stronger basis for

determining whether positive evaluations of program quality are associated with perceived developmental outcomes. In this regard, the study contributed institution-specific evidence on how graduate education may influence professional competence, values formation, career development, and personal growth. The findings might provide Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc. with an empirical basis for sustaining effective practices and addressing areas requiring further improvement in the delivery of its graduate education programs.

Research Questions

This study aimed to examine the role and relevance of graduate education at Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc. (STC) in the personal and professional growth of its alumni and to assess the employment outcomes associated with completing the institution's graduate programs. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the demographic and educational characteristics of the alumni?
2. What are the employment characteristics and job experiences of the alumni after completing their graduate degrees?
3. To what extent has graduate education contributed to the alumni's personal and professional growth?
4. How do alumni assess the relevance and quality of the graduate programs they completed?
5. Is there a significant relationship between alumni's assessment of the graduate programs and their perceived personal and professional growth?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative-correlational research design to examine the role and relevance of Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc.'s graduate education in the personal and professional growth of its alumni. The participants were 110 alumni from the 126 MAED and MBA graduates of Academic Years 2005–2019. Data were gathered using a CHED-adapted Graduate Tracer Study Questionnaire, supplemented by informal interviews for verification. The data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and Pearson product-moment correlation to describe alumni outcomes and determine the relationship between graduate program ratings and personal and professional growth.

RESULTS

Table 1. Demographic and Educational Characteristics of the Alumni-Respondents (N = 110)

Variable	Category	f	%
Age	28–32 years	12	10.91

Variable	Category	f	%
	33–37 years	24	21.82
	38–42 years	20	18.18
	43–47 years	17	15.45
	48–52 years	24	21.82
	53–57 years	6	5.45
	58–62 years	4	3.64
	63–67 years	3	2.73
Gender	Male	32	29.10
	Female	78	70.90
Civil Status	Single	11	10.00
	Married	93	84.55
	Separated	2	1.82
	Widowed	4	3.64
Address	Tandag City	50	45.45
	North	40	36.36
	South	20	18.18
Graduate Program	MAED	95*	—
	MBA	31*	—
Target Population	Total	126*	—
Actual Respondents	MAED/MBA alumni	110	87.00

Table 2. Employment Characteristics and Job Experiences of the Alumni After Completing Their Graduate Degrees

Employment and Job Experience Indicator	Result
Current job related to master's degree	109 (99.09%)
Current job not related to master's degree	1 (0.91%)
Locally employed	110 (100%)
Permanently employed	110 (100%)
New in current job	18 (16.36%)
6–10 years in the service	22.73%
11–15 years in the service	21.82%
16 years and above in the job market	43 (39.10%)
Promoted as principals	26 (23.64%)
Became Teacher 3	22 (20.00%)
Administrative Officers	5 (4.55%)

Employment and Job Experience Indicator	Result
Senior Trade and Industry Development Specialists	2 (1.82%)
Finance Division Managers	3 (2.73%)
LTO District Head	1 (0.91%)

Table 3. Contribution of Graduate Education to Alumni Personal and Professional Growth

Personal and Professional Growth Dimension	Weighted Mean	Adjectival Interpretation	Rank
Theresian Values Formation	4.69	Very Highly Contributed	1
Academic Performance	4.56	Very Highly Contributed	2
People Skills	4.54	Very Highly Contributed	3
Meeting Present and Future Professional Needs	4.45	Very Highly Contributed	4.5
Personality Development	4.45	Very Highly Contributed	4.5
Communication Skills	4.39	Very Highly Contributed	6
Learning Efficiency	4.38	Very Highly Contributed	7.5
Information Technology Skills	4.38	Very Highly Contributed	7.5
Problem-Solving Skills	4.35	Very Highly Contributed	9
Opportunities Abroad	4.34	Very Highly Contributed	10
Salary Improvement and Promotion	4.32	Very Highly Contributed	11
Local Community Exposure	4.31	Very Highly Contributed	12
Research Capability	4.25	Very Highly Contributed	13
International Community Exposure	4.17	Highly Contributed	14
Critical Thinking Skills	3.30	Fairly Contributed	15
Overall	4.33	Very Highly Contributed	—

Table 4. Alumni Assessment of the Relevance and Quality of Graduate Education Programs

Program Assessment Dimension	Weighted Mean	Adjectival Interpretation	Rank
Teacher–Student Relationship	4.65	Very Highly Rated	1
Quality of Instruction	4.55	Very Highly Rated	2
Teaching and Learning Environment	4.51	Very Highly Rated	3.5
Relevance to Profession	4.50	Very Highly Rated	3.5
Professors' Pedagogical Expertise	4.49	Very Highly Rated	5
Extracurricular Activities	4.25	Very Highly Rated	6
Library and Laboratory Resources	4.02	Highly Rated	7
Overall	4.42	Very Highly Rated	—

Table 5. Relationship Between Alumni Assessment of Graduate Programs and Personal and Professional Growth

Variables	Statistical Test	Correlation (r)	p-value	Decision
Graduate Program Assessment and Personal and Professional Growth	Pearson Product-Moment Correlation	0.759	0.001	Significant

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that the graduate programs of Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc. (STC) were strongly associated with favorable employment and professional outcomes among the alumni. Almost all respondents (99.09%) reported that their current jobs were related to their graduate degrees, while all were locally and permanently employed. This strong degree–employment alignment suggests that the programs provided competencies applicable to professional practice. Similar evidence was reported by Andaya et al. (2024), whose tracer study found that graduates' acquired competencies and skills were relevant to their employment and could inform improvements in higher education programs.

Graduate education was also perceived to have contributed very highly to alumni personal and professional growth (WM = 4.33), particularly in Theresian values formation (WM = 4.69), academic performance (WM = 4.56), and people skills (WM = 4.54). These findings indicate that the benefits of graduate education extended beyond academic knowledge to values, interpersonal competencies, and professional development. Sarsale et al. (2024) likewise found that graduate tracer studies can assess program contributions to personal and professional growth and identify dimensions of program relevance associated with employment success.

The alumni also rated the graduate programs very highly overall (WM = 4.42), particularly teacher–student relationships (WM = 4.65), quality of instruction (WM = 4.55), and the teaching and learning environment (WM = 4.51). These results suggest that instructional quality and faculty relationships were important strengths of the programs. Similarly, Ramos (2024) reported that communication and human-relations skills were among the leading competencies identified by graduates and recommended continuous curriculum and faculty development to maintain program responsiveness to employment demands.

However, critical thinking received the lowest rating among the personal and professional growth indicators (WM = 3.30), while library and laboratory resources received the lowest program-quality rating (WM = 4.02). These findings point to areas for improvement, particularly through stronger research activities, analytical learning, access to scholarly resources, and evidence-based problem solving. Such improvements are important because graduate education should equip alumni not only for current employment but also for changing professional demands. The need for continuous attention to competency application and professional relevance is also evident in Wapaño (2026), whose postgraduate tracer study examined how graduate competencies translate into professional practice and reported substantial degree–work alignment among alumni.

Finally, the significant positive relationship between alumni assessment of the graduate programs and their perceived personal and professional growth ($r = .759$, $p = .001$) indicates that more favorable program assessments were associated with stronger perceived developmental outcomes. This finding reinforces the importance of maintaining program quality, faculty support, relevant curricula, and learning environments in graduate education. Jamili (2026) similarly found strong alumni employability and direct relevance of educational preparation to graduates' professional experiences, demonstrating the value of tracer evidence in evaluating and improving higher education programs.

Conclusions

The study concluded that the graduate education programs of Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc. (STC) were highly relevant to the alumni's employment, personal development, and professional growth. Most alumni reported employment related to their graduate degrees, while graduate education was perceived to have contributed very highly to their overall development. The programs were also very highly rated, particularly in terms of teacher–student relationships and quality of instruction. Moreover, the significant positive relationship between program assessment and personal and professional growth indicates that favorable perceptions of graduate education were associated with stronger perceived developmental outcomes. Overall, the findings affirm the continuing relevance of STC's graduate programs while highlighting the need to further strengthen critical thinking and learning resources.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc. may continue strengthening its graduate education programs by maintaining the quality of

instruction and supportive teacher–student relationships that received high ratings from the alumni. The institution may also enhance critical-thinking development through research-based activities, analytical tasks, problem-solving exercises, and reflective learning experiences. Since library and laboratory resources received the comparatively lowest assessment, the institution may further improve access to updated books, journals, research databases, technological tools, and other learning resources. Regular graduate tracer studies may also be conducted to monitor alumni employment, career progression, and program relevance. Finally, the graduate programs may continuously review their curriculum and learning experiences based on alumni feedback and changing professional demands to ensure sustained relevance, quality, and contribution to graduates' personal and professional development.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The study adhered to ethical standards in conducting research with alumni respondents. Participation was voluntary, and the respondents' information and responses were treated with confidentiality and used solely for academic and research purposes. The researchers ensured that the data gathered were presented objectively and that the identities and personal information of the alumni were protected. The study also respected the rights, privacy, and welfare of the respondents throughout the data-gathering and reporting processes.

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APA Citation:

Badiang, M. Y. V., & Bola, I. P. (2026). GRADUATE EDUCATION AND ALUMNI OUTCOMES: A TRACER STUDY OF SAINT THERESA COLLEGE OF TANDAG, INC. *Ignatian International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 4(8), 1089–1098. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22010876>

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