



Career Outcomes and Professional Competencies of the Master in Business Administration Graduates: A Tracer Study

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RESEARCH ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
Received: March 07, 2026 Reviewed: May 21, 2026 Accepted: June 22, 2026 Published: June 30, 2026 Copyright © 2025 by the Author(s). This open-access article is distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.	This study assessed the level of adequacy and relevance of the Master of Business Administration program at Isabela State University through the employability skills and core competencies of its graduates from 2020 to 2025. The evaluation focused on factors such as salary increases, the adequacy and relevance of the curriculum, values acquired, and enhanced skills and competencies. A descriptive research design was utilized, and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage, and mean scores. The study had a sample size of 48, and yielded a response rate of 68.75%, which deemed sufficient for representation. Results showed that the curriculum was described as very adequate and relevant, and they strongly agreed that the values inculcated were very useful in their workplace. Findings also showed that respondents were very satisfied with the university's services across all program areas. However, the program needs to consider improving its laboratories, library services, and extension service to communities. Moreover, employability skills and competencies were very important in their careers, and they perceived themselves as highly competent, except in Information Technology and research skills, which were identified as areas requiring extensive design within the institution's teaching methodology to further student development. Thus, curriculum enhancement is recommended to improve academe-industry fit and address the immediate needs of graduates in the workplace. Keywords: <i>tracer study, curriculum enhancement, employability skills, learned values, competencies</i>

Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are required to conduct postgraduate follow-up studies to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum, instruction, and training they have provided to students and to meet graduates' immediate career needs in the workplace. A regular evaluation ensures that its programs remain relevant, high-quality, and aligned with the needs of today's workforce. Thus, tracer studies are now widely used in academic settings (Badiru & Wahome, 2016). In fact, the European Universities encourage universities to study the whereabouts of graduates to determine if the program offered meets the needs of the job market; it is a requirement for the accreditation of the program, to display the uniqueness and positioning of individual universities, and to give evidence-based decisions for universities and institutions on improvements and quality education (Teichler & Schomburg, 2013).

Education, whether at the college or at the master's degree level, is the path to success when it aligns with the employability skills needed by industries. Education is a primary means of alleviating poverty (SDG 1), eradicating hunger (SDG 2), and fostering decent work and economic growth (SDG 8). As mandated by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and other accrediting agencies for standardization, HEIs regularly conducts a tracer study not only to express its academic excellence and showcase the future of its students and alumni but also to review the universities' capability and services, program curriculum, and any mismatches with what the industry demands. This is to ensure that students have sufficient and relevant extracurricular exposure and classroom experiences that help them acquire knowledge, skills, and competencies aligned with industry needs. In fact, many challenges still occur as forms of educational failure, resulting in mismanagement within the education unit (Susilo & Kartowagiran, 2023). The career outcomes and professional competencies of graduates in a tracer study will help institutions track their progress and present it in a well-organized manner, since it suggests curriculum enhancement and industry alignment. Mgaiwa (2021) explained that universities can provide promising degree programs by assessing industry needs, creating quality assurance systems, and establishing effective university-industry partnerships. Moreover, Cammayo and Gonzales (2024) reiterate that conducting a follow-up on graduates' career status is to better understand how well they apply the lessons they learned at their university, how they develop the competencies they acquired, and how far their professional accomplishments have progressed.

Moreover, advanced studies in business administration are in high demand by industry; however, there is a lack of data on the alignment between academic institutions' curricula and the corporate landscape. Specifically, there are no institutional studies that track feedback on the evaluation of program areas, curriculum adequacy and relevance, and the values, skills, and competencies acquired by Master of Business Administration (MBA) graduates from 2020 to 2025. In advanced management education, an MBA tracer study serves as a critical evaluative tool for measuring these outcomes. By tracking the career progression, employment status, and entrepreneurial contributions of MBA graduates, the study evaluated the efficacy of higher education in generating high-value human capital. Furthermore, aligning the curriculum with current industry demands ensures that the academe produces competent professionals who can drive corporate and economic growth, thereby directly contributing to sustainable macroeconomic development.

Without tracer studies, the curriculum stagnates, creating a critical gap between competency alignment and contemporary multi-industry requirements. While this study demonstrates the career outcomes and professional competencies of the graduate program, it also evaluates the adequacy and relevance of the program, the applicability of acquired values, skills, and competencies acquired, and the extent to which the program responds to the changing demands of industry and professional

practice. The findings are expected to provide evidence-based recommendations for curriculum enhancement, program improvement, and stronger industry alignment. Thus, this study addresses this empirical void by conducting a descriptive evaluation of graduate employability and curricular relevance.

Generally, this study sought to determine the level of adequacy and relevance of the Master of Business Administration program at Isabela State University through the employability skills and core competencies of its graduates from 2020 to 2025. Specifically, the study aimed to identify the profile of the respondents, assess the effectiveness of the program areas of the graduate programs, determine the level of adequacy and relevance of the MBA curriculum as perceived by the respondents, determine the respondents' learned values that are useful in their employment, and determine the perceived level of importance and competence of the respondents regarding their employability skills and core competencies. The results of this study could serve as a reference for developing a curriculum enhancement to address the concerns identified and meet industry needs.

Methods

A descriptive research design was used to examine graduates' employment status and their feedback on the benefits of completing their MBA. The respondents were graduates of the Master's in Business Administration (MBA) program at the Isabela State University–Central Graduate School. The total population consisted of 54 graduates from 2020 to 2025. Using Cochran's finite population formula, a target sample size of 48 participants was determined at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error; however, the final data collection yielded an actual response of 33 participants. This represents a 68.75% response rate, which is considered sufficient to provide meaningful insights, and the findings remain highly representative of the group as a whole. The 13 individuals who never participated were constrained by practical limitations, including limited participant availability, time constraints, and a lack of feedback when reaching out. Despite follow-up efforts, 13 individuals opted not to participate or were unavailable during the data collection period.

The main instrument used in this study was the structured questionnaire from CHED, with revisions made by the Office of the University Director of Instruction. At the same time, the employability skills and competency questionnaire was adapted from Siraye et al. (2020) and modified to fit the participants' context. The adequacy and relevance of the curriculum were assessed by examining items that required revision or redesign to better meet students' needs. While employability skills and competencies were assessed based on item importance and graduates' competence upon completing their degree, the analysis aimed to identify the core MBA skills and competencies that should be incorporated into the program's teaching methods and strategies by the program's implementers.

Although the questionnaire items were adapted from established, validated instruments, they were carefully reviewed and modified to fit the specific context of the tracer study for MBA graduates. To ensure the research instrument's consistency, the questionnaire was pilot-tested and subjected to a reliability test using Cronbach's alpha. The results indicated high internal consistency across all dimensions: adequacy and relevance of the curriculum ($\alpha = 0.89$), values learned ($\alpha = 0.81$), employability skills ($\alpha = 0.83$), and employability competence ($\alpha = 0.75$).

Data were collected and analyzed using frequency, percentage, and mean scores. The research instrument used a 4-point Likert scale to measure participants' responses across satisfaction, adequacy, relevance, agreement, importance, and competence. The scale was structured as an unforced-choice model, omitting a neutral midpoint to encourage definitive responses. Each item was scored on a continuum from 4 (representing the highest positive evaluation, such as very satisfied, very adequate, very relevant, strongly agree, very important, or highly competent) to 1

(representing the lowest evaluation, such as not satisfied, very inadequate, not relevant, strongly disagree, not important, or not competent).

Ethical Considerations

This study followed the University's Research and Development institutional research ethics procedure in accordance with its institutional requirements. It was also conducted in compliance with all applicable national and international ethical considerations. Moreover, the participants willingly took part in the study and provided written informed consent. To ensure privacy and confidentiality, all responses were stored securely, with access restricted to the researchers.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the study's findings, which are logically anchored to the research objectives.

Profile of the Respondents

Most MBA graduates were female, married, permanently employed within government agencies, and between 30 and 34 years old. However, the majority hold rank-and-file positions with salaries ranging from ₱30,001 to ₱40,000. Their mid-career demographic and lower-ranking positions, despite a reasonable salary range, suggest that they intend to complete their master's degree in hopes of career advancement. The majority also reported high average levels of job or career satisfaction. Moreover, the data show that respondents perceived immediate effects after completing their MBA. Social recognition (45%) was the highest-rated outcome, followed by promotions (30%), changes in designation (18%), and, lastly, job permanency (6%). Thus, the mean scores indicate that respondents primarily associated their degree with enhanced professional prestige and career advancement.

This career progression aligns with Liwiński and Pastore (2019) on degree-related wage premiums but diverges from Pangilinan et al. (2019), who emphasize that promotion requires actual competence rather than credentials. Nonetheless, postgraduate education remains a vital tool for expanding professional networks, increasing income, and enhancing higher-order thinking skills.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of MBA Graduates

Profile Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	13	39
	Female	20	61
Civil Status	Single	12	36
	Married	21	64
Age	24- 29	4	12
	30-34	14	42
	35-39	6	18
	40-44	4	12
	45 and above	5	15
Tenure	Permanent	31	94
	Casual	1	3
	Temporary	0	0
	Contractual	1	3
Type of Employer	Government	21	64
	Private	11	33
	Self-employed	1	3
Position	Managerial	6	18

	Supervisory	7	21
	Rank and file	18	55
	Others	2	6
Monthly Salary	Below 10,000	1	3
	10,001-20,000	1	3
	20,001-30,000	4	12
	30,001-40,000	7	21
	40,001-50,000	2	6
	50,001-60,000	3	9
	60,001-above	5	15
	No answer	10	30
Increase Salary after taking an MBA	Less than 2,000	3	9
	2,001-3,000	2	6
	3,001-4,000	3	9
	4,001-5,000	3	9
	5,001-6,000	2	6
	6,001-7,000	6	18
	7,001-above	14	42
Immediate Effect After Finishing the MBA Degree	Permanency	2	6
	Promotion	10	30
	Designation	6	18
	Social Recognition	15	45
Job Satisfaction	Very Satisfied	17	51
	Satisfied	15	45
	Fairly satisfied	1	3
	Not satisfied	0	0

Evaluation of the Program Areas

Table 2 presents respondents' evaluations of the MBA Program's offerings. The table indicates that most MBA graduates were very satisfied with the program, particularly with the attainment of the ISU-VMGO ($M = 3.76$); also, the faculty qualifications or competencies were also very satisfying ($M = 3.70$); the design of the curriculum and instruction ($M = 3.73$), and the administrative support to the MBA students in the processing of their documents during enrollment, academic requirements, graduation, and students' activities were very satisfying ($M = 3.55$). Moreover, the learning from the research and thesis writing was very satisfactory ($M = 3.55$). Likewise, the graduates indicate that physical plant and facilities ($M = 3.52$) and the administration and management of the ISU itself ($M = 3.64$) were important to their career development. This implies that the MBA program meets students' expectations, as perceived by the graduates.

The VMGO has the highest mean among the program areas, and it was the first to address academic performance, serving as a strategic compass for carrying out the entity's mandated function. As emphasized in the CMO No. 46 s. 2012 Art. IV, Sec 17, also reiterated by Queriones et al. (2019), HEIs will reveal complex quality attributes and notable outcomes through their commitment to achieving VMGO. Ceredo and Naanep (2023) also highlighted the value of an institution's VMGO as a measure of quality education within an institution's overall academic performance. Thus, the positive responses indicate that ISU is committed to achieving the objectives of the institution and its programs.

Aside from VMGO as a baseline, other parameters in the MBA curriculum were also important to graduates' career development and employment. This was supported by Penera et al. (2021), who argued that the academe should align 100% with the job

market's needs and added that employability development should be the focus of every program's curriculum. In this study, the three highest means were from the VMGO, curriculum and instruction, and faculty competence, which implies that graduates were very satisfied with the three main factors for their learning and development that encourage them to pursue and finish their degree, and might as well continue to their doctorate or encourage others to enroll.

However, the areas of extension and community involvement, library services, and laboratories have mean scores of 3.45, 3.36, and 3.42, respectively, indicating a satisfactory rating. Respondents reported only "satisfied" in these areas because students were not often involved in extension services or community involvement, which are among the most important forms of exposure for them. The same was true for library services and laboratories, which were infrequently used because the MBA program is scheduled only on weekends, and most activities are classroom-based and delivered through blended learning modality. The underutilization of library and laboratory resources was also accentuated by Dela Cruz (2022) in his study. He further reiterated that improvements to the laboratory facilities and the library's Saturday hours are needed to ensure students can fully access these services. Thus, these findings need to be taken into account, as library services are essential in schools, colleges, and research institutions, providing access to knowledge and learning resources. At the same time, laboratories, such as computer laboratories, are rooms or facilities equipped with computers and related technology for learning, training, and research. Alvarez and Cammayo (2023) illustrated that the university's infrastructure, including libraries, classrooms, and other facilities, shows its commitment to providing students with a high-quality educational experience.

Table 2. Evaluation of Offering an MBA Program

Item	Mean	Description
1. VMGO	3.76	Very Satisfied
2. Faculty Competence	3.70	Very Satisfied
3. Curriculum	3.73	Very Satisfied
4. Support for Students	3.55	Very Satisfied
5. Research Development	3.55	Very Satisfied
6. Extension and community involvement	3.45	Satisfied
7. Library services	3.36	Satisfied
8. Physical Plant and Facilities	3.52	Very Satisfied
9. Laboratories	3.42	Satisfied
10. Administration and Management	3.64	Very Satisfied

Interpretation: 2.50–3.49 = Satisfied; 3.50–4.00 = Very Satisfied

Adequacy and Relevance of the Curriculum

Table 3 presents graduates' perceptions of the adequacy and relevance of the MBA curriculum. Regarding the adequacy of the curriculum, the data show that all statements related to the MBA curriculum were very adequate, specifically the statements: "demonstrate mastery of the subject matter" ($M = 3.76$) and "display expertise in the field of specialization" ($M = 3.76$) for their professors. Moreover, graduates were very satisfied with the design, preparation, and implementation of the MBA curriculum, rating it as very adequate in these areas, with mean scores from 3.61 to 3.76. This is because the MBA curriculum was regularly evaluated and updated, and administrators and professors ensure it addresses students' career skills and competencies. These findings imply that the specific purposes or needs of the students in their degree programs were sufficiently met, which causes them to be satisfied with studying at Isabela State University. This result is consistent with the findings of Dela Cruz (2022), which emphasized that an academic institution should be responsive to

students' professional and personal development and that professors' professional competencies should be evident in their teaching.

On the other hand, in terms of the relevance of the curriculum to their professional development, the graduates emphasized that the curriculum is very relevant in most of the statements in Table 3, specifically on competent faculty members who have mastery in the subject matter ($M = 3.73$) and have expertise in their field of specialization ($M = 3.69$).

Also, the atmosphere in the school setting is professionally and ethically practiced in accordance with the school standard ($M = 3.70$). The results on classroom management styles, pedagogy utilization, and skills and assessment techniques, with means ranging from 3.64 to 3.67, were also very relevant. From an institutional perspective, these findings confirm that the MBA program successfully achieved its primary educational objectives. Through producing highly competent graduates, the institution successfully bridges the gap between academic preparation and the evolving needs of the industry. The success of the degree program is determined by the quality of lectures and class discussions, adequate facilities and infrastructure, and the relevance of the curriculum (Wiranto & Slameto, 2021).

On the contrary, when looking into the difference between adequacy and relevance, the data shows that the statements: design and utilization of instructional materials ($M = 3.70$ vs $M = 3.45$); application of the scientific procedures in solving problems ($M = 3.70$ vs $M = 3.49$); effectiveness of communication ($M = 3.73$ vs $M = 3.40$); and regular feedback to students ($M = 3.61$ vs $M = 3.42$) were very adequate in the curriculum, but only "relevant" to their degree.

This disparity in the results suggests that although the university offered a well-rounded and robust MBA curriculum, the graduates did not fully leverage its practical relevance. This points to a potential mismatch between the advanced strategic skills taught and the actual day-to-day requirements of the graduates' job roles.

Table 3. Adequacy and Relevance of the Curriculum

Items	Adequacy		Relevance	
	Mean	Description	Mean	Description
1. Expertise in the field of specialization	3.76	Very Adequate	3.69	Very Relevant
2. Apply solving problems	3.70	Very Adequate	3.49	Relevant
3. Manifest pedagogical content	3.73	Very Adequate	3.64	Very Relevant
4. Design instructional materials	3.70	Very Adequate	3.45	Relevant
5. Employ techniques for diverse learners	3.64	Very Adequate	3.65	Very Relevant
6. Assessment techniques	3.64	Very Adequate	3.64	Very Relevant
7. Assessment results	3.64	Very Adequate	3.67	Very Relevant
8. Feedback to students	3.61	Very Adequate	3.42	Relevant
9. Utilize pedagogy	3.61	Very Adequate	3.64	Very Relevant
10. Skills in learning, problem-solving, and critical thinking	3.64	Very Adequate	3.64	Very Relevant
11. Classroom management style	3.64	Very Adequate	3.64	Very Relevant
12. Communication	3.73	Very Adequate	3.40	Relevant
13. Mastery of the subject matter	3.76	Very Adequate	3.73	Very Relevant
14. Professional and ethical teaching standards	3.70	Very Adequate	3.70	Very Relevant

Interpretation: 2.50–3.49 = Adequate/Relevant; 3.50–4.00 = Very adequate/Very relevant

Values Learned That Are Useful in Employment

Table 4 unveils that the values the graduates learned from the University during their stay have been strongly useful in their employment. The top two values learned, honesty (M = 3.82) and commitment (M = 3.82), are ethical values that suggest the MBA program can successfully develop authentic leaders, as honesty builds trust and commitment fosters loyalty and engagement beyond economic considerations. Creativity and workmanship (M = 3.79) were the next-highest perceived qualities, implying that the graduates were expected to be implementers of change and have the capability for execution. Also, leadership, confidence, and diligence (M = 3.79) show their leadership and strategic mindset. Employees who prioritize good relations with colleagues and avoid disrepute by approaching their duties with the highest ethical standards and professionalism foster a corporate culture of trust and good governance (Kwarteng & Mensah, 2022). Similarly, the values that were essential and ranked first in the study by Penera et al. (2021) were loyalty and professionalism. This had a significant impact on employees as they worked with their teams, collaborating, negotiating, and socializing with their head supervisors, coworkers, and clients.

The values they learned and developed in their personalities are very important in the workplace because they foster a conducive work environment and a culture of professionalism and trust that lead to every employee's competitive performance. Ultimately, these graduates are ready to lead in the workforce with ethical governance and efficiency, while effectively managing strategic corporate growth. Moreover, by translating their creativity into tangible industry innovation and productivity, they could seamlessly bridge the prevailing academe-industry skill gap.

Table 4. Values Learned That Are Useful in Employment

Item	Mean	Description
1. Competence	3.76	Strongly Agree
2. Workmanship	3.79	Strongly Agree
3. Diligence	3.79	Strongly Agree
4. Creativity	3.79	Strongly Agree
5. Leadership	3.79	Strongly Agree
6. Confidence	3.79	Strongly Agree
7. Commitment	3.82	Strongly Agree
8. Honesty	3.82	Strongly Agree
9. Sociability	3.73	Strongly Agree
10. Punctuality	3.70	Strongly Agree
11. Compassion	3.67	Strongly Agree
12. Faith	3.70	Strongly Agree
13. Love of service	3.73	Strongly Agree
14. Hope	3.73	Strongly Agree
15. Environmental Advocate	3.75	Strongly Agree

Interpretation: 3.50–4.00 = Strongly Agree

Employability Skills

All employability skills parameters were rated by the graduates as very important, as shown in Table 5. This perception indicates that the University's curriculum is relevant and that student learning outcomes effectively reflect the industry's dynamic requirements. Hence, minimizing the "skills gap" between academia and industry.

In terms of being competent, graduates demonstrated a high level of employability skills across multiple core competencies, evaluating themselves as highly competent in both interpersonal and operational domains. Statistically, the skills which received the highest ratings were being adaptable (M = 3.85), meeting

deadlines ($M = 3.82$), and maintaining ethical standards during planning ($M = 3.81$). This was strongly supported by high competencies in identifying problems ($M = 3.79$), staying up to date on business realities ($M = 3.76$), writing business correspondence ($M = 3.76$), and managing several tasks ($M = 3.76$). High marks were also identified in their interpersonal relationships ($M = 3.73$) and in making sound decisions ($M = 3.67$). These mean scores strongly indicate that these essential skills were effectively nurtured and developed during the graduates' academic residency at Isabela State University (ISU). By embedding these capabilities into their professional identity, graduates possess a distinct competitive advantage in the workforce. Ultimately, these learned employability skills serve as a vital catalyst for their career stability and advancement, contributing to professional growth, such as securing regular employment, earning promotions, and gaining social recognition within their respective organizations.

On the other hand, the application of IT as a management tool ($M = 3.48$), writing reports ($M = 3.44$), allocating time ($M = 3.41$), revising plans ($M = 3.40$), assigning or delegating responsibility ($M = 3.39$), taking reasonable job-related risks ($M = 3.38$), and delivering novel solutions to problems ($M = 3.38$) were interpreted as "competent." This posits that while the graduates possess a sufficient baseline to perform these tasks effectively, they have not yet attained maximum mastery or high competency in this area.

Crucially, these specific competencies can be significantly enhanced in their day-to-day workplace performance. Especially when they gain executive-level positions such as supervisory or managerial roles. Their delegation skills, risk-taking, and plan revision will be enhanced. Consequently, these findings suggest that the curriculum revision should focus strategically on advanced instructional methodologies, such as case studies, research critiques, policy papers, simulation exercises, and leadership activities, to develop these high-level managerial and decision-making capabilities before graduation.

Table 5. Importance and Competence of Their Employability Skills

Item	Importance		Competence	
	Mean	Description	Mean	Description
1. Decision-making	3.82	Very Important	3.67	Highly Competent
2. Problem-solving	3.88	Very Important	3.79	Highly Competent
3. Report writing	3.85	Very Important	3.44	Competent
4. IT as a management tool	3.76	Very Important	3.48	Competent
5. Planning and revision	3.85	Very Important	3.40	Competent
6. Writing business correspondence	3.85	Very Important	3.76	Highly Competent
7. Novel solutions to problems	3.82	Very Important	3.38	Competent
8. Interpersonal relationship	3.85	Very Important	3.73	Highly Competent
9. Time management	3.85	Very Important	3.41	Competent
10. Meeting deadlines	3.85	Very Important	3.82	Highly Competent
11. Adaptability	3.91	Very Important	3.85	Highly Competent
12. Responsibility	3.85	Very Important	3.39	Competent
13. Oversee several tasks at once	3.85	Very Important	3.76	Highly Competent
14. Job-related risk	3.85	Very Important	3.38	Competent
15. Up-to-date realities	3.84	Very Important	3.76	Highly Competent
16. Ethical plan	3.82	Very Important	3.81	Highly Competent

Interpretation: 2.50–3.49 = Important/Competent; 3.50–4.00 = Very important/Highly competent

In addition, although they rated novel solutions higher than problem identification, implying that ISU successfully taught them to think critically when diagnosing issues and concerns, their ability to come up with unique solutions requires deep industry knowledge and experience, which will be built over time.

Regarding IT as a management tool, graduates ranked it highest in the “competent” bracket. This implies that ISU ensures graduates have strong foundational digital literacy, but they must adapt to the specific software and ICT competencies used by their employers. Caingcoy (2021) clarified that ICT skills should be adequately acquired during education, implying that the use of ICT is very important for professional careers and personal purposes. However, his findings showed that ICT skills are lacking, and as a result, graduates may find it difficult to integrate ICT into their duties or initiate computer-assisted processes. Thus, ICT skills are not fully developed during their education. This can be acquired through training and workplace experience.

Employability Competence

It can be gleaned from Table 6 that the graduates’ employability competence as professionals in their field of specialization was gained during their MBA studies. Respondents perceived that all the competencies identified were “very important,” indicating that these competencies enable them to gain a competitive advantage over those who were not graduates of the MBA program.

The highest perceived competencies were human relations or interpersonal skills ($M = 3.91$), followed by leadership/managerial skills, knowledge and technical skills, problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, lifelong learning skills, and content-based skills, all with the same mean score of $M = 3.88$.

The dominance of human relations or interpersonal skills underscores that emotional intelligence (EQ) remains the most critical asset for business leaders. Successfully managing teams, resolving conflicts, and driving corporate collaboration require meaningful social interaction and communication in the workplace, rather than technical and content mastery to execute complex business operations. Furthermore, the identical mean scores across critical thinking, problem-solving, and leadership highlight perfectly balanced competencies for an executive position that fit the MBA graduates. This aligns with the study by Penera et al. (2021), which emphasized that the work values and skills gained at the institution were crucial to their field.

Accordingly, soft skills, such as interpersonal skills, communication, problem-solving, and teamwork, and hard skills, such as the ability to perform the job, are essential. Bogdany et al. (2023), on the other hand, listed competencies needed in 21st-century jobs, including the ability to apply specific knowledge and soft skills, such as complex problem-solving, critical thinking, teamwork, and digital skills. Sahara et al. (2024) identified the competencies graduates need for Industry 4.0, based on organizational needs. These include open-mindedness, decision-making abilities, emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, service orientation, coordination with others, leadership skills, critical thinking and creativity, technological skills, and complex problem-solving. Hence, this validates that the university equips its MBA students with the high-level, holistic competencies deemed indispensable for modern corporate governance and executive-level success.

On the other hand, while the graduates generally exhibit high confidence across core operational and interpersonal competencies, the findings reveal a distinct relative proficiency gap in Information Technology ($M = 3.48$) and Research Skills ($M = 3.37$). This critical gap implies an institutional bottleneck. The data-driven global market requires information technology skills and empirical research as a vital instrument for corporate strategy, data analytics, and market forecasting.

Table 6. Importance and Competence of Employability Competence

Item	Importance		Competence	
	Mean	Description	Mean	Description
Communication Skills	3.85	Very Important	3.79	Highly Competent
Human Relation/Interpersonal	3.91	Very Important	3.73	Highly Competent
Leadership/ Managerial Skills	3.88	Very Important	3.72	Highly Competent
Entrepreneurial Skills	3.87	Very Important	3.70	Highly Competent
Information Technology Skills	3.79	Very Important	3.48	Competent
Instructional & assessment skill	3.85	Very Important	3.73	Highly Competent
Knowledge and technical skills	3.88	Very Important	3.79	Highly Competent
Life and career skills	3.85	Very Important	3.76	Highly Competent
Problem-Solving Skills	3.88	Very Important	3.79	Highly Competent
Critical Thinking Skills	3.88	Very Important	3.82	Highly Competent
Research Skills	3.85	Very Important	3.37	Competent
Extension Skills	3.82	Very Important	3.76	Highly Competent
Lifelong learning skills	3.88	Very Important	3.76	Highly Competent
Collaborative skills	3.85	Very Important	3.76	Highly Competent
Content-based skills	3.88	Very Important	3.76	Highly Competent

Interpretation: 2.50–3.49 = Important/Competent; 3.50–4.00 = Very important/Highly competent

ICT training should be conducted to enable learners and educators to work independently, gain new skills, and better understand their subject areas (Anorue et al., 2023). Moreover, ICT competency is needed for research, as emphasized by Altynbekov et al. (2024). He further explained that the use of digital tools for literature searching and curation, data analysis software, collaborative learning and discussion forums, and virtual reality simulations fosters the development of research skills. In other words, technological resources empower researchers, whether professors or students, to expand their knowledge of cutting-edge research techniques and methodologies.

Thus, this serves as a critical directive for revising the MBA curriculum, signaling an urgent need to integrate advanced management information systems (MIS), corporate data analytics, and applied business research methodologies into the core coursework. In order to bridge these identified gaps, there should be a systematic integration of experiential learning opportunities into the MBA curriculum. A hands-on, practical application is an indispensable mechanism for cultivating complex IT and research competencies.

Conclusion and Future Works

The research results showed the significant career outcomes and professional competencies of MBA graduates. They were permanently employed and received salary increases after attaining a Master's degree. Moreover, the study highlighted that respondents primarily perceived the immediate value of their MBA degree in terms of enhanced social recognition and promotions, followed by changes in designation and job permanency. The majority were also very satisfied with their jobs or careers. While the MBA program offerings correspond with the respondents' needs; nevertheless, the MBA programs still need to enhance their curricular and support components to foster graduate development and improve program relevance. To achieve this, research training can be advanced by offering more opportunities for applied research and industry-based learning experiences.

Moreover, the inclusion of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) competencies should be strengthened to meet the dynamic demands of the workplace. Likewise, advancing laboratory and library services, specifically access to digital

resources and research facilities, is a crucial step to further support students' academic and professional needs. Furthermore, broadening extension and community engagement activities will greatly facilitate students' application of managerial competencies while developing social responsibility and leadership. Considering these results, further studies may include employer assessments and larger and more diverse samples to facilitate a more comprehensive evaluation of graduate outcomes and overall program efficiency and effectiveness. Additionally, because it is the first MBA tracer study conducted under the program, some important highlights, such as employer feedback, were not considered but could be treated as important information for a more comprehensive tracer study. Finally, this study could serve as basis or guide among policymakers, graduate program leaders, and academic administrators in the development of policies that foster curriculum innovation, research capacity, and industry-responsive educational practices.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Declaration Statement

The researchers declare the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, such as Grammarly, to enhance the paper's overall readability. All the ideas and content were originally composed and collectively written by the researchers. The authors assume full responsibility for the originality, accuracy of the results, and academic integrity of this research.