

Factors considered among the University of the East— Manila Students in their College Program Preference

Catalino N. Mendoza, Rosalinda B. Lacerona, Mildred P. Jimenez, Joselito Arevalo
Arnie Margarete D. Casareo, Allaiyah Kriszel C. Durante, Nicole A. Escototo,
Gillianna Dia Loreen V. Libunao, Ronalyn S. Pocallan
University of the East - Manila

ABSTRACT

This research is a quantitative study that investigated relationships among variables of the factors which includes the National Career Assessment Examination (NCAE), employability, and financial capability and its relationship to college program preference of the University of the East Manila students in Academic Year 2022-2023. The main objective of the study was to prove that there was a significant relationship between the (3) three factors and college program preference. The NCAE's goal is to assist students in determining which program to take in college and what type of profession they are ideally equipped for. Aptitude tests which are evaluated through grades are significant data points used to know a student's career strength. The researchers used survey methods via Google Forms. Overall, the three factors, namely National Career Assessment Examination, Employability, and Financial Capability have shown a significant relationship from the perception of the respondents in terms of college program preference. Moreover, students aim to pursue a career inclined with their college program even though rising tuition fee has been one of their major concerns. Determining the mentioned factors' relationship with college program preference could contribute to one-on-one consultation sessions which can be used to articulate the results of the career assessment to the student, inform them of the benefits and drawbacks of pursuing each path, and provide them with the clarity and understanding they need to make the right decisions.

Keywords: National Career Assessment Examination, Employability, Financial Capability, and College Program Preference, Descriptive method, Philippines

Introduction

Every educational institution around the world tries to develop individuals with both academic and non-academic capabilities. Balancing intellectual development with co-curricular and social activities that maximize students' perspectives works more efficiently. These activities are believed to help students reach their full potential and improve their academic performance.

Academic performance is a broad term that encompasses a variety of skills, such as retention, prior knowledge, or aptitude, as well as psychological characteristics such as motivation, interest, personality, or feelings. It is a significant challenge for the younger generation. The reason for the circumstance is that not all of them can make their own career decisions easily, yet there is also the need to make decisions before settling on their own path.

Nevertheless, success in the professional field is not simply determined by academic performance. There are non-academic considerations as well. When a student applies to colleges and chooses a professional course, it is important to consider his or her aptitude, potential, and abilities. Therefore, local authority representatives in the Philippines developed the National Career Assessment Examination, or NCAE.

The National Career Assessment Examination is a test given to Grade 9 students in public and private schools in the Philippines. Students can use the NCAE scores to assist them in choosing or determining which program they want to follow. The NCAE is particularly significant for Grade 9 or 3rd-year high school students since it enables them to understand their abilities and route they will follow in senior high school (Malipot, 2017). According to Santos (2019), this case serves as a foundation for determining a learner's ability in the four SHS tracks which are Academic, Technical, Vocational, Livelihood, Sports, and Arts and Design. Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM), Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMMS), and General Academic Strand (GAS) are the strands that make up the academic track. General Scholastic Aptitude for SHS tracks is among the three domains covered by the career evaluation. The GSA measures a student's scientific competence, reading comprehension, verbal ability skills, and mathematical and logical reasoning abilities. The Occupational Interest uses a checklist that gives a detailed assessment of preferences for career recommendations.

Furthermore, as Ross (2022) reported, one of the reasons that NCAE was created was to address the problem of workers being mismatched with the appropriate occupations, resulting in unemployment. Students can plan a path of study that will provide them with the skills and education they will need for

their desired employment. This is by assessing which careers they are ideally suited for. It will assist the students in choosing which academic track they should take and what type of profession they should pursue. This test will assess a student's vocational aptitude, career inclinations, and entrepreneurial abilities.

This study aims to determine if the NCAE test results of students became one of the factors that affected their preferred college program preference. The researchers conducted a study on this topic to identify and gain knowledge on the possible factors that influence a student's decision-making in selecting a college program. NCAE is a helpful assessment in evaluating the skills and cognitive abilities of students for them to know which career they will pursue. In this way, students will avoid making a mistake in determining which career path is best for them.

Review of Related Literature

Selecting a college degree program is vital for a student's desired career path because the learnings and experience acquired from their first year up to their senior year are beneficial in establishing a foundation of basic knowledge and developing soft and hard skills. With the foundation present, it could further prepare the students for the events to come when they graduate and begin to work in the industry. The analysis of related literature and studies provided an overview of the National Career Assessment Exam and students' career development when it comes to determining their preferred college program, as well as the findings of previous studies relating to National Career Assessment Examination in the online setting, the financial capability of the household of the students, their concern on college programs and availability, self-concept, decision making, and employability.

Issues with the Education System of the Philippines

Education in the Philippines has always been influenced by its colonizers especially the Americans because they have the biggest contributions in the educational system in the country. This American influence is evident when they introduced English as the primary language of teaching and when they established an educational system in public schools patterned after the United States (Glavin, 2017). Philippine education has established a clear competitive goal for the Filipinos and has been offering a promising future for the youth. Along with these competing goals and promising future for the people, some issues and problems are being encountered.

As studied by Gumarang Jr., B. K., and Gumarang, B. K, (2021) they presented three problems in Philippine education that lead to poor quality education. In the government during the past years, DepED received the biggest allocation in the budget as a part of the country's expenditure. However, most of the classrooms are still overcrowded and facilities mostly in public schools are poorly made. As a result, this affects the performance of both the students and the teachers. To support these claims, Gumarang Jr., B. K., and Gumarang, B. K., (2021) also cited a study by Oyebola et al. (2017) the overcrowding in classrooms poses a "substantial impact" on the performance of the teachers and the students learning experience in school because teachers are unable to assess students and put the same amount of time to focus on students individually and so this affects their National Career Assessment Examination and leads as well to low student achievement.

Another issue is that most teachers are not well trained to perform school responsibilities like teaching effectively. This problem arises when teachers are assigned to subjects or courses beyond the field of their expertise, again resulting in poor teaching and poor-quality education. Gumarang, Bk. Jr. and Gumarang, Bk (2021) also noted that it is safe to say that the Philippines has a good curriculum but the teachers who will execute the curriculum are not equipped with proper training and are incapable. Lastly, and the main issue in the Philippine educational system is its "deteriorating educational quality" because despite having the most budget allocation, public schools in the country lack school facilities for learners such as good and updated libraries and laboratories, a bad learning environment, poor teacher quality, insufficient learning materials, and classroom shortages that leads to low educational standards.

There are numerous issues in the educational system of the country and these three micro problems or the gaps in the system are not given attention despite receiving the highest budget allocation. If these gaps are not given proper solution and not addressed immediately, these could affect the academic performance of the learners and with the poor quality of the education they are given, will defeat the purpose of NCAE which is an assessment of the student's general scholastic, technical-vocational and academic aptitude, and their occupational interest to further equip them with a better career path and readiness. Because of these issues and gaps in the educational system, there can be irregularities or inaccuracies in the results of their NCAE test.

Financial Capability of Households amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

As indicated by Morgan and Trinh (2021), the serious negative impacts surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak are discerned in Asian households. The following effects can be seen; Job loss, inflation, an increased need to stay at home to care for sick family members or children, reduced access to education,

etc. As a result of their interviews in eight (8) developing countries, it implied that about 27% of students were unable to completely engage in class due to the absence of digital devices and proper internet connection. Furthermore, at least one person in each household has had their working hours reduced or been laid off. Hence, households are faced with financial difficulty. It is having a significant impact on the amplitude of online classes taken by students.

In February, the inflation rate in Thailand increased significantly to 5.28% for the year 2022. This has been considered the highest inflation rate in 13 years (Imahashi, 2022). In an article by Jiao (2022), she stated that up to 9.3 million jobs were eradicated in Southeast Asia due to the pandemic. This has resulted in more than 4 million people suffering from extreme poverty. In the Philippines, a survey conducted by Social Weather Stations (SWS) had a result indicating that up to 42% of students in the country do not use any gadgets for online learning. Meanwhile, other schools use a modular type of learning (Lalu, 2021).

National Career Assessment Exam Influence on Students

In the Philippines, the National Career Assessment Exam (NCAE) is given to Grade 9 pupils by the Department of Education annually. The test aims to identify a student's ability and vocational interest in senior high school (SHS) tracks. The test also seeks to influence career counseling at the school level, ensuring the growth of skills and competencies necessary for the workplace and career choices (DepEd, 2017). In an article by Ross (2022), the purpose of NCAE is to provide some insights and help students in choosing a college program and what career they fit into. Their skills and general knowledge are measured as well as their vocational aptitude, occupational preference, and entrepreneurial skills. Moreover, Navarro (n.d.) states that one of the many reasons why NCAE was given to students is because the Department of Education wants to address the rising unemployment rate in the country. The reason for this is because fresh graduates are getting mismatched with their chosen careers and by having NCAE students will be able to gauge their skills, strengths, and weaknesses in every area that is being measured in the test.

Also, in a similar article, according to Llego (2019), NCAE intends to help students and their parents make wise decisions in choosing their career paths in college based on the result of the test. The test also asks about the students' interests to measure which field their interests fit. Also, based on the survey conducted by DepEd on having NCAE yearly for Grade 9 students, about 81.31% of the students view NCAE positively and 80% of their parents responded positively about utilizing NCAE. This means that the acceptance of parents and students in administering NCAE shows that it is effective in guiding these students towards choosing the right college program for them.

The Concerns of Students Towards College Programs and Availability

The move from high school to college is a significant milestone in a student's academic career. The progression from a dependent to an independent learner is symbolized by this step. Students' progress from studying in a closely supervised atmosphere with a tightly controlled timetable to learning to manage their own time and make decisions in a more adult and independent manner. A responsible way of early withdrawal, difficulties managing stress, and coping with scholastic responsibilities are just a few of the unsettling consequences of this shift, low academic performance, and lack of motivation to learn (Reddy et al., 2018). Since the beginning of the academic year (AY) 2021-2022, the University of the East (UE) Manila is no longer accepting new students for Journalism, English, Library and Science, and Mathematics degree programs. Meanwhile, the university will retain current students from the four programs until they graduate. In a report by UE Dawn, the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Dean Justina Evangelista stated that the decision prompted a low enrollment rate for the four programs. The CAS Student Council expressed its disappointment with the university's decision and requested that the university administration reconsider. UE was also forced to dismiss its Electronics Engineering (ECE) program indefinitely, citing a drop in enrollment over the previous six semesters (Baron, 2021).

According to Alipio (2020), low academic adjustment of college students in the Philippines leads to poor academic accomplishment. College life is rewarding in terms of academics and emotional attachment to their institution, but it takes time for them to acclimate socially. It was found in the study by Hernandez (2017), that first-year students from Calapan City's selected higher education institutions exhibit inadequate social adjustment. The above studies looked at the link between students' transition to college and their academic achievement. Higher education in the Philippines, after the government embraced the international standards which are K-12 basic education curriculum, institutions are accepting their first batch of freshmen who recently finished senior high school, an additional two years of education. This program, Republic Act 10533 was implemented by the Department of Education. As a result, this study adds to our understanding of how academic strand is chosen in senior high school, as well as gender, financial class, proximity to home, and influence on the association between the transition to college and academic achievement.

Students face a variety of obstacles in life that may negatively impact their academic achievement, yet some school programs are not tailored to their requirements. The research examines the issues faced by 350 students at a Philippine higher education institution in the hopes of developing activities that are relevant to their needs and academic progress. According to Dagdag et.al. (2019), 9% to 23% of the students have problems in academics, social, family,

emotional, personal, economic, and spiritual areas, with degrees ranging from moderate to severe. Lack of activities that assist students' holistic development and effective learning habits.

The Importance of Career Development and Decision-Making on Students

Career development and career planning are significant in today's technological age, according to Serbes and Albay (2017); since the present century and global changes, almost everything competes. Providing students with a framework of necessary career flow competencies enables them to learn the critical skills for managing their current and future career development. According to the Nebraska Department of Education (2019) article, when students see the importance and relevance of school, their enthusiasm and academic performance improve. When students understand the connection between academics, career, and education planning, and accomplishing their own career goals, they become more motivated, self-directed learners. However, upon looking into the equity of students' career education outcomes, the findings revealed that parental education level was strongly related to high school students' career development competencies, though family income was not statistically significant. It was discovered that parental education level was less likely related to students' career development competencies when they participated in career and vocational coursework in school (Lee et al., 2021).

Choosing the right career paths for their future is probably one of most adolescents' most challenging decisions. As a result of the research conducted on undergraduate students, understanding the factors influencing students' career choices is more vital than ever. The findings revealed that students' academic self-concept has a direct and significant effect on career decisions. The study suggested that improving students' academic self-concept can help them decide their career paths (Mohd Zaini et al., 2021). Additionally, Yildiz & Eldeleklioglu (2021) stated that practitioners could organize seminars within youth counseling centers working on university campuses as well as coordinating psycho-education projects and initiatives for the youth's decision-making skills and stressing the importance of comprehension in these programs.

The value of decision-making abilities for students can be felt even later in life, such as when pursuing a career. A decision made today may advantage them in the future (Borkala, 2021). However, some inevitable challenges, such as the pandemic, affected almost all aspects of life and industry. Therefore, adjusting decisions into something that could minimize effect and loss became the key to survival. It might have a negative impact on the students' career development by choosing a program that is convenient rather than a program of their interest and capability.

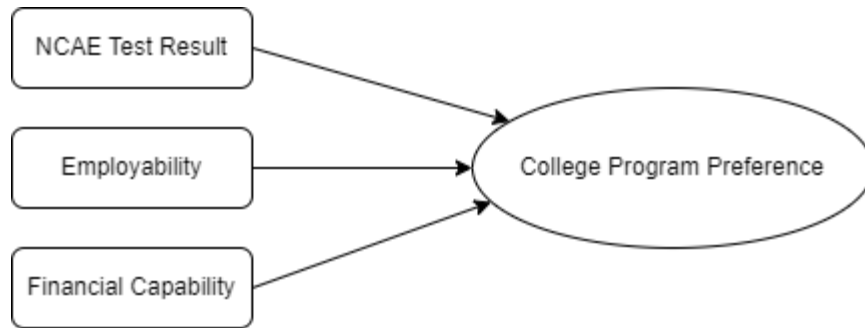
The Perception of Students to the Self-Concept and Employability

For university students, employability is becoming a growing concern. Aside from the field of study, it discovered that the perceived proximity to graduation and professional career was related to the perception of employability. Furthermore, assertiveness, ambitious competitiveness, mental fortitude, and the preferred characteristics of a good employee were associated with students' perceptions of employability; however, the attribution of academic skills had the opposite effect (Rätty et al., 2019). Results reveal from the study by Donald et al. 2018) that undergraduates recognize their investment in pursuing higher education to offer a net monetary gain. However, this is thinning due to increased tuition fees, affiliated student debt, and interest payments. Undergraduates feel more employable on a personal level but less employable on a market level due to increased competition for graduate positions and the cost/benefit turmoil of resources.

Recent studies stated that the effectiveness in choosing a career and developing a positive self-concept in the corresponding academic area is an unavoidable period for adolescent students to be successful in their academic life. The limited educational courses and study hours committed by students in their formative years presents a significant challenge for them as they begin to make rational and logical decisions. Parents and teachers should motivate the students to pursue their interests and skills and select a course of study. A well-liked course of study augmented by regular study hours builds confidence in choosing a career, but it does not guarantee expertise in the course (Javed & Alee, 2020). On the contrary, either positive or negative factors could pose a change in the student's interests and capabilities. Significantly, the parents, educators, and universities provide enough guidance and counseling to aid the student in coping with possible changes or unforeseen events.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Factors affecting college program preference of students



Two theories were used in this correlational study, and with that, the researchers will be able to depict the relationship between these concepts and connect them to the existing research problem. Along with the theoretical framework, the researchers developed a conceptual framework that depicts what they expect to discover through their research. It aids in the definition of the relevant variables in the study as well as the mapping of how they may relate to one another, which is critical to construct before beginning data collection (Swaen, 2015).

Based on the theories shown in the theoretical framework, the researchers outlined the possible factors that are significant in identifying the relationship between the factors and the students' preferred collage program. The 5 academic year gap between the time when students took the assessment exam during 9th grade and their current enrollment in a college program after graduating from secondary education poses a change in their National Career Assessment Examination and financial capability in pursuing their desired program brought about by socio-economic factors as well as the program's availability in college institutions. However, the theories did not emphasize if those stated factors have a significant relationship with a student's preference and the possible issues or concerns that may arise in the decision-making process.

Every stage in a person's lifetime plays an important role in the development of their self-concept. For every stage of development, there are underlying factors that could potentially affect the person's view and preferences as they reach the next stage or progress in life, as mentioned in Super's Developmental Theory. College is increasingly being viewed to an end. Due to surging higher education costs and the ongoing economic hardships caused by the coronavirus pandemic, experts believe that prospective students making college choices may be prioritizing financial considerations and employability over other factors more than ever (Kerr, 2020). With the socio-economic and environmental factors present, a student's preferred program might suddenly change and in most cases shift into a different career path.

Several theories in career development, specifically Krumbolt's theory on planned happenstance state that it is alright not to plan because uncertain or

unplanned events might lead to a good career. This emerging focus on the need for people to adapt to the change in a rapidly changing labor market. Managing life transitions is regarded as a necessary skill for career management. Krumboltz guides how to deal with the narrow amount of control we have over certain career experiences. Unforeseen social factors, chance events, and environmental factors all have a significant impact on people's lives (careers.govt.nz, 2016). Therefore, students who might experience changes may tend to make unplanned or unpreferable plans and might still land on a good career path.

On the contrary, this can be opposed by Holland's Theory of Career Choice emphasizing that people prefer careers where they can work with people who are like them. People seek environments in which they can apply their skills and abilities, as well as express their attitudes and values while taking on enjoyable problems and roles. There is a possibility that when students prefer a certain program but end up in the wrong career poses a negative effect. According to Holland, working together in a job with people of the same personality type creates an environment that aligns and rewards their type. Additionally, people who choose to work in an environment that matches their personality type are more likely to be successful and satisfied (career.govt.nz, 2019).

Through this study, the researchers expect to correlate the factors namely National Career Assessment Exam, employability, and financial capability, whether it has a significant or insignificant relationship with the student's college program preference, as well as the possible changes, if any, of their preference leading to a shift of career path. The researchers will also aim to determine the feedback of the students with regards to the program offered which may contribute to improving the curriculum and consideration of offering new programs to universities.

Statement of Objectives

The overall goal of this study is to gain knowledge and understanding of the factors National Career Assessment Exam, employability, and financial capability that affected the college program preference of students at the University of the East – Manila. Particularly,

1. Determine the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1.NCAE Preferred Track and Strand Concentration
 - 1.2.Chosen SHS Track and Strand
 - 1.3.Enrolled College Program
 - 1.4.Program Availability

2. Identify the factors that influence the respondents in determining their preferred college program preference in terms of:
 - a. NCAE Test Results
 - b. Employability
 - c. Financial Capability
3. Measure if there a significant relationship between the three factors and the respondents' college program preference.

Methodology

Research Design

This research is a quantitative study that investigates variables without allowing the researcher to control or manipulate them. This research design is beneficial for measuring the strength or the direction of NCAE results affecting the college program preference of the respondents. A correlation's direction could either be positive or negative. Correlational research is suitable for quickly collecting data from natural settings. It allows the researchers to positively apply the findings to real-life situations (Bhandari, 2021).

After observing the topic, the researchers formulated a hypothesis and employed deductive reasoning to anticipate how the data will appear if the hypothesis is correct before collecting and evaluating the data to validate or refute the hypothesis. This technique investigates the correlation between the result of the National Career Assessment Exam as one of the factors affecting college program preference of students accompanied with employability and financial capability. It will ensure the dependability and validity of our findings and carefully select and arrange the procedures.

Data Collection

The medium used for the survey was Google Forms to make it easier for the researchers to organize the data gathered from each sample. For data collection, there were three sections in the survey questionnaire. The first section of the questionnaire included the consent form to ensure that the respondents understood their involvement in the data gathering of this study. The second section included demographic questions, profiles, and other information about the respondents useful for student profiling. In the third section, the respondents assessed the statements expressing their perceptions of their National Career Assessment Examination and employability. This category also incorporated

financial capability to fund their preferred program on the focus of the survey section, which used a Likert scale to analyze people's opinions, attitudes, and behaviors. It determined whether the NCAE score, employability and financial capability affected the college program that respondents desire. Likert scales are popular in survey research because it makes it easier to operationalize personality traits or perceptions. A five-point scale was utilized, with 5 representing "strongly disagree", 4 representing "disagree", 3 representing "neutral", 2 representing "agree", and 1 representing "strongly agree".

This method can quickly gather broad information on a target audience to prepare for a more targeted, in-depth study that requires time-consuming procedures like in-depth interviews or field research. Surveys are the most often used research method. They are well-liked because they are exceedingly developed, allowing them to be built and adjusted to answer a wide range of research problems. Rather than asking a single question, researchers used this scale to determine how often respondents agree or disagree, providing a choice between indecision and neutrality. Respondents are not obligated to choose one side or the other on an issue when given a neutral response option.

Ethical Considerations

These principles ensure that a research subject's involvement in studies is voluntary, informed, and safe. It is always vital to avoid lasting or extreme harm to participants, whether inadvertent or not. It is difficult for others to accept that the results of the techniques are morally objectionable. Therefore, breaking research ethics could harm the research's reputation. Even if a research proposal is helpful to society, it does not excuse infringing on the human rights or dignity of the participants.

According to Resnik, D. B. (2020), it promotes research objectives such as knowledge expansion. It will promote collaborative work values such as mutual respect and fairness. The government funds many researchers, and regulations governing conflicts of interest, misbehavior, and human or animal research are required to guarantee that funds are spent wisely. It will ensure public faith in research to support and fund it. Researchers should carefully and critically analyze their work to guarantee that the results are legitimate. It is also crucial to keep meticulous notes of their findings. Also, support fundamental social and moral ideals like the notion of non-harming others.

Furthermore, every part of the research is examined on how to handle and use the data to publish and present the findings, and ethics is a critical factor. Human subjects research necessitates the most thought, as the researchers examine concerns such as people's health, safety, and identity. Because everyone has a right to privacy, they should keep their personal information safe

if they store or use it. Even if they cannot obtain data anonymously, ensure confidentiality whenever possible. Moreover, as a researcher, one must be aware of these factors and take the appropriate steps to ensure that ethics are not compromised. If they are, they can be handled quickly and satisfactorily.

Researchers should also publish their findings and always be prepared to share the data and results and any new tools they built to help improve their knowledge. Avoid trying to pass off someone else's work as their own by plagiarizing or copying it. The researchers should always get permission before using other people's tools or methods, unpublished data, or results. Copyrights, patents, and other kinds of intellectual property must be respected, and contributions to the researcher's study must always be acknowledged to avoid plagiarism.

Respondents

With the study focusing on National Career Assessment as a factor to college program preference, it was necessary to look for respondents who have taken the test. Thus, the respondents of this research were the 2nd Year students from CBA, CEduc, CDent, CAS, and CCSS of University of the East (UE)-Manila.

They were chosen as the respondents because they were the last examinees of the National Career Assessment Examination and received its results. Additionally, the researchers chose an equal number of respondents per college department to obtain fitting results for the study despite the limited time available.

Sampling Design

The respondents were 2nd Year students in the academic year 2022-2023. They were considered as samples and were selected by random sampling method by choosing (20) twenty students from CBA, CEduc, CDent, CAS, and CCSS. This ensures that each was equally chosen resulting in the sample being the representative of the population.

Sample Size

The number of the respondents was only limited to (100) one hundred through quota sampling using equal distribution in which the researchers identified the subgroups CBA, CDent, CEduc, CAS, and CCSS and equally distributed 20% in each subgroup.

Research Instrument

The researchers used a survey questionnaire through Google Forms. The research instrument consists of two parts. Part I includes demographic information of the respondents' namely profile name, and other information about the respondents useful for student profiling. While Part II of the research instrument consists of statements expressing their perceptions of their National Career Examination test result, employability, and financial capability. It included financial capability to fund their preferred program on the focus in the survey. The questionnaire was done using Google Forms and was forwarded to the respondents' students by using Facebook Messenger and UE Gmail.

A Likert scale is a type of rating scale that is used to assess opinions, attitudes, or behaviors. It is made up of a sentence or a question, followed by five or seven answer statements. In this case the researcher used the 5-point Likert scale therefore using five answer statements. The respondents select the choice that best expresses their feelings about the statement or topic. The range was computed by using this formula $n - 1 / n$ that helped us come up with the 0.80 interval per range.

The researchers used Microsoft Excel to ensure accuracy on the data that will be presented. The following statistical treatments were:

1. Frequency and Percentage - organized and summarized the responses of the respondents in the survey questionnaires.
2. Weighted Mean: measured the factors affecting college program preference of 2nd-year CBA students.
3. Likert Scale: interpreted and measured the strength of which factor is vital to college program preference.
4. Chi-squared Test: measures the significant relationship between the factors to college program preference

Results and Discussion

For the NCAE Strand and Track Concentration, most of the respondents revealed that the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Strand is their NCAE preferred track and strand concentration which corresponds to 31 responses.

The chosen senior high school strand/track, the Humanities and Social Science Strand has the highest response which acquired 31 answers from the respondents.

Twenty (20) responses were gained from each college departments, namely the College of Business Administration, College of Arts and Sciences, College of Education, College of Dentistry, and College of Computer Studies and System.

One hundred (100) of the respondent's preferred program is available in UE Manila.

In the responses of UE Manila 2nd year students towards their NCAE results, the highest mean (4.51) states that the NCAE strengthened the respondents decision-making skills.

In the responses of UE Manila 2nd year students towards employability, the highest mean (4.58) states that most of the respondents want to be in an industry that will develop my potential and opportunities.

In the responses of UE Manila 2nd year towards financial capability, the highest mean of 4.53 is the one that pertains to students becoming concerned about the possible tuition fee increase and having it cause more expenses.

Overall, the three factors namely National Career Examination Assessment, Employability, and Financial Capability have shown a significant relationship from the perception of the respondents in terms of college program preference.

Conclusions

In terms of National Career Examination Assessment, the respondents stated that their NCAE result strengthened their decision-making skills. This is supported by the factor stating that it opened the eyes of the respondents to different possibilities available for them. This implies that education is a means to accomplishment, knowledge, and self-preservation and its main goal is to enable each member of society to realize their potential and improve their skills. One of the most crucial factors in determining a student's future professional success is their National Career Examination Assessment.

Most of the respondents want to be in an industry that will develop their potential and opportunities. Additionally, the respondents chose a college program that would help them find a long-term career. This indicates that many students pursuing higher education do so to increase their prospects of success in the labor market. The selection of a program and career path that aligns with the student's interests, personal skills, and overall life goals is one of the most crucial factors.

The respondents have stated concerns about possible tuition fee increases that may cause more expenses. Although students are concerned about tuition fee costs, students acknowledge that their parents can afford to send them to the school of their choice because they have enough savings.

It has been claimed that National Career Examination Assessment, Employability, and Financial Capability has a significant relationship with the college program preference of 2nd - year UE Manila students.

Recommendations

The guidance counselling office should provide pre-counselling with regards to the benefits of the NCAE examination to encourage students to perform better. Teachers and the school can also offer an evaluation and monitoring program.

Since Technical-Vocational Aptitude is one of the domains measured in NCAE, it would be beneficial for the government to reorganize the curriculum in the Basic Education and provide additional attention to Technical-Vocational subjects.

The rising tuition costs are a growing issue that put more financial strain and prevent some students from affording higher education. Thus, the universities and education institutions should encourage openness and transparency in tuition fee increases. Being open and honest about school fees will assist in establishing trust between students and educational institutions, as well as save students from worrying about the sudden increases in tuition and other miscellaneous fees.

Although the Employability factor has the highest overall weighted mean among the other factors, it is highly suggested that universities and colleges should be open with the career opportunities per college program in which the students are enrolled in by providing practical training and activities that could harness the soft and hard skills of the students would increase their chance of employability rather than just focusing on theories or basic in-class learning.

To the university Professors, the researchers suggest that they re-evaluate how they provide homework and activities to their students and how they engage with the students. A student's National Career Examination Assessment does not just depend on their personal skills but also with how the educators nourish them in improving those skills. This could be achieved by providing homework that is not just book-based such as practical activities, case studies, and learning applications. Therefore, increasing the chances of Professor-Student engagements.

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