

## **Investigating the Alignment of Skills Acquired by Mass Communication Graduates and Workplace Demands**

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### **Keywords**

Employability,  
Skills alignment,  
Mass  
communication,  
Curriculum  
development, and  
the Workplace  
demands

### **Abstract**

This study examines the employability of mass communication graduates from Negros Oriental State University (NORSU) in Dumaguete City and the alignment of their educational background with the skills required in the workplace. An online questionnaire adapted from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) was administered to 40 mass communication graduates who studied at NORSU between 2017 and 2021. The study found that while graduates were mostly satisfied with their current jobs, the skills acquired during their education did not fully align with those required in the workplace. These findings can inform curriculum development for mass communication programs and guide future research.

### **Introduction**

Mass communication programs play a pivotal role in equipping graduates with critical skills for success in the workforce. Negros Oriental State University (NORSU) is one such institution, providing students with training in writing, critical thinking, teamwork, communication, and media production. However, the critical question remains: Do the skills taught in these programs align with the demands of the workplace?

This study aims to investigate this gap by examining the experiences of recent NORSU mass communication graduates. The focus is on their skills acquisition, job satisfaction, and the

time taken to secure their first job. The study seeks to explore the relevance of the Bachelor of Mass Communication curriculum in SY 2008-2009 and the alignment of the curriculum with learning objectives.

Achieving alignment is crucial in higher education, yet practical issues often pose a challenge. Misalignment can have a negative impact, exacerbated by a lack of student awareness regarding their place within the curriculum. Therefore, the study proposes the potential implementation of a digital curriculum mapping tool to enhance student understanding and engagement. Such a tool can aid in visualizing and analyzing the alignment of the

curriculum and its learning outcomes (Wijngaards-de Meij and Merx 2016).

The contemporary economic landscape demands not only traditional literacy and numeracy competencies but also novel aptitudes such as creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving. Individuals need to develop and hone such proficiencies to compete and excel in the current job market. Technological advancements continue to replace manual labor and penetrate nearly every aspect of life and work, requiring individuals to analyze information effectively and solve unstructured problems.

Thus, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the skills required for success in the contemporary economic landscape and the relevance of mass communication programs in meeting these demands. The findings will have significant implications for both academia and industry, leading to improvements in curriculum design, pedagogy, and the development of relevant skills (World Economic Forum, 2015).

### **Skills that a Mass Communication Graduate must Possess**

Likely, the communications industry is experiencing rapid growth, with increasing numbers of graduates entering the job market daily. Mass communication alumni need to be branded fresh and original as competition intensifies. To help graduates succeed in this highly competitive field, the Forbes Communications Council (2019) has identified a set of must-have skills and attributes.

### **Well-Rounded Marketing Skills**

To succeed in the communications industry, graduates must possess diverse skill sets. Startups are constantly emerging, and communication graduates must understand product, sales, and digital marketing. This knowledge makes them more appealing to learn and increase their value as a company expands.

### **The Ability to Be Proactive, Not Reactive**

Adaptability is a crucial trait in the communications industry. The industry is constantly evolving, and graduates need to be able to ride the waves and adapt fast. Better yet, they should be proactive and think of multiple scenarios before they happen.

### **Effective Storytelling**

Successful brand communications are grounded in effective storytelling. Graduates need to think about the words the audience would use to describe the problems and need they care about and develop a storyline that evolves across multiple touchpoints. This approach can help brands to say something meaningful instead of trading noise.

### **Grit and Passion**

The most critical skills in communications are not necessarily skills but attributes. Grit and passion are essential in a demanding and ever-changing field. Communicators must have a true passion for staying on top of the game and the grit to deal with changes in the industry and within the organization. Those who lack these attributes may burn out and fail to stand out.

### **Data Analytics**

PR professionals are under increasing pressure to prove ROI and attribution. Reporting earned media value and potential impressions is no longer sufficient. It is crucial to understand Google Analytics and other forms of measurement that can uncover site traffic, sales, the share of voice, and sentiment. As digital continues to evolve, so do the opportunities and challenges.

### **Strong, Adaptable Writing**

Graduates should have strong writing skills and be able to adapt their writing to multiple styles. They should also be able to think critically about their audiences and be strategic. Relevant internship or part-time work experience can make a difference in standing out.

## A Learning Mindset

Communication is a unique arena where professionals in the digital age see new trends every couple of years. It is essential to unlearn before learning a new methodology. Curiosity, an open mind, and a willingness to learn can help graduates to stand out. No one knows it all, so adapting to the moment and business need is key.

## Listening

The communications industry involves lots of creativity, writing, and strategy. The key to putting these into action and developing success is listening. Strong listening skills can help mass communicators build more effective communications and stronger relationships with their audience.

Thus, the communications industry is rapidly evolving, and graduates need to possess a diverse skill set, the ability to be proactive and adapt fast, effective storytelling skills, grit and passion, data analytics proficiency, strong and adaptable writing skills, a learning mindset, and good listening skills to succeed. Graduates with these skills and attributes can stand out in this highly competitive industry, bringing fresh and original ideas to their work and adding value to their organizations.

## Statement of the Problem

The research questions for this study include the following:

- What are the primary reasons for mass communication graduates from NORSU to choose their course of study?
- What skills are acquired by mass communication graduates during their education at NORSU?
- What skills do mass communication graduates identify as necessary for success in the workplace?
- To what extent do mass communication graduates from NORSU find their acquired skills aligned with workplace demands?

- What is their current job, the level of job satisfaction, and the duration to land the first job among mass communication graduates from NORSU?

## Significance of the Study

This study will contribute to the existing knowledge on aligning skills acquired by mass communication graduates with workplace demands. The findings will inform curriculum development for mass communication programs and guide future research. Additionally, this study can help NORSU and other higher education institutions to better understand their graduates' employability and enhance their curricula to better prepare students for the workforce.

## Theoretical Framework

The study's theoretical framework is based on the Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993), which posits that individuals invest in education and training to increase their productivity and, consequently, their earnings. This theory highlights the importance of acquiring skills relevant to the labor market.

## Methodology

The study employed an online questionnaire distributed to 40 of 88 mass communication graduates who studied at NORSU from 2017 to 2021 at the height of the pandemic. The questionnaire included questions on the respondents' demographic information, reasons for choosing the course, skills acquired from the course, skills necessary for the workplace, current work, level of job satisfaction, and the duration it took to land their first Job.

## Results and Discussion

The study found that the primary reasons for choosing the mass communication course at NORSU were a strong passion for the profession, being inspired by role models, and the availability of the course. The skills acquired during the

course were predominantly technical, such as PR and advertising, public speaking, copy editing, research and editing, graphics and Design, and radio broadcasting. However, the skills identified as necessary for the workplace were communication, writing, advertising skills, and research.

Most respondents (52.5%) were satisfied with their current job being call center agents (37.5%)

and followed by radio broadcasters (22.5%) and online bloggers (7.55 %). Furthermore, 68% reported that it took them one month to land their first Job. Most respondents were female, single, and aged between 20-26.

**Profile of Respondents:** Most respondents were female, single, and aged 20-26.

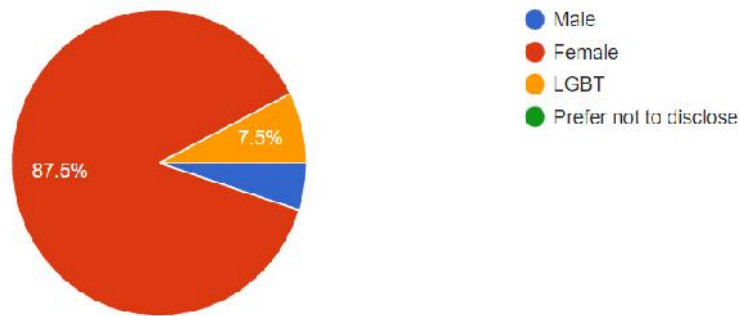


Figure 1 Gender

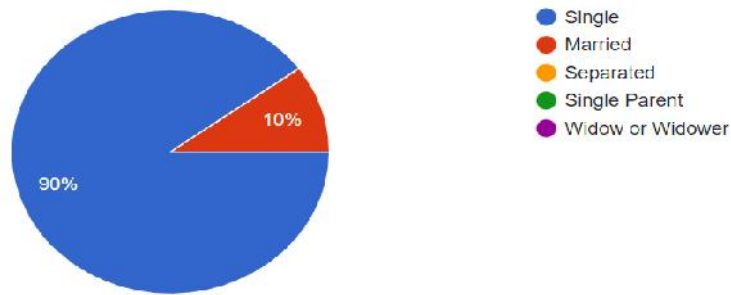


Figure 2 Marital Status

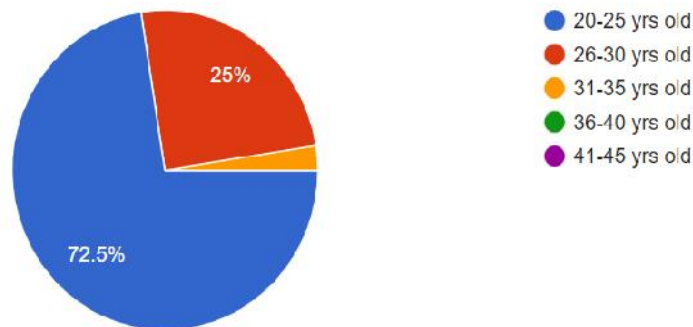


Figure 3 Age

**Reasons for Choosing the Course:** The primary reasons for choosing the course were a strong

passion for the profession, being inspired by role models, and the availability of the course.

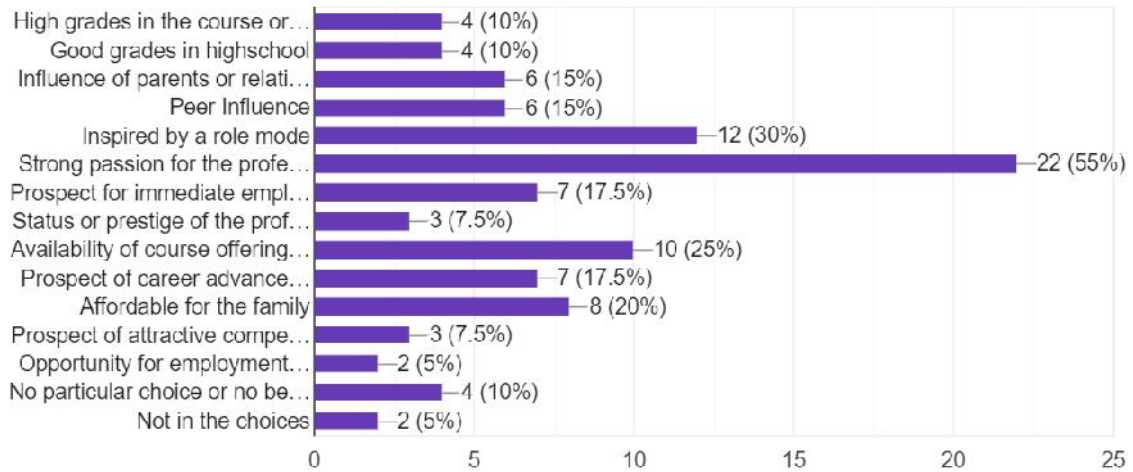


Figure 4 Reasons for Choosing the Course

**Skills Acquired from the Course:** The skills acquired from the course included PR and advertising, public speaking, copy editing,

research and editing, graphics and Design, and radio broadcasting.

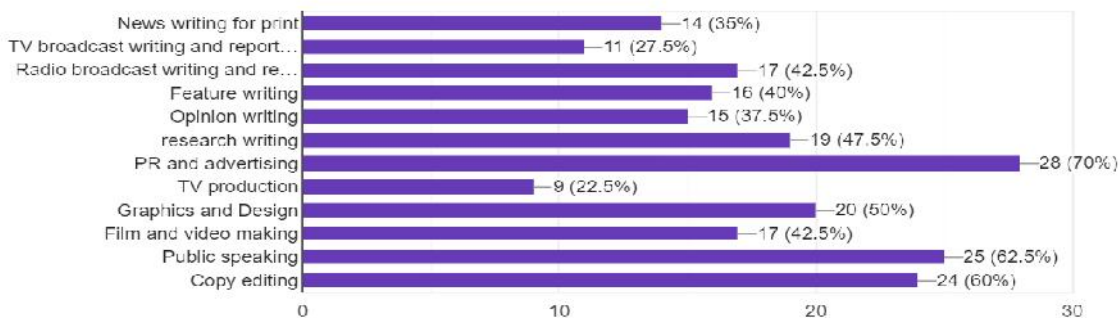


Figure 5 Skills Acquired from the Course

**Skills Necessary for the Workplace:** The skills necessary for the workplace were identified as

communication, writing, advertising skills, and research.

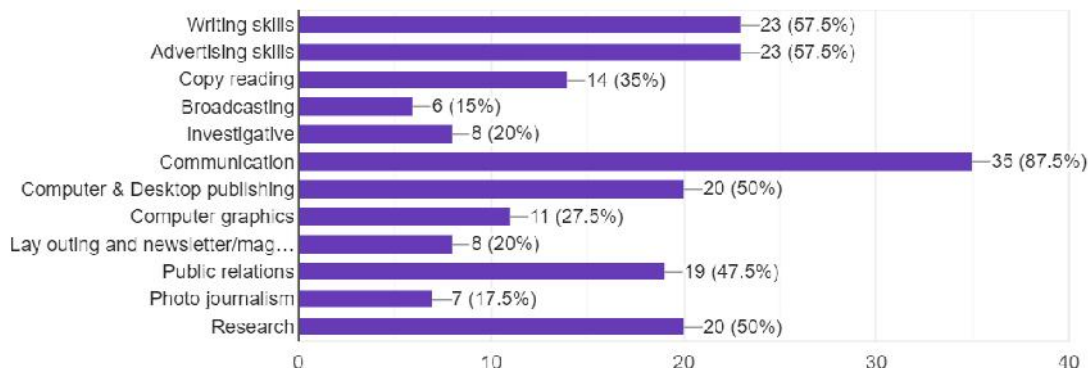


Figure 6 Skills Necessary for the Workplace

**Alignment of Acquired Skills with Workplace Demands**

Table 1 Alignment of Acquired Skills with Workplace Demands

	Skills Acquired in School	Skills Needed in the Workplace
1	<b>PR &amp; Advertising (70%)</b>	Communication (87.5%)
2	Public Speaking (62.5%)	<b>Writing Skills (57.5%)</b>
3	<b>Copy Editing (60%)</b>	<b>Advertising (57.5%)</b>
4	Graphics and Design (50%)	Computer and Desktop Publishing (50%)
5	<b>Research (47.5%)</b>	<b>Research (50%)</b>

The study found a discrepancy between the skills taught in educational programs and those required by employers. Based on Table 1, copy editing and writing, advertising, and research are aligned with skills taught in school and skills needed in the workplace, comprising 60% of the skills. This finding indicates a potential need for curriculum development to better align with workplace

demands, such as incorporating advanced skills in multimedia production, social media management, and data analysis. The findings can serve as a basis for future research in the field of mass communication and inform improvements in mass communication courses at the university level.

**Present Job**

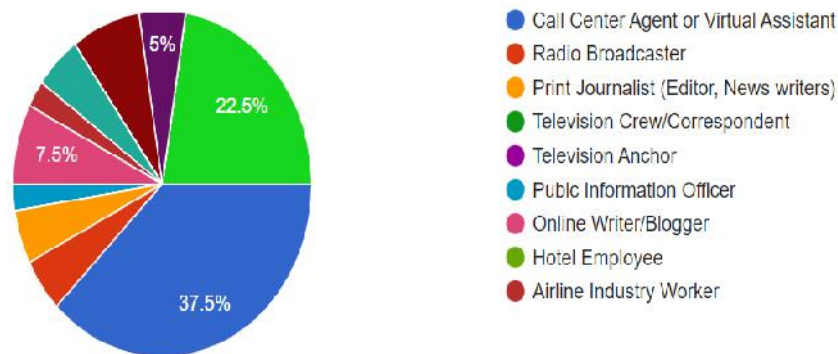


Figure 7 Present Job

The present study indicates that a significant proportion of Mass Communication graduates are employed as call center agents (37.5%), followed by radio broadcasters (22.5%) and online bloggers (7.55%). The employment trends for graduates of the Negros Oriental State University (NORSU) appear to be consistent with the academic program's focus. The findings highlight the vocational trajectories of Mass Communication graduates in contemporary labor markets, providing valuable insights into the evolving demands of the media industry.

Contrary to the *Employment Status of Mass Communication Graduates of the University of Pangasinan - PHINMA Education Network* study, a significant proportion of respondents were underemployed. However, the research also highlighted a marked increase of 17.55% in the employability rate of Mass Communication graduates from academic years 2009 to 2011 when compared to the earlier study conducted by Manzano on the "Status of Mass Communication in the University of Pangasinan" during the academic years 2002 to 2007 (Sanchez, 2019).

### Level of Job Satisfaction

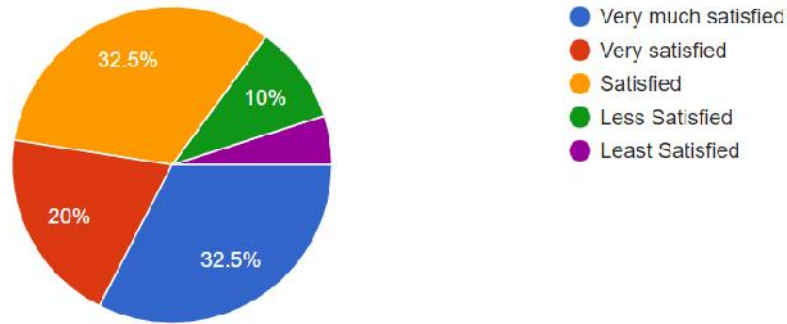


Figure 8 Job Satisfaction

Based on Figure 8, 32.5% of the respondents were highly satisfied with their current Job, while 20% were very satisfied. Job satisfaction and employability are critical aspects of graduates' transition into the workforce. Factors affecting job satisfaction include salary, job security, working conditions, and opportunities for professional

growth. Employability, on the other hand, refers to the ability of individuals to secure and maintain employment (Khan et al., 2022).

**The duration it Took to Land a First Job:** 68% of the respondents reported that it took them one month to land their first Job.

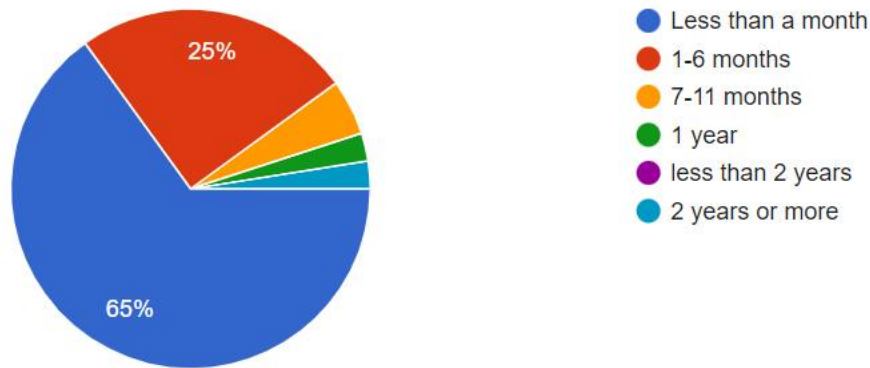


Figure 9 Duration to work in the First Job

### Conclusion

This study provides insight into the skills acquired by mass communication graduates from NORSU and the skills necessary for the workplace. The results reveal a discrepancy between the skills taught in educational programs and those required by employers, indicating a potential need for curriculum development to better align with workplace demands. The findings can serve as a basis for future research in the field of mass

communication and inform improvements in mass communication courses at the university level.

The divergence between the competencies acquired through academic instruction and those demanded by the labor market is primarily attributed to rapid technological advancements. The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) online portals in 2023, which were not included in the previous Mass Communication curriculum, is a significant factor. Additionally, the absence of

Grades 11 and 12 in the education of all communication graduates resulted in missed opportunities to engage with the latest developments in the curriculum. However, it was only in 2017 that the Philippine K-12 curriculum underwent a restructuring, introducing the senior high school graduates to address these issues.

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