

Career Trajectories of Criminology Graduates: Employment Outcomes

Nikki G. Trinidad

Faculty, Polytechnic College of La Union, San Nicolas Sur, Agoo, La Union.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2026.1315PH00053>

Received: 18 March 2026; Accepted: 24 March 2026; Published: 08 April 2026

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Criminology or Criminal Justice Education is a four-year degree program designed to prepare individuals for careers in law enforcement, criminal investigation, corrections, forensic science, and other related fields within the criminal justice system. The program aims to develop professional competence, leadership, integrity, accountability, and a strong commitment to public service. Through a combination of general education courses, professional subjects, and practicum training mandated by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), students acquire knowledge of criminal behavior, law enforcement policies, investigative procedures, and crime prevention strategies (Pacatang, 2016).

In recent years, higher education institutions have placed increasing emphasis on evaluating the employability of their graduates. One of the most widely used approaches for assessing graduate employability is the Graduate Tracer Study (GTS). Tracer studies track graduates' employment status, career paths, and professional experiences after completing their academic programs. These studies provide important feedback to higher education institutions by determining whether the knowledge and skills acquired during college align with the demands of the labor market.

For professional programs such as criminology, tracer studies are particularly significant because graduates are expected to enter highly structured and regulated sectors such as law enforcement, corrections, forensic investigation, and private security. Employment in these fields often requires licensure, strict recruitment standards, and specialized competencies. Understanding the career trajectories of criminology graduates can therefore help educational institutions evaluate the effectiveness of their programs and identify areas for improvement to enhance graduate employability.

This study examines the employment outcomes and career trajectories of criminology graduates from the Polytechnic College of La Union (PCLU). By analyzing their employment status, job-hunting strategies, and challenges encountered during the job application process, the study aims to generate evidence-based insights to improve institutional programs and strengthen alignment between criminology education and labor market demands.

Graduate Tracer Studies (GTS) have gained global recognition as important tools for evaluating how effectively higher education institutions prepare graduates for employment. Many countries, including the United Kingdom, Germany, Malaysia, and Australia, conduct national graduate surveys to monitor employment outcomes, job relevance, and skill applicability among university graduates. In Germany, tracer studies are commonly required for institutional accreditation, while in the United Kingdom, employment data from graduate surveys are used to evaluate university performance and influence public funding allocations (World Bank, 2023).

International studies indicate that successful employment outcomes among graduates are often influenced by factors such as internship exposure, development of soft skills, institutional career support services, and access to labor market information (OECD, 2024; Ismail & Said, 2021). In criminology and criminal justice programs

worldwide, tracer studies have been used to monitor employment in sectors such as policing, corrections, forensic services, and private security, revealing the diverse career opportunities available to graduates.

In Southeast Asia, tracer study initiatives have also become increasingly common. For example, Medan State University in Indonesia conducted a tracer study to assess graduates' competencies and their relevance to workplace demands. The findings revealed that graduates' skills and professional roles were generally aligned with employers' needs, highlighting the importance of tracer studies in evaluating the effectiveness of academic programs (Hasibuan et al., 2022, as cited in Procurato et al., 2023).

In the Philippine context, tracer studies have become an important mechanism for assessing the employability of higher education graduates. The Fourth Philippine Graduate Tracer Study, conducted by Orbeta, Tutor, and Miraflor (2021), found that many graduates reported insufficient preparation in essential employability skills, such as communication and problem-solving. Furthermore, only about half of graduates who passed licensure examinations were employed in positions directly related to their field of study. These findings indicate a significant gap between academic preparation and the actual demands of the labor market.

Recent studies focusing specifically on criminology graduates in the Philippines reveal similar challenges. Procurato et al. (2024) reported that only about 35 percent of surveyed criminology graduates obtained employment directly related to their academic training, with most securing employment several months after graduation. Similarly, Repoyo (2021) found that only a small proportion of graduates from the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology were employed in criminology-related occupations. Although Manzano (2024) reported a relatively higher employability rate among graduates of St. Paul University Surigao, the study still emphasized the need for stronger institutional support in preparing students for employment. Meanwhile, Nayoyos-Refugia (2021) identified failure in the licensure examination and lack of additional professional qualifications as major barriers to employment among criminology graduates.

Despite the opportunities available in law enforcement and related sectors, criminology graduates often face several structural and institutional challenges when seeking employment. These include skills mismatches, limited work experience, and intense competition for positions within government agencies. In the Philippines, recruitment into major law enforcement institutions such as the Philippine National Police (PNP), Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), and Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) is regulated by strict eligibility requirements, including physical standards, age limits, and moral fitness qualifications, as mandated under relevant laws and regulations.

Another challenge affecting criminology graduates is the changing demand for professional skills in the modern labor market. With the emergence of advanced technologies and the increasing importance of cybercrime investigations, employers are now seeking graduates with digital literacy, technological competence, and analytical skills in addition to traditional law enforcement knowledge.

Furthermore, studies have shown that only a small proportion of qualified applicants are absorbed into government service each year due to limited vacancies and budget allocations. As a result, many criminology graduates are compelled to pursue alternative career paths such as private security services or other professions that may not be directly related to their field of study.

These challenges highlight the importance of conducting graduate tracer studies to evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of criminology education programs. By examining graduates' employment outcomes and career experiences, higher education institutions can identify strengths and weaknesses in their curricula, teaching methods, and student support systems.

In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has recognized the importance of tracer studies in quality assurance and program evaluation. Higher education institutions are encouraged to conduct tracer studies as part of the criteria for designating Centers of Excellence (COE) and Centers of Development (COD) in various academic programs. These initiatives aim to ensure that academic programs remain responsive to labor market needs and contribute to the development of a competent workforce.

Despite the growing number of tracer studies conducted across the country, localized evidence on the employment outcomes of criminology graduates from private higher education institutions in La Union remains limited. In particular, there is insufficient information regarding the employment status, career trajectories, job-search experiences, and challenges encountered by graduates of the Polytechnic College of La Union (PCLU).

This lack of localized data limits the institution's ability to evaluate the effectiveness of its criminology program and implement evidence-based improvements to enhance the employability of its graduates. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the career trajectories of criminology graduates from PCLU by analyzing their employment outcomes, job-hunting strategies, and challenges encountered in entering the workforce. The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights that may guide institutional improvements and strengthen the alignment between criminology education and the evolving demands of the labor market.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study was anchored on selected career development and employment theories, namely the Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA), Job Search Theory, the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT), and Guichard's reconceptualization of career development. These theories collectively provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the employment outcomes and career trajectories of criminology graduates from the Polytechnic College of La Union (PCLU). They explain how individual competencies, institutional preparation, and structural labor market conditions interact to influence graduate employability.

The Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) explains employment as a process of correspondence between an individual's abilities and the requirements of the work environment. According to Biscontini (2024), successful work adjustment occurs when there is alignment between employee skills and employer expectations, resulting in job satisfaction and stability. In this study, TWA helps explain how criminology graduates' academic preparation, licensure status, and acquired competencies influence their success in securing and maintaining employment.

The study was also guided by Job Search Theory, which explains employment acquisition as a dynamic process influenced by labor market conditions, information availability, and structural constraints (Faggian, 2014). This theory helps explain employment delays experienced by criminology graduates due to quota systems, limited hiring slots, eligibility requirements, and competitive recruitment processes within law enforcement agencies.

Additionally, the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT) emphasizes that career outcomes are shaped not only by individual effort but also by broader socioeconomic and institutional factors (Duffy et al., 2016; Blustein et al., 2019). In the Philippine context, structural barriers such as budget limitations, strict standards, and economic constraints may significantly influence access to stable employment among criminology graduates.

Furthermore, the study draws on Guichard's (2022) career development framework, which highlights the ecological and systemic influences on career pathways. Guichard asserts that career decisions are shaped by personal agency, social relationships, institutional support systems, and labor market realities. This perspective reinforces the idea that graduate employability is influenced not only by academic preparation but also by institutional guidance, alumni networks, and external employment conditions.

In addition to these theories, Philippine laws and policies provide practical grounding for understanding graduate employability. Republic Act No. 11131 (The Philippine Criminology Profession Act of 2018) governs the licensure, regulation, and professional standards of criminology practice, ensuring that graduates meet legal and professional requirements for employment in law enforcement and related careers, thereby reinforcing the importance of competencies and board qualifications in employment outcomes (Lawphil, 2018; Supreme Court E-Library, 2018).

Commission on Higher Education (CHED) policies institutionalize the use of graduate tracer studies and employability monitoring as part of quality assurance and program evaluation, requiring higher education

institutions to collect and report data on graduate employment status and career paths to guide curriculum improvement and labor market responsiveness (CHED, 2020).

Finally, National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM) memorandum guidelines on recruitment, quota allocation, and eligibility requirements illustrate how structured hiring processes and standards (such as physical and medical examinations and recruitment quotas) shape access to law enforcement careers, reflecting how institutional policies constrain or enable employment opportunities in regulated labor markets (NAPOLCOM, 2021).

Together, these selected theories and laws provide a multidimensional explanation of graduate employability, emphasizing the interaction between personal competencies, institutional preparation, and structural labor market factors in shaping the career outcomes of criminology graduates.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the study using the Input–Process–Output (IPO) paradigm, which serves as the guiding structure for examining the career trajectories of criminology graduates from the Polytechnic College of La Union (PCLU).

The Input phase consists of the key variables of the study, including the employment outcomes of criminology graduates, the factors contributing to successful job-hunting strategies, and the challenges encountered during the job application process.

The Process phase describes the methodological procedures used to transform raw data into meaningful findings. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentage distribution to determine employment patterns. Meanwhile, qualitative data obtained from interviews and open-ended responses were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and significant themes.

The Output of the study is the development of a proposed action plan aimed at improving the employment outcomes of criminology graduates. This plan is designed to strengthen the alignment between academic preparation and labor market demands, ensuring that the PCLU Criminology program remains responsive to the evolving requirements of the profession.

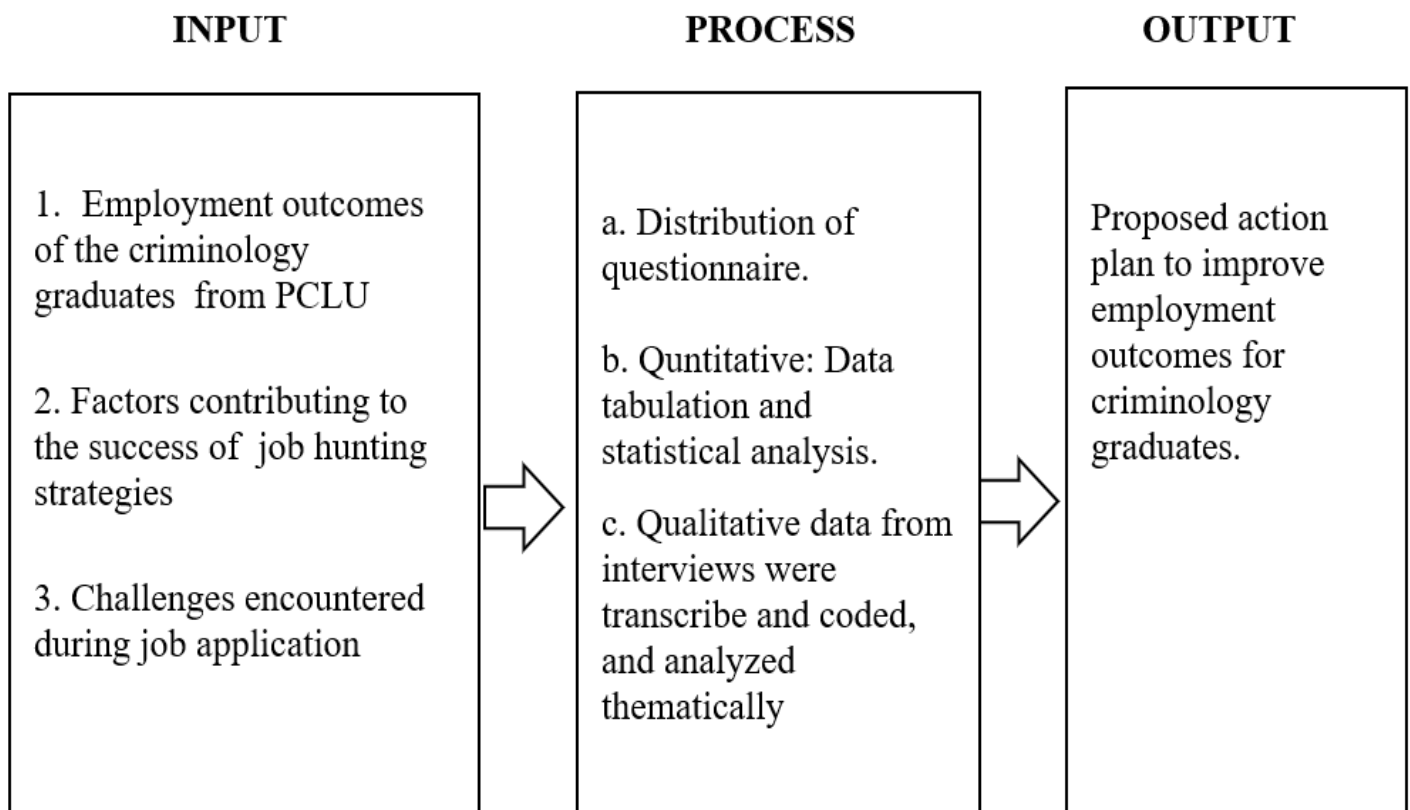


Figure 1. Research Paradigm

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the career paths and employment results of Polytechnic College of La Union criminology graduates (2021–2023).

The following important problems are the focus of this study:

1. What career paths do criminology graduates from PCLU currently pursue?
2. What factors contribute to the success of job-hunting efforts among criminology graduates of Polytechnic College of La Union?
3. What challenges do criminology graduates encounter during the job application process?
4. What measures can be proposed to improve the career trajectories and employment opportunities of Criminology graduates from Polytechnic College of La Union (PCLU)?

Importance of the Study

The research was beneficial to the following:

Policymakers. For policymakers, the findings offer evidence that may guide improvements in educational programs and employment policies. By identifying gaps between academic preparation and labor market demands, policies can be shaped to better support graduates in securing stable and meaningful employment.

Academic Institutions. The findings of this study can help academic institutions reflect on how well their criminology programs prepare students for real-world careers. By looking closely at graduates' employment experiences, schools can better understand what they are doing well and what areas may need improvement—whether in curriculum design, internship programs, board exam preparation, or career counseling services.

Law Enforcement Agencies. The study may also help law enforcement agencies better understand the strengths and limitations of new criminology graduates entering the workforce. Insights from the research can contribute to improving recruitment strategies, training programs, and workforce planning.

Other Stakeholders. Lastly, employers, government agencies, and community organizations involved in criminal justice and public safety may also benefit from this study. By understanding how prepared criminology graduates are for professional roles, these stakeholders can better support their recruitment, training, and integration into the workforce.

Criminology Students. For those still studying, the results serve as a practical guide. The study gives students a realistic understanding of what to expect after graduation. It helps them recognize the importance of building both technical and soft skills early on, gaining relevant experience, and preparing seriously for licensure and employment requirements.

Criminology Graduates. For graduates, this study provides a clearer picture of the job market they are entering. It highlights common challenges, successful strategies, and possible career paths. With this understanding, graduates can make wiser decisions about skill development, licensure preparation, and long-term career planning.

Future Researchers. This research may serve as a helpful reference for future studies on graduate employability, tracer studies, or curriculum enhancement. It can provide a foundation for further exploration and comparative research in other institutions.

The Researcher. For the researcher, this study serves as a professional contribution to the field of criminology education, particularly within the Polytechnic College of La Union (PCLU). It provides an opportunity to reflect on current teaching practices and contribute to continuous program development.

Definition of Key Terms

Academic Preparation. This refers to the knowledge, training, and educational background acquired by criminology graduates during their college studies.

Board Examination. This refers to the Criminologist Licensure Examination administered by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) that qualifies graduates to practice the criminology profession.

Career Paths. These refer to the specific jobs or industries where the criminology graduates of the Polytechnic College of La Union (PCLU) from 2021 to 2023 are currently working.

Career Trajectories. These refer to the changes and progress in a graduate's employment journey, including promotions, job transfers, or career shifts.

Criminology Graduates. These are individuals who completed the Bachelor of Science in Criminology program at PCLU.

Employment Outcomes. These refer to the results of graduates' efforts to enter the workforce, including whether they are employed, their type of job, and how long it took them to secure employment.

Institutional Support. This refers to the assistance provided by PCLU, such as internships, review programs, career guidance, and faculty mentoring.

Job-Hunting Efforts. These refer to the actions taken by graduates to find employment, such as sending resumes, attending interviews, networking, and applying online.

Labor Market Conditions. These refer to external factors that affect employment opportunities, such as competition, hiring quotas, and job availability.

Skills Mismatch. This refers to the gap between what graduates learned in school and the skills required by employers.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methodology, research design, population and samples, research instruments, validation procedures, data gathering procedure, data analysis and ethical consideration.

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, specifically adopting the explanatory sequential approach, to examine the employment outcomes and career trajectories of criminology graduates from the Polytechnic College of La Union (PCLU) who graduated between 2021 and 2023.

In the quantitative phase, the study utilized a descriptive research method to systematically describe the graduates' current employment status. This method was used to determine the distribution of respondents according to employment status and the alignment of their jobs with their field of study. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using statistical tools, such as frequency counts and percentages, to ensure clear and organized presentation of results.

Subsequently, the qualitative phase followed using the explanatory sequential design (ESD), in which qualitative data were collected to further explain and elaborate on the quantitative findings. In this phase, data were gathered through open-ended survey responses and selected interviews. This approach provided deeper insights into the factors influencing employment outcomes and the challenges encountered during the job application process.

The qualitative data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and key themes. These findings were then used to support and provide context to the quantitative results.

Finally, the findings from both quantitative and qualitative phases were integrated and interpreted to develop a comprehensive understanding of the graduates' employment outcomes. This approach enabled the study not only to describe employment trends but also to explain the underlying factors influencing these outcomes. The results served as the basis for proposing recommendations aimed at enhancing the career development and employability of criminology graduates.

Population and Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at the Polytechnic College of La Union (PCLU), located in San Nicolas Sur, Agoo, La Union. As a reputable higher education institution in the region, PCLU offers various undergraduate programs, including the Bachelor of Science in Criminology. The program equips students with the knowledge and skills necessary for careers in law enforcement, forensic science, and other fields within the criminal justice system, making it an appropriate setting for examining graduate employment outcomes.

The study population consisted of 285 criminology graduates from 2021 to 2023. Using purposive sampling, the study focused on graduates who were accessible and able to provide relevant information regarding their employment experiences. A total of 98 graduates participated in the quantitative survey, while 30 respondents were selected for qualitative interviews.

The use of purposive sampling allowed the researcher to gather data from participants with relevant experiences; however, it also presents limitations in terms of generalizability. Since participants were selected based on accessibility and willingness to respond, the findings may not fully represent all PCLU graduates or those from other institutions. Therefore, the results should be interpreted as indicative rather than definitive. Despite this limitation, the approach ensured the collection of rich and meaningful qualitative data, providing depth to complement the quantitative findings. Future studies may improve representativeness by employing probability sampling techniques.

The difference between the total population and the number of respondents was due to practical constraints in reaching all graduates. Factors such as outdated contact information, relocation, non-response, and unwillingness to participate limited the number of survey participants. Nevertheless, the 98 respondents represent a substantial portion of the population and provide sufficient data for descriptive analysis. The selection of 30 interview participants further strengthened the qualitative component by capturing in-depth insights into employment experiences, job-hunting strategies, and challenges encountered by graduates.

The selection of PCLU as the research site is supported by its significant role in producing criminology professionals in the region. Examining the employment outcomes of its graduates provides valuable insights for both academic institutions and stakeholders in the criminal justice sector. Moreover, the availability of institutional records and administrative support facilitated the effective tracing of graduates, thereby enhancing the reliability of the data collected.

For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was applied to select participants who could provide detailed and relevant insights. To ensure balanced representation, quotas were established based on graduation year (2021, 2022, and 2023) and employment category (law enforcement, allied, and non-allied fields). This approach ensured that diverse perspectives were captured while maintaining alignment with the study's objectives.

Table 1. Distribution Of Respondents

Year Graduated	Population
2021	37
2022	91
2023	157
TOTAL	285

Data-Gathering Tools

To gather the necessary data, this study utilized a survey questionnaire and an interview guide as the primary research instruments. These tools were designed to collect both quantitative data and qualitative insights from the graduates.

The survey questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part consisted of closed-ended questions that gathered information on respondents' employment status and career paths. These responses were organized and analyzed using frequency and percentage distribution. The second part included open-ended questions that allowed respondents to elaborate on their experiences, particularly the factors contributing to their job-hunting success, the challenges encountered during the application process, and their suggestions for improving employment opportunities for criminology graduates of the Polytechnic College of La Union (PCLU).

To ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study's objectives, the questionnaire was reviewed and validated by the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Dean of the Criminology Department, and the CCJE Program Head. The instrument obtained an Average Weighted Mean of 4.00, interpreted as "Highly Valid," indicating its suitability for data collection.

In addition to the primary instruments, the study also utilized secondary sources to support and validate the findings. These included PRC licensure examination results, PCLU graduate records, institutional employment reports, Republic Act No. 11131, and CHED Memorandum Order No. 05, Series of 2018. These documents provided supplementary data and strengthened the overall credibility of the study.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher first submitted the proposed research title for approval. After securing approval, permission was obtained from the Registrar of the Polytechnic College of La Union (PCLU) to access the list of criminology graduates from 2021 to 2023.

Once the research instruments were validated and ethical considerations were observed, the questionnaire was distributed to the identified graduates through social media platforms to reach them more efficiently. From the respondents, 30 graduates were selected for follow-up interviews. These interviews were conducted through phone calls to allow for a deeper discussion of their employment experiences.

After collecting the responses, the quantitative data were carefully organized, tallied, and presented in tables using frequency and percentage to ensure clarity and accurate interpretation of the results.

The qualitative responses from open-ended questions and interviews were transcribed and examined using thematic analysis. The answers were coded and grouped into related categories, allowing common themes and patterns to emerge. This process provided a deeper understanding of the graduates' experiences, challenges, and career journeys.

Data Analysis

Frequency was utilized to determine the number of respondents in each category, while percentage was used to show how much each category represents in relation to the total number of respondents. This allowed the researchers to clearly present the distribution of employment among criminology graduates, such as how many are working in law enforcement, allied field and non allied field .

For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was primarily used, supported by frequency and percentage. Thematic analysis helped identify and organize common patterns or themes from the responses to open-ended questions and interviews. The responses were coded, grouped into categories, and developed into themes.

In addition, frequency and percentage were also applied to the qualitative data to determine how many respondents mentioned a particular theme and what proportion they represent. This helped in emphasizing the most common factors contributing to employment success and the challenges encountered by the graduates.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, the researcher secured authorization from the school Registrar to access the records of criminology graduates of the Polytechnic College of La Union (PCLU), specifically their names and years of graduation.

The researcher ensured that the purpose of the study was clearly explained to all respondents before their participation. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to refuse or withdraw from the study at any time without any consequence.

Throughout the research process, strict adherence to ethical standards was observed. The privacy and confidentiality of the respondents were safeguarded, and no personally identifiable information was disclosed. All data collected were handled with care and used solely for academic and research purposes.

Furthermore, the study ensured that respondents were not exposed to any form of social, psychological, or physical harm. Ethical principles of respect, beneficence, and confidentiality were upheld at all stages of the research.

In compliance with Republic Act No. 10173, also known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, appropriate measures were implemented to ensure that all collected data were securely stored and protected against unauthorized access, disclosure, or misuse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results of the study, presenting both the analysis and interpretation of data collected from Criminology graduates of the Polytechnic College of La Union (PCLU). The findings are explored in light of the study's objectives and are enriched with personal insights and experiences shared by the graduates. Throughout, the discussion is connected to relevant theories and existing research, providing a deeper understanding of their career paths and experiences

Employment Distribution of Criminology Graduates from PCLU According to Career Paths (2021–2023)

One of the main objectives of this study was to examine the employment outcomes of criminology graduates from the Polytechnic College of La Union (PCLU). Understanding where graduates are currently employed provides valuable insight into how well the program prepares students for the workforce and how responsive it is to labor market demands.

This section presents the distribution of graduates by career path from 2021 to 2023. By analyzing the sectors in which they are employed, whether in law enforcement, allied fields, or non-allied fields, the study aims to determine the dominant career trends among graduates. The data also reveal shifts in employment patterns over time and highlight the realities graduates face as they transition from academic training to professional practice.

Table 2. Employment Distribution of Criminology Graduates from PCLU According to Career Paths (2021–2023)

Employment Distribution	2021	2022	2023	Total	Percentage (n=98)
Law Enforcement	12	12	14	38	38.78%
Allied Field	5	6	6	17	17.35%
Non-Allied Field	5	13	25	43	43.88%
TOTAL	22	31	45	98	100%

The results show that 38 graduates (38.78%) were employed in law enforcement agencies, including the Philippine National Police (PNP), Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), and Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP). This indicates that a substantial proportion of graduates were able to enter careers directly

aligned with the primary objective of the criminology program—preparing students for roles within the criminal justice system.

This finding suggests that the program is effective in producing graduates who meet the minimum qualifications required by law enforcement agencies, particularly in terms of licensure and foundational competencies. However, the fact that less than half of the graduates secured positions in these agencies also indicates that employability is influenced not only by academic preparation but also by external constraints within the labor market.

Comparative studies indicate that approximately 30–45% of criminology graduates in Southeast Asia enter law enforcement, while lower proportions are observed in Western countries due to limited vacancies and more diverse career pathways (Nguyen & Lee, 2023; Smith & Johnson, 2022). The present findings fall within this regional range, suggesting that the employment outcomes of PCLU graduates are consistent with broader trends. Nevertheless, the persistence of limited absorption into law enforcement highlights structural constraints such as hiring quotas, strict eligibility requirements, and competitive recruitment processes.

From the perspective of the Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA), employment occurs when there is alignment between individual competencies and workplace demands. The proportion of graduates employed in law enforcement reflects a degree of person–environment fit, indicating that graduates possess the necessary qualifications and skills required by these agencies. However, TWA also implies that alignment alone does not guarantee employment. Structural limitations, such as restricted hiring capacity, may prevent qualified individuals from securing positions despite meeting the required standards.

In addition, 17 graduates (17.35%) were employed in allied fields related to criminology, such as private security, safety services, and administrative roles within criminal justice-related institutions. These positions allow graduates to apply their knowledge and skills in related contexts while maintaining professional relevance.

This pattern suggests the existence of a secondary employment pathway for criminology graduates, serving as an alternative when direct entry into law enforcement is not immediately possible. From the lens of Job Search Theory, this reflects how individuals adapt their employment decisions based on available opportunities, labor market conditions, and timing. Graduates may accept allied roles as interim positions while waiting for recruitment opportunities or while completing licensure requirements.

Notably, the majority of graduates (43 out of 98, or 43.88%) were employed in non-allied fields. This finding highlights a significant gap between academic training and actual employment outcomes. It suggests that, despite having specialized education, many graduates are unable to secure positions directly related to their field.

This trend can be attributed to several factors, including limited job availability in law enforcement, delays in the licensure process, and intense competition among applicants. As a result, graduates may prioritize immediate employment and financial stability, leading them to accept positions outside their field of specialization.

From the perspective of the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT), this outcome reflects the influence of structural and socioeconomic constraints on career pathways. Employment decisions are not solely determined by personal qualifications or preferences but are shaped by external conditions such as labor market capacity, economic necessity, and access to opportunities. The high proportion of graduates in non-allied fields demonstrates how these constraints can redirect career trajectories.

Furthermore, Guichard’s career development framework supports this interpretation by emphasizing that careers are dynamic and shaped by both individual agency and environmental factors. Graduates may adjust their career paths in response to labor market realities, resulting in transitions to alternative occupations that may not align with their original professional goals.

General, the findings indicate that while the criminology program effectively prepares graduates for law enforcement careers, employment outcomes are significantly influenced by structural limitations and labor market conditions. This highlights the need for institutions to not only strengthen academic preparation but also provide broader career support and alternative pathways for graduates.

Factors Contributing to the Success of Job-Hunting Efforts Among Criminology Graduates

Securing employment after graduation is a significant milestone for criminology graduates. However, success in job hunting does not depend on a single factor. It is influenced by a combination of academic preparation, professional qualifications, personal effort, and the ability to meet employer expectations. Understanding these contributing factors provides valuable insight into how graduates navigate the transition from college to the workforce.

Table 3. Factors contribute to the success of job- hunting among criminology graduates

Theme	Frequency (n=30)	Percentage	Actual Verbatim/ Response
Academic and Professional Credentials	19	63.33%	<p>“Passing the board exam was essential in my job search because it gave me credibility and opened doors with employers.” (R1, R3, R7, R8, R12, R14, R5, R19, R22, R25)</p> <p>“Academic performance and board exam results helped me meet agency requirements”(R2, R5, R9, R17, R20, R23, R26, R28, R30)</p>
Practical Experience and Skill Application, Leadership and Communication	15	50.00%	<p>“Experience during OJT helped me develop skills required by employers .”(R1, R4, R6, R10, R13, R16, R21, R24)</p> <p>“Being active in student organizations allowed me to strengthen leadership and public speaking skills.”(R2, R8, R11, R15, R18, R22, R29)</p>
Personal Attributes	10	33.33%	<p>“It is not just having good academic performance that matters to the employers. Showing discipline and flexibility is important also to them.” (R3, R5, R12, R18, R27)</p> <p>“Perseverance and positive attitude helped me stay motivated during applications .” (R10, R13, R19, R25, R28)</p>
Social Capital and Institutional Support	8	26.67%	<p>“A family member working in the agency guided me through the hiring process.”(R4, R7, R9)</p> <p>“A former colleague informed me about the job opportunity and supported my application.”(R14, R20, R26)</p> <p>“My former instructor informed us about the opening or the recruitment schedule and helped us review our documents for application.”(R11, R21)</p>

Theme 1: Academic and Professional Credentials

Academic and professional credentials refer to the formal qualifications acquired through education and regulated certification processes, such as a college degree and professional licensure. This theme emerged as the most significant factor influencing employability, as identified by 19 out of 30 respondents (63.33%).

The findings indicate that, for criminology graduates, the combination of academic achievement and licensure serves as a primary gateway to employment. Respondents consistently emphasized the importance of passing the licensure examination as a critical requirement for job access. As one participant noted, “*Passing the board*

exam was important for my job search because it gave me credibility and opened doors with employers.” Similarly, other respondents highlighted that strong academic performance, when combined with licensure, enables them to meet agency requirements. These responses suggest that credentials function not only as formal qualifications but also as indicators of competence and readiness for professional roles.

This finding is supported by existing literature, which emphasizes that licensure and formal credentials play a crucial role in employability, particularly in regulated professions such as law enforcement where strict qualifications are required (RSIS International, 2026). However, global evidence also indicates the presence of qualification saturation, where the increasing number of degree holders has outpaced available job opportunities, making credentials alone insufficient to guarantee employment (OECD, 2025). This suggests that while licensure is a necessary condition, it is not sufficient without additional competencies and favorable labor market conditions.

The results further imply that human capital in criminology is largely measured through standardized licensure, particularly the Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE), which serves as a fundamental entry requirement into the profession. At the same time, the findings highlight the importance of institutional support, such as board examination preparation programs and mentoring, in enabling graduates to meet these standards. Academic performance also contributes to graduates’ confidence and preparedness, particularly in navigating competitive recruitment systems and quota-based hiring processes in government agencies.

From the perspective of the Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA), employability is achieved when an individual’s competencies align with organizational requirements. In this context, passing the licensure examination ensures a baseline level of alignment between graduate qualifications and employer expectations. However, the findings also suggest that this alignment is mediated by external factors, such as institutional support and structural constraints, including quota systems and regulatory requirements. Thus, TWA in this study extends beyond a simple person–environment fit, demonstrating that employment outcomes are shaped by both individual competencies and labor market conditions.

Furthermore, these findings interact with broader human capital and career development frameworks, indicating that formal credentials function as necessary but not sufficient conditions for employment. Licensure provides legal recognition and professional legitimacy, as reinforced by Republic Act No. 11131 (2018), but successful employment also depends on graduates’ ability to navigate institutional processes, access support systems, and respond to labor market limitations.

Overall, the findings highlight a dynamic interplay between theory and practice. While TWA explains the importance of alignment between qualifications and job requirements, empirical evidence from this study demonstrates that employability is influenced by the interaction of personal competencies, institutional preparation, and structural constraints. This underscores that academic and professional credentials are essential for entry into the criminology profession, but long-term employment outcomes are shaped by a broader set of factors beyond credentials alone.

Theme 2: Practical Experience and Skill Application, Leadership and

Communication

This theme highlights that employability is not determined solely by academic achievement, but also by the ability to apply knowledge in real-world settings and effectively interact with others. Beyond academic performance, 15 out of 30 respondents (50%) identified practical experience, skill application, leadership, and communication as key factors contributing to successful job acquisition.

The findings suggest that while passing the licensure examination may provide initial access to employment opportunities, practical competencies and interpersonal skills enable graduates to successfully navigate the recruitment process. Respondents emphasized the value of experiential learning, particularly through On-the-Job Training (OJT). As one participant noted, *“Experience during OJT helped me develop skills required by employers.”* This indicates that OJT serves as a critical bridge between theoretical knowledge and professional practice.

In addition, leadership and communication skills emerged as important competencies developed through extracurricular involvement. One respondent stated, *“Being active in student organizations allowed me to strengthen leadership and public speaking skills.”* This suggests that participation in campus activities enhances confidence and preparedness, particularly in meeting the demands of interviews, assessments, and screening processes commonly required in law enforcement recruitment.

These findings are supported by existing literature, which emphasizes that experiential learning and soft skills significantly enhance graduate employability. Structured workplace experiences, such as internships and practicums, improve job readiness, especially in roles requiring interpersonal, analytical, and decision-making skills (Jackson & Wilton, 2024). Moreover, employers increasingly prioritize competencies such as communication, teamwork, and leadership over academic performance alone, particularly in competitive hiring environments (Andrews & Higson, 2022). Engagement in leadership activities further develops confidence and communication abilities, which are essential for professional success (Malik, Paul, & Turcotte, 2023).

The results also indicate that learning experiences beyond formal classroom instruction play a critical role in employability. The prominence of this theme suggests that student leadership programs and practicum experiences are essential components of the criminology curriculum at PCLU. Graduates who actively develop soft skills, such as communication and leadership, appear to be better positioned to meet employer expectations and overcome employability barriers associated with limited practical competence.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings align with Guichard’s (2022) career development framework, which emphasizes the role of individual agency and social context in shaping career outcomes. The development of leadership and communication skills through institutional activities reflects how educational environments contribute to career readiness. Similarly, the findings support OECD (2024) and Ismail and Said (2021), who highlight the importance of internships and soft skills in enhancing employment prospects.

Furthermore, the emphasis on communication and confidence supports earlier findings (Magnaye, 2020) and recent tracer studies, which indicate that these competencies are critical in passing oral interviews and neuropsychiatric assessments in law enforcement recruitment. This also reflects the broader concept of “skills mismatch” (Bernal, 2023), where graduates may possess academic knowledge but lack the practical and interpersonal skills required by employers.

Generally, the findings demonstrate that practical experience, leadership, and communication skills function as critical complements to academic credentials. While formal qualifications provide access to employment opportunities, it is the integration of experiential learning and soft skills that enables graduates to successfully compete in the labor market and adapt to professional demands.

Theme 3: Personal Attributes

This theme emphasizes that employability is not solely determined by academic achievement but also by personal attributes such as discipline, adaptability, perseverance, and a positive attitude. These traits enable graduates to remain focused, adjust to varying circumstances, and persist throughout the lengthy and demanding job application process.

Personal attributes emerged as the third most significant factor, cited by 10 out of 30 respondents (33.33%). This finding shifts the focus from external qualifications to internal characteristics that are essential for navigating the highly competitive and structured recruitment processes of law enforcement and criminal justice agencies.

Respondents highlighted that employers value more than academic performance. As noted by Participants 3 and 5, discipline and flexibility are equally important in securing employment. This suggests that while academic credentials may help applicants qualify for opportunities, personal character plays a critical role in successfully obtaining employment. Similarly, Respondents 10 and 13 emphasized the importance of perseverance and a positive mindset, noting that these qualities helped them remain motivated throughout the application process. This indicates that job hunting is not only a test of professional competence but also of psychological resilience.

These findings are supported by existing literature, which underscores the importance of personal attributes in graduate employability. Psychological capital comprising resilience, self-efficacy, hope, and optimism has been shown to enhance individuals' ability to manage job search challenges and sustain effort in competitive environments (Luthans et al., 2021). Additionally, adaptability and a positive attitude facilitate successful adjustment to workplace demands (González-Romá et al., 2022), while employers increasingly recognize discipline and perseverance as valuable “soft credentials” that complement technical skills (Li & Wang, 2023).

The results further suggest that these personal attributes function as key competitive advantages, particularly in the context of law enforcement recruitment. The emphasis on discipline and adaptability aligns with the core values promoted by the criminology program at PCLU, indicating that institutional efforts to develop leadership, integrity, and responsibility are effectively reflected in graduate outcomes. Moreover, these attributes help graduates cope with prolonged recruitment timelines, often characterized by waiting periods, repeated screenings, and high levels of uncertainty.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings are consistent with the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT), which posits that career outcomes are shaped by the interaction between individual characteristics and structural conditions. In this context, personal attributes such as resilience and perseverance function as psychological resources that enable graduates to navigate institutional barriers, including quota systems, strict screening processes, and competitive hiring environments.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that personal attributes are not merely supplementary qualities but essential components of employability. They complement academic and professional credentials by enabling graduates to adapt, persist, and succeed within complex and constrained labor market conditions. This highlights employability as a dynamic interplay between personal resilience, institutional structures, and labor market realities, where character-based competencies serve both as intrinsic strengths and strategic assets.

Theme 4: Social Capital and Institutional Support

This theme highlights that employability is not determined solely by individual effort and qualifications but is also shaped by access to guidance, information, and support networks. Social and institutional support emerged as a significant external factor in job-hunting success, as identified by 8 out of 30 respondents (26.67%).

The findings indicate that the presence of strong support systems such as family members, alumni, and faculty plays a crucial role in helping graduates navigate the complex recruitment processes in law enforcement and related sectors. These networks provide not only informational support but also practical guidance and encouragement throughout the application process.

Consistent with this, existing research emphasizes that social capital and institutional support are critical determinants of graduate employability, particularly in competitive and regulated fields. Access to networks provides valuable informational and emotional resources that facilitate job access (Putnam & Feldstein, 2022). Moreover, institutional mechanisms such as career services, mentoring programs, and alumni engagement enhance graduates' ability to navigate complex recruitment systems (Benson & Ward, 2023; Chen et al., 2024). Empirical evidence further suggests that strong social ties enable graduates to overcome structural employment barriers, highlighting that employability extends beyond individual qualifications to include access to supportive networks (Nguyen et al., 2023).

The responses reveal multiple forms of support. First, kinship-based support was evident, as some respondents reported receiving guidance from family members already working in law enforcement. For instance, one participant shared, *“A family member working in the agency guided me through the hiring process.”* Second, professional networks also played a role, with respondents noting that colleagues or acquaintances provided information about job opportunities and assisted in the application process. These findings demonstrate that both personal and professional relationships contribute to employment access.

The results further suggest that the recruitment process involves not only meeting formal qualifications but also navigating procedural requirements. In this context, information about application procedures,

documentation, and recruitment timelines functions as a form of social capital. This implies that institutional actors, such as faculty members and alumni, serve as important facilitators or “gateways” to employment opportunities.

From an institutional perspective, these findings highlight the importance of strengthening structured support systems. Formalizing alumni networks and enhancing career guidance services may help ensure that all graduates regardless of personal connectionsn have equitable access to employment-related information and opportunities.

From a theoretical standpoint, these findings align with Guichard’s (2022) career development framework, which emphasizes the role of social relationships and institutional contexts in shaping career trajectories. Similarly, the results support Job Search Theory, which highlights the importance of information access and network-based resources in securing employment. Access to timely and relevant information enables graduates to better navigate structural barriers, such as quota systems and competitive hiring processes.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that social and institutional support functions as a critical bridge between individual qualifications and employment outcomes. While academic credentials and personal competencies are essential, access to supportive networks significantly enhances graduates’ ability to translate these attributes into successful entry into the workforce.

Challenges Encountered During Job Applications

While many graduates secured employment, the job application process was not without its difficulties. Respondents shared several challenges they encountered, particularly limited job opportunities, intense competition, and structural constraints in hiring systems. Their experiences highlight the realities of entering a competitive and highly regulated labor market, where qualifications alone do not always guarantee immediate employment.

Table 3. Challenges Encountered During Job Applications

Theme	Frequency (n=30)	Percentage	Actual Verbatim/ Response
Institutional and Procedural Barriers During Job Application	18	60.00%	No matter how high my grades were. I’m not able to apply to the agency that I wanted because I didn’t meet the eligibility requirements, so I had to wait until I passed .”(R1, R3, R4, R7, R8, R10, R11, R13, R15, R16) “Some applicants were disqualified because they didn't pass the physical or medical exams because it is strict part of the screening process.” (R19, R20, R22, R24, R25, R27, R28, R30
High Level of Competition Among Applicant	17	56.67%	“I struggled due to intense competition from other graduates, as employers preferred those who were proficient in computer skills and English.”(R2, R4, R5, R6, R9, R11, R12, R14, R17, R18, R20, R21, R23, R25, R26, R29, R30)
Skill Gaps and Inadequate Preparation	10	33.33%	“Developing communication and report writing skills improved my confidence”(R3, R6, R10, R12, R15) “As a fresh graduate, gaining more practical exposure would have been helpful.”(R18, R21, R24) Application and review expenses required financial preparation”(R27, R29)
Limited Availability of Criminology-Related Jobs	6	20.00%	“One of the main challenges was the limited number of criminology-related jobs available.”(R1, R5, R8, R13, R17, R22)

Theme 1: Institutional and Procedural Barriers During Job Application

This theme emphasizes that employment in criminology is not solely determined by academic performance or technical competencies, but also by eligibility requirements imposed by regulatory institutions. These include passing the Criminologist Licensure Examination, meeting physical and medical standards, and complying with strict quota systems. Respondents' experiences highlight how these requirements create barriers to entry, even for academically qualified graduates, resulting in delays in transitioning from student to professional.

Institutional and procedural barriers emerged as the most significant challenge, cited by 18 out of 30 respondents (60%). The findings reveal two primary constraints: the time required to meet licensure eligibility and the strict enforcement of physical and medical standards. As one respondent explained, *"No matter how good my grades were, I couldn't apply to the agency I wanted because I didn't meet the requirements, so I had to wait until I passed."* Similarly, another respondent noted that applicants were disqualified for failing to meet physical or medical criteria, underscoring the rigidity of the screening process.

These findings are consistent with existing literature, which indicates that regulatory and structural barriers significantly affect graduates' entry into professional employment, particularly in highly regulated fields. Licensing requirements often create delays and bottlenecks that hinder timely employment (Smith & Johnson, 2022), while quota systems and strict screening standards may disadvantage applicants despite strong academic qualifications (Brown et al., 2023). Prior studies also identify failure to meet licensure and regulatory requirements as a major obstacle for criminology graduates (Nayoyos-Refugia, 2021).

The results suggest the presence of a "wait time" phenomenon, wherein graduates experience prolonged periods of uncertainty while fulfilling eligibility requirements or awaiting recruitment opportunities. During this period, graduates may remain underemployed or pursue alternative work, reflecting a gap between academic completion and professional entry. This highlights that the transition from education to employment is not immediate but is shaped by institutional timelines and structural constraints.

From the perspective of the Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA), employment outcomes depend on the alignment between individual competencies and workplace requirements. In the context of criminology, this alignment is defined by non-negotiable institutional standards set by agencies such as the Philippine National Police, Bureau of Fire Protection, and Bureau of Jail Management and Penology. However, the findings indicate that even when graduates possess the required competencies, structural factors such as limited hiring slots, scheduled licensure cycles, and strict eligibility criteria can delay or prevent successful work adjustment.

These results extend the application of TWA by demonstrating that employability is not solely a function of person–environment fit, but also of access to opportunities within constrained systems. Graduates who meet all requirements may still face delays due to institutional limitations, while those who fall short of specific criteria experience prolonged barriers to entry.

Taken together, the findings highlight that employability in criminology is shaped by a complex interaction between individual qualifications and systemic constraints. While academic preparation and licensure are essential, the ability to navigate institutional requirements and structural barriers ultimately determines the transition from education to meaningful employment.

Theme 2: High Level of Competition Among Applicants

This theme highlights that the job market for criminology graduates is highly competitive, where a large number of applicants compete for a limited number of positions. As a result, academic qualifications alone are often insufficient to secure employment.

High competition among applicants was identified as the second most significant challenge, reported by 17 out of 30 respondents (56.67%). This finding reflects an oversaturated labor market in which holding a degree no

longer guarantees a competitive advantage. Instead, graduates must demonstrate additional competencies to distinguish themselves from other applicants.

Respondents emphasized that competition is not only quantitative but also qualitative. As one participant explained, *"I had a hard time because there were so many other graduates looking for jobs, and employers preferred those who were proficient in computer skills and English."* This indicates that employers increasingly value "plus-factor" skills such as digital literacy, communication, and interpersonal competence that extend beyond traditional criminology training.

These findings suggest the presence of qualification inflation, where the increasing number of graduates raises the standards for entry-level positions. In this context, employers adopt higher expectations, requiring not only academic credentials but also technical and soft skills. This also reflects a "skills-workplace mismatch," wherein graduates possess theoretical knowledge but lack the practical and transferable skills demanded by employers. Consequently, there is a need to balance traditional criminology competencies with skills such as communication, information technology, and professional adaptability.

From a theoretical perspective, these results are consistent with Job Search Theory, which posits that employment outcomes are influenced by labor market conditions, competition, and access to relevant information. The high level of competition reflects structural constraints within the labor market, where limited opportunities intensify the selection process and increase the importance of additional qualifications.

The findings are further supported by existing studies. The *Aspiring Minds (2017)* report highlights that a significant proportion of graduates lack industry-relevant skills, contributing to employability challenges. Similarly, recent policy discussions, such as the *EDCOM 2 (2025)* report, emphasize the need for higher education institutions to strengthen digital literacy, communication skills, and applied competencies to remain responsive to labor market demands. Research by *Magnaye (2020)* also supports the importance of communication and self-confidence, particularly in passing interviews and neuropsychiatric assessments in law enforcement recruitment.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that competition in the criminology job market is driven not only by the number of applicants but also by evolving employer expectations. To remain competitive, graduates must develop a combination of academic knowledge, technical skills, and interpersonal competencies. This highlights the need for institutions to enhance curriculum design by integrating practical training, communication development, and digital competencies to better prepare graduates for increasingly competitive employment environments.

Theme 3: Skills Gaps and Inadequate Preparation

Skills gaps and inadequate preparation refer to areas where graduates feel insufficiently equipped to meet the demands of the professional environment, particularly in communication, practical experience, and financial readiness.

This theme was identified by 10 out of 30 respondents (33.33%), indicating that a significant proportion of graduates perceive limitations in their preparedness for employment. The findings highlight gaps not only in technical competencies but also in transferable skills and real-world exposure.

Respondents emphasized the importance of communication and practical experience in building confidence and readiness. As noted by one participant, *"Improving my communication and report writing skills made me more confident,"* indicating the need for stronger administrative and documentation skills in law enforcement contexts. Another respondent stated, *"As a recent graduate, gaining more practical exposure would have been helpful,"* suggesting that existing training experiences may not fully simulate real workplace demands.

These findings are supported by existing literature, which underscores the importance of experiential learning and financial readiness in graduate employability. Participation in internships and fieldwork enhances

confidence and facilitates the application of theoretical knowledge to real-world tasks (Ali et al., 2023). At the same time, financial constraints particularly those related to licensure examinations, review programs, and application processes can delay entry into regulated professions (Paredes & Tan, 2024).

The results suggest the presence of a “practicality gap,” where the curriculum provides strong theoretical foundations but may offer limited immersive experiences necessary for developing applied competencies. This gap may affect graduates’ ability to perform tasks such as report writing, field operations, and professional communication. Additionally, financial barriers may further delay employment, particularly for graduates who lack resources to support licensure preparation and application requirements.

These findings are consistent with the Fourth Philippine Graduate Tracer Study (Orbeta, Tutor, & Miraflor, 2021), which reported that a significant proportion of graduates felt underprepared in key employability skills such as communication and problem-solving. From a theoretical perspective, this aligns with the Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA), which posits that successful employment depends on the alignment between individual competencies and job requirements. In this case, skill gaps indicate a misalignment that may hinder graduates’ transition into stable employment.

Furthermore, calls for increased practical exposure reflect broader global trends in curriculum development. For instance, higher education systems in countries such as Malaysia emphasize the integration of experiential learning to better align academic training with labor market needs (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2024). Similarly, recent policy discussions, including the EDCOM 2 (2025) report, highlight the need to strengthen communication, technical documentation, and digital competencies to address ongoing skills workplace mismatches (Bernal, 2023).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that employability is influenced not only by academic preparation but also by the extent to which graduates develop practical competencies and overcome financial constraints. Addressing these gaps requires enhancing experiential learning opportunities and providing institutional support mechanisms to ensure that graduates are fully prepared to meet the demands of the profession.

Theme 4: Limited Availability of Criminology-Related Jobs

This theme highlights that even well-prepared and qualified graduates may experience delays in employment or be compelled to pursue alternative career paths due to the limited availability of criminology-related job opportunities. Government agencies such as the Philippine National Police (PNP), Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), and Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) operate under strict hiring quotas and budget constraints, which significantly restrict employment absorption.

Limited availability of criminology-related jobs was identified by 6 out of 30 respondents (20%). Although this theme has the lowest frequency, it represents a critical structural barrier affecting graduate employability. Respondents emphasized that the number of available positions is insufficient relative to the growing number of qualified graduates. As one participant noted, “*One of the biggest problems was that there weren’t many criminology-related jobs.*” This situation creates a bottleneck effect, wherein graduates must wait for limited hiring cycles or seek employment outside their field of specialization.

These findings are supported by existing research, which indicates that restricted hiring capacity and budget limitations in government agencies contribute to underemployment and delayed workforce entry among criminology graduates (Nguyen & Lee, 2023; Oliveira et al., 2024). Evidence further shows that only a portion of graduates are able to secure positions aligned with their qualifications, while others transition into related or non-related occupations due to limited opportunities. Labor market saturation further intensifies competition and prolongs the job search process.

The findings underscore that employment outcomes are not solely determined by individual qualifications but are significantly influenced by structural and institutional factors. This perspective is consistent with the

Psychology of Working Theory (PWT), which posits that access to employment is shaped by broader socioeconomic conditions, including institutional capacity and labor market constraints. In this context, limited hiring slots and budget restrictions directly affect graduates' ability to secure employment, regardless of their competencies.

Supporting evidence from recent reports indicates that only a small proportion of qualified applicants are absorbed into law enforcement agencies annually due to budget limitations. Similarly, previous studies (Procurato et al., 2024; Repoyo, 2021) report low percentages of graduates employed in criminology-related fields, reinforcing the presence of systemic constraints within the labor market.

In summary, the findings highlight that the limited availability of criminology-related jobs is a significant structural challenge that shapes career outcomes. While academic preparation and licensure remain essential, they do not guarantee employment in a constrained labor market. This underscores the importance of preparing graduates not only for traditional law enforcement roles but also for alternative and allied career pathways. Enhancing adaptability, transferable skills, and career flexibility is therefore crucial in enabling graduates to navigate limited employment opportunities and achieve sustainable career development.

Similarly, Job Search Theory provides insight into how graduates navigate employment within a competitive and information-dependent labor market. The presence of intense competition, limited job openings, and reliance on networks highlights that employment acquisition is a strategic and adaptive process influenced by timing, access to information, and labor market conditions.

In addition, Guichard's career development framework reinforces the idea that career trajectories are shaped by both individual agency and environmental influences. Graduates actively adjust their career paths in response to opportunities and constraints, often transitioning to allied or non-allied fields when direct entry into law enforcement is not immediately possible.

Overall, the study highlights that employability among criminology graduates is not a linear process but a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. It emerges from the interaction of personal preparation, institutional mechanisms, and structural realities, indicating that successful career transitions require not only qualifications and competencies but also adaptability, access to support systems, and the ability to navigate constrained labor markets.

Proposed Action Plan

Based on the challenges and concerns identified in this study, there is a clear need for practical and responsive interventions to better support criminology graduates in their transition from school to employment.

The findings showed that graduates face not only limited job opportunities but also institutional barriers, skill gaps, financial constraints, and intense competition. In response, the following action plan outlines key areas that require attention, along with specific strategies, responsible personnel, and monitoring measures. These proposed actions aim to strengthen graduate preparedness, improve employability outcomes, and ensure that the Criminology program remains responsive to the realities of today's employment.

The proposed action plan was designed specifically to address the challenges faced by criminology graduates. Recognizing this, the plan includes strategies like posting job announcements on official school platforms and conducting career seminars, ensuring graduates are informed, guided, and better prepared to meet these eligibility requirements.

The action plan takes a holistic approach, combining institutional support, academic preparation, experiential learning, and personal development. By implementing these strategies, the institution can help graduates overcome structural barriers, bridge skills gaps, and become confident, competitive, and adaptable professionals in the field of criminology.

Proposed Action Plan To Improve Employment Outcomes For Criminology Graduates

Key Areas of Concern	Key Result Area	Strategies and Actions	Timeline	Person/s In-Charge	Monitoring and Evaluation
Institutional and Procedural Barriers During Job Application	To improve graduates' employment opportunities	Post job announcements through official school channels (FB page, bulletin boards) Provide career seminars on various criminology related roles beyond law enforcement.	Quarterly	Dean Program Head Faculty	Annual graduate tracer study Monitoring of graduate placement records
Graduate Competitiveness and Professional Qualification	Strengthen graduates' academic, and professional credentials, to improve employability	Provide accessible board review programs and exam support Encourage early preparation for professional licensure	Quarterly	PCLU Administration College of Criminology Faculty Board Review Centers	Higher board exam passing rates; stronger credibility and eligibility for job applications
Workplace Readiness and Experiential Learning	Enhance graduates' practical skills and workplace readiness	Expand and monitor structured OJT and internship programs with law enforcement agencies Provide simulation exercises, workshops, and volunteer opportunities	Quarterly	College of Criminology Faculty Partner Law Enforcement Agencies	Graduates gain hands-on experience, practical skills, and confidence; smoother transition to workforce
Career Awareness and Personal Development	Develop graduates' personal competencies for career success	Integrate personal development programs emphasizing discipline, time management, and ethical behavior	Quarterly	College of Criminology Faculty Student Affairs	Behavior, resilience, and adaptability; higher success rate in securing and retaining jobs

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations derived from the findings of the study on the career trajectories of Criminology graduates from the Polytechnic College of La Union (PCLU) covering the years 2021 to 2023. The conclusions are based on the analysis and interpretation of data gathered in response to the Statement of the Problem, focusing on graduates' career paths, factors influencing employment success, and challenges encountered during the job application process.

Conclusion

This section presents the conclusions derived from the findings of the study.

1. The study found out that significant number of graduates are working in non-allied field while law enforcement remains a key career path only 38.78% secured positions in law enforcement agencies, reflecting alignment between their competencies, licensure qualifications, and job requirement.
2. The results show that Criminology graduates from the Polytechnic College of La Union (PCLU) are more likely to get jobs if they have a mix of academic and professional credentials, practical skills, personal traits, and social capital, as well as assistance from their institutions. Passing the board test and doing well in school gave graduates professional legitimacy and made them eligible for jobs. Practical experiences, leadership abilities, discipline, and a good attitude toward work made them more likely to get hired. Family connections, recommendations, teacher help, and access to institutional networks all made it much easier to get job.

3. The results show that Criminology graduates from the Polytechnic College of La Union (PCLU) face many problems when they apply for jobs. These problems are all connected and include a lack of job openings, a lot of competition, strict quota systems, institutional and procedural barriers, and gaps in personal readiness. Even though they have the right degrees, graduates have trouble finding jobs because the job market is too full, the hiring process is too long, the physical and medical standards are too strict, they don't have enough money, they don't have enough work experience, and they don't have the skills they need, like communication and computer skills.

Recommendation

In response to the conclusions drawn from this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The College of Criminology may continue strengthening career guidance services to help students explore diverse criminology related career paths beyond traditional law enforcement roles. Regular career orientation sessions may inform graduates about allied and non-allied opportunities, recruitment cycles, and quota systems. Strengthening alumni engagement may also widen employment linkages.
2. To enhance employability, the College may strengthen board examination support programs through accessible review sessions, mock exams, and early preparation initiatives. Expanding structured OJT partnerships and providing workshops on leadership, communication, report writing, computer literacy, and networking skills may further improve graduate readiness. Personal development programs focusing on discipline, resilience, and professional attitude may also be integrated into student activities.
3. The institution may conduct seminars on documentation compliance, hiring procedures, and eligibility requirements to reduce procedural disqualifications. Preparatory sessions for physical and medical screenings may also be offered. In addition, financial guidance or support mechanisms, such as review assistance programs and low-cost preparation workshops, may help graduates who experience financial barriers during board exam.
4. Future researchers may conduct longitudinal or comparative studies to evaluate long-term employment trends, institutional effectiveness, and the impact of implemented interventions on graduate employability.

REFERENCES

1. Arthur, N., McMahon, M., & Collins, S. (Eds.). (2019). *Career theories and models at work: Ideas for practice*. Canadian Education and Research Institute for Counselling.
2. Biscontini, T. (2024). *Theory of work adjustment (TWA)* [Research starter]. EBSCOhost.
3. Blustein, D. L., Duffy, R. D., Diemer, M. A., & Autin, K. L. (2016). The psychology of working theory. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 63(2), 127–148. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000140>
4. Commission on Higher Education. (2020). CMO No. 14, s. 2020: Guidelines on graduate tracer studies. <https://ched.gov.ph>
5. Cuadra, L. J., Aure, M. R. K. L., & Gonzag, G. L. (2019). The use of tracer study in improving undergraduate programs in the university. *Journal of Advanced Research in Dynamical and Control Systems*, 11(7), 1234–1244. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335429907>
6. Faggian, A. (2014). *Job search theory*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/278661248_Job_Search_Theory
7. Guichard, J. (2022). From career guidance to designing lives acting for fair and sustainable development. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 22(3), 581–601. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10775-021-09521-6>
8. Higher Education Statistics Agency. (2023). Graduate outcomes survey: UK results 2022/23. <https://www.hesa.ac.uk>
9. Ismail, A., & Said, R. (2021). Graduate employability and tracer study: The Malaysian experience. *Journal of Education and Work*, 34(2), 198–211. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2021.1892621>
10. Jena, L., & Nayak, U. (2020). Theories of career development: An analysis. Centurion University of Technology and Management. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344414923_Theories_of_Career_Development_An_analysis

11. Manzano, E. M. (2024). Tracer study of criminology graduates at St. Paul University Surigao. St. Paul University Surigao.
12. McMahon, M. (2019). The systems theory framework of career development. In N. Arthur, M. McMahon, & S. Collins (Eds.), *Career theories and models at work: Ideas for practice* (pp. 123–132). Canadian Education and Research Institute for Counselling.
13. Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia. (2024). Graduate tracer study annual report. Author.
14. Mugwisi, T., & Hikwa, L. (2015). A tracer study of Master of Science in Library and Information Science graduates from the National University of Science and Technology, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. *African Journal of Library, Archives & Information Science*, 25(2), 178–183.
15. National Police Commission. (2021). Memorandum circular on recruitment policies, physical and medical standards, and quota allocation. <https://napolcom.gov.ph>
16. Nayoyos-Refugia, J. M. (2024). Exploring employability, program relevance, and job satisfaction among BS Criminology graduates. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*, 5(1), 131–150.
17. Orbeta, A. C., Jr., & Miraflor, J. M. (2021). The 4th Philippine graduate tracer study: Examining higher education as a pathway to employment. Philippine Institute for Development Studies. <https://pidswebs.pids.gov.ph>
18. Pacatang, D. H. Q. (2016). Tracer study of BS Criminology graduates of Jose Rizal Memorial State University. *Journal of International Academic Research for Multidisciplinary*, 4(2). <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=11806ea1f778>
19. Patton, W., & McMahon, M. (2021). *Career development and systems theory: Connecting theory and practice* (4th ed.). Brill | Sense.
20. Philippine National Police. (2023). PNP recruitment and quota system guidelines. Directorate for Personnel and Records Management.
21. Procurato, L. J. F., Manzano, E. M., Alamban, A. A., & Poquita, J. M. C. (2024). The employability of criminology graduates from academic years 2019 to 2023: A tracer study. *EPR International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 10(5), 320. <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra2013>
22. Repoyo, L. M. (2021). Tracer study of criminology graduates of A.Y. 2019. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 6(6).
23. Republic Act No. 11131. (2018). An act regulating the practice of the criminology profession in the Philippines. https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2018/ra_11131_2018.html
24. World Bank. (2023). Navigating the education–employment nexus: Global practices in graduate tracking. World Bank.