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PHILIPPINE NORMAL UNIVERSITY
The National Center for Teacher Education
**COLLEGE OF GRADUATES STUDIES AND TEACHER
EDUCATION RESEARCH**
Taft Avenue, Manila



LIVED EXPERIENCES OF UNEMPLOYED COLLEGE GRADUATES

A Thesis

Presented in the Faculty of

College of Graduate Studies and Teacher Education Research

Philippine Normal University

Taft Avenue, Manila

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Bachelor of Science-

Master of Arts in Psychology and Counseling

JUVILEE ANN V. AUSA

December 2020

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis entitled “**LIVED EXPERIENCES OF UNEMPLOYED COLLEGE GRADUATES**” prepared and submitted by **JUVILEE ANN V. AUSA** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Bachelor of Science – Master of Arts in Psychology and Counseling** is hereby recommended for approval and acceptance.



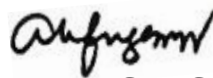
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DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to all struggling young adults out there. May you never lose sight of your aspirations and goals in life. Life is full of suffering; we can never get rid of it. We have to learn to live with it and create something out of it. It is in this suffering that we grow as a person. It may be hopeless and complicated now, but all your hard work will pay off in the end.

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J.A.V.A

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ABSTRACT

Name: Juvilee Ann V. Ausa

Title: Lived Experiences of Unemployed College Graduates

Key Concepts: Unemployment, College Graduates, Young Adults, Job search

Degree: Bachelor of Science – Master of Arts

Specialization: Psychology and Counseling

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This qualitative study explored the meaning of unemployment as unemployed college graduates in the Philippines understand it. The meaning of unemployment as a lived experience was determined through thematic analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted with 12 participants from the National Capital Region (NCR) and Olongapo City. After the thematic analyses of interview transcripts, experiences of unemployed college graduates were described into three central themes. These are: unemployment is emotionally taxing, unemployment is financially taxing, and job search is full of hindrances. Meanings ascribed to these experiences revolve around accepting unemployment and job search factors out of their control and improving on what they can regulate. The responses of unemployed college graduates proved to be a rich source of insight with the current state of Career Counseling in the Philippines. It calls for further enrichment of services offered specifically in information, career education, placement, individual inventory, and counseling.

CHAPTER I

The Problem and Literature Review

Background of the Study

Employment is an essential aspect of life. It serves as the foundation of society and the individuals' existential organization (Sennett, 2001; Schnapper, 1998). Moreover, it promotes physical and mental well-being as well as a financial source for the sustenance of needs. Further evidence (Hammarstrom & Janlert, 1997; Harris & Morrow, 2001; Mathers & Schoeld, 1998) reported that unemployment is associated with poor mental health. To achieve employment, people engage in job search activities. However, efforts in a job search are not always met with positive outcomes. Subsequently, for some job seekers, the process of job search was described to be emotionally exhausting (Wanberg, 1995; Wanberg, Zhu, & Van Hooft, 2010; Sun, Song, & Lim, 2013). In support of this, Creed (1998) recognized that long-term unemployment could cause reduced self-esteem, lowered self-efficacy, and decreased belief in the ability to regain employment. Consequently, this is manifested through decreased motivation and unsuccessful job seeking.

Seeking for a job has often been associated as a stressful event for individuals, especially those who are just starting to make their way into the world of work. Fresh college graduates and some senior high school graduates now face the realities beyond the world of the academe. Ideally, having a degree increases job opportunities. But with a tight job market, finding a job has become difficult. At the same time, those who

persevere in their job search will be lucky to find themselves in the informal sector or abroad where low-skilled work is in need (Lina, 2019).

Job seeking has been more difficult now, especially in a fast-paced world of work. Often, applicants are discouraged from getting their desired job because of the demanding skills and experience required from them. In addition, recent statistics showed that only 35 to 40 percent of them get employed. Those who are lucky to land a career that they studied for only comprise 10 percent while the rest remain unemployed (Lina, 2019). The significant responsibility of seeking for a job coupled with high expectations from employers and limited job openings may cause distress among these individuals.

As a graduating student who is expected to find employment after finishing school, this topic was of interest to the researcher. And after observing that some cohorts are having difficulty looking for a job, this topic has further piqued her interest. Despite the abundance in the literature regarding employment, there are still aspects that have yet to be extensively studied. To date, little is known about the plight of bachelor degree holders who have been unemployed for a long time. With this, the researcher shed light on this occurrence to provide assistance and help those who are experiencing the same phenomenon.

The conduct of this research project will be of great importance to Career Counseling. It is hoped that through this, there will be enrichment in the existing career counseling program for job seekers. Results that came from empirical analyses of the data gathered from the respondents will help provide services appropriate to the needs of individuals looking for a job. This will contribute to their efforts to aid unemployed

individuals to navigate job search processes, such as suggesting possible avenues for interventions to boost job seekers' spirits, and to encourage them to persevere in their search. In this regard, the education sector, together with the government, will be able to produce globally competitive and productive citizens who are ready to take on the demands of the 21st-century workforce physically and psychologically.

In the literature cited (Blau, Petrucci, & McClendon, 2013; Koen, 2010; Kulik, 2001; Mathers, 1998; McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanber & Kinicki, 20005; Paul & Moser, 2009; Pohlan, 2019), most have focused on the job search experience of individuals towards reemployment. Moreover, they have a heterogenous sample of participants. The current study concentrated on bachelor graduates of any program. The essence that the researcher hoped to elicit came from the experiences of college graduates who are actively looking for a job. Also, participation in the study was limited to those who have no previous work experience. Literature has cited that it is common for individuals to experience distress when encountering a new stimulus such as employment after school (Stewart, Sokol, Healy & Chester, 1986). However, the duration of unemployment was not accounted for before. This is why, for the current study; the population was narrowed to graduates who have been unemployed for a year and are engaged in any job-seeking activity.

This study focused on the lived experiences of unemployed college graduates. A Phenomenological Qualitative design was employed to explore their understanding of their unemployment. The research project was conducted in the locale of Manila and Olongapo City since these are the most geographically efficient for the researcher. Moreover, it was chosen for the reason that Manila is a place of many job opportunities

for job seekers all over the country. Olongapo City is also a highly urbanized city with relatively many job opportunities. The participants who were purposively sampled are individuals who must have earned a bachelor's degree. They also need to be engaged in any job search activity for at least a year. In addition, they must not also have any working experience before.

This study was carried out with utmost respect to the human participants to which the data were gathered. Research guidelines and ethics were considered and followed throughout the study. Primary data were utilized for this research. Consent from the respondents and permission were ensured for the usage of their given data. Confidentiality of the responses was maintained strictly to ensure the privacy of the data. The researcher did not include any identifying names in the presentation of the data. Rather, disclosure of respondent identities was based on code names. Moreover, this study adhered to the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Literature Review

This section contains a literature review which examines different concepts mentioned in this study for a better understanding. These concepts include unemployment, job search, and job-seeking behavior. The examination of these concepts was demonstrated through the review of different studies related to it.

Unemployment

Average job seekers usually take at least six months to find a job, while others spend as long as a year of job search before getting employed (Ilg & Theodossiou, 2012). This long period of job search was described to be stressful and emotionally draining

(Wanberg, 1995; Wanberg, Zhu, & Van Hooft, 2010; Sun, Song, & Lim, 2013). In support of this, Creed (1998) has recognized that long-term unemployment can cause reduced self-esteem, lowered self-efficacy, and decreased belief in the ability to regain employment. Consequently, this was manifested through decreased motivation and unsuccessful job seeking. Jackson and Warr (1984) claimed that unemployment for a long duration of time might allow stress to accumulate, as coping resources are depleted (Kinicki et al., 2000) and savings exhausted. Thus, individuals who have been unemployed for a long-time report lower levels of well-being.

To address this, government, charitable organizations, and private agencies extended their efforts to aid the unemployed. However, their assistance was usually limited to resume preparation, vocational counseling, and job search training. Matters concerning the management of the psychological effects of unemployment were not considered in the intervention (Harris, 2002).

Based on the lens of empowerment, unemployment disempowers an individual because of the deprivation of functions that employment can provide such as stable income, time structure, purposefulness, social connectedness, and personal identity (Jahoda, 1982). Several studies highlighted the length of unemployment as detrimental to the job seeker's coping mechanisms. Paul & Moser (2009) cited that the longer-term of unemployment is associated with psychological distress. The longer a person is jobless, the more it negatively impacts job search intensity, employment-seeking strategies (Kulik, 2001), finances, emotional well-being, life satisfaction, and career prospects (Blau, Petrucci, & McClendon, 2013). Moreover, it leads to higher unemployment stigma, financial strain, and depression (Blau et al., 2013).

The financial resources of an unemployed individual were documented to be a crucial factor in evaluating unemployment and its impacts. Unemployed individuals with other sources of income tend to suffer less from job loss. Their financial resources serve as a cushion from financial hardship (Turner, Kessler, & House, 1991). However, for young adults who are motivated to establish economic independence from the family as they transition into adulthood, this serves as a barrier (Aquilino & Supple, 1991). Not having a disposable financial resource can impede the standard of living. Furthermore, this may limit an individual to participate in social and cultural activities (Jenkins and Cappellari, 2007).

Sociologists and psychologists emphasized that unemployment could be accompanied by stigmatization, as well as feelings of insecurity and shame. Thus, unemployment represents a potential source of stress which can lead to emotional and physical distress, isolation, and alienation (Brand, 2015). These economic and social exclusion are expected to contribute to the subjective feeling of the social exclusion of an unemployed individual (Pohlan, 2019).

Unemployment may also lead to lower levels of self-efficacy (Pohlan, 2019). Bandura (1997) described self-efficacy as the ability of an individual to deal with demanding situations through adaptive action. The link between employment and self-efficacy have been documented by Tisch and Wolff (2015). According to their study, employed workers are likely to be more confident with their problem-solving capabilities. Additionally, relationship with co-workers and higher-ups contributes to a collective purpose which might lead to increased self-efficacy when goals are achieved. Activities in the workplace may also be beneficial for individuals to learn and utilize their skills.

Warr (1987) and Jahoda (1979) provided explanations for why unemployment may negatively impact individuals' well-being. Warr (1987) postulated that unemployment leads to negative psychological and physical outcomes because unemployed individuals do not experience nine positive benefits associated with employment: the opportunity for control, opportunity for skill use, externally generated goals, variety, environmental clarity, availability of money, physical security, opportunity for interpersonal contact, and valued social position. The same conclusion was derived by Jahoda (1982) citing that job loss results in adverse outcomes because unemployed individuals are less likely to experience a host of positive manifest and latent consequences associated with working. She suggested that employment imposes a time structure on the day, allows individuals to socialize with others, provides people with a sense of purpose, allows individuals to increase in status, and encourages activity.

Jahoda (1981) claimed that an individual's position in life is largely defined by one's job. In support of this, Paul and Batinic (2010) stated that individuals tend to see themselves in a similar way to how others see them. It was also noted that bachelor degree holder employees are more likely to obtain their identity or self-concept from work (Kaufman, 1982). Therefore, employed workers feel respect and recognition more than their unemployed counterparts. This loss of "social prestige" may be manifested in the subjective view of having a lower social status related to being unemployed. In the case of graduates who have no previous employment history, it was revealed that they lack the well-established occupational identity that most employed individuals have. The pressure to establish their identity serves as an extra burden. Consequently, this identity formation may be manifested in diminished psychological well-being (Donovan & Oddy, 1982).

Schaufeli (1997) argued that educated individuals are particularly vulnerable to unemployment stress because they have to endure status inconsistency. On the other hand, it is postulated that graduates are supposed to cope well since they have many resources at their disposal (Feather & Bond, 1983). Well-educated individuals exhibit proactive behaviors when they become unemployed (Fryer & Payne, 1984). And they also have options for accepting alternative jobs (Kjos, 1988). They believed that these individuals could utilize their education as a coping resource. Feather and Bond (1983) concluded that successful graduates had developed skills in structuring time and in developing autonomy and a sense of purpose. Additionally, well-educated unemployed are described as good copers (Warr, 1984).

Schaufeli (1982) has observed that there is a general tendency towards better psychological health among long-term unemployed individuals. It can be hypothesized that this can be attributed to reaching a plateau of ill health, after which an adaptive process commenced, thus, resulting in less psychological distress. Payne (1987) also supported this after finding that the reduction of distress sets in after being unemployed for two years.

Job Search

The job search was described to be an emotional experience due to the problems a job seeker might experience (Song et al., 2009). Wanberg and his colleagues (2012) claimed that there were no predetermined steps to employment. Consequently, job seekers find themselves, if not rejected, not getting feedbacks. This negative job search experiences caused many individuals to describe the process as something that wastes their efforts and energy without reaping their expected outcome.

McKee-Ryan et al. (2005) concluded that there is a negative relationship between job search and mental health. This proved to be unfavorable to the job seeker since success in the job search is influenced by the emotional responses of the individual. Moreover, numerous studies (Cote, Saks, & Zikic, 2006; Turban, Lee, Da Motta Veiga, Haggard, & Wu, 2013) cited that positive emotions promote job search success.

Lazarus & Folkman (1984) contended that a job search could be viewed as a problem-focused way of coping with resolving a stressful situation, specifically unemployment. In this regard, since job search has the capacity to bring individuals to their employment goal, it may have a positive impact on people's feelings. As evident in a diary study of Wanberg et al. (2010), on days when people perceived progress in their job search, they reported having a higher positive affect.

However, the job search does not always entail progress. Van Hooft et al. (2013) found that the job search process included pursuing distant goals, encountering rocky pathways, and receiving little feedback. Consequently, job seekers find it difficult to perceive progress. Furthermore, unsuccessful attempts to get a job coupled with high pressure to attain it leaves the job seekers to have minimal control over finding a suitable job. Thus, contrary to the presented idea that job search was a coping strategy to relieve distress, it may be an additional source of anguish. Evidence of this can be found in studies that reported a negative relationship between mental health and job search effort (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). Song et al., (2009) attribute this relation to the negative job search experiences commonly experienced by individuals. Therefore, people experience more distress, as they spend more time on job search, and encounter more negative job search experiences.

Negative job search experiences refer to different types of setbacks, such as difficulty in finding vacancies and rejection for a job. These are proved to be detrimental in the job search process. This process of finding a job includes having a goal, engaging in a goal-striving behavior, and monitoring progress toward that goal. Carver (2001) cited that assessment of whether the behavior is going well or poorly is affected by the positive and negative affect of the assessor. Thus, how an individual evaluates his progress has a significant impact on his affect. A decrease in positive affect is likely the result of negative interference in achieving one's goal. In this regard, setbacks experienced by a job seeker negatively influences his goal of employment.

Wanberg and colleagues (1999) have cited antecedents that may impede the job search for unemployed individuals. Among these factors were poor health, family responsibility, financial constraints, and inadequate transportation (Wanberg et al., 1999). In support of this Sverko et al. (2007) have further examined these job-search constraints. They listed three situational factors— family responsibilities, hidden-economy working, and health. The degree of family obligations of an individual may limit the time allocated for job search activities. Schneider & Enste (2000) claimed that a shadow or black economy could be found in all countries. This refers to all obscured economic activities that the government is unaware of. Unemployed persons may engage in this kind of economy as a short-term solution until they find a suitable job. Thus, it is posited that job search efforts are impeded by their activities in hidden-economy (Sverko et al., 2007).

Despite the evidence about the negative experiences in job search, some literature has looked into what factors may help job seekers to pursue their search. Among these factors is the commitment to employment. This refers to an attitudinal construct regarding

the importance of work in the life of an individual (Sverko et al., 1995). Kanfer and colleagues (2001) highlighted that employment commitment correlates with job search behavior. Moreover, the willingness to accept a job also plays a role in job search success. This is the degree to which a job seeker is willing to take a job offer despite some of its unfavorable aspects (e.g. unsatisfactory job content, pay or work conditions). Although related to employment commitment, willingness to accept a job draws its difference in that it is a need for employment which stems from a person's whole life situation (Sverko et al, 2007).

Inadequate financial resources serve as an essential antecedent in job search behavior. Economic utility theory stated that financial hardship is one of the primary motivators why one seeks employment. Moreover, it is noted that there is a positive relationship between financial hardship and job-seeking behavior (Kanfer et al., 2001). Lastly, social support has been highlighted as one of the motivational factors in the job search. This refers to the perceived assistance provided by others in coping with stressful job search-related events. Social support is of valuable assistance which can encourage an unemployed person to persist in an employment search. Results from Kanfer (2001) confirm that high levels of perceived social support are positively correlated with job-seeking behavior.

As mentioned in previous literature, job seekers are often faced with different setbacks towards employment. One way to counter these obstacles is through goal maintenance. Sansone & Thoman (2006) posited that goal maintenance is necessary for reaching distant goals which cannot be realized immediately. Additionally, it can be useful

in working toward goals that are not satisfying, such as job search which is characterized by dull tasks (e.g. filling out applications) and constant rejections (Melloy, 2018).

Job-seeking behavior

Job search behavior refers to the searching for, responding to vacancies, going to job interviews, and networking. Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz (2001) defined job search as a process that was purposive, intentional, and self-organized. Studies showed that employment and time spent in a job search are positively related. More time spent on seeking a job results in a higher likelihood of employment (Kanfer et al., 2001).

Unemployment is usually accompanied by negative consequences, such as decreased physical and psychological well-being (Koen, 2016). In this regard, individuals struggle to find a suitable job. Researchers have noted that there are factors beyond the individual's control which can influence reemployment success. However, they don't discount the fact that individuals themselves can significantly enhance their chances of finding reemployment through their job search behavior (Wanberg, 2012).

Sverko et al. (2007) posited that biographic characteristics (e.g. gender, age, or education level) is related to job-seeking behavior. This characteristic can influence determinants such as motivation, skills, and financial resources needed in search of employment. For instance, males may be more persistent in job-seeking because of their traditional role as breadwinners. While for older people, their declining health and obsolete skills may dampen their efforts in a job search. As for those who had been unemployed for a long time, they may be less motivated in their job search. Moreover, job seekers who finished school may be more confident in their competencies and prospects compared to

those who did not. In support of this, Kanfer et al. (2001) recognized that demographic variables are significantly related to job search behavior. They operate as “signals” of the job seekers’ competencies which affect employers’ hiring decisions (Sverko et al., 2007).

Gathering of information is one concrete way of searching potential jobs and exploring alternatives (Barber et al., 1994; Schaufeli, 1997) Through the collected data, it is easier to delineate preferences and consider alternative opportunities (Werbel, 2000). Once the gathering of information about self and opportunities, one can proceed to implement the job choice based on their personal preference (Peterson et al., 1996).

Ngai (2016) has documented studies that supported the notion that when accurate information is available to decision-makers, their decision improves accurately. Sources of formal job information such as employment agency, advertisement, campus visit, and television have been documented to have a positive influence on college graduates’ perceptions of person-job (P-J) and person-organization (P-O) fit (Saks & Ashforth, 1997). The use of multiple sources of information about jobs is likely to help job seekers in gaining accurate and complete information about a job and organization (Williams, Labig, & Stone, 1993). Thus, they are equipped to make better decisions based on their realistic evaluation of employment and organizations (Saks & Ashforth, 1997).

Job seekers can adapt to different job search behaviors. For instance, they can use the internet to locate job openings and/or pass resumes to potential employers. Employment can be successful if job seekers put more time and effort into their job search. However, recent studies have emphasized that in addition to the quantity, the quality of job search is also essential (Saks, 2005; Van Hooft, Wanber, & Van Hoyer, 2013; Vinokur & Schul,

2002). In this regard, job seekers are more likely to obtain employment if they engage in high-quality job search behavior.

Van Hooft et al. (2013), revealed that one indicator of high-quality job search is self-regulation. Self-regulation guides individuals in their goal-directed activities over time and across changing circumstances. This process involves setting goals, developing plans, monitoring, and evaluating one's progress toward goal accomplishment. Self-regulation is crucial for job seekers to persist searching despite setbacks in their job search activities (Wanberg et al., 2010). Interestingly, Turban and colleagues (2009), found that self-regulatory activities during job search are positively associated with the number of resumes submitted and job interviews received by the job seeker.

Another parameter of high-quality job search behavior is the appropriate use of job search strategies (Van Hooft et al., 2013). Literature (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Koen et al., 2010) have recognized the following job search strategies: exploratory strategy, focused strategy, and haphazard strategy. The exploratory strategy entails job seekers fully exploring their options and being dedicated to their job-search activities. Clear employment goals and perseverance in job search denotes focused strategy. While haphazard strategy indicates unclear employment standards with a trial and error approach. A job seeker employing a haphazard strategy will accept any job. In contrast, job seekers with exploratory and focused strategies aim to find a pleasant and matching job. In support of this, Crossley and Highhouse (2005) cited that job seekers with an exploratory strategy have received more job offers compared to those who have haphazardly searched. Thus, the use of focused and exploratory strategies increases the likelihood of a job seeker to finding employment. However, it is important to note that job seekers do not rely on a

specific strategy during their job search. Rather, they may utilize three different strategies to a greater or lesser extent (Koen et al., 2010).

Van Hooft et al. (2013) and Wanberg et al. (2012) have emphasized the importance of job seekers' motivation towards employment. This motivation has been equated with employment commitment (Kanfer et al., 2001) or job search intention (Wanberg et al., 2005). However, these conceptualizations of motivation denote degree rather than the reason for job search (Koen, 2016).

Deci & Ryan (2000) in their Self-Determination Theory, posited that motivation does not only vary in degree but also type (autonomous and controlled motivation). Autonomous motivation happens when people are engaged to do something because it is in line with their own goals and value. When people behave in a certain way because they are pressured to do so, they are motivated controllingly. Aside from this, individuals can also be motivated and not engage in any activity at all. In summary, autonomous rather than controlled motivation will result in more positive outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Thus, autonomous motivation is related to higher job search intensity. However, controlled motivation was reported not to have any relation with job search intensity. While amotivation usually results in poorer job search and low chances of employment (Vansteenkiste et al., 2004).

Autonomous motivation entails that finding employment is of importance to job seekers. Thus, this results in greater effort and understanding of the job search process (Van Hooft et al., 2013). This will aid job seekers to analyze and monitor their progress, their employment goal, and persevere to achieve that goal. Moreover, job seekers who are

autonomously motivated show more interest and enjoyment during their search, which can be beneficial in self-regulation and exploration of options. Since controlled motivated job seekers are pressured to search for a job, it is posited that they engage in job search activities, albeit in a poor way. Additionally, they may be less likely to set, monitor, and pursue their goals (Vansteenkiste et al., 2004). Contrastingly, job seekers who are amotivated attach little importance to their goal of employment. Consequently, they tend to search in a minimal and disaffected way (Koen, 2016).

Flexibility in the job search is also seen to yield positive results in employment. Venn (2012) posited that flexibility might positively influence job search effort and the likelihood of employment. Since flexible job seekers are less picky, they tend to accept a job offer faster. Thus, increasing their chances of getting employed. Moreover, employers may choose to hire flexible job seekers, especially because of the volatile nature of the economy and employment (Van den Broeck et al., 2010). However, some researchers are concerned that flexibility may increase the likelihood of a job seeker to get a job inferior to their expected employment goal. Thus, lowering their employment quality (Van den Broeck et al., 2010).

Recent studies in positive organizational behavior have highlighted the importance of psychological capital in employment success (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007). Psychological capital is associated with individuals' capacity to cope with stress and adversity. Furthermore, it was also documented that it influences human flourishing and optimal functioning. High levels of psychological capital (e.g., resilience and optimism) can serve as a personal supply which job seekers can draw upon to develop a more positive attitude and perseverance in their search for employment (Kim, 2016).

Evidence proved that unemployment is associated with poor mental health. The stigma of unemployment contributes to the distress experienced by unemployed individuals. In their effort to alleviate these negative consequences, they engage in different job search activities. However, seeking a job is not an easy task. Often, they are faced with setbacks, such as not receiving any feedbacks and getting rejected. The longer these persist, the more harmful its effect on the job-seeking effort of the individual. Some job seekers even describe their experience as something that wastes their efforts and energy without getting their desired outcome.

Studies in the past suggested that employment offers a lot of benefits to the individual. Consequently, unemployment is associated with negative consequences. Among these consequences are decreased self-esteem, lowered self-efficacy, and reduced ability to regain employment. Additionally, the stigma attached to unemployment contributes to the stress experienced by unemployed individuals.

Although job search was seen to have negative consequences, researchers emphasized that there are aspects of the job search that a job seeker can control. Attaining the goal of employment may be achieved by adapting high-quality job search behaviors. Engaging in self-regulation, using appropriate job strategies, and being flexible have proved to be effective practices to promote employment success.

There have been speculations about the impact of unemployment among the well-educated. Some argue that the well-educated are particularly vulnerable to unemployment stress because they have to endure status inconsistency (Feather & Bond, 1983; Warr, 1984). At the same time, others hypothesized that better-educated individuals could cope

well with unemployment. These individuals can utilize their education as a coping resource. Moreover, successful graduates have developed skills in structuring time and in developing autonomy and a sense of purpose (Fryer & Payne, 1984).

Research Problem

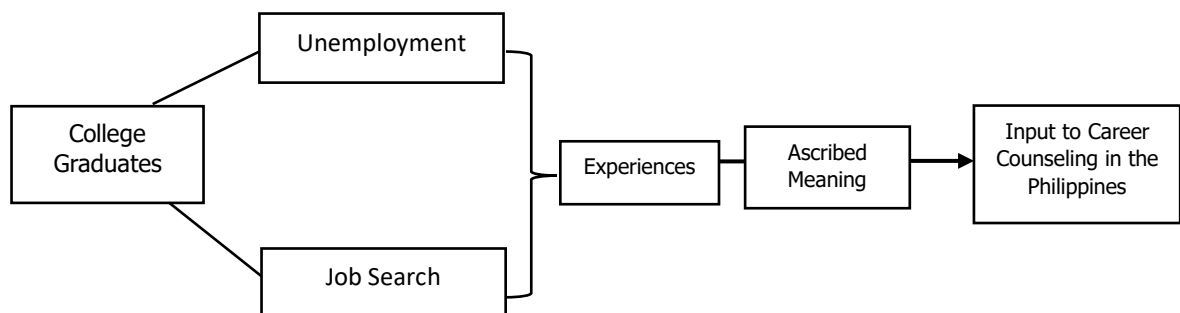
This study was centered on the lived experiences of active job seekers. The findings principally came from the thematic analysis of the responses of the participants which were used as a basis for exploring the phenomenon of unemployment among individuals actively looking for a job.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following specific questions:

1. How do unemployed college graduates describe their experiences?
2. How do they give meaning to their experiences?
3. What contributions can the experiences of unemployed college graduates give to Career Counseling in the Philippines?

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Experiences of Unemployed College Graduates



As individuals finish their college degree, they have to face the responsibility of finding a job. Ideally, having a degree increases job opportunities. However, statistics suggest otherwise. In the Philippines, almost 60 percent of college graduates who have no working experience are unemployed. With a tight job market, being employed has become difficult. Despite this, college graduates persist to achieve their goal of employment by engaging in different job search activities. However, the job search is not always a pleasant experience. Most of the time, these job seekers are faced with obstacles like rejection and not receiving any feedback. Moreover, studies have mentioned that the introduction of novel stimuli is often a stressful event for anyone. For college graduates who have no working experience, the job search may be distressing. The convergence of the negative impacts of unemployment and impeding setbacks in the job search is a significant experience for college graduates as they enter the world of work. Their experiences, including their attributed meaning warrant exploration, which is the goal of the present study. Its exploration will provide input for the enrichment of existing program in Career Guidance Counseling in the Philippines.

Significance of the Study

The present study can provide valuable insights to sectors and entities within the environment of the participants. Results will aid them in providing assistance and support to the population of the study. As for individuals who are seeking employment, the experience of their cohorts will provide awareness and support, which may alleviate their feelings of distress. This study will also promote the understanding of the phenomenon by contributing to the small amount of literature known about it. Specifically, the results of the study will be of great benefit to the following:

Job Seekers. They will gain insights on the experiences of unemployed college graduates and prepare for challenges of employment. With the account of different participants, it can encourage them to be open about their distress and establish a support system from those who are experiencing the same thing. Moreover, improvement in programs and services for them can pave the way for producing ready and equipped individuals who can survive and thrive in the world of work.

Guidance counselors. The outcomes of this study can be used as a basis in planning, constructing, improvising, and enriching guidance office services and programs. Moreover, this will help in putting up an effective, integrated career information and guidance system, which plays an instrumental role in guiding individuals in making the optimal career decisions. Lastly, it is hoped that from the results of the study, counselors will be able to adapt a counseling structure which will cater to the needs of individuals who are having difficulty finding a job.

Psychologists. The information yielded by this work may be of practical use for Psychologists. Insights gained from the experiences of the participants will aid in conceptualizing ways on how to relieve the distress experienced by job seekers. Moreover, this will assist them in designing a treatment plan keeping in view the factors that contribute to the adverse experiences of the research population.

Future researchers. Policies and programs are usually supported by validated studies. In this case, there have not been many of studies concerning job seekers who have no working experience to which policymakers can use as a basis. Therefore, with the conclusion of this study, future researchers will be encouraged to evaluate the impact, as

well as to replicate, and to build upon reliable and scientific researchers through the findings.

Education Setting. Educators play a huge role in the production of future workers in the country. Their guidance and support may aid in promoting work readiness among the youth. Moreover, it is hoped that with the results of this study, policy recommendations will be created, or if there are existing, be improved to effectively cater to the needs of the next-generation workforce.

Families. As the main support system for the majority, families of active job seekers will also benefit from this study. This will provide them information about the challenges faced by these individuals. With the knowledge and insight gained from the results, they can provide guidance and support to the member of the family who is undergoing tough times as they seek employment.

Employers. Playing a significant role in the transition of emerging adults into the workforce, employers will gain from this research. This will provide background about the state of job seekers who may become their potential employees. Knowledge about the results will hopefully guide them in constructing company policies and advocacies to assist these individuals better and aid them to become productive workers and citizens of the country.

Policymakers. Data from this study will help them understand the plight of active job seekers in the country. With globalization and subsequently, the constant change in education and working trends, policymakers can utilize this in designing various programs and implement it to address the needs of individuals in their entry to the workforce.

Definition of Terms

The mentioned keywords used in this study were operationally defined below for the purpose of clarity and a better understanding of the context of the study.

College Graduate – Any individual who has completed a four-year program from any higher education institution recognized by the state.

Job Search – A goal-directed behavior individuals engage in for the purpose of achieving employment.

Job search activities – Any action an individual does to increase his/her likelihood of getting employed (e.g. looking for job vacancies, filling out resumes, going to job interviews).

Unemployed – An individual who is actively looking for employment yet unable to land a job.

CHAPTER II

Methodology

This chapter presents information concerning the collection and analysis of the data. This includes the research design, research setting, population and sampling method, the instruments, procedures in data collection, and the process of data analysis. Moreover, it also contains a statement of the Research ethics which the researcher considered throughout the course of this study.

Research Design

A qualitative approach was employed to explore the experiences of unemployed college graduates. This design was suitable for this study as it provided a straight forward description of the phenomena. In the present study, data were gathered through individual interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis to produce a comprehensive description of the experiences of the participants.

A phenomenological inquiry was employed for an in-depth exploration and understanding of the participants' experiences. Phenomenology relies on the descriptions of experience from a small number of participants. Its strength lies in its capacity to conceptualize how situations are meaningfully lived as they are experienced (Giorgi, 2009). Moreover, it focuses on contemplating on, gaining insight into, and describing the “how” and the “what” of an experience.

Research Setting

Individuals who finished their bachelor's degree and are engaged in a year of job search were the chosen participants for this study. Manila City was the primary setting for this scientific endeavor. As this is the capital of the country, it is a place of opportunity for Filipinos all over the country, especially in the province. Manila is home to numerous companies and organizations which recent graduates all over the country look for employment to.

Unforeseen circumstances such as incompatibility and misunderstanding regarding the participant's schedule led the researcher also to include Olongapo City as its setting. Olongapo City is a highly-urbanized city situated in Zambales. Individuals from Zambales and near provinces go to this city for employment opportunities. Additionally, the said sites were the preferred location of the researcher, as this is the most convenient geographically.

Research Population and Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants until data saturation was achieved. Potential participants were carefully selected according to the following criteria: (1) graduated with bachelor's degree from any university or higher education institution in the country, (2) did not have any work experience before, and (3) have been actively looking for a job for a year. Such criteria were cited to explore the experiences of unemployed college graduates. The bachelor degree criterion was included to account for the speculation that graduates experience more distress in unemployment compared to their non-degree holder counterparts (Schaufeli, 1997). Moreover, inexperience in employment

was also used as a criterion, considering the anxiety usually experienced by those who encounter novel stimuli such as an occupation.

The use of networking and social media platforms such as e-mail and messenger were utilized to scout participants. Some participants also referred people whom they know fit in the criteria. Then, the researcher contacted potential participants to inform them about the study's purpose and process. Once the researcher received the participants' consent to participate in the study, individual interviews were scheduled. Three participants had to back out last minute because of unforeseen circumstances which hindered their attending of the scheduled interview. Twelve unemployed college graduates were able to share their experiences with unemployment.

Twelve college graduates participated in a one-on-one interview. All are graduates of a four-year degree program and have no formal working experience before. They had been engaged in an active job search for a year at the time of the interview. The longest duration of active job search was 15 months. Three (25%) of the respondents are male, while the remaining 9 (75%) are female. National Capital Region (NCR) and a city in Region 3, specifically, Olongapo City were chosen as the setting of this study. Three (25%) of college graduates finished their degree in different universities in NCR, while the remaining 9 (75%) completed their tertiary education in Olongapo City. Among them, five (41.67%) have chosen to seek a job in NCR. The remaining 7 (51.83%) wish to gain employment in the city of Olongapo. All participants are young adults with ages ranging from 20-25 years old. They were assigned code numbers to ensure anonymity.

Table 1

Profile of the Participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Duration of Active Job search
P1	21	Female	12 and ½ months
P2	20	Male	12 months
P3	21	Male	12 months
P4	25	Female	16 months
P5	24	Female	15 months
P6	23	Female	12 and 2 months
P7	22	Female	12 months
P8	21	Female	13 months
P9	20	Female	13 months
P10	21	Female	14 months
P11	21	Female	13 ½ months
P12	20	Male	1 year and one month

Research Instruments

Before the conduct of the actual interview, a questionnaire (Appendix B) was given to the participants. The questionnaire was used to gather background from the respondents such as name, age, sex, finished program, school, duration of active job seeking, job search activities and job applied for. When the relevant information of the participants was collected, an interview guide (Appendix D), the main instrument of this study was utilized.

Research Process

Once approval of the participants was secured, dates for the interview were scheduled. The participants were given an informed consent form before the interview was conducted. Moreover, they were given the data information sheet, which was coded to secure confidentiality. The researcher explained the contents of both forms to ensure understanding among participants. After this, the interview proper commenced. Interviews were conducted at a private and secure place. Additionally, the interview sessions were recorded, provided that the participants agree to do so. Lastly, they were given the option to stop the interview or withdraw from the study any time they wish to do so. The interview ran for approximately 40-60 minutes.

Data Gathering Procedures

An in-depth interview guide was utilized to serve as a basis in the face-to-face, in-depth interviews with the participants. The guide questions were designed to encourage openness among participants in sharing their experiences. Questions such as: “How would you describe your experiences of being unemployed?”, “How do you feel about these experiences?”, and “What do these experiences mean to you?” were asked. The author, about the same age as the participants, provided support for them as they share their stories and experiences during interviews.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the gathered responses from the participants was done using thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) defined thematic analysis as a method that involves identification, analysis, and reporting of patterns within the data. This results in an

organized and descriptive rich detail of the account of participants. The researcher undertook the following procedures:

1. Familiarizing with the data

Recordings of the full session were transcribed verbatim. Once transcribed, the researcher read the transcripts several times as a whole. This helped in the immersion and familiarization with the depth of the content. Repeated reading of the data was done to search for meanings and patterns in the responses of the participants.

2. Generating Initial codes

At this part, the researcher started to generate a list of ideas about the responses of the participants and identify what are relevant to the study. Significant statements concerning the participants' experiences were differentiated into units. Segments of the description were extracted through manual coding. The researcher coded many extracts as possible. Contexts of data were also carefully included so as to fully understand the experiences of the participants.

3. Searching for themes

The initial codes generated in the previous stage were analyzed. Codes that are related were sorted and combined to form an overarching theme. This was the most tedious part for the researcher, especially since the data proved to be overwhelming. To aid in the process, the researcher used tables to organize data.

4. Reviewing themes

The themes generated were refined. Some themes were merged with other themes which resulted in the emergence of subthemes. While others were removed because further analysis proved that there wasn't enough data to support them. The researcher enlisted the help of peers at this stage. Additionally, two guidance counselors also assisted in external validation and cross-analysis of themes.

5. Defining and naming themes

Reviewed themes from the previous stage were further refined. The essences of each theme were identified. This was done by revisiting the data extracts for each theme and organizing them into a coherent account with accompanying narratives of the participants. Names for each theme and subthemes were also finalized at this point.

6. Producing the report

Utilizing the final themes, the researcher proceeded with the write-up of the thematic analysis. Ample data extracts were shown to provide evidence of the prevalence of themes. The outcome for this stage is a concise and coherent account of the experiences of the participants.

Role of Researcher

Creswell (2007) postulated that the researcher's role in qualitative research is critical. The researcher collected data and implemented analysis. In the present study, the researcher assumed the role of an observer-as-participant. She served as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. This was demonstrated in her collection, coding,

and analyzing data from interviews to uncover emerging themes and concepts about the experiences of unemployed college graduates.

Although the experience was novel to the researcher, she witnessed some of her close friends going through negative experiences because of their unemployment. Often, she helped them process the feelings that they had. To limit the effect of potential bias, the researcher followed what Husserl (1954) called the phenomenological reduction. This entailed adapting a reflective attitude while putting aside knowledge and prior research about the topic under investigation. Moreover, the researcher kept a journal to document the process as well as her thoughts and feelings. Lastly, the process of peer review has also helped in controlling researcher bias.

Methods of Validation

At the conclusion of each interview, verbatim transcription was produced to examine the emerging themes and concepts which arose during data collection. Once transcribed, the researcher read the transcripts several times as a whole to capture impressions regarding the content. Significant statements concerning the participants' experiences were extracted. Meanings were formulated from significant statements. Groups of themes were gathered from different meanings. From there, the researcher used appropriate descriptions of the experiences of the participants, which were summarized into more explicit statements.

Credibility was ensured through immersion into interview data, peer review, and verification of codes with participants. Verbatim statements were translated to English for uniformity and understandability. To ensure that statements are equivalent to what the

participants really meant, translations were also communicated and verified with the participants. They were asked to review and give comments on the suitability of the themes and categories to safeguard consistency between the interpretation and their reported experience. Emerging themes underwent external validation with a guidance counselor. To further guarantee integrity, a cross-analysis was also completed by the researcher together with another guidance counselor.

Ethical Considerations

This study was carried out with utmost respect to the human participants to which the data were gathered. Research guidelines and ethics were considered and followed throughout the duration of the study. Furthermore, the researcher promoted the following in adherence to the prescribed Research Ethics of Philippine Normal University:

Respect. The researcher promoted the positive well-being of the participants by not placing them in situations or conditions that may pose any physical and/or psychological harm as a consequence for their participation in the study. Furthermore, participants were ensured full disclosure of their roles in the conduct of research, including information about the nature, goals, and methods of the research project. Possible risks and benefits were also communicated with the respondents. The informed consent form was given beforehand. Should there be any queries and concerns about the study, it was promptly addressed and responded to. Under no circumstance did the researcher force anyone to participate in the study. Participation was voluntary and respondents were free to withdraw any time they wish to do so. The privacy of respondents was respected and all of their information was handled with the utmost confidentiality. The researcher ensured that any information

collected from the participants was not made available to anyone who has no direct involvement in the study. Any identifying information of the participants was removed in the presentation of the data. Code numbers were used instead. All of the data collected were also kept in a secured file cabinet to which only the researcher has access to.

Beneficence. Throughout the duration of the study, the research project assured the safety and protection from harm, among all participants, including the researcher. Additionally, prior to their participation, participants were given informed consent form containing detailed information about the study, including the benefits that they may receive in the conduct of the research. The researcher also ensured that there was no harm: physical and psychological that the respondents sustained in their participation. The results of the study will be shared with the community where the research was conducted. Additionally, the researcher also recognizes the right of the respondents to be informed of the outcomes of the research project. Should they wish to ask a copy, it will be made available for them. In addition to the benefits this study will incur to the participants and the community, it will contribute significantly towards the development or enhancement of policies and programs in guidance and counseling in the Philippines. Lastly, the conclusion of the study will hopefully help in alleviating human conditions within the educational system, positive mental health movement, as well as the employment system in the country.

Justice. With knowledge about appropriate ethics, scientific education, training, and qualification, the researcher ensured justice in the conduct of the study. Criteria for selecting the research participants were explicitly stated. The sampling of the participants was conducted in a manner that ensured the equal selection of individuals who are

qualified. Under no circumstance was the researcher biased with gender, class, and ethnicity of the participants throughout the duration of the research. Should there be any opportunity, the researcher will be more than willing to engage in projects within the range of her competencies to collaborate with others. Professional advice and recommendations of experts were put into consideration throughout the study to ensure validity. To ensure justice regarding the experiences of the participants, under no circumstance did the researcher attribute any other meaning aside from what was mentioned by the respondent. Once data were consolidated and themes emerged, the researcher communicated with the participants to ensure that the discussion reflected the true experiences of those involved in the study. Furthermore, any conflict of interest was avoided.

CHAPTER III

Results and Discussion

This chapter shows the presentation and discussion of data gathered through the semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants. It will answer the research problems and include the common themes extracted from the lived experiences of the respondents. Verbatim responses will be shown to easily facilitate understanding of how unemployed college graduates give meaning to their experiences.

Research Problem # 1: How do unemployed college graduates describe their experiences?

Various literature (Wanberg, 1995; Wanberg, Zhu, & Van Hooft, 2010; Sun, Song, & Lim, 2013) described unemployment to be highly stressful for job seekers. This was not different from the responses of the participants in this study. Themes that emerged from the participants' statements revolve around the challenges that they endure. This includes difficulties in job search, as well as with their unemployment state. Thematic analysis of data helped the researcher to single out three major themes about the participants' description of their experiences. These are unemployment is emotionally taxing, unemployment is financially taxing, and job search is full of hindrances. The theme unemployment is emotionally taxing includes subthemes: feeling lost, feeling pressured, decrease in self-worth, and development of symptoms of anxiety and depression. Subthemes difficulty in sustaining job search expenses, shame for financial dependence on others, and guilt from not contributing financially are under the theme about unemployment

being financially taxing. Lastly, the theme job search full of hindrances has four subthemes: limited opportunities, employer biases, personal limitations, and set standards for oneself.

Table 2

Descriptions of experiences of unemployed college graduates

Themes	Participants	Subthemes	Sample Responses
Unemployment is emotionally taxing Unemployment challenges the emotional well-being of college graduates.	P1, P2, P8 & P11	Feeling lost Hopelessness for being stuck in state of unemployment.	<i>I feel like I'm just wasting my time and longing for that routine I had back in school. I feel lost. I don't know what step to take.</i>
	P1, P2, P3, P6, P7, P8, P9 & P10	Feeling pressured Unemployed college graduates experience pressure to secure employment. This includes familial, societal, and peer pressure.	<i>I feel pressured especially since we have this culture where you're expected to find employment and give back to your family.</i> <i>It's difficult because my parents would give me sermons. They'd ask me what my plans are and if tomorrow I'd still be where I am now...</i>
	P1, P3, P5, P6	Decrease in self-worth	<i>I feel pressured especially when I see my batchmates already working. ... makes me feel like I'm in my</i>

		Feeling bad about oneself which results to persistent feelings of sadness, anxiety, and shame or guilt.	<i>lowest point. It decreases your self-esteem because you'll keep wondering what you're lacking and where you went wrong.</i>
	P6 & P7	Development of symptoms of anxiety and depression Manifestation of symptoms of mental health disorders which in worst cases, leads one to attempt suicide.	<i>...I feel like I have anxiety and depression...I attempted suicide four times. There's hanging, I also tried overdosing with pills. I'm just tired. I just wish my life would turn around. It's tiring to wake up every day...</i>
Unemployment is financially taxing Unemployment itself and job search demands financial resources.	P1, P5, P6 & P8	Difficulty in sustaining job search expenses Trouble in obtaining optimal results with job search because of lack of financial means.	<i>I wanted to work in Makati or Taguig because I thought that's where the lucrative jobs are... But my parents told me they wanted me to stay in Olongapo to cut down on costs... Throughout the job-hunting process, I was thinking that if I were only rich, I won't have difficulty looking for a job...</i>
	P1, P4, P6 & P8	Shame for financial	<i>My son is sick. I depend on others for his medications.</i>

		dependence on others Feeling self-conscious about one's dependence on others for personal expenses.	<i>If only I have a source of income, I wouldn't depend on others.</i>
	P1, P3, P6, P7 & P8	Guilt from not contributing financially Feelings of distress for not helping with the financial expenses of the household.	<i>...as time went by, I started feeling guilty especially since I'm not contributing anything when I know I'm already capable of doing so.⁸</i>
Job search is full of hindrances There are different factors in the job search which impede one's success in securing employment.	P1, P8, P9, P11 & P12	Limited opportunities Lack of job vacancies in a certain field of work. Might be caused by the program finished and location.	<i>It's difficult because only few companies need the job that I want.</i>
	P1, P2, P3, P5, P9, P10 & P11	Employer biases Employers' preferences which negatively impact an applicant's chance of getting employed.	<i>It's difficult because most employers look for experience, typically 3-5 years of experience.</i>
	P4, P8 & P9	Personal limitations Deficiencies in skills and competencies favorable to employers.	<i>I also have difficulty answering oral interviews because I'm usually reserved. I'm not used to voicing out my opinions and</i>

P1, P2, P3, P4, P8 & P12	Set standards for oneself Difficulty finding a job that is fit within standards.	<i>talking to other people. I had high expectations for myself. Not to be elitist but I did not subject myself into four years of almost unbearable hardships in UP just to land an ordinary job.</i>
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A. Unemployment is emotionally taxing

Unemployment proved to be challenging for the mental well-being of unemployed college graduates. With the setbacks experienced in job search and the difficulties associated with unemployment in itself, it is not uncommon for unemployed college graduates to be prone to emotional distress. This is manifested in feeling lost, feeling pressured, decrease in self-worth. In unfortunate cases, unemployment causes them to develop symptoms of mental disorders.

A1. Feeling lost

Jahoda (1982) argued that unemployment disempowers an individual because of the deprivation of functions that employment can provide such as structure, social connectedness, and personal identity. Unemployed college graduates cited that there were instances where they felt hopeless for being stuck in their unemployment state. These are instances where they feel uncertainty about their goals and aspirations. This crisis is manifested in feeling like they're not doing anything productive as evident in the statement

of P2. This crisis sometimes makes them long for the structure they have back in school like what P1 shared. P11 reported feeling defeated for not having achieved her plans because of unemployment. A sentiment shared by P8.

I find myself longing for that routine I had back in school. I feel lost. I don't know what step to take. -P1

I feel like I'm wasting time. Instead of doing something productive, I'm not doing anything. -P2

Maybe why I also had difficulty starting because my plans and expectations didn't push through. -P8

I feel defeated. I have lots of plans for my life, but I couldn't push through it because I need a job to support it. -P11

A2. Feeling pressured

This subtheme consists of familial, societal, and peer pressure to be employed. College graduates who have difficulty obtaining a job for a long-time face challenge as a result of their unemployment. This difficulty is further exacerbated by the pressure put unto them by the people around them. Paul and Batinic (2010) found out that employed workers feel more respected and recognized compared to their unemployed counterparts. Society seems to favor those who are considered productive citizens. That is why participants expressed concerns about the pressure to gain employment from their family, peers, as well as the societal norms.

Feelings of being pressured can be caused by family members. This is manifested in the constant questions about the plans of their unemployed family member. P2 shared that he also received preaching from his parents about his situation.

It's difficult because my parents would give me sermons. They'd ask me what my plans are and if tomorrow I'd still be where I am now. -P2

There's that heavy feeling, especially when you hear family members asking what you're doing when you should already be helping. -P6

My older brother would constantly ask me if I'll forever stay this way. -P7

In the country, there is a certain understanding that after graduation, the next step is to have a job. Having a job is necessary so that one can provide for the family. Consequently, individuals who are not lucky to secure a job experience encounter stigma from other people. Often, they are looked down upon as evident in the statement of P3 and P10. P8 shared being pressured from the stereotype of easily landing a job when you graduated from a prestigious university.

I feel pressured, especially since we have this culture where you're expected to find employment and give back to your family. -P1

There are a lot of negative things people will say about you because you're unemployed. As if they really know my struggles. -P3

I graduated in UP. And I feel pressure to be employed immediately. Especially since there's this stereotype that when you graduate in UP, it will be easy to land a job. -P8

Here I am still unemployed. It's even more challenging when you hear neighbors' and relatives' negative comments. They kept asking me when I'll work. As if it's that easy. -P10

Pressure stemming from peers was also common among participants. Sentiments were shared about instances when they can't help but compare themselves when they see their cohorts already working. This comparison leaves them feeling frustrated and compelled also to gain employment. Sometimes, this comparison leads one to feel envious with others evident in the statement of P7.

There's that external pressure. I feel frustrated seeing most of my batchmates stable already. I can't help but think about what did I do wrong. -P6

I feel pressured, especially when I see my batchmates already working. I'm envious and feeling pressured at the same time. -P7

After graduation, when I saw my batchmates already having a job, I started to feel really down. It's a trigger factor for comparison when you see the professional life of your batchmates in social media. This worsened the pressure I felt. -P8

I feel pressured, especially when I see my batchmates already working and earning money.⁹

A3. Decrease in self-worth

Ilg & Theodossiou (2012) reported that average job seekers usually take at least six months to find a job, while others spend as long as a year of job search before obtaining employment. This long-term unemployment was described to cause reduced self-esteem, lowered self-efficacy, and decreased belief in the ability to regain employment. This feeling bad about oneself results in persistent feelings of sadness, anxiety, and shame or

guilt. Constant rejections and setbacks experienced by unemployed college graduates were proved to be a blow to their self-esteem. Sometimes, they can't help but feel worthless and a burden. In addition, they also fixate on where they went wrong for not having a job when some are already successful.

I've really come to the point where I feel useless. When you're unemployed, your self-worth decreases. -P1

You question yourself when you see your batchmates already working. And there's also a bit of envy. -P2

You know in yourself that you're doing everything yet you can't stop feeling worthless in your family. -P5

You can't stop feeling like you're a burden. -P6

A lot of unfortunate events happened. I was unemployed; I got sick, something happened with my personal life... I don't have a job, no money. In the end, I feel worthless. -P6

You feel like a burden to your family. -P7

Most of the time, I feel sad. I feel like a burden in my family.10

*This waiting game makes me feel like I'm at my lowest point. It decreases your self-esteem because you'll keep wondering what did you lack and where you went wrong.
10*

*The experiences are unpleasant. I mean, who would want to be unemployed, right? I feel like a freeloader. I don't like that, but unfortunately, my efforts are fruitless.
10*

A4. Development of symptoms of anxiety and depression

For individuals, employment plays a huge role in their lives. As mentioned in previous literature, it said to be a pillar of social organization (Sennett, 2001; Schnapper, 1998). Highly stressful job search in addition to not achieving something despite exerting effort cause unemployed college graduates to develop mental health concerns (Hammarstrom & Janler, 1997; Harris & Morrow, 2001; Mathers & Schoeld 1998). In the present study, these concerns refer to symptoms of anxiety and depression. Participant 6 and 7 mentioned that they went as far as attempting suicide because of their current situation.

It's frustrating. I feel like I have anxiety and depression. I feel worthless... I don't usually go out. I just stay at home and lock myself in the room. I've come to the point where I can't take it anymore. I would always contact my friends to drink with me so I can be occupied because I'm really finding it difficult to sleep at night. If I'm successful, I'd only get 30 minutes of sleep; then I'd wake up shaking...I attempted suicide four times. There's hanging, I also tried overdosing with pills. I'm just tired. I just wish my life would turn around. It's tiring to wake up every day... -P6

I've really come to the point when I want to die... I tried overdosing with pills. It's painful and difficult. I'm fed up with my situation, I just want to disappear. -P7

B. Unemployment is financially taxing

Financial resources of an individual are said to be crucial in evaluating unemployment and its impacts (Briar, 1987; Jahoda, 1982; Blau et al., 2013). After finishing school, individuals now go to the stage where they try to establish their economic independence from their parents. Unfortunately, this proved to be more difficult for unemployed college graduates who have no stable source of income, especially since unemployment itself and job search demands financial resources. This makes it difficult

for them to fund their job search activities. Moreover, they feel embarrassed for not contributing to sustaining household needs. Lastly, they feel ashamed for still depending on others financially.

B1. Difficulty in sustaining job search expenses

Engaging in job search activities can be challenging more so because it entails expenses. Participants mentioned spending money for their medical examinations, necessary printing of data, as well as travel expenses. Unemployed individuals who have other sources of income tend to suffer less because their financial resources serve as a cushion from any financial strain (Turner, Kessler, & House, 1991). And since they still have no income of their own, they have to ask financial assistance to sustain the expensive process of job search. With no source of funds and the accompanying discomfort in asking for it, sometimes, unemployed college graduates have to compromise, thereby, limiting their likelihood of gaining employment.

Right from the start, you need resources to find employment. There are medical expenses and other stuff that employers will look for. And I don't have a financial source of my own since I am not earning yet. -P1

The process is also expensive. You keep paying for stuff you won't be able to use in the end when you're rejected. You spent a lot without gaining in return. -P5

My struggles are mostly financial. I've spent a lot already, passed requirements to all who would accept yet I am not receiving any callbacks. It's really difficult. -P6

I wanted to work in Makati or Taguig because I thought that's where the lucrative jobs are. I thought I was cut out for it. But my parents told me they wanted me to stay in Olongapo to cut down on costs...Throughout the job-hunting process, I was thinking that if I were only rich, I won't have difficulty looking for a job because I wouldn't have to think about the costs of applying and boarding. I found this true because I have batchmates who

have comfortable lives now in Makati and Taguig because they are supported financially by their parents. -P8

B2. Shame for financial dependence on others

As mentioned earlier, economic independence is one of the milestones of young adults as they finish their school. For college graduates, unemployment is a barrier (Aquilino & Supple, 2001). Instead of already providing for their personal and familial needs, they still have to depend on their parents. If not with parents, they rely on other people. This is apparent in the case of participant 4, mother of a son with muscle cancer. Since she has no income, she has to depend on other people for his son's medical needs. In some instances, unemployed college graduates find themselves being restricted to spend because of a lack of personal financial source and discomfort in asking for money. Jenkins and Cappellari (2007) mentioned that unemployment limits an individual to participate in social and cultural activities. This is evident in the responses of P6 and P8.

I want to work already so I can have money for my own expenses. Right now, I still depend on my older sister for my needs. -P1

It's difficult, especially in my situation. My son is sick. I depend on others for his medications. If only I have a source of income...Instead of spending for myself, I'll allocate it to my son's needs. -P4

When you don't have a stable source of income, you think of ways to save. I don't want to ask much from my parents. There are times when I want to go out and chill but I can't because I have to stretch the very little money that I have. -P6

You have these plans for yourself that you can't fulfill because of a lack of financial resources. I don't even want to ask from my parents because they have to allocate it to our needs. -P8

B3. Guilt from not contributing financially

Not having a disposable financial resource can impede one's standard of living (Jenkins and Cappellari, 2007). As individuals try to establish economic independence, they are expected to improve their family's standard of living. Often, parents are expecting their children to at least give them financial assistance as a way of giving back for what they've spent on the child's education. This is more evident in eldest children as exemplified in P6's experience. Consequently, this causes unemployed college graduates to feel guilt for not contributing anything to the family.

I am a bit ashamed for not helping my mom with the expenses. -P1

I feel guilty for not earning money. -P2

It's really difficult because instead of already supporting my family, I'm doing nothing. -P3

I have to come back again to my parents for my expenses when I should be helping with the expenses already as the eldest child. -P6

As time went by, I started feeling guilty, especially since I'm not contributing anything when I know I'm already capable of doing so. -P8

C. Job search is full of hindrances

There are different factors in the job search which hinder one's success in securing employment. These include limited opportunities in the workforce. Employer biases also negatively affect one's chances of getting employed. Lack of skills and competencies are

also not favorable. Lastly, unemployed college graduates set standards for their employment. Often, they are having a hard time finding a job that fits these standards.

C1. Limited Opportunities

Job applicants also have a hard time securing employment because of limited opportunities. The recent shift in global needs has caused some fields to be in demand and other fields to be unpopular, thereby, limiting job opportunities (Lina, 2019). This may be the result of the place where one is looking for a job as is the case of P1. For P9 and 11, the struggle is in finding jobs that they want and eligible for.

There's also a lack of opportunities, especially in a small town like this. -P1

It's difficult because only a few companies need the job that I want.9

It's a struggle to look for jobs suited to my license and program. -P11

C2. Employer biases

One of the problems in the job search is the preferences of employers. With the dawn of the 21st century, employers have shifted their focus from mere skills and abilities to the performance of potential employees. Consequently, experience is highly valued among applicants (Lina, 2019). As they enter the world of work, applicants face the challenge of at least passing the standards set by the global workforce, including the preferences of employers. For most employers, these standards are manifested in their preference for applicants who already have ample experience related to the job applied for. In the case of unemployed college graduates who have no working experience, this is evidently a big obstruction to their goal of getting employed.

It's difficult because most employers look for experience, typically 3-5 years of experience. -P1

...most of them want experienced applicants. I think it's valid for them to look for experience. But it's really unfair for fresh graduates like me.. How will I have experience if they won't hire me.9

It's challenging to land a job when employers look for experience which I clearly don't have as a fresh graduate. How will I gain experience if they won't hire me? It's unfair for fresh graduates like me who have to provide for their families. We're not given the opportunity to showcase our skills.10

I have passed my resume to 16 companies. I also received callbacks twice. But I always fail because they look for experienced applicants. I get why they would want someone with experience. I mean it would be less expensive for them since they won't spend for training. But it's really unfair for fresh graduates who have a lot of potentials. Those who are willing to learn and train. How will we gain experience? Sometimes, I really don't know where to put myself. 11

In addition to difficulty fitting in with the preferences of employers, there are also instances when employers' biases contribute to difficulty in securing a job. Participant 3 mentioned not being accepted just because the employers prefer female employees. A similar instance happened with P2. In the case of participant 5, she experienced not being hired in favor of an applicant who was related to the employer.

There was this time when I was offered a different job than I applied for. According to the employer, that position is only open for women.-P2

I'm rejected in the schools that I applied for because they think that kinder teachers should only be women. -P3

I tried applying to the city hall. It's really important to have a backer nowadays. I keep coming back to complete the requirements they needed. They asked a lot of things from me. A few days after, I found out that that job was already offered to someone.

*When I looked at the applicant's Facebook profile, I found out that her aunt is working in the city hall. People thought you could go on with just perseverance and hard work, but no, you also need a backer.*⁵

C3. Personal limitations

In addition to the preferences of the employers, personal limitations also posed to be a challenge in the job search. These personal limitations pertain to deficiencies in skills and competencies as well as unpreparedness. Like what was mentioned earlier, there are standards and criteria in the workforce. Applicants whose skills and competencies will be advantageous to their institution tend to be favored. Participant 4 shared her difficulties with the application because she doesn't have a teaching license yet. While for participant 9, she considers her shyness as a hindrance to successful job search. In some cases, job applicants feel insecure about applying because they feel like they lack preparation. P8 recognized this unpreparedness in facing the world of work.

I wasn't able to take the board exam. Now, I'm having difficulty competing with applicants who are board passers. -P4

I also have difficulty answering oral interviews because I'm usually reserved. I'm not used to voicing out my opinions and talking to other people. It's frustrating because I know I'm capable, that I can do better. It's just that I really have difficulty expressing myself orally. -P9

I literally left the university with no idea where to go next. I was unprepared for job hunting and the real world. I don't know what I want. -P8

C4. Standards set for oneself

Personal standards also influence the job search for unemployed college graduates. Having graduated a four-year degree program, college graduates often set standards in their

employment. They tend to be picky about which job to choose. This may be attributed to what Schaufeli (1997) termed status inconsistency. Some job opportunities entail having employees to do something that is maybe beyond or below their abilities and skills. In the case of college graduates, they refuse to do jobs that will not maximize what they learned in school. Evidently, this proved to be a challenge in securing employment. This is shown in the responses of the participants; there is a reservation to accept any job that does not fit their criteria.

My older brother told me not to be choosy and just try whatever is available, but I don't want to. I want something where I can gain experience and is related to my field. - P1

My dad would tell me to just look for any job. But I don't want that. I finished a four-year degree program. I have a standard. I don't want to work just anywhere. 3

I still haven't found any job offer that I like. I'm choosy. When I hear negative things about the company, I won't push through. -P5

I had high expectations for myself. Not to be elitist, but I did not subject myself into four years of almost unbearable hardships in UP just to land an ordinary job. -P8

For P2 and P12, they mentioned that they look for jobs that will fit in their schedule.

While some do not align with my schedules in Church.-P2

I am looking for job offers that will fit in my schedule. -P12

Competitive salaries were also looked into by unemployed college graduates as suggested by the responses of P1, P2, & P5.

There are job openings which have unfavorable salaries. -P1

I had job offers I declined because my pay would be the same as those who didn't have any degree. -P2

I look for good benefits and pay. -P5

P8 and P12 stated that job offers that will promote their growth are a must for them.

Some job offers are also not sustainable because they don't offer much opportunity for growth. -P8

It's also important for me that the employer will allow their employees to go beyond their limits and maximize their potential. -P12

Job search is often described to be an unpleasant experience for many. For college graduates who have just finished their studies, this is another aspect of their life they have yet to face. They are expected to be well-prepared since their years in school should have equipped them for it. In reality, this is not the case. Participants in the study mentioned their hardships and described their experiences to be far from what they imagined it to be. Sentiments about how it challenged them emotionally were common. Looking at it, most of the challenges are rooted in being pressured. In a close-knit country, it is not unusual for individuals to take responsibility for household expenses. Consequently, individuals are pressured to look for a job as soon as they can immediately. Additionally, Filipino people tend to equate work with being productive and attribute their achievements to their work. Thus, unemployed individuals are often stigmatized. This causes more pressure on unemployed individuals. Moreover, the job search can deplete one's resources. The effects

are further exacerbated when one is not getting any favorable outcomes. For college graduates who are engaged in job search, there is that added feeling of guilt for spending money when they should already be helping the family financially.

Job search obstacles are not unusual. What's notable, albeit unsurprising about the experiences of unemployed college graduates is how their set standards proved to be a hindrance to their employment. Having undergone formal training in schools, college graduates don't like to sell themselves short and won't settle for anything less. For some, continued unemployment may often lead in a compromise, different from what their original goals are. But for college graduates, they remain anchored to their goals because they know they are equipped with favorable skills and competencies.

Research Problem 2: How do they give meaning to their experiences?

Two main themes emerged from the analysis of the experiences of unemployed college graduates. Meanings attributed to their experiences include coming to terms with what one cannot control and working on what one can control. The first theme entails coming to terms with the harsh reality of job search and accepting that unemployment is part of life. While the theme working on what one can control includes subthemes: personal development and adopting a positive mindset.

Table 3.

Meanings ascribed to experiences of unemployed college graduates

Themes	Participants	Subthemes	Sample Responses
Coming to terms with what one cannot control	P1, P3, P7, P8 & P12	Harsh reality of job search	<i>When I was still in school, I thought it will be easy. I</i>

Accepting uncontrollable factors as it is.		Job search is not as easy as one thought it would be.	<i>thought it was easy to look for a job. Now that I'm at this point, I realize it's difficult.</i>
	P1, P2, & P8	Unemployment is part of life Unemployment is an impermanent aspect of life most people will undergo.	<i>I don't want to blame the employment system of the Philippines because I'm aware that you'll really come to the point where you won't be employed immediately. I'm just really at the point of job searching now. I'm planning to take another degree that I want. There are still a lot of stuff I have to learn and improve on.</i>
Working on what one can control Focusing and working with unemployment and job search factors one can control	P1, P2, P3, P8, P9, P10 & P11	Personal Development Acquiring skills and competencies that improve one's employability.	
	P1, P3, P5 & P11	Persistence with job search Continuing and improving one's job search activities.	<i>Nothing good will come out if I don't work hard enough. My job search is continuous. I search every day and wait for email back.</i>
	P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11 & P12	Adapting a positive mindset Being hopeful about job search success. And recognizing that something good	<i>I am hopeful that by next month, I will have a job already.</i> -P1

will come out of the
difficulties
experienced.

A. Coming to terms with what one cannot control

Over time unemployed college graduates face difficulties with their unemployment and job search; they learned to come to terms with factors that are beyond their control. It was hypothesized that educated individuals tend to cope well with unemployment (Kaufman, 1982). Participants mentioned realizing and accepting that job search is really not easy. In addition to this, they also mentioned becoming patient with the process because according to them, unemployment is really a part of life.

A1. Harsh reality of job search

Participants mentioned having this notion that job search will be easy back when they were still in school. But as they try to enter the world of workforce, they are met with a lot of challenges and setbacks. With these difficulties, they realized that being employed is not easy. Coming to terms with this harsh reality is one way of how they give meaning to their experiences. P1, who initially thought it would be easy has now realized job search is difficult. With the reality of the job search, P7 tries to be patient with herself. While P8 stated that the struggles she experienced are vital to her progress.

When I was still in school, I thought it would be easy. I thought it was easy to look for a job. Now that I'm at this point, I realize it's difficult. -P1

...but I constantly remind myself that gaining employment is not as easy as it looks. -P7

Without struggles, there will be no progress. This told me that adulting is not easy. -P8

P2 and P3 shared the acknowledgement that holding a degree does not ensure employability.

What you finish won't always be what you'd end up doing. And finishing a degree does not ensure employability. -P2

When I was still in school, I saw a graduate handing out flyers. I told myself, I'd never stoop down to that level. Now that I'm experiencing it, I realize it's not that easy. Finishing school does not ensure ease in gaining employment. -P3

A2. Unemployment is part of life

College graduates stated that their experiences are normal for someone who's just starting. Unemployment is an aspect of life people will really undergo. It's just that they're in that state at the moment. P1 mentioned that she learned to accept unemployment as an unavoidable phase in the process of her job search. This was also voiced out by P2 who recognizes that all these challenges are just in the beginning and that there will be something worthy in the end. With the acceptance of unemployment and recognition that it's all in the beginning, P8 learned to be patient with herself by the reminder that whatever job will come won't dictate the success of her career goals.

I don't want to blame the employment system of the Philippines because I'm aware that you'll really come to the point where you won't be employed immediately. I'm just really at the point of job searching now. -P1

I think this is only at the start. There will come a time when I'll be able to find a job I like.-P2

I just think that my struggles are only for now, that it's not permanent. It's hard not to wrap our heads around grand ideas because, after all, we're allowed to dream huge things for ourselves, but I have to remind myself that I'm just starting. My first job won't dictate my success. I could always start all over again. -P8

B. Working on what one can control

Kaufman (1982) postulated that these individuals use their education as a coping resource. While there are factors beyond the applicant's control just like what was mentioned in the previous section, unemployed college graduates recognize that there are some which they can work on. These include making themselves more favorable to employers by acquiring skills and competencies and trying to regulate their deficiencies. Attitude toward their experiences can also be managed. Instead of being discouraged by their experiences, they persist with their job search activities. Lastly, unemployed college graduates look at their challenging experiences in a more positive light. They try to push themselves and hope that it will bring favorable results in the end.

B1. Personal Development

As evident in the previous theme mentioned, personal limitations and employer preferences limit the employability of unemployed college graduates. To counter this, the participants have learned to adapt by improving their knowledge and skills to increase the chances of employment. Feather and Bond (1983) hypothesized that college graduates develop skills in developing autonomy and a sense of purpose. Participants in the study mentioned that improving themselves and gaining experience will aid them with their employment. This is evident in their plans to take the board exams as well as to further their education (graduate level). For P1, this entails being confident about her skills and

competencies As for participant 9, she is doing her best to overcome her shyness which hinders her from being hired.

And I also try to be confident about my skills and competencies. I feel confident that I will learn the skills needed by me. -P1

I'm trying to work out my shyness. I'm trying to develop my confidence in speaking. -P9

Passing the licensure exam is one of the goals of P2, P3, & P4

I plan to take the board exam. After that, I'll study again. -P2

In the future, if I have that license, maybe they won't say no. -P3

I'll apply for the board exam. Hopefully, I'll pass. -P4

P1, P8, & P10 are planning to further their studies by enrolling in graduate school or by taking another program.

I plan to enroll in graduate school after this. -P1

I'm planning to take another degree that I want. There is still a lot of stuff I have to learn and improve on. -P8

I just want to have work so I can have experience. Then I'll study again and continue with graduate school. -P10

B2. Persistence with job search

This negative job search experiences caused many individuals to describe the process as something that just wastes their efforts and energy without reaping their

expected outcome (Wanberg, et al., 2012). Contrary to this is the responses of the participants. Instead of being demoralized with the challenges they face, unemployed college graduates learn to brave through it and continue their job search efforts. This persistence includes enhanced job search activities and motivating themselves to do better. P1 recognizes that she has to work hard enough to get results. P11 is set on pushing herself and continuing until she finds employment.

Nothing good will come out if I don't work hard enough. My job search is continuous. I search every day and wait for email back. -P1

I will push myself to do better. I will continue with my job search. -P11

P3 and P5 looked at their difficulties as a motivation to persevere

I take these challenges as a motivation to persevere and prove them wrong. -P3

I try to look at those difficulties as motivation to keep pushing myself and persist with my job search. -P5

B3. Adopting a positive mindset

The process of finding a job includes having a goal, engaging in a goal-striving behavior, and monitoring progress toward that goal. The assessment of whether the behaviors are going well or poorly is affected by the positive and negative affect of the assessor (Carver, 2001). Therefore, how an individual evaluates his progress has a huge impact on his affect. Changing the mindset to adapt to the challenges of unemployment was common among the respondents. Instead of being down from the challenges, they learned to look at it as a motivation to do better. Unemployed college graduates adopt a

positive outlook on their difficulties. This positive mindset is manifested in being hopeful about achieving their desired outcomes. P1, P3, & P11 are hopeful that they'll achieve their goals.

I am hopeful that by next month, I will have a job already. -P1

I am hopeful. I want to get better. Hopefully, I'll be able to improve myself when I have a job since I will be able to interact with a lot of people then. I will not be able to isolate myself anymore.6

Yes, it's tiring but this is for my own future. Hopefully, I'll be able to achieve positive outcomes. -P11

P3 mentioned feeling positive about her plans. This positive mindset also includes acceptance of whatever comes. For P4, her son is her main motivation to deal with her negative experiences and overcome it.

I feel positive about my plans. But whatever comes, I'll accept it. 3

I try to brave through it and of course, pray that I will be able to overcome it. Anything for my son. I'm positive that I will be able to achieve my plans.4

For P5, adopting a positive mindset includes acceptance of her past failures. She is also confident that her hardships will bear positive outcomes in the end.

I'm fine even if I wasn't successful in most of my interviews. I'm just trying to be positive. I know that my experiences will all be worth it in the end. 5

Despite the numerous challenges of being unemployed, Filipino college graduates move forward and persevere with their job search, hoping that their efforts will be

rewarded. Several assumptions may be attributed to this. First is that college graduates exhibit proactive behaviors when they become unemployed (Fryers & Payne, 1984). This was evident in the participants' responses denoting self-improvement, as well as persistence and engagement in more job search activities. Second is that college graduates have options for accepting alternative jobs (Kjos, 1988). Some participants mentioned being offered jobs that do not fit in their criteria of a prospective job. However, they mentioned being open in accepting should they have no options left. Also, they were proved to be more confident in their competencies and prospect compared to those who did not (Feather & Bond, 1983) Supporting this is the participants' statements about intention to get a job within the deadline that they've set upon themselves as well as plans to develop themselves personally and professionally.

Research Problem 3: What contributions can the experiences of unemployed college graduates give to Career Counseling in the Philippines?

Career Counseling in the Philippines, although already recognized, still has a long way to go. For instance, all participants did not mention any career guidance and counseling programs that assisted them. This may have contributed to the difficulties with their careers they were unprepared to encounter after school. Their experiences call for the enrichment of career counseling services in the country.

Information

The primary purpose of this service is to deliver necessary and appropriate information to students. It aims to enable students to use the information to guide their choices. In the case of graduating students, this should direct them with the career decisions

they will make. However, experiences of unemployed college graduates prove that this service may be lacking. Most participants cited that they felt lost in the real world of work. Some mentioned not knowing what to do and where to start. This calls for the effective delivery of information about what to expect and what they have to undertake when it comes to their careers. Valid and useful data about positions, jobs, and occupations may also be communicated with students, especially with graduating ones. Well-designed and up-to-date information service stimulates the students to evaluate their ideas and notions. This will also aid them to be self-dependent and decide on their own and explore new possible areas. Getting readily available information about jobs will assist them in choosing better for their own sake. Participants mentioned being shocked that in actual, there are limited opportunities than what they were led to believe. One even mentioned feeling scammed because she was assured that her program is well-sought in the workforce. Counselors are called to provide previous pattern and status of occupations, as well as its present condition to help predict future occupational patterns. This will help graduating students to have a realistic picture of their respective fields. Readily available and accessible career information will help graduate students to adjust well in different situations, especially with their transition from school to work.

Career Education

Career education will focus on equipping graduating students with the skills and competencies, which will increase their employability. This can be done with collaboration with employers and companies. Seminars and workshops focusing on skills such as working on a team, problem-solving, and organizational skills can be designed. Series of symposia where professionals can discuss their job requirements and activities may also

be conducted. Training on writing an effective resume, application letters, answering interview questions will help them gain confidence as they start with their job search. Strategies for career development may also be discussed with graduating students. Parents and guardians may also be invited to symposia so they'll be aware of their roles in their children's career paths and be able to support them through it.

Individual Inventory

Unemployed college graduates, as mentioned earlier, feel lost with their career goals. This feeling of being stuck may be alleviated when they know themselves fully. This includes knowing their ability, interests, aptitude skills, habits, etc. Career counselors may take advantage of the inventory the guidance office has to assist graduating students in this matter. It may be useful for graduating students to have access to their data before entering the world of workforce. Through it, they will be able to correlate and compare their decisions with their abilities, interests, aptitudes, strengths, and weaknesses. They may also gain insights from their data and develop tactics that will help them stay motivated during their career exploration. With the knowledge of themselves that they have, college graduates won't be susceptible to feeling lost when the outcomes of their efforts are not met with favorable responses.

Placement

As evident in the responses of the participants, not every college graduate are fortunate to land, or even find a job that they like and in accordance with their abilities and interests. Some have mentioned feeling lost because of the broadness of their program. While some shared that they finished a program that they did not like in the first place,

often for practicality reason. Consequently, this worsens their feelings of being lost. While we recognize that each individual had their certain occupational goals in mind, counselors with the aid of teachers may still offer placement recommendations to jobs that will maximize the potential and satisfaction of their graduates. Additionally, they may also enlist the help of different companies and employers by conducting job fairs. This will provide guidance in locating jobs that will fit with their qualifications, experience, and interest. Doing so would help students to better adjust in the workforce in order to achieve progress in their respective career paths.

Counseling

Unemployment proved to be emotionally exhausting for college graduates. Some even mentioned developing symptoms of mental health concerns. While this may not be completely avoided, such a toll on mental health may be lessened. Counselors may identify students who are at risk to be negatively impacted by the hardships of job search and unemployment itself. With the identification, one-on-one counseling sessions can be offered to help address their needs and if possible, manage irrational beliefs which may lead to the development of psychological concerns. Personal standards proved to be a hindrance to the success in the job search of college graduates. To limit its negative impacts, counseling sessions may focus on the realistic acceptance of their capacities, motivations, and attitude. This can also aid in empowering students about their problem-solving capabilities which will be useful in their careers. And allow them to be confident and secured about their decisions in a safe place before they enter the workforce.

Framework on Experiences of Unemployed College Graduates

Figure 2. Experiences of Unemployed College Graduates

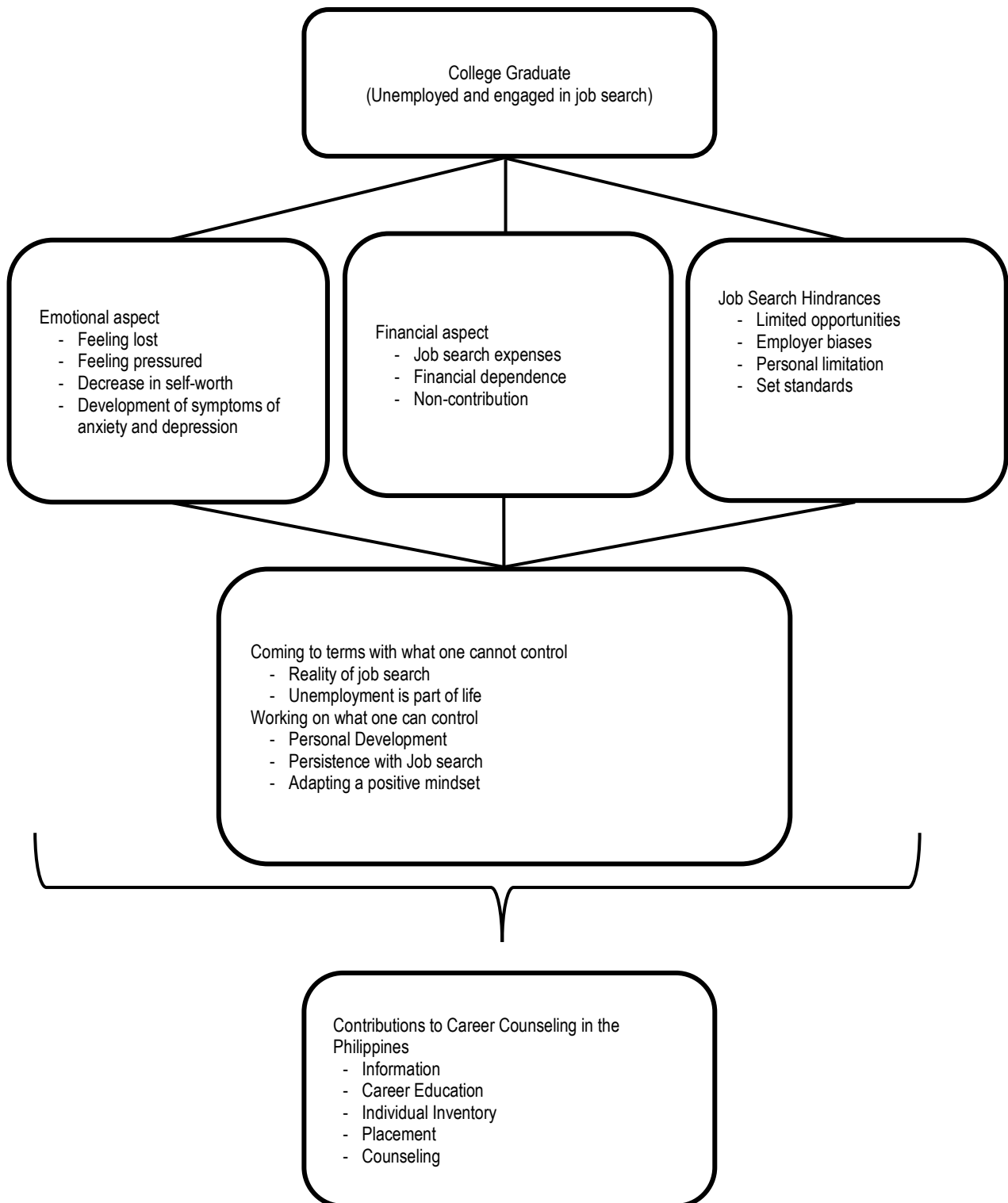


Figure 2 shows the overarching framework of the experiences of unemployed college graduates. Filipino college graduates face a lot of challenges after school. These mainly concern unemployment as well as engaging in a job search. The interplay of these two provides rich experiences that can be categorized into three. These are emotional concerns, financial concerns, and job search obstacles.

The emotional aspect refers to the challenges to the emotional well-being of college graduates. Under this are feelings of being lost and pressured. Unemployment also proved to be a challenge in their self-esteem. Most reported a decrease in self-worth throughout their unemployment. For some, the challenges are too much that the development of symptoms of anxiety and depression were unavoidable. There were also instances of suicide attempts.

The second aspect concerns finances. This challenging experience concerns unemployed college graduates' dealing with their lack of financial resources and the need for it. The difficulty lies in sustaining expenses related to job search. Job search is an expensive process since it requires different resources. Without a source they can call their own, they find it difficult to sustain their job search activities. In addition to the expenses, the inability to contribute resulted in inner difficulties. This mainly involves feelings of shame and guilt. The shame is felt because of still having to depend on others for their needs. While the guilt stems from not contributing to help with household expenses.

The third category is all about job search experiences. The experiences mentioned were mostly about hindrances. These include external factors, such as limited opportunities and employer biases. The world of work was not exempted from the changes of needs and

demands of a fast-paced world. Often, college graduates find themselves with the difficulty of fitting in with what the global workforce needs. Internal factors, such as personal limitations and standards were also a big hurdle for college graduates. One might expect that a degree would make one well-equipped for work. However, this may not always be the case. Some college graduates have deficiencies that make it harder for them to land a job. On the other hand, the degree also gives one a sense of pride in one's abilities and skills. This leads to setting standards about the job that they will consider. College graduates do not want to get a job below what they think is appropriate for their competencies. This is an obstacle for job search since the employment opportunities and their standards mostly do not align.

The challenges experienced in the three aspects can be overwhelming. To deal with this, unemployed college graduates adopted two main coping styles. The first is through acceptance. They learned to come to terms with things that are out of their control. This entails accepting that a job search is really difficult. And that unemployment is a part of life that anyone will experience. They also learned to work on the aspects that they can control. For them, this can be done through personal development and persistence. This helps increase their chances of employment. Lastly, they adapt by changing their frame of thought. Instead of looking at the challenges in a negative light, they learned to adapt a positive mindset.

These challenging experiences, as well as their ways of coping, encompass the experiences of unemployed college graduates. Unemployed college graduates' experiences served as a basis for some suggestions within Career Counseling. Since most of the

experiences were all about challenges, this calls for the improvement of some Career counseling services. There needs to be a refinement in career information, career education, individual inventory, placement, and counseling.

CHAPTER IV

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter presents a brief outline of the study, which is divided into four parts which are the summary of the study, summary of the findings, limitations, conclusions and recommendations.

Summary of the Study

Employment plays a huge aspect of life. It serves as the base of social and existential organization. It contributes to one's identity and well-being. To achieve employment, people engage in different job search activities. Unfortunately, these activities do not always result in successful employment. Ideally, having a degree increases the chances of employability and decrease in challenges in the job search. However, this does not seem to be the case for college graduates here in the country. Some engage in different job search activities for as long as a year without getting fruitful outcomes.

This study explored the lived experiences of unemployed college graduates. The essence that the researcher hoped to elicit came from the experiences of college graduates who are actively looking for a job and have no formal working experience before. Twelve college graduates from Manila and Olongapo City participated in the study. Each underwent a one-on-one interview with the researcher.

Utilizing a phenomenological inquiry, the researcher aimed to answer the following research questions: how do unemployed college graduates describe their experiences, how do they give meaning to their experiences, and what contributions can the experiences of

unemployed college graduates give to Career Counseling in the Philippines. Through the use of thematic analysis, three themes central to the descriptions of the experiences of unemployed college graduates were extracted. These themes are: unemployment is emotionally taxing, unemployment is financially taxing, and job search is full of hindrances. Meanings attributed to their experiences revolve around coming to terms with what one cannot control and working on what one can control.

Summary of the Results

With the participation of 12 unemployed college graduates in Manila and Olongapo City, the researcher gathered data from one-on-one interviews. Through thematic analysis, several themes emerged from the participants' experiences. Results of analysis in accordance with the research questions are listed below:

1. How do unemployed college graduates describe their experiences?

College graduates who have difficulty obtaining employment for a long-time face challenges as a result of their unemployment. Participants described their experiences as unemployed to be challenging emotionally and financially. Aside from being unemployed, they also mentioned challenges in the job search. Among the challenges of being unemployed is pressure to gain employment. This pressure stems from their family, peers, as well as societal norms. Financial dependence also caused them to be insecure as they try to establish their economic independence from their parents. Unemployed college graduates' identity is also challenged because of their unemployment. Lastly, common among the challenges brought by being unemployed is its negative influences on the participants' well-being.

Job search also brings another set of challenges to unemployed college graduates. Firstly, they experience difficulty in meeting the standards of employers. Lack of job opportunities in their respective fields also posed to be a hindrance to gaining employment. Also, college graduates often set standards with their employment. However, these standards do not always seem to be compatible with reality. Lastly, having personal deficiencies also proved to be a challenge for the participants to be successful in their job search.

2. How do they give meaning to their experiences?

Various studies proved that with the negative influences of long-term unemployment, job-seekers view their experiences as a waste of effort, without gaining something in return. Surprisingly, this is different from the responses of the participants. They learned to accept the job search and unemployment variables out of their control. At the same time, they do their best to work on and improves those that they control. Instead of being discouraged, they are hopeful that they will be successful in the end. They also learn to adopt a positive mindset and accept things the way they are. Lastly, they move forward by improving themselves through skills development.

3. What contributions can the experiences of unemployed college graduates give to Career Counseling in the Philippines?

With the recent passing of the Mental Health Law, guidance counseling in the country have improved relatively. However, the field of career counseling remains to be overlooked. Most of the participants interviewed have not received any career counseling sessions prior to their job search. While college graduates largely contribute to their

experiences and how they view it, Career Counseling would have helped them substantially in dealing with these difficulties. The experiences of the participants shed light on the plight of college graduates in gaining employment. Having a degree does not ensure employability. The cited difficulties of unemployed college graduates will serve as a basis in putting up effective, integrated career information and guidance services. This also highlighted the importance of providing career counseling in individuals, more especially those who are looking for employment. Some participants wished that they had been given career counseling before graduation to prepare them for the challenges they are to face and assist them in making optimal career decisions.

Limitations of the Study

The present study was a qualitative study that was conducted on a limited number of unemployed college graduates; thus, future researchers should be wary of its generalizability to similar populations. Because of the setting of the study, Manila and Olongapo City, two highly urbanized cities, generalizability may also be limited, especially in rural areas. In addition, some of the findings of the study may be culturally specific to the Philippines. As a family-oriented country, Filipino family members are expected to contribute to the expenses of the household; hence, the need for immediate employment. This may not be true at all to other countries which promote the individuality and independence of other family members.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated the meaning of the lived experience among unemployed college graduates. Key findings demonstrated challenges in being unemployed as well as

seeking a job. Unemployed individuals are negatively affected by the pressure put on to them by society, family, and peers. Additionally, this also causes them to have an unstable sense of identity and impair their mental well-being. To alleviate these challenges, unemployed college graduates engage in different job search activities. However, job search is a bumpy road full of obstacles. Participants raised concerns about difficulties posed by the world of work, such as limited opportunities and demands of employers. Aside from these, they also experience difficulties because of personal standards and deficiencies. Although faced with a lot of challenges, unemployed college graduates learn to adapt to these difficulties. They adopt a positive mindset. Instead of looking at the challenges negatively, they look at it as a motivation to move forward and continue with their goal of employment. Addressing the needs of unemployed college graduates as well as assisting them in their career decisions through Career counseling have the potential to somehow ease the challenges college graduates experience in their job search.

Recommendations

Based on the finding and conclusions drawn in this study of the lived experiences of unemployed college graduates, the researcher has come up with the following recommendations:

Future Researchers

1. Future researchers should include a larger sample of participants to increase the generalizability of the results
2. Literature posited that biographic characteristics such as age or gender are related to job search behavior. However, this was not examined in the current study. Future

researchers are recommended to explore these characteristics in relation to experiences of unemployment.

3. Birth order may also have significance on how college graduates describe their experiences. The position in the family was not emphasized in the present study. Researchers interested in employment are recommended to study its relation to experiences of unemployment.

School Counselors and Administrators

1. Guidance counselors should set meetings with graduating students for monitoring purposes. While the challenges of job search are unavoidable, the counselor must see to it that graduating students are well-equipped and physically and psychologically prepared in securing employment. Tips and techniques may be shared by the counselor to the students when required.

2. School administrators should also hold symposia for parents of graduating students. Such discussions should emphasize the importance of their participation in the journey of their children into the workforce.

3. Curriculum designers and planners should also consider the development of the necessary skills and abilities of a 21st century worker in their educational programs.

Local government units and Industry

1. Schools and local government units should also provide readily available and complete information materials which will inform applicants about job-search related data.

2. Local government units should also provide financial assistance to deserving individuals for their job search expenses.

3. Employers should also review their hiring processes and selection criteria and assess its fairness to all job applicants.

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Appendices

Appendix A



Philippine Normal University
National Center for Teacher Education
Taft Avenue, Manila
College of Graduate Studies and Teacher Education Research



INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title: *Lived Experiences of Unemployed College Graduates*

Researcher:

Juvilee Ann V. Ausa

ausa.jav@pnu.edu.ph

0966 946 3943

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read this document carefully. Your signature is required for participation. If you desire a copy of this consent form, you may request one and the researcher will provide it. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw anytime, should you object to the nature of the study. You are entitled to ask questions and to receive an explanation during and after the interview.

Description of the Study:

This phenomenological study will consist of two-parts. The first part is a one session interview which will approximately run for 40-50 minutes. Once data are gathered, the researcher will come back for another session wherein the responses of the participants

will be confirmed and validated.

Purpose of the Study:

This study aims to explore the experiences of unemployed college graduates in the Philippines

Possible Risks:

- a. When filling out the questionnaire, you may come across a question or answer choice that you may find unpleasant, upsetting or objectionable;
- b. You will be asked to share confidential information about you.

Possible Benefits:

- a. You will have an opportunity to contribute to psychological science by participating in this research;
- b. You will be given an opportunity to learn about this research, which may be useful in understanding yourself and others.

Confidentiality:

Your responses will be anonymous. Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:

- Assigning code numbers for participants which will be used on all research notes and documents
- Keeping notes, interview transcripts, and any other identifying participant information in a locked file cabinet in the personal possession of the researcher

Participant data will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally obligate to report specific incidents. These incidents include those which may cause harm to the participant and others.

Opportunities to Withdraw at will:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decided to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide now or at any point to withdraw this consent or stop participating, you are free to do so. You are free to skip answering specific questions and continue participating at no penalty. If you withdraw from the study before the data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

Contact Information

If you have questions at any time about this study, or you experience any adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided on the first page. In all likelihood, the results will be fully available around April 2020. If you wish to be told the results of this research, you may do so by communicating with the researcher

☐ I have read and understood the content of this form. I understand what is being asked from me and I am willing to participate in the said study.

Dated this _____ day of (month) _____, 2020

Signature of Participant over Printed Name

Appendix B

P __



Philippine Normal University
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DATA INFORMATION SHEET

Name: _____

Age: _____ **Sex:** _____ **Contact Number:** _____

Address: _____

Number of siblings: _____ **Birth Order:** _____

Occupation of Mother: _____

Occupation of Father: _____

Program Finished: _____

School: _____

Job applied for: _____

Job search duration: _____

Job search activities: _____

Appendix C



PHILIPPINE NORMAL UNIVERSITY
The National Center for Teacher Education
College of Graduate Studies and Teacher Education Research



Interview Guide Validation

[Date]

[Name]

[Position]

[Office]

Dear,

Good day!

I, Juvilee Ann V. Ausa, a 5th year student of Bachelor of Science— Mater of Arts in Psychology and Counseling Straight Program is currently working on my thesis entitled “*Lived Experiences of Unemployed College Graduates*”.

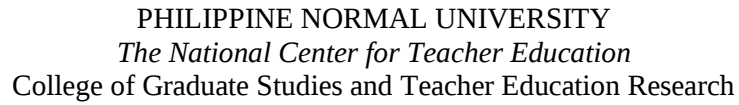
This paper aims to explore the essence of the experiences of college graduates who are actively looking for a job. With this in mind, the researcher hopes to answer the following questions: 1) How do unemployed college graduates describe their experiences; 2) How do they give meaning to their experiences; & 3) What contributions can the experiences of unemployed college graduates contribute to Career Counseling in the Philippines.

With your expertise, I am humbly asking your permission to validate the attached interview guide which will be utilized in the data collection. To help improve the guide, please consider the suitability of the questions. You can also write your comments, suggestions and recommendations in the space provided

I look forward to your favorable response. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. For further inquiries, please contact me at 0966 946 9343 or email me at ausa.jav@pnu.edu.ph

Respectfully yours,

JUVILEE ANN V. AUSA
Student- Researcher



OVERALL COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS:



Interview Guide

Questions	Suitable	Not Suitable	Needs Revision	Remarks
How would you describe your unemployment experiences?			✓	① How would you describe your experience of being unemployed?
You mentioned that you experienced difficulties with unemployment. Could you please describe what you mean by these difficulties?			✓	② What do you think are the reasons of your unemployment?
How did you deal with these difficulties?			✓	③ what are the difficulties you experienced in finding a job?
How did these difficulties affect you?				
How do you see your employment prospect?				
What are your plans now?				
OVERALL COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS:				
④ How do you see your employment prospect? Follow-up: - what are your plans? - How do you feel? Follow-up: - How did these difficulties affect you? - How do you deal with these difficulties? Follow-up: - what do you think about these reasons? - How do you feel about it? Follow up: - How do you feel about it? - what do you do? - what does this experience mean to you?				



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Interview Guide

How do you describe people who are not working?

Questions	Suitable	Not Suitable	Needs Revision	Remarks
How would you describe your unemployment experiences?				
You mentioned that you experienced difficulties with unemployment. Could you please describe what you mean by these difficulties?				<i>What difficulties do you experience as an unemployed person?</i>
How did you deal with these difficulties?				
How did these difficulties affect you?				
How do you see your employment prospect?				
What are your plans now?				

OVERALL COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS:

Appendix D



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INTERVIEW GUIDE SAMPLE

1. How would you describe your experiences of being unemployed?
2. What do these experiences mean to you?
3. What difficulties do you experience in finding a job?
4. What are your plans now?

Appendix E

Validation of Categories, Concepts and Themes

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF UNEMPLOYED COLLEGE GRADUATES

Instructions: Please read and evaluate the suitability of the concepts to themes and vice-versa. Check any of the applicable columns at the right. Mark “Agree” if you agree that the concepts are suitable to the theme, and “Disagree” if not. If you do not agree, kindly mark “Revise” and state your comments on the last column (e.g. delete, move to _____, add to_____).

Main Theme	Subtheme	Statements of Participants	Agree	Disagree	Revise	Comments
Challenges of being Unemployed Refers to the challenges experienced by college graduates regarding their unemployment	External Pressure Pressure to gain employment stemming from family, peers and society.	<i>“My older brother told me to look for any job so that I won’t just stay at home” -P1</i> <i>“Here in our country, when you finished school, you have to work and you have to provide for the family” -P1</i>				
	Financial Insecurity Dependence on others in terms of expenses (including but not limited to personal expenses and job search expenses)	<i>“I am a bit ashamed for not helping my mom with the expenses.”-P1</i> <i>“I feel like a burden to the family. I’ve already spent a lot for printing and medical and yet I am still unemployed. I feel guilty because I can’t help even though I am the eldest.”-P6</i>				
	Identity Crisis Uncertainty and confusion wherein one’s sense of identity is challenged	<i>“I kept on asking what my next step is. I am having a crisis because I feel lost not having the map I used to have in college. I am bored just staying at home. I long for the structure that I had while I was still in school. I just want to have that routine again.”- P1</i>				

	Negative Affect Experience of various negative emotions	<i>"It came to a point where I attempted suicide. I got tired of all the negative things that happened to me."-P7</i>				
Job Search Challenges Refers to the challenges experienced by unemployed college graduates during their job search	Employer Preferences Refers to preferences or standards of employers in hiring applicants.	<i>"It's difficult for me because employers look for 3-5 years of experience"-P</i>				
	Limited Opportunities Lack of job vacancies in a certain field of work	<i>"... I see a lot of job advertisements for accountancy graduates but few for business administration/management."-P8</i>				
	Personal Standards Standards made by the college graduate regarding his/her job	<i>"Not to be elitist, but I did not subject myself into four years of almost unbearable hardships in UP just to land an ordinary job."-P8</i>				
	Personal Limitations Deficiencies in skills, means, and connections.	<i>"I realized how unprepared I am for job hunting and the real world"-P8</i>				
Adapting to Challenges Denotes how college graduates cope with the challenges they experience in job search and in being unemployed	Keeping oneself hopeful Being hopeful to get positive results despite being faced with a lot of difficulties.	<i>"I am hopeful about my plans. It's really like that when you're aspiring for something, you try to be positive"-P4</i>				
	Acceptance Accepting unemployment as it is. Also denotes to	<i>"I am not pressuring myself anymore. I learned to accept that there will come a time when you're unemployed. I am just in that phase for now"-P1</i>				

	accepting readily available jobs.					
	Changing Mindset Adapting positive mindset; turning challenges into motivation	<i>"I'm still so far from where I really want to be, but it took a lot of strength to get out of the mindset as if I will achieve something, as if I'm worthless. Without those struggles, there will be no progress"-P8</i>				
	Personal Development Improving one's skills and abilities to increase employability	<i>"I want to take my MA this year when I already have savings"-P1</i> <i>"I am planning to study again or take the board exam"-P2</i> <i>"I try to work out my shyness. I am trying to develop my confidence in speaking."-P9</i>				

Appendix F



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College of Graduate Studies and Teacher Education Research



CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that I, Rosarie Anne S. Borja, validated the themes presented by Juvilee Ann V. Ausa, 5TH year BSMA-Psychology and Counseling Straight Program student of Philippine Normal University for her thesis entitled, **“Lived Experiences of Unemployed College Graduates”**.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rosarie Anne S. Borja", written in a cursive style.

ROSARIE ANNE S. BORJA

Faculty / Guidance Counselor

PNU - Institute of Teaching and Learning



Philippine Normal University
National Center for Teacher Education
Taft Avenue, Manila
College of Graduate Studies and Teacher Education Research



CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that I, Marie Josell M. Visitacion, reviewed the themes presented by Juvilee Ann V. Ausa, 5TH year BSMA-Psychology and Counseling Straight Program student of Philippine Normal University for her thesis entitled, **“Lived Experiences of Unemployed College Graduates”**.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "J Visitacion".

MARIE JOSELL M. VISITACION

MA Student in Guidance and Counseling



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Taft Avenue, Manila
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that I, Crissalyn Joy A. Dionisio, reviewed the themes presented by Juvilee Ann V. Ausa, 5TH year BSMA-Psychology and Counseling Straight Program student of Philippine Normal University for her thesis entitled, **“Lived Experiences of Unemployed College Graduates”**.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Crissalyn Joy A. Dionisio".

CRISSALYN JOY A. DIONISIO

MA student in Guidance and Counseling



JUVILEE AUSA

Juvilee Ann V. AUSA is on her 5th year taking Psychology and Guidance and Counseling. She aims to maximize her counseling skills, interpersonal relationship, and flexibility. With the new learning and experience that she hopes to acquire, she aspires to be an effective counselor with the goal of assisting the clients to become the best version of themselves.

CONTACT

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EDUCATION

St. Joseph College-Olongapo, Inc.
East Bajac-Bajac, Olongapo City
2005-2011

St. Joseph College-Olongapo, Inc.
East Bajac-Bajac, Olongapo City
2011-2015

Philippine Normal University
Taft Avenue, Manila
2015-Present

ACHIEVEMENTS

- 4th Honorable Mention (2011)
- 6th Honorable Mention (2015)
- Class Topnotcher ('16-'17 & '18-'19)
- School Representative for Philippine Mental Health Association Quiz Bee (2016)
- School Representative for Psychological Association of the Philippines Quiz Bee (2017)

SKILLS

- Keen to details and good in organizing files and documents
- Works in accordance with established guidelines
- Can communicate effectively
- Able to adapt to different situations
- Empathic listener
- Possesses self-awareness

CHARACTER REFERENCE

Rosarie Anne S. Borja

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