

EMPLOYABILITY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE GRADUATES OF THE KALINGA STATE UNIVERSITY: AN ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT This study assessed the employability of Bachelor of Arts in Political Science graduates from Kalinga State University (KSU) using a combined methods approach. Quantitative data were gathered through a structured survey administered to 59 employed graduates from academic years 2017–2018 to 2019–2020. Qualitative data were collected through interviews with 21 employers to validate and enrich the quantitative findings. The study explored graduates' employment status, career motivations, employer satisfaction, and the job skills most valued in the workplace. Results showed that most graduates were employed in government agencies, with roles in education, governance, and legal support. Career motivations were largely driven by job security, opportunities for advancement, and the desire to contribute to public service. Employers reported high satisfaction with graduates' performance in communication, teamwork, and technological skills. However, gaps were noted in computer literacy, organizational abilities, and independent initiative. Employers also emphasized the growing need for soft skills such as adaptability, critical thinking, and responsibility. The findings highlight the importance of aligning academic training with labor market needs. The study recommends strengthening practical training components and graduate tracking systems.

Keywords: Employability, Employer Satisfaction, Political Science Graduates, Soft Skills

INTRODUCTION

The employability of university graduates has emerged as a key concern among higher education institutions, policymakers, and labor market stakeholders, particularly in the context of rapidly evolving job requirements, automation, and global economic transitions. In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) mandates that higher education institutions (HEIs) equip students not only with academic knowledge but also with the skills and competencies necessary for meaningful employment and lifelong learning (CHED, 2017) [1]. This call is echoed by the Philippine Development Plan (PDP 2023–2028), which emphasizes the importance of human capital development as a foundation for inclusive and sustainable growth (NEDA, 2023) [2].

In response, academic programs must ensure relevance to both global and local employment landscapes. The discipline of Political Science, traditionally oriented toward careers in public service, academia, and governance, must evolve to meet these demands. While the field provides essential skills in critical thinking, policy analysis, and civic engagement, it must also respond to the growing need for transferable competencies such as communication, digital literacy, project management, and interdisciplinary problem-solving (Yorke & Knight, 2006) [3]. Globally, there is increasing evidence that Political Science graduates often encounter challenges related to the practical application of their training in diverse job sectors (Weiss, 2018) [4].

In the Philippine setting, these challenges are amplified by regional disparities in labor market access and socioeconomic development. Kalinga State University (KSU), a public HEI located in the Cordillera Administrative Region, offers a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science (BAPoS) program that caters to students from predominantly rural and indigenous backgrounds. These students often face unique socio-cultural and economic conditions that influence their career aspirations. Many prioritize employment in local government units (LGUs), non-government organizations (NGOs), or community-based development work-paths shaped by familial expectations, cultural values, and geographic constraints. Consequently, the relevance of academic training to both local and national labor markets become a critical concern for institutions like KSU. This issue is deeply connected to international development frameworks, particularly the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 4 calls for inclusive and equitable quality education that promotes lifelong learning opportunities and skill acquisition for employment and entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, SDG 8 emphasizes the promotion of decent work and sustainable economic growth, advocating for education systems that develop the workforce necessary for an adaptive, innovation-driven economy (United Nations, 2015) [5]. For Political Science graduates, these goals underscore the importance of both technical and soft skills in achieving upward mobility and contributing to development outcomes at various governance levels. Moreover, a region-specific analysis is essential. The economy of Kalinga is primarily based on agriculture, micro-enterprises, public service, and tourism (PSA, 2021) [6]. Unlike urban centers with diversified labor markets, the province offers limited opportunities in corporate and international sectors. Graduates seeking

employment beyond local boundaries often encounter barriers such as geographic isolation, limited internship networks, and gaps in employability skills. These conditions necessitate a closer look at how academic programs, such as the BAPoS at KSU, prepare students for both regional and national employment demands. Feedback from employers is critical to this process. Employers serve as key stakeholders in evaluating graduates' readiness for work and provide valuable insights into the strengths and gaps of existing curricula (Encio et al., 2016) [7]. Prior studies have highlighted areas such as communication, critical thinking, adaptability, and digital competencies as essential but often underdeveloped among graduates (Yen et al., 2009) [8]. Additionally, frameworks such as graduate capital theory (Tomlinson, 2017) [9] and signaling theory provide analytical lenses to assess how academic credentials, personal attributes, and social capital influence employability outcomes.

Despite growing literature on employability, few studies have focused specifically on the outcomes of Political Science graduates from rural universities. This represents a significant theoretical and empirical gap. Understanding how regional HEIs like KSU address the employability of their graduates is essential for promoting equitable access to labor markets and reducing systemic disparities in education and employment—key targets of SDG 10, which aims to reduce inequality within and among countries (UN, 2015) [5].

Thus, this study aims to evaluate the employability of Political Science graduates from Kalinga State University by examining their employment outcomes, skills alignment, and employer satisfaction. In doing so, it contributes to the evolving discourse on graduate employability, curriculum responsiveness, and the role of regional HEIs in inclusive development.

OBJECTIVE

This study aimed to assess the employability of Political Science graduates from Kalinga State University (KSU). Specifically, it determined the employment profile of the graduates in terms of their employment status, service sector (government or private), and the nature of their job. It also identified the career motivations of the graduates, determined the extent of employers' satisfaction with the job performance of the graduates, examined the strengths and weaknesses of the graduates in terms of the traits required for the job, and identified the job skills required by employers from new recruits.

METHODOLOGY

Research Method

This study employed a combined methods design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the employability of Political Science graduates from Kalinga State University (KSU). A combined or multi-method approach refers to the use of separate but complementary quantitative and qualitative methods within a single study. In this context, the quantitative component involved a survey of graduates to collect measurable data on employment status, motivations, and self-reported outcomes. Meanwhile, the qualitative component utilized interviews with employers to gather deeper insights into the workplace performance, competencies, and behavioral traits of the graduates. This approach allowed the researcher to triangulate findings and strengthen the overall validity of the conclusions.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study employed a two-phase combined-methods approach to gather comprehensive data on the employability of the BA Political Science graduates. The first phase involved quantitative data collection through a structured survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was disseminated using both online (via Google Forms) and face-to-face methods, depending on the accessibility of the graduates. Invitations to participate were sent through Facebook/Messenger, and email. Upon collection, all responses were carefully reviewed for completeness and consistency to ensure data quality and reliability.

The second phase of the study involved qualitative data collection through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with selected employers. These interviews were conducted either in person, via phone, or through online video conferencing platforms, depending on the preference and availability of the respondents. Prior to the interviews, informed consent was obtained, and all interviews were audio-recorded with permission. The recordings were transcribed verbatim to prepare the data for analysis.

For the quantitative phase, descriptive statistical techniques were employed to analyze the survey responses. Mean scores were used to summarize data trends, while ranking procedures helped identify the most and least significant variables influencing the employability of the graduates. In the qualitative phase, thematic analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's [10] six-phase framework, which includes familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. This analytical method enabled the researcher to extract recurring patterns, perceptions, and insights from the employer responses, which effectively complemented the quantitative findings and enriched the overall analysis of graduate employability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Employment Profile of BA Political Science Graduates of Kalinga State University

Table 1. Employment status of respondents by school year of graduation

School Year	Employed (f)	Percentage (%)
2017–2018	27	45.76%
2018–2019	20	33.90%
2019–2020	12	20.34%
Total	59	100%

The data indicate that the majority of employed respondents graduated in SY 2017–2018 (45.76%), followed by 33.90% from SY 2018–2019, and only 20.34% from SY 2019–2020. This trend is understandable, as earlier graduates have had more time and opportunity to secure employment, gain experience, and adjust to the demands of the job market.

Notably, the relatively low proportion of employed graduates from the 2019–2020 cohort can be attributed to the timing of their graduation coinciding with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2021) ^[11], the pandemic resulted in a global employment crisis that particularly affected young people entering the workforce. Lockdowns, hiring freezes, and organizational restructuring limited the availability of job openings, especially for new graduates without prior work experience.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2020) ^[12] also noted that graduates during this period faced delayed transitions into the labor market, as employers became more cautious with recruitment and increasingly sought applicants with digital competencies and remote work readiness. Despite these challenges, all respondents across the three cohorts were employed at the time of the study, suggesting that graduates of the program eventually found work, albeit at different paces. The higher percentage of employed graduates from earlier cohorts may also be attributed to their enhanced career preparation, accumulated job-seeking experience, and greater opportunities to take licensure exams, pursue graduate studies, or build networks, factors emphasized by Tomlinson (2017) ^[9] in his framework of graduate employability.

Moreover, the employment outcomes reflect not only individual efforts but also how well academic programs equip students with transferable and marketable skills. As Albert (2019) ^[13] observed, there is a growing demand in the Philippine labor market for graduates who are adaptable, tech-savvy, and capable of interdisciplinary thinking. This is especially relevant in political science, where graduates often pursue careers in government, education, research, public service, and civil society.

The lower representation of employed graduates from the most recent cohort highlights the importance of aligning academic instruction with current labor market trends, including digital literacy, communication, and public policy analysis. As Succi et al. (2020) ^[14] argue, the development of soft skills and real-world experiences during college is critical to ensure graduate employability, especially in times of economic uncertainty.

While all 59 respondents were employed at the time of the survey, the distribution of employment across the years reflects both natural progression and external factors, particularly the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings suggest that the university may consider enhancing career readiness programs, strengthening linkages with industries, and embedding more practical and digital skill-building opportunities in the political science curriculum to better prepare graduates for a rapidly changing job market.

Table 2. Employment sector of graduates

Sector	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Government	31	52.54%
Private	28	47.46%
Total	59	100%

The data reveals that over the three academic years, a slight majority (52.54%) of graduates found employment in the government sector, while 47.46% were employed in the private sector.

The prevalence of government employment among graduates can be attributed to the structured and formalized nature of the public sector hiring process. Positions are typically governed by eligibility standards such as the Civil Service Examination, which serves as a quality control mechanism to ensure that public employees possess the necessary competencies and ethical standards for public service (Philippine Civil Service Commission, 2019) ^[15]. This structured approach provides graduates with relatively stable and secure employment, a factor that becomes especially appealing during periods of economic uncertainty.

Conversely, employment in the private sector encompasses a wider range of roles, including entrepreneurial ventures, contractual jobs, and service-oriented positions. The private sector generally imposes less stringent entry requirements, often focusing on relevant education or experience rather than formal certification or

exams (Albert, 2019) ^[13]. This flexibility allows graduates to explore diverse career paths but may also come with less job security, as the private sector is more sensitive to market fluctuations.

The sharp decline in private sector employment in SY 2019–2020 is likely linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, which severely disrupted economic activities and labor markets worldwide. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which typically constitute a significant portion of private sector employment, faced operational setbacks, revenue losses, and workforce reductions, limiting new hiring opportunities (ILO, 2021) ^[11]. This contraction in the private labor market forced many fresh graduates to seek employment in more stable government roles or delay their job search.

These findings are consistent with prior research indicating that during times of economic downturns, graduates tend to prefer public sector employment for its perceived stability and benefits, despite the higher entry barriers (Tomlinson, 2017) ^[9]. The contrast between the government's regulated recruitment system and the private sector's flexibility highlight the dual challenge graduates face: balancing the security of public sector jobs with the opportunities and risks inherent in the private sector.

Table 3. Nature of job of employed graduates

Nature of Job	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Education/Teaching	15	25.42%
Legal and Judicial Support Services (Law Office Staff, Paralegal)	10	16.95%
Public Administration and Governance (Admin Aide, LGU/Contractual Staff)	13	22.03%
Development and Advocacy Work (NGO, Community Organizer)	6	10.17%
Corporate and Business Services (BPO, Customer Service, Sales, HR Staff)	7	11.86%
Freelance and Digital Work (Online Research, Virtual Assistant)	2	3.39%
Others/Not Specified (Non-related jobs or unspecified roles)	6	10.17%
Total	59	100%

As gleaned from the data, the majority of graduates are employed in roles closely related to their academic preparation, with 25.42% in Education/Teaching and 22.03% in Public Administration and Governance. Legal and Judicial Support Services account for 16.95%, while Development and Advocacy Work comprises 10.17%. Other sectors include Corporate and Business Services (11.86%), Freelance and Digital Work (3.39%), and 10.17% engaged in other or unspecified jobs.

The prominence of Education/Teaching roles among graduates is consistent with the discipline's strong foundation in critical thinking, communication, and social sciences- skills essential for educators at both secondary and tertiary levels (Yorke & Knight, 2006) ^[3]. Teaching positions also offer stability and opportunities for community impact, making them an appealing career path for Political Science graduates (CHED, 2017) ^[1].

Legal and Judicial Support roles, including paralegal and law office positions, reflect graduates' familiarity with legal systems, governance, and public policy- core areas of Political Science programs (CHED, 2017) ^[1].

The considerable number of graduates in Public Administration and Governance underscores the discipline's direct relevance to public service careers. Employment in local government units and administrative roles demonstrates how graduates contribute to policy implementation and administrative efficiency (NEDA, 2023) ^[2].

Similarly, roles in Development and Advocacy Work with NGOs and civic organizations highlight Political Science graduates' involvement in social justice, human rights, and community development, echoing the emphasis on civic responsibility within their academic training (CHED, 2017) ^[1].

Graduates engaged in Corporate and Business Services such as BPOs, customer service, and HR, illustrate the adaptability of Political Science alumni in diverse sectors. Their communication, analytical, and negotiation skills remain relevant in these contexts (Albert, 2019) ^[13].

Freelance and Digital Work, including content writing and virtual assistance, reflects the rise of flexible, gig-based employment and the increasing importance of digital literacy in today's labor market (International Labor Organization, 2021) ^[11].

The 10.17% employed in Others/Not Specified may reflect underemployment or misalignment between their qualifications and job roles, a trend observed globally among social science graduates (Succi & Canovi, 2020) ^[14]. This employment distribution highlights the versatility of Political Science graduates while pointing to the continuing need for academic programs to align more closely with labor market demands and employability frameworks (Tomlinson, 2017) ^[9].

Career Motivations of the Graduates

Table 4. Career Motivations of the Graduates

Career Motivation	Mean	Description	Rank
1. Passion for work	4.60	Very Much Motivated	4
2. Desire to work in a dynamic environment	4.33	Very Much Motivated	8
3. Desire to help society and contribute to public welfare	4.68	Very Much Motivated	3
4. Desire for job security and stability	4.80	Very Much Motivated	1
5. Attraction to the prestige of the position or employer	4.25	Very Much Motivated	9
6. Desire for financial rewards or compensation	4.48	Very Much Motivated	6
7. Flexibility in work schedule and environment	4.20	Very Much Motivated	10
8. Opportunities for personal growth and development	4.75	Very Much Motivated	2
9. Interest in making a positive impact on organizational development	4.50	Very Much Motivated	5
10. Influence of mentors, peers, or family in career choice	4.40	Very Much Motivated	7
Total Average Weighted Mean	4.50	Very Much Motivated	

The Total Average Weighted Mean (TAWM) of 4.50, which signifies that the graduates are “Very Much Motivated,” illustrates that their career motivations are deeply influenced by a combination of factors, including job security, opportunities for growth, and the desire to contribute to society. This result indicates that the respondents are not solely focused on monetary compensation but are also driven by the goal of securing stable employment, developing professionally, and making a positive impact on their communities. This finding aligns with contemporary employability research, which emphasizes that modern graduates increasingly seek not just financial rewards but also career pathways that offer meaning, personal fulfillment, and long-term development (Succi & Canovi, 2020) ^[14].

The strong emphasis on job security and stability as the top motivator among KSU graduates reflects broader labor market trends, particularly in regions facing economic uncertainties. It affirms that long-term employment remains a key goal for graduates navigating post-crisis labor markets. This finding supports the framework of Yorke and Knight (2006) ^[3], who argue that employability should not be reduced to job attainment alone but understood as the ability to maintain meaningful employment and adapt to change.

Opportunities for personal growth and development, ranked as the second most important motivator, demonstrate that graduates value career paths that foster continuous learning and self-improvement. These aspirations align with the goals of the Political Science curriculum, which emphasizes critical thinking, communication, and civic engagement (CHED, 2017) ^[1]. Such skills are increasingly regarded by employers as essential components of graduate employability, especially in dynamic and competitive work environments.

Flexibility in work schedule and environment, while still acknowledged as important, received the lowest prioritization. This suggests that early-career graduates in regions such as Kalinga may place higher value on career stability and skill development over flexible arrangements, which are often more common in advanced or urbanized economies. Indeed, the career motivations of Political Science graduates from KSU reflect a balanced orientation toward stability, growth, and social contribution. These findings are consistent with global research trends that emphasize the changing expectations of the workforce and highlight the importance of aligning academic programs with evolving labor market needs (Yorke & Knight, 2006) ^[3]; (Succi & Canovi, 2020) ^[14]. This underscores the relevance of higher education in not only producing job-ready graduates but also in fostering lifelong learners committed to both personal and societal development.

Extent of Employers' Satisfaction with the Job Performance of the Graduates

Table 5. Extent of Employers' Satisfaction on the Job Performances of the Graduates

Competence	Mean	Description	Rank
1. Applying appropriate skills in performing required tasks/functions	4.47	Very Much Satisfied	5
2. Using technology effectively in the work place to enhance his/her job output	4.76	Very Much Satisfied	1

3. Demonstrating effective communication skills in dealing with clients, contemporaries, and supervisors	4.57	Very Much Satisfied	3.5
4. Providing sound decision making in responding to the needs of the organization/ company	4.57	Very Much Satisfied	3.5
5. Working professionally with the team	4.71	Very Much Satisfied	2
Area Mean	4.58	Very Much Satisfied	
Commitment	Mean	Description	Rank
1. Accepting willingly and performing leadership roles in various activities with an exceptional sense of duty and dependability	4.42	Very Much Satisfied	5
2. Providing necessary support, service and assistance for the welfare of the organization	4.61	Very Much Satisfied	3
3. Demonstrating passion for execution and sense of urgency in all tasks	4.71	Very Much Satisfied	1
4. Transcending personal needs when organizational concerns need to be attended to	4.66	Very Much Satisfied	2
5. Participating in making decisions and implementing the activities of the organization	4.57	Very Much Satisfied	4
Area Mean	4.59	Very Much Satisfied	
Collaboration	Mean	Description	Rank
1. Maintaining harmonious and friendly relations with superior, peers and subordinates through respecting their individual differences	4.80	Very Much Satisfied	2
2. Fostering sense of family in the workplace by helping co-employees with difficulty in completing some tasks	4.66	Very Much Satisfied	3.5
3. Promoting positive image of the department through serving clients/customers effectively	4.85	Very Much Satisfied	1
4. Demonstrating the significant values of the organization/company in achieving its vision and mission	4.66	Very Much Satisfied	3.5
5. Showing marked interest and pride in the present job by completing tasks on time	4.57	Very Much Satisfied	5
Area Mean	4.71	Very Much Satisfied	
Credibility	Mean	Description	Rank
1. Demonstrating professionalism in dealing with colleagues	4.71	Very Much Satisfied	2
2. Modeling leadership that adheres to the policies, rules and regulations of the organization	4.66	Very Much Satisfied	4
3. Practicing honesty, fairness and transparency in all transactions	4.85	Very Much Satisfied	1
4. Protecting and preserving company's property through careful and wise use of the resources	4.66	Very Much Satisfied	4
5. Setting oneself as an example of moral and ethical behavior	4.66	Very Much Satisfied	4
Area Mean	4.71	Very Much Satisfied	
Total Average Weighted Mean	4.65	Very Much Satisfied	

The Total Average Weighted Mean (TAWM) of 4.65 reflects a very high level of employer satisfaction with the job performance of BA Political Science graduates. This result, categorized as “Very Much Satisfied,” indicates that employers perceive the graduates to be highly competent in essential areas such as competence, collaboration, commitment, and credibility. The positive assessment suggests that these graduates are well-prepared to meet workplace demands and are aligned with employer expectations. This observation is consistent with employability studies emphasizing the importance of both hard and soft skills in enhancing job performance. Communication, teamwork, and ethical conduct are increasingly seen as indispensable qualities among new employees (Jackson & Tomlinson, 2020) [16]. Employers value graduates who can work collaboratively, uphold professionalism, and apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings.

Moreover, the findings echo those of Succi and Canovi, who highlighted the value of interpersonal skills and a strong commitment to continuous professional development in increasing employability (Succi & Canovi, 2020) ^[14]. Kalinga State University graduates exhibit these traits through their ability to function well within teams, observe ethical behavior, and effectively apply relevant skills to job functions. This supports existing literature emphasizing the importance of soft skills, such as collaboration and commitment, in job performance and organizational fit. Furthermore, the study corresponds with the observations of Andrews and Higson, who argued that embedding relevant employability skills into the university curriculum significantly enhances graduate readiness (Andrews & Higson, 2008) ^[17]. The Political Science graduates' proficiency in communication, digital tools, and decision-making demonstrates that they are well-prepared for modern workplace challenges. This reinforces the idea that a curriculum aligned with labor market needs produces graduates more likely to meet and exceed employer expectations.

In terms of competence, the analysis of employer satisfaction showed a high overall mean of 4.58, suggesting strong performance across indicators like technological proficiency, teamwork, and application of learned skills. The highest score was attributed to the "ability to use technology effectively in the workplace," which received a mean of 4.76. This reflects the increasing importance of digital literacy in the workforce, as noted by Martin, Rees, and Edwards, who emphasize that digital competence is critical in enhancing graduate employability (Martin et al., 2019) ^[18]. This is further supported by the World Economic Forum, which identifies digital skills as core competencies required in future job markets (World Economic Forum, 2020) ^[19].

The second-highest score, with a mean of 4.71, was given to the "ability to work professionally with a team." This highlights how highly employers value teamwork. Helyer and Lee (2014) found that teamwork not only fosters a collaborative environment but also enhances problem-solving and contributes to organizational success (Helyer & Lee, 2014) ^[20]. The high performance of KSU graduates in this area may be attributed to academic experiences involving group work and collaborative projects. Meanwhile, the lowest score under competence, though still high at 4.47, was for the "application of appropriate skills in performing job functions." This suggests a relative need for improvement in applying specific, job-related skills. Bridgstock (2009) argued that while general competencies like communication and teamwork are important, employers also expect graduates to demonstrate technical expertise relevant to their positions (Bridgstock, 2009) ^[21]. Enhancing the curriculum with practical training and applied learning opportunities could help bridge this skills gap.

In the area of commitment, the overall mean of 4.59 reflects a strong work ethic, reliability, and professional dedication among graduates. The highest-rated item, with a mean of 4.71, was "demonstrating passion and a sense of urgency in completing tasks." This trait is increasingly valued in fast-paced work environments. Jackson and Tomlinson (2020) emphasized that a proactive approach and responsiveness are essential in contributing to organizational productivity (Jackson & Tomlinson, 2020) ^[16]. The second-highest rating, at 4.66, was for "prioritizing organizational needs over personal convenience." This reflects a strong sense of professional responsibility and supports the findings of Helyer and Lee, who noted that this behavior fosters workplace efficiency (Helyer & Lee, 2014) ^[20].

The lowest score in the area of commitment, although still high at 4.42, was in the "willingness to take on leadership roles with a sense of dependability." This indicates a need for improvement in developing leadership readiness. Andrews and Higson (2008) noted that leadership development remains a gap for many graduates transitioning from academic settings to professional environments (Andrews & Higson, 2008) ^[17]. Bridgstock (2009) similarly recommended incorporating leadership opportunities into higher education programs to help students gain the confidence and skills needed to assume managerial responsibilities (Bridgstock, 2009) ^[21].

In the area of collaboration, the overall mean score of 4.72 indicates strong employer satisfaction, demonstrating that KSU graduates are highly valued for teamwork and building cooperative relationships in professional settings. The highest-rated mean "Promoting a positive image of the department through serving clients/customers effectively" scored 4.85, showing their exceptional ability in customer-facing roles. Empirical evidence confirms that customer satisfaction heavily depends on employees' communication and service quality (Ray, et al., 2017) ^[22]. Moreover, Filipino graduates with strong interpersonal skills tend to perform better in client-focused roles (Garcia & Ramos, 2018) ^[23].

The item regarding "Maintaining harmonious relations with superiors, peers, and subordinates by respecting individual differences" scored 4.80, reflecting high workplace inclusivity. Research indicates that respectful communication and cultural sensitivity among team members significantly boost cohesion and performance (Klein & Sorra, 2005) ^[24]. Filipino studies further show that valuing diversity contributes to stronger team cohesion (Romero & Perales, 2020) ^[25]. Eijffinger & Jansen (2017) ^[26] also highlight how respectful workplace norms help mitigate conflicts in multicultural environments.

The lowest-rated item "Showing interest and pride in the present job by completing tasks on time" scored 4.57. While still positive, this indicates room for enhancing intrinsic motivation. Pritchard et al (2019) ^[27] underscore how cultivating purpose-driven pride fosters greater engagement and commitment, and Rosales (2017) ^[28] suggests that reinforcing ownership early in graduates' careers can deepen their connection to work.

In the credibility domain, an overall mean of 4.71 reflects employers' high regard for graduates' ethical standards and professional conduct. "Practicing honesty, fairness, and transparency in all transactions" was the highest item at 4.85, highlighting graduates' integrity. Research shows transparent organizations earn higher trust and loyalty (Fombrun, 2017) ^[29]. In the Philippines, Aquino (2018) ^[30] emphasizes that ethical professionalism enhances organizational relationships and long-term reputational success.

The second item, "Demonstrating professionalism in interactions with colleagues" scored 4.71. DeCelles et al. (2019) ^[31] found that professional conduct supports better communication and teamwork. Filipino workplace values like bayanihan and pakikisama also reinforce harmonious and respectful collaboration (Gonzales, 2020) ^[32].

Lastly, "Setting oneself as an example of moral and ethical behavior" achieved a score of 4.66, reflecting graduates' ethical leadership capacity. Brown, et al (2005) ^[33] link ethical leadership to positive organizational culture, improved morale, and employee trust. Santos et al. (2020) ^[34] confirm that in the Philippine context, ethical leadership promotes strong organizational integrity and stakeholder confidence.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Graduates as to Job Traits

Table 6. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Graduates as to Job Traits

A. Strengths		
Informant	Response	Code
IN2	The employee is very dedicated in doing all tasks given to her. She does not complain and she just do it silently.	Dedication
IN7	I can say that her strength is her dedication to what she does . She gives effort in all she does.	
IN10	She shows dedication and hard work in the tasks we give her.	
IN16	What I like the most about the PolSci graduate is that he is committed and dedicated to his work , though he is just new in the office.	
IN23	I think her strength as to job trait is her being dedicated to all the tasks given to her . She gives her best in all she does.	
IN4	As observed, she is hardworking and effortful . She makes sure that she finishes task before going home.	Diligence
IN24	What makes her special is her being hardworking . She is still young yet she can do a lot of things like a senior employee.	
IN11	She shows dedication and hard work in the tasks we give her. She is very diligent that she finishes work on time.	
IN14	Her strengths as to job traits, based on my observation, are her positive attitude, her being industrious , her being initiative to do tasks without being instructed, and her act of professionalism.	
IN5	As to the job trait, which I find as his strength, is his flexibility that he can be an expert in almost all the tasks we give him. Even if it makes him so busy handling many tasks already, he still does not complain.	Flexibility
IN12	In every workplace, flexible employees are very much needed. Fortunately, the BAPoS graduate we hired is one of those employees who can work in any given situations .	
IN15	Though she is not so good in computer, still she is flexible in doing multitasking . She can go for field work, sort documents, arrange programs, and many more.	
IN6	She also has the initiative to help others who are in need of help, especially during audit.	Initiative
IN8	She is very thoughtful and initiative . I commend her for that.	
IN3	Her strengths as to job traits, based on my observation, are her positive attitude, her being hardworking, her being initiative to do tasks without being instructed , and her act of professionalism.	Confidence
IN1	Confidence is an important job trait of an employee and that is seen from the BAPoS graduate. She has the confidence in interacting with clients and she can facilitate or act as host or master of ceremony.	

IN13	I like that he is confident enough to work on the tasks given to him.	
IN17	He has a lot of ideas that he can suggest new ideas.	Critical thinking
IN11	She also has critical thinking skills.	
IN9	The employee has good communication skills that is why we usually assign her as emcee in events or programs.	Good communication skills
IN19	She was hired because of her communication skills. She has good enunciation.	
IN22	Her strengths as to job traits, based on my observation, are her positive attitude, her being hardworking, her being initiative to do tasks without being instructed, and her act of professionalism.	Optimism
IN18	Also, she has positive outlook in life that is why she is likable and easy to interact with.	
IN20	Her strengths as to job traits, based on my observation, are her positive attitude, her being hardworking, her being initiative to do tasks without being instructed, and her act of professionalism.	Professionalism
IN21	When she is in the office, you can observe that she is professional enough in dealing with other employees and her clients. She knows how to keep her personal life with work.	
B. Weaknesses		
Informant	Response	Code
IN1, IN3, IN4, IN15, IN22	Based on observation, she should undertake further training on ICT skills because we need computer literate employees.	Lack of Computer Literacy
IN5, IN6, IN7, IN8, IN17	There is a need for the employee to be sensitive of his surrounding that when others are busy preparing documents, he should at least lend a hand to help.	Lack of Discernment
IN10, IN11, IN2, IN24	He needs supervision because there are still things he needs to learn, especially in written reports.	Needs Supervision
IN12, IN13, IN20, IN23	She actually lacks in providing support and assistance that you need to call her attention and tell her what to do, before she does things.	Low Initiative
IN14, IN16, IN21	The graduate of the program is sometimes disorganized in arranging documents. I think that is what he needs to enhance more.	Poor Organizing skills
IN18, IN19, IN9	Sometimes, he is impatient in doing tasks that is why I recommended that he attends training on personality development.	Impatience

Strengths of the Graduates as to Job Traits

In analyzing the strengths of political science graduates as to job traits, it is crucial to recognize the evolving needs of employers in today's labor market. Research underscores the importance of key job traits such as dedication, flexibility, diligence, and professionalism, which are consistently identified as essential by employers worldwide. A study by the World Economic Forum (2020) ^[19] highlights the increasing demand for adaptable and dedicated employees who demonstrate initiative and a strong work ethic as industries face rapid technological and economic changes. Furthermore, local studies in the Philippines emphasize the importance of soft skills, such as communication and critical thinking, alongside core job traits, as these are crucial in meeting the expectations of employers across different sectors (Philippine Business for Education, 2022) ^[35]. By aligning the identified strengths of graduates with these evolving employer expectations, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of how Political Science graduates can better position themselves in the job market and contribute effectively to their respective organizations.

The most frequently mentioned traits were dedication and diligence, with informants highlighting the graduates' strong work ethics, willingness to complete tasks, and consistent effort in their roles. Dedication is often seen as a core component of employee commitment, as it involves putting in sustained effort to meet organizational goals (Meyer et al., 1997) ^[36]. This aligns with findings from Rhoades et al. (2001) ^[37], who emphasized that dedicated employees contribute positively to workplace productivity and exhibit a strong

sense of responsibility. Furthermore, diligence, defined as a thorough and persistent work ethic, has been linked to higher job performance across various sectors (Judge et al., 2013) ^[38]. The emphasis on these traits suggests that the graduates possess a solid work ethic, which is vital in enhancing organizational efficiency and effectiveness.

Flexibility was another prominent trait noted by the informants, reflecting the graduates' ability to adapt to various tasks and changing work environments. In today's dynamic job market, flexibility is a highly sought-after skill that enables employees to manage multiple responsibilities and respond effectively to unexpected changes (Pulakos et al., 2000) ^[39]. The capacity to be flexible and handle diverse tasks, even beyond one's job description, is crucial in enhancing an organization's agility and responsiveness (Harvey et al., 2014) ^[40]. Research by DeRue et al. (2012) ^[41] supports this, suggesting that flexibility in employees leads to better performance, particularly in roles that require multitasking and problem-solving.

The graduates' initiative, particularly their proactive approach to assisting others and taking on tasks without being directed, was highlighted by several respondents. Initiative is a critical aspect of personal proactivity, where employees anticipate future needs and take action independently (Grant et al., 2008) ^[42]. This trait is essential in driving organizational growth and innovation, as proactive employees are more likely to identify opportunities for improvement and contribute to process enhancements (Parker et al., 2010) ^[43]. The respondents' observations reflect the importance of initiative in fostering a collaborative and forward-thinking workplace.

Confidence was another job trait praised by employers, with many noting the graduates' ability to interact with clients and take on public-facing roles. Confidence in employees is crucial as it affects their willingness to engage in tasks, handle customer interactions, and make decisions effectively (Stajkovic, 2006) ^[44]. Similarly, critical thinking skills, which involve analyzing information and making reasoned decisions, were also highlighted.

According to Facione (2015) ^[45], critical thinking is integral to problem-solving and decision-making, making it a valuable asset in complex and uncertain environments. The graduates' display of confidence and critical thinking skills demonstrates their preparedness to handle challenging situations and contribute meaningfully to organizational objectives.

Effective communication was frequently mentioned as a key strength, particularly in roles requiring client interactions or event facilitation. Strong communication skills are essential in almost all professional settings, as they facilitate clear information exchange, enhance teamwork, and improve client satisfaction (Hargie, 2016) ^[46]. The graduates' proficiency in communication aligns with findings from Robles (2012) ^[47], who identified it as one of the top soft skills sought by employers across various industries. The ability to articulate ideas clearly and engage effectively with different stakeholders is a critical component of successful professional practice.

Employers also noted traits such as optimism and professionalism. Optimism, or having a positive outlook, has been associated with greater job satisfaction and resilience, enabling employees to cope better with work-related stress (Carver et al., 2010) ^[48]. Professionalism, which encompasses behavior that aligns with the values and standards of the workplace, is crucial in building trust and credibility with colleagues and clients (Clark, 2013) ^[49]. The graduates' demonstration of optimism and professionalism indicates their capability to contribute positively to workplace morale and uphold the ethical standards expected in their roles.

Weaknesses of the Graduates as to Job Traits

In examining the weaknesses of political science graduates from Kalinga State University as observed by their employers, several key areas were highlighted that can serve as focal points for professional development. Firstly, lack of computer literacy was frequently noted as a gap among graduates. Given the increasing digitalization of the workplace, proficiency in ICT skills is no longer optional but a core requirement. This aligns with findings from global studies, such as those by the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2023) ^[50], which emphasize the need for enhanced digital skills in the workforce. Locally, Philippine research by the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT, 2022) ^[51] also identifies a lack of digital skills among fresh graduates, indicating a pressing need for curriculum updates to incorporate more ICT training.

Another observed weakness is the lack of discernment in workplace dynamics, particularly in recognizing when to offer help to colleagues. This trait, often linked with emotional intelligence, is vital for fostering collaborative environments. Studies by Goleman (2021) ^[52] on emotional intelligence indicate that higher discernment correlates with better teamwork and overall job performance. The Philippine Business for Education (PBed, 2021) ^[53] similarly notes that employers value graduates who can read and adapt to workplace cues effectively, which enhances organizational harmony and efficiency.

Needs supervision was another area of concern, with some graduates needing close supervision to complete tasks, particularly in report writing. This observation suggests a need for more emphasis on developing independent working skills and critical thinking during their academic training. Research by OECD (2023) ^[54] underlines the importance of self-management skills in increasing employability, particularly in fields requiring high levels of autonomy and analytical thinking.

Low initiative was also found to be lacking among some graduates, with informants noting the need for constant prompting before tasks are undertaken. This aligns with research by the World Bank (2022) ^[55], which found that employers increasingly seek candidates who demonstrate proactive behavior, as this is crucial in dynamic and fast-paced environments. In the Philippine context, the lack of initiative has been linked to cultural tendencies towards hierarchical work environments, where employees wait for instructions rather than act autonomously (Salazar et al., 2020) ^[56].

Poor organizational skills were highlighted as an area for improvement, especially in tasks involving document arrangement. Effective organizational skills are essential in ensuring efficiency and accuracy, particularly in roles that involve data management or administrative tasks. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2023) ^[57], employers rank organizational skills as one of the top attributes they seek in new hires. Enhancing these skills could significantly improve job performance and satisfaction.

Furthermore, issues related to impatience were noted, particularly when graduates faced tasks requiring prolonged focus or repetition. This trait is critical in maintaining productivity and quality of work over time. Studies by Duckworth (2020) ^[58] on grit and perseverance indicate that patience is a key component of sustained performance in any job role. Training on personality development, as suggested by employers, could help graduates cultivate a more patient and enduring approach to their work tasks.

Addressing these weaknesses through targeted training and development programs could help bridge the skills gap, improving both individual performance and overall job satisfaction among political science graduates.

Job Skills Required by Employers from New Recruits

Table 7. Job Skills Required by Employers from New Recruits

Skill Category	Job Traits	Frequency
Communication Skills	Good Communication Skills	10
Technical Skills	Computer Literate, Skilled, Well Trained	19
Work Ethic	Hard Working, Committed, Responsible, Punctual, Strong Work Ethics	21
Adaptability & Initiative	Independent, Flexible, Can Work Under Pressure, Fast Learner, Willing to Learn	24
Cognitive Abilities	Intelligent, Critical Thinker, Resourceful, Effective, Attentive	14
Personal Traits	Confident, Passionate, Good Personality, Sincere, Trustworthy, Patient	18

The job traits perceived by employers as essential for new recruits, as presented in Table 7, reflect a well-rounded set of competencies required in the modern workplace. The categories- Adaptability and Initiative (24 responses), Work Ethic (21 responses), Technical Skills (19 responses), Personal Traits (18 responses), Cognitive Abilities (14 responses), and Communication Skills (10 responses) suggest that employers value a combination of soft skills, behavioral traits, and technical proficiency to ensure workplace success.

Adaptability and initiative, which had the highest frequency (24 responses), reflect employers' strong preference for graduates who can work independently, learn quickly, manage pressure, and remain flexible. These traits are increasingly critical in dynamic and hybrid work environments. Employees who demonstrate adaptability and self-management are more likely to succeed in evolving roles and fast-changing organizational structures (McKinsey & Company, 2022) ^[59]. In the Philippine labor context, where freelancing and flexible work arrangements are expanding, adaptability has become a key differentiator (Ramos, 2023) ^[60].

Work ethic, cited 21 times, includes traits such as responsibility, punctuality, dedication, and strong moral values at work. These qualities are fundamental for employers who seek dependable and committed employees. A strong work ethic contributes to productivity, team cohesion, and long-term employment (Asian Development Bank, 2023) ^[61]. In industries experiencing rapid innovation and change, consistent performance and reliability are highly valued traits.

Technical skills were reported 19 times, emphasizing that being computer literate, well-trained, and skilled remains a crucial advantage. With industries undergoing digital transformation, employers now consider digital fluency as a baseline requirement. In the Philippines, sectors such as business process outsourcing (BPO), finance, and education increasingly require proficiency in digital tools and platforms (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023) ^[62]. The World Bank (2023) reinforced that digital skills are no longer optional but foundational for employability in both developed and developing economies (World Bank, 2023) ^[63].

Personal traits, such as confidence, sincerity, trustworthiness, and good personality, received 18 mentions. These characteristics demonstrate the importance of emotional intelligence and social competence in professional environments. These qualities foster teamwork, build trust, and improve workplace harmony (Salazar, 2023) ^[64]. In service-oriented sectors in particular, personal demeanor contributes significantly to client satisfaction and organizational image.

Cognitive abilities, including intelligence, critical thinking, attentiveness, and resourcefulness, were mentioned by 14 employers. These traits enable graduates to process information effectively, make sound decisions, and generate innovative solutions- skills that are vital in a knowledge-driven economy. The World Economic Forum (2023) identified critical thinking and problem-solving as top future skills needed for success in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (World Economic Forum, 2023) ^[65].

Communication skills, although the least cited (10 responses), remain an essential job trait. Effective communication enhances collaboration, leadership, and client interaction, particularly in team-based and service-oriented work environments. As noted globally, communication is consistently ranked as one of the top soft skills for employability (World Economic Forum, 2023) ^[66]. Locally, communication competence facilitates professional integration and strengthens both internal and external stakeholder relationships (Ramos, 2023) ^[60].

Indeed, the data suggest that employers seek a balanced profile of graduates, those who are not only technically competent but also adaptable, ethical, emotionally intelligent, and communicative. These findings reinforce the importance of cultivating a holistic skill set in higher education to better align with both local and global labor market demands.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that the Bachelor of Arts in Political Science graduates of Kalinga State University have demonstrated a high level of employability across diverse fields, with most finding opportunities in government and private institutions. Although not all are employed in positions directly related to their degree, their ability to adapt to various roles indicates flexibility and resilience in the job market. The concentration of employed graduates in education, governance, and legal services suggests that the program has practical relevance, though there is room to enhance alignment between the curriculum and employment trends.

Graduates were generally motivated by intrinsic and long-term career goals, particularly job security, opportunities for personal growth, and a desire to contribute meaningfully to society. These motivations are consistent with the values promoted in public service and development work, areas where many of the graduates are currently engaged.

Employer feedback reflects a high level of satisfaction with the graduates' performance, particularly in areas of communication, teamwork, credibility, and technological proficiency. This suggests that the program instills important foundational competencies, although some gaps remain. Notably, employers identified a need for improved computer literacy, organizational skills, and greater initiative among some graduates. The identified job skills most valued by employers such as adaptability, responsibility, communication, and critical thinking reflect the dynamic demands of today's workforce. While the graduates are well-prepared and generally meet employer expectations, continuous improvement in skill development, curriculum enhancement, and support for workplace readiness will further increase their employability and impact in their respective fields.

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