Dimensions of quality of life of UM Digos College graduates

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ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions need to look beyond internal indicators as a means of measuring quality. Graduates' quality of life (QoL) has to be looked into and become a source of feedback. This study aims to model the quality of life of UM Digos College graduates from years 2005 to 2010 for the three major departments namely Liberal Arts, Commerce and Business Administration, and Teacher Education. This descriptive-exploratory research specifically sought to determine the dimensions that would define the graduates' quality of life. Out of 1,829 graduates covered in the eight-year period, a sample of 457 alumni were selected using stratified sampling. The latent nature of the graduates' quality of life necessitates the use of factor analysis. The data gathering process commenced with focused group discussions (FGD) which generated 38 indicator items which were then pilot tested. Screening of quantitative data which involved tests for collinearity, normality and outliers were done to ensure

satisfaction of basic assumptions for analysis. Dimension reduction using principal component analysis and VARIMAX rotation revealed a multidimensional quality of life of the graduates. The final model was made up of 23 item statements that clustered into five dimensions identified as community engagement and work satisfaction, financial stability, health and environment, educational and professional development, and leisure and personal growth. Furthermore, the findings also revealed no significant differences in the manifestation of the factors when the graduates were grouped by department.

Keywords: quality of life, college graduates, exploratory factor analysis, multidimensionality, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of higher education, the imperative to foster graduates who are not only academically adept but also exhibit a well-rounded quality of life is becoming increasingly paramount. This broadened perspective addresses the essential role that institutions like the University of Mindanao Digos College (UMDC) play in promoting not just intellectual excellence but also the economic, social, and moral advancement of their alumni (Pee & Vululleh, 2020). The traditional focus on internal academic metrics is expanding towards more holistic outcomes that reflect the real-world successes and well-being of graduates (Ali & Shastri, 2010; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022; Kahu & Nelson, 2018). This shift underscores a critical dialogue within the educational sector on how best to tailor academic programs to meet the evolving challenges of the workplace and societal integration.

Quality of life (QoL), as characterized by the World Health Organization, provides a framework for this inquiry, offering a multidimensional perspective that transcends mere economic welfare to include physical, mental, and social health factors (Skevington et al., 2021). In this context, QoL encompasses a broad spectrum of human experiences and aspirations, which are critical to understanding the impact of educational outcomes on graduate lives (Pazey et al., 2016; Wallander & Koot, 2016). Yet, standard educational assessments, like tracer studies commissioned by the Commission of Higher Education (CHED), often overlook these broader life quality measures, focusing predominantly on employment metrics post-graduation (e.g., Albina & Sumagaysay, 2020; Basalan, 2016; Cornillez et al., 2021; Cuadra, Aure & Gonzaga, 2018).

Conventional evaluation metrics for assessing the quality of life of college graduates have often been criticized for their narrow focus, failing to capture the broader, more nuanced impacts of higher education on graduates' overall well-being (Cobb, 2000; Douglass, Thomson & Zhao, 2012; Etzkowitz, 2016). With this prevailing concern, this study proposes a novel approach by broadening the scope of measurement to include economic stability, social integration, and moral development—dimensions that reflect a more comprehensive understanding of what it means to lead a 'quality life.' Such an approach aligns with contemporary shifts towards holistic education models that value personal development and societal well-being alongside traditional academic success. This methodological innovation not only fills a gap in current research but also offers practical insights that can inform future educational policies and program designs to better meet the evolving needs of students and society. Acknowledging this gap, this study aims to delve deeper into

the quality of life of UMDC alumni, specifically those who graduated between 2005 and 2010 from the faculties of Liberal Arts, Commerce and Business Administration, and Education. This analysis seeks to enrich the existing data with nuanced insights into the social and moral dimensions of alumni lives, providing a more comprehensive evaluation of educational impact. Such an approach not only responds to the immediate academic community but also aligns with broader educational mandates to enhance human development and societal well-being.

The findings from this research will potentially guide UMDC in refining its educational strategies and program offerings to better address the holistic needs of its students and graduates. By integrating quality of life indicators into the feedback loop for curricular and instructional enhancements, UMDC can foster educational experiences that not only lead to employment but also contribute to the overall well-being and societal integration of its graduates, reinforcing the transformative role of higher education in contemporary society.

METHOD

Participants. The participants of this study were alumni of University of Mindanao Digos College of the Liberal Arts, Commerce and Education departments from the academic years 2005 to 2010. As for vital statistics obtained from the Registrar's Office, there were 1,098 graduates of UMDC that satisfy these criteria. Using the formula for determining the appropriate sample size by Slovin, it was found that the needed sample is 293 or 26.6% of the alumni of 2005-2010. The study utilized probability sampling as the population of UMDC

graduates for the academic year 2005-2010 is already determined from the list given by the Registrar's Office. The present whereabouts of these graduates were also obtained from the graduate tracer studies previously conducted. Stratified random sampling was employed to determine the appropriate sample size for every department. This is shown in the Table 1.

Table 1. *Distribution of respondents*

Department	Number of Graduates	Sample Size
Liberal Arts	102	28
Commerce	757	201
Education	239	64
Total	1098	293

Instrument. Since there are no standardized questionnaires published that would fit the inquiry of this study, the researchers developed the scale to characterize quality of life measures. To generate the items, the researchers conducted a focus group discussion of 12 graduates from various batches, wherein their responses became part of the item statement pool (IPS) that will be used in developing the actual scale.

After generating the items, the survey questionnaire was validated by a process of consultation, correction, suggestion and refinement by experts in the field of study. The first part of the questionnaire was for the purpose of determining socio-demographic data like the graduate's sex, age, marital status, educational background and employment. The subsequent section is the part of the questionnaire that assessed the reflections on impact of UMDC to the quality of lives of the alumni, which covered the social, moral and

religious aspects. The participants responded by indicating the degree of manifestation in terms of 5-always, 4-most of the time, 3-sometimes, 2-seldom and 1-never.

Design and Procedure. This research is quantitative descriptive since it involved recording, analysis and depiction of the existing state and condition using quantitative techniques of analyzing data and information gathered. Specifically, this study intends to describe the level of quality of life in terms of economic, social, moral and religious. This is carried out by procedures that assign numerical values to the variables of the study. Economic status was evaluated in terms of employment and monthly income. The mean of these variables for the set of graduates as well as their distribution provided a comprehensive picture of this indicator. The variable on graduates' social life was measured by the four indicators identified under this category: organizational involvement, family property and ownership, education and leisure. A 5-point Likert scale was used to quantify these indicators. Another aspect of graduates' lives considered in this study is moral and religious life, which was also measured using the Likert scale.

Before the conduct of the survey, the researchers secured permission from the program heads of the departments concerned to administer a questionnaire to the graduates. After approval, the researchers wrote a letter of request to the registrar for the names of the graduates and their whereabouts. Following the identification of the names of the UM graduates of 2005-2010, the researchers traced these respondents by their addresses or place of work. A letter of request was also handed to the employers if ever the survey will occur during work periods. Then, the questionnaires were personally administered to the identified respondents by a face-to-face interaction with the researcher.

After all of the graduate respondents have answered the survey questionnaire, data was gathered and tallied in a manner that would answer the statement of the problem of the study. These data were then consolidated and organized for statistical treatment. The scores obtained for each indicator variable were verbally described using the following scale of interpretation:

Rating Scale	Rating Interval	Descriptive Level	Descriptive Meaning
5	4.20-5.00	Very high	If the measure described in the item is excellently manifested
4	3.40-4.19	High	If the measure described in the item is very favorably manifested
3	2.60-3.39	Moderate	If the measure described in the item is favorably manifested
2	1.80-2.59	Low	If the measure described in the item is poorly manifested
1	1.00-1.79	Very low	If the measure described in the item is unfavorably manifested

In the analysis of the data, the researchers primarily employed descriptive statistical measures like frequency and percentage for describing the demographic profile. The mean was used as a measure of central tendency to identify the levels of reflection on the quality of lives. These measures were

utilized for the descriptive part of the economic, social, moral and religious dimensions of the graduates' personal lives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 provides a comprehensive socio-demographic snapshot of the alumni, focusing on age, gender, and civil status. The average age of participants is 23.95, with the youngest at 22, illustrating a relatively young alumni group. The age distribution indicates a significant concentration in the younger demographic, with 61.4% of participants falling within the 20-24 age range and 33.4% aged between 25-29. This suggests that the majority of respondents are recent graduates, which could influence their perspectives on quality of life post-graduation.

The gender breakdown shows a predominance of female participants, who make up 61.8% of the sample. This gender distribution could reflect the enrollment demographics of the university during the years these alumni graduated or might indicate differing levels of engagement with alumni activities between genders.

In terms of civil status, a majority of the alumni (66.9%) reported being married, 29.1% are single, and a small fraction (4.1%) are single parents, as defined under Republic Act 8972. The higher proportion of married individuals could suggest a shift in personal priorities and life conditions that may impact their reflections on the quality of life after university. This socio-demographic data not only contextualizes the alumni responses but also underscores the need to consider these variables when analyzing the impact of higher education on life outcomes.

Table 2. *Socio-demographic profile of the UMDC alumni*

Socio Demographic Variables	f	%
Age		
20-24	180	61.4
25-29	98	33.4
30-34	8	2.7
35-39	4	1.4
40-44	3	1
Gender		
Male	112	38.2
Female	181	61.8
Civil Status		
Single	85	29
Married	196	66.9
Single Parent	12	4.1

Table 3 delineates the economic dimensions of alumni from the UM Digos College, focusing on employment status and income levels, which are pivotal indicators of their economic quality of life post-graduation. This economic profiling of alumni underscores the necessity of evaluating how well higher education prepares graduates for economic challenges and opportunities.

The data reveals that a significant majority (71%) of the respondents are employed, which suggests a relatively strong absorption of graduates into the workforce. Further scrutiny shows a distinctive local employment trend, with many finding jobs in private enterprises within Digos City. Interestingly,

Table 3. *Economic profile of the UMDC alumni*

Economic Profile Variables	f	%
Employment Status		
Employed	208	71
Self-employed	56	19.1
Unemployed	29	9.9
Income Level		
below P 5,000	11	3.8
P 5,000 - below P 7,500	38	13
P 7,500 - below P 10,000	69	23.5
P 10,000 - below P 12,500	104	35.5
P 12, 500 - below P 15,000	51	17.4
P 15,000 - below P 17,500	20	6.8
P 17,500 and above	0	0

19.1% of respondents identify as self-employed, indicating a robust entrepreneurial spirit among the alumni, who engage in various income-generating activities without direct employer affiliations. Nonetheless, there remains a concern as 9.9% of the alumni are unemployed, highlighting ongoing challenges in job market integration or transitions.

The income distribution among the alumni offers insights into the economic positioning of the graduates within the local economy. A significant proportion (35.49%) earns between PHP 10,000 to below PHP 12,500 monthly, positioning them within a moderate-income bracket by local standards. The next largest group (23.55%) earns between PHP 7,500 to below PHP 10,000, suggesting a concentration of alumni in lower-

middle income tiers. Notably, only a small fraction (3.8%) earns below PHP 5,000, which might reflect underemployment or part-time employment statuses. The upper income brackets are less represented, with fewer than 7% earning between PHP 15,000 to PHP 17,500, indicating limited upward economic mobility for many graduates.

The factor analysis of the quality of life (QoL) items in Table 3 reveals significant insights into the multifaceted impact of higher education on graduates, as indicated by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy which was robust at 0.849, suggesting that the sample was suitable for the analysis (Shrestha, 2021). Furthermore, Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant (χ^2 = 3863.74, p < .001), indicating that the correlation matrix was appropriate for factor analysis (Williams, Onsman & Brown, 2010). The overall Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.797, demonstrating good internal consistency among the items.

In addition, the items that clustered into five dimensions were extracted from Table 3. These dimensions could provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the broader impacts of higher education on graduates' lives, moving beyond traditional employment metrics to include social, financial, health, educational, and personal aspects of life quality. The first dimension, "*community engagement and work satisfaction*," encapsulates the social and professional fulfillment aspects of the graduates' lives. This dimension is marked by an eigenvalue of 10.525, explaining 34.6% of the variance, with a high reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha = 0.89). This dimension reflects how integral community involvement and job satisfaction are to the graduates' perception of their quality of life, emphasizing the value of social connections and meaningful employment in contributing

Table 3. Factor Analysis of QoL Items

Items	Factors				
	1	2	3	4	5
7: Participation in civic organizations and clubs is a facet of my community engagement	0.537				
8: I have the opportunity to spend quality time with my family.	0.729				
9: I am involved with the activities of the community	0.602				
17: I am employed by a highly regarded organization or institution.	0.601				
23: I enjoy various benefits provided by my employer.	0.766				
26: I am satisfied with my current role within my organization.	0.719				
28: I find happiness in my current job.	0.735				
30: I contribute positively to the community through my work.	0.712				
5: I can afford nutritious food for myself and my family.		0.734			
16: I have financial savings for future needs.		0.735			
15: I have the financial ability to assist others in need.		0.534			
22: My earnings allow me to purchase personal necessities.		0.603			
23: I can financially support my own housing needs.		0.729			

1: My living environment is minimally polluted.	0.514				
11: I consider myself healthy and free from serious illnesses.	0.431				
37: I have access to adequate healthcare when needed.	0.420				
36: My living conditions are highly conducive to a good quality of life.	0.576				
6: I can pursue further education, such as a master's degree.		0.590			
12: I am able to afford quality education for my children.		0.615			
34: My current job allows me to utilize the skills and knowledge I acquired in college effectively.		0.414			
2: I can afford to take vacations outside the city a couple of times a year.			0.517		
24: I travel at least once a year for professional development through trainings and seminars.			0.702		
38: I can afford to buy modern technological gadgets, which were previously out of my reach.			0.643		
Eigenvalue	10.525	3.56	2.03	1.74	1.19
% Variance explained	34.6	12.71	6.72	5.49	4.66
Reliability by Cronbach's α	0.89	0.901	0.92	0.83	0.806

Cronbach α = 0.797
KMO = 0.849
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity χ^2= 3863.74, p<0.001

to overall well-being (Brieger, De Clercq & Meynhardt, 2021; Michalos, 2012; Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2007).

The second dimension, "*financial stability*," focuses on the economic aspects of the graduates' lives, capturing their capability to manage personal finances effectively. It has an eigenvalue of 3.56, explaining 12.71% of the variance. The reliability of this factor is commendable (Cronbach's alpha = 0.901), highlighting the consistency of the financial measures in depicting this facet of life quality. This dimension underscores the critical role of financial security and autonomy in enhancing graduates' life satisfaction (Diener & Diener, 1995; Diener & Seligman, 2004; Fischer, 2007; Lane & Fink, 2015).

"*Health and environment*," the third dimension, addresses the physical aspects of the graduates' quality of life. This factor has an eigenvalue of 2.03 and explains 6.72% of the variance. The dimension is reliably measured, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.92, indicating that health and environmental conditions are perceived as integral components of graduates' well-being, reflecting the importance of a healthy living environment and access to healthcare (Constanza et al., 2007; Ferrans, 2005; Ferrans et al., 2005; Kiefer, 2008; Parmenter, 1994).

The fourth dimension, "*educational and professional development*," pertains to the opportunities for continued learning and application of educational achievements in professional settings. It has an eigenvalue of 1.74 and accounts for 5.49% of the variance, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83. This dimension illustrates the significance of ongoing education and professional growth in fulfilling the graduates' aspirations and enhancing their societal contributions (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2002; Okolie et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2009).

Finally, the fifth dimension, "*leisure and personal growth*," which focuses on personal development and

recreation, exhibits an eigenvalue of 1.19, explaining 4.66% of the variance. This dimension's reliability is slightly lower (Cronbach's alpha = 0.806), yet it still effectively captures the importance of leisure and personal growth activities in maintaining a balanced and fulfilling life (Heintzman, 2000; Iwasaki, 2017; Lacida et al., 2020; Littman-Ovadia, 2019).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusions

This study has provided critical insights into the multifaceted quality of life (QoL) of UM Digos College graduates. By employing a comprehensive factor analysis, five distinct dimensions were identified: community engagement and work satisfaction, financial stability, health and environment, educational and professional development, and leisure and personal growth. These dimensions underscore the diverse aspects of life that are influenced by higher education beyond the conventional academic outcomes. The findings suggest that UM Digos College effectively contributes not only to the professional success of its graduates but also enhances their overall well-being and social integration. The high levels of community engagement and work satisfaction among the alumni highlight the institution's role in fostering meaningful professional and social connections. Financial stability, as reflected in the graduates' employment status and income levels, points to the economic benefits of their education. Furthermore, the strong emphasis on health and environmental conditions, ongoing educational and professional development, and the opportunities for leisure and personal growth, align with broader educational goals to produce well-

rounded individuals capable of contributing to society in various capacities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to enhance the quality of life of future graduates further:

1. **Curricular Integration:** Integrate more real-world applications and community engagement projects within the curriculum to enhance students' preparedness for the social and professional demands they will face after graduation.
2. **Alumni Tracking and Feedback Systems:** Strengthen alumni tracking systems to continuously gather feedback on the long-term career and personal life outcomes of graduates. This feedback should be systematically used to adjust and improve academic programs and support services.
3. **Career and Financial Planning Services:** Expand career services to include more comprehensive financial planning and entrepreneurship training to better prepare students for financial stability post-graduation.
4. **Health and Well-being Programs:** Develop and implement wellness programs that address both physical and mental health needs of students to ensure they are well-equipped to manage stress and maintain a healthy lifestyle after leaving the university.
5. **Lifelong Learning Opportunities:** Offer more continuing education and professional development courses to alumni at a discounted rate to encourage lifelong learning and continual professional growth.
6. **Enhanced Support for Non-Traditional Students:** Provide additional support for non-traditional students,

such as single parents, to ensure they have the resources necessary to succeed both academically and in their personal lives.

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