

Certified Public Accountants with Multiple Opportunities in the Business Landscape: A Multiple Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The study entitled explores the experiences, challenges, competencies, and strategies of certified public accountants (CPAs) who transitioned to non-CPA professions. Through a multiple case study approach, several key themes emerged across the five cases. Firstly, CPAs experienced a transition to entrepreneurship, finding enjoyment and fulfillment in new career paths, defining roles and tasks, and realizing perks for shifting to non-accounting roles. Secondly, the impact on relationships and financial considerations varied, including changes in relationship dynamics, income potential, and financial stability. Thirdly, themes related to utilization of digital platforms and business growth highlighted the importance of technology in business strategies. Fourthly, professional and personal identity themes emphasized the hands-on involvement in management tasks and the importance of networking and wisdom from interactions. Finally, the study revealed insights into career development and adaptation, personal growth, stability, and personal fulfillment. CPAs gained insights into exploring skills beyond their profession, pursuing passion, seeking opportunities, evaluating economic practicality, and maintaining work-life balance. Overall, the findings shed light on the multifaceted experiences and strategies of CPAs navigating non-CPA professions, offering valuable insights for CPAs considering similar career transitions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Despite notable advancements, not all employees currently experience appropriate working circumstances. It is not uncommon for professionals to not practice their profession in the commercial sector. The data suggests that there is a lack of consistency between the employment that graduates ultimately obtain and the field of study they have pursued and prepared for (Aminu, 2019). Extensive research (e.g., Anis & Hanafi, 2015; Wendler et al., 2012; Zakaria, wan Fauzi & Hasan,

2012) has demonstrated that a significant number of graduates opt not to follow their chosen profession. This decision is often influenced by personal preferences, financial constraints, and factors such as loss of interest and excessive job demands, which lead to tiredness and ultimately result in employees either quitting or transitioning to different careers.

A career in accounting necessitates strict adherence to professional regulations, traditions, ethics, and principles, and successfully completing the CPA board exam is a challenging endeavor. The current count of Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) in the Philippines has surpassed 100,000. According to Diokno and Peparah (2021), approximately 14,000 individuals attempt the CPA license examination each year, but less than 20% of them are successful. There has been a substantial increase in the number of unemployed graduates in their specific areas of expertise during the last two years, which presents a potential danger. Based on a survey of 700 graduates, 60% of them were working in a sector or occupation that was not directly related to their academic degree. More than a quarter of the participants stated that their degree did not sufficiently provide them with the essential skills for the professional setting, and a similar amount decided not to pursue it.

The accounting profession, renowned for its enduring difficulties, requires substantial time, dedication, and rigorous attention to detail. In recent years, there has been a significant occurrence where accountants are choosing to resign from their professions and leave the field. Moreover, there has been a decrease in the number of students who are choosing to pursue accounting degrees, which further complicates the changing nature of the industry. In fact, a survey performed by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) found that burnout is the main catalyst for accountants choosing to leave their jobs. Extended durations of labor, heightened levels of stress, and excessive work requirements contribute to burnout, leading to both physical and mental exhaustion and decreasing quality of work-life (Cuevas & Murcia, 2018). Burnout is a state that occurs as a result of extended stress and is characterized by feelings of less energy, diminished work performance, and an increased sense of disconnection or negativity towards one's job, as defined by the World Health Organization. The high incidence of burnout is a major concern. As revealed by several studies (Fogarty et al., 2000; Rodrigues et al., 2023; Storm & Muhr, 2023) that found that an exceedingly large proportion of accountants, precisely 99%, suffer from burnout.

To further emphasize the significance of burnout, certain CPAs choose to form their own enterprises. CPAs are well-suited for entrepreneurship due to their expertise in accounting, strict commitment to deadlines, and thorough attention to detail. Furthermore, in case of any additional unsuccessful endeavors, Certified Public Accountants carry a professional designation that increases their appeal to potential employers. With a strong safety net in place, there is no reason why a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) should not succeed as a skilled entrepreneur (Kernan, 2016).

In addition, several experts such as CPAs have chosen to start their own businesses due to their strong passion for their work, firmly believing that passion is a crucial characteristic for attaining success. Running their businesses gives them a sense of accomplishment and contentment. Furthermore, many established their own businesses because they valued the ability to independently manage their work experiences. They seek independence in determining their own schedules, career paths, and work environments (Mask, 2014). However, several accountants derive satisfaction from being employed by major firms, prioritizing their personal fulfillment over the specific nature of their job (Casanaan et al., 2013).

According to Kalleberg (2008), a significant number of employed individuals are working in jobs that do not match their educational qualifications. This finding is supported by Kohnová et al. (2020), who focused on the differences in skills and educational mismatch among graduates in business and accountancy programs in various countries. This occurrence is frequently denoted as skills mismatch. Meanwhile, Hartog (2000) mentioned that the occurrence of over education is prevalent in diverse economies. Recent statistics from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicates that 35.7 percent of the labor force in OECD countries is working in positions that are not in line with their skills. The percentages are as follows: 33.5 percent in the United States, 38.7 percent in Australia, and 41.0 percent in the United Kingdom.

The Asian Development Bank (2014) that the accountancy profession in the Philippines is currently regarded as very dynamic globally. Moreover, it is one of the most strictly monitored. Professional organization is defined by a combination of regulation and private involvement. The problem of graduates not working in their chosen fields is not a recent phenomenon in the Philippines. A recent investigation carried out by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) revealed that a substantial portion, precisely 40%, of the employed population in the country holds educational qualifications that exceed the demands of their current occupations. In addition, the survey found that these individuals, despite having higher qualifications than necessary for their jobs, were only receiving a minimal income boost of 5% after finishing their studies.

In addition, the Philippine Business for Education disclosed in March 2023 that there is a large problem of job-skills mismatch in the country, which has emerged due to a longstanding divergence. This phenomena plays a big role in the problem of unemployment and underemployment in the Philippines, therefore hindering the country's capacity to properly utilize the potential of its young workforce. It is worth mentioning that firms in the fields of business, accountancy, and entrepreneurship are actively involved in recruiting new employees. However, there is still a considerable number of employment vacancies that have not been filled. A research conducted by Micabalo et al. (2021) revealed that 47% of college-educated persons reported that their first job after graduation did not align with their degree. In addition, 32% of respondents indicated that they were unable to obtain employment directly relevant to their field of study at any time. The remaining 31% were individuals aged 35 and above who had more years of work experience. The data suggests that discrepancies arise not only among accounting graduates, but also among other recent graduates and established professionals. Nevertheless, a considerable proportion of persons still have difficulties in obtaining employment possibilities.

Furthermore, Casanaan et al. (2013) identified the obstacles that hinder Certified Public Accountants from effectively applying their knowledge and abilities in their professional practice. The gathered figures were obtained from experienced professionals in the field of accountancy, spanning from individuals with modest knowledge to those with extensive years of experience. Passing the CPA board examination is a demanding endeavor, and a career in accounting requires rigorous compliance with professional regulations, standards, ethics, and principles. CPAs argue that some organizations frequently recruit graduates from prestigious and well-known universities without properly evaluating the candidates' aptitude and skills. Certain individuals find gratification in being employed by large organizations, placing personal fulfillment above the nature of their specific job. The coexistence of both business and personal issues in the workplace impedes accountants' capacity to fulfill their professional obligations, while concurrently posing difficulties for them to stay abreast of the annual revisions in accounting standards.

Brunello and Wruuck (2019) suggest that graduates are regarded as the ultimate results of higher education institutions. They travel extensively over the world to showcase their knowledge and skills, actively contributing to the advancement of every country. They are currently part of the workforce, actively contributing to the attainment of organizational success, while working towards a common goal. One obstacle that students encounter when looking for jobs after finishing their education is meeting the unique job requirements established by organizations for job applicants.

Unfortunately, in a challenging economic climate characterized by limited resources, a significant number of graduates are unable to obtain employment. Alejandro et al. (2015) explained that there is a disparity between the quantity of graduates being generated and the particular skills that are required. Certain individuals who have obtained a degree in Financial and Management Accounting may find themselves in a scenario where their job responsibilities do not correspond effectively with their expertise and qualifications. There is a disparity between the curriculum being taught and the specialized skills that the industry demands. It is widely acknowledged that the industry frequently considers graduates to be unsuitable for the roles they are offering.

Based on first-hand observation in the accounting sector, there are colleagues who have opted not to pursue a career as accountants. Indeed, a portion of them are employed as college

educators within the academic field, while many others have found work overseas that does not align with their area of study. Additionally, a small number have pursued careers as real estate brokers, specializing in the sale of condominiums, houses, and land, and some have even become full-time insurance providers. Given the scarcity of research and literature on certified public accountants (CPAs) working in non-CPA industries, both globally and locally, it is recommended that a qualitative research shall be conducted to investigate the reasons and circumstances that lead these accountants to work outside their profession.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study used the multiple-case study approach as it allows for an in-depth exploration of complex issues and understanding of the conditions of the system from a behavioral standpoint. It does this based on the feedback, inputs, and interpretive perspectives of the participants (Gustafsson, 2017). For multiple case studies, the cases should have some similarities, such as a group of teachers, school leaders, among others. In studies spanning multiple sites, data collection could involve all available cases but oftentimes, it involves just a selection of cases.

This method was utilized because the researchers sought to understand the experience by collecting data from in-depth interviews with certified public accounts who do not practice ones' profession. The collected data included detailed descriptions of their life experiences, focusing on their current situation. The investigation further delved into the various strategies or actions that will be implemented to address the challenges they encountered and how they managed their profession making sure they perform excellently. Another key area of interest for the researchers were the insights that are derived from their experiences, with the potential to share this information in the pool of literatures regarding accountancy, business and entrepreneurship.

2.2 Research Participants

This study utilized a multiple case study design, using participants who are certified public accountants (CPAs) in the Philippines but are not currently practicing their profession. Additionally, each individual case unit was depicted as a scaled-down replica of the larger business environment, offering diverse yet interconnected viewpoints on Certified Public Accountants who were not actively practicing their profession. This facilitates a comprehensive comprehension of how people adapt and create new ideas during these substantial transformations.

The study employed purposive sampling, specifically maximum variation sampling, to choose the participants. This approach, which falls under the category of non-probability sampling, entails purposefully choosing individuals who have a deep comprehension or extensive expertise regarding the issue being investigated. Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016) suggest using deliberate sampling to choose research participants who are expected to offer important insights for the study. This approach entails purposefully choosing persons based on their potential significance for the investigation.

Furthermore, Creswell and Poth (2016) stressed the need of limiting the number of participants to a maximum of five in a multiple case study. This small number allows for a thorough exploration of case themes and facilitates cross-case theme analysis. The eligibility criteria for participation in the in-depth interview were adhered to in this study. The researcher had some expectations regarding the attributes that potential study participants were predicted to possess: If a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) in the Philippines is not actively practicing accounting and instead pursuing a non-accounting profession, they must provide informed consent to ensure the study's ethical conduct. Nevertheless, this study adhered to the exclusion criteria mentioned below, which disqualify any individuals who are not Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) or do not engage in non-accounting professions from participating in the study. Ultimately, this research adhered to the following criteria for withdrawal: an individual who wishes to retract their consent to participate in the studies due to reasons that do not require disclosure, and one who intends to resume their career in accounting during the study period.

In order to safeguard the confidentiality of the individuals participating in the study, their real names were substituted with fictitious ones known as pseudonyms. Every participant in the CPA program received an informed consent form to sign, along with the guarantee that all data collected from the interview would be utilized exclusively for the study's objectives. The pseudonym allocated to each participant will be determined by the case unit number and the participants' position. The pseudonyms used by the participants were Angelita, Stefania, King, Robert, and Edgar.

2.3 Research Instruments

The data sources for this multiple case study are obtained through in-depth interviews and observations. Transcripts were produced using the interview guide questionnaire that was validated by experts in the content, methodology, and field of expertise. The data for this study was collected via individual interviews, which could be conducted either in person or online. Participants were provided with an interview guide that focused on the research topics and sub-questions. The researchers gathered the participants' viewpoints, outlooks, and emotions on CPAs who do not engage in their profession.

Creswell and Poth (2016) emphasized the necessity for researchers to employ a data recording protocol in order to document information gathered during observation and interviews. In this study, the researcher utilized a smartphone application recorder as a substitute for recording the talks and viewpoints of the participants. These recordings were then transcribed for analysis. In addition to the audio-recorded interview, the researcher took written notes during the interview to document their observations about CPAs who do not practice their profession. The interview and observation were used to collect all case profiles. Simultaneously, the transcriptions were stored in a spacious preservation envelope and meticulously labeled to ensure their secure storage and easy retrieval.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

In collecting the data for the study, the study sought authorization from the University of Mindanao through the Dean of the Graduate School. The study is also approved contingent to requirements of the University of Mindanao Ethics Review Committee (UMERC). Once given the go-signal, the researchers started in the conduct of in-depth interview from the contacted informants. Furthermore, the researchers employed a collection of related documents accordingly and adhered to the four basic processes of interviews, observation, audio-related materials, and documents connected to the research. In terms of participant data, the researchers ensured that the informed consent from the identified participants was obtained.

Following consent, the researcher-interviewer began collecting the data from the participants by asking them the questions from the expert-validated interview guide questionnaire and inform them that the interview was recorded for easy transcribing of the utterances. Observations and some nuances were also noted by writing them in a research journal. After the interviews were conducted, individual themes in tabular presentation were created for every research question and were sent to each of the informants for checking, if the themes generated made sense to the participants. After the member checking process, the researchers proceeded in conducting cross-case analysis.

2.5 Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the researchers employed Creswell's (2013) six-step process for qualitative data analysis in this study. The data was first prepared for analysis including the transcription of interviews. The researcher then read through all the data to get a general sense of what is going on. The participant responses then started the coding process to identify recurring themes. These were labeled and used for further investigation. This coding will aid in the creation of detailed descriptions of the school environment and the experiences. Using a thematic approach, the findings are then represented in the study's narrative. Each theme was thoroughly discussed and supported by data evidence. Finally, cross-case analysis was performed by the researchers to determine the commonality of the themes generated from each case profiles.

For the case analysis, each case was subjected to a separate within-case analysis, followed by a cross-case analysis. Each within-case analysis received detailed and rich descriptions of the case. The research questions were addressed in the cross-case analysis using all the data gathered from the

case units and summarized into major themes or core ideas. The presentation of the major themes and core ideas was modeled after Amparo's (2015) study, which used three classifications: general (meaning 50 percent of the participants mention the item), typical (meaning 50 percent of the participants mention the item), and specific (meaning 50 percent of the participants mention the item) (which means only 25 percent to 49 percent of the participants mentioned the item). The term variant refers to data that is unique to one or two cases.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

To ensure the ethical soundness of this paper, the researchers observed full ethical standards in conducting the study, following the study protocol assessments and standardized criteria, particularly in managing the population and data contingent to UM Ethics Review Committee approval no. UMERC-2024-067.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following results showcased the generated themes which were generated coming from the interview of each case's participants. The following discussions starts with elaborating about the experiences of certified public accountants (CPAs) who did not practice their profession and opted to another job opportunity, are the challenges and opportunities you have encountered in your current job, and lessons or insights have they gained from those experiences.

The Case of Angelita. Angelita, a distinguished graduate *cum laude* from Cor Jesu College with a degree in Accountancy, embarked on a fruitful career in the field of auditing after passing the CPA board exam in 2010. Her journey commenced at a rural bank, where she contributed her expertise as an auditor for nearly two years before further honing her skills as an audit clerk at a government agency for almost a year. Her career trajectory reached new heights when she assumed the role of a state auditor in another government agency, where she dedicated a commendable decade to upholding financial integrity and transparency in the public sector. However, Angelita recently made a significant career pivot, resigning from her esteemed position in November 2023 to pursue her entrepreneurial aspirations in the skincare industry.

Despite her notable background in accountancy and auditing, Angelita has gracefully transitioned into a new role as the full-time owner of her own skincare brand. Embracing her passion for skincare and entrepreneurship, she has found fulfillment in crafting quality skincare products while also embracing the joys of motherhood, balancing her responsibilities as a full-time mom of three. While she hesitates to label herself as an influencer, Angelita has adeptly positioned herself as a content creator on TikTok, leveraging the platform to showcase her skincare expertise and engage with her audience. With TikTok as her primary platform and Facebook as a supplementary channel, she strategically disseminates her content to reach a wider audience, drawing upon her extensive experience in the CPA profession to navigate the intricacies of digital marketing and brand management.

Angelita's career trajectory exemplifies a remarkable journey of resilience, adaptability, and entrepreneurial spirit. From her humble beginnings as a diligent auditor to her current role as a thriving skincare entrepreneur and content creator, she continues to embrace new challenges with enthusiasm and determination. With her unwavering commitment to excellence and her entrepreneurial acumen, Angelita is poised to make a lasting impact in the skincare industry, leveraging her diverse skill set and passion for innovation to inspire others on their entrepreneurial journey.

The Case of Stefania. After graduating from college, Stefania immediately pursued a career in accountancy. However, after starting a family, she decided to leave her position as an internal auditor at a prominent bank in Davao due to family commitments. This decision led her to explore various career paths, eventually leading them to Kidapawan, where she became a full-time housewife. During this time, her interest in culinary arts flourished, leading them to experiment with cooking and baking.

Stefania's professional journey has been marked by significant transitions and challenges. Despite lacking formal training in cooking or entrepreneurship, her passion for culinary arts drove

her to start a small business. Initially, she faced hurdles in balancing family responsibilities with her entrepreneurial aspirations. However, with the support of her husband and the desire for a simpler life prioritizing family, she persevered. In 2020, she established a food stall, capitalizing on her love for cooking and baking. Her business model focused on providing homemade meals and baked goods to the local community. Despite not having prior entrepreneurial experience or familial connections in business, she embraced her passion for cooking as a driving force behind her venture. Transitioning from accountancy to entrepreneurship presented its own set of challenges. While her accounting background provided valuable skills, she encountered difficulties in applying them to her new business. Despite this, she remained determined to succeed, leveraging her experience and adapting to the demands of the culinary industry.

Looking ahead, Stefania seeks to expand her culinary business while maintaining a balanced family life. Her journey reflects a testament to the transformative power of pursuing one's passions and adapting to new challenges. As she continues to navigate the complexities of entrepreneurship, she remains focused on providing for their family and nurturing their love for cooking.

The Case of King. King is a seasoned professional with a diverse background in both accounting and real estate. Having graduated with a BS in Accountancy in 2009 and subsequently passing the board exam in 2010, King embarked on a career journey that led him through various roles in accounting firms, government offices, and eventually, in a government agency. Despite aiming for a promotion, the unforeseen challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic prompted King to reevaluate their priorities, ultimately leading to the decision to resign from their position as an Auditing Examiner II in 2020.

Parallel to their accounting career, King cultivated a passion for real estate, initially starting as an agent in 2016. Recognizing the potential of this field, King pursued further education, enrolling in brokerage studies at a university in Cebu. Graduating in 2020 with a specialization in real estate management, King obtained licenses as a broker and appraiser, expanding their expertise in the real estate industry. Alongside their professional pursuits, King also ventured into property management, balancing their responsibilities with assisting their wife in her legal practice.

In response to the pandemic's impact on traditional business operations, King demonstrated resilience and adaptability by venturing into entrepreneurship. In 2020, King seized the opportunity to establish an online business, the franchise of a fruit juice drink, supplementing their income and leveraging their entrepreneurial spirit. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, King continues to manage their various endeavors, maintaining a dynamic balance between their real estate ventures, property management responsibilities, and support for their wife's legal practice.

The Case of Robert. Robert's journey is a testament to the dedication and perseverance of a professional committed to both career advancement and family priorities. With over a decade of experience at a state college, his career trajectory reflects a steady climb from an accounting staff to his current role as Chief Administrative Officer of a state college. Robert's commitment to his family led him to prioritize job opportunities that would allow him to support them, ultimately leading him to the College in 2012. Despite the geographical challenges of being away from his family while working at a Davao-based hospital, his determination remained unwavering, culminating in his transfer to the College where he is connected now last September 2023, close to his family.

Robert's professional journey is deeply intertwined with his pursuit of professional qualifications, particularly his journey to becoming a Certified Public Accountant (CPA). His background in various private companies, including a banana company where he worked for seven years, provided the foundation for his accounting expertise. His decision to pursue his CPA license while working as a bookkeeper showcases his ambition and determination to excel in his field. After years of dedicated study and preparation, he successfully obtained his CPA license in 2012, opening doors to new career opportunities and expanded responsibilities, such as his role as Accounting Manager of a hospital in Davao City.

As Robert transitions into his new role as OIC Chief Administrative Officer, his experience qualities position him well to help the institution towards continued growth and success. His journey

from an accounting professional to a college official underscore the importance of continuous learning, adaptability, and seizing opportunities for career advancement. Robert's dedication to both his profession and his family serves as an inspiration for aspiring professionals navigating the complexities of balancing personal and professional aspirations.

The Case of Edgar. Edgar, a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) with over a decade of experience, embarked on a diverse career path after graduating from a private university in Davao City with a Bachelor of Science in Accountancy. Despite obtaining his CPA license in October 2012, Edgar found himself in a non-practicing role. His professional journey began as an auditor at an accounting firm, where he gained valuable insights during his short tenure of four months. Following this, he transitioned to a financial role at an industrial company in Santa Cruz, albeit briefly, before exploring new opportunities.

Driven by the pursuit of stability and financial security, Edgar's career took an unexpected turn when he ventured into the insurance sector. However, grappling with the uncertainties of income stability in his new role, he sought alternative avenues. Recognizing his passion for education and the potential for a more consistent source of income, Edgar embraced the opportunity to teach in his alma mater from 2014 to 2018. Teaching became more than just a profession for Edgar; it became his primary source of income and a significant part of his life, overshadowing his previous ventures in auditing and finance.

Despite his initial aspirations in auditing and finance, Edgar's journey led him to prioritize stability and fulfillment in his career. While his path diverged from the traditional trajectory of a CPA, Edgar found purpose in education and teaching. His experiences underscore the importance of adaptability and seizing unexpected opportunities in navigating the complexities of a professional career.

3.1. Cross-case Matrix of the Themes on the Experiences of Certified Public Accountants Who Did Not Practice their Profession and Opted to Another Job Opportunity

In the cross-case analysis of the five cases in Table 1 regarding experiences of certified public accountants (CPAs) who did not practice their profession and opted to another job opportunity, it was observed that there are four themes that has been identical to everyone, these are transition to entrepreneurship, impact on relationships and financial considerations, utilization of digital platforms and business growth, and professional and personal identity. The five participants shared that despite not being able to practice their profession the opted job opportunity has enabled them to achieve this.

Moreover, transitioning from a career in accounting to entrepreneurship can be a significant shift, impacting various aspects of a person's life, including relationships, finances, professional identity, and the utilization of digital platforms for business growth. Hence, transitioning from a career in accounting to entrepreneurship for CPAs involves multifaceted considerations. Beyond financial risks, the shift impacts personal relationships, requiring open communication to manage the demands of entrepreneurship effectively. Leveraging their financial expertise, CPAs can utilize digital platforms for business growth, embracing digital marketing and exploring fintech opportunities. However, this transition also entails a redefinition of professional and personal identity, as CPAs move from structured roles to the uncertainty and versatility of entrepreneurship. Overall, successful navigation of this transition requires a holistic approach, balancing financial planning, relationship management, digital innovation, and identity adaptation to thrive in the entrepreneurial landscape.

Transition to Entrepreneurship. Transition to entrepreneurship is one of the global themes for the experiences of certified public accountants (CPAs) who did not practice their profession and opted to another job opportunity. The five cases (Angelita, Stefania, King, Robert, and Edgar) confirmed that transitioning to entrepreneurship from a career as a certified public accountant (CPA) can be a significant and transformative journey for professionals in the field. CPAs possess a unique skill set that includes financial expertise, analytical thinking, and an understanding of regulatory frameworks. The responses they shared were:

Table 1. Cross-case matrix of the themes emerging from the five cases for RQ1: What are the experiences of certified public accountants (CPAs) who did not practice their profession and opted to another job opportunity?

Global Theme	Angelita	Stefania	King	Robert	Edgar
Transition to Entrepreneurship	Enjoyment and fulfillment in new career path	Defining roles and tasks in the business	Perks for shifting to non-accounting role	Career satisfaction, utilization of skills, leadership skills development	Role and responsibilities in new organization, diverse product offerings, fulfillment in career path, financial growth and potential in new profession, investment in self and team development
	Identity shift from CPA profession to skincare entrepreneurship	-	-	-	-
Impact on Relationships and Financial Considerations	Changes in relationship dynamics due to work stress, financial stability and risk assessment	Decision-making dynamics with spouse	Income potential and flexibility, growth opportunities in real estate	Fulfillment, impact in decision-making, financial expertise, succession planning	Providing financial needs and security to clients, transition from producer to leader, importance of salesmanship and leadership, taking on additional responsibilities after family loss
Utilization of Digital Platforms and Business Growth	Utilization of TikTok as primary marketing platform, integration of TikTok and Shopee for sales	-	-	-	Diverse product offerings in insurance industry, perception of insurance as a fulfilling career path
Professional and Personal Identity	-	Hands-on involvement, management of various tasks	Networking and wisdom from interactions, real estate investment strategies	Skills as advantage in the job, leadership in finance, value of being CPA in current role	Role and responsibilities in new organization, diverse product offerings, fulfillment in career path, financial growth and potential in new profession, investment in self and team development

Angelita: There are indeed better and best opportunities for us CPAs, not just limited to CPA-related work or jobs. Before I ventured into this business, I had no background in it. My family's mindset was focused on education for employment. We didn't have any relatives involved in business, and I never even thought about starting one. During the pandemic, I simply enjoyed pursuing my passion, without realizing that it would lead me to change my path into something like this. What I did was simply enjoy it, unaware that it would lead me to divert onto a much better path.

Burton, Sørensen and Dobrev (2016) corroborated with this statement, their study confirmed that transitioning to entrepreneurship holds significant importance for business-related graduates as it offers a pathway to harness their creativity, innovation, and leadership skills to create value in the marketplace. Entrepreneurship empowers graduates to pursue their passions, shape their own destinies, and contribute to economic growth by launching ventures that address unmet needs and capitalize on emerging opportunities. Moreover, entrepreneurship fosters a culture of risk-taking, resilience, and adaptability, equipping graduates with invaluable experience in problem-solving and strategic decision-making. By embracing entrepreneurship, business graduates not only cultivate their entrepreneurial mindset but also play a pivotal role in driving innovation, job creation, and societal progress, thereby shaping a dynamic and vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Impact on Relationships and Financial Considerations. On the other hand, another theme has been similar to the five cases and it talks about impact on relationships and financial considerations. They shared that transitioning from a career as a certified public accountant (CPA) to another job opportunity can profoundly affect both relationships and financial aspects. Professionally, it may entail leaving behind established networks while potentially opening doors to new connections. Personally, expectations from family and friends may require adjustment, and time availability may change. Financially, the transition may bring income instability, especially if venturing into entrepreneurship, alongside the need to assess and manage investment risks. Careful planning is essential to navigate these changes successfully. The participants discussed that:

Angelita: I didn't know that this would be the thing that would lead me to divert onto a different path, which is far, far, far better not just in terms of monetary gain, but also in the relationship with my children and family. My life is much better now.

Edgar: Some insurance agents may not always practice what they preach, but for me, I truly find this job very fulfilling. I don't just focus on earning commissions, because eventually, it's more about the value I provide. I mean, I'm earning well, not boasting, but I am earning well. However, whenever I talk to people, I prefer to build connections and relationships. Strengthening my connections strengthens me. I now appreciate talking to different people, including clients in their 50s and 60s, as I learn more about the business in this way.

The same sentiments have been explored by Shanafelt et al. (2019) stating that in the realm of business-related professions, the importance of relationships and financial considerations cannot be overstated. Relationships form the backbone of successful business interactions, encompassing partnerships with clients, colleagues, suppliers, and stakeholders. Cultivating strong professional relationships fosters trust, collaboration, and mutual support, which are essential for achieving common goals and driving business growth. Additionally, understanding financial considerations is fundamental for informed decision-making and sustainable business practices. Profound knowledge of financial principles enables professionals to manage resources effectively, mitigate risks, and optimize profitability. By prioritizing relationships and financial acumen, business professionals not only nurture thriving enterprises but also lay the groundwork for long-term success and resilience in an ever-evolving economic landscape.

Utilization of Digital Platforms and Business Growth. Aside from personal areas, the third global theme has touched about the utilization of digital platforms and business growth among non-practicing CPAs who opted for another field or job. They expressed that the utilization of digital platforms plays a pivotal role in the business growth experienced by certified public accountants (CPAs) who transition away from practicing their profession. Embracing digital tools and platforms

enables these professionals to leverage technology for various aspects of their new roles or ventures. They harness digital platforms for marketing, customer acquisition, and client management, thus expanding their reach and enhancing efficiency. Moreover, utilizing digital platforms facilitates agile decision-making, data analysis, and collaboration, empowering CPAs to adapt quickly to changing market dynamics and drive sustainable business growth in their new endeavors. They specifically emphasized that;

Angelita: The TikTok Shop is really making a huge difference for many people nowadays. TikTok itself has become incredibly popular, almost like it's combined with all of Facebook, YouTube, and Shopee.

Edgar: I always start my day at 4 am. I wake up at 4:30, then I scroll through Facebook, checking out what my contacts are up to. That's what we call prospecting.

Considerably studies like Möller, Schäffer and Verbeeten (2020) claimed that for professionals in business-related roles, leveraging digital platforms is instrumental in driving business growth in today's interconnected world. Embracing digital platforms enables professionals to expand their reach, engage with customers on a global scale, and tap into new markets. Through social media, websites, and e-commerce platforms, businesses can effectively showcase their products or services, interact with customers in real-time, and gather valuable feedback for continuous improvement. Moreover, digital tools offer powerful analytics capabilities, allowing professionals to track performance metrics, identify trends, and make data-driven decisions to optimize business strategies. By harnessing the potential of digital platforms, business professionals can unlock opportunities for innovation, streamline operations, and propel sustainable growth in an increasingly digital-centric marketplace.

Professional and Personal Identity. Another aspect which has been considerably shared is all about professional and personal identity, when certified public accountants (CPAs) transition away from practicing their profession, their professional and personal identities undergo significant shifts. Professionally, they may experience a redefinition of their expertise and skill set as they apply their accounting knowledge in new contexts or industries. This transition can lead to a sense of identity exploration as they navigate unfamiliar roles and responsibilities. Personally, they may encounter challenges in reconciling their previous career identity with their current pursuits, especially if there are societal or familial expectations tied to being a CPA. However, embracing new job opportunities allows them to craft a multifaceted identity that integrates their accounting background with their evolving professional journey, ultimately fostering personal growth and fulfillment. They communicated that:

Stefania: Sometimes, I get intimidated by other businesses because there are moments when I recognize that I might not be able to keep up with them. I know I lack experience; I started from zero. There are times when I feel intimidated, especially by those well-known and firmly established.

Robert: In my opinion, CPAs have a significant advantage, especially in our financial skills. In higher-ranking positions, decision-making is crucial, and being familiar with numbers is essential for effective decision-making. So, having a good grasp of numbers is a significant factor in making decisions. From what I've observed, CPAs have an edge because there are plenty of opportunities for us. Being able to understand the financial impact is a significant part of decision-making. On the other hand, managing people also plays a crucial role, which includes costs and investments. Whatever area it may be, making sound decisions that involve money is essential. It greatly helps if you aspire to reach a high position to have solid experience in financial matters.

The same assumption is raised by the recommendation in the study of Jackson (2016), he pointed that the importance of both professional and personal identity cannot be overstated. Professional identity encompasses the expertise, skills, and values that professionals bring to their roles, shaping how they are perceived by peers, clients, and stakeholders. Establishing a strong

professional identity instills trust, credibility, and respect, laying the foundation for successful career advancement and business relationships. Simultaneously, personal identity plays a crucial role in shaping one's authentic self-expression, values, and motivations, influencing decision-making and overall job satisfaction. Integrating both professional and personal identities enables professionals to align their actions with their values, foster meaningful connections, and cultivate a sense of fulfillment and purpose in their work. By nurturing a balanced identity that authentically reflects both professional expertise and personal values, business professionals can navigate their careers with integrity, resilience, and authenticity, ultimately driving success and fulfillment in their professional endeavors.

3.2. Cross-Case Matrix of the Themes Emerging from the Five Cases on the Challenges and Opportunities Encountered in Current Job

On the other hand, as the research made assumptions on the cross-case matrix of the themes emerging from the five cases on the challenges and opportunities encountered by CPAs in their current job or source of income, there were two themes that seemingly related among the five cases, these are prospects for better income and work-life balance and discouragement. Cross-case analysis of the five cases for this research question is found in Table 2.

Further, it can be observed that the participants shared that better income and work-life balance and discouragement can also be significant factors for individuals who transition from practicing as a certified public accountant (CPA) to pursuing alternative career paths. When CPAs opt for non-accounting roles, they often seek opportunities that offer better compensation and a more balanced lifestyle. Moreover, transitioning away from practicing as a certified public accountant (CPA) often involves considerations of better income, improved work-life balance, and managing discouragement. This shift may lead individuals to pursue alternative career paths offering higher compensation and flexibility, potentially in fields like finance or consulting. However, this transition also poses challenges, such as adjusting to new roles and industries, facing setbacks, and managing feelings of discouragement. Despite these obstacles, CPAs can leverage their skills to navigate the transition successfully and find fulfillment in their chosen paths.

Prospects for Better Income and Work-Life Balance. In being a non-practitioner of public accounting despite being a CPA, it has been expected already that it has its up and downs. One of its advantages speaks about Better Income and Work-Life Balance. Participants are in unison saying that Despite not practicing public accounting, being a CPA can still offer distinct advantages, including the potential for better income and improved work-life balance. Non-practitioners often find themselves in roles within corporations, financial institutions, or consulting firms where their CPA credential commands higher salaries and greater job opportunities. Additionally, these positions may afford more predictable hours and flexibility compared to the demanding schedules often associated with public accounting firms, allowing CPAs to achieve a more balanced integration of their professional and personal lives while still leveraging their accounting expertise to advance their careers. They remarkably talked about;

Angelita: Because there's a better opportunity, not just in terms of finances but also concerning family matters. The number one opportunity offers higher financial rewards, sometimes exceeding five times the net pay. Number 2, for family reasons, as I can spend more time with my children.

Edgar: Most of my batchmates now have stopped practicing as CPAs. Not all, but most of the people I know quit because they got tired of being CPAs. It's because the workload doesn't match the income. Maybe it's just me being very open-minded at the age of 23. Perhaps it's because I faced career crossroads early on, and I decided right away not to pursue being a CPA. I don't want to be stressed; I don't want to constantly worry about finances. Imagine, in a month, I rest for 2 weeks and work for 2 weeks. If I feel like resting for the whole month, I can. Why? Because I can work everything, I need for two months in just one month. That's my mindset now: if I want to rest, then I'll rest.

Table 2. *Cross-case matrix of the themes emerging from the five cases for RQ2: What are the challenges and opportunities you have encountered in your current job?*

Global Theme	Angelita	Stefania	King	Robert	Edgar
Prospects for Better Income and Work-Life Balance	Higher financial gains, ability to take care of children, maternity leave challenges	Desire for simplicity and work-life balance, concerns of high rental costs that cannot be paid by regular salary	Work-life balance, freedom in work schedule, opportunities for advancement	Personal fulfillment, workload intensity, time management	Flexibility and autonomy in managing work schedule
	Extra income from small business, family support at home, pressure and multitasking at work	Prospects of better income in new business ventures, prospect risks in investments	Salary and financial stability, potential for additional income	-	Business growth and income potential
	Pursuing passion for beauty enhancement, prioritizing health reasons, limited time for family and business	Comfort of life at home	-	Passion, integrity, professional growth	Family expectations and pressure to work in government, disinterest in routine and monotonous tasks, flexibility and work-life balance in career
Discouragement	Salary discrepancy, limited time spent at work	Financial challenges, lack of interest in financial details, discomfort with under-the-table practices	Potential for political interference, fear of implication in irregularities, rigidity in government work schedules	-	Workload not commensurate with income, comparison with income potential in other professions, desire for personal fulfillment and satisfaction
	-	Desire for job satisfaction and fulfillment, impact of positive feedback on motivation	Opportunities for advancement, salary and financial stability	-	Importance of personal fulfillment and satisfaction, leveraging CPA knowledge and skills in financial advising

Truly, finding another path to pursue could be an advantage, as concluded by Akhmetshin et al. (2018) that workers outside the corporate world often enjoy better income and work-life balance due to various factors. While corporate positions may offer higher salaries initially, non-corporate roles such as freelancing, entrepreneurship, or specialized trades can provide opportunities for increased income potential through autonomy and diversified revenue streams. Additionally, these roles often afford greater flexibility in terms of work hours and location, allowing individuals to tailor their schedules to accommodate personal commitments and interests. This flexibility promotes improved work-life balance, reduced stress, and enhanced overall well-being. Moreover, non-corporate roles often offer opportunities for creative expression, skill development, and a sense of ownership over one's work, contributing to greater job satisfaction and fulfillment. As a result, many individuals outside the corporate world find that they can achieve both financial success and a fulfilling lifestyle that aligns with their personal values and priorities.

Discouragement. However, there are also some negative situations such as discouragements where financial challenges, lack of interest in financial details, discomfort with under-the-table practices and workload does not commensurate with income, comparison with income potential in other professions, desire for personal fulfillment and satisfaction. Hence, discouragements among CPAs who choose not to practice public accounting despite holding the credential stem from various factors. Financial challenges may arise due to the perception that other professions offer higher earning potentials or more immediate financial rewards. Additionally, some individuals may lack interest in the detailed financial work often associated with public accounting roles, while others may feel discomfort with under-the-table practices or ethical conflicts. Moreover, the disparity between workload and income can be discouraging, particularly when compared to the earning potential in alternative professions. Ultimately, the desire for personal fulfillment and satisfaction may lead CPAs to seek opportunities that align more closely with their passions and values, even if it means deviating from traditional accounting paths. They discussed the following:

Stefania: One thing for me, ma'am, is that it's really hard to imagine being an accountant because it's so stressful for me. Like when I tried bookkeeping, it was exhausting... Plus, there's also the filing, which feels like a never-ending chore because the deadlines are so fast-paced, with days passing by quickly and you're constantly chasing them.

Edgar: So, reasons for not practicing—I really can't see myself growing under the four corners of a room, especially since most of my time is spent on travel... I travel every day, and it's exhausting... it feels like I'm in a repetitive routine area, and I really don't like jobs with routinary tasks.

Robert: Indeed, the workload of an accountant is truly overwhelming...Eight hours is not enough, especially in the busiest office positions, particularly in the finance sector, specifically in the accounting office. Deadlines and reports are constant, requiring attention to detail. If you were to identify the most hardworking personnel, you'd often find them in the accounting office.

King: Receiving a notice of findings would really make me nervous. Plus, being an accountant also makes us susceptible to those kinds of fears, especially since we've experienced how politicians can make us feel vulnerable to such situations... We'll be counting money that isn't ours and then reconciling it, but it turns out it's not ours to reconcile after all.

Discouragement is also possible when one has not practiced what is expected from him or her, Huđek, Tominc and Širec (2020) found out that freelancers can also experience feelings of discouragement for various reasons. The unpredictable nature of freelancing, including fluctuations in income, inconsistent workloads, and challenges in finding clients, can contribute to feelings of uncertainty and doubt about the viability of freelancing as a career choice. Moreover, freelancers may encounter rejection from potential clients, encounter difficulty in establishing a stable client base, or face competition from other freelancers, which can affect their confidence and motivation. Additionally, freelancers may grapple with feelings of isolation or imposter syndrome, particularly if

they lack a supportive network or struggle with self-doubt about their skills and abilities. However, it is important for freelancers to recognize that experiencing setbacks and challenges is a natural part of the freelancing journey. Seeking support from peers, setting realistic goals, and focusing on personal growth and development can help freelancers overcome feelings of discouragement and persevere in building a successful freelance career.

3.3. Cross-case Matrix of the Themes Emerging from the Five Cases on Competencies of CPAs Practicing Non-CPA Professions

In the analysis of the competencies acquired by CPAs who are practicing non-CPA professions, it can be noted that the five participants have learned and mastered two kinds of competencies, these are *core competencies as CPA* and *new competencies from current job*. Non-practicing certified public accountants (CPAs) can leverage their core competencies gained from their accounting background along with new competencies acquired from their current job to excel in their chosen field. Summary of the cross-case analysis is displayed in Table 3.

To note, CPAs possess a strong foundation in accounting principles, financial analysis, and regulatory compliance. These core competencies provide a solid framework for critical thinking, problem-solving, and attention to detail. Additionally, CPAs are skilled in data analysis and financial reporting, which are valuable in various industries and roles. Also, transitioning to a new field or role allows CPAs to develop additional competencies that complement their accounting background. For example, they may gain expertise in project management, leadership, or specialized industry knowledge. They may also acquire skills in communication, teamwork, and adaptability, essential for success in diverse professional environments.

Core Competencies as CPA. Despite the non-practice of being a CPA due to personal choice of being in different field, it cannot be denied that there are some core competencies of being a CPA that still applies on the profession or job which they are currently affiliated. Despite not actively practicing as CPAs in their current roles or professions, individuals who hold the CPA credential undoubtedly bring with them a wealth of core competencies that remain relevant and applicable. Skills such as critical thinking, attention to detail, and a strong understanding of financial principles are intrinsic to the CPA designation and can be valuable assets in various fields.

Moreover, CPAs are typically adept at problem-solving, data analysis, and decision-making, which are transferable across industries. Their rigorous training in accounting standards, regulations, and ethics also instills a sense of professionalism and integrity that can positively impact their work in any setting. Therefore, while they may not be engaged in traditional accounting practices, the core competencies acquired as CPAs continue to shape their approach to their current profession or job, enhancing their effectiveness and contributing to their success. The participants confidently expressed that:

Angelita: In terms of hard skills, we have basic accounting along with subjects in IT, and Excel, which are essential tools in accounting, especially for inventory management. As for soft skills, confidence in facing people is crucial because we often interact with agency personnel, PR, and community relations. Professionalism is also essential, as some CEOs may not be professional in how they handle content and communicate, while I prefer to keep things low-key.

Stephanie: we can create reports, read reports, and interpret reports.

Robert: I became a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) because of the technical skills I developed as an accountant. I've also matured in terms of how I treat people, face problems, and balance work and family. I've matured in organizing and problem-solving, critical thinking, and public relations. Confidence has truly been built.

Trivellas et al. (2015) have observed that core competencies in accounting and management are very beneficial all fields, whether corporate, academic or freelancing. Core competencies in accounting and management are essential for professionals to thrive in their roles and contribute to

Table 3. Cross-case matrix of the themes emerging from the five cases for RQ3: What are the competencies of CPAs practicing non-CPA professions?

Global Theme	Angelita	Stefania	King	Robert	Edgar
Core Competencies as CPA	Proficiency in basic accounting, familiarity with IT and Excel, utilization of IT tools in accounting	Report creation and interpretation, financial analysis and decision-making, time management and prioritization	Financial analysis and management, real estate expertise, communication skills	Continuous development of technical skills	-
	Confidence in facing people, professionalism in communication, low-key approach to content creation	Flexibility and adaptability, humility and acceptance of decisions, emotional resilience and self-awareness	Building trust and credibility, effective communication with clients, sales and persuasion skills	Maturity in problem-solving and coping mechanisms, confidence and self-assurance in decision-making, effective communication and public relations	Personal skills and confidence, acquisition of business-related skills, utilization of administrative and organizational skills, adaptation and flexibility in learning and applying skills
New Competencies from Current Job	Proficiency in editing, development of creativity, self-taught learning	HR and people management, cost-consciousness and inventory management, pursuing formal culinary education	Understanding market dynamics, property valuation, convincing sales pitch	Interpersonal relations skills, supervisory role as a bridge between offices, troubleshooting and problem-solving at operational levels	Desire for further development in communication and analytical skills, need for enhanced networking and relationship-building abilities

organizational success. In accounting, proficiency in financial reporting, auditing, budgeting, and taxation ensures accurate financial data interpretation and compliance with regulatory standards, facilitating informed decision-making. Meanwhile, management competencies such as leadership, communication, strategic planning, and problem-solving enable effective resource optimization, team motivation, and adaptation to business challenges. Integrated competencies in both areas are particularly valuable for leaders in financial management roles, allowing them to oversee financial operations while driving strategic initiatives.

New Competencies from Current Job. Aside from the core competencies, there are also new competencies from the current job which made them more expert and attuned in the contemporary world despite non-practice of being a CPA due to personal choice of being in different field. Notably, beyond the core competencies acquired as CPAs, individuals who choose to pursue different fields often develop new and specialized competencies in their current roles, enhancing their expertise and relevance in the contemporary world. These new competencies could include proficiency in technology and data analytics, strategic leadership and management skills, effective communication and interpersonal abilities, and an understanding of industry-specific trends and regulations.

Moreover, they may gain insights into diverse business functions, such as marketing, operations, or human resources, broadening their skill set and perspective. By integrating these new competencies with their accounting background, individuals can offer unique insights and solutions, positioning themselves as versatile professionals capable of thriving in today's rapidly evolving business landscape despite not actively practicing as CPAs. They confirmed it by stating that:

Angelita: Editing has been a huge help for me, both in editing and marketing ads. I still handle my own videos and pictures, so I've really explored my creativity there. It's like tapping into my roots because my creativity comes from my father, who is an artist.

Steph: At this time, I'm directly involved in managing people, and I've acquired HR skills that I've learned on the job.

Aside from core competencies, professionals also learn some new competencies that are relevant in the contemporary times. As concluded by Möller, Schäffer and Verbeeten (2020) that in contemporary business environments, the importance of new competencies relevant to business, accounting, and management cannot be overstated. Emerging technologies such as data analytics, artificial intelligence, and digital marketing are reshaping traditional business practices, necessitating competencies in areas such as data analysis, technology proficiency, and digital literacy. Additionally, the increasing emphasis on sustainability and corporate social responsibility requires competencies in sustainable business practices, environmental management, and stakeholder engagement. Furthermore, the dynamic nature of global markets demands competencies in cross-cultural communication, global strategy, and geopolitical awareness. By acquiring these new competencies, professionals can effectively navigate evolving business landscapes, drive innovation, and lead organizations toward long-term success in the contemporary era.

3.4. Cross-Case Analysis of the Themes from the Five Cases on the Lessons or Insights Have they Gained

Aside from the discussed competencies above which are both core and new, what is most important is to emphasize what are the lessons or insights have they gained from the experiences of not practicing their profession on the job they push to excel with. The themes common for this matter are the following: career development and adaptation, personal growth, and stability and personal fulfillment. Results of the cross-case analysis for this research question is in Table 4.

Based on the interviews, it can be understood that CPAs who choose another field of profession gain valuable insights and lessons in career development and adaptation, personal growth, and achieving stability and personal fulfillment. By embracing change, pursuing growth opportunities, and prioritizing personal well-being, they can navigate successful career transitions and find fulfillment in their chosen path. Further, transitioning to a new field requires non-practicing CPAs to

adapt, develop new skills, and seek growth opportunities. They learn the importance of agility and resilience, navigating dynamic landscapes by embracing change and remaining open to learning.

Table 4. Cross-case matrix of the themes emerging from the five cases for RQ4: What lessons or insights have they gained from those experiences?

Global Theme	Angelita	Stefania	King	Robert	Edgar
Career Development and Adaptation	Exploration of skills beyond CPA profession, discovery of better opportunities	Ability to create and understand reports and data-driven decision-making	Flexibility in communication, assessing personal preferences and goals	Continuous learning and development through training, leveraging CPA training for career advancement and success	Considering alternative career paths outside traditional CPA roles, pursuing passion and interests
Personal Growth	Overcoming challenges of introversion in social engagement	Pursuing passion despite challenges, endurance and perseverance in chosen path, finding motivation and reasons to continue	Seeking opportunities beyond traditional paths	Transformational impact of becoming a CPA on career and life, opportunities and doors opened by being a CPA	Evaluating economic practicality in the CPA profession, appreciating family support in career decisions, maintaining work-life balance and enjoying personal hobbies
Stability and Personal Fulfillment	Simultaneous pursuit of multiple opportunities, financial stability as a basis for resignation, importance of happiness in the work environment	Follow your passion and interests for sustainability, choose the path that aligns with your values and goals	Pursuing partnerships for success, financial considerations and planning	Building and maintaining employee support, balancing leadership approach based on individual needs, empowering and developing leadership skills in others	Setting and pursuing personal and professional goals, finding satisfaction and fulfillment in one's work and accomplishments, encouraging to follow one's passion and interests

Moreover, transitioning away from practicing as a CPA fosters personal growth and self-discovery, as individuals explore new interests and passions, stepping out of comfort zones to unlock untapped potential. Choosing another profession enables non-practicing CPAs to align with personal values and preferences, seeking roles that offer both stability and fulfillment. Overall, they prioritize personal well-being and satisfaction, embracing opportunities for growth and fulfillment in their professional journey.

Career Development and Adaptation. One of the lessons and insights the participants had is having career development and adaptation, the expressed that despite not being a practitioner of CPA they articulated a valuable lesson in career development and adaptability, noting that despite diverging from a path as a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) to pursue alternative professions, they gained significant insights. Their experiences underscored the importance of embracing change and navigating diverse career trajectories. While they may not have pursued a CPA designation, their journey illuminated the significance of transferrable skills, personal growth, and the ability to pivot in

response to evolving interests and opportunities. This realization underscores the dynamic nature of career development, emphasizing the value of continuous learning and adaptation in the pursuit of professional fulfillment. Thus, their response involved;

King: We should know how to keep up with people... We should find a way for them to get to know us because we might not know that they are actually looking for a property.

Career development and adaptation are crucial for individuals in any job as they facilitate professional growth, personal fulfillment, and resilience in the face of change. Continuously developing skills, expanding knowledge, and seeking new opportunities enables individuals to remain competitive and relevant in their field. Moreover, Rudolph, Lavigne and Zacher (2017) stated that adapting to evolving industry trends, technological advancements, and organizational needs allows individuals to effectively navigate shifting landscapes and seize emerging opportunities. By prioritizing career development and adaptation, individuals can enhance their employability, pursue meaningful work aligned with their interests and values, and achieve long-term success and satisfaction in their careers.

Personal Growth. Aside from career related learning, one good thing they have learned is personal growth. The five participants put emphasis elaborating that they even though they chose paths divergent from practicing as Certified Public Accountants (CPAs), participants highlighted significant personal growth stemming from their alternative career choices. Their decision to pursue other professions allowed them to explore diverse interests, develop new skills, and cultivate a deeper understanding of their own strengths and passions. By embracing alternative career paths, they engaged in self-discovery, honed their abilities, and expanded their horizons beyond the confines of a singular professional identity. This journey of personal growth exemplifies the richness and complexity of individual career trajectories, illustrating how diverse experiences can contribute to holistic development and fulfillment. Thus, they shared that;

Steph: In my opinion, based on my personal experience, I truly believe in following my passion. It's not easy, but whether you choose this road or that road, they both require hard work. However, if you choose the one you're more in love with, it becomes more bearable because you have more reasons to continue, more reasons to move forward, to learn, and to improve. It's not necessarily easy, but you have more reasons to keep going.

Personal growth is essential in any job as it fosters continuous improvement, resilience, and fulfillment. By engaging in ongoing self-reflection, learning, and skill development, individuals expand their capabilities, enhance their effectiveness, and unlock their full potential. Buil, Martínez, and Matute (2019) posited that personal growth enables individuals to adapt to changing circumstances, overcome challenges, and seize new opportunities for advancement. Moreover, it promotes confidence, creativity, and a sense of purpose in one's work, leading to greater job satisfaction and overall well-being. Embracing personal growth not only benefits individuals in their current roles but also positions them for long-term success and fulfillment in their careers.

Stability and Personal Fulfillment. Moreover, there is also stability and personal fulfillment in this chosen path. The five cases' participant affirmed that despite choosing alternative career paths instead of practicing as Certified Public Accountants (CPAs), individuals found stability and personal fulfillment through their chosen professions. By pursuing roles outside the realm of accounting, they were able to align their careers more closely with their passions, values, and long-term goals. This deliberate choice allowed them to cultivate a sense of fulfillment derived from meaningful work that resonated with their interests and aspirations. While diverging from the traditional CPA path may have initially seemed unconventional, their decision ultimately provided them with a stable foundation for professional success and personal satisfaction, showcasing the importance of pursuing authentic career paths aligned with individual values and aspirations.

Angelita: There are two signs for when to start a business and resign from your job. Firstly, you'll know it's time when you see that your income has been stable for 6 months to a year. Secondly, when your business income surpasses your salary, that's a clearer indicator.

Edgar: Follow your dreams, follow your path, and what I mean is, if you're asking for advice from me, it's really about knowing your passion.

Stability and personal fulfillment are paramount in both professional and personal realms, offering individuals a sense of security, satisfaction, and well-being. Stability provides a solid foundation for individuals to build their lives and careers upon, offering financial security, consistency, and predictability. It fosters a sense of confidence and peace of mind, enabling individuals to pursue their goals and aspirations with clarity and focus. Moreover, Suleman et al. (2020) concluded that personal fulfillment encompasses a deeper sense of satisfaction, purpose, and meaning derived from one's work, relationships, and contributions to society. It fuels motivation, resilience, and a sense of accomplishment, enriching individuals' lives and fostering holistic well-being. Together, stability and personal fulfillment empower individuals to lead fulfilling and meaningful lives, achieve their potential, and contribute positively to their communities and the world around them.

3.5. Cross-Case Analysis of Themes that Represent Activities that Keep Certified Public Accountants Relevant in the Profession they Chose

Lastly, on the idea of what keeps them relevant despite the fact that they are to be considered as non-practicing CPAs. Truly, it is not easy to still attuned on the technicalities of the professional world of public accounting taking into consideration that the participants have chosen another field to have their expertise be practiced. However, on their statements they strongly concurred that still despite being considered as a non-practitioner CPA, there are situations which made them relevant and excellent, these are strategies for business sustainability, professional growth, keeping skills up to date and professional development and adaptability. Results of the cross-case analysis are shown in Table 5.

Strategies for Business Sustainability. Most of the participants had given their realization that because they venture on other profession and jobs such as being in business, or being in the academic field, they were able to gain strategies for business sustainability. One of which that make them relevant is that they become professionals who have chosen alternative career paths instead of pursuing the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) designation who knows the importance of implementing strategies for business sustainability. While their careers may not directly involve accounting practice, they recognize the significance of fostering sustainable business practices to ensure long-term success and resilience. Through their diverse experiences, they have gained insights into the importance of ethical decision-making, financial stewardship, and strategic planning in promoting organizational sustainability. By incorporating principles of sustainability into their respective professions, they contribute to the creation of value-driven enterprises that prioritize environmental responsibility, social impact, and economic resilience, showcasing their ability to apply holistic business principles beyond the confines of traditional accounting roles. One of the five informants confirmed this by sharing that:

Angelita: Number 1 priority really is customer service. If there are any inquiries through messages on TikTok, Shopee, or YouTube chat, I personally handle and address their concerns immediately. It's crucial to secure sales as early as possible because sometimes, if they have concerns and we don't attend to them promptly, it might discourage them, and we might lose potential sales. So, we consistently maintain our service alongside our products, ensuring quality in both aspects. I also regularly add new products to our offerings.

Strategies for business sustainability are indispensable for professionals as they ensure the long-term viability, resilience, and success of organizations in a rapidly changing global landscape. Galpin, Whittington and Bell (2015) believed that by implementing sustainable practices such as resource efficiency, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility, professionals can mitigate risks,

enhance reputation, and create value for all stakeholders. Additionally, sustainability strategies foster innovation, drive operational efficiency, and position businesses to adapt to emerging trends and regulations, thereby ensuring their continued relevance and competitiveness. By prioritizing business sustainability, professionals not only contribute to the preservation of the environment and societal well-being but also safeguard the future prosperity and longevity of their organizations.

Table 5. Cross-case matrix of the themes emerging from the five cases for RQ5: How do they keep themselves relevant in the profession they chose?

Themes	Angelita	Stefania	King	Robert	Edgar
Strategies for Business Sustainability	Personal attendance to inquiries on various platforms; Maintenance of service quality; Generation of financial profits and savings	Emphasis on implementing effective accounting systems; Continuous improvement of skills	Diversification of revenue streams; Business expansion through licensing and systems	-	-
Professional Growth	Self-management of accounting books; Utilization of TikTok for promotional learning; Shift from traditional storefronts to online platforms	Openness to new learning; Pursuing additional skills and knowledge; Keeping abreast with professional updates	Participating in seminars and training programs	Attending seminars and training sessions; Engaging in continuous learning and skill improvement	-
Keeping Skills Up to Date	Challenges in adapting to promotional strategies; Importance of consistency	Attending seminars and training sessions; Participating in relevant organizational events and workshops	-	Staying informed about recent trends and standards; Keeping up-to-date with business and administrative laws	-
Professional Development and Adaptability	Client care and referral strategy; Goal setting and performance metrics; Continuous learning and skill development; Networking and relationship building; Financial advising and wealth management	Training and seminar attendance; Achieving industry certifications and recognition; Diversification of product offerings and skills	-	Hands-on experience and supervision; Personal learning and skill enhancement	Global outreach and client services; Offering services abroad; UITS sales; Client diversification

Professional Growth. Also, since there are some who did take another path which may include in the academe or being in the corporate world, they were given chances to excel professionally and have been exposed to different situations where it made them professionally matured. Hence, one

Certified public accountants with multiple opportunities... (Caralos)

of the key lessons learned by professionals who have opted for alternative careers instead of pursuing the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) designation is the enduring nature of professional growth. While their chosen paths may diverge from accounting practice, they have discovered that growth transcends specific job titles or industries.

In addition, through their varied experiences, they have honed valuable skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and leadership, which are applicable across diverse fields. Embracing new challenges and opportunities outside the realm of accounting has allowed them to continuously expand their knowledge base, broaden their perspectives, and cultivate a versatile skill set. This journey of professional growth demonstrates their adaptability, resilience, and commitment to lifelong learning, showcasing their ability to thrive and excel in dynamic professional landscapes beyond the confines of traditional CPA roles. They have expressed these experiences by mentioning that:

Robert: I really engage in seminars, especially those that align with my interests, and of course, government training on new issues and laws. It's more advantageous to equip ourselves with that knowledge.

Professional growth is essential for professionals as it empowers them to continuously expand their skills, knowledge, and capabilities, ultimately enhancing their effectiveness, versatility, and resilience in the workplace. Through ongoing learning, skill development, and career advancement, professionals can stay abreast of industry trends, technological advancements, and best practices, ensuring their relevance and competitiveness in their field. Moreover, Purwanto (2023) emphasized that professional growth fosters confidence, motivation, and a sense of fulfillment, enabling individuals to pursue challenging opportunities, achieve their career aspirations, and realize their full potential. Embracing professional growth not only enriches individuals' professional lives but also drives organizational innovation, productivity, and success, making it a cornerstone of sustainable career development and organizational excellence.

Keeping Skills Up to Date. Being in other fields does not necessarily mean that the participants are nonchalant and outdated, instead because of the different fields they are exposed they were able to know things that had been the cotemporary trend in business, management and academe. One crucial lesson learned by professionals who have chosen alternative career paths instead of pursuing the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) designation is the importance of keeping their skills up to date. Despite not directly practicing as CPAs, they recognize that staying abreast of industry developments and acquiring new competencies is essential for remaining competitive and relevant in today's rapidly evolving job market. Whether through formal education, professional development programs, or self-directed learning, they prioritize continuously upgrading their skill sets to adapt to emerging trends and technological advancements. By proactively investing in their professional development, they ensure their ability to navigate changing landscapes, seize new opportunities, and effectively contribute to their chosen professions, underscoring their commitment to ongoing growth and success beyond traditional accounting roles. They confidently shared that:

Steph: It's important to prioritize improvement, especially in areas like managerial accounting if you're managing a business.

Updated skills are vital for professionals as they ensure their continued relevance, effectiveness, and competitiveness in today's dynamic and evolving job market. In an era marked by rapid technological advancements, changing industry trends, and globalization, professionals must continuously adapt and acquire new competencies to meet the demands of their roles and industries. Gan and Yusof (2019) find updated skills as a tool that enable professionals to leverage emerging technologies, navigate complex challenges, and seize new opportunities for growth and advancement. Moreover, staying abreast of the latest developments in their field demonstrates a commitment to excellence, professionalism, and lifelong learning, enhancing their credibility,

employability, and career prospects. By prioritizing skill updates, professionals can remain agile, resilient, and well-positioned to thrive in an ever-changing professional landscape.

Professional Development and Adaptability. Lastly, professional development and adaptability are achieved which make them relevant in their personal and professional life. They said that one of the pivotal relevant ideas they had gleaned as professionals who have chosen alternative career paths instead of pursuing the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) designation is the paramount importance of professional development and adaptability. While their careers may not directly involve accounting practice, they have realized that continuous learning and adaptability are indispensable for thriving in today's dynamic job market.

By actively seeking opportunities for skill enhancement, staying abreast of industry trends, and cultivating a growth mindset, they position themselves to navigate diverse professional landscapes with confidence and agility. Embracing change and proactively seeking out new challenges allow them to remain resilient and versatile, enabling them to capitalize on emerging opportunities and chart fulfilling career trajectories beyond the confines of traditional CPA roles. They specifically shared the following;

Edgar: We have regular trainings and seminars, and if you could see the list for each month, it's extensive. It's a company initiative where they hire speakers, and all you have to do is click to watch. We even have sponsors like Insurance company who send us to Manila for speakers, including international wealth experts. We cover various topics like wealth management, and all these are included in our training sessions.

Professional development and adaptability are indispensable for individuals navigating today's dynamic and rapidly evolving professional landscape. Professional development empowers individuals to enhance their skills, expand their knowledge, and stay abreast of industry trends, enabling them to remain competitive and relevant in their fields. Additionally, Rasheed et al. (2020) confirmed that adaptability enables professionals to effectively navigate uncertainty, embrace change, and capitalize on emerging opportunities, fostering resilience and agility in the face of evolving circumstances. By prioritizing professional development and adaptability, individuals can proactively shape their careers, seize new challenges, and cultivate a mindset of continuous growth and learning, ultimately achieving long-term success and fulfillment in their professional endeavors.

4. CONCLUSION

The observations from the experiences of CPAs transitioning to other job opportunities provide a rich tapestry of themes that illuminate the complexities of career shifts. Transitioning to entrepreneurship underscores the entrepreneurial spirit and risk-taking propensity among CPAs, showcasing their adaptability and willingness to explore new ventures. The impact on relationships and financial considerations delves into the personal ramifications of career transitions, highlighting the importance of financial stability and the potential strains on personal and professional relationships. Utilizing digital platforms for business growth reflects the integration of technology into modern business practices, emphasizing the role of innovation and digital literacy in driving organizational success. Furthermore, the emphasis on professional and personal identity speaks to the intrinsic motivations and values that guide career decisions, illustrating the importance of alignment between individual aspirations and professional pursuits.

In examining the challenges and opportunities faced in their current roles, the convergence of themes such as prospects for better income and work-life balance underscores the pursuit of greater financial security and personal fulfillment. However, the presence of feelings of discouragement highlights the inherent struggles and setbacks that accompany career transitions, emphasizing the importance of resilience and perseverance in navigating uncertain pathways.

On the other hand, analyzing the competencies acquired by CPAs in non-CPA professions reveals the dynamic nature of skill acquisition and mastery, showcasing the ability to leverage both traditional accounting competencies and new skills acquired in alternative roles. This hybrid skill set

underscores the versatility and adaptability of CPAs, positioning them to excel in diverse professional environments.

Furthermore, the lessons gleaned from not practicing their profession underscore the broader implications of career transitions, emphasizing the importance of continuous learning, personal growth, and fulfillment in professional endeavors. The pursuit of career development and adaptation highlights the proactive approach to navigating evolving career landscapes, while personal growth and stability and personal fulfillment underscore the holistic nature of career satisfaction and well-being.

Finally, the acknowledgment of relevance and excellence in their roles despite not being traditional practitioners speaks to the inherent value and contributions of CPAs in non-traditional capacities. The focus on strategies for business sustainability, professional growth, skills development, and professional adaptability underscores the proactive stance toward driving organizational success and personal fulfillment.

In conclusion, these observations paint a comprehensive picture of the multifaceted nature of career transitions for CPAs, highlighting the myriad challenges, opportunities, competencies, and lessons learned along the way. Despite the complexities and uncertainties inherent in career shifts, CPAs demonstrate resilience, adaptability, and a commitment to excellence, underscoring their capacity to thrive in diverse professional landscapes.

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