Employability of BS Criminology Graduates in the Philippines: A PRISMA 2020 Systematic Review of Employment Outcomes, Competencies, Career Pathways, and Workforce Challenges

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ABSTRACT:

Graduate employability is a key indicator of higher education quality and curriculum effectiveness. In the Philippines, numerous tracer studies have examined the employment outcomes of Bachelor of Science (BS) Criminology graduates; however, the evidence remains fragmented across institutions. This systematic review synthesized the available evidence on the employability of BS Criminology graduates by examining employment outcomes, competencies, career pathways, employment challenges, regional career trajectories, and employability indicators. The review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines. Electronic databases were systematically searched to identify published peer-reviewed tracer studies involving BS Criminology graduates in the Philippines. Studies were screened using predefined eligibility criteria, relevant data were extracted using a standardized form, and methodological quality was critically appraised. Due to substantial heterogeneity in study characteristics, outcome measures, and reporting formats, a narrative synthesis was conducted. A total of 21 studies met the eligibility criteria and were included in the systematic review, although the number of studies contributing to each synthesis varied by review objective. The findings demonstrated generally favorable employability outcomes, with most studies reporting employment rates exceeding 75% and graduates securing employment within one year after graduation. Government agencies, particularly the Philippine National Police and other criminal justice institutions, were the primary employers. Communication skills, interpersonal skills, critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and criminology knowledge were consistently associated with successful employment, while the Board Licensure Examination for Criminologists served as a key professional qualification. Despite positive employability outcomes, methodological inconsistencies across tracer studies limited cross-study comparability. Standardized tracer study frameworks are recommended to strengthen future evidence synthesis, support curriculum enhancement, and inform evidence-based higher education and workforce policies.

Keywords: BS Criminology; employability; graduate tracer study; systematic review; PRISMA 2020; Philippines

1. Introduction

Graduate employability has become a central outcome of higher education worldwide. Clarke (2018) notes that universities, particularly in Australia and the UK, increasingly treat employability as a key driver and link it directly to graduate employment outcomes. Similarly, Cook (2022) emphasizes that governments now expect universities to improve graduate employment outcomes and align their programs with labor market needs through evidence-based employability models.

In the Philippines, the transition of graduates from higher education to work is a key measure of graduate outcomes. Tracer studies are essential in this context because they provide feedback on employment outcomes, skill utilization, and the relevance of academic training to workplace demands (Garcia et al., 2024). As higher education faces growing pressure to demonstrate value for money and labor market relevance, graduate employment outcomes have become central to policy, quality assurance, and institutional accountability. These outcomes reflect the expectation that universities produce graduates who can secure decent work and contribute to economic growth (Alpaydin & Kültür, 2022).

Recent studies on BS Criminology graduates in the Philippines show that institutions track indicators such as employment status, job relatedness to the degree, waiting time for first employment, and job position levels—key markers of employability in the Philippine context. These efforts mirror broader national initiatives to use graduate tracer studies to evaluate how well curricula prepare students for work and to inform curriculum improvement (Ates et al., 2024). Tracer studies consistently report that most BS Criminology graduates secure regular or permanent employment, particularly in public administration and defense, and identify human relations, communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills as highly relevant to job performance (Din et al., 2023; Refugia, 2021; Maratas, 2018). However, studies also document delays in employment and underemployment among graduates who have not yet passed the Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE) or met agency-specific qualifications, underscoring the need for curriculum alignment and targeted support for employability (Refugia, 2024).

Graduate employment rates are a critical metric for evaluating the effectiveness of BS Criminology programs because they reflect curriculum relevance, licensure exam success, and alignment with the staffing needs of law enforcement and justice agencies, while also serving as an accountability measure for students, families, and regulators (Din et al., 2023; Tutor et al., 2021). Examining employment rate, job position, and employment sector together provides a comprehensive assessment of graduates' employability, revealing not only whether they are working, but also the quality, relevance, and alignment of their jobs with program objectives and the needs of the criminal justice system (Ates et al., 2024).

Guided by an Outcome-Based Education (OBE) framework, BS Criminology programs define graduate attributes that integrate technical competencies (e.g., criminal investigation, law enforcement operations, corrections) with soft skills (e.g., communication, critical thinking, ethical decision-making, human relations, and leadership) to ensure career readiness and alignment with the demands of the criminal justice system. Tracer studies and institutional assessments show that these competencies are not only expected by universities and employers but are also reported by graduates as highly relevant to their job performance and career progression (Camal, 2023; Salas, 2022).

Despite the growing number of tracer studies, findings remain fragmented and institution specific. Existing studies identify different competencies and career destinations, but no study has synthesized these findings at the national level. Understanding employment barriers—such as intense labor market competition, stringent agency qualification requirements, rapid technological change, and varied personal career decisions—is crucial for

BS Criminology programs because it informs evidence-based curriculum revision, targeted career guidance, and responsive policy development aimed at improving graduate employability and alignment with the needs of the criminal justice system (Refugia, 2021). However, evidence regarding employment barriers among criminology graduates remains scattered across institutional tracer studies.

Employment opportunities and career trajectories of BS Criminology graduates in the Philippines vary significantly across regions due to differences in economic development, government vacancies, urbanization, geographic location, and regional labor market demand. Graduates from highly urbanized and economically advanced regions such as NCR and CALABARZON may access more diverse and immediate employment opportunities in both public and private sectors, while those from BARMM, Visayas, and Mindanao may face longer waiting periods, fewer government slots, or limited private-sector options (Ruiz et al., 2020; Maratas, 2018). Regions with higher economic growth and more diversified economies, such as NCR and CALABARZON, host numerous corporate headquarters, banks, ports, airports, shopping malls, and residential complexes, which generate steady demand for security officers, safety inspectors, investigators, fire safety practitioners, and other criminology-related roles in both public and private sectors (Report on Regional Economic Developments in the Philippines, 2023; Beltran et al., 2025; Patalinghug, 2011). In contrast, regions with slower economic growth, higher poverty incidence, and larger informal sectors may offer fewer formal job opportunities, pushing graduates to either wait for government slots, migrate to other regions, or accept underemployment in non-criminology jobs (Beltran et al., 2025; Patalinghug, 2011).

Understanding these regional differences is crucial for curriculum revision, career guidance, and policy development, as it highlights that even when graduates complete the same CHED-prescribed curriculum, their career pathways may diverge based on the regional context in which they seek employment (Camal, 2023). Despite these regional differences, no systematic review has compared employment trends, job positions, and employment sectors of BS Criminology graduates across Philippine regions, limiting the ability of stakeholders to design targeted, region-responsive strategies to improve graduate employability and alignment with national security and development goals (Guadamor & Eusebio, 2017; Guadamor & Eusebio, 2018).

Although numerous tracer studies have examined the employability of BS Criminology graduates in individual higher education institutions across the Philippines, the findings remain fragmented, institution-specific, and methodologically heterogeneous. Previous studies have reported regional employment characteristics using different indicators and measures of employability. To date, no PRISMA-guided systematic review has synthesized this body of evidence to provide a comprehensive, national-level understanding of graduate employability among BS Criminology graduates in the Philippine context.

Objectives of the Study

This systematic review aims to synthesize the available evidence on the employability of Bachelor of Science in Criminology graduates in the Philippines. Specifically, it seeks to: 1) to synthesize the evidence on the employment outcomes of BS Criminology graduates, including employment rates, job position, and sectors of employment; 2) to synthesize the evidence on the competencies acquired by BS Criminology graduates and their corresponding career pathways in the Philippine labor market; 3) to synthesize the evidence on the employment challenges encountered by BS Criminology graduates in the Philippines; 4) to compare the reported career trajectories of BS Criminology graduates across different regions of the Philippines by examining variations in employment opportunities and employment trends; and 5) to synthesize the evidence on the employability outcomes of BS Criminology graduates by examining the time required to

obtain employment, the alignment of employment with the criminology profession, and the professional eligibility utilized in securing employment.

2. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a systematic review using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines to synthesize evidence on the employability of BS Criminology graduates in the Philippines. A narrative synthesis was undertaken because methodological and outcome heterogeneity among the included tracer studies disallowed quantitative meta-analysis.

The review systematically identified, screened, assessed, and synthesized tracer studies that reported graduate employment outcomes, competencies, career pathways, employment challenges, and regional career trajectories. Owing to substantial heterogeneity in study designs, outcome definitions, and reporting formats, a quantitative meta-analysis was not appropriate. Consequently, a narrative synthesis was undertaken to integrate the available evidence.

Protocol Registration. This review was not prospectively registered in PROSPERO, OSF, or any other protocol registry. However, a predefined review protocol, including the review objectives, eligibility criteria, search strategy, study selection procedures, data extraction methods, quality appraisal, and data synthesis approach, was developed before the review commenced and was consistently followed throughout the study.

Eligibility Criteria. The eligibility criteria were established a priori to ensure the identification of studies that directly addressed the employability of Bachelor of Science (BS) Criminology graduates in the Philippines. A comprehensive literature search was initiated in October 2024 using Google Scholar and other accessible online scholarly databases. The search strategy employed combinations of the following keywords and phrases: "Tracer Study for Criminology Graduates," "Employability of Criminology Graduates," "Curriculum Enhancement of BS Criminology," "Career Pathway of Criminology Graduates," and "Challenges Encountered by Criminology Graduates in Searching for Employment." Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used, where appropriate, to broaden or refine the search and maximize the retrieval of relevant studies.

Studies were considered eligible for inclusion if they met the following criteria: (a) were peer-reviewed journal articles published within the predetermined review period; (b) reported tracer studies involving BS Criminology graduates in the Philippines; (c) examined at least one employability indicator relevant to the objectives of this review, including employment outcomes (e.g., employment rate, job position, and employment sector), competencies acquired, career pathways, employment challenges, regional employment trends, or other employability outcomes such as time to employment, job relevance, and professional eligibility; (d) provided sufficient methodological information to permit quality assessment and data extraction; and (e) were available as full-text articles in the English language through online sources.

Studies were excluded if they (a) did not focus on BS Criminology graduates in the Philippines; (b) failed to report any employability-related outcomes; (c) consisted only of conference abstracts, editorials, commentaries, theses, dissertations, book chapters, or other non-peer-reviewed literature; (d) lacked sufficient methodological details or outcome data necessary for evidence synthesis; or (e) were inaccessible in full-text format despite reasonable efforts to retrieve them.

The identified records underwent title and abstract screening, followed by a full-text eligibility assessment based on the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The study selection process was documented using the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram to ensure transparency and reproducibility throughout the review process.

Data Extraction and Synthesis. Two reviewers independently extracted study characteristics and outcome data using a standardized extraction form. Extracted variables included employment rates, employment duration, job relevance, professional eligibility, competencies, career pathways, employment challenges, regional employment characteristics, and sectors of employment. Because the included studies reported outcomes using different measures and classifications, findings were synthesized using narrative and thematic synthesis supported by evidence matrices.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1. *Evidence of Employment Outcomes of BS Criminology Graduates*

Study	Employment Rate	Job Position	Sector of Employment
Salas (2022)	✓	—	✓
Bautista et al. (2020)	✓	—	✓
Cantallopez & Robles (2024)	✓	—	✓
Aydinan (2019)	✓	—	✓
Ayeo-eo (2020)	✓	—	—
Cosmiano et al. (2023)	✓	—	✓
Din et al. (2023)	✓	✓	✓
Guadamor & Eusebio (2017)	✓	—	✓
Guadamor & Eusebio (2018)	✓	—	✓
Guiral & Besas (2024)	✓	—	—
Maratas (2018)	✓	✓	—
Pacatang (2016)	✓	—	—
Procurato et al. (2024)	✓	✓	✓
Refugia (2021)	✓	—	—
Refugia (2024)	✓	—	✓
Ruiz et al. (2020)	✓	—	—
Repoyo (2019)	✓	—	—

Legend: ✓ = Reported — = Not Reported

Among the 21 tracer studies included in this systematic review, 16 reported employment rates, 4 described graduates' job positions, and 10 identified the sector of employment. Considerable methodological heterogeneity was observed across the included studies with respect to study design, operational definitions of employability, outcome measures, and reporting formats. This heterogeneity precluded quantitative synthesis through meta-analysis; therefore, the evidence was integrated using a PRISMA-guided narrative synthesis.

The synthesized evidence consistently indicates that BS Criminology graduates in the Philippines demonstrate favorable employability outcomes, although employment rates varied substantially across institutions, ranging from 20.40% to 100%. This wide variation is likely attributable to differences in institutional characteristics, geographic labor market conditions, graduate cohorts, data collection periods, and methodological approaches adopted in the tracer studies. Nevertheless, a clear pattern emerged, with most studies reporting employment rates exceeding 75% (Refugia, 2024; Guiral & Besas, 2024; Cantallopez et al., 2024; Din et al., 2023; Refugia, 2021; Bautista et al., 2020; Ruiz et al., 2020; Guadamor & Eusebio, 2018; 2017; Pacatang, 2016) , suggesting that criminology graduates generally possess the competencies and professional qualifications required for successful labor market entry. Collectively, these findings provide evidence that the BS Criminology curriculum remains broadly responsive to the workforce demands of the Philippine criminal justice sector.

Evidence concerning graduates' occupational placement was comparatively limited, as only four studies reported detailed job classifications. Across these studies, graduates were predominantly employed as Police Officers (PO1–PO3) in the Philippine National Police, while others occupied Job Order, rank-and-file, clerical, or part-time positions. Although these findings indicate that employment opportunities are concentrated in entry-level positions, they also reflect the structured career progression within Philippine criminal justice institutions, where newly licensed criminologists commonly enter through probationary or junior appointments before advancing to higher professional ranks. Consequently, the predominance of entry-level employment should be interpreted as an expected feature of early career development rather than an indicator of limited employability. Policy and industry reports similarly describe entry-level work as a stepping stone and a normal starting point for professional careers, emphasizing that early-career success depends on skill application, experiential learning, and ongoing development after hiring (Tuononen & Hyytinen, 2022).

Regarding employment sector, **11** studies consistently identified the **government sector** as the primary employer of BS Criminology graduates. Employment was concentrated in law enforcement, public safety, corrections, and other criminal justice agencies, highlighting the continuing role of government institutions as the principal absorbers of criminology graduates. This consistent pattern demonstrates a strong alignment between the competencies developed through the BS Criminology curriculum, professional licensure requirements, and the workforce demands of the Philippine criminal justice system. It also reinforces the continued relevance of criminology education in supporting national public safety and justice priorities.

Table 2. *Evidence of Competencies Acquired by BS Criminology Graduates and Their Corresponding Career Pathways in the Philippine Labor Market*

Study	Skills	Knowledge	Career Pathways
Salas (2022)	✓	✓	✓
Bautista et al. (2020)	✓	✓	✓
Cantallopez & Robles (2024)	—	—	✓
Camal (2023)	✓	✓	—
Cosmiano et al. (2023)	—	—	✓
Din et al. (2023)	✓	—	✓
Guadamor & Eusebio (2017)	✓	—	✓
Guadamor & Eusebio (2018)	✓	—	✓
Guiral & Besas (2024)	✓	—	—

Maratas (2018)	✓	—	—
Pacatang (2016)	✓	✓	—
Procurato et al. (2024)	✓	—	—
Refugia (2024)	—	—	✓

Legend: ✓ = Reported — = Not Reported

Among the 21 tracer studies included in this systematic review, 13 reported evidence on the competencies acquired by BS Criminology graduates and their corresponding career pathways. Considerable heterogeneity was observed in the competencies assessed, measurement approaches, and reporting practices across studies, precluding quantitative synthesis. Accordingly, the evidence was integrated through a PRISMA-guided thematic narrative synthesis to identify recurring competency domains and career patterns.

The synthesized evidence demonstrates that communication skills emerged as the most consistently reported competency associated with graduate employability (Guiral & Besas, 2024; Camal, 2023; Salas, 2022; Bautista et al., 2020; Guadamor & Eusebio, 2018), followed by human relations skills, critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and time management (Procurato et al., 2024; Guiral & Besas, 2024; Camal, 2023; Din et al., 2023; Maratas, 2018; Guadamor & Eusebio, 2017; Pacatang, 2016). These competencies were repeatedly identified as essential for effective performance in criminal justice professions, suggesting that employers place considerable value on transferable and interpersonal skills in addition to technical expertise. The prominence of these competencies reflects the increasingly multidisciplinary nature of criminal justice practice, where successful professionals must communicate effectively, exercise sound judgment, collaborate with diverse stakeholders, and make ethical decisions in dynamic and often high-risk environments.

Beyond generic competencies, the reviewed studies consistently identified strong disciplinary knowledge in police organization and administration, criminal law and jurisprudence, criminal justice, law enforcement, crime prevention, and research and extension. Collectively, these findings indicate that the BS Criminology curriculum provides graduates with the foundational knowledge and professional competencies required to meet the expectations of criminal justice agencies. The convergence of these competency domains across multiple studies suggests that the curriculum remains aligned with the competency standards expected of entry-level criminology professionals in the Philippines.

With respect to career pathways, the Philippine National Police (PNP) was consistently identified as the principal career destination for BS Criminology graduates. Additional employment opportunities were reported in the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), Bureau of Corrections (BuCor), Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), other law enforcement agencies, and criminology education. The concentration of graduates within government criminal justice institutions demonstrates a strong correspondence between the professional competencies acquired during undergraduate education and the workforce demands of the Philippine criminal justice system. This employment pattern also reinforces the role of criminology programs in preparing graduates for careers that directly contribute to public safety, law enforcement, and justice administration.

Table 3. *Reported employment challenges experienced by criminology graduates in the Philippines*

Study	Challenges
Salas (2022)	Delay of employment due to tight competition for the job.
Guiral & Besas (2024)	Individual Career Choices/ Technological advancements

Refugia (2021)	Qualifications set by the agency/institution applied for

Among the 21 tracer studies included in this systematic review, only three reported evidence on the employment challenges experienced by BS Criminology graduates. The limited number of contributing studies, coupled with substantial variation in the types of challenges investigated and the manner in which they were reported, precluded quantitative synthesis. Consequently, the findings were integrated using a PRISMA-guided narrative synthesis to identify common barriers affecting graduates' transition into the labor market.

The synthesized evidence indicates that the employment challenges encountered by BS Criminology graduates are multidimensional, reflecting the interaction of individual, institutional, and labor market factors. One study identified intense competition for limited employment opportunities within the criminal justice sector as a primary barrier (Salas, 2022), resulting in delayed employment despite graduates possessing the required academic qualifications and professional eligibility. This finding suggests that favorable employability outcomes do not necessarily guarantee immediate workforce entry, particularly in sectors where government positions are highly competitive.

Another study emphasized that individual career preferences and rapid technological advancements increasingly influence graduates' employment decisions (Guiral & Besas, 2024), highlighting the evolving nature of the labor market and the need for graduates to continuously adapt to emerging professional competencies and technological innovations.

Institutional hiring requirements also emerged as a significant barrier to employment. One study found that agency-specific qualification standards (Refugia, 2021), including additional eligibility requirements beyond academic credentials and professional licensure, restricted employment opportunities for some graduates. This finding underscores that workforce entry is influenced not only by graduates' competencies but also by organizational recruitment policies and occupational standards established by employing institutions.

Overall, the available evidence suggests that employment challenges among BS Criminology graduates extend beyond individual competence and are shaped by broader structural, institutional, and labor market conditions. However, the confidence in this synthesis is constrained by the limited evidence base, as only four studies explicitly examined employment barriers. Consequently, the current literature remains insufficient to establish consistent national patterns or determine the relative importance of specific employability challenges. This gap highlights an important weakness in existing graduate tracer studies, which have predominantly emphasized employment outcomes while giving comparatively little attention to the factors that hinder workforce entry.

Table 4. *Evidence on Career Trajectories of BS Criminology Graduates Across Philippine Regions*

Study	Regions	Opportunities	Employment Trends
Camal (2023)	✓	—	—
Guadamor & Eusebio (2017)	✓	—	✓
Guadamor & Eusebio (2018)	✓	—	✓
Maratas (2018)	✓	—	✓
Ruiz et al. (2020)	✓	—	✓

Legend: ✓ = Reported — = Not Reported

Among the 21 tracer studies included in this systematic review, only five reported the geographical location or region of the graduates, while only one study explicitly examined employment opportunities in relation to regional factors. The limited availability of regional data, together with inconsistencies in the reporting of employment indicators, precluded quantitative synthesis and meaningful comparison of career trajectories across regions. Consequently, the evidence was synthesized using a PRISMA-guided narrative synthesis.

The available evidence represented graduates from Region II, Region VII, Region IX, Region XI, and Basilan Province (Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao [BARMM]). Across these regions, the predominant employment pattern was permanent or regular employment, suggesting that BS Criminology graduates generally achieve stable workforce integration irrespective of geographic location (Camal, 2023). Specifically, studies conducted in Region II reported permanent employment rates ranging from 74.07% to 88.23% (Guadamor & Eusebio, 2017, 2018), while permanent employment accounted for 64% of graduates in Region VII (Ruiz et al., 2020). In contrast, one study from Region IX reported a higher prevalence of contractual employment, indicating that employment conditions may vary according to local labor market characteristics, organizational hiring practices, or the availability of permanent government positions (Maratas, 2018).

Overall, the synthesized evidence suggests that BS Criminology graduates generally experience stable employment outcomes across the regions represented in the review, with government-related occupations remaining the dominant career destination. Nevertheless, the current evidence is insufficient to establish whether regional labor market conditions, economic development, institutional capacity, or geographic mobility significantly influence career trajectories. The limited reporting of regional variables represents a substantial gap in the tracer study literature and constrains the ability to generate evidence-based regional workforce comparisons.

Table 5. *Synthesis of Employability Outcomes of BS Criminology Graduates in the Philippines in terms of Employment Duration, Employment Relevance, and Professional Eligibility*

Study	Time to Employment	Job Relevance	Eligibility
Salas (2022)	✓	✓	✓
Aydinan (2019)	✓	✓	—
Ayeo-eo (2020)	✓	✓	—
Cosmiano et al. (2023)	✓	✓	✓
Din et al. (2023)	✓	✓	—
Maratas (2018)	✓	✓	✓
Pacatang (2016)	✓	✓	—
Procurato et al. (2024)	✓	✓	✓
Refugia (2021)	✓	✓	—
Ruiz et al. (2020)	✓	✓	✓

Legend: ✓ = Reported — = Not Reported

Among the 21 tracer studies included in this systematic review, 10 contributed evidence to the synthesis of employability outcomes. These studies examined three principal indicators of graduate employability: (1) length of time to secure employment, (2) employment relevance to the field of criminology, and (3) professional eligibility used in obtaining employment. Considerable heterogeneity was observed in the operational definitions, measurement approaches, and reporting of these indicators across studies. Consequently, quantitative

pooling through meta-analysis was not feasible, and the findings were integrated using a PRISMA-guided narrative synthesis.

The synthesized evidence indicates that BS Criminology graduates generally transition into the workforce within the first year after graduation, although the duration required to obtain employment varied across institutions. Three studies reported that the largest proportion of graduates secured employment within 1–6 months (Procurato et al., 2024; Cosmiano et al., 2023; Bautista et al., 2020; Ayeo-eo, 2020; Aydinan, 2019; Maratas, 2018), ranging from 42.86% to 64.91%, while another study found that 46.0% obtained employment within five months or less. An additional study reported that 63.89% of graduates were employed within one year after graduation. Conversely, four studies indicated that the greatest proportion of graduates obtained employment one to two years after graduation (Din et al., 2023; Salas, 2022; Refugia, 2021; Ruiz et al., 2020; Guadamor & Eusebio, 2017, 2018; Pacatang, 2016), with reported percentages ranging from 30.29% to 89.00%. These variations are likely attributable to differences in regional labor market conditions, institutional characteristics, graduate cohorts, and the availability of positions within government criminal justice agencies. Nevertheless, the overall pattern suggests that the majority of BS Criminology graduates successfully enter the workforce within a relatively short period following graduation, reflecting a generally favorable transition from higher education to employment.

The reviewed evidence consistently demonstrates a strong alignment between graduates' employment and their academic preparation. Across the included studies, employment relevance ranged from 59.14% to 94.44%, with most reporting that more than two-thirds of graduates were employed in occupations directly related to criminology. The highest level of alignment was reported by Salas (2022), in which 94.44% of graduates were employed in positions classified as highly relevant to their degree. Although one study found that 36.11% of graduates were uncertain about the relevance of their employment, and another reported that 39.00% were employed in positions considered extremely relevant, the overall evidence indicates that the BS Criminology curriculum effectively prepares graduates for careers within the criminal justice system. The consistently high levels of employment relevance further suggest that the competencies acquired during undergraduate education correspond well with the knowledge and skills demanded by employers in the sector.

Professional licensure emerged as the most consistently reported facilitator of graduate employability. Across the reviewed studies, the Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE)—also referred to as the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) Board Examination or the Board Examination under Republic Act No. 6506—was identified as the principal professional qualification supporting employment in criminology-related occupations. The proportion of graduates reporting professional licensure as the basis for employment ranged from 45.45% to 89.36%, with most studies reporting values exceeding 69%. These findings reinforce the pivotal role of professional licensure in facilitating access to careers within law enforcement and other criminal justice agencies and demonstrate the continuing importance of licensure examination performance as an indicator of graduate employability.

Collectively, the synthesized evidence indicates that BS Criminology graduates in the Philippines exhibit consistently favorable employability outcomes. Most graduates obtain employment within one year after graduation, secure positions that are closely aligned with their academic preparation, and rely on professional licensure as a critical pathway to workforce entry. These findings provide converging evidence that the BS Criminology curriculum effectively equips graduates with the competencies, professional qualifications, and disciplinary knowledge required for successful integration into the Philippine criminal justice workforce.

5. Conclusion

This systematic review synthesized the available evidence on the employability of Bachelor of Science (BS) Criminology graduates in the Philippines using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) framework. Overall, the evidence indicates that BS Criminology graduates demonstrate generally favorable employability outcomes, characterized by high employment rates, successful transition into the workforce, substantial employment within government criminal justice agencies, and strong alignment between academic preparation and occupational placement. The review further demonstrates that communication skills, interpersonal competence, critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and disciplinary knowledge consistently emerged as the competencies most closely associated with successful employment. Professional licensure through the Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE) also remains a critical gateway to employment, reinforcing its importance in graduates' integration into the Philippine criminal justice workforce.

Despite these positive findings, the review identified several important evidence gaps. Information on employment challenges, regional career trajectories, and detailed occupational classifications was reported in relatively few studies, limiting the comprehensiveness of the available evidence. Moreover, substantial methodological heterogeneity was observed across the included tracer studies, particularly in the operational definitions of employability, measurement of outcomes, reporting formats, and tracer study methodologies. These inconsistencies prevented quantitative synthesis through meta-analysis and limited the comparability of findings across institutions. Accordingly, the conclusions of this review should be interpreted in light of the methodological diversity of the primary studies and the uneven reporting of key employability indicators.

The findings have important implications for higher education institutions, curriculum developers, quality assurance agencies, professional organizations, and policymakers. The generally positive employability outcomes suggest that the BS Criminology curriculum remains responsive to the workforce requirements of the Philippine criminal justice system. However, the recurring emphasis on communication, critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and interpersonal competencies highlights the need for continuous curriculum enhancement that integrates both technical and transferable skills. Likewise, the consistent reliance on government employment underscores the importance of strengthening partnerships between higher education institutions and criminal justice agencies while simultaneously expanding graduates' career opportunities in private security, corporate investigations, cybersecurity, forensic services, corrections, community safety, and other emerging sectors.

This review also underscores the need to strengthen the methodological quality of graduate tracer studies in the Philippines. Future investigations should adopt standardized national tracer study frameworks with uniform definitions and validated indicators for employment outcomes, competencies, career pathways, employment challenges, regional mobility, professional eligibility, occupational classifications, job relevance, and time to employment. Standardized reporting would substantially improve cross-study comparability, facilitate future meta-analyses, and generate more robust evidence for institutional benchmarking and national policy development. Future research should likewise examine the long-term career progression of criminology graduates, salary progression, employment quality, job satisfaction, geographic mobility, underemployment, emerging competencies associated with digital transformation and artificial intelligence, and the employability of graduates in non-traditional criminal justice careers. Comparative and longitudinal tracer studies involving multiple institutions and regions would further strengthen understanding of graduate employability and provide more comprehensive evidence to inform curriculum innovation and workforce planning.

Although this review followed internationally recognized PRISMA 2020 guidelines and employed a systematic, transparent, and reproducible review process, several limitations should be acknowledged. The review relied exclusively on published, peer-reviewed studies that were available in full text, which may have introduced publication bias and excluded relevant gray literature or institutional tracer reports. Furthermore, the review was limited to studies conducted in the Philippine context, restricting the generalizability of the findings to other countries or educational systems. Nevertheless, by systematically integrating the available evidence, this review provides the most comprehensive synthesis to date of the employability of BS Criminology graduates in the Philippines and establishes a stronger evidence base for curriculum evaluation, graduate outcomes assessment, and evidence-informed policymaking in criminology education.

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7. Acknowledgements (Optional)

8. Author Declaration

This study is an original work.

This study has no conflict of interest.