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Article

Relevance of Education and Challenges in the Job Market: Results of Tracer Study of Graduates of 2022

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A B S T R A C T

This study aims to evaluate the relevance of master's degree (S2) education to the challenges in the workforce through a tracer study of graduates from the year 2022. A tracer study is a survey conducted to gather data on graduates' perceptions regarding the alignment of their S2 education with job requirements and career development. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 72 graduates, with a response rate of 100%. The results show that all respondents were employed before starting their S2 education. Of the 52 respondents who answered, 43 (82.7%) stated that their S2 education was aligned with their job requirements and assisted in career development. Additionally, 26 (50%) graduates felt that higher-level education was needed for more advanced career positions. Meanwhile, 3 (5.8%) respondents indicated that their current jobs only required lower-level education. These findings indicate that S2 education plays a significant role in professional career development, although there is a noted need for further education at higher levels for certain positions. Recommendations include enhancing cooperation between educational institutions and industries to align curricula with specific job requirements and providing advanced education programs relevant to professional career demands.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is the primary foundation in shaping a competitive human resource that contributes to the progress of society and the nation. More than just a teaching process in the classroom, education also has a significant impact on the lives of students and alumni after they complete their studies and leave the educational institution (Wahab, 2022). The role of alumni is very important in improving the quality of education at their institutions; they can provide constructive feedback to the institution, which helps in evaluating how well the educational curriculum applied during college meets the needs of the industry (Rizka et al., 2018). In addition, the companies where the alumni work also play a role in enhancing the quality of educational institutions. Companies provide assessments of the performance of their alumni, which also contributes to the improvement of education quality. Amidst the increasingly intense competition in the job market, the pressure to produce high-quality graduates from educational institutions is increasing—this drives universities to work harder to produce quality graduates (Ujiasih, 2013).

The ability to produce graduates who can compete both nationally and internationally is one of the benchmarks for the success of an educational institution. The relevance of education is also an important indicator in achieving academic performance in higher education (Purwantini et al., 2018). The increasing number of graduates each year demands a study that can track and analyze the profiles of graduates. Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA (UHAMKA) has routinely conducted Tracer Studies, especially in the Master of

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Educational Administration program under the auspices of the School of Graduate Studies (Susanti & Wibawa, 2021).

There are several internal and external factors that can influence the success of a university graduate in securing a job, including Grade Point Average (GPA) and soft skills. Other factors include the length of study, academic experience, knowledge, and job search strategies (Purnama et al., 2021). Educational institutions are also required by stakeholders to demonstrate their tangible role in educating the nation's generation by producing graduates with good academic quality and personality. Additionally, educational institutions receive valuable feedback from their alumni, which is used as an evaluation material to assess the relevance of higher education to job requirements. Information about graduate profiles is essential for assessing the effectiveness of the learning process. One method that can be used to collect information about graduate profiles is by conducting a tracer study. This study plays an important role in understanding alumni's views on their experiences (Fajaryati et al., 2015).

Tracer studies, or more commonly known as tracer studies, are conducted two years after graduation with the aim of understanding educational outcomes related to the transition from higher education to the workforce. These educational outcomes include self-assessment of skill mastery and acquisition, evaluation of the learning process, and contributions from higher education (Saif Muhammad Mussafi & Rohaya, 2022). Tracer studies also serve as a method for higher education institutions to identify potential errors in the learning and educational process (Fajri, 2016). This is highly beneficial for higher education institutions as it provides insights to evaluate the graduates they produce.

Tracer studies provide information about graduates' career success, status, income, and the relationship between the curriculum and their professional world (Fanani et al., 2017). The results from tracer studies are also one of the requirements for recognition by the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (NABHE). Tracer studies can be conducted manually or online. According to the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (NABHE), higher education is established to (1) master, utilize, disseminate, transform, and develop science, technology, and arts (IPTEKS), (2) study, explain, and preserve culture, and (3) improve the quality of life of society (Noveandini et al., 2020).

Every educational institution is required to conduct a tracer study (Trimurtini et al., 2019). Through tracer studies, education providers can assess the quality of educational program services based on alumni evaluations (I. M. A. D. Saputra et al., 2019). Additionally, there are three benefits of conducting tracer studies, namely: 1) collecting data on stakeholder satisfaction levels; 2) obtaining relevant input as a basis for institutional development; 3) enhancing the relationship between graduates and institutions (Masrizal et al., 2021). Therefore, tracer studies can help educational institutions in preparing graduates to tackle problems, producing competent and industry-relevant graduates, and improving the curriculum and learning system. Moreover, tracer studies are expected to enhance graduates' ability to prepare for the workforce by providing relevant training (Rahmawati et al., 2022). Based on the above explanation, this research will conduct a tracer study on the alumni of the Master's Degree in Educational Administration at UHAMKA who graduated in 2022. This research is an effort to improve the quality of educational program services and the competence of graduates of the Master's Degree in Educational Administration at UHAMKA.

METHOD

Research Design

This research uses a quantitative approach with a tracer study method to evaluate the relevance of master's level education (S2) to the challenges in the workforce.

Population and Sample

Population: Graduates of 2022 from the Master's Degree in Educational Administration at UHAMKA. The sample includes the entire population.

Data Collection Instrument

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Questionnaire: Developed to collect data regarding graduates' perceptions of the suitability of their S2 education with job requirements and career development.

Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire is distributed to the 2022 graduates of the Master's Degree in Educational Administration at UHAMKA. Data collection is conducted through an online survey questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data is analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency, mean, and percentage to describe graduates' perceptions.

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FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Current Employment Status of Graduates

Working (full time / part time)	70
Not yet able to work	0
Self-employed	2
Continuing Education	0
Not working but looking for work	0

The "Current Employment Status of Graduates" graph shows that the majority of graduates, namely 97.2%, have entered the workforce after completing the study program. Out of a total of 72 respondents, 70 graduates are working either full-time or part-time, while the other 2 graduates have chosen to become entrepreneurs. The high participation rate of graduates in the job market indicates that the study program has been successful in preparing them to enter the workforce. The presence of graduates who have chosen to become entrepreneurs also reflects the program's ability to develop entrepreneurial skills among its students. This shows that the graduates have successfully applied the knowledge and skills acquired during their studies in various work contexts, both as employees and as independent entrepreneurs. Therefore, the results of this graph indicate that the study program has made a significant contribution in preparing its graduates to face challenges in the job market.

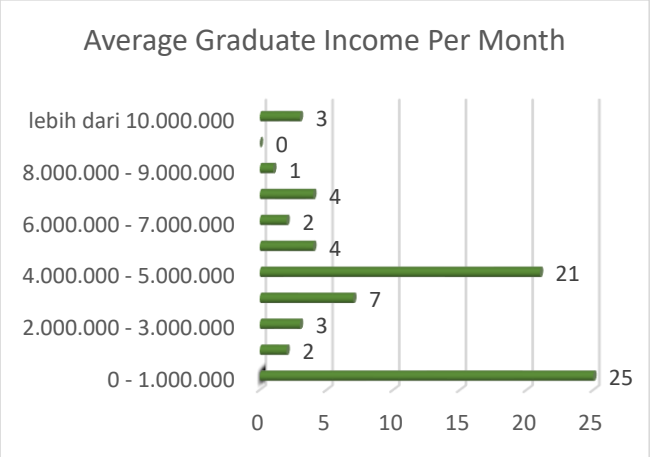

Figure 1. Average Graduate Income in a Month

The chart "Average Monthly Income of Graduates" provides an overview of the income distribution among graduates after entering the workforce. Out of 72 respondents, the majority, totaling 34 people (47.2%), have a monthly income of less than 4 million rupiah. Among them, 25 individuals (34.7%) earn less than 1 million rupiah, while 9 individuals (12.5%) earn between 1 million and 3 million rupiah. Furthermore, 21 graduates (29.2%) have an income between 4 million and 5 million rupiah, indicating a significant proportion of graduates earning within this range. A small number of graduates earn above 5 million rupiah per month, with only a few earning over 10 million rupiah. From this chart, it can be concluded that most graduates have relatively low monthly incomes, while only a few earn

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higher incomes. This suggests a significant variation in graduate income levels, which may be influenced by factors such as career field, work experience, and higher education levels.

Table 2. Types of Companies/Institutions Where Graduates Currently Work

Government institution	48
State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN / BUMD)	0
Multilateral institutions/organizations	7
Non-profit organizations/NGOs	2
Private companies	2
Entrepreneur/self-owned business	3
Other	7

The chart "Types of Companies/Organizations/Institutions Where Graduates Currently Work" provides an overview of where graduates work after completing their studies. Of the 72 respondents, the majority, totaling 48 people (66.7%), chose to work in government institutions. This shows that most graduates prefer a career in the public sector, reflecting their interest in contributing to community development and service. In addition, a small number of graduates opted to work for multilateral institutions or organizations (9.7%), non-profit organizations (2.8%), private companies (2.8%), or start their own business (4.2%). Although the proportion of graduates working in the private sector or as independent entrepreneurs is relatively small, their presence indicates variation in career preferences among graduates. Furthermore, 7 people (9.7%) selected the "other" category, which may include various jobs or careers not listed in the previous categories. From this chart, it can be concluded that most graduates tend to pursue careers in government, while a small number choose to work in the private sector, non-profit organizations, or start their own businesses. This demonstrates a diversity of career choices among graduates, influenced by factors such as interests, values, and available opportunities in the job market.

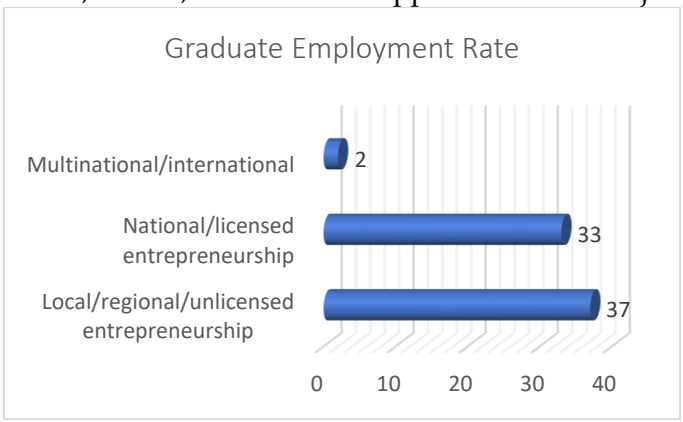

Figure 2. Graduate Employment Levels

The chart "Graduate Employment Levels" provides an overview of the distribution of where graduates work after completing their studies. Out of 72 respondents, the majority, totaling 37 people (51.4%), chose to work at the local or regional level, or as self-employed. This indicates that most graduates prefer to build their careers at a more local or regional level, which may reflect their interest in developing careers in environments more connected to their communities. Additionally, 33 graduates (45.8%) chose to work at the national level or as licensed entrepreneurs. Although the proportion of graduates working at the national level is slightly lower than those working at the local level, their presence demonstrates an interest in pursuing careers at broader levels, including the national or larger regional scale. Furthermore, 2 graduates (2.8%) chose to work at multinational or international levels. Although the proportion is small, the presence of graduates working at the international level shows that some are interested in or have the opportunity to explore careers globally. From this chart, it can be concluded that most graduates prefer to build their careers at the local or national level, with a few opting for international careers. This highlights variation in graduate career preferences, influenced by factors such as interests, opportunities, and individual career aspirations.

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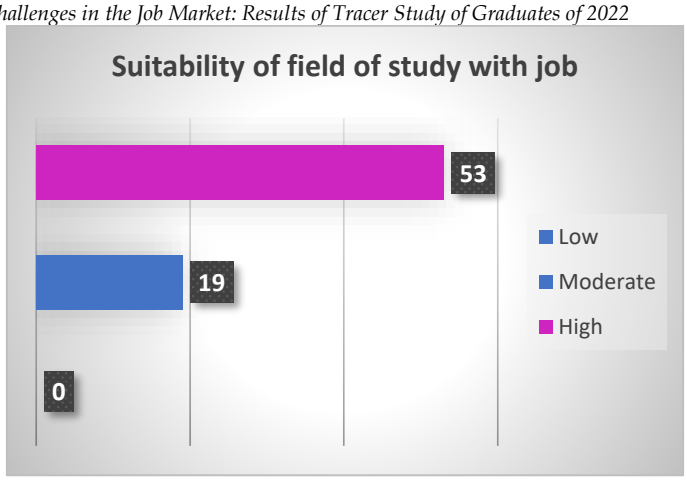

Figure 3. Relevance of Study Field to Work

The chart "Relevance of Study Field to Work" shows graduates' perceptions of how much their field of study aligns with their current work. Out of 72 respondents, 74% stated that the relevance of their study field to their current job was high. This indicates that the majority of graduates believe that the education they received prepared them with knowledge and skills relevant to working in fields aligned with their major or study program. Meanwhile, 26% of graduates stated that the relevance was moderate. While there are still a few graduates who feel that the alignment between their field of study and their current job is only moderate, these results show variation in their perceptions of the relevance of their education to their job. From this chart, it can be concluded that most graduates feel that their education aligns with the demands and requirements of their jobs, although some feel that the relevance is only moderate. This highlights the importance of educational programs that are relevant and aligned with labor market demands to better prepare graduates for entering the workforce.

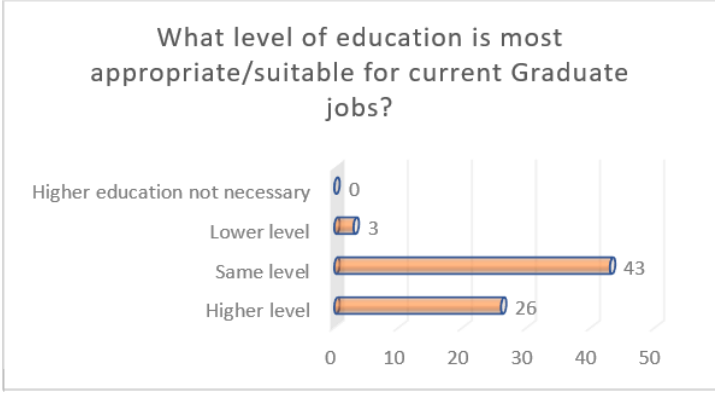

Figure 4. The Most Appropriate Education Level for Current Graduates' Jobs

The chart "The Most Appropriate Education Level for Current Graduates' Jobs" reflects graduates' preferences regarding the education level they consider most suitable for their current jobs. Out of a total of 72 respondents, the majority, 43 people or around 59.7%, answered that the same education level they currently possess is considered most appropriate for their current job. This indicates that most graduates believe their current education has provided them with sufficient knowledge and skills to pursue a career in their field. Additionally, 26 people or around 36.1% of graduates answered that a higher education level would be more appropriate for their current job. Although fewer than those who chose the same education level, the presence of graduates who see further education as a more suitable option highlights a need for further development in their specific field. On the other hand, only 3 people or around 4.2% of graduates felt that a lower education level would be more appropriate for their current job. Although the proportion is small, this shows that some graduates may feel that a lower education level is still adequate for supporting their current job. From this chart, it can be concluded that the majority of

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graduates believe their current education level is already appropriate for their job, though some see value in pursuing further education.

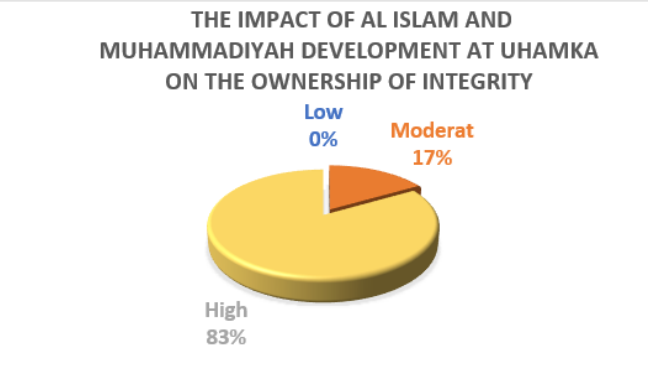

Figure 5. The Impact of Al-Islam and Muhammadiyah Studies at UHAMKA on Integrity

The chart "The Impact of Al-Islam and Muhammadiyah Studies at UHAMKA on Integrity" reflects graduates' perceptions of the influence of religious and Muhammadiyah studies programs at Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA (UHAMKA) on their understanding and possession of integrity. Out of a total of 72 respondents, 83% stated that these programs had a significant impact on their integrity. This suggests that most graduates believe that the religious and Muhammadiyah studies at UHAMKA have successfully shaped their character, enabling them to possess a high level of integrity in both personal and professional life. Meanwhile, 17% of graduates felt that the impact of these programs was only moderate. Although their proportion is smaller, the presence of graduates who feel the impact was moderate indicates that there is variation in perceptions regarding the effectiveness of these religious programs in shaping individual integrity. From this chart, it can be concluded that the majority of UHAMKA graduates believe that the religious and Muhammadiyah studies programs at their university have successfully helped them develop a high level of integrity, although some see the impact as moderate. This highlights the importance of a holistic approach to education, not only focusing on academics but also on building strong moral character and values.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the data presented in various charts related to service satisfaction and graduate profiles, several important conclusions can be drawn. First, student satisfaction with services at Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA (UHAMKA) appears to be quite high, both in academic and non-academic services. This reflects UHAMKA's commitment to providing a supportive and student-friendly learning environment. Second, the graduate profiles indicate that most graduates have successfully entered the workforce with adequate earnings, although some are still earning below the Regional Minimum Wage (UMR). Nevertheless, the majority of graduates feel that their level of education is aligned with the needs of their current jobs, signaling the relevance of UHAMKA's education to the demands of the job market. Additionally, the charts show that most graduates are employed in the public sector, highlighting UHAMKA's contribution to producing human resources needed in the public sector. However, some graduates have chosen entrepreneurship or private sector employment, demonstrating the flexibility and diversity of career options available to UHAMKA graduates. Overall, these findings provide a positive overview of the quality of educational services and UHAMKA's contribution to shaping graduates ready to compete in the workforce. However, there are also areas for improvement, such as increasing graduate earnings and diversifying career opportunities. Therefore, the results of this tracer study can serve as a foundation for UHAMKA to enhance the quality of education and services they provide, continuing to make a positive impact on students and the broader community.

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