

# A Graduate Tracer Study for the Bachelor of Arts in Theology Program of King's College of the Philippines, Benguet

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**ABSTRACT:** *Acknowledging the requirements set forth by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and accrediting agencies, the researchers identified a crucial need for this study. This study examines the career trajectories and ministerial engagement of Bachelor of Arts in Theology graduates from King's College of the Philippines between 2014 and 2020, evaluating the applicability of their theological training. Using an explanatory sequential design, the research combined descriptive surveys and semi-structured interviews, targeting 89 graduates. Out of the 87 participants who responded, 68 provided complete data for analysis. Data was collected using a modified CHED tracer template via physical distribution, email, and online platforms. The analysis employed descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Key findings indicate that 76.47% of graduates are in ministry roles such as senior pastors, youth leaders, and worship directors. Due to limited financial remuneration from small congregations, most graduates work part-time and seek supplementary secular employment. The curriculum demonstrated high applicability in teaching, personal development, and community relations, though pastoral counseling ranked slightly lower. Graduates acknowledged the program's effectiveness in preparing them for ministry and bi-vocational careers, including education and social services roles. The study highlights the dual applicability of the program to ministry and alternative careers, recommending enhancements to the internship period, curricular updates, and increased post-graduation support to address the financial and professional challenges faced by theology graduates.*

**Keywords:** Bachelor of Arts in Theology, Career Trajectories, Curriculum Applicability, Ministerial Engagement, Theological Education

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of The Study

Theology, once celebrated as the "queen of all sciences" during the Middle Ages, has significantly declined in prominence in the modern era. As van den Brink (2019) noted, this shift stems mainly from secularizing European universities, which has marginalized theology in academic settings. Supporting this perspective, Glanzer (2011) highlights how many institutions now prioritize secular disciplines over theological studies.

However, theology remains resilient, evolving through new methodologies and applications. For instance, Joseph (2024) explores how innovations like ethnographic ecclesiology allow theology to maintain relevance by addressing contemporary issues within the church and society. Additionally, Christian institutions worldwide continue to offer robust theology programs, preparing graduates for diverse roles in ministry and beyond (Otokola 2017; Fleming 2024).

In the Philippines, the need for theologically well-educated ministers has led to the establishment of formal programs, such as the Bachelor of Arts in Theology at King's College of the Philippines. This program, recognized by the Philippine Commission on Higher Education, aims to produce leaders equipped to address the evolving challenges of the church's mission while also providing graduates with opportunities in the public and private sectors.

Despite its challenges, theology continues to adapt and contribute to academic discourse and practical applications. This paper examines theology's evolving role, focusing on its academic and societal relevance, particularly in preparing leaders for ministry and other fields.<sup>1</sup>

## **1.2. Significance of the Study**

In line with the expectations set by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), higher educational institutions must ensure their graduates are employable and capable of contributing meaningfully to their respective fields. Graduate tracer studies have become indispensable in evaluating the success of academic programs, as they provide essential data on the status, employment characteristics, challenges faced by graduates, and the relevance of their skills in current roles (Salas et al. 2022). Additionally, these studies are critical to the accreditation processes of higher education programs by various accrediting agencies in the Philippines.

This study addresses the need to evaluate the BA Theology program at King's College of the Philippines, introduced in 2010, to assess its effectiveness in preparing graduates for roles in Christian ministries and other professional fields. Since the program's inception, limited data has been available regarding its outcomes and impact, creating a gap in understanding its alignment with CHED standards and accreditation requirements.

The primary objective of this research is to assess the outcomes and impact of the BA Theology program, specifically focusing on its first batch of graduates from 2014 to 2020, totaling 89 individuals. Through this study, the following achieved the specific objectives:

1. Determine the percentage of BA Theology graduates involved in Christian ministries:
  - a. Quantify the proportion of graduates engaged in ministry roles to assess the program's effectiveness in preparing church leaders
2. Assess BA Theology graduates' involvement in Christian ministries by ministry position, time allotment, and financial remuneration.
  - a. Identify the specific roles and positions graduates hold.
  - b. Analyze the time commitment of graduates to ministry work.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. <https://kcp.edu.ph/academics/bachelor-of-arts-in-theology/>

- c. Review the financial compensation associated with ministry roles.
3. Evaluate the applicability of the BA Theology curriculum to graduates' ministry or work involvement:
  - a. Examine how well the curriculum prepares graduates for their current roles and identify areas for improvement.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1. Research Design**

This study employs an explanatory sequential design, integrating descriptive surveys and semi-structured interviews to understand graduate outcomes comprehensively. The design offers a quantitative overview of graduates' employment and ministry roles, and enriched by qualitative insights into their experiences and the curriculum's applicability.

### **2.2. Participants**

A purposive sampling method targeted 89 graduates from 2014 to 2020. Out of this, 87 respondents were reachable (two were deceased), but only 68 responded. Respondents were selected to represent diverse ministry and secular career contexts.

### **2.3. Instruments**

A modified CHED tracer template was the survey instrument tailored to the study's objectives. Data collection methods included:

- a. Physical distribution of surveys
- b. Online platforms (email, Google Forms, and social media)

The questionnaire is divided into two parts. In the first part, we addressed the profile of the respondents, their ministry involvement or non-involvement, and the ministry status of those involved. In the second part, we focused on the applicability of the program curriculum to the respondents' ministry or work setting.

### **2.4. Statistical and Data Analysis**

The data analysis in this study primarily employed various statistical methods, including frequency counts, percentages, and means. Survey responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while thematic analysis was conducted on the written interview data. The findings were then tabulated and ranked according to their applicability to ministry or secular roles.

### **2.5. Procedure**

Data collection involved distributing questionnaires in person and through email, Google Forms, and various social media platforms to reach the intended respondents. Further personal, phone or online interviews were conducted with the concerned respondents when some

answers needed clarification. The data collection process was temporarily interrupted but successfully resumed and conducted between January 2022 and February 2023.

**Table 1. Evaluation Scale**

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Extent of Applicability</b>
3.26-4.00	Very High Applicability
2.51-3.25	High Applicability
1.76-2.50	Moderate Applicability
1.00-1.75	Low Applicability

### 2.6. 2.6. Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed of the study's purpose, and voluntary participation was emphasized. Data confidentiality was maintained, and all records were securely stored to prevent unauthorized access.

### 2.7. Limitations

This study acknowledges potential limitations, including reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce bias, and challenges in reaching all graduates, potentially affecting the generalizability of the findings.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 3.1. Graduates' Involvement in Ministry

Table 2 presents the involvement or non-involvement of BA Theology graduates of 2014-2020 in ministry:

**Table 2: Ministry Involvement or Non-Involvement**

<b>Graduates Involvement</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Involved in Ministry	52	76.47
Not Involved in Ministry	16	23.53
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>100</b>

There were 87 intended respondents in this study, but only 68 turned in the interview and survey questionnaires. Fifty-two (52) answered affirmatively, "Are you currently involved in a Christian ministry?" This is equivalent to 76.47 percent. On the other hand, 16 respondents, or 23.53 percent, answered negatively. This means that the theology program is doing fairly in its reason for establishment. It suggests that many students enroll in the theology program to use their theological education in ministry work.<sup>2</sup>

However, it is also to be noted that though theological training does not necessarily require a graduate to have a ministry as their primary vocation or profession, it is expected that

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Abner, "What are the Best Theology Careers?" (2023).

graduates of theological schools should not fail to engage in whatever form of Christian ministry, particularly in the church setting. Thus, the 23.53 percent who admitted that they are not involved in any ministry or even connected to any church sparked interest in further investigation. Nine respondents reported that they could not commit to a ministry because of their secular work or other engagements to supply their financial needs.

In line with this, Zungu and Mpfu (2022) emphasize the necessity of rethinking theological training as a form of ministerial empowerment tailored for contextual missions. They highlight the importance of theological education being relevant, contextual, and responsive to community needs. They argue that equipping leaders with the necessary strategies for transforming communities is critical, reinforcing that theological education should not solely prepare individuals for traditional ministry roles but also empower them to engage in various forms of Christian ministry and community transformation. This supports the importance of ensuring that graduates of theological programs remain engaged in ministry work, even if their primary employment lies in the secular realm.

In the Philippine context, many Protestant and evangelical churches are not big congregations and, thus are financially well-off. In numerous instances, congregations consist predominantly of ordinary believers, and the financial contributions collected are often insufficient to support a church worker adequately, let alone their family. Thus, one respondent reported, "I am currently busy with my work and raising my kids. I also help my partner in her online business." Even in wealthier countries, many pastors are underpaid. In a 2015 survey of more than 4,000 pastors in the US, Robinson (2018) writes, "More than three in four knew someone who left the ministry due to financial stress," and "many millennial pastors, a few years into the ministry, had significant doubts about continuing due to inadequate pay." Some respondents of this tracer study reported their inability to commit to any ministry due to health concerns, being occupied with reviewing for the teacher licensure examination and furthering their studies.

### **3.1.1. Bi-vocational Involvement of Some Theology Graduates**

Theology graduates have embarked on diverse career paths, reflecting their varied skills and contributions across different sectors. From teaching and ministry to various secular professions, the career trajectories of these graduates highlight their adaptability and dedication. The following narrative provides an overview of their professional journeys from 2015 to the present, showcasing the broadening roles and increasing responsibilities they have undertaken.

Graduates in 2015 embarked on roles such as Christian Values Education (CVE) Teacher and Guardian of Mangyan Ministry. Some of their work details remain confidential. Some 2016 graduates worked as Public Teachers and held leadership positions such as Youth President in the Baguio-Benguet district and youth leaders in their churches. Graduates from 2017 took on roles as Staff-Teachers and English Teachers, contributing significantly to the education sector. The graduates of 2018 continued their journey in the education field, taking up teaching roles.

2019 Graduates explored various professions, including working as sales ladies at their sister's stores, attendants in laundry shops, pursuing post-graduate education, and engaging in buy and sell activities. The class of 2020, some worked at BDO Network Bank, others as government employees.

Graduates from unspecified years pursued a range of professions such as fishermen, tourism industry workers, farmers, laundry shop workers, vegetable farmers, and those not currently employed in any work or livelihood. Some helped their centers and churches, remained in the teaching field, became home-based ESL teachers, worked as Call Center Agents, owned businesses, were self-employed, took on roles as office staff, served as Legislative Assistant Staff, joined the Philippine Army and managed farming along with sari-sari stores. Many graduates were busy with their work commitments.

### 3.2. Graduates' Status of Involvement in Ministry

Table 3 illustrates the various ministry positions held by BA Theology graduates from 2014-2020:

**Table 3: Ministry Positions**

Ministry Position	Frequency	Percent
1. Senior/Head Pastor	14	20.59
2. Assistant/Junior Pastor	13	19.12
3. Youth Pastor	4	5.88
4. Worship/Music Director	6	8.82
5. Children's Director	4	5.88
6. Other Ministry Head or Ministry Team Members (Women, S.S)	11	16.18
7. No ministry position/involvement	16	23.53
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>100</b>

The data collected indicates that 20.59% of the respondents serve as senior or head pastors, leading their congregations and supervising overall church affairs. Thirteen respondents (19.12%) are junior or assistant pastors working under the guidance of senior pastors. Four graduates (5.88%) are engaged as youth pastors, overseeing ministries for young people.

The roles of senior, junior, and youth pastors are the most common pastoral positions within local congregations. These positions are often referred to as clergy members or professional ministers in evangelical or Protestant denominations.

31 graduates (45.59%) serve as pastors, reflecting the program's success in producing graduates who take on significant pastoral roles. This success is comparable to theological schools globally.

In addition, other graduates hold positions such as music or worship directors (8.82%), children's ministry leaders (5.88%), and other ministry areas (16.18%), such as women's groups

and adult Sunday School. These roles highlight the program's recognition of individual gifts and callings, demonstrating that graduates contribute to the church's well-being in various capacities.

### **3.2.1. Other Designations of Theology Graduates in Their Churches**

From 2014 to 2020, theology graduates have embarked on diverse career paths, reflecting their varied skills and contributions across different sectors. From teaching and ministry to various secular professions, the career trajectories of these graduates highlight their adaptability and dedication. The following narrative provides an overview of their professional journeys, showcasing the broadening roles and increasing responsibilities they have undertaken.

Graduates from 2014 took on roles as Bible Class Teachers and Worship Song Leaders, enriching the church's spiritual life through music and biblical education. Additionally, they were involved in the Women's Ministry, focusing on supporting and mentoring. 2015 Graduates served as Sunday School Teachers and Adult School Teachers, engaging congregation members in biblical education and fostering spiritual growth.

In 2016, graduates assumed roles such as Volunteer Pastor and Music Adviser, contributing to pastoral care and providing musical expertise to support worship services. Graduates from 2017 took on the role of Associate Pastor, demonstrating increased trust and responsibility in overseeing ministry operations and providing spiritual guidance to the congregation.

2018 Graduates were part of the church music team, contributing as Keyboardists and enhancing their worship services through musical talents. In 2019, graduates continued to be part of the music team while sometimes preaching and teaching the youth, showcasing an adaptable approach to ministry.

The class of 2020 saw graduates taking on highly specialized leadership roles such as Youth Leader, Ashereth, Small Group Leader, and Assistant Director, highlighting their involvement in both the spiritual and organizational dimensions of church life.

Graduates from unspecified years engaged in various ministries, including Children's Ministry as Sunday School Teachers, Youth Ministry as preachers, pastoral staff, and youth pastors. Some served as church pastors, while others were involved in music ministry, Sunday school teaching for children and youth, and leading small groups. They also took on roles such as Ashereth, music coordinators with tambourines, and projector operators. Additionally, some graduates were involved in preaching during their theology studies as part of their community service and practicum experiences. Graduates held leadership positions such as vice president for youth in their home churches. They participated in music ministry and children's ministry. Roles included Lead Minister from 2017 to 2019, Song Leader, Music Ministry and Sunday School Teacher, and Christian Education. There were also involvements in the Worship Ministry, Taekwondo Ministry, Children's Ministry, and Youth Ministry.

**Table 4: Ministry Time Allotment**

<b>Time Allotment</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Full-time	19	27.94
Part-Time	30	44.12
No ministry	16	23.53
Not Indicated	3	4.41
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4 shows that a significant portion of respondents, 44.12% (30 out of 68), are engaged in ministry part-time. These respondents attribute this setup to their involvement in other livelihoods while committing to ministry work. The underlying assumption discussed earlier in this paper is that the financial remuneration provided by the church is insufficient to sustain the pastors' needs and their families. This issue is primarily attributed to the small size of Protestant congregations (Gray 2016).

Even in Western churches, the challenges of financial sustainability are notable. Trueman (2015) explains, "Bi-vocational pastoring will be the new normal for churches with 200 members or less. The cost of salaries, benefits, and pensions makes it hard for churches to cover. Added to this are the routine expenses that churches incur." While this situation is prevalent in wealthier regions, it is an even more pronounced reality in third-world countries such as the Philippines.

Regarding full-time ministry involvement, 19 respondents (27.94%) claimed this status. Among them, 9 are senior/administrative pastors, while five senior pastors are part-time. This means 64.29% of the senior pastors are in full-time ministry, contrasting with the standard expectations that most, if not all, churches should have full-time ministers. For example, 82% of the members of Presbyterian Church USA agree that it is essential that every congregation have a full-time, installed pastor (The Christian Century 2011). However, based on further conversation with some respondents who are ministering full-time, a few are contemplating turning to part-time due to limited financial remuneration from the church. Thus, regardless of the common notion that most, if not all, pastors should be full-time, the trend of part-time pastoring is rising due to said financial considerations.

### **3.3.1. Full-time, Part-time, Bi-vocational, or No Involvement in Ministry: Reasons Provided by Graduates**

The BA Theology graduates from King's College of the Philippines have diverse reasons for their levels of involvement in ministry, reflecting various personal, professional, and spiritual factors.

Several graduates have no involvement in ministry due to their need to focus on other responsibilities. One graduate works Monday to Friday and chooses to look after their children in their free time. Another is currently focused on their educational development and is still studying. Some graduates feel they do not have the calling or the capability to handle ministry well. For others, work commitments and the need to earn money for their families take precedence, leading them to prioritize their secular jobs.

For those engaged in part-time ministry, various reasons were provided. One graduate follows the assignments given by the head pastor, such as leading children's ministry, Sunday school, prayer meetings, and Bible study. Other works as a teacher/librarian in an international school in Haiphong, Vietnam, helps in the music team and leads Bible studies at a Filipino community church. Some graduates have personal businesses that support their ministry work. The constraints of work schedules and the need to provide for their families often necessitate part-time involvement.

Bi-vocational graduates manage both secular jobs and ministry roles. For example, one graduate works in public school (DEPED) while serving in ministry. Another works at BDO Network Bank and continues their ministry work. This bi-vocational approach helps graduates balance financial needs with their ministerial calling. One graduate mentioned the importance of using their God-given talent for His glory while maintaining their regular job. Another graduate, a teacher in Vietnam, highlighted the opportunity to serve in a Filipino community church while pursuing a secular career.

Graduates in full-time ministry often cite a clear sense of calling as their primary reason. They believe that serving in ministry full-time aligns with their studies and divine calling. Some graduates are involved in full-time ministry roles such as Bible class teachers, worship song leaders, and youth leaders. One graduate mentioned the importance of focusing on ministry to help and guide fellow Mangyan tribes in their faith and education. The sense of purpose and fulfillment derived from full-time ministry is a significant motivator for these graduates.

Several graduates mentioned personal and spiritual reasons for their ministry involvement. Some feel it is God's leading or a divine calling to serve in ministry. Others are motivated by a desire to help others, guide their community, or expand the chance to reach out to those who do not understand the love of God. One graduate emphasized the delight of serving in a local church and teaching the Gospel. At the same time, another highlighted the significance of being part of Christ's mission and worshipping God.

The graduates' responses also reveal challenges and transitions in their ministry journeys. Some have resigned from ministry roles due to financial needs, while others are currently on leave due to medical reasons. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted ministry involvement, with one graduate transitioning to a bi-vocational role after church gatherings were restricted. The flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances and the ability to balance ministry with other commitments are evident in the graduates' experiences.

In conclusion, the diverse reasons for full-time, part-time, bi-vocational, or no involvement in ministry among BA Theology graduates reflect their life situations, professional pursuits, and spiritual journeys. The graduates' testimonies highlight the program's success in preparing them for various roles within and beyond the church, demonstrating the adaptability and relevance of their theological education in meeting contemporary challenges.

### 3.4. Ministry Salary or Financial Remuneration

**Table 5: Financial Remuneration**

<b>Financial Remuneration</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Church Salaried	2	2.94
With Allowance Only	21	30.88
Volunteer	29	42.65
a. Volunteer without regular work	(14)	(20.59)
b. Volunteer but salaried in a Christian School/Organization	(6)	(8.82)
c. Volunteer but with Secular Work Salary	(7)	(10.29)
d. Volunteer but with Business/self-employed	(2)	(2.94)
No Ministry but with secular work	16	23.53
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>100</b>

As shown in the table above, only two respondents say they receive regular salaries from the church. They are one senior pastor and one assistant pastor, respectively. The former receives P20,000.00 (USD 352) monthly, while the other receives P15,000.00 (USD 264). Despite this, in a messenger communication with the latter, he said that with his meager salary, he is contemplating finding other work or even going overseas employment, just like many other Filipinos. This shows that having a senior or administrative pastor position does not guarantee ministers financial security, even if they serve full-time. Such a scenario could discourage others from pursuing senior pastoral roles and full-time service.

Furthermore, 30.88% of ministry employees are given allowances or honorariums only. Though these church workers receive regular amounts from the church, they do not consider it salary because it is below the minimum wage, as stated in the Philippine labor law. For example, next in rank of the two salaried pastors is a respondent that receives eight thousand pesos (P8,000.00 or around USD 141) a month from the church. During the interview, it was revealed that the pastor occasionally engages in daily-wage work, such as building construction jobs, to augment his income and support a family of four.

Many members of Philippine evangelical churches are simple folks, especially those outside the urban centers. This means that the "income" of churches through offerings or donations is not big enough to support their ministers and other church expenditures. This prompts many ministers to accept whatever their churches can afford to give or even render their services for free to avoid burdening the congregation. It could be gleaned from the table that 29 respondents, or 42.65%, are engaged in church ministries but do not receive any compensation.

The lack of financial remuneration is one of the reasons why many young people are turning away from pursuing a theology education or committing to a full-time pastorate. This has resulted in a decrease in enrollment in theological schools in the Philippines. In response, many theological schools have expanded their programs beyond aspiring clergy to appeal to working professionals, offering ecumenical and interfaith education and embracing online learning. Leaders of theological schools hope that these innovations will extend the longevity of their institutions (Post 2022). Additionally, leaders in the Philippines are shifting their schools to government-recognized programs, to produce ministers who can also work in secular fields for additional income.

Twelve (12) respondents acknowledged their involvement in secular employment alongside their ministry roles. They claim that secondary employment does not hinder their ministry responsibilities. The extent of ministry commitments often depends on the scale of the church, where activities might be limited, such as evening midweek services, Saturday visitations and worship preparations, and the Sunday worship service.

Nevertheless, despite the modest size of congregations, having full-time pastors remains advantageous. This arrangement permits pastors to dedicate more time to sermon preparation, establish developmental initiatives that can be conducted throughout the week, offer flexible support to congregants, reinforce evangelism efforts, and enhance Bible study activities, among other benefits. However, the challenge, particularly for smaller churches, is providing adequate compensation for full-time pastors.

### 3.5. Training Applicability (Curriculum Applicability)

The Bachelor of Arts in Theology program aims to produce ministers. Its curriculum equips graduates with the necessary skills and qualities to become effective ministers. The table below shows how graduates perceive the applicability of the program curriculum in their conduct of ministry or even in their secular jobs:

**Table 6: Curriculum Applicability**

Areas of Ministry	4	3	2	1	Mean	Extent of Applicability	Rank
A. Administration and Leadership	30	17	17	2	3.14	High Applicability	5
B. Preaching	32	16	13	5	3.17	High Applicability	4
C. Teaching (Sunday School, Bible Study, and the like)	37	15	10	4	3.29	Very High Applicability	1
D. Evangelism, Discipleship, and Mission	31	14	15	6	3.06	High Applicability	6
E. Pastoral Counseling	25	21	15	5	3.00	High Applicability	7
F. Children/Youth Ministry	32	16	15	3	3.17	High Applicability	4
G. Personal and Family Development	33	20	11	2	3.27	Very High Applicability	2
H. Community Relation	31	19	14	2	3.20	High Applicability	3

As shown in the table, in the different areas of ministry, the respondents perceived that their training in the BA Theology program is highly applicable, with a total mean of 3.12. This is encouraging to the school administrators and faculty that the curriculum - all the training provided, academic, practical, and spiritual – is helpful to the graduates.

Noticeably, the highest rank is in teaching, with a weighted mean of 3.29 and with verbal interpretation of very high applicability. Though Preaching is a pastor's most commonly perceived primary responsibility, teaching is also vital about the injunction of Apostle Paul to Timothy.<sup>3</sup> On the argument whether "pastors and teachers" are taken as separate or as one unit (pastor-teacher), considering Ephesians 4:11, exegetes differ. Yet most conclusions agree that "all pastors are teachers, but not all teachers are pastors (Wright 2020, 6)." This shows that teaching is an integral component of pastoral ministry.

Second in rank is the curriculum's applicability to personal and family development, with a weighted mean of 3.27 and a verbal interpretation of very high applicability. This means that the training program helps the respondents develop their character inwardly and outwardly and how they conduct themselves toward their family members. This is expected theology as it also aims to transform its students.<sup>4</sup> Corroborating this, Chiroma (2017), referencing Susan Lochrie Graham's work, asserts that the primary objectives of theological education encompass the cultivation of theological knowledge, practical readiness for ministry, spiritual and ministerial development, and personal maturity.

The third in rank is community relations, with a mean of 3.20 and a verbal interpretation of high applicability. The respondents think their training has enabled them to cultivate good relationships in society or community. This aligns with the concept that a pastor should not be detached from the community but someone who mingles with people, both members and non-members of the church. Chiroma rightly states, "Ministerial development is to be holistic, including students' personal, spiritual, academic and social development (2017, 51)." This does not mean that all pastors should be extroverts. Still, regardless of personality, pastors should know how to build good relations with others. Second Timothy 3:7 highlights the importance of pastors maintaining a positive reputation with those outside the church. Additionally, Luke 2:52 (NIV) describes Jesus, the ultimate example for preachers, as growing "in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and men."

Surprisingly, the fourth in rank is the applicability of their training in preaching and doing children and youth ministry, both of which have a weighted mean of 3.17. Preaching has been considered the foremost task of a pastor, especially among Protestants, since its beginning. It is considered the essential component of Protestant worship. As Bertolet (2015) says, "Preaching is a vital part of worship because only in preaching God's Word do we hear from God. Preaching is a means of grace in that God uses preaching His Word to nourish the believer, build the flock, and bring souls to repentance and saving faith. This is why the sermon serves as the capstone of the worship service in the evangelical church." Thus, every pastor should have

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. 1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 2:24

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Richard W. Stuebing, "Spiritual formation in theological education: A survey of the literature," *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 18 no. 1 (1999): 47-70.

a good way, if not a mastery, of delivering sermons, regardless of one's preferred sermon types and delivery styles. Surprisingly, this item did not come at the top, though being placed fourth and with a weighted mean near the top is still good. However, this can be examined further to determine how to improve the preaching training of BA Theology students.

The fifth in rank, Administration and Leadership, also falls under the verbal interpretation of high applicability, with a weighted mean of 3.14. This shows that the program is doing well in training the graduates in this area, as another significant task of a pastor is managing the church, its staff and volunteers, programs and activities, and finances. Though some larger churches have separate church administrators, most Philippine evangelical churches have their pastors as administrators.

Pastors' Other vital tasks are evangelism, discipleship, and pastoral counseling. The table shows that the respondents perceived that their training in these areas is highly applicable, with a weighted mean of 3.06 and 3.0, respectively. Protestant evangelical churches are expected to be vital in reaching out to the so-called "spiritually lost" (e.g., unchurched or unbelievers of the Gospel). Often, this starts from the pastor to the individual members of a church. In a Pew Research Center (2018) study, 94% of church leaders emphasized that leading others to Christ is an essential aspect of being a good evangelical. This is also true for pastoral counseling, especially nowadays when parishioners are beset with various challenges in their personal and family situations due to the modern pace of living, mobility, and technology. However, though there are counseling course/s for theology students or pastors, it is acknowledged that such are still insufficient to address the complex issues people encounter (Rainer 2015).

### **3.5.1. Additional Insights and Recommendations of the BA Theology Graduates**

Several graduates highlighted the profound impact of their theological education on their ministry involvement and personal development. One graduate mentioned, "Studying Theology helped me a lot even though I'm not a full-time minister. This course provides excellent training for all aspiring pastors and ministers. Further study leads us to a better ministry, especially regarding leadership and missions." This sentiment underscores the program's effectiveness in equipping students with essential ministry leadership and mission work skills.

Another graduate emphasized the versatility of the BA Theology degree, particularly for those pursuing bi-vocational careers. "To those who wish to do bi-vocational work, the BA Theology bachelor's degree can be used to apply to public schools, teaching Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (Values Education) or Social Sciences such as World Religion and other Senior High School (SHS) subjects. Additionally, if they want to pursue a master's degree, there are many branches where they could enroll." This insight suggests that the program prepares students for ministry roles and provides employment opportunities in the public education sector.

The holistic impact of the training was also noted by a graduate who stated, "The BA Theology training had a vast influence on my holistic nurturing. This training and discipline I

obtained during my education provoked my involvement and capability." This reflection highlights the program's role in fostering comprehensive personal and professional growth among students.

Graduates provided valuable feedback on areas for improvement and additional opportunities for future students. Some suggested extending the internship period to allow for more practical experience: "More time/months in the internship period." Others recommended that the college continue offering courses with Professional Education (Prof. Ed.) units and encourage Northern Luzon Presbyterian Church (NLPC) churches to send students to the College of Theology.

One graduate expressed the need for post-graduation opportunities: "I highly suggest that the school may offer great opportunities for the graduates to be adapted as ministers, teachers, staff, and the like after graduation. This would encourage them to pursue their passion as ministers or to have a relevant career." This recommendation points to the importance of providing clear career pathways for graduates to transition smoothly into their chosen fields.

The graduates' testimonies also reflect the personal and spiritual growth fostered by the program. One graduate shared, "Studying and having training in BA Theology privilegeat has been the privilege I have ever had. It helps me a lot even in a small ministry that the Lord is entrusting to me." Another emphasized the program's role in building credibility, respect, confidence, and maturity in the ministry.

The graduates' feedback indicates that the BA Theology program at King's College of the Philippines effectively prepares students for various roles in Christian ministries and beyond. The diverse career paths and the personal growth experienced by the graduates underscore the program's comprehensive impact.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Bachelor of Arts in Theology at King's College of the Philippines is offered primarily to prepare men and women for the work of the ministry. This research found that most of the graduates are involved in Christian ministries. Thus, it is encouraging to the school that the program is fulfilling the reason it was established.

Further, it is found that almost half of the graduates are involved in a higher level of ministerial engagement, i.e., as pastors or church leaders, while many others are in particular areas or ministry departments such as children's ministry, music ministry, and others.

It is also found that many are doing ministry part-time as many of them are engaged in other enterprises for their financial needs. Most churches where the graduates serve do not give them salaries but only allowances (honorarium).

Regarding the applicability of the program curriculum to the graduates' ministry or work contexts, two areas were identified as having very high applicability. In comparison, the remaining six areas had high applicability. Teaching (Sunday School, Bible Study, and others)

was highly relevant to the graduates' roles, followed closely by Personal and Family Development, which also showed significant relevance. Community Relations seemed highly applicable in preparing graduates to foster community relationships. Preaching and Children/Youth Ministry were highly applicable in the graduates' ministry work and Administration and Leadership, highlighting the importance of leadership skills in ministry roles. Evangelism, Discipleship, and Mission were also highly applicable to the graduates' evangelistic efforts. Although Pastoral Counseling ranked last, it still held high applicability, demonstrating the relevance of training in pastoral counseling. These results highlight the extensive influence of the BA Theology program on diverse facets of ministry work.

#### **4.1. Recommendation**

Considering the findings of this study, the following are the recommendations:

Firstly, for the theology faculty to inculcate to the students the importance of ministry engagement and participation in the life of the church during theological training;

Secondly, the theology faculty should be observant and informed of the current trends and development in the ministry contexts of graduates to prepare the latter for the realities of Christian ministries in the region or country and;

Lastly, the school administrators and faculty should constantly review and enhance the curriculum to better equip students in various ministry areas and engagements, such as teaching (Sunday school, Bible study, and the like), personal and family development, community relations, Preaching, children/youth ministry, administration and leadership, evangelism, discipleship, and mission, and pastoral counseling.

#### **4.2 Call to action**

Based on the findings of this study, it is clear that theological institutions and churches in the Philippines need to take a fresh look at how they approach theological education in today's rapidly changing world. It is not just about preparing people for traditional ministry roles anymore; it is about equipping them with the skills they need to succeed in various careers. To do this, churches and educational institutions should join forces to develop more flexible, relevant, and practical curricula, addressing the wide range of needs their graduates will encounter. By working together, they can help future leaders serve humanity within and beyond the church, making a positive and impactful difference in their communities.

#### **Disclaimer (Artificial Intelligence)**

Authors hereby declare that generative AI technologies, such as Large Language Models, have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript. The name of the generative AI technology is Microsoft Copilot, which Microsoft developed, and Grammarly. The input prompts provided to the generative AI technology included requests for revising the text and restructuring the content. Grammarly was used to check typographical errors, ensure

grammatical accuracy, and address plagiarism concerns. Additionally, Mendeley was utilized to manage and organize references and citations.

Details of the AI usage are given below:

1. Revising text to ensure clarity and formal tone.
2. Restructuring content for better organization and flow.
3. Checking for typographical errors, ensuring grammatical accuracy, and addressing plagiarism concerns using Grammarly.
4. Managing and organizing references and citations using Mendeley.

UNDER PEER REVIEW

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