

# A FEASIBILITY STUDY OF J.H. CERILLES STATE COLLEGE OFFERING A MASTER OF SCIENCE IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE WITH SPECIALIZATION IN CRIMINOLOGY

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**ABSTRACT:** *An advanced degree in criminal justice can open doors far outside traditional criminal justice practice, making it a highly in-demand course. This current study aimed to assess the viability of J.H. Cerilles State College to offer a Master of Science in Criminal Justice with Specialization in Criminology (MSCJ) in 2021. A descriptive survey type of research was employed as the methodology for this study. The 215 respondents from students, graduates, and professionals in the field from private and government institutions were chosen via random sampling to answer the online survey questionnaire. Management viability, market viability, operation viability, location viability, and industry viability were all evaluated. There was evidence to suggest that offering MSCJ in the college is doable, provided that the curriculum will be tailored to account for community needs and industry demands. In meeting future demand for this field of study, constant improvements in school facilities, instruction, research, and extension should be made. The methodology utilized in this study can be replicated in a future feasibility assessment, which may also include other areas that were not covered in this study.*

**Keywords:** Master of Science in Criminal Justice, specialization in criminology, market demand viability, location viability, operational aspect viability, college viability

## 1. INTRODUCTION

High-quality human resources, technology, and knowledge are the most important resources available to any nation in its pursuit of the desired level of development. Higher-education institutions (HEIs) are the primary sources of quality workforce, technological innovation, and knowledge available in any nation. Education is both a present-day necessity and a future-day demand. Global educational programs that are useful to society are urgently needed in today's globe. Offering educational programs that fulfill the needs of today while also anticipating future demand is critical, yet it is even more critical to guarantee that the programs are of high quality to be sustainable over time.

In determining the program's feasibility to be offered in HEIs, identifying the external stakeholders' demand can significantly impact how an organization conducts business and how its administration makes decisions to meet the market demand of a particular setting. For example, in the criminology program under criminal justice education in response to stakeholder qualification standards, high levels of learning competencies were the highlighted areas that correspond to the industry's demands [1].

Complex tasks, such as analyzing crime data, managing courts, and law enforcement, and maintaining peace and order require experts with interdisciplinary skills and well-prepared in the twenty-first century. The Master's Degree Program in Criminal Justice with a Specialization in Criminology (MSCJ) has been designed to tackle the problem of increasing the abilities of professionals, particularly criminology graduates, to meet this challenge. According to the program, criminology professionals would improve in terms of quality, thereby making them better suited to meet the demands of the Philippine Criminal Justice System in the 21<sup>st</sup> century[2].

The community and law enforcement sectors can take advantage of the Criminal Justice Education graduate program's numerous continuing education opportunities and benefits. Additionally, the programs educate law enforcement and forensic sectors [3]. Graduate students are often more

driven and experienced than undergraduate students, particularly after completing the four years required for an undergraduate degree. A master's degree typically includes a heavy concentration of courses from a single discipline[4]. While a bachelor's degree meets the educational requirements for many entry-level law enforcement and prison occupations, a master's degree enables professionals to pursue advanced employment and higher compensation. Moreover, the Master of Science in Criminal Justice (MSCJ) offering with specialization in Criminology program will help professionalize the Law Enforcement Agencies, private agencies, and criminologists in the academe who are willing to pursue graduate schooling. Pursuing a master's degree program will be a factor in strengthening their knowledge, attitudes, skills, and values, which will redound to an effective and quality pool of human resources in criminology responsive to the needs of the criminal justice system. Similarly, offering graduate degree programs in criminal justice is an effective way to meet the rising demands of criminal justice practitioners in addressing growing public order and safety challenges.

In the province of Zamboanga del Sur, there is a dearth of the graduate program in Criminal Justice with a Specialization in Criminology. No HEI has offered a Master of Science in Criminal Justice with a Specialization in Criminology. There are only three HEI's offering MSCJ in western Mindanao, namely, Universidad de Zamboanga, Jose Rizal State University, and Western Mindanao State University, due to the distances of graduate schools offering MSCJ, which are very far from Zamboanga del Sur province. The small number of criminology graduate programs available is insufficient to meet the needs of criminologists and other professions related to criminal justice for professional advancement and growth.

The passage of the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Act of 2016 (Republic Act No. 10912) required all professionals, including registered criminologists, to pursue educational advancement in the practice of their profession. To renew one's professional license in the Philippines, all

professionals generally engage in lifetime learning through continuing education and must meet the needed or minimal number of CPD units. Providing opportunities for lifelong learning and keeping Filipino professionals' skills up to date [5].

Besides, with the 1102 graduates produced in J.H. Cerilles State College Dumingag Campus alone starting from 2008 to 2018, graduates have limited access to uplift their educational qualification and professional development. This figure is projected to rise because of the Modified Base Pay Schedule for the Military and Uniformed Personnel approved in 2019, increasing the pay of law enforcement and uniformed personnel[6]. Considering this line of work is the targeted profession of Bachelor of Science in Criminology graduates.

Meanwhile, to begin delivering an academic program, colleges and universities must first undertake a feasibility study to determine whether the program is practicable, viable, and marketable and whether or not it will be responsive to the requirements of the local community [7]. A feasibility study on the University of Northern Philippines' offering of a Master of Science in Criminal Justice with Specialization in Criminology found significant demand and viability for the program[8].

Considering the significance of the Master of Science in Criminal Justice with a specialization in Criminology in the province, the J.H. Cerilles State College aimed to offer the program in the institution. Thus, this research was conducted to evaluate the market demand and viability of MSCJ in J.H. Cerilles State College Dumingag Campus.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This research uses a descriptive-quantitative and qualitative component with 215 respondents. Random samples of respondents were chosen for an online survey conducted using Google forms with two sections. The first part consists of questions that tackle the profile and the assessment of the program viability using a 4-point Likert scale, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Likert Four-Point Scale Range Interpretation

| POINT | SCALE RANGE | EXPLANATION       |
|-------|-------------|-------------------|
| 4     | 4.00 - 3.00 | Strongly Agree    |
| 3     | 2.99 - 2.00 | Agree             |
| 2     | 1.99 - 1.00 | Disagree          |
| 1     | 1.00 - 0.99 | Strongly Disagree |

The second section contains a qualitative description of the program's viability based on the individual's evaluation. The study's participants include students, recent graduates, and professionals from private and public sector organizations. The questionnaire utilized in this study was adapted from recently published research [9][10][7][11]. Prior to the instrument's use, professionals with specialized knowledge of the topic were consulted, and they were asked to provide feedback on the utilization of the adapted questionnaires and suggested that it is fit for utilization. The procedure of Roble and Tan [7] was employed in this study with some modifications to include the location viability and industry demand viability [11]. The online survey was done with an

opening page that outlines the intent of inquiry, identification, and affiliations of the researchers and specifies what involvement would entail before requiring participants to answer the questions[12]. The approved schedule of data gathering was set in the month of March to May 2021. The researchers abide by the provision of Republic Act Number 10173, also known as The Data Privacy Act of 2012, and the Philippines Health Research Ethics Board (PHREB) guidelines on human research. Descriptive statistics such as percentage, frequency count, and weighted mean were utilized to analyze the collected data.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this feasibility study are presented in the tables and figures shown below.

**Table 2.** Profile of the Respondents

| Profile  | (f) | P (%) |
|--|-----|-------|
| <b>Sex</b>                                     |     |       |
| Male   | 133 | 61.86 |
| Female   | 82  | 38.14 |
| <b>Age</b>                                     |     |       |
| 40-49 years old                                | 26  | 12.09 |
| 30-39 years old                                | 45  | 20.93 |
| 20-29 years old                                | 98  | 45.58 |
| Below 20 years old and below                   | 46  | 21.40 |
| <b>Civil Status</b>                            |     |       |
| Single   | 88  | 40.93 |
| Married  | 127 | 59.07 |
| <b>Educational Qualification</b>               |     |       |
| College Level                                  | 41  | 19.07 |
| Baccalaureate Degree                           | 156 | 72.56 |
| Master's degree                                | 13  | 6.05  |
| Doctorate Degree                               | 5   | 2.33  |
| <b>Agency</b>                                  |     |       |
| Government Service                             | 113 | 52.56 |
| Private Sector                                 | 58  | 26.98 |
| Not Working                                    | 44  | 20.47 |
| <b>Current Position/Rank</b>                   |     |       |
| Instructor/Professor                           | 9   | 4.19  |
| Police Officer                                 | 76  | 35.35 |
| Jail Officer                                   | 32  | 14.88 |
| Security Officer/ Other Security Practitioners | 35  | 16.28 |
| None   | 63  | 29.30 |

Table 2 shows the profile of the respondents. As shown in the table, most respondents were male (61.86%), aged 20-29 (45.58%), and married (59.07%). Regarding educational qualifications, the majority of respondents completed their Baccalaureate Degree (72.65%), were employed in the government services (52.56%), and many of these respondents worked as police officers (35.35 %), security officers/practitioners (16.28), and jail officers (14.88%). The management viability of the MSCJ program was depicted in Table 3. As shown in the table, the respondents strongly agreed (3.68) that there were faculty who were qualified to teach subjects in the MSCJ program. Furthermore, they strongly agreed (3.61) that the administration and management of J.H. Cerilles State College could oversee the program's implementation. According to the sample population, this demonstrates that management viability is conceivably possible.

Regarding the MSCJ program's marketability, the respondents strongly agreed (3.56) that graduates of BS Criminology and other related programs are interested in pursuing the MSCJ program. This further establishes the program's marketability. Additionally, respondents strongly agreed (3.23) that there are instructional facilities available for the MSCJ and suitable facilities and equipment available at the college. Consequently, the college has the necessary resources to operate and meet the needs of graduate students. Moreover, the respondents strongly agreed (3.76) that the college is very accessible for graduate students. Thus, the college's location is excellent for establishing the MSCJ program and is easily accessible.

**Table 3. Assessment of Offering Master of Science in Criminal Justice (MSCJ) in Terms of Management, Market, Operational, Location, and Demand Viability**

| Indicators  | WAM         | I                     |
|---|-------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Management Viability</b>   |             |                       |
| There are qualified faculty to handle subjects in the Master of Science in Criminal Justice?  | 3.68        | Strongly Agree        |
| The administration and management of the J.H. Cerilles State College that will handle the program are highly competent.                     | 3.61        | Strongly Agree        |
| <b>Market Viability</b>   |             |                       |
| Bachelor's Degree Graduates related to the program are interested in enrolling in Master of Science in Criminal Justice.                    | 3.56        | Strongly Agree        |
| <b>Operational Viability</b>  |             |                       |
| There are instructional facilities available for the Master of Science in Criminal Justice.   | 3.23        | Strongly Agree        |
| There are adequate facilities and equipment available in the college to open the Master of Science in Criminal Justice.                     | 3.46        | Strongly Agree        |
| <b>Location Viability</b>   |             |                       |
| The college is very accessible for graduate students.   | 3.76        | Strongly Agree        |
| <b>Industry Viability</b>   |             |                       |
| There is a demand for Master of Science in Criminal Justice graduates in the Academe, security industry and other Law Enforcement Agencies. | 3.72        | Strongly Agree        |
| Graduates of the Master of Science in Criminal Justice are highly employable in private and public institutions.                            | 3.67        | Strongly Agree        |
| The Master of Science in Criminal Justice program is highly in demand in the next 5 years.  | 3.56        | Strongly Agree        |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>3.58</b> | <b>Strongly Agree</b> |

Lastly, most respondents strongly agreed (3.72) that MSCJ graduates were in high demand in the industry and would continue for the next five years. Even more impressive was that respondents strongly agreed (3.67) that those graduates of the MSCJ program as highly employable in both private and governmental organizations. Consequently, it demonstrates that the demand for the MSCJ program is high and that it is viable for implementation in the next five years.

#### **Respondent's Intention to Enroll and Recommend the MSCJ Program**

As shown in the graph, most of those surveyed were interested in enrolling in the MSCJ program and would highly recommend it to their coworkers, friends, family, and other associates and associates they may know.

#### **MSCJ Program Respondent's Perception**

Below are the verbatim comments and suggestions of the respondents on offering the MSCJ program at J.H. Cerilles State College.

*"It would be ideal if the JHCSC MS Criminology Justice Program were located at JHCSC since this would prevent all of the province's criminology graduates from enrolling in the program in another province".*

*"Yes, it is helpful to have an opening of the MS Criminal Justice Program for the students who want to pursue and have the level of knowledge".*

*"It would be a great recommendation to open the MS Criminal Justice program because I know that this will be useful in the future, especially since there is no other place that offers this program here in Pagadian City."*

*"A master course which is very near and accessible for Criminology graduates is very relevant and helpful since we do not have to go to other provinces and do not spend so much on the financial matter".*

*"This program must be open as soon as possible so that criminologists within the region who are willing to undergo*

*master's degree will no longer travel far places to continue study. This is highly needed for us being CRIMINOLOGISTS because we all know that a master's degree is very demand for seeking a job nowadays. This is a great opportunity and advantage for people like us who belong to academic professions".*

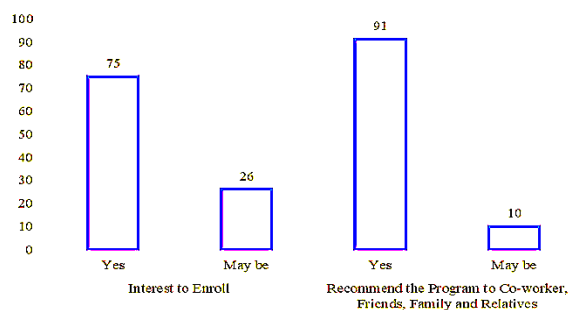
*"It is vital in law enforcement, especially today, that most of JHCSC-Dumingag, CCJE are employed in the tri-bureau, and in my position as an investigator, it will help me learn more, a continuous learning in our field".*

*"Aside from no school in Zamboanga del Sur offering such a program, MS Criminal Justice is in demand to both public and private institutions".*

*"JHCSC should offer MSCJ for the reasons; a. Accessible b. Competency of instructor c. Demands of MSCJ".*

*"JH Dumingag is highly capable and highly recommended for opening the MS Criminal Justice program."*

*"For me, I will recommend JHCSC as a school of choice for the opening of MS Criminal Justice program since many BS Criminology graduates demand to have this program that is very convenient for them in which JHCSC is not far and also if this program will be approved many graduates will enroll this program".*

**Figure 1. Interest and Recommendation of Respondents**

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

Offering an MSCJ program in the college with undergraduate feeder courses such as BS Criminology is viable, as demonstrated by the current research. According to the feasibility study findings, it is feasible for the school to establish a new program from the perspectives of management, market, operation, and location, as well as from the perspective of the industry.

The community and industry-focused curriculum at J.H. Cerilles State College can be developed using this. Improvements should be made on a regular basis in school facilities, instruction, research, and extension to meet the needs of the future. Other areas that were not examined in this study could be included in a future feasibility assessment using the same methodology used in this study.

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