

Impact of Virtual Practicum on Professional and Personal Development of 4th year Hospitality Students of EAC-Manila

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ABSTRACT

Practicums have an important role in building students' experiences with regard to their future careers as it helps a student feel an overall satisfaction in achieving their future careers. However, as of 2022, there is a great transition of modality learning with virtual learning being adapted to most schools. This change may directly have an impact on the personal and professional development of students. Therefore this study aims to evaluate the impact of internship programs on the professional as well as on personal development of Hospitality students in EAC-Manila. The data of the study considered 30 undergraduate Hospitality students of 4-year degree programs from Emilio Aguinaldo College Manila. The study used a survey questionnaire via Google form. The study employed descriptive research to evaluate the insights of the responses. Furthermore, statistical measurement analysis is used to check distribution normality of study data and reliability of the questionnaire. Based on the study that the researchers conducted some of the students have answered that virtual practicum has a moderate impact (75%) in terms of professional development of the students, while some of the students have answered that virtual practicum has a neutral impact (50%) in terms of personal development. The results of the study depict the impact of internship programs on the professional and personal growth of the Hospitality students of Emilio Aguinaldo College Manila.

Keywords: Student Performance, Virtual learning, Professional development, Hospitality students

INTRODUCTION

Practicum is designed to connect the classroom to the industry where students can apply what they learned in the context of the myriad of businesses and acquire hands-on learning working for those businesses that are part of the hospitality industry (Enghagen, 2018; Kim & Jeong, 2018; Sonnenschein, Baker, & Hibbins, 2019). According to Self et al. (2016), students who completed a practicum: a) enjoy greater job satisfaction, b) obtain initial employment more quickly, c) report higher

starting salaries than those students not participating in a college practicum, d) apply classroom material/theory to real-world situations, e) develop skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, and f) become more familiar with the industry. With this premise, we can conclude that practicum has an important role in building students' experiences with regard to their future careers. The transition of modality learning through virtual learning will definitely have an impact on the personal and professional development of students.

The impact of COVID-19 on virtual practicum was severe; Tourism, events, and hospitality programs have been putting a lot of effort into increasing the quality of the practicum experience for students since it became an integral part of the curriculum. However, the COVID-19 pandemic left no options for universities. Many universities and colleges had to pivot to convert to virtual practice quickly. Yet, little is known about virtual practicum, and empirical studies about virtual practicum are scarce

According to Glassdoor (Stansell, 2020), half of all internships (52%) in the U.S. were canceled in the spring since the coronavirus crisis began. While all industries showed declines in internship openings in the spring, the travel and tourism sectors had dropped 92% since March 2020 (Stansell, 2020). Many companies canceled their internships due to budget constraints or an inability to move to an online format. Others pivoted to virtual or remote internships as a replacement. According to an April poll conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (Nesbit, 2020), 42% of employers responded that they were changing internships to a virtual format. Tourism, events, and hospitality programs in the U.S. also had to convert internships and practicums to virtual ones.

This pandemic has taken a huge toll even in every school here in the Philippines. Because of the restrictions and guidelines set by the IATF, many schools are not yet allowed to conduct face-to-face classes. The current circumstance is unique as it could aggravate the challenges experienced during virtual practicum due to restrictions in movement and health protocols (Gonzales et al., 2020).

As a result, the Emilio Aguinaldo College of Manila has resorted to the conduct of virtual practicum — to the 3rd year and 4th year students. It started around the last quarter of 2020, and EAC Manila chose The Hospitality Institute of America (HIAP Inc.) as their program provider. The programs offered by HIAP contain various practicum skills through different multimedia presentations (e.g. videos lessons). After watching and/or reading certain lessons, there are corresponding questions that gauge the student's understanding. They are given unlimited chances to retake the tests when the students cannot get 80% of the items correctly (which is the required average for each assessment). Moreover, each question can only be answered in a limited time.

Therefore, the main objective of this research is to identify the impact of virtual practicum on the improvement of the professional and personal skills of Emilio Aguinaldo College Manila senior hospitality management students after the completion of their practicum period.

METHODOLOGY

In the procedure of obtaining the information, survey questionnaires will be given to identify the impact of virtual practicum on professional and personal development of senior hospitality students of EAC Manila.

Respondents of the Study

Senior hospitality management students of Emilio Aguinaldo College Manila were selected as the respondents of the survey with 30 participants.

Data Gathering Procedure

The study was conducted through the use of survey questionnaires constructed via Google Forms.

The questions are based on research by Andrew Vladimirovich Novotorov of Iowa State University. Respondents can answer questions through a website. They were given ten minutes to complete the form. The survey questionnaires consist of two parts. The first part was about the factors that affect professional development, and the second part was about how personal characteristics were affected by taking the virtual practicum.

A convenience sampling method was used where a sample of individuals who are 4th year students taking a course in Hospitality Management in EAC Manila. were utilized.

Statistical Treatment

The weighted mean was calculated to obtain the average by multiplying the weights with its respective mean and taking its sum. It is a type of average in which weights are assigned to individual values to determine each observation's relative importance. Spearman rho was used to determine the relationship between the variables being compared. Spearman's Rho is a nonparametric test used to measure the strength of association between two variables, where the value $r = 1$ means a perfect positive correlation and the value $r = -1$ means a perfect negative correlation

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Agreement on the Impact of Virtual Practicum on Professional Development Graph

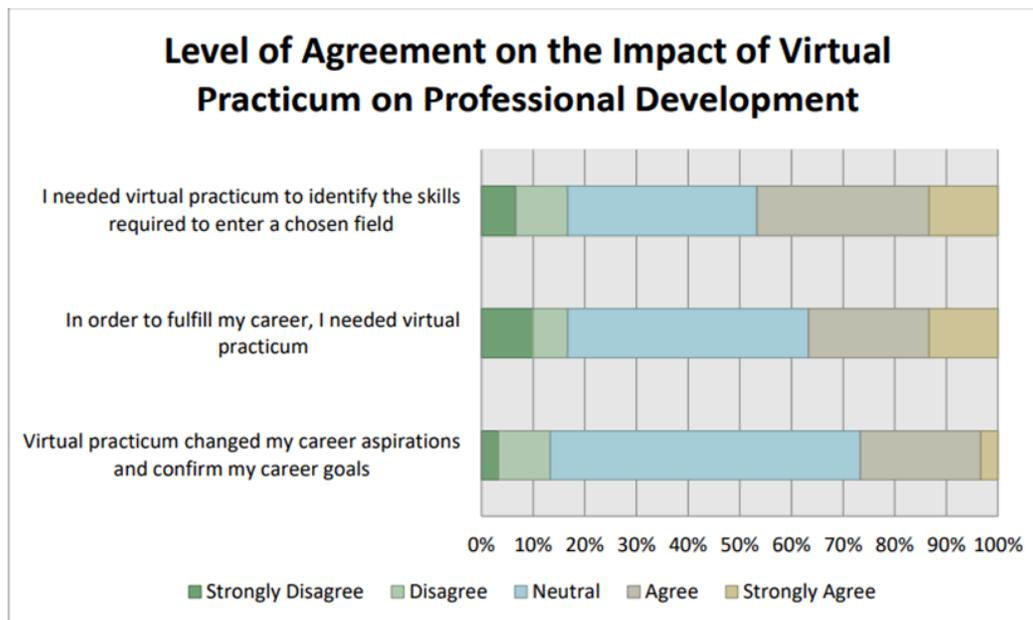


Figure 1. Answers of the respondents on Level of Agreement when it comes on their Professional Development

Table 1. Rating and the Distribution of responses on the level of agreement on the impact of virtual practicum to professional development.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Virtual practicum changed my career aspirations and confirmed my career goals.	my	1	3	18	7	1	3.13	0.78	Moderate Impact
In order to fulfill my career. I needed virtual practicum.		3	2	14	7	4	3.23	1.10	Moderate Impact
I needed virtual practicum to identify the skills required to enter a chosen field.		2	3	11	10	4	3.37	1.07	Moderate Impact

Legend; 4.21-5.00 very positive impact; 3.41-4.20 positive impact, 2.61-3.40 moderate impact, 1.81-2.60 negative impact, 1.00-1.80 very negative impact.

Table 1 shows the mean ratings and the distribution of responses for the statements pertaining to the level of agreement of the respondents to the impact of the virtual practicum to their professional development. We can see that the most frequent response per statement is neutral and the mean ratings per statement fall within the range with verbal interpretation of moderate impact. The statement about needing the virtual practicum to identify the skills required to enter a chosen field had 14 responses of either agree or strongly agree which is

only 47% of the total 30 respondents. Nonetheless, it got the highest mean rating (M=3.37, SD=1.07) among the three statements. On the other hand, the statement about having the virtual practice of changing their career aspirations and confirming career goals got the lowest mean rating (M=3.13, SD=0.78), which also got the lowest combined 8 responses (27%) of either agree or strongly disagree. These results suggest that the virtual practice generally has a moderate impact on the professional development of the respondents.

Does virtual practicum affect your development of the following professional skills?

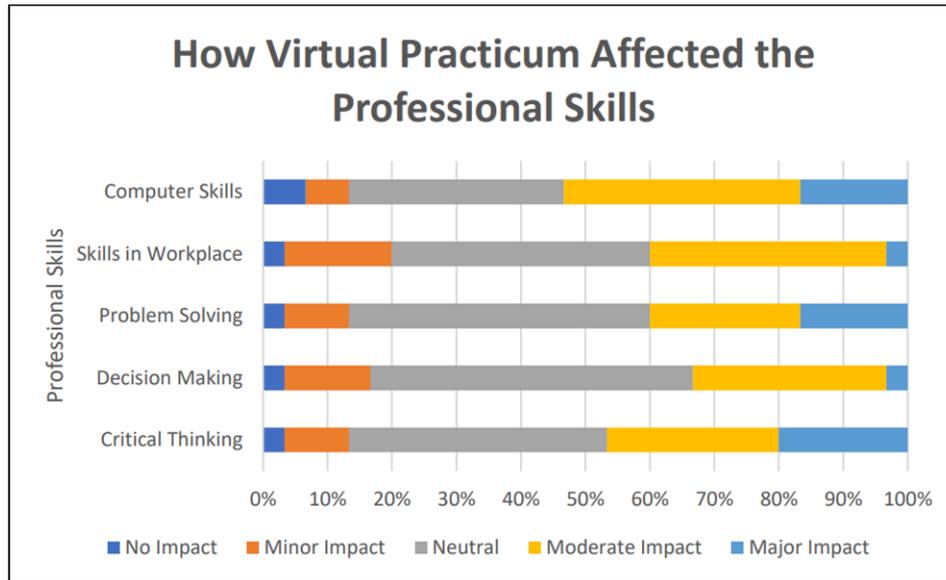


Figure 2. Answers of the respondents on how the virtual practicum affected Professional Development Skills

Table 2. Ratings and the Distribution of responses on the level of agreement on the impact of virtual practicum to professional development.

	No Impact	Minor Impact	Neutral	Moderate Impact	Major Impact	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Critical Thinking	1	3	12	8	6	3.50	1.04	Moderate Impact
Decision Making	1	4	15	9	1	3.17	0.83	Neutral
Problem Solving	1	3	14	7	5	3.40	1.00	Neutral
Skills in Workplace	1	5	12	11	1	3.20	0.89	Neutral
Computer Skills	2	2	10	11	5	3.50	1.07	Moderate Impact

Legend: 4.21-5.00 very positive impact, 3.41-4.20 positive impact, 2.61-3.40 moderate impact, 1.81-2.60 negative impact, 1.00-1.80 very negative impact.

Table 2 shows the mean ratings and the distribution of the responses on how the virtual practice affected the professional development skills

of the respondents. We can see that the most frequent response for each skill was also —neutral except for computer skills. The highest mean ratings are for

critical thinking skills (M=3.50, SD=1.04) and computer skills (M=3.50, SD=1.07) both falling under —moderate impact category. All the other skills fall under the —neutral category. These results

suggest that the respondents benefitted relatively more in terms of their critical thinking and computer skills.

Statements in this section pertain to personal development skills related to virtual practicum experiences

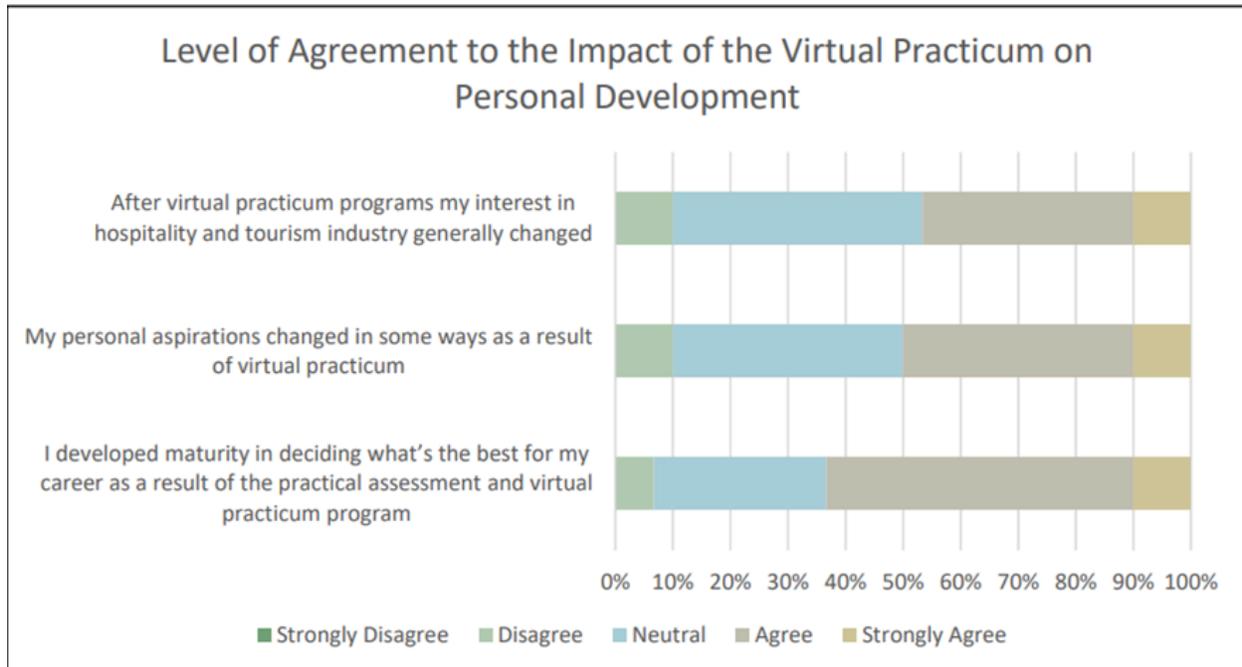


Figure 3. Answers on Level of Agreement to the Impact of the Virtual Practicum on Personal Development. Legend: 4.21-5.00 very positive impact, 3.41-4.20 positive impact, 2.61-3.40 moderate impact, 1.81-2.60 negative impact, 1.00-1.80 very negative impact.

Table 2. Ratings and the Distribution of responses on the level of agreement on the impact of virtual practicum to personal development.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
I developed maturity in deciding what's the best for my career as a result of the practical assessment and virtual practicum program.	0	2	9	16	3	3.67	0.76	Positive Impact
My personal aspirations changed in some ways as a result of virtual practicum.	0	3	12	12	3	3.50	0.82	Positive Impact
After virtual practicum programs my interest in hospitality and tourism industry generally changed.	0	3	13	11	3	3.47	0.82	Positive Impact

Legend; 4.21-5.00 very positive impact; 3.41-4.20 positive impact, 2.61-3.40 moderate impact, 1.81-2.60 negative impact, 1.00-1.80 very negative impact.

Table 2 shows the mean ratings and the distribution of responses for the statements pertaining to the level of agreement of the respondents to the impact of the virtual practicum to their personal development. We can see that the most frequent response for the first

statement about having developed maturity in deciding what's best for career is —agree with 16 responses. Combining the 16 responses of —agree and the 3 responses for —strongly agree gives a total of 19 out of 30 responses (63%) who either agree or

strongly agree to the statement. This statement also got the highest mean response ($M=3.67$, $SD=0.76$) among the three statements which are in the category of positive impact. For the second statement about —personal aspirations changed in some ways as a result of the virtual practicum| got a combined 15 responses (50%) for the options —agree| and —strongly agree| which means that half the respondents had their personal aspirations changed in some ways due to the virtual practicum. It also has a

mean rating that falls on positive impact ($M=3.50$, $SD=0.82$). As for the statement about interest in hospitality and tourism generally changing after the virtual practicum, a combined 14 of 30 responses (47%) either agree or disagree with it with a mean rating ($M=3.47$, $SD=0.82$) that falls under positive impact as well. These results suggest that the virtual practice generally have positive impact on the respondent’s personal development.

Are the following personal characteristics affected by taking the virtual practicum?

Figure 4. *Answers of respondents on how the virtual practicum affected the Personal Development Skills*

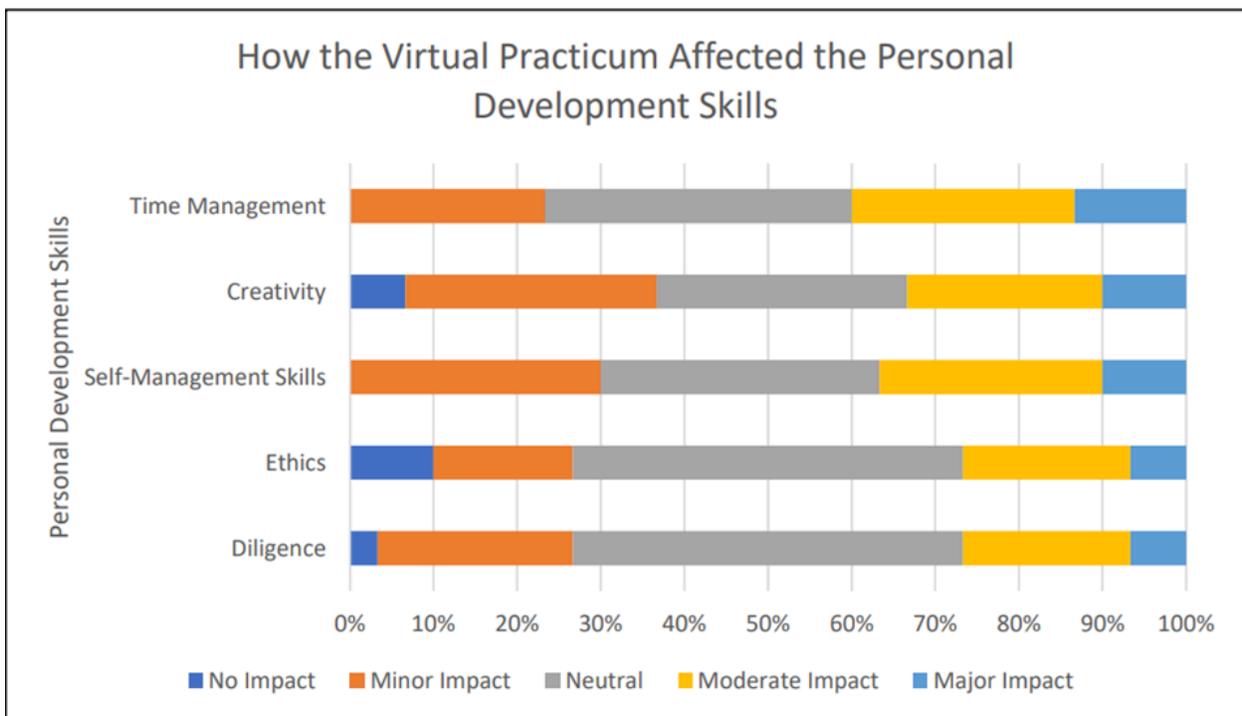


Table 3. Ratings and the Distribution of responses on the level of agreement on the impact of virtual practicum to personal development skills.

	No Impact	Minor Impact	Neutral	Moderate Impact	Major Impact	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Diligence	1	7	14	6	2	3.03	0.93	Neutral
Ethics	3	5	14	6	2	2.97	1.03	Neutral
Self-Management Skills	0	9	10	8	3	3.17	0.99	Neutral
Creativity	2	9	9	7	3	3.00	1.11	Neutral
Time Management	0	7	11	8	4	3.00	0.99	Neutral

Legend: 4.21-5.00 Major impact, 3.41-4.20 Moderate impact, 2.61-3.40 Neutral , 1.81-2.60 Minor impact, 1.00-1.80 No impact

Table 3 shows the mean ratings and the distribution of the responses on how the virtual practicum affected the personal development skills of the respondents. We can see that the most frequent response for each skill was —neutral except for Creativity which had neutral and minor impact tied with 9 responses each. The personal development skills that got the highest mean ratings were time management skills (M=3.30, SD=0.99) followed by

self-management skills (M=3.17, SD=0.99) although both of them fall under the neutral category. On the other hand, the skills that got the two lowest mean ratings were on Ethics (M=2.97, SD=1.03) and Creativity (M=3.00, SD=1.11) which suggest that the virtual practicum had the least effect on these skills which might be attributed to the virtual nature of the practicum.

Table 4. Correlation of Each Statement with the Individual Professional Development Skills

	Spearman's rho correlation	Critical Thinking	Decision Making	Problem Solving	Skills in Workplace	Computer Skills
Virtual practice changed my career aspirations and confirmed my career goals.	Correlation	.490	.450	.267	.393	0.93
	Coefficient					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.013	.154	.032	.626
In order to fulfill my career goals, I needed virtual practice.	Correlation	.447	.290	.216	.311	.320
	Coefficient					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	.120	.252	.094	.084
I needed virtual practice to identify the skills required to enter a chosen field.	Correlation	.335	.311	.245	.189	.102
	Coefficient					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.070	.094	.193	.317	.591

Table 4 shows the relationship between the individual statements and the individual professional development skills included in the study. We can see that the statement —Virtual practicum changed my career aspirations and confirmed my career goals has significant positive correlation with critical thinking skills ($r=0.490$, $p=0.006$), decision-making skills ($r=0.450$, $p=0.013$), and skills in the workplace ($r=0.393$, $p=0.032$). This means that those who have a high level of agreement on virtual practicum having

changed their career aspirations tend to have higher effect on critical thinking, decision-making, and workplace skills from their virtual practicum experience. On the other hand, the statement —In order to fulfill my career goals, I need a virtual practicum had significant positive correlation with the effect on critical thinking skills ($r=0.447$, $p=0.013$). This suggests that a higher level of agreement about the need for virtual practice to fulfill career goals is associated with a higher effect on

critical thinking skills. Lastly, the statement about —the need for virtual practicum to identify the skills

required to enter a chosen field was not correlated with any of the professional skills.

Table 5. Correlation of Each Statement with the Individual Personal Development Skills

	Spearman's rho correlation	Diligence	Ethics	Self-Management Skills	Creativity	Time Management
I developed maturity in deciding what's the best for my career because of the practical assessment and virtual practicum program.	Correlation	.585	.564	.457	.370	.284
	Coefficient					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.001	.011	.044	.128
My personal aspirations changed in some because of virtual practice.	Correlation	.423	0.387	.445	.349	.215
	Coefficient					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.020	0.35	0.14	.059	.254
After virtual practicum programs my interest in the hospitality and tourism industry generally changed.	Correlation	.166	.118	.198	.007	.153
	Coefficient					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.380	.536	.294	.972	.419

Table 5 shows the relationship between the individual statements and the individual personal development skills included in the study. We can see that the statement —I developed maturity in deciding

what's best for my career as a result of the practical assessment and virtual practicum program had significant positive correlation with Diligence (rs=0.585, r=0.001), Ethics (rs= 0.564, p=0.001),

Self-management skills ($r_s=0.457$, $p=0.011$) and Creativity ($r_s=0.370$, $p=0.044$). This suggests that higher level of agreement on the statement is associated with higher impact on the skills of Diligence, Ethics, Self-management and Creativity. As for the statement —My personal aspirations changed in some ways as a result of virtual practicum, it was found to have significant positive correlation with Diligence ($r_s=0.423$, $p=0.020$), Ethics ($r_s=0.387$, $p=0.035$), and Self-management skills ($r_s=0.445$, $p=0.014$). This suggests that higher level of agreement on the statement is associated with higher impact on Diligence, Ethics, and Self-management skills. As for the statement —My personal aspirations changed in some ways as a result of virtual practicum, it was found to have significant positive correlation with Diligence ($r_s=0.423$, $p=0.020$), Ethics ($r_s=0.387$, $p=0.035$), and Self-management skills ($r_s=0.445$, $p=0.014$). This suggests that higher level of agreement on the statement is associated with higher impact on Diligence, Ethics, and Self-management skills. The third statement did not have significant correlation with the personal development skills. In summary, these results mean respondents who developed maturity related to career due to the virtual practicum tended to improve their diligence, ethics, self-management, and creativity. On the other hand, those whose aspirations changed due to virtual practice also tend to have their diligence, ethics and self-management skills improved.

CONCLUSION

Critical thinking and computer skills have moderate impact on the professional development skills of the students; it shows that the highest mean ratings are for critical thinking skills ($M=3.50$, $SD=1.04$) and computer skills ($M=3.50$, $SD=1.07$)

However the decision making, problem solving and skills in workplace have a neutral impact on their professional development which shows in verbal interpretation. Therefore, the respondents are gaining enough professional skills ought to have from the virtual practicum.

Moreover, all characteristics in personal development have a neutral impact on the students. It shows that the personal development skills that got the highest mean ratings were time management skills ($M=3.30$, $SD=0.99$) followed by self-management skills ($M=3.17$, $SD=0.99$) although both of them fall under the neutral category. On the other hand, the skills that got the two lowest mean ratings were on Ethics ($M=2.97$, $SD=1.03$) and Creativity ($M=3.00$, $SD=1.11$) which suggest that the virtual practicum had the least impact on these skills which might be attributed to the virtual nature of the practicum.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the conducted study in professional development, it shows that the virtual practicum has a neutral effect in terms of the decision-making, problem-solving, and skills in the workplace of the students. As a result, it is recommended that the program provider offer more workshops and webinars geared toward the virtual practicum so that students can have a greater impact on professional capabilities. Program providers can invite experts to help them with this. The workshop will contain activities such as writing essays, which can help the students gain and improve their decision making, problem solving, and skills in the workplace.

While based on the conducted study in personal development it shows that the virtual practicum has a neutral effect on five characteristics;

Diligence, ethics, self management, time management, and creativity, as a result, it is recommended that the students should provide an evaluation through university organizations regarding the performance of the educational institution in conducting virtual practicum. Experts can then measure its efficiency as students aspire to be competent and proficiently- skilled in their chosen field of specialization. With these means, the students could develop their personal characteristics significantly.

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