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Describing the Experiences of the Bachelor of Science in Management Accounting Graduates as Virtual Assistants: A Case Study

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A B S T R A C T

This study describes the experiences of Bachelor of Science in Management Accounting graduates as virtual assistants. This study used a qualitative case study approach; the research gathered data from six BSMA graduates who had at least six months of professional experience as VAs. Researchers utilized a semi-structured interview guide, a primary data collection instrument, conducted via face-to-face, observation, and virtual platforms to accommodate the participants' remote work settings. A thematic analysis method was employed to analyze the data. Findings: BSMA graduates working as virtual assistants began their careers as networking, etc. The skills the BSMA graduates learn from the program help them carry out the VA roles, such as management skills, etc. The reasons/motivations of BSMA graduates to pursue careers as VA include salary, etc. The challenges faced by BSMA graduates in working as a VA include a lack of time management skills, etc. The BSMA graduates working as VAs have overcome those challenges with a strong support system, among others. The significant learnings/insights that BSMA graduates have developed from their experiences as virtual assistants include client relationship management, etc. The study concluded that BSMA graduates possess transferable skills that align with the demands of virtual assistant roles, enabling them to thrive in this career path. It is recommended that more learning opportunities be provided in virtual environments. This would give students hands-on experience in remote working and virtual assistant tasks, such as managing financial records or coordinating projects online, making them more competitive and effective in their roles post-graduation.

Keywords: *BSMA Accounting Graduates, Virtual Assistants, Online Work Environments, Work-life balance, Non-traditional career paths*

Introduction

The development of digital technology has changed the nature of work and increased demand for virtual assistants in several fields. The main subject of this study is the experiences of graduates with a Bachelor of Science in Management Accounting who have moved into virtual assistant positions. The study intends to offer important insights into how these graduates modify their accounting expertise to satisfy client's needs in a virtual context by looking at their distinct skill sets, education histories, and the challenges they encounter in this developing work environment.

This research will use a qualitative case study technique to analyze these graduates' personal and professional experiences and emphasize the competencies and strategies they use to thrive as virtual assistants. By reviewing their experiences, the study aims to contribute to a broader discussion on higher education's role in preparing students for non-traditional career choices, extremely remote jobs, and online business ownership.

Review of Literature

Virtual Assistants

Virtual assistants are known as professionals that work remotely to do a variety of activities, including personal, artistic, technical, and administrative ones. They collaborate and communicate with their clients using a range of platforms and methods, including social media, cloud-based software, phone calls, video conferences, and email (Bhaskar, 2024).

According to Kenton (2024) that operating remotely from their client's office, Virtual Assistants are independent contractors that offer administrative support to clients. Though they can access the required planning documents, such as shared calendars, remotely, virtual assistants usually work from home offices. Indeed, Gubareva and Lopez (2020) stated that virtual assistants are becoming more common and beneficial. With its many benefits, technology is assisting students with time management, information access, automation of chores, and facilitation of communication. Technology is still in its early stages. To make virtual assistants more successful, a few things need to be improved, including the engagement and motivation of students.

These days virtual assistants are used in a wide range of applications (Wang, 2023). Assistants that are virtual provide both virtual and physical support. Physical assistance is focused on task completion, whereas virtual assistant offers contextualized information in real time, mostly for support purposes. Integration with older systems and the handling of static information are examples of applications related to services (Lima et al., 2023). Virtual Assistant services are growing more and more in demand across a range of industries due to their many advantages, which include affordability, flexibility, scalability, and the opportunity to access a large and talented talent pool (Bhaskar, 2024).

Virtual employment benefits the company, the individual employee as less stress, more job satisfaction, and increased productivity, and maybe society at large such as less traffic, fewer pollution, and cheaper healthcare costs due to decreased stress and work-family conflict. Many firms have implemented new policies that allow workers to work electronically in ordser to grasp the potential benefits of this type of work. Nevertheless, data from studies and news articles suggest that a lot of workers are reluctant to take advantage of the chance to work remotely (Adamovic et al., 2021).

The ability of virtual leaders to improve the remote work environment for staff members and guide teams toward organizational objectives made them increasingly important (Dilby & Farmanesh, 2023). Virtual leaders have to acknowledge that in order to guarantee team connectedness and inclusivity, they will have to deliberately work to encourage this among their teams. In order to successfully lead their remote and hybrid teams and reduce the danger of disengagement, virtual leadership must acquire specific skill sets, which will be examined in this article (Johnson, 2024).

The use of technology to facilitate contact among geographically separated individuals in virtual work arrangements can have both beneficial and harmful effects on their psychological health (Axtell et al., 2022). AI virtual assistants notably reduced the direct and indirect relationships between transformative leadership and information sharing and then with team innovation (Akhtar et al., 2024). Virtual Assistants have become increasingly popular, which is a big step forward for AI and has a significant impact on our daily lives (Thakkar, 2023). In a time when Virtual Assistants are becoming more and more integrated into our daily lives (Paradeda et al., 2024).

Time management with a virtual assistant does not have to be difficult. It can turn the workplace into a productivity machine with the correct tactics. Setting priorities for the work and designating areas free from distractions are just the start. Taking care of oneself is crucial to staying energetic and preventing fatigue. Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is also essential. Keeping a thought record or journaling can help you stay focused and organized (Hunter, 2023)

Methodology

This study was developed to describe the Virtual Assistant job experiences of Bachelor of Science in Management Accounting Graduates. The study's primary participants were limited to Bachelor of Science in Management Accounting (BSMA) graduates across various regions, including but not limited to those in Pagadian City, Zamboanga del Sur. The researchers utilized a semi-structured and interviewed a total of 6 individuals.

The study's primary tool was the researchers, who were guided by the interview questions that the panelists and adviser had approved and confirmed in order to gather data of the Graduates students about their experiences as Virtual Assistants. The researchers' actual instrument used by the participants in the interview questions: How did the BSMA Graduates working as Virtual Assistants start their careers? What are the skills of the BSMA Graduates learned from the program to help carry out the roles as virtual assistants? What reasons or motivations lead BSMA Graduates to pursue careers as Virtual Assistants? What are the challenges faced by BSMA graduates in working as Virtual Assistants? How did the BSMA graduates working as Virtual Assistants overcome those encountered challenges? What significant learnings or insights have the BSMA graduates developed from their experiences as Virtual Assistants? The researchers recorded the entire conversation to obtain participants responses and experiences. To organize the data, the researchers employed categorical aggregation, grouping similar responses to identify patterns and themes in the participants' freelance job experiences.

Findings and Conclusion

The findings reveal that BSMA graduates effectively apply their knowledge in accounting, management, and organizational skills to their Virtual Assistant roles, particularly in financial management and project coordination.

BSMA graduates working as Virtual Assistants began their careers through various pathways such as Friends Recommendation, Online Searching, and Networking. The skills of the BSMA graduates learned from the program to help carry out the roles as virtual assistants are Management Skills, Decision Making, Time Management, and Client Interaction. The reasons or motivations of BSMA Graduates to pursue careers as Virtual Assistants are Salary, and Work-Life Balance. The challenges faced by BSMA graduates in working as Virtual Assistants such as Lack of time Management Skills, Language and Culture, and Had Technical Proficiency. The BSMA graduates working as Virtual Assistants overcome those encountered challenges by Strong Support System, Backup Plan Internet Connection, Leveraging the Benefits of Social Media Resources, and Developing the Effectiveness of Time Management Techniques. The significant learnings or insights that BSMA graduates have developed from their experiences as Virtual Assistants are Client Relationships Management, Perseverance of Time Management, and Value of Good Communication.

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