

Students' Mobility in University of Eastern Pangasinan: Basis for Guidance Placement Service Plan

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ABSTRACT

This study determined the status, profile, and major factors of students' mobility at the University of Eastern Pangasinan as basis for a Guidance Placement Service Plan. It used a descriptive research design involving 400 former students from five colleges who transferred out from Academic Year 2019 to 2023. Data were gathered through a researcher-made survey checklist, institutional records from the Registrar and Guidance Office, and enrollment data from the university information systems. Descriptive statistics summarized the respondents' profiles, mobility status, and mobility factors, while correspondence analysis examined associations between student profiles and mobility factors. Findings showed that

most respondents were 17–19 years old, female, residents of Pangasinan, first-year students, and enrolled mainly in business-related courses. Mobility was highest in 2019 at 23.90% and lowest in 2020 at 4.44%. Academic factors emerged as the leading overall reason for mobility, followed by economic, sociocultural, and environmental factors. Preferred course was the top academic reason, religious and spiritual belief was the leading sociocultural reason, insufficient household income was the dominant economic reason, and the desire to become independent was the major environmental reason. Correspondence analysis indicated that age and course had significant correspondence with mobility factors. Based on the findings, a Guidance Placement Service Plan was proposed to strengthen career guidance, multi-faith support, student assistance, and counseling services for student retention and institutional support.

Keywords: *student mobility, guidance placement service, student retention, academic factors, correspondence analysis, University of Eastern Pangasinan*

INTRODUCTION

Student mobility is a continuing concern in higher education because it reflects how students respond to academic opportunities, institutional support, economic conditions, and personal circumstances. In the context of local higher education, mobility is not limited to international exchange or cross-border transfer; it also includes the movement of students from one institution to another when their academic, social, financial, or environmental needs are not fully met. While mobility may provide students with opportunities for better alignment with their interests and future plans, it may also signal challenges in student retention, guidance placement, and institutional responsiveness.

The University of Eastern Pangasinan (UEP), located in Binalonan, Pangasinan, serves students from diverse social, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Despite its commitment to accessible education and the broader support provided by the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, the university continued to experience student movement over several academic years. Enrollment records indicated a

substantial increase in institutional enrollment from A.Y. 2019–2020 to A.Y. 2023–2024, yet students still transferred out of the university. This situation created a need to examine the factors that influenced mobility and to identify practical guidance interventions that could support students before they decide to leave.

Existing literature explains student mobility through academic, economic, sociocultural, and environmental perspectives. Globalization, institutional reputation, career opportunities, family resources, and social networks have been identified as factors that influence students' decisions to move (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Brooks & Waters, 2011). In the Philippine context, mobility is also shaped by internal migration, uneven educational opportunities, economic limitations, and the availability of guidance and placement support (Caoli-Rodriguez, 2007; Garcia et al., 2014; Orbeta & Paqueo, 2016). These patterns suggest that mobility should be treated not only as a student decision but also as an institutional concern that requires preventive and developmental services.

Guidance and placement services are important because they help students make informed decisions about academic programs, career paths, adjustment concerns, and personal challenges. Prior studies emphasized that counseling and placement services can help mobile students adjust academically and socially (Flores & Villafuerte, 2015; Rivera & Torres, 2019; Santos & Reyes, 2018). However, there remains a need for institution-specific evidence that identifies the profile of mobile students, the status of mobility, the major reasons for transfer, and the appropriate guidance placement interventions.

Guided by this context, the study aimed to determine the profile of mobile students, the status of students' mobility from A.Y. 2019 to 2023, the factors influencing mobility in terms of academic, sociocultural, economic, and environmental dimensions, the significant correspondence between student profiles and mobility factors, and the guidance placement service plan that could be proposed based on the findings.

Literature Review

Student Mobility in Higher Education

Student mobility in higher education has been commonly explained through the movement of students across institutions, regions, or countries in pursuit of educational opportunities. International literature relates mobility to globalization, institutional reputation, career prospects, cultural exposure, and the search for quality education (Altbach, 2015; Altbach & Knight, 2007). In receiving countries, mobility may contribute to institutional diversity and economic activity; in sending contexts, it may create both risks of brain drain and opportunities for skills circulation when students return with wider networks and competencies.

Domestic or local student mobility is equally important because students often move within a country due to program availability, school reputation, distance from home, financial capacity, and the perceived quality of institutional support. Brooks and Waters (2011) and Reay et al. (2005) emphasized that social class, family resources, and educational choices influence whether students remain near home or move to another educational setting. In the Philippines, Caoli-Rodriguez (2007), Garcia et al. (2014), and Orbeta and Paqueo (2016) linked internal mobility to regional disparities, uneven educational resources, and academic disruption.

Factors Influencing Student Mobility

The literature groups mobility factors into academic, sociocultural, economic, and environmental dimensions. Academic factors include program availability, preferred course, teaching practices, class size, academic quality, and facilities. When students enter a course that is not aligned with their first preference or perceived career direction, the likelihood of transfer may increase. This is consistent with the idea that educational choices are shaped by the availability of desired programs and the perceived value of the institution.

Sociocultural factors include religious beliefs, language, cultural adjustment, social prestige, and opportunities for social integration. Social capital theory explains that families, peers, communities, and institutional networks can influence mobility by providing support or by shaping expectations about appropriate schools and programs. Economic factors include household income, cost of living, material

support, family economic security, and scholarships. Human capital theory views education as an investment; however, low-income families may struggle to sustain educational costs even when tuition support is available. Environmental factors include independence, transportation, accessibility, and physical or social surroundings. These concerns influence how students experience daily life and whether an institution remains suitable for their needs.

Guidance and Placement Services for Mobile Students

Guidance and placement services support students in making decisions about courses, careers, personal adjustment, and institutional transitions. Flores and Villafuerte (2015) found that guidance services helped mobile students address academic, emotional, and social challenges. Santos and Reyes (2018) also emphasized the value of counseling and placement support in helping students adapt to new academic environments, while Rivera and Torres (2019) reported that strong placement services can align students' academic goals with career pathways. These studies support the need for a guidance placement service plan that addresses the specific reasons behind students' transfer decisions.

For the present study, the literature supports a framework in which student mobility is influenced by student profile variables and academic, sociocultural, economic, and environmental factors. The study therefore used an input-process-output orientation: student profile and mobility factors served as inputs, survey and institutional data analysis served as the process, and the proposed Guidance Placement Service Plan served as the output.

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design using a survey checklist questionnaire and institutional records as primary data sources. The design was appropriate because the study described the profile of mobile students, summarized the status of student mobility, identified major mobility factors, and examined categorical associations between profile variables and mobility factors.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at the University of Eastern Pangasinan in Binalonan, Pangasinan. UEP is a local higher education institution that serves students from Pangasinan and nearby provinces and offers programs in business, teacher education, criminology, information technology, civil engineering, and midwifery.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The respondents were 400 former students of the University of Eastern Pangasinan from the College of Business and Accountancy, College of Teacher Education, College of Criminal Justice Education, College of Information Technology, and College of Midwifery who transferred out from A.Y. 2019 to A.Y. 2023. Purposive sampling was used because the respondents were intentionally selected based on the defining characteristic needed for the study: they were mobile students who had transferred out of the university.

Research Instrument

The study used a researcher-made survey checklist questionnaire designed to identify the reasons for students' mobility in terms of academic, sociocultural, economic, and environmental factors. The study also used record books and institutional data from the Registrar, Guidance Office, and university information systems. The instruments and records were used under strict confidentiality and anonymity.

Data Gathering Procedure

Permission to conduct the study and obtain institutional records was requested through official letters addressed to concerned university officials, including the University President, Office of Student Affairs Director, University Guidance Counselor, Registrar, and MIS personnel. Enrollment data, transfer-out records, graduate counts, and status data from A.Y. 2019 to A.Y. 2023 were gathered. Survey responses were then collected to identify the major reasons for student mobility.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, particularly frequency counts and percentages, were used to summarize the respondents' profiles, the status of mobility, and the reasons for mobility. Correspondence analysis was used to determine associations between categorical profile variables and mobility factors. Symmetrical normalization was used in interpreting the biplots for age and course associations.

Ethical Consideration

The study followed ethical procedures to protect the rights and privacy of student respondents. Informed consent was secured, the purpose of the study was explained, and respondents were assured that participation would remain confidential. Institutional approval was obtained from appropriate offices, and student data were handled with anonymity and used only for research purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Mobile Students

The personal profile of the respondents showed that the mobile students were predominantly young, female, and residents of Pangasinan. As shown in Table 1, 244 respondents or 61.00% were 17–19 years old, 114 or 28.50% were 20–22 years old, and 42 or 10.50% were 23 years old and above. Female respondents comprised 223 or 55.75%, while male respondents comprised 177 or 44.25%. Most respondents, 356 or 89.00%, resided in Pangasinan, which is expected because UEP is located in Binalonan and serves students from the province and nearby areas.

Table 1. *Personal Profile of the Mobile Students (n = 400)*

Profile Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Age	17–19	244	61.00
	20–22	114	28.50
	23 and above	42	10.50
Sex	Male	177	44.25
	Female	223	55.75
Place of Residence	Pangasinan	356	89.00
	La Union	6	1.50
	Tarlac	18	4.50
	Nueva Ecija	3	0.75
	Baguio	14	3.50
	Manila	3	0.75

The school profile further showed that the largest group of mobile students came from business courses, with 160 respondents or 40.00%, followed by education with 91 or 22.75%. Most respondents were first-year students, representing 267 or 66.75% of the sample. For first-choice course, the largest category was “Others” with 105 or 26.25%, indicating that many students initially preferred programs not available or not specified within the university offerings. For second-choice course, Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management had the highest frequency with 100 or 25.00%. These findings suggest that course preference and program alignment were central concerns among mobile students.

Table 2. *School Profile of the Mobile Students (n = 400)*

Profile Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Course Enrolled	Business Courses	160	40.00
	BS Criminology	61	15.25
	Midwifery	18	4.50
	BSED	91	22.75
	BS Civil Engineering	8	2.00
	BSIT	62	15.50
Year Level	1st year	267	66.75
	2nd year	103	25.75
	3rd year	25	6.25

1st Choice Course	4th year	5	1.25
	IT	64	16.00
	Criminology	45	11.25
	Nursing	7	1.75
	Engineering	1	0.25
	BSBA	71	17.75
	BSHM	17	4.25
	Education	77	19.25
	Midwifery	13	3.25
	Others	105	26.25
2nd Choice Course	IT	53	13.25
	Criminology	38	9.50
	Hospitality Management	100	25.00
	Education	45	11.25
	BSBA	41	10.25
	BEED	25	6.25
	Midwifery	33	8.25
	BSA	35	8.75
	Others	30	7.50

Status of Students' Mobility from A.Y. 2019 to 2023

The status of students' mobility from A.Y. 2019 to 2023 showed fluctuating transfer-out patterns. Table 3 indicates that mobility was highest in 2019 at 23.90%, followed closely by 2022 at 23.50% and 2023 at 19.71%. The lowest mobility rate occurred in 2020 at 4.44%. The relatively low mobility during 2020 may be understood within the context of pandemic-related disruption, when students and families faced uncertainties about movement, schooling arrangements, and institutional transfer decisions. The increase in 2021 to 2023 suggests that mobility concerns resumed and intensified as students adjusted to post-pandemic learning and institutional conditions.

Table 3. *Status of Students' Mobility in the University from A.Y. 2019 to 2023*

Year	Enrollment	Freshman Enrollment	Graduates	Old Students Expected	Old Students Observed	Mobile Students	% Mobility
2018	2,452	1,513	155	-	-		
2019	4,122	2,374	180	2,297	1,748	549	23.90%
2020	6,352	2,585	116	3,942	3,767	175	4.44%
2021	10,197	4,997	141	6,236	5,200	1,036	16.61%
2022	14,072	6,379	453	10,056	7,693	2,363	23.50%
2023	22,357	11,422	896	13,619	10,935	2,684	19.71%

Factors of Students' Mobility

The overall results show that academic factors were the leading category of mobility reasons, reported by 118 respondents or 29.50%. Economic factors followed with 102 respondents or 25.50%, while sociocultural and environmental factors each accounted for 90 respondents or 22.50%. This pattern indicates that while students' transfer decisions are multidimensional, academic concerns remain the most immediate reason for leaving the institution. The findings support the need for a guidance placement service plan that begins with course alignment, academic counseling, and early intervention for students whose program preferences do not match their enrolled course.

Table 4. *Factors of Students' Mobility (n = 400)*

Major Factor	Frequency	Percent
Academic Factors	118	29.50
Sociocultural Factors	90	22.50
Economic Factors	102	25.50
Environmental Factors	90	22.50
Total	400	100.00

Academic, Sociocultural, Economic, and Environmental Reasons

Table 5 presents the specific reasons under each factor. Under academic factors, preferred course was the most common reason, with 54 respondents or 45.76%. This confirms that course mismatch or unmet academic preference played a major role in student mobility. Under sociocultural factors, religious and spiritual belief was the leading reason, with 57 respondents or 63.33%, suggesting that students' personal and family belief systems influenced school choice. Under economic factors, insufficient household income was the dominant reason, with 53 respondents or 51.96%, showing that free tuition alone may not fully address the cost of education because students still face expenses for transportation, food, materials, and daily living. Under environmental factors, the desire to become independent was the leading reason, with 70 respondents or 78.02%, indicating that some students transferred because of personal development needs and living-environment preferences.

Table 5. *Leading Reasons for Students' Mobility by Factor*

Factor	Main Reason	Frequency	Percent
Academic	Preferred course	54	45.76%
Academic	Mode of teaching	35	29.66%
Academic	Academic quality	8	6.78%
Academic	Class size	8	6.78%
Academic	School facilities	7	5.93%
Academic	Family problem	5	4.24%
Academic	Distance from residence	1	0.85%
Sociocultural	Religious and spiritual belief	57	63.33%
Sociocultural	Insufficient income of parents	11	12.22%
Sociocultural	Language barriers	7	7.78%
Sociocultural	Cultural diversity and acceptance	6	6.67%
Sociocultural	Social status and prestige	5	5.56%
Sociocultural	Social and cultural opportunities	4	4.44%
Economic	Insufficient household income	53	51.96%
Economic	Cost of living	24	23.53%
Economic	Material support	15	14.71%
Economic	Family economic security	6	5.88%
Economic	Financial aid and scholarships	4	3.92%
Environmental	To become independent	70	78.02%
Environmental	Availability of public transportation	13	14.29%
Environmental	Inclusive infrastructure	7	7.69%

Correspondence Between Student Profile and Mobility Factors

Correspondence analysis was used to determine whether respondents' profile variables were associated with mobility factors. As shown in Table 6, age had a significant correspondence with mobility factors, $\chi^2 = 13.072$, $p = .042$, while course also had a significant correspondence, $\chi^2 = 43.751$, $p = .000$. Sex, year level, and place of residence were not significant. These results indicate that mobility reasons varied meaningfully by age and course. Older students aged 23 and above were associated with environmental factors, students aged 17–19 were associated with economic or academic factors, and students aged 20–22 were associated with sociocultural factors. By course, Information Technology and Business students were associated with environmental factors, Engineering and Education students with sociocultural factors, Criminology students with sociocultural and economic factors, while Midwifery students were not strongly associated with a specific factor.

Table 6. *Correspondence Analysis of Factors of Mobility and Student Profile*

Profile Variable	Dimension	Singular Value	Inertia	Chi-square	Significance	Accounted	Cumulative
Age	1	.166	.028	13.072	.042*	.843	.843
Age	2	.072	.005	13.072	.042*	.157	1.000
Sex	1	.090	.008	3.226	.358ns	1.000	1.000
Course	1	.248	.061	43.751	.000*	.561	.561
Course	2	.200	.040	43.751	.000*	.364	.925
Course	3	.091	.008	43.751	.000*	.075	1.000
Year Level	1	.124	.015	8.468	.488ns	.722	.722
Year Level	2	.077	.006	8.468	.488ns	.278	1.000
Year Level	3	.001	.000	8.468	.488ns	.000	1.000
Place of Residence	1	.065	.004	1.672	.643ns	1.000	1.000

Note. * Significant; ns = not significant

Proposed Guidance Placement Service Plan

The proposed Guidance Placement Service Plan was designed in response to the leading issues identified in the study. Since academic factors were the strongest overall reason for mobility, the plan prioritizes career guidance, individual and group counseling, and follow-up services for students with course mismatch, absenteeism, tardiness, or poor academic performance. Since sociocultural, economic, and environmental concerns were also present, the plan includes multi-faith activities, student assistant and food allowance programs, and individual counseling for students who struggle with independence and adjustment.

Table 7. *Proposed Guidance Placement Service Plan*

Problem	Action Area	Activity	Persons Involved	Source of Fund
Mismatch courses	Academic and career guidance	Career counseling; guidance interview; student pre-orientation; follow-up of students with academic concerns	Guidance Personnel, Deans, Program Heads, Instructors, UEP students	Guidance Fund
Conflict on religious and spiritual belief	Sociocultural support	Multi-faith organization; interfaith dialogue; small-group discussion; campus ministry; religious symposium	Guidance Personnel, Deans, Program Heads, Instructors, students from different religions	Guidance Fund
Insufficient household income	Economic support	Student assistant program; application and hiring support; food voucher or allowance proposal	Guidance Personnel, Deans, Program Heads, Instructors, UEP students	Guidance Fund
Lack of independence	Environmental and adjustment support	Individual counseling; regular check-ins; barrier identification and practical support	Guidance Personnel, Deans, Program Heads, Instructors, UEP students	Guidance Fund

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that student mobility at the University of Eastern Pangasinan was influenced by the personal and school profile of students and by multiple academic, sociocultural, economic, and environmental factors. The respondents were mostly 17–19 years old, female, residents of Pangasinan, first-year students, and enrolled in business-related programs. Mobility fluctuated from A.Y. 2019 to 2023, with the highest mobility rate in 2019 and the lowest in 2020. Academic factors emerged as the leading overall cause of mobility, especially preferred course, followed by economic concerns, sociocultural concerns, and environmental concerns.

The correspondence analysis showed that age and course were significantly associated with mobility factors. This means that student mobility concerns were not uniform across groups; rather, different age groups and courses had different reasons for transferring. The findings therefore establish the need for a targeted Guidance Placement Service Plan that strengthens career guidance, academic advising, financial support referral, values-sensitive programs, and adjustment counseling. The study contributes practical evidence for improving student retention and for designing responsive guidance programs in local higher education institutions.

Recommendations

The Guidance Office and Office of Student Affairs should implement the proposed Guidance Placement Service Plan as a structured intervention for students who are at risk of transferring. Career guidance and course-placement counseling should be strengthened during admission, orientation, and the first year of study so that students can better understand their academic choices and career pathways before mobility concerns arise.

Program heads, faculty members, and guidance personnel should collaborate in monitoring students with academic difficulties, course mismatch, absenteeism, poor performance, or uncertainty about their program. Early referral and follow-up counseling should be institutionalized to address academic factors before students decide to leave.

The university should also develop support mechanisms for economic and sociocultural concerns. These may include student assistant opportunities, referral to scholarship and subsidy programs, food assistance initiatives, multi-faith activities, and culturally responsive guidance services. For environmental concerns, individual counseling and regular check-ins should be provided to students who desire independence but need support in managing adjustment, transportation, accessibility, and personal barriers.

Future researchers may conduct qualitative interviews or mixed-method studies to explore deeper narratives behind transfer decisions. Further studies may also include distance from residence, family background, program availability, academic performance, and institutional facilities as additional variables to strengthen the analysis of student mobility.

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