

Perceptions and Challenges of the Grade 12 Senior High School Students Towards Employability

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Abstract— Employability was a key concern for Senior High School students preparing to enter the workforce. This research examined Grade 12 students' perceptions and obstacles regarding employability, their readiness for entry-level jobs, and factors hindering their smooth transition into the labor market. The study's respondents included 93 Grade 12 Senior High School students, mostly within the typical age range for their grade. This uniform age group provided a good basis for exploring students' perceptions and experiences related to employability. The study involved 93 Grade 12 students, mostly within the typical age range for their grade. This uniform age group provided a good basis for exploring students' perceptions and experiences of employability. A quantitative research design used a structured survey to gather data on students' perceptions of employability skills and challenges. Descriptive statistics analyzed the data. Findings showed students valued employability skills but faced challenges like limited work experience, a lack of practical skills, and low confidence, revealing a gap between education and workplace needs. The study recommended enhanced school initiatives such as more career guidance, work immersion, and targeted training to improve job readiness for Grade 12 students, helping them acquire skills and confidence for employment.

Keywords— Challenges, Employability, Perceptions of the Senior High School students.

I. INTRODUCTION

Grade 12 Senior High School students developed a range of personal and academic skills that contributed to their employability as they prepared for life after graduation. These skills were formed through daily classroom activities, project-based learning, oral presentations, group tasks, and school programs that required responsibility and discipline. Students

learned to manage time, follow instructions, communicate effectively, and work collaboratively with peers. In addition, work immersion programs provided students with opportunities to experience real work environments, enabling them to apply their skills in practical settings. Through these experiences, students gradually became more aware of their strengths and areas for improvement, which helped them prepare mentally and emotionally for future employment. Although students possessed skills that supported employability, their perceptions of readiness varied due to the challenges they encountered. According to Yorke (2006), employability was influenced not only by skills but also by students' confidence in using them in real work settings. From the students' point of view, one of the main challenges was a lack of sufficient hands-on experience, which left them unsure of their ability to meet workplace expectations (Jackson, 2014). Some students also perceived a gap between what was taught in school and the actual demands of employers. Tomlinson (2017) further explained that students often experienced anxiety and uncertainty about employment because of competition, limited job opportunities, and unclear career pathways. These perceptions affected students' motivation and confidence in pursuing employment after Senior High School.

Although various studies discussed employability and workforce readiness, there was still limited research focusing on the perceptions and challenges of Grade 12 Senior High School students in the Philippine context. Most existing local studies and reports emphasized curriculum implementation and employer expectations rather than students' personal experiences and self-assessment of readiness for employment

(DepEd, 2016). Additionally, while the K–12 program aimed to prepare learners for work, employment, or entrepreneurship, there was insufficient empirical evidence to determine whether students themselves felt adequately prepared to enter the labor market after Senior High School. This gap underscored the need for student-centered research examining how Filipino Senior High School students perceived their skills, preparedness, and challenges related to employability.

In response to this gap, the study aimed to explore Grade 12 Senior High School students' perceptions and challenges regarding employability, focusing on how they viewed their own skills and preparedness. Hence, the study sought to identify the skills students believed they had developed, the challenges they faced in transitioning from school to work, and the factors that influenced their confidence in seeking employment. The findings of this study were intended to help educators, school administrators, and curriculum planners improve instructional strategies, work immersion programs, and career guidance services. The study sought to contribute to the development of educational practices that better supported students in achieving successful employment outcomes.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aimed to identify the perceptions and challenges of Grade 12 Senior High School Students towards employability at Martin M. Salimbangon National High School regarding employability.

Specifically, this centered on the following:

1. What was the demographic profile of the Grade 12 Senior High School Students at Martin M. Salimbangon National High School?
 - 1.1 Age; and
 - 1.2 Strand?
2. What were the perceptions of the Grade 12 Senior High School Students towards employability in terms of:
 - 2.1 preparedness, confidence, experience, knowledge?
3. What were the challenges of Grade 12 senior high school students towards employability in terms of motivation, courses offered, work experience, limited job opportunities, and lack of necessary skill?
4. Based on the findings, what relevant courses of action were implemented?

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study was significant because it identified how senior high school students in Grade 12 perceive and struggle with employability, providing valuable insights for researchers, educators, organizations, and policymakers. The results can guide training programs such as TESDA, OJT, and internships by emphasizing the value of technological competencies, which are often underappreciated in employability assessments. This will improve students' readiness and better prepare them for their professional and postgraduate endeavors. Additionally, by understanding how students view

employment, targeted interventions and support networks can be created to close the skills gap between education and the workforce, facilitating a more seamless transition from school to the workplace. Parents may use the results to promote their children's education and career decisions. The study also provides valuable insights for employers in creating efficient hiring and training practices, educators in updating curricula to meet industry demands, and students in gaining a better understanding of the skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly competitive labor market.

IV. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter reviews related literature and studies about Grade 12 Senior High School Students' Perceptions and Challenges Towards Employability.

Perceptions Towards Employability

Students' perceptions of employability were extensively studied in worldwide research to understand how young learners perceived their preparedness for the workforce. Scholars around the world contended that students' perceptions of their capacity to find and keep a job, adapt their skills to workplace demands, and engage in career development activities were part of perceived employability. Students frequently overestimated technical competencies while undervaluing vital soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and adaptability, which were crucial for employability in dynamic labor markets, according to early research (Rothwell, 2016). Additionally, Ferguson (2019) noted that proactive career behaviors, self-assurance in professional encounters, and increased engagement in future career planning were all positively correlated with perceived employability. According to their findings, students' perceptions of employability could significantly impact their preparedness to pursue career options and continue learning, especially in settings that valued both technical and interpersonal skills.

Furthermore, studies conducted in more general educational settings showed that perceptions of employability were impacted by exposure to real-world work settings and career counseling programs in addition to individual skills. To improve students' understanding of what it meant to be employable, studies on youth employability often emphasized the importance of incorporating work-based learning experiences and reflective career development. The basis for comprehending how perceptions functioned as both predictors and outcomes of employability readiness was laid by these worldwide studies taken together. Since the introduction of the K–12 curriculum, which formally expanded basic education in 2012, employability attitudes among Grade 12 senior high school students in the Philippines drew increasing attention. According to research, students' perceptions of their employability skills varied by skill area, reflecting the advantages and disadvantages of a Senior High School (SHS) education. In a descriptive study, Roxas (2022) found that most Grade 12 students rated their employability skills as moderate to high, with lower self-rated competency in planning and problem-solving tasks and strengths in

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills. This suggested that students were aware of both their strengths and areas that required improvement. Similar results from a recent poll on perceived employability showed that Grade 12 pupils had moderate levels of key competences such as communication, teamwork, and time management, with ICT skills ranking among the top.

These findings demonstrated that senior high school students in the Philippines were aware of their skill levels and felt relatively well-equipped to meet professional demands, particularly in the technical and digital domains, but remained wary of other employability qualities (JOURNAL, 2024). Furthermore, studies on Perceived Skills and Employability among SHS graduates found associations between technical, emotional, and cognitive skills and the likelihood of being deemed employable. This suggested that students believed their skill portfolios had a significant impact on landing a job, which could guide the creation of policies for youth employment programs (Carada, Aliazas, Palacio, & Palacio, 2022). These nationwide assessments revealed a complex perception among Grade 12 students: they identified deficiencies in several employability areas that might have affected their entry into the workforce, yet they generally felt capable of performing job-related tasks.

Furthermore, work immersion experiences had a quantifiable effect on students' self-perceived employability abilities and professional confidence, according to a recent local study. For instance, even a brief 10-day work immersion program greatly enhanced students' perceptions of their flexibility and collaborative abilities, two crucial elements of employability preparedness, according to a study on Grade 12 General Academic Strand (GAS) students. Following immersion, students expressed greater confidence in their ability to perform well in actual work settings, indicating that practical experience not only enhanced skill development but also positively influenced students' perceptions of their readiness for future employment (Tinio, 2025).

Challenges Towards Employability

Students around the world struggled with a lack of work experience and skill shortages. According to Brown, Hesketh, & Williams (2018), insufficient exposure to work situations, inaccurate self-evaluation, and weaknesses in soft skills were significant obstacles. Even technically proficient students frequently found it difficult to adjust to industry demands; Jackson (2020) highlighted the necessity of hands-on training and career counseling programs. In the same way, Jackson (2020) noted that even students with excellent technical competencies often found it difficult to adjust to industry demands, such as professional conduct, time management, and problem-solving under duress.

In the early phases of employment, when students were expected to work independently and effectively with others, this problem became increasingly apparent. To better prepare students for the reality of the labor market, Jackson (2020) highlighted the significance of hands-on training, organized work-based learning, and career counseling programs. All these international studies showed that in order to improve

students' overall employability preparation, educational systems had to strike a balance between academic instruction and experiential learning.

Senior high school (SHS) students in the Philippines encountered resource-based and curricular obstacles that impacted their preparedness for the workforce. According to the PIDS (2020), many students still encountered discrepancies between what they learned in the classroom and what employers wanted, despite the fact that the K–12 curriculum was created to improve employability. The absence of mentorship and industry exposure, as well as the restricted chances for students to apply theoretical knowledge to actual industrial circumstances, were clear indicators of these disparities.

Work immersion programs were frequently limited by insufficient industry partnerships, which lowered their efficacy in producing skills that were ready for the workforce. Additionally, Delos Reyes (2019) highlighted that students in rural locations, where access to technology, career advisory services, and competent training resources was frequently restricted, had greater difficulties. Because of this, rural SHS students might not have had as many opportunities to acquire digital skills and obtain enough career planning assistance, which could have resulted in unequal employability preparation across areas. To better serve SHS students across the country, it was imperative that curriculum implementation was reinforced, resources were allocated more effectively, and career advice programs were expanded. These factors also contributed to discrepancies in students' employability preparation.

Local studies highlighted practical issues in SHS employability. According to Santos (2021), students struggled with time management, workplace communication, and adjusting to regimented work environments when interning. Lopez (2020) emphasized confidence concerns and a fear of failure, especially among technically proficient students. Masong (2025) discovered that strand-specific and school-based inequalities had a substantial impact on pupils' preparation for work.

Employability of Grade 12 Senior High School Students

Internationally, employability was recognized as a crucial outcome of secondary education, particularly for high school seniors preparing for the workforce. Communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving abilities, flexibility, and professional conduct were just a few of the attributes that made a person employable. According to Brown, Hesketh, and Williams (2018), many students struggled with employability because they lacked soft skills, had limited work experience, and overestimated their own strengths. Even academically competent students frequently struggled to adapt to the demands of the job because of these problems. Furthermore, Jackson (2020) stated that technical knowledge alone was insufficient for effective employment. The study found that students frequently struggled with job requirements such as time management, cooperation, and professional behavior. As a result, worldwide literature emphasized the significance of incorporating practical training, work-based learning, and

career advisory programs into senior high school education to better prepare students for the realities of the job market.

In the Philippines, the K-12 Senior High School curriculum prioritized employability by providing Grade 12 students with job-relevant skills through specialized courses and work immersion programs. According to the PIDS (2020), while the curriculum encouraged employability, many students faced gaps between classroom learning and industry requirements. These difficulties were linked to inadequate mentorship, insufficient industry relationships, and discrepancies in the implementation of work immersion programs.

Employability preparedness differed at the local level based on school location and resources, according to studies. According to Delos Reyes (2019), children in rural schools frequently lacked access to career counseling services and technology, which affected their preparedness for the workforce. Additionally, local research showed that Grade 12 students typically rated their employability skills as moderate, indicating that, even though they had fundamental abilities, they still needed stronger support networks and opportunities for hands-on learning to improve their employability preparation.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study discussed research design, research environment, respondents, research instrument, data-gathering procedure, data analysis, and ethical considerations in studying Grade 12 Senior High School Students' Perceptions and Challenges Toward Employability.

Research Design

This study used a quantitative descriptive research design, which aimed to provide a clear and straight forward description of the perceptions and challenges experienced by Grade 12 Senior High School students toward employability. A quantitative descriptive design focused on capturing and summarizing participants' views in everyday terms without imposing deeper interpretation. This approach is appropriate when the goal is to present an accurate account of experiences as shared by the participants (Sandelowski, 2000).

Research Environment

This study was conducted at Martin M. Salimbangon National High School, formerly known as Curva National High School, which offered HUMSS (Humanities and Social Science) and Hairdressing strand in its Senior High School Department in compliance with the required subject to the K-12 curriculum. With 876 students enrolled, this institution was administered by 38 teachers. The head of the school is Mrs. Cirila M. Monleon.

Research Respondents

The respondents of this study are the Grade 12 Senior High School Students of Martin M. Salimbangon National High School. There are five (5) sections, and every section has 30 plus students except TVL because there are 17 students only. The researchers used convenience sampling to get the

desired sample. Below is the table that shows the distribution of the respondents.

Data Analysis

This study utilized quantitative data. The information on the professional background of Grade 12 Senior High School students was analyzed using frequency and percentage. Meanwhile, the perceptions and challenges toward employability were analyzed using weighted mean.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations guided the researcher's research design and practices, and the researcher must adhere to a code of conduct when collecting data from the respondents. This study allows the researchers to ensure the protection and privacy of the respondents.

To ensure the privacy of the respondents, the four ethical principles were followed and conducted.

Beneficence and Non-maleficence

The researchers ensure that the chosen respondents are personally and physically risk-free. About employability, the study seeks to comprehend the perceptions and challenges that Grade 12 Senior High School Students encounter, which may have positive consequences. The result could assist educators, legislators, or career counselors provide students with better support when they enter the profession. By determining the difficulties Senior High School Students face, the study may also point out areas requiring more instruction, materials, or direction. Thereby enhancing employability preparations in general. Providing Senior High School Students with a forum to voice their thoughts can empower them and help shape policies or initiatives that directly impact their futures.

Furthermore, the study's design did not cause participants harm or suffering. For instance, researchers should not make students feel more anxious about their chances of finding work in the future. Sensitivity to their difficulties and careful question formulation are crucial.

Justice

This refers to how accurately and fairly the data reflects the opinions, experiences, and challenges these students face when considering employment opportunities. The varied demographic of the student body should be fairly represented in the sample of respondents, which consists of Grade 12 students. This encompasses socioeconomic status, place and residence, and academic path.

Maintaining diversity enables a more thorough comprehension of the obstacles to attitudes about employment.

VI. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This chapter presented, analyzed, and interpreted the data concerning the perceptions and challenges of Grade 12 students regarding employability. The data collected responded directly to the research problems identified in the study. Specifically, the findings showed the students'

perceptions of employability and the challenges they encountered while preparing for employment.

The data analysis was organized and presented as follows: (1) Demographic Profile of Respondents: This involved analyzing the professional background of the Grade 12 Senior High School students, specifically their age and strand. (2) Perceptions Towards Employability: This section examined the students' confidence, readiness, and values regarding securing a job after graduation. (3) Challenges Encountered: This part analyzed the obstacles faced by students in terms of motivation, courses offered, work experience, limited job opportunities, and a lack of necessary skills. (4) Proposed Course of Action: A relevant course of action was identified, putting forward a focused intervention strategy to close the preparation and employability gaps for students.

Demographic Profile (Age)

The table showed that a significant majority of the 93 Grade 12 respondents were 17 years old, accounting for 73.1%. Students aged 18 years followed at 21.5%, while those aged 19 and above combined totaled only 5.4%.

Age	Frequency	Percentage
16 years old	0	0
17 years old	68	73.1
18 years old	20	21.5
19 and above	5	5.4
Total	93	100

These figures demonstrated that the study primarily captured the perceptions of students among standard-age seniors. These findings implied that the “perceptions of employability” gathered were those of students entering the labor market for the first time. This suggested that the proposed intervention needed to focus on preparing them for their transition from school to work. The high percentage of respondents who were 17 years old indicated that the employability attitudes gathered in this survey were representative primarily of teenagers preparing to enter the workforce for the first time. This outcome was consistent with global research showing that young students often assess their employability more on perceived skills and limited work experience than on actual job experience (Rothwell, 2016). According to Education (2016), through academic study and work immersion, the Senior High School curriculum in the Philippines aimed to equip students in this age group with the core skills required for entry-level professions.

Additionally, studies conducted nationally and locally revealed that Grade 12 students typically see themselves as employable, with more confidence in their technical and digital skills than in their soft skills, such as problem-solving and workplace flexibility (Roxas, 2022); PIDS, 2020). The age distribution of the respondents thus indicates that recommended interventions should focus on improving work immersion programs, preparing young workers for entry-level employability, and providing guidance on legal labor protection, all of which are consistent with findings documented in the pertinent literature.

Strand	Frequency	Percentage
Humanities & Social Sciences (HUMSS)	80	86
Hairdressing	13	14
Total	93	100

Demographic Profile (Strand)

The table showed that most of the Grade 12 respondents were from the HUMSS strand, with 80 students or 86.2% of the total population. This indicated that most participants in the study came from Humanities and Social Sciences. Meanwhile, 13 students (14%) were from the Hairdressing strand. Overall, the data revealed that the study was largely represented by HUMSS students out of the 93 total participants.

The distribution of respondents by Senior High School strand was displayed in the table, which showed the percentage of students included in the study, the strand, and the associated frequency. The characteristics of the respondents presented in this table were essential for understanding how students' opinions of their employability might have been influenced by their background. The results showed that the bulk of respondents (86.2%) came from the HUMSS strand, while the Hairdressing strand was the second-most represented with 14% of the sample.

This distribution underscored a significant focus on perceptions among HUMSS students, with less representation from other strands—especially Hairdressing which tended to concentrate on hands-on training. The higher participation of HUMSS students indicated that the study captured their specific attitudes and the challenges they faced regarding employability. Students in this strand were likely more concerned with job-readiness and career prospects, as the HUMSS curriculum emphasized critical thinking, communication, and social awareness over technical or industry-specific skills.

According to Roxas (2022), academic strands frequently expressed strengths in communication and cognitive skills but showed lower confidence in practical and job-specific competencies. Senior high school students typically estimated their employability higher in areas related to their strand specialization. This aligned with the findings of Carada, Aliasas, Palacio, & Palacio (2022), who highlighted that students' perceptions of their employability were influenced by how well their skill sets aligned with the demands of the labor market. Compared to students in more skill-oriented courses like Hairdressing, students in HUMSS programs may have felt more apprehensive about their preparedness for work because those programs placed less emphasis on direct technical training.

Local studies indicated that limited exposure to work-based learning and industry immersion caused doubts about employability among academically focused students (PIDS, 2020; Delos Reyes, 2019). Furthermore, Tinio (2025) highlighted that work immersion and real-world experiences significantly enhanced students' confidence and perceived readiness for employment. As a result, most HUMSS respondents stressed the importance of more work immersion opportunities and career counseling to better facilitate their transition into the workforce.

The table presented the perceptions of Grade 12 Senior High School students regarding employability, using 10 indicator statements measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The overall weighted mean was 2.73, which was interpreted as "Neutral," indicating that students neither felt fully confident nor completely unprepared for employment after finishing Senior High School. This neutral perception suggested a transitional phase in employability readiness, aligning with constructivist views that learning and confidence developed through experience and active engagement (Piaget, 1936).

Students agreed that their work immersion experiences provided them with valuable job skills (2.56), that their Senior High School education prepared them for employment (2.47), and that employers appreciated the skills of Senior High School graduates (2.55). These findings supported regional studies indicating that students' perceptions of employability were significantly influenced by the K–12 curriculum and work immersion components, especially in developing technical and basic skills Roxas (2022); Tinio, (2025). According to Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory, positive educational experiences like these boosted individuals' confidence in their ability to carry out work-related tasks, which was crucial for employability preparation (Bandura, 1997).

QUESTIONS	Strongly Disagree 5	Disagree 4	Neutral 3	Agree 2	Strongly Agree 1	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
My Senior High Education has prepared me for employment.	4	9	28	38	14	2.47	Agree
I am confident that I can secure a job after graduating.	6	12	38	30	7	2.78	Neutral
My work immersion experience has provided me with relevant skills for employment.	4	14	25	37	13	2.56	Agree
Employers value the skills and knowledge of Senior High School graduates.	4	11	27	41	10	2.55	Agree
I have strong communication and interpersonal skills needed for employment.	4	16	38	26	9	2.78	Neutral
I am aware of the job opportunities available for Senior High School graduates.	11	7	28	37	10	2.70	Neutral
I feel ready to enter the workforce after completing Senior High School.	4	23	30	29	7	2.87	Neutral
I am ready to commit to a job after graduating from Senior High School.	5	21	29	31	7	2.85	Neutral
I am confident in decision-making and not struggling to seek a job.	8	14	45	21	5	2.99	Neutral
I am motivated to find a job after graduating from senior high school.	8	13	32	30	10	2.77	Neutral
Overall Weighted Mean						2.73	NEUTRAL

Overall, several factors were deemed neutral, such as motivation to look for work (2.77), readiness to enter the workforce (2.87), confidence in making decisions (3.01), and confidence in finding a job after graduation (2.69). These findings showed that students were hesitant and uncertain about entering the workforce. This was consistent with both domestic and foreign research that highlighted how students frequently overestimated their academic readiness but were unsure of the demands of a real-world job because of a lack of exposure and advice (Brown, Hesketh, & Williams, 2018;

PIDS, 2020). From a self-efficacy perspective, limited mastery experiences and insufficient career feedback may have weakened students' confidence in applying their skills in authentic work contexts (Bandura, 1997).

Significant gaps in labor market understanding were highlighted by the "Disagree" rating (3.51) regarding Senior High School graduates' awareness of employment prospects. This result was in line with research from the Philippines that showed gaps in career counseling, industry exposure, and employment information availability, especially in academically focused strands like HUMSS (Delos Reyes, 2019; PIDS, 2020). Constructivist theory suggested that without opportunities to explore career options and engage actively with workplace realities, students might have struggled to construct a meaningful understanding of employability pathways (Piaget, 1936).

QUESTIONS	Strongly Disagree 5	Disagree 4	Neutral 3	Agree 2	Strongly Agree 1	WEIGHTED D MEAN	VERBAL DESCRIPTION
I lack a clear career path, which may affect job opportunities.	5	13	38	30	7	2.77	Neutral
I am unmotivated in seeking a job that is relevant to my course.	8	28	27	24	6	3.09	Neutral
College/universities offer limited courses that do not fit my career/course.	6	4	34	25	7	2.2	Agree
I lack work experience, which may affect my job opportunities.	5	10	33	31	14	2.58	Agree
I feel unprepared for job interviews and resume writing.	8	19	31	28	7	2.92	Neutral
Employers prefer college graduates over Senior High School graduates.	12	10	26	33	12	2.75	Neutral
There are limited job opportunities for Senior High School graduates.	10	11	23	37	12	2.68	Neutral
I lack the necessary technical skills required in my chosen career path.	7	16	38	25	7	2.9	Neutral
I have financial difficulties that may affect my job search or further studies.	12	6	27	34	14	2.66	Neutral
The location of the available job is a challenge for me.	9	8	18	38	20	2.44	Agree
Overall Weighted Mean						2.7	Neutral

The results suggested that students still faced difficulties with career preparedness, work knowledge, and self-confidence, even though a Senior High School education could favorably enhance fundamental employability skills. The "Neutral" to "Disagree" answers highlighted the need for more work immersion and career preparation activities, improved school-industry connections, and enhanced career assistance programs. According to both local employability studies and the theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter 2, these interventions were crucial for raising students' self-efficacy and facilitating their transition from education to employment Bandura, (1997) ; Roxas, (2022) & Carada, Aliazas, Palacio, & Palacio (2022).

The table presented 10 indicator statements using a 5-point Likert scale regarding the challenges Grade 12 Senior High School students experienced with their employability. The overall weighted mean of 2.70, categorized as "Neutral," suggested that students were not experiencing significantly high levels of employability-related difficulties at the time of the study. This also applied to how they viewed these issues; based on the 67–68% consensus, "moderate" was the descriptive term, signifying a slight but enduring barrier. This

indicated that students believed it would be difficult to obtain work based on current statistics; however, they remained unsure if the available information was reliable.

Students primarily viewed education through a Western lens, seeing it as vocational training and didactic instruction. A lack of work experience significantly disadvantaged over 83% of students, highlighting the limited availability of programs that prepared graduates for relevant career sectors (2.20). This issue was also evident in developing regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa and India, where labor research institutes and unemployment insurance were less common (2.58). Accordingly, and consistent with earlier research, PIDS (2020) data indicated that a misalignment between education pathways and labor market needs could negatively affect workforce readiness. Furthermore, research both domestically and internationally showed that Senior High School students' concerns about their lack of practical experience remained significant (Brown, Hesketh, & Williams, 2018; Jackson, 2020).

The availability of jobs by location received an "Agree" rating (2.44), suggesting that geographic limitations were a real obstacle for students seeking employment. This finding was consistent with Delos Reyes (2019), who noted that students, especially in non-urban regions, frequently encountered challenges in accessing job opportunities due to distance, transportation issues, and the uneven distribution of industries.

A lack of a clear career path (2.77), low motivation to seek course-related employment (3.09), unpreparedness for job interviews and resume writing (2.92), and the belief that employers preferred college graduates over Senior High School graduates (2.75) were among the challenges rated neutrally. Instead of strong agreement, these neutral responses suggested ambiguity, indicating that students were aware of these issues but might not have fully experienced them yet. This supported Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, which suggested that individuals with limited mastery experiences and feedback might doubt their ability to perform career tasks such as decision-making and interviews (Bandura, 1997).

Neutral ratings were also given to issues such as limited employment opportunities for Senior High School graduates (2.68), their lack of technical skills (2.90), and financial difficulties that prevented them from securing jobs or pursuing higher education (2.66). These results were consistent with local research showing that, although they possessed basic skills, Senior High School students felt uncertain about their competitiveness in the job market due to perceived skill gaps and financial limitations Roxas, (2022); Carada, Aliazas, Palacio, & Palacio (2022).

VII. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

Findings

Based on the collected and interpreted data, the study revealed the following insights:

1. The study revealed that the majority of respondents were 17 years old (73.1%), followed by 18-year-olds (21.5%), and a small percentage who were older (5.4%). In terms of

academic strand, most respondents belonged to the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand (84.9%), while a smaller portion came from the Hairdressing strand (14%). This indicates that the data largely reflect the perspectives of HUMSS students, who are generally more inclined toward developing academic, communication, and social competencies rather than technical or vocational skills directly related to employment.

2. In terms of employability perception, students demonstrated a neutral level (WM = 2.8). While they acknowledged that employers value the skills of Senior High School (SHS) graduates and believed that their education helps them develop new competencies, they expressed uncertainty about securing employment, selecting a career path, and understanding available job opportunities. This suggests that although students possess foundational skills, they lack confidence and clarity in transitioning from school to the workforce.
3. Similarly, the overall level of employability challenges was found to be neutral (WM = 2.7), indicating moderate difficulties. Key challenges identified include limited work experience, unclear career direction, restricted job opportunities, and constraints related to job location. Although technical skills, motivation, and financial resources were also considered, these were perceived as less significant barriers compared to the primary concerns. This implies that students' difficulties are not solely due to skill deficiencies but are also influenced by limited exposure and guidance regarding employment.
4. Overall, the findings highlight a critical need to strengthen support systems for SHS students. Enhancing career guidance programs, establishing stronger linkages between schools and industries, and providing opportunities for real-world work exposure can help bridge the gap between education and employment. Furthermore, initiatives that improve students' awareness of career options, build their confidence in job-seeking, and develop practical, job-relevant skills through training and mentorship programs are essential in preparing them for successful workforce integration.

Conclusion

This study concluded that although Grade 12 students recognize the value of their Senior High School education, they demonstrate a moderate or neutral level of readiness for employment due to average self-efficacy, limited work experience, and a need for enhanced career development programs to better prepare them for labor market demands.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Strengthen Support for Minor and Near-Minor Workers – Since many respondents are under 18, schools should enhance education about youth employment laws, acceptable work conditions, and legal labor protections. This approach helps ensure that young workers are well-informed and protected as they begin entering the labor market.

2. Promote Cross-Strand Collaboration and Learning– Schools might promote collaborative projects involving students from different strands. These cross-strand activities can provide HUMSS students with opportunities to develop technical and entrepreneurial skills, while TVL or STEM students can strengthen their communication and teamwork skills.

3. Provide Targeted Support for Academic Strands – Students from academically oriented strands, particularly HUMSS, may require additional support in translating academic skills into employable competencies. Career coaching, internships, and skills-mapping activities can help students recognize how their communication and critical-thinking skills align with labor market needs (Carada et al., 2022; PIDS, 2020).

4. Align Senior High School Curriculum With Labor Market Needs - To better align education pathways with labor market needs, schools and policymakers should regularly review and update Senior High School curricula in collaboration with industry stakeholders. This approach ensures that the skills taught stay relevant, current, and aligned with labor market trends, ultimately improving students’ workforce readiness (PIDS, 2020) ; (Roxas, 2022).

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