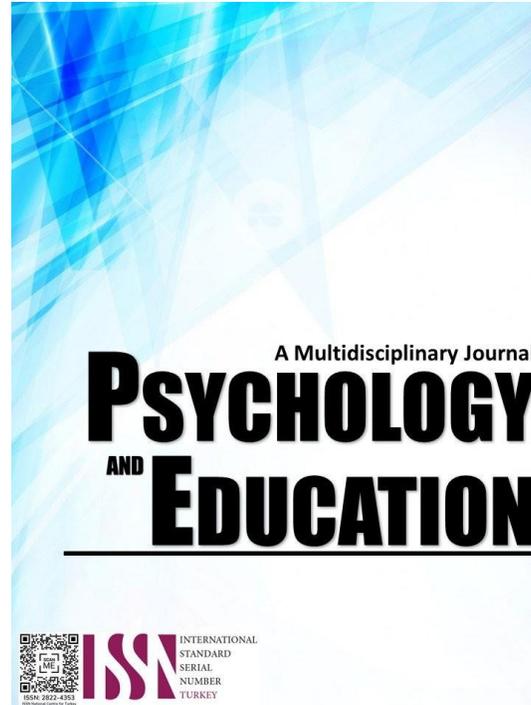


**GRADUATE’S EMPLOYABILITY: A TRACER STUDY FOR
SECOND BATCH OF GRADUATES IN DAVAO DE ORO
STATE COLLEGE – NEW BATAAN BRANCH**



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Graduate's Employability: A Tracer Study for Second Batch of Graduates in Davao de Oro State College – New Bataan Branch

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Abstract

Colleges play a crucial role in preparing students for the job market by providing a comprehensive education, equipping students with job-ready skills, and aiding graduates in securing suitable employment opportunities. To assess the effectiveness of their programs, a study was conducted on the graduates of Davao de Oro State College New Bataan from 2018 to 2019. The primary objective of the study was to collect detailed demographic data from the alumni and assess their perceptions of the course program, training, job, and employment status. The study used a descriptive research design and collected data from the second batch of graduates through a survey questionnaire. The findings revealed that while some graduates secured employment, most had contractual positions. Furthermore, some alumni were not employed due to lack of job experience, health issues, or limited job opportunities in their field of study. The study also indicated that most respondents who found employment had been working for less than two years. These results highlight the need for colleges to continually evaluate their programs and provide graduates with the necessary tools and resources to secure long-term employment opportunities. Finally, conducting another tracer study with graduate employers or supervisors is recommended to assess the graduates' job competitiveness. This can provide valuable feedback on the effectiveness of the college's programs and help the college identify areas for improvement to ensure that graduates are well-prepared for the job market.

Keywords: *employment, graduates, tracer study, quantitative methodology, Philippines*

Introduction

In the dynamic and evolving landscape of employment, it is imperative for educational institutions to equip graduates with the requisite skills for securing gainful employment. By fostering graduates with the appropriate competencies to excel in the workplace, a mutually beneficial outcome is achieved, encompassing the advancement of future employees, the satisfaction of employers, and the reputation of educational providers (Teng et al., 2019). Filipino and global labor markets are competitive, and student results affect post-graduation employment. Consequently, curriculum design and execution affect student outcomes (Terano, 2019). Parents assess job possibilities when choosing a university or college for their children, so school curriculum and recruiting, entry, and retention policies must address employability (Albina, 2020).

According to the findings of a study that was conducted on employers in the northeastern part of the United States, the top six skills and competencies that were rated as having the highest importance by employers were as follows: interpersonal skills (working well with others), critical thinking/problem-solving skills, listening skills, oral/speech communication skills, professionalism, and personal motivation. Interpersonal skills, critical thinking, problem-solving, and listening were rated as the three most essential skills. However, out of all 21 skills, interpersonal skills scored the highest (Baird & Parayitam, 2019).

In Indonesia, a study of Educational Management graduates found that most have jobs and have learned the skills they need. However, they have not had much success in international jobs because they have trouble communicating and networking with people from other countries. As a result, the department is creating new programs to help graduates get international jobs. Tracer studies also help universities improve the quality of their education by giving feedback on the curriculum, teaching methods, and facilities (Andari et al., 2021)

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, 60.9% of the working population aged 15 and over in the Philippines were wage and salary employees in February 2023. Next were unpaid family workers (9.8%) and self-employed without paid staff (27.2%). Family-owned farms and businesses had the lowest percentage (2.1%). The labor force participation rate (LFPR) was consistently higher for males (77.1%) than females (56.1%) in February 2023. Men also had a higher employment rate (95.5%) than women (94.7%). Men had an underemployment rate of 14.7%, while women had an underemployment rate of 10.4%. The employment rate in February 2023 was 90.9%, up from 89.2% in January 2023 and 85.7% in February 2022. The average employed teenager worked 32.8 hours per week in February 2023. Students will attend college and graduate with a degree, and the chances of finding work in the future are very important. It is important to identify and address problems with the curriculum when it comes to employment, employment status, monthly income, and the amount of time spent looking for work (Albina & Sumagaysay, 2020).

A study in Davao de Oro found that college graduates need the right skills to succeed and advance in their careers. The survey found that graduates prefer their first job to be related to their education because of the pay, benefits, challenges, and skills. Because they can work in almost any industry or career, graduates need excellent professional skills. However, many barely make enough to survive. The institution's course availability and their passion for the profession influenced their choice of job. Most respondents chose

employment or financial commitments over higher schooling. Most respondents work contractually or temporarily because government and private enterprises lack permanent positions (Cubero & De Los Reyes, 2022).

Higher education institutions must constantly respond to the demands of today's world. Around the globe, graduates' employability and skills development depend on a clear focus on creativity and teamwork in higher education. The employability of graduates reflects the high-quality education and relevant preparation they attain by completing their degrees. Tracer studies enable higher education institutions to profile their graduates and assess the quality of their education (Pentang et al., 2022).

The researchers focused on the employability status of the second batch of graduates from 2018-2019, how the institution helped them in their employment, and what else the branch can improve. The three programs in the batch were Bachelor of Science in Entrepreneurship (45 alums), Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in Social Studies (53 alums), and Bachelor of Elementary Education (43 alums). A total of 141 graduates were invited to participate in the study, but only those who consented voluntarily were included. Participants were not penalized or lost any benefits if they chose not to participate, and they could withdraw their consent at any time without penalty. Participation in the study did not waive any legal claims, rights, or remedies. The study aimed to determine the job placement profile of the graduates and the relevance of school-related factors to job placement. Using improvement indicators for specific results, the study found that the institution was on the right track to reaching quality gold standards in many respects despite some hurdles. This was evident in the institution's growth programs and reorientation of learning and teaching modalities. Universities and colleges need to know what career trajectories their graduates can expect and what sort of guidance and development will best equip them to deal with life beyond college.

Moreover, this study determines the job placement profile of the graduates and the relevance of school-related factors to job placement. Using improvement indicators for specific results, it is evident that, despite hurdles, the institution was on the right track to reaching quality gold standards in many respects. This may be observed in the institutions' growth programs and reorientation of learning and teaching modalities. Universities and colleges need to know what career trajectories they can expect and what sort of guidance and development will best equip them to handle life beyond college. Accordingly, this second research tracer study has been undertaken.

Literature Review

Albina and Sumagaysay (2020) found that 177 graduates of BS Information Technology and BS Computer Science programs were able to secure jobs in related fields. However, several poll respondents cited family issues as a barrier to employment. Pentang et al. (2022) reported that graduates who passed the licensure exam were hired as teachers with a monthly salary of \$5,000 to \$10,000. Walk-in candidates were hired within six months, but graduates need assistance in obtaining permanent teaching positions with higher salaries. Due to employment norms and the abundance of teaching and clerical positions, graduates face challenges.

Caingcoy et al. (2022) revealed that most graduates secured employment in teaching and teaching-related positions, primarily under contractual arrangements, within the first year after graduation. While private-sector employment opportunities were identified, these positions were often characterized by relatively low compensation. Despite these challenges, graduates demonstrated proficiency in communication, pedagogy, IT, time management, and flexibility. The study's findings suggest that the graduates successfully acquired 21st-century competencies through their educational program.

Dela Cruz (2022) affirmed the high employability of graduates, highlighting their ability to leverage their skills and academic qualifications to advance professionally. Graduates are well-regarded within their respective graduate programs, demonstrating the institution's effectiveness in preparing students for success. Alumni have suggested expanding program offerings and enhancing facilities to further strengthen the graduate school's services.

A survey revealed that most graduates choose to work locally, influenced by factors such as salary, benefits, professional growth opportunities, and the connection to their college courses. The study further demonstrated the alignment of NORSU graduates' curriculum and skills with industry expectations. Graduates consistently demonstrated strong communication, interpersonal interaction, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills – competencies highly valued by employers. Furthermore, NORSU VMGOs were found to correlate with job performance, indicating that graduates with exceptional work ethic, skills, and knowledge tend to achieve higher VMGOs.

Casanova's (2022) study revealed that a significant portion of respondents had recently been promoted to unit head positions. While these graduates had participated in seminars and training, they had not received formal accolades or recognition since completing their master's degrees. Despite this, their overall performance was characterized by exceptional quality, work habits, interpersonal connections, and leadership skills. Notably, factors such as gender, graduation year, academic program, and promotion were found to influence graduates' employment success.

Andig and Canencia et al. (2020) highlighted a concerning trend among Engineering Technology graduates, with a majority opting to pursue unrelated bachelor's degrees instead of seeking immediate employment. This suggests a disconnect between the University System's credentials and the skills and competencies sought by employers. To address this issue, the study emphasized the need for Engineering Technology graduates to develop essential skills in assessment, inclusion, diversity, student life skills, and outcome-based competence. Furthermore, it underscored the importance for Mindanao State University System graduates to cultivate both local and

national competencies to align with industry expectations. In light of these findings, the Engineering Technology program at Mindanao State University System requires a comprehensive revitalization plan. This includes securing adequate funding for operational and maintenance expenses to construct facilities that support teaching, research, and extension activities aligned with the academe-industry curriculum. Additionally, the program should prioritize improvements in admission, retention, teacher development, testing, assessment, and administrative processes.

Rosa and Galang's (2021) study revealed that a majority of BSIT graduates secure regular or permanent employment opportunities in the Philippines, typically within the first six months after graduation. Their initial salaries range from P10,000 to P20,000, and they primarily work as professionals, technical workers, or supervisors. Notably, respondents indicated that IT skills were the most valuable and frequently utilized in their respective jobs. This suggests that problem-solving and critical thinking skills, which are core components of the BSIT curriculum, are highly sought after by employers in the IT industry.

A study by Paguigan and Quebral (2020) highlighted the high employability of architecture graduates, with all respondents securing employment within a year of graduation. Graduates attributed their success to a combination of their strong academic foundation, recommendations from personal networks, and the development of essential problem-solving and critical-thinking skills during their university education. The study also revealed that architecture degrees remain highly relevant to the professional demands of the field. However, some graduates faced delays in securing employment due to factors such as competition, limited job openings, and financial constraints. To address these challenges, the study recommended that the campus alumni office provide more proactive assistance to graduates in finding direct employment opportunities. Additionally, the study suggested that architecture programs consider incorporating entrepreneurial skills training into their curriculum to equip graduates with the ability to create their own employment opportunities.

BSE graduates generally demonstrate strong employability, with a high proportion securing employment within a reasonable timeframe. While some graduates may find themselves in job order positions with potential termination, their overall competitiveness is evident. However, the alignment between BSE graduates' employment choices and the program's objectives remains a concern, with only 23.20% working directly in their field of specialization. This suggests a potential disconnect between the program's curriculum and the industry's specific needs. Nevertheless, the industry recognizes the value of BSE competencies, and graduates' ability to adapt and acquire additional training or on-the-job experience is crucial for long-term success. To further enhance their employment prospects, the timely release of school credentials remains essential for new graduates to confidently pursue job opportunities (Alvarez & Cammayo, 2023).

Methodology

Research Design

The researcher employed a descriptive survey research design to gather insights from the second batch of graduates of the institution. A survey questionnaire was deemed the most suitable data collection method, as it allowed for the efficient and systematic collection of data on graduates' skills, knowledge, values, and perceptions of the curriculum program's influence on their employment outcomes. This approach aligned with the study's objective of comprehensively describing the characteristics of the graduates and their job experiences.

Respondents

The respondents were the graduates of the three offered programs: Bachelor of Elementary Education, Bachelor of Secondary Education, and Bachelor of Science with a major in Entrepreneurship. These programs were specifically chosen for this study because they represent three distinct career paths with varying job market conditions in the Philippines. For instance, graduates of Bachelor of Elementary Education and Bachelor of Secondary Education are required to take the Licensure Examination for Teachers and are often required to take the civil service examination, while graduates of Bachelor of Science with a major in Entrepreneurship may not find this necessary. The study employed total enumeration to identify potential respondents, and out of the 145 eligible graduates, 92 responded, resulting in a response rate of 73.80%.

Instruments

A questionnaire patterned after the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) standardized form was used to collect data from graduates of the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED), Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED), and Bachelor of Science in Entrepreneurship (BSE) programs at the Davao de Oro State College New Bataan Branch. The questionnaire was disseminated and processed primarily through social media and email systems.

Procedure

The registrar's office provided lists of the graduates. The researcher directly distributed questionnaires to 145 respondents, while students with family and friends circulated additional questionnaires. The researcher also used social media, such as Facebook, and email to reach respondents. Additionally, the researcher appears to have reached some respondents through technology such as mobile

phones and references.

Data Analysis

For the analysis and interpretation of the collected data, this study used descriptive statistics quantitative methods such as frequency, percentage, mean, and rank.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers followed ethical considerations in conducting their study. They obtained ethical clearance from the Davao de Oro State College Research Ethics Committee (REC) and ensured that the respondents were fully informed about the study procedures and were not coerced into participating. They also protected the confidentiality of the respondents' personal information and made sure that the respondents were not put in any harmful situations. The findings of the study will benefit DepEd officials, school heads, teachers, students, parents, community residents, and future researchers. The researchers also took steps to avoid plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, conflict of interest, deceit, and authorship issues.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. *Frequency, Percentage, and Rank Distribution of the Respondents in terms of Degree and Specialization*

Course	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Bachelor of Elementary Education	40	37.4 %	2
Bachelor of Secondary Education – Major Social Studies	44	41.1%	1
Bachelor of Science in Entrepreneurship	23	21.5 %	3
Total	107	100%	

The table reveals Bachelor of Secondary Education with a major in Social Studies as the dominant choice among 107 respondents, with a substantial 41.1% having completed this program. Bachelor of Elementary Education followed closely behind at 37.4%, while Bachelor of Science in Entrepreneurship trailed considerably at 21.5%. This suggests that there is a growing interest in entrepreneurship among graduates. This is a positive development, as entrepreneurship can help to create jobs and boost economic growth. Additionally, the data suggests that the institution is doing a good job of preparing its graduates for the workforce. The fact that the majority of graduates are choosing careers in teaching, which is a high-demand field, suggests that they are confident in their skills and knowledge. Furthermore, the growing interest in entrepreneurship among graduates is a positive sign that the institution is preparing its students to be successful in a variety of fields.

Table 2. *Frequency, Percentage, and Rank Distribution of the Respondents in terms of the Sex*

Civil Status	Frequency	Percent	Rank
Female	67	62.6%	1
Male	43	37.4%	2
Total	107	100%	

The table shows the distribution of 110 respondents based on their sex. A majority (62.6%) identified as female, while the remaining (37.4%) identified as male. This finding is supported by a review of related literature from 2019 (Buchmann & DiPrete, 2019; Katsomitros & Martin, 2019), which suggests a growing trend of female students pursuing higher education in recent years. In fact, according to a 2019 World Bank report, the gender gap in tertiary education has been narrowing globally, with more women than ever before enrolling in and completing university degrees. Additionally, Hango & de Broucker (2019) reported that female students in Canada were more likely to graduate from university than male students. Therefore, it is plausible that the higher proportion of female graduates in the school's dataset reflects this broader trend in higher education.

Table 3. *Frequency, Percentage, and Rank Distribution of the Respondents in terms of Professional Examination Passed*

	Frequency	Percent	Rank
Civil Service Examination	1	0.9%	3
Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET)	56	52.3 %	1
Others (Pls. Specify)	50	46.7%	2
Total	107	100%	

Among 107 respondents, the Licensure Examination for Teachers emerged as the most prevalent professional exam passed, with 52.3% of individuals achieving it. While 46.7% passed other unspecified professional exams, the Civil Service Examination saw the least success with only 0.9% passing. This is likely due to the fact that the Civil Service Examination is more difficult than other professional examinations, and it is required for government jobs. This finding is consistent with a 2019 review of related literature that suggests teaching is one of the most popular professions among university graduates (Mackness, Waheed, & Singh, 2019). The review also highlights the importance of professional licensure in teaching, as it is often required for employment and career advancement (Sosulski & Zimmerman, 2019).

Moreover, Table 3 shows that many graduates still need to take or pass professional examinations. While this may be concerning, it is

important to note that passing professional examinations is not always required for certain professions or industries (Liu & Liu, 2019). Finally, the high success rate of graduates passing the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) indicates that the institution successfully provided graduates with the knowledge and skills necessary to pass the exam. This is consistent with a study by Cariño and Barrientos (2019), which found that students who received a quality education in teacher training programs were more likely to pass the LET.

Table 4. *Frequency, Percentage, and Rank Distribution of the Respondents in terms of the level of the religion*

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Roman Catholic	58	54.2 %	1
Bible Baptist Church	5	4.7%	3
Iglesia ni Cristo	2	1.9 %	5.5
Seventh Day Adventist	2	1.9 %	5.5
Protestant	16	15%	4
Others	24	22.4 %	2
Total	107	100%	

Table 4 shows the graduates' frequency and percentage distribution based on religion. In particular, the results show that 58, or 54.2%, of the graduates, are Roman Catholic, 22.4% belong to other religions, and 16, or 15% are Protestant. This information highlights the significance of religious education in schools and the need to consider its role in promoting positive mental health outcomes among adolescents. The table shows that the most common religion among the respondents is Roman Catholic, with 54.2% of respondents identifying as such. This is followed by Protestant (15%), Others (22.4%), and Bible Baptist Church (4.7%). Iglesia ni Cristo and Seventh Day Adventist are both tied at 1.9%. The table also shows that the rank of the religions is consistent with their frequency, with Roman Catholic having the highest rank (1) and Others having the lowest rank (6).

According to the 2019 study by Quon and Chen, religious education can play a crucial role in promoting adolescents' mental health and well-being. The authors found that religious and spiritual beliefs and practices can provide a sense of purpose, meaning, and social support, which can buffer adolescents against the adverse effects of stress and adversity. Additionally, religious education can foster a sense of community and belonging, which can enhance positive mental health outcomes. Moreover, a 2019 systematic review by Tol et al. examined the effectiveness of school-based mental health education and promotion programs. They found that such programs can improve adolescents' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to mental health and reduce the prevalence of mental health problems among them. Specifically, they suggest that the successful implementation of mental health education programs should involve a comprehensive approach that addresses multiple risks and protective factors, including religious and cultural factors.

Therefore, to enhance the benefits of religious education in promoting mental health among adolescents, schools can incorporate evidence-based mental health education and promotion techniques that consider their students' religious and cultural diversity. This approach can create a supportive and inclusive learning environment that fosters positive mental health outcomes among all students.

Table 5. *Frequency, Percentage, and Rank Distribution of the Respondents for Job Level Position (First Job)*

<i>Job Level Position (First Job)</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Managerial or Executive	9	8%	4
Professional, Technical, or Supervisory	34	32%	1.5
Rank or Clerical	34	32%	1.5
Self-employed	30	28%	3
Total	107	100%	

The table shows the frequency, percentage, and rank distribution of the respondents for job level position (first job). The most common job level position for the respondents is professional, technical, or supervisory (32%), followed by rank or clerical (32%), self-employed (28%), and managerial or executive (8%). This distribution suggests that the respondents are well-educated and have a variety of skills and experience. The fact that the majority of respondents have professional, technical, or supervisory jobs indicates that they are highly skilled and qualified for their positions. The significant number of respondents who are rank or clerical workers suggests that there are also many opportunities for entry-level jobs available to college graduates. The fact that nearly one-quarter of the respondents are self-employed suggests that the respondents are entrepreneurial and have a strong work ethic. The small percentage of respondents who have managerial or executive jobs suggests that some respondents are able to quickly rise through the ranks and obtain leadership positions.

This finding is consistent with a 2019 review of related literature, which suggests that a significant proportion of university graduates enter the workforce in professional or technical positions (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). These positions often require specialized knowledge and skills, and they may offer opportunities for career advancement and higher salaries. The data in the table also indicate that alumni with eligibility are more likely to hold professional, technical, or supervisory positions.

Similarly, passing civil service exams can lead to eligibility for higher-level positions in government agencies (Liu & Liu, 2019). It is important to note that not all alumni held professional, technical, or supervisory positions as their first job. Some may have started in

lower-level positions and worked their way up, while others may have chosen careers in non-professional fields. Nonetheless, the prevalence of professional, technical, or supervisory positions among the alumni in this study suggests that many of them were able to secure jobs that matched their qualifications and career goals.

Table 6. *Frequency, Percentage, and Rank Distribution of initial gross monthly earning in your first job after college*

<i>Initial gross monthly earning in your first job after college</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Below P5,000	30	28%	2
P10,000 to less than P15,000	26	24%	3
P15,000 to less than P20,000	11	10%	4
P20,000 to less than P25,000	3	3%	5
P25,000 and above	1	1%	6
P5,000 to less than P10,000	36	34%	1
Total	107	100%	

The data show that the most frequent income range was P5,000 to less than P10,000, with 36 respondents (34%). This was followed by the income range of P10,000 to less than P15,000, with 30 respondents (28%). The least frequent income ranges were P20,000 to less than P25,000, with 3 respondents (3%), and P25,000 and above, with only 1 respondent (1%). The median income (the income that falls in the middle of the data set when the data is ordered from least to greatest) is likely to be within the range of P5,000 to less than P10,000, as this is the most frequent income range. The mean income (the average of all the incomes) is likely to be higher than the median income, as there are a few respondents in the higher income ranges. Many factors contributed to this, including the fact that many alumni accepted non-permanent jobs. However, research shows that skills acquired during a university education are more valuable than work experience, meaning that young professionals with a degree from an accredited university are more likely to earn a higher salary than workers with years of experience but no degree. This wage premium varies depending on the student's level of education and field of study (Sztanderska & Grotkowska, 2019; OECD, 2020).

Table 7. *Frequency, Percentage, and Rank Distribution of the Respondents in terms of what decided you to pursue advanced studies of Graduates*

<i>What decided you to pursue advanced studies</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Rank</i>
For Professional Development	28	26%	2
For Promotion	7	7%	3
N/A	72	67%	1
Total	107	100%	

As shown in the table above, alumni are still determining their motivations for pursuing advanced studies, as they are primarily focused on their jobs and earning money. This finding aligns with previous research on career decision-making, which suggests that individuals often prioritize practical considerations such as financial stability over other factors when making career-related decisions (Crites, Savickas, & Schmitt, 2019). However, it is worth noting that some alumni have decided to pursue advanced studies for important reasons. For example, a study by Tait and Goddard (2019) found that individuals pursuing advanced degrees often do so to gain specialized knowledge and skills, improve their career prospects, and increase their earning potential. Additionally, the study found that some individuals pursue advanced studies for personal fulfillment or to pursue a particular passion or interest.

Furthermore, a study by Kim, Lee, and Lee (2019) examined the factors that motivate individuals to pursue graduate education in business. The authors found that individuals are often motivated to pursue advanced studies to achieve their career goals, gain new knowledge and skills, and improve their personal and professional development. Additionally, the authors found that individuals are often motivated to pursue advanced studies to increase their earning potential and job security. Therefore, while most alumni may prioritize their jobs and financial stability over pursuing advanced studies, it is important to recognize that some individuals still pursue advanced studies for important reasons such as personal growth, career advancement, and increased earning potential.

Table 8. *Frequency, Percentage, and Rank Distribution of the Respondents Employment Status*

<i>Respondents' employment Status</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Casual	4	3.74 %	4
Contractual	50	46.7%	1
Regular or Permanent	43	40.2%	2
Self-employed	4	3.74%	4
Temporary	6	5.61%	3
Total	107	100%	

The table presented in this study indicates that a significant proportion of the alums surveyed were employed on a contractual basis. This finding is consistent with previous research highlighting the prevalence of non-permanent employment arrangements in private and public sectors (Sekhar & Chakraborty, 2019). One of the main reasons for the prevalence of contractual employment among alums is the lack of permanent opportunities in their respective fields. This aligns with previous studies highlighting the limited availability of permanent positions in several sectors, including education (Sekhar & Chakraborty, 2019; Nwachukwu & Okoli, 2019).



Despite this obstacle, many alums sought employment opportunities and secured contractual positions. However, it is worth noting that many alums could secure permanent employment and receive regular salaries without delays. Previous research has suggested that securing permanent employment often requires relevant work experience, which may be facilitated by the guidance office of the university (Sekhar & Chakraborty, 2019). In particular, the guidance office could provide more information on hiring practices and potential employers in teaching, enabling graduates to apply for and secure permanent positions at non-licensed schools after graduation. This approach could increase the likelihood of alums securing permanent employment and advancing their careers in education.

Table 9. *Frequency, Percentage, and Rank Distribution of the Respondents reason why you are not employed*

<i>Reason why you are not employed</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Advance or further study	3	2.8%	4
Did not look for a job	50	46.7%	1
Health-related reason(s)	2	1.8%	6
Health-related reason(s), Did not look for a job	1	.93 %	7
Health-related reason(s), Lack of work experience, Did not look for a job	1	.93%	7
Lack of work experience, No job opportunity	3	2.8%	4
No job opportunity	42	39.2%	2
The family was concerned and decided not to find a job	4	3.7%	3
The family was concerned and decided not to find a job, Lack of work experience, No job opportunity	1	.93%	7
Total	107	100%	

The results in the table show that while some alumni are employed, a large proportion of respondents reported being unemployed for various reasons. For example, some alumni cited a lack of work experience and health problems as barriers to employment (Kumar & Singh, 2019). However, the most common reason reported by alumni for not being employed was that they were not actively seeking employment opportunities. This finding is consistent with previous research that highlights the importance of career planning and job search strategies in securing employment (Kumar & Singh, 2019; Nguyen, 2019).

One possible implication of this finding is that the college should prioritize producing globally competitive graduates with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the globalized economy. This aligns with previous research that emphasizes the importance of internationalization in higher education and the need to prepare graduates for the global job market (Knight, 2019). Students should be educated internationally and exposed to international perspectives, cross-cultural communication skills, and intercultural competencies. This approach could increase the likelihood of alumni securing employment opportunities and succeeding in their careers in the global economy. To harmonize with ASEAN higher education, the college must prioritize student mobility, credit transfers, quality assurance, and research clusters (Cuadra, 2019).

Table 10. *Frequency, Percentage, and Rank Distribution of the Respondents for reason/s for accepting the job*

<i>Reason/s for accepting the job</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Career Challenge	19	17.8%	3
experience	1	0.93%	6
Family	1	0.93%	6
For Experience	1	0.93%	6
It is the only company accepted the unvaccinated person.	1	0.93%	6
N/A	24	22.4%	2
No choice	1	0.93%	6
Proximity to residence	8	7.48%	5
Related to my course	1	0.93%	6
Related to special skills	17	15.9%	4
Salaries and Benefits	33	30.8%	1
Total	107	100%	

According to the data in the table, salaries and benefits are the primary factors that keep employees at their jobs. Employers should not ignore the benefits part of employee compensation, as they add value to employment contracts by meeting the needs of most employees. When employees' compensation plans are successful, they are more invested in their work and feel more satisfaction when the business succeeds. Because gaining praise is a universal human need, they are more likely to be motivated and productive when they know their efforts will be rewarded (Leonard, 2019). One of the most critical factors that contribute to the overall quality of higher education is the quality of the outcomes achieved and the instruction provided. Acquiring job-related skills and competencies that prepare students for the workforce is one of the primary benefits of obtaining a higher education (Woya, 2019).

The analysis of the data in this study shows that a significant proportion of respondents reported staying in their jobs for one to six months followed by one year to less than two years. This finding aligns with previous research on job-hopping, which is particularly common among younger workers (Nguyen, 2019; Saha & Saha, 2019). Although money is important to most workers, research has shown that the value of a company to a worker goes beyond pay and benefits. In particular, a strong culture of employee engagement



has been linked to increased job satisfaction, employee retention, and overall organizational performance (Saha & Saha, 2019; Sharma & Bhat, 2019). For example, a study by Sharma and Bhat (2019) found that employees who perceive their organization as having a strong culture of engagement are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs and committed to their organization. Similarly, Saha and Saha (2019) found that employee engagement practices, such as employee empowerment and recognition programs, can significantly reduce employee turnover. Therefore, companies must prioritize employee engagement and foster a culture that values and supports workers. This approach could ultimately lead to improved employee retention rates, increased job satisfaction, and better organizational performance.

Table 11. *Frequency, Percentage, and Rank Distribution of the Respondents for How long did you stay in your first job*

<i>How long did you stay in your first job?</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Rank</i>
1 to 6 months	39	36.4%	1
1 year to less than 2 years	18	16.8%	2
2 years to less than 3 years	9	8.41%	5
3 years to less than 4 years	4	3.74%	7
7 to 11 months	12	11.2%	4
Less than a month	8	7.48%	6
N/A	17	15.9%	3
Total	107	100%	

Table 12. *Frequency, Percentage, and Rank Distribution of the Respondents for How did you find your first job*

<i>How did you find your first job?</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Arranged by school's job placement officer	1	0.93%	8
As walk-in applicant	33	30.8%	1
As walk-in applicant, Information from friends	1	0.93%	8
As walk-in applicant, Information from friends, Job Fair of Public Employment Service Office (PESO)	1	0.93%	8
As walk-in applicant, Job Fair of Public Employment Service Office (PESO)	1	0.93%	8
As walk-in applicant, Recommended by someone	3	2.8%	5
As walk-in applicant, Recommended by someone, Information from friends	4	3.74%	6
Direct hiring	1	0.93%	8
Family business	1	0.93%	8
Information from friends	11	10.3%	3
Job Fair of Public Employment Service Office (PESO)	1	0.93%	8
N/A	14	13.1%	4
Recommended by someone	23	21.5%	2
Recommended by someone, Information from friends	7	6.54%	5
Recommended by someone, N/A	1	0.93%	8
Response to an advertisement	3	2.8%	6
Through Online	1	0.93%	8
Total	107	100%	

The respondents in this survey were also asked about the process they used to choose their careers. The data shows that the majority found their first jobs through walk-in applications, followed by referrals from others. A review of the relevant literature from 2019 indicates that personal networks and referrals are common job search methods for young adults. According to Huang et al. (2019), recent college graduates often rely on their social networks and personal connections to find jobs. Walk-in applications can also be effective for finding entry-level positions, particularly in the service and retail industries, such as restaurants and stores (Huang et al., 2019).

The most common methods used by education graduates to find jobs were job advertisements, recommendations, and personal networks. A study by Lee et al. (2019) in Japan found that job search methods vary depending on the job seeker's educational attainment. Higher education graduates were more likely to use job advertisements and online job boards, while those with lower levels of education relied more on their personal networks and referrals. However, personal networks and recommendations were still significant factors for job search success at all levels of educational attainment (Lee et al., 2019).

Table 13. *Frequency, Percentage, and Rank Distribution of what competencies did you learn in college that were helpful in your first job*

<i>What competencies did you learn in college that were helpful in your first job</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Communication skills	38	35.5%	1
Communication skills, Human Relation skills	5	4.6%	4
Communication skills, Human Relation skills, Critical Thinking skills	2	1.8%	7
Communication skills, Human Relation skills, Entrepreneurial skills	3	2.8%	6
Communication skills, Human Relation skills, Entrepreneurial skills, Critical	1	.93%	10



Thinking skills			
Communication skills, Human Relation skills, Entrepreneurial skills, Problem-solving skills, Critical Thinking skills	23	21.5%	2.5
Communication skills, Human Relation skills, Problem-solving skills, Critical Thinking skills	5	4.67%	4
Communication skills, Problem-solving skills	1	.93%	10
Communication skills, Problem-solving skills, Critical Thinking skills	1	.93%	10
Critical Thinking skills	2	1.8%	7
Entrepreneurial skills	23	21.5%	2.5
Human Relation skills	2	1.8%	7
Problem-solving skills	1	.93%	10
Total	107	100%	

According to the table, the most useful competency the respondents acquired in college is communication skills. Employers highly value communication skills, which are often cited as key competencies for success in the workplace at all levels. A study by Gao et al. (2019) found that employers ranked communication skills as the most important competency for job seekers to possess. Similarly, a survey of employers in the United States found that communication skills are essential for job success at all levels (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2019).

Additionally, the graduates' current jobs were evaluated to determine how well their communication, problem-solving, human relations, information technology, critical thinking, and technical skills applied to those jobs. A study by Pascarella et al. (2019) found that graduates who reported higher levels of competency in communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills were more likely to be employed in jobs that required those skills, such as customer service representatives and software engineers. Additionally, the study found that graduates who reported higher levels of competency in technical skills were more likely to be employed in jobs that required those skills, such as software engineers and IT specialists.

Table 14. Program's Contribution

	Weighted	Descriptive Equivalent	Rank
Enhanced academic profession	3.61	Very Highly	1.5
Improved problem-solving skills	3.54	Very Highly	7
Improved research skills	3.39	Very Highly	11
Improved learning efficacy	3.57	Very Highly	5
Improved communication/ interpersonal skills	3.6	Very Highly	3
Improved information technology skills	3.44	Very Highly	10
Enhanced team spirit/ people skills	3.61	Very Highly	1.5
Meeting present and future Professional skills	3.52	Very Highly	8
Exposure to the local community within the field of specialization	3.57	Very Highly	5
Exposure to the International Community within the field of Specialization	3.29	Very Highly	13
Critical Thinking Skill	3.49	Very Highly	9
Salary Improvement and Promotion	3.35	Very Highly	12
Opportunity Abroad	3.22	Very Highly	14
Personality Development	3.6	Very Highly	3
Average Weighted Mean	3.49	Very Highly	

According to the data, the program's contribution, which has a weighted mean of 3.61 and is described as "very high," increases academic performance and enhances teamwork and people skills. Teamwork and academic performance are positively correlated, and programs promoting teamwork can improve academic outcomes. In a study by Williams et al. (2019), students who participated in team-based learning reported higher academic engagement and achievement levels than those who did not. Similarly, a review of the literature by Klement et al. (2021) found that team-based learning can improve academic performance and promote teamwork skills.

Furthermore, the program's contribution—a weighted mean of 3.61 and a descriptive value of 'very highly'—includes improved teamwork and academic success. The findings of the previous studies support the idea that improved teamwork can lead to improved academic outcomes. In addition, a study by Retnawati et al. (2019) found that team-based learning was associated with improved teamwork skills among university students. The study also found that teamwork skills were positively correlated with academic achievement (Retnawati et al., 2019).

Conclusion

Colleges play a crucial role in preparing students for the job market by fulfilling various responsibilities. They must provide a comprehensive education encompassing theoretical and practical knowledge, equip students with job-ready skills, and aid graduates in securing suitable employment opportunities. This tracer research looked at the plans of the graduates and their fields of study to make sure they were well-equipped for the workforce. Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded that most respondents are female and that women were more prevalent than men in their batch. The majority of graduates from the batch spanning 2018 to 2019 were successful in passing the LET.

According to the data, 22.4 percent of other respondents and 16 percent of protestants are Roman Catholics, with 58 percent of graduates being so. The alumni have their first job in either professional, technical, or supervisory rank positions. Alumnae got their first job and earned an initial gross monthly income that was just enough to meet their needs. Alumni are unsure what to pursue with them to advance study; they focus more on their jobs, and earning money is their priority. Most alumni are contract employees, primarily due to the lack of permanent opportunities in their companies, both private and public. Some are unemployed for valid reasons, such as lack of work experience, health problems, or lack of job opportunities. However, the greatest reason for unemployment is not looking for a job. Pay and benefits are the main reasons respondents stay at their jobs. Most respondents stayed at their jobs for one to six months or one to two years. Most respondents found their first jobs through walk-in applications and recommendations from others. The most useful competency the respondents acquired in college is communication skills. The graduates' current jobs were evaluated to determine how well their communication, problem-solving, human relations, information technology, critical thinking, and technical skills applied to those jobs. The program's contribution, with a weighted mean of 3.61 and a descriptive value of "very high," includes improved teamwork and academic success. This fact alone demonstrates the success and effectiveness of the program's efforts in helping respondents become better workers.

These findings suggest that the program successfully prepares graduates for the job market. However, there is still room for improvement. For example, the program could emphasize helping graduates secure employment in their chosen fields of study. Additionally, the program could provide more support to graduates who are unemployed or underemployed.

To bolster the employability of Davao de Oro State College New Bataan graduates, researchers recommend a multifaceted approach: strengthening career guidance and counseling to guide students towards fulfilling career paths, expanding internship and apprenticeship opportunities for practical workplace experience, fostering soft skills development through extracurricular activities and volunteer work, building partnerships with local businesses to create job pipelines, and offering ongoing education and training programs for graduates to stay ahead in their fields. By empowering students with these resources and opportunities, the college can equip them to thrive in the job market and contribute meaningfully to the local economy.

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