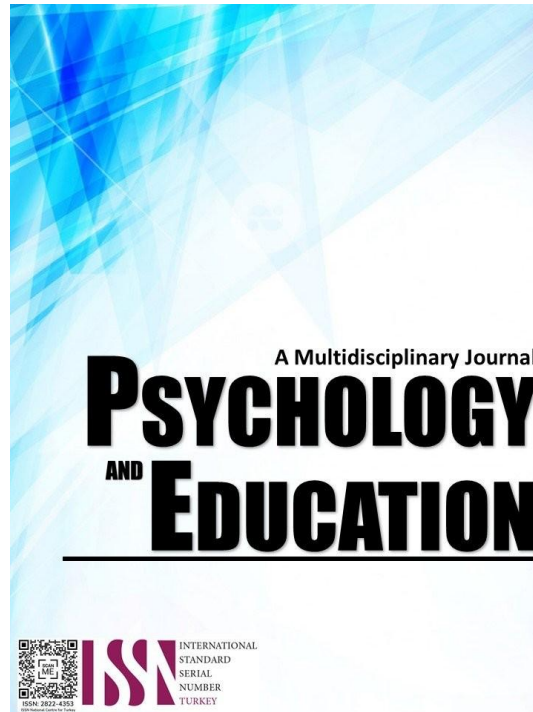


NAVIGATING THE PATH FROM GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT TO WORKFORCE SUCCESS



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Navigating the Path from Graduate Unemployment to Workforce Success

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Abstract

This study explored graduate unemployment and its relationship to workforce success among professionals in District 5, Pangasinan. Specifically, it examined respondents' demographic profiles, duration of unemployment prior to securing sustainable employment, perceived causes of unemployment (individualistic causes, human capital deficit, volitional constraints, and frictional unemployment), challenges experienced during unemployment (psychological distress, social isolation, financial struggles, and physical and locational struggles), and participants' lived experiences. The study also aimed to develop strategic policy inputs to enhance workforce success. A mixed-methods research design was employed using a validated semi-structured survey questionnaire and interviews. A total of 386 respondents participated, with 178 meeting the inclusion criteria of having experienced unemployment (at least one year for non-board programs and two years for board programs). Respondents were selected through purposive and stratified sampling across Laoac, Pozzorubio, Urdaneta City, and Villasis. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed moderate levels of agreement regarding the causes of unemployment and moderate levels of seriousness across most unemployment-related challenges, except physical and locational struggles, which were rated low. Significant relationships were identified between selected profile variables, causes, and challenges of unemployment, leading to the rejection of the null hypotheses. Participants' lived experiences further confirmed the persistence of these factors in their employment trajectories. The study concludes that addressing identified causes and challenges is essential to improving workforce success and recommends policy-informed interventions to support professionals' employment sustainability in the district.

Keywords: *graduate unemployment, workforce success, human capital deficit, unemployment challenges, mixed-methods research*

Introduction

The unemployment problem has become a curse in developing countries (Arab, 2025), and various institutions and organizations define it differently. Typically, when a person remains workless despite having qualifications, it is called unemployment. Meanwhile, academics from around the world focused on the problem of unemployment, and the policy would prevent the employment challenge from becoming a social disaster (ILO, 2022). According to the World Development Indicators (2022), enrollment in tertiary education has increased substantially in low-income countries over the past two decades, rising from 4.5% to 9.3% in 2020. However, graduate unemployment has become a cause for serious concern worldwide, raising sensitive issues in many countries, particularly in developing countries (Fenta, 2024). Thus, this research seeks to explore the paths of graduate unemployment to workforce success in District 5, Pangasinan.

Many graduates from tertiary institutions are concerned about the state of the labor market after graduation (Emmanuel & Dzisi, 2024). Graduate unemployment is also a source of concern, primarily due to a mismatch between the demand for high-skilled jobs and the supply of new graduates (Tamrat, 2023). However, in most developed countries, one of the most important indicators of higher education institutions' performance is the match between graduates' qualifications and their employment status (Demissie et al., 2021).

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRf) was initially developed in 2010 as part of the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) Economic Cooperation Support Programme (AECSP) project. ASEAN is characterized by varying levels of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs). The Association of Southeast Asian Nations Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRf) is an initiative aligned with the ASEAN Charter's objective to develop human resources through closer cooperation in education and lifelong learning, thereby empowering the peoples of ASEAN and strengthening the ASEAN Community. The AQRf aimed to support ASEAN Community building and specifically through the process to achieve the following goals, 1) ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) 2015 blueprint, free flow of skilled labor (through harmonization and standardization within the region; 2) ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) 2015 blueprint, to establish national skills frameworks as an incremental approach towards an ASEAN skills recognition framework.

Philippine Qualifications Framework Act (R.A 10968) have been institutionalized to encourage lifelong learning of individuals; to provide employees with specific training standards and qualifications aligned with industry standards; to ensure that training and educational institutions comply with particular standards and are accountable for achieving corresponding learning outcomes; and to provide the government with a common taxonomy and qualifications typology as bases for recognizing education and training programs as well as the qualifications formally awarded and their equivalents. There are three objectives of the PQF, namely; 1) to adopt national standards and levels of learning outcomes and education; 2) to support the development and maintenance of pathways and equivalencies that enable to access to qualifications and to assist individuals to move easily and readily between the different education and training

sectors and between these sectors and the labor market; and 3) to align domestic qualification standards with the international qualifications framework thereby enhancing recognition of the value and comparability of Philippine qualifications and supporting the mobility of Filipino students and workers.

The Philippine Skills Framework (PSF) initiative is a Philippine government inter-agency effort to build the skills and competencies of the country's human capital and to better prepare the workforce for the future economy, particularly for Industry 4.0. The Philippine Skills Framework for Human Capital Development (PSF-HCD) is an initiative designed to promote skills mastery and continuous learning across all industries for the Philippine workforce, with a cross-sectoral focus on Human Capital Development. The importance of this framework is, 1) For the employers to assess their human resources requirements, adapt or modify the standard guidelines for work performance, key tasks, skills and competencies, for purposes of recruitment and selection, hiring, job rotation, and promotion; 2) For the organization to create training programs to address skills gaps as well as training for the acquisition and upgrading of skills and competencies. Education and training institutions to educate students and learners about the sector, as well as make curricula for the facilitation of learning of required skills and competencies that are more aligned to industry needs; and 3) for the individuals to be equipped, make informed decisions about career choices, as well as take responsibility for skills upgrading and career planning. Individuals can assess their career interests, identify avenues to close skills gaps, and renew, upgrade, and deepen their skills through the quality programs offered by training institutions or academe, guided by the Philippine Skills Framework-Human Capital Development.

The Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS, 2024) stated that a widening skills mismatch in the Philippines has become a significant barrier to economic growth. Dacuycuy (2024) explained that the evolving world of work, driven by technological advancements, requires a focus on developing relevant skills. Further, Dacuycuy warned that failure to address these challenges could lead to further inequality, as workers without critical skills are more likely to face underemployment or unemployment.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) conducted a labor force survey, and the labor force participation rate in July 2025 decreased to 48.64 million Filipinos aged 15 years and over. In the final estimates of 2019, the labor force participation rate was 61.3%. The preliminary estimate for January 2025 increased to 63.9%, and then decreased to 60.7% in July 2025. While the employment rate final estimate for 2019 is 94.9%, it increased from the January preliminary report to 95.9% and then decreased in the July report to 94.7%, compared to January. The underemployment rate in 2019 was 13.8%, significantly higher than the 12.9% rate in January 2025. It increased to 14.8% last July 2025. While the unemployment rate in 2019 was 5.1%, it decreased to 4.3% last January 2025 and then increased to 5.3% last July 2025. Likewise, the Philippines' unemployment rate dropped to 3.9% in August 2025, from 4.0% in August 2024, and to 5.3% in July 2025. The number of unemployed individuals in August 2025 was reported at 2.03 million, lower than the numbers in August 2019 (2.07 million) and July 2025 (2.59 million). While the employment status in the Philippines in August 2025 was estimated at 96.1%, this was higher than the recorded rates in August 2024 (96.0%) and July 2025 (94.7%).

According to The Philippine Star (2025), there is a troubling increase in the number of Filipino college graduates who remain unemployed. Commission on Higher Education Chairperson Agrupis said, "The June 2025 Labor Force Survey by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) showed a 2.6%-point increase in the number of unemployed college graduates from 35.6% in December 2024." Moreover, "This troubling increase reveals that our most educated citizens—those who have invested significant time and resources into higher education—are encountering growing difficulties in finding employment." On the other hand, the Philippine News Agency (2024) reports that employers prefer to hire college graduates, given the large pool of unemployed college graduates. Further, many college graduates frequently find themselves in positions that do not align with their level of education and training. Moreover, a Social Weather Station (SWS) survey showed that in September 2023, the jobless rate was highest among college graduates, at 25.6 percent of the total unemployed adult labor force.

Regarding government initiatives, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is the government agency responsible for formulating plans, policies, and strategies related to the development and efficient operation of higher education institutions in the Philippines (CHED, 2010).

Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order no. 46, series of 2012, guides the higher education institutions (HEIs) in producing quality graduates, focusing on competency-based learning, national and international standards, and a commitment to societal development, which outlines the goal of producing graduates with specific technical, thinking, and ethical skills. The Commission on Higher Education Memorandum Order no. 46, series of 2012 is in accordance with pertinent provisions of the 1987 Philippine Constitution which assert that the state "shall protect and promote the right of all citizens of quality education at all levels" (Article XIV, Section 1); "establish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the people and society" (Article XIV, Section 2); and "exercise reasonable supervision and regulation of all educational institutions" while recognizing the complementary roles of private and public institutions (Article XIV, Section 4)—provisions that are reiterated in *Batas Pambansa Blg. 232* and Republic Act 7722, otherwise known as the Higher Education Act of 1994, which states that "the State shall protect, foster and promote the right of all citizens to affordable quality education at all levels" (Section 2).

The researcher is inspired to conduct this study to explore the path navigated by professionals from graduate unemployment to workforce success. The connection between education and employment is neither simple nor consistently positive over time. The study's findings are essential to every Filipino professional and serve as the basis for formulating strategies and policies to strengthen

professional employment and guide every Filipino toward workforce success, fostering personal growth and professional development.

Research Questions

This study critically analyzed the path navigated by the professionals from their experiences of graduate unemployment to workforce success. The present study was conducted among professionals in a selected locality of District 5, Pangasinan. The study's results were used as inputs to strategy and policy formulation in strengthening employment among professionals. Specifically, the present study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1. age;
 - 1.2. sex;
 - 1.3. civil status;
 - 1.4. course graduated;
 - 1.5. highest educational attainment;
 - 1.6. eligibility;
 - 1.7. years in service;
 - 1.8. family type; and
 - 1.9. monthly income?
2. What is the average rate of unemployment experienced by individuals before they secure a long-term and stable job?
3. What are the causes of unemployment experienced by professionals before they secure a long-term and stable job? What is the level of agreement of the professionals on these causes?
4. What are the challenges faced by professionals during their unemployment before they secure a long-term and stable job? What is the level of seriousness of these challenges?
5. Is there a significant relationship between level of agreement of the professionals on the causes of unemployment and their profile?
6. Is there a significant relationship between level of seriousness of the challenges faced by the professional and their profile?
7. Is there a significant relationship between the level of agreement on the causes and the level of seriousness of the challenges on the unemployment challenges experienced by the professionals?
8. What are the lived experiences of successful professionals in overcoming unemployment challenges?
9. What input to strategy and policy formulation can be proposed based on the key findings of the study?

Methodology

Research Design

To achieve significant results in the present study on graduate unemployment to workforce success, the researcher employed a mixed-methods, sequential, explanatory research design to collect data from a pool of respondents. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a mixed-method research design combines quantitative and qualitative research designs. While an explanatory sequential design harnesses both quantitative and qualitative data, it is distinguished by two phases: first, quantitative data is collected and analyzed, and then qualitative data is collected and analyzed. Creswell and Clark (2017) stated that the purpose of this design is to elaborate on the quantitative findings by using qualitative methods. Likewise, the researcher followed Creswell and Plano Clark's (2011) conceptual integration by linking the methods of data collection and analysis; the researcher used a building approach, in which one database informs the other's data collection approach. Integration through building occurs when results from one data collection procedure inform the data collection approach of the different procedure. In this sense, the data collection needed for the qualitative approach is formed based on the qualitative results for data triangulation.

This research design is deemed necessary, as it requires qualitative data to complement the quantitative data. Likewise, this research is more quantitatively oriented, with a clear understanding of the critical variables and access to quantitative instruments for measuring the primary constructs of interest.

Respondents

A total of three hundred eighty-six (386) professionals from different localities in District 5, Pangasinan, namely Laoac, Pozorrubio, Urdaneta City, and Villasis, who signified their willingness to participate in the study, are included as respondents.

The identified respondents were surveyed, and their profile variables and average unemployment rate were determined. Respondents with unemployment experience were the appropriate respondents to participate in further investigation. There was a selection of the respondents with the following criteria: a) For non-board courses, the respondents who have had experienced unemployment for at least one (1) year is included on the following investigation; b) For board courses, the respondents who have had experienced unemployment for at least two (2) years is included in the following investigation; and c) respondents for both board and non-board courses who do not have experienced unemployment within the identified period is excluded from succeeding investigation for a more meaningful results for the study.

The respondents with unemployment experiences were selected to participate in the subsequent survey to provide meaningful data on the causes of unemployment and challenges associated with unemployment. The reason for this selection is to filter out respondents who have experienced unemployment within the study's criteria and to meet the study's needs. Lastly, the calculated average unemployment rate is limited to this study and does not reflect the unemployment rate in the Philippines.

For the participants of the study on the lived experiences in overcoming unemployment challenges, the researcher selected fifteen (15) participants from the group of respondents within the different fields, specifically in the academe, business industry, agriculture sector, and various work employment sectors.

The respondents of the study were selected using a purposive sampling method, specifically a subjective purposive sampling approach combined with stratified sampling. According to Stratton (2024), purposive sampling is a population sampling process in which a researcher selects research participants based on their presence in a population of interest, characteristics, experiences, or other criteria. Research using purposeful samples is used to identify current concepts, standards, and social issues. There are two fundamental forms of purposeful sampling: randomized and subjective. Subjective purposive sampling involves the use of any non-random method for selecting sample subjects; it is necessary to find divergent and competing information among the group of sample respondents. Subjective purposeful sampling is used in conjunction with stratified or cell sampling, and once a group of interest is identified, individual study respondents are selected using a non-random method. Likewise, the subjective purposive sampling is used in the present study, as the respondents have specific characteristics and experiences. This involves non-random subject selection and applies to the present study, wherein various groups of professionals from different professions were included.

A stratified sampling method was employed, in which respondents' place of residence served as a cluster and to ensure equal numbers of respondents and to comprehensively collect the data required for the realization of this study.

Instrument

The researcher used a pre-tested, semi-structured questionnaire checklist based on the literature review and validated by a pool of experts, as well as an interview guide, to collect the data needed for the present study.

For phase 1, the survey questionnaire checklist focuses on the profile variables and the average unemployment rate. Followed by the selection of the respondents based on set criteria. The subsequent survey was conducted among respondents who met the requirements. It consists of two (2) parts: the causes of unemployment and the challenges professionals face during their unemployment before securing a long-term, stable job.

For Phase 2, the researcher conducted follow-up interviews about their lived experiences of successful professionals in overcoming unemployment challenges using the structured interview guide with fifteen (15) participants from different fields of industry. These participants are randomly selected from the saturated respondents.

A dry run was conducted with one hundred (100) respondents. Following the pre-testing, the questionnaire was revised based on suggestions and reconsideration. Before the dry run, the questionnaire was validated by six (6) experts in the field of study. The evaluators assessed the instrument's validity, with an overall mean of 4.73, rated "very highly valid."

The researcher ensures that the respondents meet the eligibility criteria through the survey interview before including them in the study. Furthermore, the researcher obtained written informed consent from the respondents as a matter of respect and in accordance with research ethics principles.

The researcher highly employed moral norms and principles in this study. Rules and policies promote the research's aspiration, such as knowledge, truth, and error avoidance. The researcher protects confidential communications, such as respondents' data records and all other evidence entrusted to them, and uses them only for the research objectives.

Procedure

After the committee's approval, the researcher determined the study subjects, finalized the research instrument, and fulfilled other research requirements. The researcher then solicits written permission from the research adviser to conduct the survey and gather data. As soon as permission was granted, the researcher located all the study subjects in Laoac, Pozzorubio, Urdaneta City, and Villasis, all in District 5, Pangasinan. The research instrument of the present study was administered personally to the identified respondents. After gathering all the necessary data, it was collected, tabulated, and interpreted for presentation and analysis of the findings.

Data Analysis

To describe and summarize the data, phase 1 utilized both descriptive and inferential statistics, employing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS). In phase 2, the researcher employed a narrative case approach, integrating narrative through a weaving approach.

To address problem number 1 on the profile of the respondents, specifically their age, sex, civil status, course graduated, highest educational attainment, eligibility, years in service, family type, and average monthly income, the researcher utilized frequency counts and percentages.



To address problem 2 regarding the average unemployment rate, the researcher used frequency counts and percentages.

To address problem 3 regarding the causes of unemployment among professionals before they secure a long-term and stable job, the researcher used factor analysis. After identifying the underlying factors, the researcher used the average weighted mean on a five-point Likert scale to measure professionals' level of agreement on the causes of unemployment.

To answer problem number 4 regarding the challenges faced by professionals during their unemployment before they secure a long-term and stable job, the researcher used factor analysis. After identifying the underlying factors, the researcher used the average weighted mean on a five-point Likert scale to measure the level of seriousness of the challenges during unemployment.

For problem number 5 on the relationship between professionals' level of agreement on the causes of unemployment and their profile variables, the researcher used bivariate correlation analysis, specifically the Spearman rank correlation coefficient.

For problem number 6 regarding the relationship between the level of seriousness of the challenges faced by professionals and their profile variables, the researcher used bivariate correlation analyses, specifically the Spearman rank correlation coefficient, biserial correlation, and multiserial correlation.

For problem number 7, which examines the relationship between the level of agreement on the causes and the level of seriousness of the challenges in unemployment experienced by professionals, the researcher used bivariate correlation analysis, specifically the Pearson Correlation Coefficient, to describe the strength and direction of relationships between responses.

For problem number 8, which examines the lived experiences of successful professionals in overcoming unemployment challenges, the researcher employed a narrative case study approach to compile and analyze the recorded interview material, and an intelligent transcript was used to translate the local language into English. Intelligent transcription or intelligent verbatim in the context of Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis (2006) involves editing spoken words or text for readability-removing filler words, stammers, and grammatical errors-while preserving the intended meaning. The researcher followed the strategy for publishing that incorporates approaches to integrating qualitative and quantitative data at the interpretation and reporting levels, as outlined by Creswell and Tashakkori (2007). The researcher used integration through narrative, in which the researcher describes the quantitative and qualitative findings in a single or a series of reports. Likewise, the researcher used a weaving approach, which involves writing qualitative and quantitative data together on a theme-by-theme or concept-by-concept basis. Findings were reported using an integrative mixed-methods technique, in which narratives were integrated into the quantitative data to enrich the results.

Lastly, to address problem number 9, the researcher proposes an input to strategy and policy formulation based on the key findings of this study, which could help increase the employability of professionals and future graduates. Likewise, the output may be beneficial to the Higher education institutions, local government units, and public and private institutions.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the data gathered from the different processes undertaken by the researcher. This discusses the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of findings based on data collected from respondents. The data were tabulated to facilitate better understanding and to make it more convenient for those who will encounter the study.

It presents the analysis of data gathered and the interpretation of the findings on the experiences of professionals from unemployment to workforce success, which served as the basis for strategy and policy formulation. This study determined the following; 1) Profile of the respondents; 2) Average rate of unemployment experienced by individuals before they secure a long-term and stable job; 3) Causes of unemployment experienced by professionals before they secure a long-term and stable job and respondents' level of agreement on the causes; 4) Challenges faced by the professionals during their unemployment and respondents' level of seriousness on the challenges; 5) Relationship of level of agreement of the professionals on the causes of unemployment and their profile; 6) Relationship of level of seriousness of the challenges faced by the professionals and their profile; 7) Relationship of level of agreement on the causes and level of seriousness of the challenges on the unemployment challenges experienced by the professionals; 8) Lived experiences of successful professionals in overcoming unemployment challenges; 9) A proposed input to strategy and policy formulation.

Profile of the Respondents Who Experienced Unemployment

Table 1 below presents the profile of professionals who have experienced unemployment. The total number of respondents with unemployment experiences following the inclusion criteria was one hundred seventy-eight (178), which was selected from the saturated respondents of the study which were three hundred eighty-six (386) respondents. Thus, respondents with unemployment experiences were surveyed while respondents who do not meet the criteria were excluded.

Table 1. *Profile of a Professional Who Experienced Unemployment*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Categories</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>%</i>
Age	40 and below	138	77.52
	41 to 50	31	17.42
	50 or older	9	5.06
Sex	Male	72	40.45



	Female	106	59.55
Civil Status	Single	97	54.49
	Married	81	45.51
	Teacher Education/Public Service	86	48.31
Course Graduated	Accountancy/Business Related	24	13.48
	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics	37	20.79
	Health and Medicine	15	8.43
	Others	16	8.99
Educational Attainment	BS	135	75.84
	MS/MA	38	21.35
	PhD/EdD	5	2.81
Eligibility	Without Eligibility	47	26.40
	With Eligibility	131	73.60
Years in Service	10 or less	123	69.10
	more than 10	55	30.90
Family Type	Nucleus	141	79.21
	Extended	37	20.79
Monthly Income	40,000 or Below	157	88.20
	40,001 to 75,000	17	9.55
	more than 75,000	4	2.25

Based on the age of respondents who experienced unemployment, about 138 (77.52%) are aged 40 and below, with this age group having the highest frequency in this study. While 31 or 17.42% were aged 41 to 50, and the remaining 9 or 5.06% are respondents who are aged 50 and older. Thus, this study affirmed that professionals are in the early to adulthood stage, specifically in the employment sector. The results of the study provide insight into the nation’s potential workforce and economic capacity. As shown in World Economics (2026), their projection of the working-age population, used to assess a nation’s economic capacity, yields a metric representing the proportion of individuals aged 15 to 64 who are economically active and available to work. Meanwhile, in the study by Börsch-Supan and Weiss (2016), it was estimated that ages 25 and 65 are productive, and that, at the individual worker level, the average productivity measure increases monotonically up to age 65. Further, older workers may devote some of their time to helping or teaching younger workers.

In terms of sex, most respondents were females (106, 59.55%) out of 178, while males accounted for 72 (40.45%). The results imply that females are most dominant in the workplace, especially in local government offices, the medical field, and education. The study’s findings are supported by Buchhave and Belghith (2022), who demonstrate impressive performance in closing key gender gaps. It is therefore striking that women’s labor force participation in District 5, Pangasinan, especially in Urdaneta City, Villasis, Pozzorubio, and Laoac, is persistently high. On the other hand, the latest Global Gender Gap report (2025) shows that the Philippines has surged back into the top 20 globally, climbing five places to rank 20th out of 148 countries, and remains Asia’s leader in Gender Equality. Further, in a Philippine Institute for Development Studies news report (2023), the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028 aims to increase women’s labor force participation from 51.7 percent in 2022 to 52-54 percent in 2025.

Regarding their civil status, most respondents are single (97, 54.49%), while 81 (45.51%) are married. These findings are supported by United Nations Population Division statistics based on 2021 data on singles; these indicate that the Philippines has the highest number of singles among Southeast Asian countries (Esquire Philippines, 2024). Further, from January to December 2024, registered marriages fell 10.2% to 371,825, down from more than 414,000 in 2023, as reported by the Philippine Daily Inquirer (2025).

Regarding the course graduated, 86 or 48.31% of the respondents are in teacher education/public service, 24 or 13.48% are in the field of accountancy/business related, 37 or 20.79% are specialized in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, 15 or 8.43% of the respondents are graduated on health and medicine, while there are 16 or 8.99% who choose others which implies that they graduated a course that is not specified in the field.

Data revealed that respondents were highest in having a bachelor’s degree (135, 75.84%), followed by those with a master’s degree (38, 21.35%), and the remaining 5 (2.81%) had doctorate degrees.

Among the respondents who experienced unemployment, 131 (73.60%) had their eligibility issued by the Professional Regulation Commission and the Civil Service Commission of the Republic of the Philippines. Meanwhile, 47 respondents (26.40%) do not have eligibility. These respondents had a bachelor’s degree, worked in private companies, and held jobs that did not require eligibility.

In terms of years in service, 123 respondents (69.10%) had less than 10 years, while 55 respondents (30.90%) had more than 10 years. Results showed that respondents are committed to their work.

Regarding their family type, most respondents had a nuclear family (141, 79.21%), while extended families accounted for 37 (20.79%). Results showed that respondents acknowledged building their own family composed of two parents, either married or partnered, and their children only. Additionally, provides many advantages, such as stronger emotional bonds, financial flexibility and independence, greater decision-making freedom, better work-life balance, and tailored support for children’s development, with social, emotional,



and financial benefits (Nimbli, 2025). On the other hand, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2025) says that 28% of Filipino families live in extended households or multifamily arrangements. Exposing significant gaps in the Philippine housing policy, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2025) shows that shared living arrangements are not merely borne of poverty but reflect adaptive strategies in response to rising costs, stagnant wages, and evolving socio-economic dynamics. Furthermore, PIDS Supervising Research Specialist Tatum Ramos explained that “extended family setups allow for resource sharing, especially among young working women who may not have the time or income to manage an independent household, and this is not only just about building more homes—it’s about designing policies that reflect the way Filipinos actually live today.”

In terms of their monthly income, 157 respondents (88.20%) had Php 40,000 or less, which had the highest frequency in this study and resembles the lower-middle class, followed by 17 respondents (9.55%) with Php 40,001 to Php 75,000, which resembles the middle class. The remaining 4 respondents, or 2.25%, were upper-middle- to high-income earners with monthly incomes exceeding Php 75,000. The result suggests that individual differences, such as educational attainment and job position, may help explain income disparities. According to Digidio (2025), the middle class in the Philippines is defined as those earning between Php 18,200 and Php 109,200 per month, which aligns with the lower-middle and middle-income brackets. Earners earning over Php 109,000 are typically classified as upper-income by local standards.

Average Rate of Unemployment Experienced by Individuals Before They Secure a Long-Term and Stable Job

Table 2 on the following page presents the distribution of professionals by their experience with unemployment. In this phase of data collection, the approximated total number of respondents was saturated. Those saturated respondents are included in the preceding data collection. These saturated respondents were those who experienced unemployment.

Respondents who graduated from non-board and board programs tend to find work. Likewise, this study investigated the navigated path from unemployment to workforce success. This study draws on inclusion and exclusion criteria to select respondents from the preceding investigation. Only respondents who had experienced unemployment were included, and respondents who had been employed within the specified criteria were excluded.

Inclusion for non-board courses requires at least one (1) year of being unemployed, while board courses require at least two (2) years of being unemployed.

Table 2. Distribution of the Professionals as to their Experience on Unemployment

Course Graduated		Experienced Unemployment		Row Total
		No	Yes	
Non-Board Program	Frequency	63	46	109
	% of Row Total	57.80%	42.20%	
Board-Program	Frequency	145	132	277
	% of Row Total	52.35%	47.65%	
Column Total		208	178	386
Percent of Total		53.89%	46.11%	

Data revealed that 178 respondents (46.11%) experienced unemployment, and 208 respondents (53.89%) did not experience unemployment. The result implies that it is better and more likely that a professional can find employment for less than one or two years as a starting point for achieving success in the workplace. Hence, the study's results also imply that it is crucial and alarming that a professional cannot find a stable job and becomes unemployed for at least 2 years before finding a career that can unlock their success.

A Philippine Daily Inquirer news report (2025) cited data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) that 2.54 million Filipinos were out of work in October 2025, up from 1.96 million in September of the same year; Thus, resulted in jobless rate up to 5% from the previous month’s 3.8 percent, putting it just slightly below the three-year high recorded in July, when unemployment reached 5.3 percent or 2.59 million people. Among the major industry sectors, services remained the largest employer, accounting for 62.1% of total employment, followed by agriculture at 20% and industry at 17.9% (PSA, 2025). Hence, the average unemployment rate is limited to this study, specifically in District 5, Pangasinan, within the selected residences: Urdaneta City, Villasis, Laoac, and Pozzorubio. Further, the respondents in the study came from the industry.

For non-board programs, results revealed that most respondents (63, 57.80%) did not experience unemployment for at least 1 year. Meanwhile, respondents who have been unemployed for less than a year are close, with 46 counts, equivalent to 42.20% of the 109-row total of non-board program respondents.

For the board program, about 145 respondents (52.35%) did not experience unemployment over the past 2 years. At the same time, unemployed respondents are close, with 132 (46.11%) of the 277 respondents in the board program.

Causes of Unemployment Perceived by Professionals Who Became Successful Later in Life

Figure 1 below presents the factor extraction of twenty-four (24) indicators on the causes of unemployment. The factor extraction guides this research in identifying major groups or variables. The variability includes individualistic causes, human capital deficit, volitional constraints, and frictional unemployment.

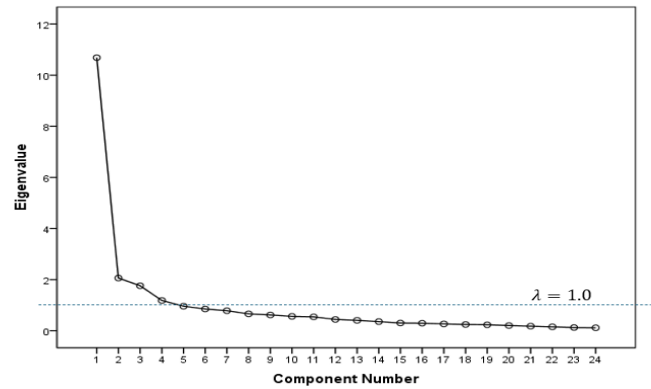


Figure 1. Scree Plot of the Extracted Factors on Cause of Unemployment

The identified variability among observed and correlated variables is assessed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity, as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Test	Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	0.910 Marvelous
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square 2935.63 Sig. .000

Table 4 presents the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy to determine the proportion of variance among variables in the study that might be common. This type of test indicates the degree of commonality between variables. Results are interpreted as values between 0 and 1, where higher values indicate that the variables share more variance and are more suitable for factor analysis.

The test result of this study was 0.910, which is equivalent to marvelous. As noted on the DataPott Analytics website, Statistical Data Analysis, a KMO value greater than 0.5 is generally considered acceptable for factor analysis; values of 0.6 are acceptable, 0.7 are good, 0.8 are very good, and 0.9 are excellent.

Given that the commonality between items of this study is marvelous or excellent for factor analysis, it is treated using Bartlett’s test of Sphericity to help ensure that the data contains sufficient correlations between items to allow for meaningful exploratory factor extraction. Test result for Bartlett’s test of Sphericity indicated 2935.63 approximate chi-square significance value, and p-value of .000. This suggests that the variables are sufficiently interrelated to justify factor analysis. A significant p-value indicates that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix, suggesting sufficient correlation between the items to proceed with factor analysis.

Table 4. Results of Factor Extraction on Causes of Unemployment

Indicators Based on my experience, I...	Component Loading			
	1	2	3	4
1. faced labor-market competition that reduces the likelihood of job opportunities.	-.40	.41	-.02	.27
2. lack the required skills needed in the labor market.	.31	.83	.06	.09
3. lack technical skills due to the demand for technological knowledge.	.31	.73	.30	.05
4. lack the work experience required in the job position.	.07	.72	.28	.29
5. lack specialized training for the position.	.14	.74	.39	.24
6. lack the industry-eligibility needed.	.28	.77	.14	.18
7. have a limited education level.	.54	.57	.25	.13
8. do not pursue other job offers because offers are a mismatch for my skills	.09	.40	.75	.19
9. am hesitant to take the job that does not align with my education level.	.26	.40	.73	.11
10. faced pressure from the family, which decreased my motivation to find work.	.35	.37	.49	.26
11. am hesitant to work outside my place of residence.	.32	.17	.52	.28
12. cannot adapt to the working environment.	.74	.27	.32	.05
13. have poor communication skills.	.80	.28	.25	.11
14. could not adjust to the character and attitude of others.	.71	.13	.15	.29
15. felt workplace pressure that led me to resign.	.56	-.02	.33	.36
16. faced the limited job availability in my field of study.	.35	.07	.76	.19
17. lack of effort in finding a job.	.73	.25	.29	.18
18. have health-related concerns that result in prolonged absences.	.76	.25	.01	.21
19. believe that the end of contract can cause unemployment.	.28	.15	.21	.62
20. believe low workplace satisfaction can lead to filling for resignation.	.14	.19	.00	.82
21. believe unemployment is due to government policies and strategies.	.10	.17	.15	.75



22. faced limited financial resources that hindered my job search, applications, and follow-ups.	.19	.13	.37	.70
23. have low self-confidence when facing recruiters due to fear of making mistakes.	.57	.26	.37	.32
24. struggle with the demands of the job that pushed me to find an easy job.	.48	.14	.33	.49
Variance Contribution	20.73%	18.16%	14.32%	13.59%
Variance Explained to the Total Variation				66.81%
Unexplained Variance				33.19%

Table 4 on the following page presents the results of factor extraction for the causes of unemployment. Factor analysis is used to simplify a set of complex variables and to identify the underlying dimensions that explain relationships among multiple variables (Tavakol & Wetzel, 2020). The variance contribution among the four (4) components loading shows 20.73%, 18.16%, 14.32%, and 13.59%. Among these variances, 66.81% is explained by the total variation, while 33.19% is unexplained.

For component loading number 1, with 20.73% variance contribution, there are seven (7) indicators with the highest point values that represent individual causes of unemployment. These indicators are “cannot adopt to the working environment” (.74), “have poor communication skills” (.80), “could not adjust to the character and attitude of others” (.71), “felt workplace pressure that led me to resign” (.56), “lack of effort in finding a job” (.73), “have health-related concerns that result in prolonged absences” (.76), and “have low self-confidence when facing recruiters due to fear of making mistakes” (.57).

For component loading number 2, with 18.16% variance contribution, there are seven (7) indicators with the highest point values that represent human capital deficit as a cause of unemployment. These indicators are “faced labor-market competition that reduces the likelihood of job opportunities” (.41), “lack the required skills needed in the labor market” (.83), “lack technical skills due to demand for technological knowledge” (.73), “lack the work experience required in the job position” (.72), “lack specialized training for the position” (.74), “lack the industry-eligibility needed” (.77), and “have a limited education level” (.57).

For component loading number 3, with 14.32% variance contribution, five (5) indicators with the highest point values represent volitional constraints as causes of unemployment. These indicators are “do not pursue other job offers because offers are a mismatch for my skills” (.75), “hesitant to take the job that does not align with my education level” (.73), “faced pressure from the family, which decreased my motivation to find work” (.49), “hesitant to work outside my place of residence” (.52), and “faced the limited job availability in my field of study” (.76).

For component loading number 4, with a 13.59% variance contribution, five (5) indicators with the highest point values indicate that frictional unemployment is the cause of unemployment. These indicators are “end of contract can cause unemployment” (.62), “low workplace satisfaction can lead to filing for resignation” (.82), “unemployment is due to government policies and strategies” (.75), “faced limited financial resources that hindered my job search, application, and follow-ups” (.70), and “struggle with the demands of the job that pushed me to find an easy job” (.49).

Level of Agreement on the Extracted Causes

The identified factors on the causes of unemployment, specifically individual causes, human capital deficit, volitional constraints, and frictional unemployment, are explored in this research by determining the level of agreement among respondents who experienced unemployment, based on the inclusion criteria of this study.

Table 5 presents the level of agreement on the extracted causes of unemployment, specifically regarding individualistic causes.

Table 5. *Individualistic Causes*

Indicators	Mean	SD
1. Lack of effort in finding a job.	2.52	1.22
2. Health-related concerns that make me prone to prolonged absences.	2.35	1.17
3. Competition in the labor market	3.70	1.17
4. Inability to adapt to the working environment.	2.44	1.15
5. Poor communication skills.	2.36	1.18
6. Inability to adjust to the character and attitude of others.	2.46	1.14
7. Pressure from the workplace that causes me to resign.	2.63	1.15
8. Low self-confidence in facing recruiters because of the fear of making mistakes.	2.67	1.19
Mean	2.64	
Level of Agreement	Moderate	
<i>1.0-1.49 (Very Low) 1.5 - 2.49(Low) 2.5 - 3.49 (Moderate) 3.5-4.49 (High) 4.5-5 (Very High)</i>		

Individualistic causes of unemployment primarily concern the characteristics, attitudes, and circumstances of the job-seeking individuals rather than external economic conditions. These findings are supported by Becker's (1993) Human Capital Theory, which posits that unemployment outcomes are partly determined by an individual's investment in education, skill development, work experience, and psychological readiness for work, suggesting that deficiencies in these areas can reduce employability even when jobs are available. Furthermore, Clarke (2017) emphasizes that job seekers' attitudes, such as motivation, resilience, willingness to accept

initial job conditions, and adaptability to workplace environments, significantly shape employment outcomes.

Data on the individualistic causes of unemployment revealed that the respondents agree that competition in the labor market is a top cause, yielding a mean of 3.70, equivalent to a “high” level of agreement, and a standard deviation of 1.17, indicating that the data points are clustered closely around the mean and showing consistency of the results. Competition in the labor market is increasingly recognized as an individual-level contributor to unemployment, particularly among graduates and early-career professionals. Labor market competition arises when the number of qualified job seekers exceeds the number of available positions, causing individuals to compete intensely for limited employment opportunities. While competition reflects broader labor market conditions, its impact is often realized at the individual level, where job seekers’ skills, preparedness, adaptability, and self-presentation determine their likelihood of being selected over other applicants (Shamsudin et al., 2013). Likewise, this finding is supported by Human Capital Theory, which holds that in a competitive labor market, employers prioritize candidates with stronger combinations of technical competencies, soft skills, experience, and confidence, even when applicants share similar educational qualifications (Becker, 1993).

Additionally, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization lists the ten core life skill strategies and techniques as: problem solving, critical thinking, practical communication skills, decision-making, creative thinking, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness building skills, empathy, coping with stress, and coping with emotions, as cited in the research of Sundaram & Jayaraman (2024). Thus, graduates who lack distinctive skills or competitive advantages are more vulnerable to unemployment, not because of the absence of jobs per se, but due to their relative position among competing applicants. These findings suggest that unemployment in competitive labor markets is influenced not only by job availability but also by an individual's capacity to outperform other job applicants.

Moreover, the respondents moderately agree on the items indicating that lack of effort in finding job, pressure from the workplace that causes me to resign, and low self-confidence in facing recruiters because of the fear of making mistake had moderate level of agreement with computed mean values of 2.52, 2.63, and 2.67 with standard deviations of 1.22, 1.15, and 1.19 which is still clustered closely to the mean. Studies on graduate unemployment also identify individual constraints, such as fear of failure, a lack of confidence in facing recruiters, and ineffective job-search strategies, as critical obstacles to securing employment (Affum-Osei et al., 2023). Thus, individualistic causes highlight how unemployment may persist not only because of limited job opportunities but also because of personal capacity gaps and behavioral factors that hinder effective labor market participation.

Further, the respondents had “low” level of agreement in the items indicating that health-related concerns make prolonged absences, inability to adapt to the working environment, poor communication skills, and inability to adjust with the character and attitudes of others with a computed mean values of 2.35, 2.44, 2.36, and 2.46 with standard deviations of 1.22, 1.17, 1.15, and 1.14 which is closed to the mean, therefore the scores are clustered and shows consistency. These results, despite a low level of agreement, still provide significant support for individualistic causes of unemployment. Health-related concerns are commonly identified as barriers to sustained employment, as chronic illness, stress, and physical limitations may lead to absenteeism and reduced work performance (Fenta, 2024). However, the low level of agreement in this study may indicate that most respondents perceived themselves as physically capable of work and did not view health limitations as a primary reason for their unemployment. Findings align with studies showing that health-related unemployment is more pronounced among vulnerable populations, older workers, and individuals with disabilities, rather than among generally healthy, working-age professionals (Demissie et al., 2021). Similarly, adaptability to the working environment and the ability to adjust to organizational culture and interpersonal dynamics are widely recognized as essential employability attributes (Clarke, 2017; Tomlinson, 2017). Subsequently, difficulties in adjusting to workplace norms, leadership styles, and co-worker attitudes can contribute to job dissatisfaction and early resignation. However, the respondents’ low agreement on these items suggests that they may possess adequate adaptive and interpersonal skills, or that they attribute unemployment more to external competition and skill mismatches than to workplace adjustment issues.

Meanwhile, poor communication skills are frequently cited by employers as a significant employability gap among graduates (Cheang & Yamashita, 2023). Nevertheless, the low level of agreement in this study implies that respondents did not strongly perceive communication deficiencies as a personal limitation. These findings may be attributed to respondents’ professional background, educational attainment, or prior work experience, which may have enhanced their confidence in basic communication competencies.

Overall, the results of the study indicated that respondents exhibited a “moderate” level of agreement with the individualistic cause of unemployment, with a computed mean of 2.64, suggesting that personal characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors contributed to their unemployment experiences. This finding implies that while individual-level limitations played a role in shaping unemployment outcomes, respondents recognized that their employment challenges were also influenced by broader labor market dynamics, especially in the 21st century, as well as by contextual labor market constraints. Human Capital Theory holds that employability is influenced not only by formal educational attainment but also by individuals’ job search effort, adaptability, self-efficacy, communication skills, and psychological readiness for work (Becker, 1993). Overall, the moderate level of agreement on individualistic causes underscores the multidimensional nature of unemployment, where all personal effort, attitudes, and behaviors matter but operate within a competitive, evolving labor market. This finding supports the argument that effective policy interventions and institutional strategies should not adopt a purely individual-deficit perspective, such as personal shortcomings or job-seeker deficiencies. Still, it must address both personal employability development and structural labor-market alignment. Further, strengthening institutional, government, and



industry collaboration is highly recommended. Thus, individualistic factors are a contributing factor in the professional workforce's success trajectory.

Several participants shared their experiences overcoming unemployment challenges. When asked about their perspectives on unemployment and how they faced the challenges of seeking new employment, the narratives are shown below.

“Matindi ang kompetisyon. Kasi, pipila ako sa mga job fair at makakakita ng daan-daang aplikante na naghahanap ng parehong entry-level na posisyon. Kahit Maganda ang mga grades ko, laso pa ring may maraming experience at credentials kumpara saakin. Kaya pakiramdam ko, nasa pinaka-mababa ako.” (The competition was overwhelming. I would line up at job fairs and see hundreds of applicants looking for the same entry-level position. Even with good grades, there were always applicants with more experience or better credentials. It made me feel like I was constantly at the bottom of the rank.)

“Matapos ang sunod-sunod na hind makapasok, nagsimula akong magduda sa sarili ko. Nakikita ko ibang graduates na mas Maganda ang credentials, feeling ko may kulang pa ako. Kaya, naglilow ako, nadelay rin ako sa job application, ganun kahirap at kacompetent.” (After multiple failures in getting in, I started doubting myself. Seeing other graduates with better credentials made me feel I wasn't enough. The competitiveness in the job market lowered my motivation and delayed my job applications.)

“Para akong nasa judgment day noon guna akong sumalang sa interview. Takot akong magkamali, kaya naging conscous ako masyado sa bawat salitang sinasabi ko. Nanginginig ang mga kamay ko, nag-va-vibrate ang boses ko, at minsan nakakalimutan ko pa yung mga sagot na prinaktis ko. Doon ko napagtanto na mahalaga rin talaga ang confidence o kumpiyansa sa sarili para makuha ang posisyon.” (My first time in interview felt like a judgment day. I was so afraid of making mistakes that I became too conscious of every word I said. My hands would shake, my voice vibrated and sometimes I would forget the answers I practiced. I realized that confidence is the key also to get the job position.)

“Nag-resign ako sa una kong trabaho kasi sobrang bigat talaga ng workload—hindi naman tugma sa sweldo ko. Tapos inaasahan pa ng management na mag-overtime kahit lampas na sa office hours. Umabot ako sa point na grabe na ‘yung pressure na naapektuhan na talaga ang mental health ko. Pero pag-resign ko, mas naging mahirap humanap ng next job kasi laging tinatanong ng mga employer kung bakit daw ako umalis agad.” (I resigned from my first job because the workload was too heavy for the salary I received. Management also expected me to work beyond office hours. I reached a point where the pressure affected my mental health. But when I resigned, it became harder to find my next job because employers questioned why I left so quickly.)

“Sa previous job ko, nahirapan talaga ako makideal sa mga co-worker na super strong ang personality. Madali akong ma-offend at lagi kong feeling ako ‘yung tine-target. Instead na mag-adjust or maghanap ng better way para makipag-communicate, lumalayo na lang ako. Nakaapekto tuloy ‘yon sa teamwork at performance ko. At nung nag-resign ako, doon ko narealize na malaking factor pala ‘yung interpersonal struggles ko sa decision ko umalis.” (In my previous job, I had difficulty dealing with co-workers who had strong personalities. I often took things personally and felt singled out. Instead of adjusting or finding better ways to communicate, I distanced myself. It affected my teamwork and performance. When I eventually resigned, I realized my interpersonal struggles contributed to that decision.)

These participants acknowledged the competition in the labor market, seeing others with better credentials and others with low self-confidence and not work-ready, leading to resignations and job searches. These findings are supported by Kaharudin et al. (2023), who found that oversupply of graduates in specific disciplines creates structural imbalances that restrict employment opportunities in graduates' chosen fields, resulting in limited job availability due to competition. Thus, amidst competition, one can secure work with highly acquired competencies in knowledge, skills, and values (Baybado & Estacio, 2025).

Table 6 below presents the level of agreement on the extracted causes of unemployment, specifically regarding human capital deficit. The human capital deficit as a cause of unemployment is closely related to an individual's skills gap. It involves a discrepancy between the skills and qualifications possessed by the unemployed professional and those demanded by employers.

Table 6. *Human Capital Deficit*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Lack the required skills needed in the labor market.	2.99	1.10
2. Lack technical skills due to the technological knowledge demand.	2.98	1.10
3. Lack of work experience required in the job position.	3.11	1.22
4. Lack the training specialized in the position.	3.00	1.25
5. Lack the eligibility needed in the industry.	2.93	1.33
6. Limited education level.	2.75	1.19
Mean	2.96	
Level of Agreement	Moderate	
<small>1.0-1.49 (Very Low) 1.5 - 2.49(Low) 2.5 - 3.49 (Moderate) 3.5-4.49 (High 4.5-5 (Very High)</small>		

Human capital deficit is grounded in human capital theory, which conceptualizes human capital as the stock of knowledge, skills, competencies, and attributes embodied in individuals that enhance their productivity and economic value (Becker, 1993). In this theory, a human capital deficit occurs when individuals possess insufficient or inadequate education, training, skills, or experience relative to

what is required for effective participation in the labor market. Additionally, Becker (1993) emphasized that unemployment and underemployment are more likely when individuals' human capital investments fail to yield employability and stable income.

Results on the human capital deficit indicate that respondents tend to agree moderately with all items presented. Among the six items, the lack of work experience required for the job position yields the highest mean of 3.11, equivalent to a "moderate" level of agreement, with a standard deviation of 1.22, indicating that respondents perceived insufficient practical exposure as a primary barrier to employment. These findings, which align with labor market studies, emphasize that work experience is an indicator of job readiness, adaptability, and immediate productivity. According to Bradley et al. (2022), many employers report difficulty filling vacancies, not because of a lack of applicants but because candidates lack sufficient experience and applied competencies. As a result, job seekers with limited work experience often experience prolonged job search periods and a higher risk of unemployment.

Moreover, the respondents likewise had a "moderate" level of agreement among the items, lack the required skills needed in the labor market, lack technical skills due to technological knowledge demand, lack the training specialized in the position, lack the eligibility required for the industry, and limited education level with a computed mean of 2.99, 2.98, 3.00, 2.93, and 2.75 with standard deviation that is clustered closely to the mean that only shows consistency of the results. About their required skills and technical competencies, particularly those demanded by rapidly changing industries, supported by the existing literature on skill mismatch, which highlights that technological advancements, automation, and digital transformation frequently outpace the skills possessed by the labor force, resulting in unemployment driven by misalignment rather than job shortages (Restrepo, 2015).

When workers' skills do not align with employer requirements, unemployment persists even amid available job openings, reinforcing the role of human capital deficits in labor market exclusion. Furthermore, moderate agreement on specialized training and professional eligibility underscores the importance of certifications, licensure, and targeted training in securing unemployment benefits. Employers often use eligibility requirements and specialized credentials as screening mechanisms to ensure competence and compliance with industry standards. The World Economic Forum, in its 2013 report, emphasized that a poorly aligned education and training system aggravates unemployment by failing to equip workers with industry-relevant qualifications, thereby limiting their employability despite holding academic degrees. Likewise, education alone does not guarantee employment unless it is relevant to labor market demands. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2021) argues that mismatches between educational backgrounds and occupational requirements significantly increase unemployment risks, particularly when fields of study and acquired skills do not correspond to high-demand sectors.

Overall, the findings of the present study indicate that a human capital deficit is a notable contributory factor to unemployment among professionals, as reflected in the respondents' "moderate" level of agreement, with a computed mean of 2.96. These findings suggest that limitations in work experience, technical skills, job-specific training, professional eligibility, and educational preparation influenced the respondents' unemployment experiences before achieving work success. Likewise, the theory of human capital holds true that employability and labor market outcomes are primarily determined by individuals' investment in education, training, and experience, and deficiencies may increase susceptibility to unemployment. In light of these findings, the study underscores the need for skills-aligned education, continuous professional development, and coordinated employability policies. Strengthening collaboration among higher education institutions, government agencies, and industry stakeholders is vital to reducing human capital deficits and facilitating a smoother transition from graduate unemployment to long-term workforce success.

Several participants shared their experiences overcoming unemployment challenges. When asked about their thinking on their realization of human capital, such as knowledge, skills, competencies, and attributes, in employment. Below are the narratives from the interview among the participants.

"Halos lahat ng job posting, kailangan may at least one year experience ka, kahit junior position pa. Wala naman ako nun. Sobrang ikli rin ng internship ko kaya hindi talaga siya kinonsider na relevant. Paulit-ulit sinasabi ng mga employer na kailangan nila ng empleyaf na puwedeng mag-start agad at kayang mag-work nang hindi masyadong imo-monitor. Kaya 'yun ang naging biggest disadvantage ko." (Almost every job posting requires at least one year of experience, even for junior positions. I didn't have any. My internship was too short to be considered relevant. Employers kept telling me they needed an employee who could start immediately without much supervision. That became my biggest disadvantage.)

"Nung naghahanap ako ng work nuon, napilitan akong mamasukan bilang bagger sa Mall. Kasi, di ako nakapasok agad sa work na gusto kasi nga need ng experience. Kaya nagwork muna ako sa private companies habang nag-iipon. The time na naka-ipon na ako, nakatulong yun saakin dahil duon ako kumuha ng pangastos ko sa mga documents na kailangan ." (When I was looking for a job back then, I was forced to work as a bagger in a mall. I couldn't get into the job I wanted right away because they required experience. So I worked in private companies first while saving money. When I finally had enough savings, it really helped me because that's where I got the funds for the documents I needed.)

"Galing ako sa rural area kaya sobrang limited ng training opportunities. Karamihan ng skill-based workshops ginagawa sa mga siyudad, at hindi ko kayang bumiyaha. Dahil doon, halos wala akong exposure sa specialized training, at kita 'yon sa mga job application ko." (Coming from a rural community, training opportunities were minimal. Most skill-based workshops were held in cities. I couldn't afford to travel. As a result, my exposure to specialized training was very low, and it reflected in my applications.)



“Pagkatapos ko matapos ang bachelor’s degree ko, akala ko sapat na ‘yon. Pero nang nag-apply na ako, napansin ko na yung ibang candidates na may master’s units at extra certifications. Pakiramdam ko, masyadong basic ang educational background ko kumpara sa kanila. Kaya mas hindi ako naging competitive sa screening.” (After finishing my bachelor’s degree, I thought it was enough. But when I started applying, I noticed other candidates already had master’s units and additional certifications. I felt my educational background was too basic compared to theirs. It made me less competitive during screening.)

“Pagkatapos ng graduation, hindi pa talaga stable ang finances ko kaya hindi ko muna ti-nake ang licensure exam at naghanap muna ako ng trabaho para makaipon. Dahil sa delay na ‘yon, naapektuhan yung progression ko sa career. Doon ko narealize na dahil hindi ko agad ti-nake ‘yung exam, parang naiwan ako ng batchmates ko.” (I was financially unstable after graduation, so I postponed taking the licensure exam and found work to save money. That delay pushed back my employment progression. I realized that not taking the exam immediately placed me behind my batchmates.)

These participants acknowledged experience as a necessary aspect of job acquisition, alongside training, postgraduate studies, and eligibility. According to Bonnard (2020), work experience and social networks are beneficial to students and graduates. Tuononen et al. (2017) said that work experience also enhances self-efficacy and self-confidence in making the transition to working life.

Table 7 on the following page presents the level of agreement on the extracted causes of unemployment, specifically regarding volitional constraints.

Table 7. *Volitional Constraints*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Did not pursue other job offering because of skills mismatch.	3.03	1.24
2. Hesitant to grab the job that does not correspond to their education level.	2.99	1.22
3. Pressure from the family that causes demotivation in finding work.	2.81	1.22
4. Hesitant to work outside my place of residence.	2.78	1.20
5. Limited job availability in one’s field of study.	2.87	1.19
Mean	2.90	
Level of Agreement	Moderate	
1.0-1.49 (Very Low) 1.5 - 2.49(Low) 2.5 - 3.49 (Moderate) 3.5-4.49 (High 4.5-5 (Very High)		

Volitional constraints are closely related to job search impediments, which refer to factors that hinder individuals from actively pursuing or accepting available employment opportunities. These constraints often arise from personal preferences, perceived job mismatch, family obligations, geographic immobility, and psychological considerations such as fear of underemployment or loss of professional identity, even when employment opportunities exist (Van Hooft et al., 2021; Affum-Osei et al., 2023).

Data in Table 7 revealed that all respondents agreed that the items constituting volitional constraints were moderate in their agreement as causes of unemployment. Among the indicators, the respondents agree that professionals did not pursue other job offers due to a skills mismatch, yielding the highest mean of 3.03, equivalent to a “moderate” level of agreement, and a standard deviation of 1.24, clustered closely around the mean. These results showed that job seekers deliberately refrain from applying for or accepting positions they perceived as misaligned with their education, skills, or professional identity. These findings are supported by Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005), which posits that professionals are active agents who construct their careers by aligning work choices with their vocational personality, career adaptability, and life themes. Likewise, explains why respondents are reluctant to pursue job opportunities that do not match their skills: it reflects an effort to preserve coherence between their self-concept and their career trajectory rather than just accepting any available job offers.

Additionally, the findings are further supported by Salas-Velasco (2021), who used labor-market-mismatch theory, which shows that individuals may avoid employment opportunities perceived as underemployment or unrelated to their field of study due to concerns about skill depreciation, reduced career progression, and loss of occupational identity. Meanwhile, Dyrda (2018) emphasizes that unemployed individuals may voluntarily prolong their job searches due to reservation wages, career aspirations, or reluctance to accept jobs that do not align with their skills or educational attainment, thereby increasing the duration of unemployment. Likewise, this behavior is particularly prevalent among educated professionals who invest significant resources in higher education and expect employment outcomes that correspond with their human capital investments (Becker, 1993).

Further, results also showed that respondents moderately agree that professionals are hesitant to grab the job that is not corresponding to education level, pressure from the family that causes demotivation in finding work, hesitant to work outside the place of residence, and limited job availability in one’s field of study with a computed mean value of 2.99, 2.81, 2.78, and 2.87 along with the standard deviations of 1.22, 1.22, 1.20, and 1.19 which reflected that all of these items are clustered closely to the mean, which implies consistent results. External family pressure, such as family expectations and social norms, may discourage individuals from accepting specific jobs, reinforcing volitional constraints as a significant contributor to graduate unemployment despite labor market availability (Clarke, 2017; Tomlinson, 2017). Moreover, Corpin (2025) and Accad and Seva (2025) found that Filipino graduates often face societal and familial expectations to secure employment immediately after graduation. While intended as motivation, persistent family pressure can instead reduce self-efficacy and heighten psychological stress, leading to withdrawal from active job-search behavior. It is also supported by the study of Nieto and Abacano (2021), who reported that family and societal expectations often exacerbate anxiety,

stress, and fear of failure among unemployed graduates, negatively affecting their motivation to pursue employment opportunities.

Meanwhile, geographical immobility is recognized as a contributor to graduate unemployment. According to Demissie et al. (2021), limited willingness or ability to relocate, often due to family obligations, financial constraints, or cultural expectations, restricts access to broader labor markets in the Philippine context. Loquias and Bauyot (2024) found that many graduates prioritize proximity to family over employment opportunities, especially when relocation costs and living expenses in urban areas are costly. On the other hand, Kaharudin et al. (2023) argue that the oversupply of graduates in specific disciplines, combined with slow industry absorption, creates structural imbalances that restrict employment opportunities in graduates' chosen fields, resulting in limited job availability in those fields.

Overall, the respondents had a “moderate” level of agreement that volitional constraints were a cause of unemployment, with a computed mean of 2.90. The result affirms that volitional constraints, particularly skills mismatch, function as a significant contributor to graduate unemployment, operating alongside structural unemployment theory and human capital theory. Moreover, these constraints reflect rational, self-regulated employment decisions influenced by career aspirations, social context, and perceived job quality. Thus, it is highly recommended that policy and institutional interventions address not only job availability but also job quality, skills alignment, and career guidance to support smoother transitions from unemployment to workforce success.

Several participants shared their experiences overcoming unemployment challenges. When asked about their thinking on why professionals prefer to and prefer not to accept other available employment opportunities. Below is the narrative of the interview among the participants.

“May mga job openings naman sa labas ng field ko, pero hindi ko na sila tinuloy kasi alam kong wala ako sa skillset na hinahanap nila. Pakiramdam ko, puro frustration lang ang aabutin ko kung pipilitin ko ang sarili ko sa trabahong hindi ko naman napaghandaan.” (There were several openings outside my field, but I didn't pursue them because I knew I didn't have the skills they required. I felt it would only lead to constant frustration if I forced myself into a job I wasn't prepared for.)

“Nung naghahanap ako ng work nuon, napilitan akong mamasukan bilang bagger sa Mall. Kasi, di ako nakapasok agad sa work na gusto kasi nga need ng experience. Kaya nagwork muna ako sa private companies habang nag-iipon. The time na naka-ipon na ako, nakatulong yun saakin dahil duon ako kumuha ng pangastos ko sa mga documents na kailangan.” (When I was looking for a job back then, I was forced to work as a bagger in a mall. I couldn't get into the job I wanted right away because they required experience. So I worked in private companies first while saving money. When I finally had enough savings, it really helped me because that's where I got the funds for the documents I needed.)

“After ko grumaduate nun, nagbukid pa ako. Magbukid kasi ang family namin. While helping my family, sinasahuran din ako ng Papa ko. Yun, iniipon ko yun. That's my starting point in looking for a job. Kami kasi, paggraduate ko para kang wallet na walang laman. Need mo muna magwork like farming to earn money to be used in your job application.” (After I graduated, I went back to farming because my family is farmers. While I was helping them, my father would also give me a small salary, and I saved every penny. That became my starting point when I began looking for a job. In our situation, after graduation, it feels like you're a wallet with nothing inside. You have to work first—like farming—to earn money that you can use for your job application.)

“Lagi akong tinatanong ng pamilya ko kung bakit wala pa rin akong trabaho. Imbes na ma-motivate ako, nakaka-drain actually ng energy 'yung mga sinasabi nila. Mas napressure ako kaysa na-support, kaya tuloy nade-delay ko pa lalo mag-submit ng applications.” (My family would constantly question why I still didn't have a job. Instead of motivating me, their comments drained my energy. I felt pressured rather than supported, and this caused me to delay submitting applications.)

“Palagi akong kinukumpara ng mga magulang ko sa iba na nakahanap agad ng trabaho. Imbes na ma-inspire ako, lalo lang akong nai-insecure at kinakabahan. Dahil sa pressure, nagkaroon ako ng self-doubt, kaya natatakot akong mabigo na naman. Pero, kahit ganun, try and try parin hanggang sa makapasok sa trabaho na gusto mo talaga” (My parents kept comparing me to others who immediately found work. Instead of inspiring me, their remarks made me anxious. The pressure created self-doubt, and I feared failing again. But, even so, you just to keep trying until you get the job you really want.)

These participants acknowledged their skills and education as aligned with the workplace; some took other jobs due to impediments that prevented them from entering the workplace. Some participants felt pressure from their family, resulting in demotivation in finding work and pushing psychological distress. According to Corpin (2025), parents often say, “hindi pwedeng walang trabaho,” while neighbors and relatives ask, “anong balak mo?” This push to find any job, even those that do not align with their studies. This research found that others accept jobs, but others do not. Findings are supported by Kaharudin et al. (2023), who state that many graduates accept jobs below their qualifications due to limited job availability. While Ndayikesa (2025) emphasized that professionals often work in low-skills jobs such as phone credit sales agents, servers, or security guards. Meanwhile, in this study, some professionals' experiences include labor as a construction worker, a tri-cycle driver, a farmer, and a mall merchandising assistant.

Table 8 presents the level of agreement on the extracted causes of unemployment, specifically regarding frictional unemployment.

Frictional unemployment occurs when workers voluntarily move between jobs or are temporarily out of work while searching for a more suitable position. Naturally, it is considered a generally healthy part of a dynamic labor market reflecting voluntary mobility,

active job search, and efficient matching between workers and employers rather than labor market distress. Recent studies continue to frame frictional unemployment as a positive indicator of labor market dynamism. According to Autor (2022), in modern economies characterized by technological change and job reallocation, frictional unemployment enables workers to transition into emerging roles and industries, accelerating long-term workforce adaptation.

Table 8. *Frictional Unemployment*

Indicators	Mean	SD
1. End of contract causing unemployment.	2.98	1.32
2. Low satisfaction in the workplace resulting in voluntary resignation.	3.06	1.22
3. Poor policies and strategies of the government.	3.01	1.18
4. Limited finance that hinders job search, application, and follow-ups.	3.02	1.09
5. Struggle with the demand of the job that pushed one to find an easy job.	2.58	1.14
Mean	2.93	
Level of Agreement	Moderate	
<i>1.0-1.49 (Very Low) 1.5 - 2.49 (Low) 2.5 - 3.49 (Moderate) 3.5-4.49 (High) 4.5-5 (Very High)</i>		

Data shows that all indicators of frictional unemployment fall within a “moderate” level of agreement among the respondents. Among the five indicators, low workplace satisfaction resulting in voluntary resignation had the highest mean of 3.06, equivalent to a “moderate” level of agreement, with a standard deviation of 1.22, indicating that responses were closely clustered around the mean and reflecting consistency among respondents. Findings are consistent with the concept of frictional unemployment, in which individuals voluntarily leave their jobs due to job dissatisfaction and temporarily remain unemployed while searching for a job that better matches their expectations, preferences, and working conditions. Likewise, under the structural unemployment theory, such voluntary job transitions serve as an adjustment mechanism that allows workers to reallocate toward more suitable positions as labor market structures evolve, thereby contributing to long-term workforce efficiency and stability (Demsetz, 1961; Cahuc et al., 2014).

The respondents are moderately agree that indicators end of contract is causing unemployment, poor policies and strategies of the government, and also when they had limited finance that hinders job search, application, and follow-ups, also respondents struggle on the demand of the job that pushed them to find an easy job, with a computed mean value of 2.98, 3.01, 3.02, and 2.58, and standard deviation of 1.32, 1.18, 1.09, and 1.14 all clustered closely to the mean which resulted to a consistent results. Contractual and temporary employment arrangements are widely recognized as contributors to frictional unemployment, as workers experience transitional joblessness between contracts while searching for new employment (Cahuc et al., 2014). Similarly, weak or poorly coordinated labor market policies can delay job matching and job creation, thereby increasing both frictional and structural unemployment, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2021). Furthermore, financial constraints that hinder job search activities, such as transportation costs, application fees, and limited access to digital infrastructure, have been shown to prolong unemployment and impede the individual's ability to actively search for and apply for jobs (Dyrda, 2018).

Overall, the respondents had a “moderate” level of agreement regarding frictional unemployment, with a computed mean of 2.93. The respondents’ moderate level of agreement across these indicators aligned with the view that frictional unemployment serves as a transitional mechanism that facilitates labor market adjustment rather than merely reflecting individuals’ failure to find a job. In other words, employees are finding work suitable for their preferences, behavior, and environments. As a result, research suggests that unemployment experiences associated with job-to-job transition, contractual endings, and voluntary separations are present but not overwhelmingly severe. Therefore, the structural unemployment theory holds true that moderate agreement of respondents supports the view that frictional unemployment represents a transitional stage toward workforce realignment and eventual employment stability.

Several participants shared their experiences overcoming unemployment challenges. When asked about their thinking on why professionals voluntarily switch between jobs. Below is the narrative of the interview among the participants.

“Kahit stable naman ‘yung trabaho, hindi talaga siya akma sa strengths ko. Palagi kong feeling out of place at hindi productive. Nag-resign ako nang kusa para makahanap ng work na mas kaya kong i-excel, pero mas tumagal ‘yung transition period kaysa sa inaasahan ko.” (Even though the job was stable, it didn’t fit my strengths. I constantly felt misplaced and unproductive. I resigned voluntarily to look for something I could excel in, but the transition period took longer than I expected.)

“Maraming companies ang naghahanap ng mga requirements tulad ng NBI clearance, medical tests, printed resume, at kung anu-ano pang documents. Wala akong budget noon para ma-process agad lahat ‘yon, kaya napilitan akong i-delay ang pag-aapply hanggang makaipon ako mula sa mga sideline ko.” (Many companies required documents like NBI clearance, medical tests, printed resumes, and many more documents. I didn’t have the budget to process them immediately, so I had to delay applying until I saved enough money from my sidelines.)

“Nung nawalan ako ng trabaho, sobrang limitado ng pera ko. Hindi ko kayang mag-pamasaha papunta sa job fairs, pati load para sa online applications hirap din ako. Dahil doon, sobrang bumagal ang job search ko.” (When I became unemployed, my financial resources were minimal. I couldn’t afford transportation to job fairs or even a load for online applications. It slowed down my job search significantly.)

“Napansin ko na ‘yung ilang government employment programs, hindi gaanong maayos ang implementation. May mga delay, hindi

klaro ang criteria, biglang may bagong requirements, pagbabago sa ranking, tapos minsan nag-go-ghost pa sila. Dahil dito, nawalan ako ng ilang job opportunities na inaasahan ko sana.” (I noticed that some government employment programs were not well-implemented. There were delays, unclear criteria, sudden policy shifts in requirements, rank-and-file issues, and ghosting. Because of this, I lost potential job opportunities I was counting on.)

These participants acknowledged that professionals voluntarily switched jobs or temporarily left the workforce because they were looking for something they could excel at, because of costly document requirements, financial struggles with processing, and because some government programs were not well implemented. These findings are supported by Dyrda (2018), who stated that careers are now more commonly characterized by multiple changes and shifts throughout the working life, where lifelong learning, flexibility, and self-development take precedence.

Summary

Table 9 summarizes the causes of unemployment: individualistic causes, human capital deficit, volitional constraints, and frictional unemployment.

Table 9. *Summary of the Causes of Unemployment*

<i>Cause</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Individualistic Causes	2.64	Moderate
Human Capital Deficit	2.96	Moderate
Volitional Constraints	2.90	Moderate
Frictional Unemployment	2.93	Moderate
Overall Weighted Mean	2.86	Moderate

1.0-1.49 (Very Low) 1.5 - 2.49 (Low) 2.5 - 3.49 (Moderate) 3.5-4.49 (High) 4.5-5 (Very High)

As shown in Table 9, the respondents affirmed that all four causes had mean values at the “moderate” level of agreement, with an overall weighted mean of 2.86. It has become a nature of the labor market that these four contributory factors in the causes of unemployment present a dilemma, but also serve as support in one’s career path towards achieving workforce success.

Among the identified causes, the human capital deficit yields the highest computed mean value of 2.96, interpreted as a “moderate” level of agreement. Findings suggested that factors such as insufficient work experience, skills mismatch, lack of specialized training, and eligibility play a significant role in employment. This finding implies that gaps between professionals’ competencies and the labor market’s requirements contribute meaningfully to unemployment. Likewise, the moderate result suggests that the human capital deficit as a contributory factor of unemployment is not extreme. Thus, professionals can pursue personal growth and professional development through continuing professional development, attending specialized seminars, and acquiring the qualifications required for jobs that need them. The World Economic Forum (2023) reports that 44% of workers’ skills are expected to be disrupted by 2027, reinforcing the persistence of human capital gaps despite rising education levels. The 2024 European Union-funded review on skills mismatch confirms that moderate skills gaps suggest capacity for reskilling and upskilling, particularly through lifelong learning and continuing professional development.

Frictional unemployment followed closely with a computed mean value of 2.93, interpreted as a “moderate” level of agreement. Respondents attributed unemployment to transitional factors such as job-to-job movements, contract terminations, voluntary resignations, and time spent searching for suitable employment. Findings suggest that professional unemployment experiences are partly shaped by normal labor-market mobility rather than by complete unemployment or the inability to find job opportunities. Thus, this is a good indicator of increasing work experience until professionals find their desired outcomes in employment and workforce success. Birinci et al. (2024) also revealed that job-to-job transitions are a key source of wage growth, productivity gains, and career advancement, even when they temporarily raise unemployment levels.

Similarly, volitional constraints obtained a mean value of 2.90, interpreted as a “moderate” level of agreement. Respondents’ personal decisions and limitations, such as choosing not to accept a job offer due to a skills mismatch or an educational level mismatch, reluctance to take jobs outside one’s field of residence, limited job availability, and family pressure, contribute to unemployment. This result highlights the role of individual choice and preferences in shaping employment outcomes, particularly in contexts where job opportunities may exist but are not immediately pursued. As noted on the website Workers Voice on worker preferences and labor-market participation (2023), family expectations, geographic immobility, and job quality considerations influence employment decisions even when vacancies exist. A study by Rujiwattanapong (2023) showed that educated professionals often delay accepting available jobs due to skills mismatches, reservation wages, and career identity concerns, thereby increasing the duration of voluntary unemployment.

Individualistic causes yield the lowest computed mean value of 2.64, interpreted as a “moderate” level of agreement. Findings indicate that while respondents acknowledge personal attributes such as motivation, adaptability, communication skills, and self-confidence as contributing to unemployment, the competition in the labor market, these factors are perceived as less influential compared to structural and labor-market-related causes such as skills mismatch, technological skills, industry shifts, and contractual or temporary employment arrangements. Thus, individualistic causes can be addressed through individual effort, including education, training, and skills

development. The World Economic Forum (2023) identifies motivation, adaptability, and self-efficacy as important employability traits but notes they are insufficient without labor-market-relevant skills. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2024) and the International Labor Organization confirm that individual-level factors typically interact with structural conditions rather than independently causing unemployment.

Challenges Faced By Professionals During Their Unemployment

Figure 2 presents the factor extraction of twenty (20) indicators on the challenges faced by professionals during their unemployment. The factor extraction guides this research to identify major groups or variables. The identified variables after the factor extraction include psychological distress, social isolation, financial struggles, and physical and locational struggles.

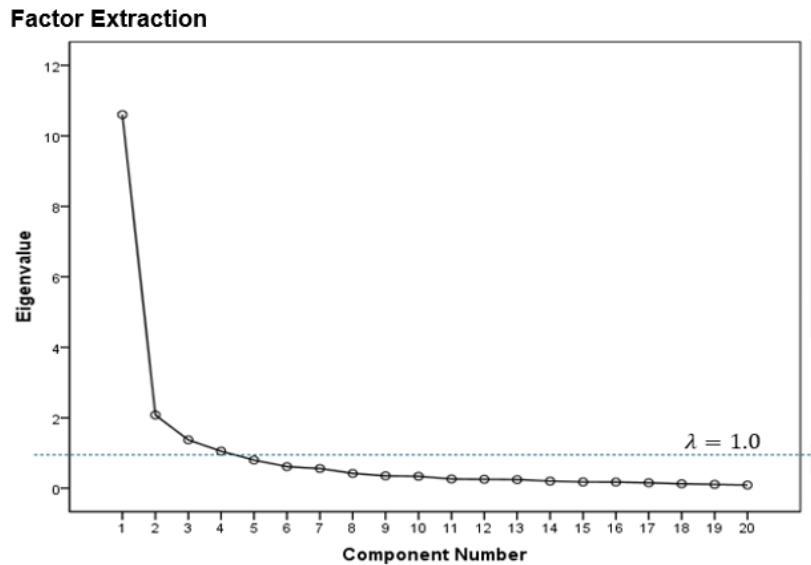


Figure 2. Scree plot of the extracted factors on challenges faced by professionals during their unemployment

The identified variability among observed and correlated variables is treated using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity, as shown in Table 10.

Table 10. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Test	Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	0.920 Marvelous
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx Chi-Square 3146.17 Sig. .000

Table 10 presents the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy to determine the proportion of variance among the study's variables that might be common. This type of test indicates the degree of commonality between variables. Results are interpreted as values between 0 and 1, where higher values indicate that the variables share more variance and are more suitable for factor analysis.

The test result of this study was 0.920, which is equivalent to a marvelous result. As noted on the DataPott Analytics website, Statistical Data Analysis, a KMO value greater than 0.5 is generally considered acceptable for factor analysis; values of 0.6 are acceptable, 0.7 are good, 0.8 are very good, and 0.9 are excellent.

Given the high or excellent commonality among items in this study, the data are tested for sphericity using Bartlett’s test of Sphericity to ensure that the data contain sufficient inter-item correlation to allow meaningful exploratory factor extraction. Test result for Bartlett’s test of Sphericity indicated 3146.17 approximate chi-square significance value, and p-value of .000. This suggests that the variables are sufficiently interrelated to justify factor analysis. A significant p-value indicates that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix, suggesting sufficient correlation between the items to proceed with factor analysis.

Table 11 presents the factor structure of the challenges encountered by professionals during their unemployment. Underlying variables are identified with four component loadings. The variance contributions of the four (4) component loadings are 21.83%, 20.07%, 17.06%, and 16.62%, respectively. Among these variances, 75.57% is explained by the total variation, and the remaining 24.43% is unexplained variance.



Table 11. Results of Factor Extraction on Unemployment Challenges Encountered

Indicators During my unemployment, I...	Component Loading			
	1	2	3	4
1. Struggled with my finances, so I depended on financial support from my family.	.05	.06	.75	-.07
2. Struggled to find work due to financial problems.	.19	.17	.88	.22
3. Lack of finance in processing and producing the required documents in applying for a job.	.15	.15	.84	.26
4. Lack travel allowance when seeking employment opportunities.	.32	.22	.76	.19
5. Have a limited internet connection for job search.	.37	.40	.50	.11
6. Had low self-confidence, which affected my relationships with my family and friends.	.30	.67	.36	.19
7. Struggled to include myself in social gatherings.	.34	.80	.15	.16
8. Struggled to start a conversation because of my economic status.	.24	.81	.15	.35
9. Felt shy to participate in community activities because of my unemployment status.	.20	.82	.19	.28
10. Received only a few invitations from my friends because of my unemployment status.	.26	.65	.11	.47
11. Struggled to think clearly about myself, my plans, and my future due to unemployment.	.68	.40	.19	.26
12. Struggled to stay motivated every day due to unemployment.	.72	.23	.21	.28
13. Felt sad because I could not find employment quickly.	.84	.12	.28	.15
14. Thought I was useless to my family because I couldn't help them with the house bills.	.80	.27	.14	.19
15. Am stressed every day because of the prolonged job search.	.82	.28	.18	.27
16. Became less motivated to eat, which resulted in slow body deterioration.	.56	.41	.05	.49
17. Struggled to find a job because of my disability.	.43	.34	.08	.67
18. Struggled with the hiring process due to physical body requirements, such as height and weight.	.34	.39	.20	.67
19. Am not ready to work in a place other than my residence.	.24	.15	.25	.81
20. Easily get sick, which causes absences that negatively impact on my work performance.	.16	.29	.09	.78
Variance Contribution	21.83%	20.07%	17.06%	16.62%
Variance Explained to the Total Variation	75.57%			
Unexplained Variance	24.43%			

For component loading number 1, with 21.83% variance contribution, six (6) indicators with the highest point values represent psychological distress. These indicators are “struggled to think clearly about myself, my plans, and my future due to unemployment” (.68), “struggled to stay motivated every day due to unemployment”, (.72), “felt sad because I could not find employment quickly” (.84), “though I was useless to my family because I couldn’t help them with the house bills” (.80), “am stresses every day because of the prolonged job search” (.82), and “became less motivated to eat, which resulted in slow body deterioration” (.56).

For component loading number 2, with a 20.07% variance contribution, five (5) indicators with the highest point values represent social isolation. These indicators are “had low self-confidence, which affected my relationship with my family and friends” (.67), “struggled to include myself in social gatherings” (.80), “struggled to start a conversation because of my economic status”, (.81), “felt shy to participate in community activities because of my unemployment status” (.82), and “received only a few invitations from my friends because of my unemployment status” (.65).

Component loading number 3, with 17.06% variance contribution, consists of five (5) indicators with the highest point values, representing financial struggles. These indicators are “struggles with my finances, so I depended on financial support from my family” (.75), “struggled to find work due to financial problems” (.88), “lack finance in processing and producing the required documents in applying for a job” (.84), “lack travel allowance in seeking for work employment opportunity” (.76), and “have a limited internet connection for job search” (.50).

Component loading number 4, with 16.62% variance contribution, consists of four (4) indicators with the highest point values, representing physical and locational struggles. These indicators are “struggled to find a job because of my disability” (.67), “struggled with the hiring process due to physical body requirements, such as height and weight” (.67), “am not ready to work in a place other than my residence” (.81), and “easily get sick, which causes absences that negatively impact on my work performance” (.78).

Level of Seriousness on the Extracted Challenges

The identified factors on the challenges faced by professionals during their unemployment before they secure a long-term and stable job, specifically psychological distress, social isolation, financial struggles, and physical and locational struggles, are explored in this present research by determining the level of seriousness of these challenges among the respondents who experienced unemployment

challenges.

Table 12 presents the level of seriousness of the extracted unemployment challenges, specifically regarding psychological distress.

Psychological distress addresses the negative emotional, cognitive, and mental state of an individual resulting from the experience of unemployment. Jahoda's latent deprivation theory (1982) explains how unemployment deprives individuals of psychological needs such as time structure, social identity, and purpose, resulting in psychological distress. Meanwhile, a study in 2009 by Paul and Moser on a seminal meta-analysis clearly establishes that unemployment is strongly associated with psychological distress, including depression, anxiety, lowered self-esteem, and impaired cognitive function.

Table 12. *Psychological Distress*

Indicators	Mean	SD
1. Struggled to think clearly about myself, my plans, and my future due to unemployment.	2.87	1.24
2. Struggled to stay motivated every day due to unemployment.	2.84	1.14
3. Felt sad because I could not find employment quickly.	2.85	1.21
4. Thought of being useless to my family because I couldn't help them with the house bills.	2.85	1.32
5. Feeling stressed every day because of the prolonged job search.	2.78	1.22
6. Became less motivated to eat, which resulted in slow body deterioration.	2.53	1.25
Mean	2.79	
Level of Seriousness	Moderate	

1.0-1.49 (Very Low) 1.5 - 2.49(Low) 2.5 - 3.49 (Moderate) 3.5-4.49 (High) 4.5-5 (Very High)

Results in Table 12 on psychological distress revealed that all the respondents tend to agree that all the items presented are moderately serious. Among the six indicators, the highest mean value falls under indicator 1, which shows that professionals struggled to think clearly about themselves, their plans, and their future due to unemployment, with a computed mean of 2.87, described as a "moderate" level of seriousness, and a standard deviation of 1.24.

These findings are supported by Ettman et al. (2024) found that individuals who experienced job or income loss showed persistent cognitive and emotional distress, including confusion about life direction and reduced future confidence. Hence, studies have shown that unemployed professionals commonly experience difficulty thinking clearly about themselves, their plans, and their future due to job insecurity and a loss of role identity. Thus, moderate psychological distress is a challenge and result of unemployment that disrupts cognitive function by removing routine, identity, and purpose in life (Achdut & Spitzer, 2020).

Moreover, respondents had a "moderate" level of seriousness in psychological distress, manifested in their struggles to stay motivated everyday due to unemployment, feeling sad because professionals could not find employment quickly, thought of being useless to the family because they could not help their families with the house bills, feeling of being stresses every day due to prolonged job search, and becoming less motivated to eat, which resulted in slow body deterioration with a computed mean values of 2.84, 2.85, 2.85, 2.78, and 2.53 with standard deviation of 1.14, 1.21, 1.32, 1.22, and 1.25, which are all clustered closely around the mean, indicating consistency in the results. These manifestations are consistent with studies showing that unemployment significantly increases psychological distress, depressive symptoms, perceived loss of self-worth, chronic stress, and adverse health-related behaviors, particularly among individuals experiencing prolonged joblessness, job search, and financial insecurity.

In the study of Yang et al. (2024), there is an increase globally in depression and anxiety linked to unemployment across 201 countries. Analysis revealed a significant positive association between unemployment and mental disorders, particularly anxiety, depression, and bipolar disorder. Moreover, a distinct pattern emerges linking unemployment to eating disorders and adverse health behaviors. Hence, there is a need to address mental health outcomes of unemployment, and it is crucial for formulating effective policy interventions. Additionally, Li et al. (2025) show that financial strain is one of the strongest predictors of psychological distress among unemployed individuals.

Overall, the respondents had a "moderate" level of seriousness in terms of psychological distress on the challenges faced by the professionals during their unemployment before they secure a long-term and stable job with a computed mean value of 2.79 suggesting that unemployment had a noticeable psychological distress but not an extreme psychological impact on the respondents which implies that there is a presence of coping mechanisms and social support among respondents. Thus, psychological distress is broad, affecting individuals' emotional, cognitive, motivational, and psychological domains.

Hence, Jahoda's Latent Deprivation Theory (1982) holds true, implying that unemployment disrupts access to key psychological benefits, leading to emotional and cognitive strain. However, the severity of this distress varies depending on available coping resources and social support systems, which can buffer individuals from extreme psychological deterioration. Thus, these findings highlight that psychological distress is a challenge yet manageable along the path from unemployment to long-term workforce success.

Several participants shared their experiences overcoming unemployment challenges. When asked about their experiences that have something to do with their emotions. Below is the narrative of the interview among the participants.

"Ako nuon, nafefeel ko yung frustration, lalo nung lumabas yung result ng board exam and bumagsak ako. Ayoko na magtake. Tapos yung kaibigan ko, kaklase ko sabi niya Tita, magreview tayo, magtake tayo. Ang sabi ko, ayoko na magbusiness nalang ako, thunders



na ako sabi ko. Sabi niya, hindi tita may kasama ka. Tapos ayun, napapayag niya ako, nagtake ako and Thanks God at nakapasa. Tapos ayun, nagtry ako magapply sa DepEd, at nabigyan ng chance. Kaya na-overcome ko yun, kasi sa bahay, ang booring Talaga at naiisip mo lahat ng problema. Kaya thankful ako sa mga kaibigan ko kasi andyan sila na handang tumulong.” (At that time, I really felt frustrated, especially when the board exam results came out, and I failed. I didn’t want to retake it. Then my friend, my classmate, told me, ‘Tita, let’s review and retake the exam.’ I said, ‘I don’t want to anymore, I’ll just start a business; I’m already old.’ But she said, ‘No, Tita, you’re not alone—you have me.’ Eventually, she convinced me to retake the exam, and thank God, I passed. After that, I tried applying to DepEd, and I was given a chance. That’s how I overcame it: staying at home was really boring, and it made me overthink all my problems. I’m very thankful for my friends because they were always there and ready to help.)

“Nuon kasi, nung wala pa ako talagang trabaho, di mo naman maiiwasan na malungkot ka kasi nga parang paano to mag iisang taon na akong graduate wala pa akong trabaho. Hindi naman ako pinipilit ng family ko na makapagtrabaho kaagad, ang sabi naman nila eh basta makapasok ka lang, kung talagang sayo, edi sayo, pero kapag hindi edi hayaan mo muna, siguro may ibang purpose ang Panginoon. Time will come siguro makapasok ka rin, yun nga nagkaroon nga tayo ng opportunity na makapasok, grinab na natin.” (Back then, when I really didn’t have a job yet, you couldn’t avoid feeling sad. You start to think, how is it possible that almost a year after graduating, I still don’t have a job? But my family never pressured me to get a job immediately. They always told me, “As long as you eventually get in, then it’s meant for you. If it’s not for you yet, let it be for now. Maybe God has another purpose.” The time will come when you will be accepted somewhere. And when the opportunity finally came, I grabbed it.)

“Yung kalungkutan, andyan talaga yan, pero ikaw dapat aware ka. May times na di mo na alam gagawin ko dahil di ka makahanap ng trabaho. Pero kahit ganun, embrace what you have and keep improving yourself until such time mas gagaling kapa kasi may igagaling kapa. Edge mo yun, para makahanap ng work.” (Sadness is really part of it. There were times when I didn’t know what to do anymore because I couldn’t find a job. But despite that, you should embrace what you have and keep improving yourself. There’s always room for growth, and that will be your edge to get a job eventually.)

These participants acknowledged the psychological effects of unemployment, feeling frustrated and sad. Also, be reminded that you keep improving and developing, and that there is hope. These findings are supported by Nath et al. (2025), wherein causes of unemployment can impact the graduates’ increased stress levels, low self-esteem, frustration, depression, mental pressure, poor living standards, and deteriorate relationships with family members and friends.

Table 13 presents the level of seriousness of the extracted unemployment challenges, specifically regarding social isolation.

Social isolation is a condition in which an individual experiences a complete or near-complete lack of social contact and meaningful interaction with others, leading to reduced participation in social, family, and community life. This phenomenon is commonly observed among individuals who experience prolonged unemployment, as the absence of work disrupts daily social routines, weakens social identity, and reduces opportunities for interpersonal engagement.

These factors are supported by Pohlen (2024), who states that unemployment produces lasting adverse effects on social integration, including weakened social participation, reduced sense of belonging, and deteriorated social identity. The absence of employment disrupts daily routines and work-based social networks, which may limit opportunities for interpersonal engagement and re-engaging in social life.

Table 13. *Social Isolation*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. I had low self-confidence, which affected my relationships with my family and friends.	2.78	1.17
2. I struggled to include myself in social gatherings.	2.75	1.09
3. I struggled to start a conversation because of my economic status.	2.69	1.10
4. I felt shy to participate in community activities because of my unemployment status.	2.66	1.16
5. I received only a few invitations from my friends because of my unemployment status.	2.48	1.19
Mean	2.67	
Level of Seriousness	Moderate	

1.0-1.49 (Very Low) 1.5 - 2.49(Low) 2.5 - 3.49 (Moderate) 3.5-4.49 (High) 4.5-5 (Very High)

Data in Table 13 on the previous page revealed that most of the respondents agree that social isolation has a “moderate” level of agreement in their lives due to unemployment, especially respondents who had low self-confidence, which affected their relationships with their families and friends, which yielded the highest computed mean value of 2.78, which is described as “moderate” with a standard deviation of 1.17. Likewise, respondents also struggled to participate in social gatherings, with a computed mean of 2.75, described as “moderate,” and a standard deviation of 1.09. Unemployment has been consistently linked to a decline in subjective social integration, including weakened relationships with family and friends.

According to Pohlen (2024), job loss leads to persistent reductions in perceived social status and social connectedness, even several years after re-employment. Low self-confidence among unemployed individuals has also been identified as a key driver of social decline. According to Kim (2025), unemployment significantly increases social exclusion and loneliness, with young adults intentionally limiting their participation in social gatherings because they feel economically and socially inferior. Thus, these findings emphasize that unemployment reduces access to social networks and weakens informal support systems, leading to moderate levels of

social isolation.

Meanwhile, respondents reported receiving only a few invitations from their friends because of their unemployment status, yielding the lowest computed mean of 2.48, described as “low,” with a standard deviation of 1.19. The findings imply that, despite their employment status, respondents still received invitations and remained friends. Several studies explain why unemployed individuals may continue to receive social invitations from friends, leading to low levels of perceived social exclusion.

According to Giustozzi (2023), unemployment does not uniformly erode friendship and close social ties; instead, its impact varies by social identity, gender roles, and relational context. Additionally, Ivkovic (2024) reported that although unemployed university graduates exhibited lower overall perceived social support than their employed peers, a substantial proportion maintained active friendships and continued social contact. Thus, friendship support networks remain resilient even during periods of joblessness.

Overall, the respondents had a “moderate” level of seriousness about social isolation in the challenges they faced during their unemployment before securing a long-term, stable job, with a computed mean value of 2.67, suggesting that while unemployment disrupted their social engagement, it did not result in complete social withdrawal. Recent studies indicate that unemployment commonly leads to reduced frequency of social interaction and weakened social participation, primarily due to diminished self-confidence, perceived stigma, and loss of social role, rather than total breakdown of social relationships (Pohlan, 2024; Kim, 2025). Thus, many unemployed individuals experience noticeable but manageable social isolation, consistent with a moderate level of seriousness.

Several participants shared their experiences overcoming unemployment challenges. When asked about their experiences in social contact and meaningful interaction with others. Below is the narrative of the interview among the participants.

“Sa family ko naman, they are very supportive naman, alam naman nila yung situation na naghahanap ng work kaya nagsusuport sila para makahanap ka ng work, support ng financial, for example naghahanap ka ng trabaho tapos pagbalik mo tatanungin ka nila kumusta yung interview tapos hindi ka nakuha syempre yung support din nila emotionally support, pati spiritual na rin.” (In my family, they were very supportive. They understood my situation while I was looking for a job, so they supported me in every way they could, including financially. For example, when I went out to apply for a job and came back home, they would ask how the interview went. And even if I didn’t get accepted, they still supported me—emotionally and even spiritually.)

“It does not affect my relationship with my friends and family because I am a jolly person, and at the same time, I have self-confidence. So, it doesn’t matter that I am not employed or unemployed. What matters most is the friendship and the relationship that is on good terms.” (My relationships with my friends and family were not affected because I’m naturally a cheerful person and confident in myself. Whether I’m employed or not doesn’t really matter to me. What’s important is the friendship we share and that our relationship remains on good terms.)

“Una, sa family ko, okay naman, there was no problem at all kasi wala akong mapagkukuhanan eh kundi sila. Sa friends ko naman, may iba na okay, at may iba na hindi. Kasi yung iba kong friends, mabilis silang nakahanap ng work, good thing for them and syempre ako, mahiyain, nahihiya naman ako na tanungin sila. Kaya I explore to learn, syempre with my other friends na katulad ko that time na naghahanap din ng work. So, tulong tulong kami. Pero not all the time andyan sila kaya need mo tumayo sa sarili mong paa.” (First, with my family, everything was fine. There were no problems because I had no one else to rely on but them. With my friends, some were okay, and some were not. Some of my friends were able to find jobs quickly—which was good for them—but for me I was shy and felt embarrassed to ask them for help. That’s why I explored things on my own, together with my other friends who were also looking for jobs at that time. We supported each other. But they couldn’t always be there, so I had to learn to stand on my own.)

“Nung unemployed ako, yung mga kaibigan ko, mga kaklase ko nung college kahit na hindi kami nagmemeet everytime, sila may work na sila, tinatawag at kinokontak parin ako, meron parin kaming gathering at nafefeel ko yung support nila.” (When I was unemployed, my friends and college classmates, even though we didn’t meet often and they already had jobs, still called and contacted me.) We still had gatherings, and I truly felt their support.)

These participants acknowledged having good relationships with their family members and friends. Having a good relationship with others is very important and beneficial, as social support is crucial during unemployment. Findings are supported by Bonnard (2020), who states that social networks are beneficial to students and graduates, not least in enhancing their employability.

Table 14 presents the level of seriousness of the extracted unemployment challenges, specifically regarding financial struggles.

Finance has become a challenge for every professional seeking a job. This financial struggle captures the dual nature of the problem described: it is not only about individual struggles due to unemployment or low income, but also a critical state of financial hardship that actively hinders the job seeker’s ability to find a new job. Finance is an active hindrance to the job search. Financial scarcity raises the challenge of finding work by reducing applications and interviews by constraining out-of-pocket spending on transportation, internet access, paid credentials, and other document fees. The National Worker Survey 2024 documents that prolonged searches generate mounting out-of-pocket costs; respondents repeatedly cited limited funds for travel, connectivity, and application materials as direct reasons for fewer applications and slower follow-ups (Empower Work, 2024).



Table 14. *Financial Struggles*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. I struggled with my finances, so I depended on financial support from my family.	3.50	1.13
2. I struggled to find work due to financial problems.	3.15	1.01
3. I lack the finances in processing and producing the required documents in applying for a job.	3.08	1.01
4. I lack travel allowance in seeking for work employment opportunity.	3.08	1.08
5. I have a limited internet connection for job search.	2.80	1.24
Mean	3.12	
Level of Seriousness		Moderate
1.0-1.49 (Very Low) 1.5 - 2.49(Low) 2.5 - 3.49 (Moderate) 3.5-4.49 (High) 4.5-5 (Very High)		

Data in Table 14 on financial struggles revealed that respondents experienced financial struggles, depending on family support, with a computed mean of 3.50, indicating a “high” level of seriousness, and a standard deviation of 1.13. Findings imply that respondents who experienced unemployment had difficulty with their finances due to a lack of income, and this is highly serious for professionals who do not have work and still do their best to find one. Amidst the challenges of unemployment, they have their families behind them to support their needs. These findings corroborate the study by Casey Family Programs (2025), which implicitly reinforces Social Support Theory, which holds that social networks, including families, provide vital emotional and financial support that mitigates hardship during economic downturns. Amid social support, Li Jiang (2025) found that financial strain is one of the strongest predictors of psychological distress among unemployed individuals, reinforcing the notion that financial hardship is not only material but also psychosocial. Thus, there is a need for stronger social support when one experiences financial struggle.

Moreover, respondents also struggled to find work due to financial problems that could lead them in lacking of finance in processing and producing the required documents in applying for a job, and also for their travel allowance in looking for work employment opportunity with a computed mean value of 3.15, 3.08, and 3.08 described as “moderate” with standard deviation of 1.01, 1.01. and 1.08. Research from the Economic Policy Institute (2025) shows that job seekers with fewer financial resources experience longer unemployment durations because they lack consistent access to transportation, digital resources, and funds for applications. These resource gaps can hinder professionals' applications, lead to fewer job offers, and result in missed follow-up opportunities. Further, respondents experienced limited internet connectivity for job searching, with a computed mean of 2.80, described as “moderate,” and a standard deviation of 1.24. This item yields the lowest mean score and thus identifies gaps, especially among low-income households. A global labor-market analysis by the World Economic Forum (2025) shows persistent digital inequality, primarily affecting lower-income job seekers who cannot consistently access online platforms that employers rely on. With that, in the Philippines, the Bayanihan SIM Project is served by the Department of Information and Communication Technology (DICT), a government initiative to address digital inequality, especially in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas. It aims to strengthen online learning, expand connectivity, and provide free mobile data to underserved Filipino communities, as stated on the Presidential Communications Office website (2025).

Overall, the respondents had a moderate level of seriousness in terms of financial struggles on the challenges faced by the professionals during their unemployment before they secure a long-term and stable job with a computed mean value of 3.12, suggesting that although the respondents financial constraints were not severe and shows moderate level, findings are still significant enough to limit job-search, efficiency, mobility, and access to necessary resources. Thus, this finding confirms that in the Modern labor market, financial challenges are among the most common and impactful challenges faced by unemployed individuals. Empower Work (2024) reported that financially vulnerable job seekers often struggle to sustain the costs of job-search activities, such as preparing documents, producing copies, and paying administrative or processing fees. Thus, the findings suggest that financial instability is persistent, a common challenge the unemployed face, yet it limits one’s ability to find opportunities for workforce success, as indicated by its moderate level of seriousness.

Several participants shared their experiences overcoming unemployment challenges. When asked about their experiences in overcoming financial crisis while seeking a job. Below is the narrative of the interview among the participants.

“Ang pamilya ko kasi is extended, every time na may problems ako, sinasabi ko sa kapatid ko, sa parents ko, so yun, pag may kailangan ako, Ma wala akong gagamitin sa pamasaha tapos tutulong sila. Kaya sobrang helpful nila.” (My family is extended, and every time I have problems, I tell my siblings and my parents. So whenever I need something, like when I say, ‘Ma, I don’t have money for transportation,’ they help me right away. That’s why they’ve been invaluable.)

“So nung una, after graduation kasi humihingi muna ako sa parents para sa finances para matustusan yung needs sa paghahanap ng trabaho. So, kailangan muna ng support para mafinance yung paghahanap mo ng trabaho, para pag nakahanap ka ng trabaho, maibabalik. Ganun yung ginawa ko nun, humiram muna ako, tapos nung nakahanap na ako ng trabaho dun ko binalik. Nahirapan ako sa transportasyon, pabalik balik ka, tapos yung mga requirements, tapos interview. Sa food din kasi kailangan mor in kumain, at sa printing ng documents.” (At first, after graduation, I had to ask my parents for financial support to cover my needs while looking for a job. You need support to finance your job search, and once you find a job, you can repay it. That’s what I did—I borrowed money first, and when I finally got a job, that’s when I returned it. I had difficulty with transportation because I had to go back and forth, plus there were requirements to process and interviews to attend. Food was also an issue because you need to eat more while you're out, and there



were also expenses for printing documents.)

“Ay ang hirap, nung time naming nun kapag graduate mo, hindi ka kaagad makakahanap ng work. Kaya ang ginawa ko nun, nagside line muna ako sa construction at nag-iipon. Ginawa ko yun kasi kulang ako ng support sa family ko, kaya sariling kayod sa mga expenses nung nagaapply ako sabay tumutulong pa sa pamilya. So yun, nagtiyaga ako, nag-ipon, at naghanap ng work.” (It was complicated. During our time, you can’t immediately find a job when you graduate. So what I did was take on side jobs in construction while saving money. I did that because I didn’t have enough support from my family, so I had to handle my own expenses while applying for jobs, all while still helping my family. That’s how it went—I persevered, saved money, and continued searching for work.)

“Saakin personally, ang hirap po kasi walang wala rin yung parents ko para magsupport saakin. Tapos lima pa kaming magkakapatid. Pero, sobrang nagpapasalamat ako sa partner ko kasi much money siya kaya medyo naging magaan yung paghahanap ko ng work kasi may motor din siya, may printer din. Kaya thankful ako sakanya.” (For me personally, it was complicated because my parents had nothing to support me with. And we are five siblings. But I’m very grateful to my partner, because he had the means to help me. That made my job search easier since he had a motorcycle and even a printer. That’s why I’m really thankful to him.)

“During our times, finding a job was not easy. There are a lot of challenges. Kaya, thankful ako sa parents ko because they are always there to support me in my financial needs. Magsasabi lang ako, and bibigyan nila ako kaagad. Kaya, mapalad ako kasi meron akong parents na supportive even if graduate na ako.” (During our time, finding a job was not easy. There were many challenges. That’s why I am grateful to my parents, because they were always there to support my financial needs. All I had to do was tell them, and they would immediately help me. I consider myself fortunate to have parents who remained supportive even after I graduated.)

These participants acknowledged the great need for family support and financial aid during the transition from unemployment to workforce success. These findings are supported by Nieto and Abacano (2021), who found that professionals are vulnerable to stress due to pressure from family and society, and by Loquias and Bauyot (2024), who found that graduates face financial barriers to immediate employment, putting family’s immediate needs first.

Table 15 presents the level of seriousness of the extracted unemployment challenges, specifically regarding physical and locational struggles. The Physical and locational struggles are also key challenges faced by professionals that relate to their body’s conditions, health, and geographical location. All of which act as stumbling blocks to entry or retention in the labor market. Likewise, employment is shaped by non-economic conditions such as health, physical capacity, environment, and access to essential services.

Table 15. *Physical and Locational Struggles*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. I struggled to find a job because of my disability.	2.40	1.31
2. I struggled with the hiring process due to physical body requirements, such as height and weight.	2.41	1.21
3. I am not ready to work in a place other than my residence.	2.56	1.23
4. I easily get sick, which causes absences that negatively impact my work performance.	2.53	1.27
Mean	2.47	
Level of Seriousness	Low	

1.0-1.49 (Very Low) 1.5 - 2.49(Low) 2.5 - 3.49 (Moderate) 3.5-4.49 (High) 4.5-5 (Very High)

Data on Table 15 revealed that respondents tend to agree that physical and locational struggles hinders their employment opportunity especially when a job seeker is not ready to work in a place other than their residence and also when a job seeker is easily get sick, which causes absences that negatively impact their working performance with a computed mean value of 2.56 and 2.53 described as “moderate” with standard deviation of 1.23, and 1.27 respectively. A recent study from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2025) reported that workers with health-limiting conditions were significantly more likely to face challenges doing their job, particularly due to mobility impairments and chronic illnesses. Additionally, Silver et al. (2025) found that those experiencing economic hardship and health limitations were more likely to rate their health as fair or poor, which directly correlated with reduced work capacity, employability, and labor-market persistence. Moreover, Galeano et al. (2023) showed that workers, especially those in low-to mid-wage roles, reported locational barriers, such as the inability to commute long distances, lack of transportation, and inability to relocate, as persistent constraints that prevented them from applying for or maintaining employment.

Moreover, respondents also see that job seekers are struggling to find a job because of their disability and struggles with the hiring process due to physical body requirements such as height and weight, with a computed mean value of 2.40 and 2.41, respectively, described as “low” level of seriousness with standard deviation of 1.31 and 1.21, respectively and according to Sol Cruz et al. (2021), persons with disability in the Philippines still face challenges in access to employment, workplace accessibility, inclusive hiring practices, public services, and social participation. Additionally, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Disability Employment Survey 2024-2025 indicates that persons with disabilities face significant barriers such as inaccessible workplaces, hiring bias, and limited job information (Nippon Foundation, 2025). Meanwhile, these findings are opposed by Saquin (2023), who revealed that employers show a moderate willingness to hire persons with disabilities, a preference for disability applicants with post-secondary education, and a high demand for soft skills and technical competencies. Additionally, Pedron (2024) showed that 1.44 million Filipinos live with disabilities, most in poverty. Despite the Republic Act no. 7277 or the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities, significant barriers persist, such as job matching problems, social stigma, and poor access to opportunities. Still, many persons with disabilities



can perform work tasks as effectively as non-persons with disability when given proper support.

Overall, the respondents had a “low” level of seriousness about the physical and locational struggles in the challenges faced by professionals during their unemployment before securing a long-term, stable job, with a computed mean of 2.47. These findings suggest physical and locational struggles typically affect employment only under specific circumstances, which could explain why not all unemployed individuals experience a higher level of seriousness. Thus, not all respondents are affected equally. Likewise, these results are grounded in Human Capital Theory, which shows that employment outcomes depend primarily on an individual’s skills, health, and capacity to work. Poor physical health reduces productivity and increases absenteeism, lowering an individual’s human capital value in the labor market.

Meanwhile, structural unemployment theory occurs when there is a mismatch between the workers’ attributes and the demands of the labor market. In this study, physical limitations, disabilities, and mobility impairments create a systemic mismatch. These findings explain why individuals are unwilling or unable to relocate or commute; thus, they are more likely to face unemployment even when jobs are available.

Several participants shared their experiences overcoming unemployment challenges. When asked about their experiences in employment concerning location, physical, and health conditions. Below is the narrative of the interview among the participants.

“May mga na-receive akong interview invitations mula sa mga kumpanyang malalayo sa hometown ko, pero na-intimidate ako sa idea na mag-commute araw-araw o mag-rent ng kwarto. Kaya hindi ko na tinuloy kahit promising naman yung mga trabaho.” (I received interview invitations from companies far from my hometown, but the idea of commuting daily or renting a room scared me. I didn’t apply even though the jobs were promising)

“Nagka-problema talaga ako dati sa paulit-ulit na migraine, at naapektuhan nito yung attendance ko sa previous job ko. Dumating sa point na tinag na ako ng HR na ‘unreliable’ dahil sa dalas ng sick leave ko. Kaya nung nag-apply ulit ako, napansin ng mga employer yung gap sa resume ko at lagi nila ’tong tinatanong. Mas lalo tuloy naging mahirap makahanap ng panibagong trabaho.” (I struggled with recurring migraines, which affected my attendance in my previous workplace. The HR eventually tagged me as unreliable because of my frequent sick leaves, so when I applied again, I had a gap in my resume that employers would question. It made securing another job more challenging.)

These participants acknowledged that relocations and personal limitations can result in unemployment or a prolonged job search. These findings are supported by Loquias and Bauyot (2024), who found that many graduates prioritize proximity to family over employment opportunities, especially when relocation costs and living expenses in urban areas are high.

Summary

Table 16 presents a summary of the challenges faced by professionals during their unemployment, including psychological distress, social isolation, financial struggles, and physical and locational struggles, each rated by level of seriousness.

Table 16. *Summary of the Challenges Faced by Professionals during their Unemployment*

<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Psychological Distress	2.79	Moderate
Social Isolation	2.67	Moderate
Financial Struggles	3.12	Moderate
Physical and Locational Struggles	2.47	Low
Overall Weighted Mean	2.76	Moderate

1.0-1.49 (Very Low) 1.5 - 2.49(Low) 2.5 - 3.49 (Moderate) 3.5-4.49 (High) 4.5-5 (Very High)

As shown in Table 16, the respondents affirmed that the challenges faced by professionals during their unemployment were of a “moderate” level of seriousness, as reflected in the overall weighted mean of 2.86, indicating that unemployment produces meaningful challenges but is manageable for professionals.

Among the identified challenges, financial struggle is the most serious, as reflected in the mean score of 3.12, which is rated as a “moderate” level of seriousness. These findings reflect the high cost of job searching, including transportation, document processing, and internet access. According to Beam (2020), job search costs are a fundamental friction that reduces search intensity. These costs include the monetary expenses of applying for jobs and attending interviews, which disproportionately burden unemployed job seekers. Findings are also supported by Zapechelnyuk and Zultan (2020), who found that job search costs discourage labor market participation and increase unemployment duration.

Meanwhile, in modern society, where the internet is beneficial for finding a job, Bhuller et al. (2023) highlighted that broadband availability significantly improves job-search outcomes and hiring, indicating that digital access is essential infrastructure for modern job seekers. Thus, this study strongly suggests that free internet access can help job seekers find jobs that lead to success, strengthen one-stop application centers, and offer discounted bundled document processing, fee waivers for unemployed applicants, and government-funded digital credential systems to eliminate repeated printing and fees. Likewise, effective solutions must therefore



directly reduce out-of-pocket costs and increase access to digital and physical job-search resources.

Psychological distress is rated as moderately serious, with a 2.79 computed mean value suggesting that unemployment negatively affects emotional well-being but not to demoralizing levels. Findings align with the global evidence showing that joblessness increases anxiety, stress, and depressive symptoms due to loss of routine, purpose, and identity (Ettman et al., 2024). However, this can be reversible when the unemployed find employment, thereby reducing distress, underscoring that the adverse emotional effects of unemployment can turn into a positive experience (Sterud et al., 2025). Thus, this evidence reinforces the notion that while psychological distress is present, it is often moderate, adaptive, and sensitive to improvement with restored employment.

Social isolation is also rated as moderately serious, with a computed mean value of 2.67. These findings imply that unemployed professionals feel less comfortable engaging socially and may limit their involvement in community activities, yet still maintain ties with friends and family. Recently published research confirmed that unemployment increases social isolation, as jobless individuals often feel less confident, withdraw from social and community engagements, and experience reduced social integration due to stigma and economic strain (Pohlan, 2024; Kim, 2025). However, consistent with Ivkovic (2024), many unemployed professionals still maintain supportive ties with friends and family.

Physical and locational struggles yield the lowest mean of 2.47, indicating a “low” level of seriousness. Findings imply that only a few respondents experience physical and locational struggles. Yet, these remain relevant to the study, as they affect employability primarily among workers with chronic illness or mobility problems (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025). Thus, these findings are impactful but concentrated among specific subgroups, not the majority of job seekers.

Overall, the seriousness of these challenges is rated “moderate,” as indicated by a weighted mean of 2.76. This finding suggests that although unemployment creates economic, psychological, and social burdens, respondents of the study often display resilience, coping strategies, and social support systems. Financial struggles are common among the respondents, but social and psychological impacts may vary based on the individual-level and gained family and friends’ support, psychological distress decreases once employment is regained, and physical limitations apply only to some individuals.

Relationship Between the Level of Agreement of the Professionals on the Causes of Their Unemployment and Their Profile

Table 17 presents the relationship between the level of agreement of the professionals on the causes of their unemployment and their profile variables using correlation analysis, specifically Spearman rho, biserial, and multiserrial correlation.

Table 17. Correlation Analysis

Variable	Correlation	Individualistic Causes	Human Capital Deficit	Volitional Constraints	Frictional Unemployment
Age	Spearman rho	-.09	-.14	-.08	-.19
	Significance	.23	.05*	.29	.01*
Highest Educational Attainment	Spearman rho	-.06	-.14	-.03	-.01
	Significance	.40	.07	.69	.92
Years in Service	Spearman rho	-.14	-.17	-.03	-.27
	Significance	.07	.02*	.72	.00*
Average Monthly Income	Spearman rho	.07	.03	.07	-.05
	Significance	.35	.65	.36	.50
Sex	biserial Correlation	.08	-.02	.11	.03
	Significance	.29	.81	.14	.70
	multiserrial				
Civil Status	Correlation	-.11	-.12	-.10	-.18
	Significance	.16	.11	.18	.01*
	multiserrial				
Eligibility	Correlation	-.16	-.13	-.11	-.12
	Significance	.03*	.08	.14	.12
	multiserrial				
Family Type	Correlation	.05	.12	-.02	.09
	Significance	.49	.12	.83	.25
	multiserrial				
Course Graduated	Correlation	.02	-.01	-.05	-.16
	Significance	.77	.89	.51	.03*

Interpretation: * < .05 – Significant; > .05 – Not Significant

These causes of unemployment hinder professionals' ability to navigate workforce success. Key concepts for these causes are derived into four variables, the individualistic causes which consists of communication deficits, low confidence, poor adaptability, and weak job search behavior; the human capital deficit which consists of lack of skills, experience, eligibility, education mismatch; the volitional constraints consists of job mismatch avoidance, family pressure, and reluctance to relocate; and frictional unemployment consists of job transitions, contract endings, and job-search delays.

Among the four identified major causes of unemployment, only volitional constraints have shown no relationship to all their profile variables, therefore, there is no significant relationship between volitional constraints and all the profile variables as reflected in their p-value of .29, .69, .72, .36, .14, .18, .14, .83, and .51, which yielded significance values greater than the .05 level of significance, thus the null hypothesis accepted.

Results on relationship between volitional constraints and their profile variable shows that demographic characteristics cannot affect a job seeker in their decisions especially in relocating for work, being hesitant to accept jobs mismatched to one's field, family pressure, and personal preferences in job selection but rather, it is primarily driven by psychological, motivational, and socio-cultural factors (Clarke, 2017; Tomlinson, 2017). Hence, volitional constraints are self-regulated choices rather than outcomes determined by demographic background. Additionally, Salas-Velasco (2021) shows that avoidance of jobs due to field mismatch or perceived underemployment reflects personal identity preservation and career aspirations. These findings are supported by Career Construction Theory, which posits that individuals actively construct their careers by aligning choices with their vocational personality, career adaptability, and life themes (Savickas, 2005).

Below is the interview with the participants related to volitional constraints.

“Marami sanang magandang opportunities sa city, pero hindi pa talaga ako ready mag-relocate. Masiyado pa akong attached sa pamilya ko at hindi ako sure kung kakayanin ko yung mabuhay mag-isa. Dahil sa pag-aalinlangan ko, sobrang lumiit tuloy ng options ko”. (Many good opportunities were in the city, but I wasn't ready to relocate. I was too attached to my family and unsure if I could handle living alone. My reluctance limited my options significantly.)

“Inalok ako ng trabaho sa field na malayo talaga sa pinag-aralan ko noong college. Nag-hesitate ako kasi pakiramdam ko masasayang lang yung apat na taon ko sa pag-aaral. Gusto ko sana ng role na tugma sa educational background ko, kahit na mas matagal pa akong maghintay.” (I was offered a job in a field far from what I studied in college. I hesitated because I felt my four years of schooling would be wasted. I wanted a role that aligned with my educational background, even if it meant waiting longer.)

On the other hand, individualistic causes of unemployment are found to be associated with eligibility, as shown by the p-value of .03, which is lower than the .05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is not accepted. These findings are consistent with Becker's (1993) human capital theory, in which eligibility, such as Philippine Regulation Commission Licenses and Civil Service Commission Eligibility, serves as a credential reflecting an individual's competencies, discipline, and adaptability. Additionally, eligibility requires mastery of specialized knowledge, adequate preparation, and psychological readiness. Individuals who exhibit weak job-search effort, poor communication skills, low self-confidence, and difficulty adapting to work environments are more likely to lack eligibility. Likewise, a weakness in a personal attribute hinders not only job performance but also eligibility acquisition.

Below is the interview with the participants related to individualistic causes.

“Bumagsak ako sa una kong eligibility exam, at dahil doon na-delay yung pag-a-apply ko sa mga government offices. Nakaramdam din ako ng pagka-inferior sa mga batchmates ko, kaya lumayo ako sa kanila kasi may license na sila habang ako, bumagsak. Marami kasing positions ang nangangailangan ng professional eligibility para ma-shortlist ka pa lang. At dahil wala ako nun, pakiramdam ko sarado lahat ng pinto, lalo na sa mga public institutions. Inabot pa ng isang taon bago ko sa wakas naipasa yung exam at naging employable.” (I failed my first eligibility exam, and that delayed my application in government offices. Also, I felt inferior to my batchmates and kept myself distant from them because they had already obtained their licenses while I had failed. Many positions required professional eligibility before I could even be shortlisted. Without it, I felt like all doors were closed, especially in public institutions. It took me another year before I finally passed the exam and became employable.)

Subsequently, results revealed that there is no significant relationship between individualistic causes and their age, highest educational attainment, years in service, average monthly income, sex, civil status, family type, and course graduated as reflected with their p-value of .23, .40, .07, .35, .29, .16, .49, and .77 greater than the .05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. These findings are consistent with those of the study by Wang et al. (2022), which found that employability is mainly driven by self-efficacy, achievements, motivation, and internal aspirations, rather than by demographic factors.

Results also show a correlation between human capital deficit and age and years of service, as reflected in their p-values of .05 and .02, which are below the .05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not accepted. These results are directly supported by Becker's Human Capital Theory, which posits that skills and productivity increase with age, though at a decreasing rate. Further, unemployment is inversely associated with skill level, indicating that individuals with greater accumulated experience are less likely to exhibit a human capital-related employability deficit. In the Career stages by Super (1957), characterized by skill building and stabilization at the ages of 25-44, productivity increases monotonically up to age 65, indicating that cognitive, experiential, and work-related competencies accumulate steadily with years in service. Thus, work experience strongly influences employability outcomes, and employers prioritize candidates with applied skills and experience, which accumulate with age and tenure.

Below is the interview with the participants related to the human capital deficit.

“Ang bilis magbago ng industry, kaya kailangan talagang mag-level up ng younger generation pagdating sa education. ‘Yung skills na natutunan ko sa college, hindi na gano'n ka-in demand ngayon. Hinahanap na ng employers ‘yung mga candidates na may training sa

mas modern at innovative na practices. Kaya kailangan talagang mag-innovate at mag-adapt ng mga bagong graduates para maka-keep up sa mabilis na pagbabago ng mundo.” (The industry changed fast; there is a need for the younger generation to be educated to keep up.) The skills I developed during college were no longer in high demand. Employers sought candidates who were trained in more modern or innovative practices, and new graduates must innovate themselves to adapt to a changing world.)

Meanwhile, results found that there is no significant relationship between human capital deficit when correlated to their highest educational attainment, average monthly income, sex, civil status, eligibility, family type, and course graduated as reflected with their p-value of .07, .65, .81, .11, .08, .12, and .89 greater than the .05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. This finding suggests that demographics such as education, income, sex, civil status, and family type do not inherently predict the presence or absence of a human capital deficit, because employers value practical, job-specific competencies more than background attributes. Thus, human capital theory emphasizes that human capital is the combination of skills, training, and experience that can be accumulated over years, not simply demographic or educational credentials.

A notable significant correlation is observed between frictional unemployment and age, years in service, civil status, and course graduates, as revealed by their p-values .01, .00, .01, and .03, which yielded a significance value below the .05 level; therefore, the null hypothesis is not accepted. Frictional unemployment is a natural and generally healthy part of a dynamic labor market. Like, younger workers experience greater mobility, job shifts, and exploration, which contributes to frictional unemployment. These findings are supported by Affum-Osei et al. (2023), who found that younger workers are more willing to explore opportunities and are often willing to transition between jobs voluntarily. Also, the Super's Career Development Theory (1957) explains that individuals ages 25-44 are in the establishment stage, characterized by entry, skill-building, and stabilization, which naturally includes job changes and transitions. Hence, age is a significant factor, as younger professionals are more active in job searching and job transitions.

Additionally, experienced workers often have stronger networks, higher job security, and stronger job matching, which reduces frictional unemployment, while early-career workers exhibit higher turnover. Becker's Human capital theory (1993) explains that skills and productivity increase with years of experience. As experience grows, workers achieve more stable employment and fewer transitions. Thus, the year in service significantly affects frictional unemployment: workers with longer tenure transition less frequently, whereas early-career workers transition more frequently, thereby increasing temporary unemployment. With that, workforce success can be achieved over longer periods, which connotes stability.

Below is the interview with the participants related to frictional unemployment.

“Gaya nga ng sabi ko kanina, motivated ako maghanap ng magandang trabaho kagaya sa DepEd para mapabuti ang buhay ng mga parents ko. Kahit akong hirap pinapasok ko, magkaroon lang ng Magandang trabaho at maibalik sakanila yung hirap na pinagdaanan nila.” (Just like what I said earlier, I'm motivated to find a good job, like in DepEd so I can improve my parents' lives. I pushed myself through hardships just to secure a better position and to repay them for all the struggles they endured.)

On the other hand, the results also found that frictional unemployment is not associated with the highest educational attainment, average monthly income, sex, eligibility, or family type, as reflected in their p-values of .92, .50, .70, .12, and .25, all of which are greater than the .05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. These findings imply that educational attainment does not guarantee smoother job transitions or job-market alignment, and that degrees alone do not guarantee job-ready skills; rather, advancing knowledge in one's field of study does. Likewise, it does not affect frictional unemployment where job searching, switching, and contract gaps are present. Moreover, income is an outcome of experience, not a determinant of job transitions, as the Human Capital Theory holds that earnings grow with tenure and accumulated experience, not with frictional unemployment caused by voluntary mobility, job mismatches, or contract terminations.

Furthermore, men and women experienced similar short-term unemployment patterns during job transitions, so sex does not statistically influence frictional unemployment. Likewise, even workers with professional eligibility may still experience contractual employment, job changes, resignations, and job searching. Eligibility does not guarantee immediate job matching or employment, because employers in the modern labor market look for soft skills, adaptability, communication, work experience, and not merely licensure. Therefore, a graduate must possess these core skills or competencies to be better equipped for the workplace, especially for navigating the path to workforce success.

Relationship Between the Level of Seriousness on the Unemployment Challenges Experienced by the Successful Professional and Their Profile

Table 18 presents the correlation analysis between the seriousness of the unemployment challenges experienced by successful professionals and their profile variables, using Spearman's rho, biserial, and multivariate correlations.

These challenges of unemployment also hinder professionals in navigating their workforce success. Key concepts for these challenges are derived into four variables, the psychological distress which consists of negative emotional, cognitive, and mental state of an individual; the social isolation that reduced participation in social, family, and community life; the financial struggles that captures dual nature such as lack of funds due to unemployment and lacking of funds that actively hinders the ability to search and process for a job; lastly, physical and locational struggles that affect job search due to body's conditions, health, and location.



Table 18. *Correlation Analysis*

Variable	Correlation	Psychological Distress	Social Isolation	Financial Struggles	Physical and Locational Struggles
Age	Spearman rho	-.19	-.06	-.10	-.04
	Significance	.01*	.43	.17	.63
Highest Educational Attainment	Spearman rho	.03	.09	.11	.07
	Significance	.74	.26	.16	.33
Years in Service	Spearman rho	-.19	-.11	-.02	-.19
	Significance	.01*	.14	.80	.01*
Average Monthly Income	Spearman rho	-.06	-.06	-.10	.02
	Significance	.39	.41	.18	.82
Sex	biserial Correlation	.11	.03	-.02	.09
	Significance	.14	.68	.75	.26
	multiserial	-.25	-.13	-.17	-.09
Civil Status	Correlation				
	Significance	.00*	.09	.02*	.23
Eligibility	multiserial	-.12	-.17	-.09	-.18
	Correlation				
Family Type	Significance	.11	.02*	.22	.02*
	multiserial	.11	.06	.10	.12
	Correlation				
Course Graduated	Significance	.14	.41	.20	.12
	multiserial	-.05	.02	.08	-.01
	Correlation				
	Significance	.55	.82	.30	.86

Interpretation: * < .05 – Significant; > .05 – Not Significant

As shown in Table 18, psychological distress during unemployment is significantly associated with age, years in service, and civil status, as reflected in their p-values of .01, .01, and .00, respectively, which yield significance values below the .05 level. Thus, the null hypothesis is not accepted. These findings revealed that age and years in service mean that older and more experienced professionals tend to report lower levels of psychological distress. While civil status suggests that respondents who are partnered or married also experienced less distress, this finding shows the kindness of family and partner support and the ability to cover application fees, transport, and other costs.

Below is the interview with the participants related to psychological distress.

“Ako nuon, nafefeel ko yung frustration, lalo nung lumabas yung result ng board exam and bumagsak ako. Ayoko na magtake. Tapos yung kaibigan ko, kaklase ko sabi niya Tita, magreview tayo, magtake tayo. Ang sabi ko, ayoko na magbusiness nalang ako, thunders na ako sabi ko. Sabi niya, hindi tita may kasama ka. Tapos ayun, napapayag niya ako, nagtake ako and Thanks God at nakapasa. Tapos ayun, nagtry ako magapply sa DepEd, at nabigyan ng chance. Kaya na-overcome ko yun, kasi sa bahay, ang booring Talaga at naiisip mo lahat ng problema. Kaya thankful ako sa mga kaibigan ko kasi andyan sila na handang tumulong.” (At that time, I really felt frustrated, especially when the board exam results came out, and I failed. I didn’t want to retake it. Then my friend, my classmate, told me, ‘Tita, let’s review and retake the exam.’ I said, ‘I don’t want to anymore, I’ll just start a business; I’m already old.’ But she said, ‘No, Tita, you’re not alone—you have me.’ Eventually, she convinced me to retake the exam, and thank God, I passed. After that, I tried applying to DepEd, and I was given a chance. That’s how I overcame it: staying at home was really boring, and it made me overthink all my problems. I’m very thankful for my friends because they were always there and ready to help.)

Thus, these findings show that psychological distress can be overcome by professionals as age and tenure increase, and having a family, as shown in civil status, could be helpful in one’s mental state. The human capital theory explains that investment in education, training, and experience increases productivity. Likewise, experience and tenure function as a store of human capital that reduces vulnerability to unemployment. Further, Super’s career stages suggest that individuals move from exploration to establishment, and they achieve better person-job fit. Thus, when a professional truly finds workforce success, the psychological distress is lowered.

Meanwhile, results showed that psychological distress was not associated with the highest educational attainment, average monthly income, sex, eligibility, family type, or course graduated, as reflected in p-values of .74, .39, .14, .11, .14, and .55, all of which were greater than the .05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. These findings suggest that psychological distress cannot be lowered or reduced by holding a degree or higher and does not protect individuals from the emotional challenges of unemployment. Further, psychological distress shows among different income groups, which implies that professionals, regardless of their income, can experience psychological distress before employment. Moreover, both males and females also experience emotional challenges, showing that there is no disparity between sex differences.

Meanwhile, although eligibility affects employability, it does not significantly influence psychological distress due to the employment process; both those with and without eligibility experienced psychological distress. Further, despite the household compositions, psychological distress did not differ significantly; nuclear and extended families both need to provide support for the professional who

needs social support to reduce the feeling of psychological distress. Lastly, psychological distress is present among all job seekers with different degrees.

Meanwhile, social isolation was also found to be associated with their eligibility, as reflected in its p-value of .02, which yielded a significance value below the .05 level; therefore, the null hypothesis is not accepted. This result implies that individuals without eligibility may experience greater social isolation due to feelings of inadequacy, diminished confidence, and a perceived lack of competitiveness when comparing themselves to others who possess it, especially in positions that require it. Findings are further explained by Becker's (1993) human capital theory, which posits that educational and credential investments, such as eligibility, shape not only economic outcomes but also psychological and social experiences tied to employability. Likewise, eligibility serves as a credential that shows readiness and competence; hence, lacking eligibility may increase vulnerability to stigma, reduce confidence in social interactions, and heighten the psychological challenges of joblessness and social isolation.

Below is the interview with the participants regarding social isolation and eligibility.

“Sa pamilya naming , supportive sila. Nung time na grumaduate ako, sabi nila saakin magfocus ako sa board exam para pumasa ako at sila na bahala sa expenses and needs ko, kaya nakinig ako . Then after that, nakapasa na ako tsaka ako naghanap ng work . Nung naghahanap ako ng work, nahirapan ako kasi andami naming aplikante, feeling ko di ako makukuha kasi feeling ko ang gagaling nila. Nagdoubt ako. Pero sa awa ng Diyos, nakuha ako. Thankful din ako sa parents ko kasi pati sa paghahanap ko ng work eh full support sila kaya hindi ako gaanong nahirapan sa expenses, sa pag aapply lang.” (In our family, they were very supportive. When I graduated, they told me to focus on reviewing for the board exam so that I could pass, and they would take care of all my expenses and needs. So I listened to them. After that, when I passed, I started looking for work. When I was applying, it was difficult because there were so many applicants, and I felt like I wouldn't get hired since everyone seemed so good. I doubted myself. But by God's grace, I was accepted. I'm also very thankful to my parents because they fully supported me throughout my job hunting, so I didn't struggle much with expenses—only with the applications themselves.)

Meanwhile, results also revealed that social isolation has no association with their age, highest educational attainment, years in service, average monthly income, sex, civil status, family type, and course graduated as reflected with their p-value of .43, .26, .14, .41, .68, .09, .41, and .82 greater than the .05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. According to Pohlen (2024), job loss reduces social participation regardless of age, sex, or education, as social isolation is triggered mainly by a loss of role in identity and perceived decline in social status. Findings are also supported by Kim (2025), who found that unemployed adults withdraw from social interaction due to shame, economic insecurity, and reduced confidence, rather than demographic factors.

Subsequently, financial struggles during unemployment are found to be significantly associated with their civil status, with a computed p-value of .02, which is lower than the .05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is not accepted. Findings imply that respondents who are married or who carry family responsibilities face greater financial pressure during unemployment because they must continue meeting household needs, contribute to shared expenses, or support dependents even without a stable income. These findings corroborate the study by Li Jiang (2025), which found that financial hardship during unemployment significantly increases stress levels and reduces well-being, emphasizing that individuals with greater family responsibilities experience more intense financial pressure. The Economic Policy Institute (2025) revealed that individuals with limited financial resources experience prolonged unemployment because financial constraints reduce their ability to submit applications, attend interviews, or complete required documents.

Below is the interview with the participants related to financial struggles and civil status.

“Araw-araw paalala nang paalala sa'kin ng asawa ko tungkol sa bills at mga responsibilidad. Pero imbes na ma-encourage ako, mas lalo akong kinakabahan. Dahil sa pressure, nawalan ako ng kumpiyansa at hindi na ako gano'n ka-active maghanap ng trabaho. Pero sinabi ko sa sarili ko, kailangan ko talagang makahanap ng trabaho agad-agad dahil kailangan ako nang husto ng pamilya ko.” (Every day, my wife reminded me about bills and responsibilities. Instead of feeling encouraged, I felt more anxious. The pressure made me lose confidence, and I became less active in job searching. But, I said to myself, I need to find a job as soon as possible because my family badly needs me.)

“Saakin personally, ang hirap po kasi walang wala rin yung parents ko para magsupport saakin. Tapos lima pa kaming magkakapatid. Pero, sobrang nagpapasalamat ako sa partner ko kasi much money siya kaya medyo naging magaan yung paghahanap ko ng work kasi may motor din siya, may printer din. Kaya thankful ako sakanya .” (For me personally, it was complicated because my parents had nothing to support me with. And we are three siblings. But I'm very grateful to my partner because he had the means to help me. That made my job search easier since he had a motorcycle and even a printer. That's why I'm really thankful to him.)

Meanwhile, results also revealed that financial struggles have no association with their age, highest educational attainment, years in service, average monthly income, sex, eligibility, family type, and course graduated as reflected with their p-value of .17, .16, .80, .18, .75, .22, .20, and .30 greater than the .05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Findings imply that financial hardships in finding a job are a widespread and universal challenge affecting unemployed individuals regardless of their demographic background. Likewise, factors that can contribute to financial struggles include those that affect income, such as civil status. The Empower Work Group conducted a National Worker Survey (2024), which revealed that financial hardship occurs because job



searching itself is costly, including transportation, food expenses, and document fees.

A notable significant correlation is observed between the physical and locational struggles when correlated with their years in service and eligibility, as revealed by their p-values of .01 and .02, which yield significance below the .05 level; therefore, the null hypothesis is not accepted. Findings imply that physical and locational struggles, such as difficulty relocating to work, managing health limitations, meeting physical job requirements, and challenges with commuting, are more likely to affect individuals depending on their years of service and eligibility. Additionally, over the years in service, workers may experience changes in physical and health-related concerns. Findings are further explained in the Super’s Career Development Theory, which states that workers in later stages experience more constraints related to health, geographic stability, and role responsibilities. On the other hand, eligibility functions as a form of human capital that improves job matching and access to stable roles. Those respondents without eligibility are more vulnerable to physical and locational demands, confirming why eligibility correlates with physical and locational struggles.

Below is the interview with the participants regarding physical and locational struggles, years of service, and eligibility.

“Before kasi ako nakapursue bilang pulis, syempre naghanap muna ako ng alternative na trabaho, naging ah tricycle driver at the same time tinutulungan ko yung parents ko kasi farmer kasi kami kaya yun yung naging reason bakit pinursue ko yung pagiging pulis, at natulungan ako ng pamamasada ko at duon sa farm. Nakaranas din ako nuon ng kakulangan sa pera kasi every time merong pagkakagastusan kahit na binate palang ako nuon syempre may need tayo pang araw araw like pagkain at allowance rin ng ibang kapatid kasi hindi lang naman ako yung may ganun sa pamilya, may kapatid din ako na kailangan tulungan. Nung nagtricycle driver ako nuon, nakaka-ipon ako at nagamit ko nung meron ng recruitment. Nung unang recruitment hindi ako nakuha, pero sabi nga diba, try and try until you succeed.” (Before I was able to pursue becoming a police officer, I had to look for alternative work. I became a tricycle driver while also helping my parents, because we were farmers—and that became one of my motivations to become a police officer. My income from driving and working on the farm helped me a lot. I also experienced financial difficulties back then because there were always expenses, and even though I was still young, there were daily needs like food and also the allowances of my siblings. It wasn’t just me who needed support; I had siblings to help as well. When I was driving a tricycle, I was able to save money, and I used those savings when recruitment opened. I didn’t get accepted the first time, but as they say, try and try until you succeed.)

“Pagkatapos ng graduation, hindi pa talaga stable ang finances ko kaya hindi ko muna ti-nake ang licensure exam at naghanap muna ako ng trabaho para makaipon. Dahil sa delay na ‘yon, naapektuhan yung progression ko sa career. Doon ko narealize na dahil hindi ko agad ti-nake ‘yung exam, parang naiwan ako ng batchmates ko.” (I was financially unstable after graduation, so I postponed taking the licensure exam and found work to save money. That delay pushed back my employment progression. I realized that not taking the exam immediately placed me behind my batchmates.)

Meanwhile, results also revealed that physical and locational struggles have no association with their age, highest educational attainment, average monthly income, sex, civil status, family type, and course graduated as reflected with their p-value of .63, .33, .82, .26, .23, .12, and .86 greater than the .05 level of significance. Findings imply that these demographics cannot affect physical and locational struggles. Regardless of age, sex, income, education, civil status, family type, and the course they graduated from, professionals still face difficulties in relocating for work, height and weight disadvantages, frequent sickness affecting work performance, and challenges in commuting.

Relationship Between Level of Agreement on the Causes and Level of Seriousness of the Challenges Encountered by Professionals During Their Unemployment

Table 19 presents a correlation analysis between the level of agreement on the causes of unemployment and the seriousness of the challenges encountered by professionals during their unemployment, using the Pearson correlation coefficient.

Table 19. Correlations

		<i>Individualistic Causes</i>	<i>Human Capital Deficit</i>	<i>Volitional Constraints</i>	<i>Frictional Unemployment</i>
Psychological Distress	Pearson Correlation	.36	.23	.31	.38
	Significance	.00*	.00*	.00*	.00*
Social Isolation	Pearson Correlation	.43	.19	.30	.29
	Significance	.00*	.01*	.00*	.00*
Financial Struggles	Pearson Correlation	.13	.19	.11	.13
	Significance	.08	.01*	.14	.08
Physical and Locational Struggles	Pearson Correlation	.38	.10	.16	.28
	Significance	.00*	.17	.03*	.00*

Interpretation: * < .05 – Significant; > .05 – Not Significant

Graduate and professional unemployment research highlights four major categories of causes: individualistic causes, human capital

deficits, volitional constraints, and frictional unemployment. The study's findings on these causes show a “moderate” level of agreement, reflecting common factors such as skills mismatch, lack of experience, and labor-market competition. On the other hand, the seriousness of unemployment challenges is often described across four domains, these include psychological distress, social isolation, financial struggles, and physical and locational struggles. Findings of the study on these challenges indicate a moderate level of seriousness, implying that unemployment generates emotional strain, reduced social participation, and financial pressure. At the same time, physical and locational struggles tend to be less severe but still relevant for specific subgroups of the population, such as those with health limitations and mobility constraints.

As shown in Table 19, there is a notable association between individualistic causes and psychological distress, social isolation, and physical and locational struggles, as reflected in their p-values of .00, .00, and .00, which yield significance at the .05 level. Thus, the null hypothesis is not accepted.

Results imply that individualistic factors, such as labor-market competition, low self-confidence, workplace pressure, ineffective job search, and difficulty adjusting to the work environment, directly affected psychological distress during unemployment. Findings are further explained by Jahoda's Latent Deprivation Theory, which asserts that the loss of work and the work search can intensify distress. Thus, this study suggests that professionals must pursue personal growth and professional development, as these are beneficial for preventing psychological distress. Meanwhile, individualistic causes and social isolation have also been associated, suggesting that individualistic causes can potentially affect unemployed professionals' social behavior. Thus, it is more likely to withdraw socially. Findings are further explained in Career Construction Theory, which emphasizes that diminished self-efficacy and disrupted identity formation affect interpersonal functioning and social engagement. Additionally, physical and locational struggles have also been found to be associated with individualistic causes, reflecting not only immobility but also personal readiness and fear of failure. Thus, increasing individual-level attributes, such as confidence, through skills enhancement and education can help individuals become physically and geographically ready for the workforce.

Below is the interview with the participants regarding individualistic causes, psychological distress, social isolation, and physical and locational struggles.

“Yung kalungkutan, andyan talaga yan, pero ikaw dapat aware ka. May times na di mo na alam gagawin ko dahil di ka makahanap ng trabaho. Pero kahit ganun, embrace what you have and keep improving yourself until such time mas gagaling kapa kasi may igagaling kapa. Edge mo yun, para makahanap ng work.” (Sadness is really part of it. There were times when I didn't know what to do anymore because I couldn't find a job. But despite that, you should embrace what you have and keep improving yourself. There's always room for growth, and that will be your edge to get a job eventually.)

“Professional and skill development. Iniisip ko kasi na hindi lang ako yung aplikante, kaya sabi ko, need ko ng trainings and seminars, so I focused on myself to gather these certificates. And, nakatulong yung mga certificates na yun nung nag-apply ako ng job. Still, nagfocus parin ako sa development ngayon. Kasi ang learning ay lifelong diba.” (Professional and skill development. I kept thinking I wasn't the only applicant, so I told myself I needed training and seminars. I focused on myself and worked to collect certificates. Those certificates really helped when I applied for a job. And until now, I continue focusing on self-development because learning is lifelong.)

Meanwhile, individualistic causes are not associated with financial struggles, as reflected in the p-value of .08, which is higher than the .05 level of significance; therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. The findings suggest that financial difficulties during unemployment, such as a lack of funds for transportation, document processing, and internet access, are primarily structural and economic, and that personal traits cannot affect financial struggles because job search expenses affect unemployed individuals broadly.

Below is the interview with the participants related to individualistic causes and financial struggles.

“Through lending. Malaki ang interest pero okay lang para sa pangarap at pangangailangan.” (Through lending. The interest was high, but it was okay because it helped me pursue my dreams and meet my needs.)

“Nung time na nag-aapply ako at talagang walang wala na ako at wala na rin mabigay ang parents ko, nagsangla ako ng mga alahas na regalo ng nanay ko nung bata ako para may pangsuporta ako sa sarili ko habang naghahanap ng trabaho.” (During the time I was applying for jobs and had absolutely nothing left—and my parents also had nothing more to give—I pawned the pieces of jewelry my mother gave me when I was a child so I could support myself while searching for work.)

“Saakin personally, ang hirap po kasi walang wala rin yung parents ko para magsupport saakin. Tapos lima pa kaming magkakapatid. Pero, sobrang nagpapasalamat ako sa partner ko kasi much money siya kaya medyo naging magaan yung paghahanap ko ng work kasi may motor din siya, may printer din. Kaya thankful ako sakanya.” (For me personally, it was complicated because my parents had nothing to support me with. And we are three siblings. But I'm very grateful to my partner because he had the means to help me. That made my job search easier since he had a motorcycle and even a printer. That's why I'm really thankful to him.)

Subsequently, results revealed that human capital deficit is also associated with psychological distress, social isolation, and financial struggles, as reflected in their p-values of .00, .01, and .01, which yielded significance values below the .05 level; therefore, the null hypothesis is not accepted. Findings imply that human capital gaps, such as a lack of required skills, limited work experience,

insufficient training, missing eligibility, and inadequate educational preparation, substantially increase psychological distress, social isolation, and financial burdens by reducing employability and prolonging job search duration. Likewise, unemployed professionals may feel a loss of motivation, sadness, confusion about their future, less confidence, a sense of distance from peers, reliance on family support, difficulty funding job applications, and difficulty affording transportation, printing, or digital access. The human capital theory argues that skills, knowledge, and training determine employability, productivity, and economic outcomes. Thus, when professionals become employed, the effects of psychological distress, social isolation, and financial struggles can be reversed, and they can regain status. Likewise, human capital deficit naturally produces psychological, social, and financial struggles.

Below is the interview with the participants regarding human capital deficit, psychological distress, social isolation, and financial struggles.

“So nung una, after graduation kasi humihingi muna ako sa parents para sa finances para matustusan yung needs sa paghahanap ng trabaho. So, kailangan muna ng support para mafinance yung paghahanap mo ng trabaho, para pag nakahanap ka ng trabaho, maibabalik. Ganun yung ginawa ko nun, humiram muna ako, tapos nung nakahanap na ako ng trabaho dun ko binalik. Nahirapan ako sa transportasyon, pabalik balik ka, tapos yung mga requirements, tapos interview. Sa food din kasi kailangan mor in kumain, at sa printing ng documents.” (At first, after graduation, I had to ask my parents for financial support to cover my needs while looking for a job. You need support to finance your job search, and once you find a job, you can repay it. That’s what I did—I borrowed money first, and when I finally got a job, that’s when I returned it. I had difficulty with transportation because I had to go back and forth, plus there were requirements to process and interviews to attend. Food was also an issue because you need to eat more while you’re out, and there were also expenses for printing documents.)

Meanwhile, the human capital deficit shows no association with physical and locational struggles, as reflected in the p-value of .17, which is above the .05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. These findings imply that the human capital deficit does not directly affect the physical or locational struggles professionals face during unemployment. Likewise, respondents may lack specific competencies or credentials during their unemployment, but this does not indicate whether they experience difficulty relocating, suffer from health-related work limitations, or struggle with physical job requirements.

Moreover, volitional constraints are also found to be significantly related to psychological distress, social isolation, and physical and locational struggles, as reflected in their p-values of .00, .00, and .03, which yield significance at the .05 level. Thus, the null hypothesis is not accepted.

Findings suggest that personal choices, preferences, and self-regulated limitations in employment decisions contribute meaningfully to the psychological distress, social isolation, and physical and locational struggles as experienced by professionals during their unemployment. Respondents who experience psychological distress in relation to volitional constraints deliberately avoid jobs that do not align with their degree, hesitate to relocate, or withdraw from job applications due to fear, pressure, or low motivation. These experiences prolong unemployment and intensify psychological distress. Respondents also hesitate to work outside their locality, feel pressured by family, withdraw from opportunities due to mismatched job expectations, and are also more likely to experience reduced social gatherings. Family obligations also drive respondents; avoiding relocation and rejecting jobs outside one’s comfort zone connotes mobility challenges and locational struggles. Thus, the respondents’ preferences are supported by Savickas’s Career Construction Theory, which suggests that people make career decisions based on their internal narratives, preferences, and identity needs.

Below is the interview with the participants related to volitional constraints and psychological distress, social isolation, and physical and locational struggles.

“Naghintay ako ng ilang buwan para sa opening na related sa course ko, pero iilan lang talaga ang lumabas na vacancies. At nung meron na, sobrang taas na ng competition. Dahil sa kaunti lang ang slot, bumagal talaga yung employment journey ko.” (I waited for months for an opening related to my course, but only a few vacancies appeared. By the time they did, the competition was extremely high. The scarcity slowed down my employment journey.)

On the other hand, there is no significant relationship between volitional constraints and financial struggles, as reflected in the p-value of .14, which is above the .05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Findings imply that volitional constraints, such as hesitation to take jobs that do not match one’s acquired skills or degree, reluctance to work outside one’s locality, and family-based challenges, do not necessarily worsen or influence financial struggles. Thus, whether unemployed professionals choose not to pursue specific job opportunities or limit their job search behavior does not determine the extent of their financial struggles during unemployment. This finding is supported by Structural Unemployment Theory, as argued by Demsetz (1961), which holds that unemployment challenges, especially financial struggles, arise from labor-market mismatches, geographic immobility, and economic structures rather than from personal choices, preferences, or volitional constraints.

Furthermore, frictional unemployment is also associated with psychological distress, social isolation, and physical and locational struggles, as reflected in their p-values of .00, .00, and .00, which yielded significance at the .05 level. Thus, the null hypothesis is not accepted.

Frictional unemployment is generally a healthy part of a dynamic labor market reflecting voluntary mobility, active job search, and

efficient matching between workers and employers. On the other hand, these job transitions, though temporary, may produce uncertainty, loss of routine, and identity disruptions due to confusion about where the professional will stay longer, leading to psychological distress. According to Dyrda (2018), job transitions can cause stress due to uncertainty, identity loss, and fear of role mismatch. Meanwhile, temporary joblessness may weaken one's social engagement and confidence, leading to social withdrawal. Additionally, Pohlan (2024) argues that unemployment, whether temporary or long-term, reduces social identity and social participation. Additionally, workers in transition often face health-related and geographic barriers that hinder re-employment. This finding is supported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2025), which notes that health limitations and difficulty meeting physical job requirements delay job matching.

Below is the interview with the participants related to frictional unemployment and psychological distress, social isolation, and physical and locational struggles.

“Mahalin mo lang kung ano yung trabaho mo, kung ano yung nakaatang sayo, mahal in mo lang. Huwag kang papaa kasi maraming mga distractions dyan huwag ka lang magpapaa sakanila, sa mga baguhan syempre nature na natin talaga, syempre pulis kami, marami talagang distractions dyan, siguro yung ibang tao, iba ang pagtingin nila saamin pero hindi yun ang problema para mareach yung goal mo. Tayo, matagal na sa trabaho kaya sanay na tayo sa distraction yan, eh yung mga baguhan di pa sila sanay pero kailangan pagdaanan lahat na bagay bagay mga problema, talagang nature na yan ng pagiging law enforcer.” (Love your work—whatever responsibility is given to you, love it. Don't let anything break you because there will always be distractions. Don't let them get to you. For beginners, of course things aren't easy. As police officers, we encounter many distractions and challenges. Some people may even have negative perceptions about us. But that shouldn't stop you from reaching your goals. For us who've been in the service for a long time, we're already used to those distractions. The new ones aren't used to it yet, but they have to go through everything—the problems, the difficulties. It's part of being a law enforcer.)

“Sa teaching ngayon, maraming mga nagmomotivate. Una, yung mga estudyante mo na natututo sayo, yung makukuha nilang aral hindi lang sa knowledge Kundi matututo sila sa buhay yun, may mga estudyante na nagsheshare kung ano yung mga kanilang kalagayan, kumbaga pinagkakatiwalaan ka. So yun yung Maganda, kumbaga as a teacher, yung mapagkakatiwalaan ka, nagsheshare sila ng mga problems, kumbaga nagiging friend ka nila, kumbaga hindi ka iba sakanila. Para saakin, yung success ay hindi lang sa financial, kumbaga yung pakiramdam mo rin na kahit wala ka pero masaya ka sa ginagawa mo, yun yung success para saakin.” (In teaching today, there are many things that motivate you. First, your students who learn from you—because the lessons they gain are not only about knowledge, but also about life. Some students even open up about their personal situations, showing that they trust you. And that's what's beautiful about it. As a teacher, when students trust you enough to share their problems, you become like a friend to them; they do not see you as someone distant. For me, success is not only about financial gain. It's also about the feeling that even if you have little, you are happy with what you do. That, for me, is true success.)

Meanwhile, frictional unemployment shows no relationship with financial struggles, as reflected in the p-value of .08, which is above the .05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Findings imply that financial struggles do not immediately arise during frictional unemployment. According to Birinci et al. (2024), job-to-job transitions often correlate with wage growth rather than wage loss.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are formulated:

Most of the respondents are in the working-age population, with professionals in their early to adulthood stage. Females dominated the workplace, indicating an increase in women's participation in the labor force. Most of them are single and are dominated by the teacher education sector and public service. The majority of them hold bachelor's degrees, are eligible to render, and have less than 10 years of service, and most have nuclear-family types and belong to the lower-middle class.

Most respondents did not experience prolonged unemployment; the results imply that it is more likely that a professional will find employment for less than 1 or 2 years. Likewise, the results indicated that it is crucial and alarming that a graduate cannot find a stable job and becomes unemployed for less than one or two years before finding a career that can potentially lead to workforce success.

Findings on the causes of unemployment revealed moderate agreement on individualistic causes, human capital deficit, volitional constraints, and frictional unemployment. Thus, it can be concluded that these four contributory factors in the causes of unemployment present a dilemma but also serve as support in one's career path towards achieving workforce success. Likewise, it is also concluded that education, eligibility, working experiences, training, skills development, and skill-education matching played a significant role in employment, and can be helpful to restrain these causes.

Findings on the challenges faced by the professionals revealed a moderate level of seriousness during their unemployment, along with psychological distress, social isolation, and financial struggles. At the same time, the physical and locational struggles had a low level of seriousness. Thus, it can be concluded that unemployment poses meaningful challenges but is manageable for professionals, indicating resilience, coping strategies, and social support systems. Likewise, during unemployment and job search, financial struggles are common, while social and psychological impacts may vary based on individual-level coping strategies and support from family

and friends. Psychological distress decreases once employment is regained, and physical and locational struggles apply only to some respondents.

The individualistic causes and eligibility were found to be statistically significant, as well as human capital deficit, age, and years of service. Frictional unemployment was also associated with age, years of service, civil status, and course graduated. Furthermore, psychological distress is associated with their age, years in service, and civil status. Social isolation and its eligibility. Financial struggles and their civil status. Physical and locational struggles are statistically significant with respect to years in service and eligibility. Additionally, a moderate significant relationship exists between individualistic causes and psychological distress, social isolation, and physical and locational struggles. A weakly significant relationship exists between human capital deficit and psychological distress, social isolation, and financial struggles. A moderate significant relationship exists between volitional constraints and psychological distress, social isolation, and a weak correlation in physical and locational struggles. A moderate significant relationship exists between frictional unemployment and psychological distress, weak in social isolation, and weak in physical and locational struggles.

The successful professionals' lived experiences during their unemployment and their present workforce success indicate that the identified causes and challenges of unemployment are present in society. Likewise, the participants emphasize the need for new college graduates to strengthen themselves through continuing education, skill development, training, and experience, as these could help them land employment and achieve workforce success.

In light of the above-mentioned findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are hereby presented.

It is highly recommended that professionals take continuing professional development, such as attaining postgraduate studies, eligibility, training, and skills development at an early age, as it is beneficial in finding a workplace that can be the path to success. The local government unit may provide more job opportunities, ensuring skills and education that match, which could serve as experience for preparation for a more stable job. This could help increase the average employment rate. The provincial government may provide low-cost regional skills hubs and review bootcamps, as it is beneficial to the graduating students to become professional and well-equipped in the workforce. Additionally, higher education institutions may continue strengthening their programs to ensure their graduates are career-ready. The parents are encouraged to continue supporting their graduates through financial and psychological aspects, as these factors are the most challenging during unemployment. Professionals are encouraged to find support from family and peers, rather than isolate themselves, and to focus on their career path towards success in the workforce.

The local government unit, higher education institution, and industries should continue strengthening their collaboration in creating policies and programs that could support skill development, especially for the graduating students in preparation for the workplace. It is highly recommended that the Philippine government adopt the formulated input to strategy and policy formulation. These could be beneficial for unemployed professionals and future graduates in securing a healthy workforce for the future. The researcher strongly recommends that future researchers who conduct studies similar to this investigate in a broader scope to discover new results and be useful for policy formations, frameworks, ensuring future workforce success among professionals in different professions.

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