

Employability of Senior High School Technical-Vocational and Livelihood Graduates: Basis for Human Resource Management Enhancement Program)

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the employability of Senior High School graduates in the Technical-Vocational and Livelihood Track at Malandag National High School and Alabel National High School from batches 2018, 2019, and 2020. The participants were chosen using the purposive sampling technique within the descriptive survey design; a total of two hundred ninety-three (293) graduates responded by filling out the adapted Graduate Tracer Study survey questionnaire. They responded to an online survey questionnaire, and the collected data was analyzed descriptively using frequency and percentages, means and weighted means, t-test, and analysis of variance as statistical treatments. The majority of graduates are employed, with 202 (68.9%) in service and sales industries, while 91 (31.1%) were unemployed despite having attended college, lacked experience, and had family concerns. Work-related issues were the most common challenge faced by graduates. The study found no significant differences in employability across sex, location, strand, or field of specialization.

INTRODUCTION

Senior High School graduates in the Philippines have the option to enter the labor market, which is a crucial step for their employability. However, there is limited literature on the employability of these graduates, especially since the first cohort graduated in 2018 (Orbeta & Potestad, 2020). Conducting a tracer study on Senior High School curriculum exits conferred by Padios et al. (2021) is unique and crucial to assessing the program's success in developing lifelong learners. As cited by Almejas et al. (2017), employability is determined by the nature of employment and available occupational options, and the efficiency of the program can be measured by graduates' ability to apply their skills and training for economic advancement.

Additionally, former President Benigno Aquino's initiative to improve the basic education program in the Philippines, known as the Senior High Schools, aims to produce productive and responsible citizens with necessary skills and values (Acosta & Acosta, 2016). The Department of Education (DepEd) believes that the Senior High School Program offers numerous benefits, including easy employment opportunities for graduates in the technical, vocational, and livelihood tracks. The K to 12 Senior High School is considered the answer to the long-standing challenge of the Philippine educational system. This study aims to determine the employability of Senior High School graduates from 2018-2020, marking a significant turning point for the Philippine Department of Education (Canezo, 2016).

The objectives of this study are: (1.) to determine the socioeconomic profile of Senior High School graduates. (2.) to determine the job and employment profile of the graduates. (3.) to determine the level of employability of Senior High School graduates in terms of teamwork, communication, attendance and punctuality, productivity/resilience, initiative/proactivity, judgement/decision making, dependability/reliability, attitude, and professionalism. (4.) to understand if there is significant difference in the employability of the senior high school graduates when they are grouped according to sex, school location, strand, field of specialization. (5.) to identify the different challenges encountered by the graduates in their job assignments. (6.) to assess and evaluate the guidelines and or policies set by firms or establishments in hiring K to 12 graduates.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Tracer studies are essential for high schools to track graduates' courses, technical training, advanced certification, and employment status (Alcovendras 2013). These studies help evaluate outcomes and determine graduates' career paths, employment profiles, and whereabouts. Aclan, Saban, Famerong, and Francisco (2018) revealed that graduates are marketable and well-trained, with most finding work within six months. Tracer studies assess the quality of education and provide valuable information for analyzing job performance. Studies show a high rate of employability with regular/permanent status, and a correlation between courses taken and graduates' employment (Deblois, 2021). A unique study focusing on Senior High School curriculum exits in the

Philippines aims to trace graduates' statehood to assess the program's success in developing lifelong learners (Padios, et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the K to 12 programs in the Philippines prepare students for college, vocational, technical, creative arts, sports, and entrepreneurial employment in a globalized environment. It covers kindergarten and 12 years of basic education, divided into primary, junior, and senior high schools. However, poor training, incompetent teachers, inadequate facilities, and poor development hinder the program's success (Seameo & Innotech, 2012).

Workplace challenges and problems are common, leading some workers to combine multiple jobs to cope with the labor market's volatility. Workers must develop new understandings of identity, emotions, and work (Cain, 2013). According to Padios et al. (2021), graduates face academic, personal, interpersonal, and family challenges, with males choosing TVL and GAS over ABM and HUMSS. Only a small proportion continue higher education to enhance their abilities and go into business. Additionally, Orbeta & Potestad (2020) assert that educational institutions need to build curriculums emphasizing work ethics and values in SHS to resist workplace influences and promote a healthy adult lifestyle.

Moreover, work immersion programs should be integrated into Philippine recruitment for senior high school graduates. DOLE and CSC have policies, while the job portal lists open government jobs. Senate Resolution 700 aims to assist graduates in obtaining work and RA 10533 implementation. Lastly, research shows an alignment and employability after immersion programs (Orbeta et al., 2019).

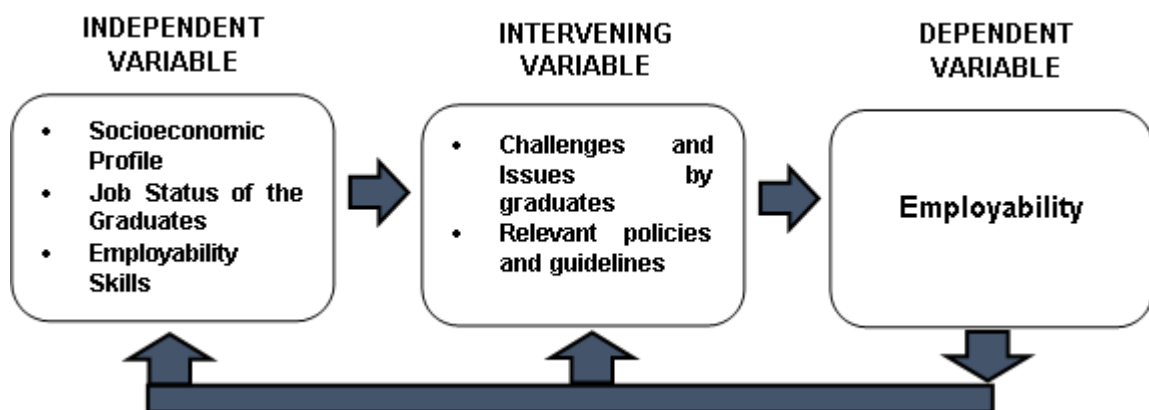


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

This research work employed sequential quantitative and qualitative methods and was conducted using a descriptive research design. The process included gathering, tabulating, and interpreting the meaning or significance of what was described. It determines the employability of Senior High School graduates of the Technical-Vocational and Livelihood Track. Also, it interprets the challenges and problems encountered in the job assignments of the

respondents and their suggestions regarding the improvement of the quality of SHS programs as well as the policies and guidelines for hiring K-12 graduates.

The researcher utilized a survey questionnaire to gather the data from two hundred ninety-three (293) graduates of Malandag National High School and Alabel National High School. Also, a key informant interview was used to gather the data from firms and establishments. The researcher obtained permission from the school heads to gather graduates' data from Learners' Information System (LIS) coordinators and guidance counselors.

RESULTS

Table 1. The Socioeconomic Profile of Graduates in Terms of Sex, Age, Civil Status and Ethnicity

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Female	165	56.3
Male	128	43.7
Age		
Above 25 years old	10	3.4
23-25 years old	49	16.7
20-22 years old	206	70.3
Below 20 years old	28	9.6
Civil Status		
Married	1	.3
Single	292	99.7
Ethnicity		
Blaan	43	14.7
Cebuano	133	45.4
Ilocano	1	.3
Ilonggo	92	31.4
Muslim	8	2.7
Tagakaulo	13	4.4
Tagalog	2	.7
Tboli	1	.3

The study's focus is on female graduates, most of the respondents are single when they graduate from senior high school. Most respondents are Cebuanos and Ilonggos, with Blaans, Tagakaulo, and Maguindanaoans being the dominant ethnic groups.

Table 2. The Socioeconomic Profile of Graduates in terms of Number of Family Members, Family Monthly Income, and Technical-Vocational and Livelihood Track

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Number of Family Members		
7 and above	84	28.7
4-6	192	65.5
1-3	17	5.8
Family Monthly Income		
More than 15000	20	6.8
10001-15000	32	10.9
5001-10000	189	64.5
5000 and below	52	17.7
Technical-Vocational and Livelihood Track		
Agri-Fishery Arts	19	6.5
Home Economics	133	45.4
Industrial Arts	80	27.3
Information and Communications Technology	61	20.8

Graduates have large family sizes with 4-6 members, a low monthly income, and a Technical-Vocational and Livelihood Track in Senior High School. Most are in home economics and industrial fields, potentially leading to jobs. Similarly, the findings of Padios et al. (2021) revealed that the majority of graduates are between the ages of 19 and 21, that the vast majority of respondents are from low-income families, and that the number of male graduates is equal to female graduates.

Table 3. The Socioeconomic Profile of Graduates in terms Specialization (Qualification/s) completed in Senior High School

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
GSAW NCII	34	11.6
SMAW NCII	52	17.7
Organic Agriculture Production NCII	23	7.8
Baking NCII	7	2.4
Cosmetology NCII	3	1.0
Bread and Pastry NCII	28	9.6
Computer Hardware and Program Servicing NCII	54	18.4
Cookery NC II	41	14.0
Food and Beverage NCII	38	13.0
Electronic Products Assemble and Servicing NCII	5	1.7
Housekeeping NCII	8	2.7

Moreover, on specialization (qualification/s) completed in senior high school, respondents have specialized in computer hardware, program servicing, cookery, food and beverage NC II, with few focusing on cosmetology.

Conversely, National Certificates don't guarantee higher employability; employers prefer college degrees and work experience. Students' confidence in employability is questionable despite their SHS training and education, with entry-level, support staff, and service-oriented jobs being the most likely options (Orbeta, et. al, 2018). In addition, private firms conforming to Balingbing (2014) study, they only require TESDA National Certificates (NC)

rather than Civil Service Career eligibility. Because they are prepared for the labor market, Willams (2015) asserts that employers prefer hiring individuals with technical and vocational training for vocational employment.

Table 4. The employment and job profile of graduates in terms of Job after graduation, present employment status, skills application acquired in SHS, reasons if unemployed, place of work and employer, landing the first job and duration of staying on the job

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Job after graduation		
Clerical support workers	4	1.4
Service and sales workers	174	59.4
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	3	1.0
Craft and related trades workers	6	2.0
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	10	3.4
None	5	1.7
Not Applicable	91	31.1
Present Employment Status		
Casual/Contractual/Temporary	137	46.8
Regular	56	19.1
Self-Employed	9	3.1
Not Applicable	91	31.1
Skills application acquired in SHS		
National Certificate Level I (NC I)	23	7.8
National Certificate Level II (NC II)	258	88.1
None	12	4.1
Reasons if unemployed		
Enrolled to college	69	75.8
Lack of experience	9	9.9
Family concern	13	14.3
Place of work and employer		
Not Applicable	91	31.1
Abroad	2	.7
Local (within the Philippines)	200	68.3
Landing the first job		
Arrange by school officials	2	0.68
As Walk-in Applicant	157	53.58
Family Business	8	2.73
Job Fair	9	3.07
Peer Influence	17	5.80
Response to an advertisement	9	3.07
Not Applicable	91	31.06
Duration of staying on the job		
less than 1 year	196	66.89
1-2 years	6	2.05
Not Applicable	91	31.06

In summary, these results show that the respondents work as service and sales workers plant and machine operators and assemblers and craft and related trades. They are working as casual or contractual or temporary. Most acquired skills are National Certificates Level II and the reasons for not employed because they went to college. The respondents acquired their work

through walk in applications and they have stayed on the job less than a year. This is justified since the coverage of this study is three years.

Similarly, the results of this study confirm in the findings of Orbeta, et.al (2018) that middle-level skilled employees can be hired as grade 12 graduates with Technical-Vocational and Livelihood track and National Certificates Level II and III. Employers categorize Senior High School graduates into lower major occupational groups, with most jobs requiring second or middle-level skills. Some organizations offer entry-level positions with third-skill levels, such as information and communications technology and clinical technicians. The results are also similar to the findings of Choi (2018), found that vocational high school graduates have a short-term employment advantage over regular high school graduates, but that advantage diminishes as they get older.

Table 5. The employment and job profile of graduates in terms of reasons for staying on the job, considerations of finding the job and duration of finding the job

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Reasons for staying on the job		
Career Challenge	67	22.87
Family/Peer Influence	32	10.92
Proximity of Residence	3	1.02
Related to Skills	68	23.21
Salary and Benefits	87	29.69
Considerations of finding the job		
Proximity to Residence	84	28.67
Career Challenge	76	25.94
Salary and Benefits	84	28.67
Related to Skills	31	10.58
Duration of Finding the Job		
less than 1 year	196	66.89
1-2 years	6	2.05
Not Applicable	91	31.06

The above table shows that respondents express that they stay on their jobs because of salary and benefits, they also consider family/peer influence as well as proximity or distance from their residence. Proximity to residence is one of the considerations of the respondents in finding the job. As to the duration of staying on the job, majority of the respondents stayed less than 1 year. This is because the coverage of the study is three years.

Table 6. Summary on the Level of Employability of Senior High School Graduates

Indicator	WM	Description
Teamwork	4.94	Very Highly Responsive
Communication	4.92	Very Highly Responsive
Attendance And Punctuality	4.95	Very Highly Responsive
Productivity/Resilience	4.92	Very Highly Responsive
Initiative/Proactivity	4.95	Very Highly Responsive
Judgement/Decision Making	4.91	Very Highly Responsive
Dependability/Reliability	4.91	Very Highly Responsive
Attitude	4.76	Very Highly Responsive
Professionalism	4.94	Very Highly Responsive
Over-all Mean	4.91	Very Highly Responsive

The respondents are very highly responsive that they have very high level of attendance and punctuality, initiative or proactivity, teamwork, and professionalism. Among the indicators, it is the attitude where the respondents got the lowest.

As mentioned by Hernandez (2021), employability skills are defined as the general skills and knowledge necessary for success in the labor market at all employment levels and in all sectors. Similarly on Acar (2019) study, students' performance during immersion was deemed "very good" and "outstanding," with a grand mean of 3.95 percent. Supervisors praised professionalism, productivity, and work behavior, while students were courteous and exceeded expectations.

On the other hand, indicators relevant to the alignment of the Work Immersion program/experience in terms of personal abilities, technical skills, and work applicability were found to be highly aligned (Garcia & Yazon, 2020). In addition, graduates with more personal qualities, technical skills, and work applicability are more likely to get employed.

Table 7. Difference in the Employability of the Senior High School Graduates across Sex

Indicator	Male	Female	t-computed	P-value	Remark
Teamwork	4.90	4.97	-2.500	.013	Significant
Communication	4.89	4.96	-1.891	.060	Not Significant
Attendance and Punctuality	4.93	4.97	-1.548	.123	Not Significant
Productivity/Resilience	4.90	4.95	-1.309	.192	Not Significant
Initiative/Proactivity	4.92	4.97	-1.617	.107	Not Significant
Judgement/Decision Making	4.88	4.93	-1.199	.232	Not Significant
Dependability/Reliability	4.88	4.94	-1.595	.112	Not Significant
Attitude	4.77	4.75	.337	.736	Not Significant
Professionalism	4.91	4.97	-2.330	.021	Significant
Over-all	4.89	4.94	-1.572	.118	Not Significant

Over-all results reveal that there is no significant difference in the employability of the senior high school graduates across sex. It is however noted, teamwork and professionalism have significant difference. Other indicators of employability have no significant difference.

The result of the study corroborates with the findings of Garcia and Yazon (2020) that Students' performance on work immersion remains consistent regardless of demographic factors, suggesting that demographic profiles do not significantly impact their performance.

The result is also similar to the findings of Abd Majid, Hussin, and Kasayan (2020), that gender has no impact on employable skills. These findings support the claims made by Sok, Blomme, and Tromp (2013), Gender doesn't affect employability skills; female students slightly have better abilities, possibly due to better industry knowledge. This result, however, conflicts with study by Rivera (2011) and Tholen (2014), which revealed that men have higher self-perceived employability, valued more in the labor market than women.

Table 8. Difference in the Employability of the Senior High School Graduates across Location

Indicator	A	B	t-computed	p-value	Remark
Teamwork	4.97	4.76	4.966	.000	Significant
Communication	4.97	4.63	6.922	.000	Significant
Attendance and Punctuality	4.98	4.76	6.248	.000	Significant
Productivity/Resilience	4.96	4.68	6.011	.000	Significant
Initiative/Proactivity	4.98	4.74	6.633	.000	Significant
Judgement/Decision Making	4.96	4.58	6.640	.000	Significant
Dependability/Reliability	4.95	4.67	5.528	.000	Significant
Attitude	4.84	4.29	7.075	.000	Significant
Professionalism	4.97	4.73	6.469	.000	Significant
Over-all	4.95	4.65	7.776	.000	Significant

The table shows that the over-all results reveal that there is a significant difference in the employability of the senior high school graduates across school. It is noted that all the indicators in employability have significant difference. It implies that school A perform better than school B in the employability of their senior high school students.

It supports the study of Majid, Husin, and Kasayan (2020), Location-based disparity in employability skills significantly impacts graduates' employability, with urban students having higher employability skills compared to rural ones due to diverse resources, systems, and learning environments. Moreover, as cited by, Syed Kamarudin (2016) and Syed Kamarudin et al. (2017) who also found that residential areas impact student employability, but urban areas offer better exposure and extracurricular activities, enhancing employability skills through proper exposure and facilities.

Table 9. Difference in the Employability of the Senior High School Graduates across Strand

Indicator	F-ratio	p-value	Remark
Teamwork	.511	.675	Not Significant
Communication	1.003	.392	Not Significant
Attendance and Punctuality	.653	.582	Not Significant
Productivity/Resilience	.991	.398	Not Significant
Initiative/Proactivity	.807	.491	Not Significant
Judgement/Decision Making	.237	.871	Not Significant
Dependability/Reliability	.281	.839	Not Significant
Attitude	2.398	.069	Not Significant
Professionalism	.355	.786	Not Significant
Over-all	.318	.812	Not Significant

The results of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) are shown in Table. It can be gleaned from this table that there are no significant differences on the employability of the senior high school students when they are grouped according to strand. The p-values are all higher than .05.

The study by Garcia and Yazon (2020) reveals that student respondents' performance varies based on track, with work skills being a common strategy for enhancing productivity and job performance.

Table 10. Difference in the Employability of the Senior High School Graduates across Field of specialization

Indicator	F-ratio	p-value	Remark
Teamwork	4.048	.000	Significant
Communication	4.515	.000	Significant
Attendance and Punctuality	3.040	.000	Significant
Productivity/Resilience	5.170	.000	Significant
Initiative/Proactivity	4.702	.000	Significant
Judgement/Decision Making	4.120	.000	Significant
Dependability/Reliability	3.949	.000	Significant
Attitude	4.481	.000	Significant
Professionalism	5.486	.000	Significant
Over-all	5.671	.000	Significant

The results of the table reveals that the employability of the senior high school students significantly differ in all the indicators as evidenced by the p-value of .000.

In conformity to Bureau of Curriculum Development (2020) as cited by TeacherPh.com, indicates that SHS TVL track graduates registered the highest from those who got employed at 9.7% followed by 6.2% of students in the Academic track graduate, followed by 0.03 % in the Arts & Design and 0.02 % in the Sports track. Additionally, according to the findings of Nazron, Lim, and Nga's (2017) study, which looked at the relationship between graduates' soft

skills attributes and employment status among students at University Malaysia Sabah, the attributes under consideration (knowledge, ICT skills, technical skills, problem-solving, communication skills, teamwork, leadership, professionalism, and ethics) don't significantly affect the graduates' employment situations.

Table 10. Challenges encountered by the Senior High School graduates in their job assignments

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Coworker	10	3.41
Miscommunication	39	13.31
Work Related	62	21.16
None	91	31.06
Not Applicable	91	31.06
Total	293	100.00

The table shows the challenges of the senior high school graduates. These results reveal that only some of the graduates encountered challenges in their work specifically on work related issues.

This is consonance to the study of Radhika (2018), that overwork, job insecurity, job unhappiness, and lack of autonomy are major workplace issues affecting employees' health and well-being. It is crucial to inform employers about these challenges and devise solutions. On the other hand, Duplon, et. al (2022), strongly concurred that improving workplace culture, time management, productivity, communication, coordination, and employee motivation will improve workers' performance. Similarly, on the study of Bushiri (2014), addressing workplace issues like job aid, performance feedback, work incentives, noise distraction, supervisor relationships, and flexible working environments can improve employee performance.

Table 11. Guidelines or policies set by firms or establishments in hiring K to 12 graduates based on the responses from Key Informant Interview (KII)

Name of Firm	Hiring Policies or Guidelines
JY Enterprise Incorporated	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Adjustments on the qualifications needed for a specific position that may consider K to 12 graduates are hired. Add up skilled courses like automotive, heavy equipment operation training and the like. Yes, if we will require or if really needed.
Ribshack Grill Corporation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Complied the required requirements or documents. For a K to 12 who are first time job seeker, they are suggested to undergo more training on how to work in a company, also, that is a part and responsibility of the company.
Jollibee Robinsons	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Under third party agency, as far as the agency is concerned, educational background of the employee does not matter. The important thing is they are on legal age (18-year-old). All trainings are the same and no changes.

St. Anne Security Agency and General Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Standard hiring requirements must be a high school graduate or senior high graduate. 2. Firing, general knowledge examination and process security license
CCT Allied Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Able to express herself/himself confidently in English then he/she is qualified. 2. The graduates with the skills needed such as speaking confidently in English and being computer savvy will be trained once they are hired.
Venue 88 Resort and Events Place	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No program for K to 12 graduates yet, but in time if Hotel industry will continue to boom, we can consider or allow K to 12 graduates 2. The TESDA courses will be very helpful in our industry.
Sarangani Highlands	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Qualifications and requirements needed such as age, gender, etc. 2. Depends on the needs of the employee.
LABELLA Hospital	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have TESDA certificate training. 2. TESDA certificates like NC II in Housekeeping, Driving, Cookery
VXI Davao Holdings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Good communication skills and willing to relocate in Davao City. 2. One month product and knowledge training, they are all the same with the college graduates and college undergraduates.
Six Eleven Global Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Qualifications based on their educational attainment. 2. Offer communication skills training and computer operation for them.
Philippine Coast Guard	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. K to 12 graduates must have TESDA NC II. 2. The K to 12 graduates can apply non-officer personnel or enlisted personnel. Enlisted personnel required NC II and other skills fit for the Philippine Coast Guard.
Martronix Digital Systems and Technology Solutions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Know the new academic program of K to 12 and adopt it with new policies. 2. Must be competitive in their skills and knowledge because K to 12 graduates are mostly shy when it comes to interviews and applying work.

Companies' hiring policies or guidelines for K to 12 graduates are listed in Table 6.

Hiring officers prioritize senior high school graduates' communication skills, emphasizing TVL programs that improve these skills. Participants suggest TESDA accreditation for graduates, requiring completion before graduation. Trainings in terms of improving the language usage and good communication skills should be made part of the curriculum of TVL.

Businesses require graduates with relevant knowledge and skills for their organization, ensuring proper training and legal age. If hired, firms offer additional training to enhance qualifications. On the study of Kapur (2022), candidates must possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities, considering factors like educational qualifications, competences, aptitude,

personality qualities, experience, and work needs. They must undergo multiple rounds of interviews and may be required to participate in additional methods such as written examinations, group discussions, and so on. The most crucial element is evaluating applicants' ability to perform their work obligations according to employers' expectations.

In Philippine setting, relevant policies and programs should be embedded in hiring senior high school graduates. In addition to the study of Orbeta et al. (2019), the Civil Service Commission's recruitment system focuses on education, eligibility, training, experience, and competence, with TESDA's Skills Certificate Equivalency Program offering equivalent eligibility. Similarly, Hernandez (2021), recent high school graduates prioritize personal traits, interpersonal skills, and critical thinking, ranking 8 out of 9 employability skills as important to extremely important.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions were drawn: the respondents are women, between 20-22 years old and single. They are Cebuano with 4-6 family members and family monthly income of 10,000.00 and below. They have home economics track in the TVL and have NCII specialization.

The respondents work as service and sales workers, plant and machine operators and assemblers and craft and related trades. They are working as casual, contractual or temporary. Most acquired skills are National Certificate II (NC II) and reasons for not employed include having attended college, a lack of experience, and family obligations. The respondents acquired their work through walk in applications and they have stayed on the job less than a year. Thus, this study is three (3) years.

The respondents strongly agree that they have very high level of attendance and punctuality, initiative or proactivity, teamwork, and professionalism. Among the indicators, it is the attitude where the respondents got the lowest.

Senior high school graduates' employability varies across sex, school, and strand, but significantly differs across all indicators. Among the challenges include work related, miscommunication, and co-workers. Hiring officers assess senior high school graduates' communication skills, TESDA accreditation, and training requirements. Businesses require graduates with relevant knowledge and skills, and offer additional training if they lack them.

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