

## Employability Study of College of Business and Management Graduates for the Academic Year 2015-2017 of North Eastern Mindanao State University

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### **Abstract**

**Aim:** The study assessed the employability of graduates of the College of Business and Management for the academic years 2015–2017 of North Eastern Mindanao State University. The study was conducted to evaluate the respondents' socio-demographic profiles and their employability status.

**Methodology:** The research utilized a quantitative descriptive design, using survey questionnaires through purposive sampling.

**Results:** The results of the study revealed that out of 926 respondents, 67% are employed. Out of the total employed graduates, 37% are in regular status, 78% are employed in private institutions, and 98% are working in the local area. On the other hand, 25% are unemployed and 2% are self-employed. The reasons why they are unemployed are mostly family concerns and a decision not to find a job (29%). In terms of competency, most of the respondents' generic skills applied and found useful in jobs were communication and entrepreneurial skills.

**Conclusion:** Despite the fact that there is no statistically significant correlation between the respondents' socio-demographic profiles and their employment status (or competency), the institution must continue to enhance its faculty development programs, curricula, and student support services.

**Keywords:** Business management, employability, graduates, tracer study, college of business and management

### **INTRODUCTION**

Graduates' employability measures their capacity to find rewarding employment as well as the academic institution's quality of education. The term "employability" is used frequently in discussions about expected outcomes of higher education and as a gauge of its effectiveness. Colleges and universities are finding it difficult to assess and prioritize the match between education and training and the workplace as a result of the rising pressure on their graduates' employability (Matherly & Tillman, 2015).

The knowledge, skills, and personal qualities that graduates possess increase their chances of finding jobs and achieving success in their chosen fields. In this study, graduates from the College of Business and Management's batches from 2015–2017 were tracked. The study's objectives included expanding useful knowledge on job status and competencies as well as making recommendations for what should be improved. Overall, the study offers valuable graduate feedback that can be used to update the curriculum of the program and make it more in line with the demands of the labor market.

The topic of employability is presented as an on-going discussion that cannot be seen as a final, definitive thing (Helyer & Lee, 2014). The education system must adapt to the labor market's accelerating change (Lice & Sloka, 2019). One of the ultimate goals of higher education institutions' efforts to provide quality in all of their undertakings is graduates' employability (HEIs, 2013). In order to provide a foundation for evaluating the current program at the university, Vong (2010) claims that a number of the tracer study's objectives are to investigate the employability of the graduates and how they searched for a job, the places where they worked, and the connections between their educational experience and labor market needs. Additionally, according to Schomburg (2003), graduate and employer surveys are a

type of empirical study that can offer important data for assessing the outcomes of the education and training provided by a particular higher education institution.

Furthermore, Sumanasiri, et al. (2015) claim that there is growing pressure on universities all over the world from governments, financial agencies, students, and parents as graduate employability has been acknowledged as one of the primary goals of higher education. The contributions made to employability appear to be another way that accreditation organizations gauge the caliber of education. In such a situation, one would anticipate that the employability of university graduates would be a well-known and thoroughly studied topic.

This study was conducted since there was no tracer study before intended for the College of Business Management at the North Eastern Mindanao State University. As the researcher looked back in 2014, the tracer study was only limited to every program offered in the said college. Therefore, this study was conducted to support the employment status of the graduates from Business Administration majors in Financial Management, Marketing Management, Human Resource Development Management, and Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management for the years 2015–2017. Most of the graduates work in particular jobs that are suited to their course in college, but a few of them are not fully employed because other companies need to find more skilled graduates.

This study is important in part because it identifies and addresses the strengths and flaws of the current curriculum as well as the suitability, quality, and marketable skills of a graduate. This study will contribute to the university's knowledge about the employment of the graduates and provide valuable information for evaluating the results of education and how adequate the training provided by the institution is for the overall career life of the graduates. This provides accurate information as to what the current situation of graduates in the labor industry is while at the same time gathering information on possible deficits of the College of Business and Management, which can be used as a basis for college improvement.

## **OBJECTIVES**

This study assessed the employability status of the graduates across the four programs of the College of Business Management of North Eastern Mindanao State University-Main Campus from the years 2015 to 2017. It specifically sought to answer the following research queries:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents as to:
  - 1.1 civil status;
  - 1.2 gender;
  - 1.3 age;
  - 1.4 educational attainment; and
  - 1.5 professional/ sub-professional licenses?
2. What is the employability status of the respondents as to:
  - 2.1 status of employment;
  - 2.2 nature of present occupation;
  - 2.3 job level position and promotion;
  - 2.4 length of time to take and stay for a job; and
  - 2.5 initial gross monthly earnings?
3. What are the generic and business-related competencies of the respondents that are:
  - 3.1 acquired in SDSSU;
  - 3.2 applied in work; and
  - 3.3 found useful in work?
4. What are the suggestions of the respondents to improve the college services to produce more competitive graduates?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and their employability status?
6. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' employability status and their competencies?

## **HYPOTHESIS**

The following hypotheses were basically derived from the available literatures but refined to suit the scenario at hand:

Ho1. There is no significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and their employability status.

Ho2. There is no significant relationship between the respondents' employability with competency.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Career development theory explains that although graduates can make their own career decisions, such decisions can also be determined by a variety of influences, such as family, school, community, and social factors.

With the growing number of aspiring applicants, fresh graduates today are undoubtedly facing severe competition and obstacles in getting a new job. One of the factors is the demographic profile of the respondents: age, gender, and civil status play a vital role and have an impact on the employability status of fresh graduates (Caiyod et al., 2015).

In addition, based on Nabi (2015), employability is about graduates possessing an appropriate level of skills and attributes, and being able to use them to gain and remain in appropriate employment. Employability is a human resource concept that emerged in the 1990s in response to an increasing perception among employees that they could not rely on their employers for long-term employment.

The study by Malhotra et al. (2022) identifies and analyses the antecedent factors that influence the employability development among college graduates and undergraduates. With its findings, the study identifies the changes or improvements required in teaching and learning mechanisms, grooming students and societal practices, and social and economic biases in accessibility to facilities, leading to employability. It also calls for a reflection on an individual's own attitude, motivation, and abilities. The study calls for an assessment of the education system and academic quality to develop employability among students. It is obvious that aligning teachers and learners with industry requirements is a must for the industry's expansion, particularly in the retail sector.

An academic institution's main objective is to turn forth qualified graduates who can aid in the advancement of society. Graduates' employability maps show how competent they are. The Tracer research findings helped the college become better so that it could respond to the requirements of its patrons and the community. To make sure it remains relevant, its effectiveness should be frequently assessed. The graduates' employment prospects, current work, and the types of jobs they took on right after graduation can all be used to assess the quality of the educational program (Laguador et al., 2009). The results of Roth's (2012) study would also assist the university in identifying its learning outcomes, the advantages and disadvantages of its programs, and the connection between needs for education and training and the job market.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

The research used a quantitative descriptive survey design to gather facts and information from the respondents. The descriptive quantitative method was used to explore the employability of College of Business and Management graduates for the academic year 2015–2017. The research used descriptive research design using survey questionnaires because this research involved collecting data in order to test hypotheses or answer questions concerning the current status of the respondents. According to Burns and Grove (2007), descriptive quantitative design provides a picture of a situation as it naturally happens. It might be used to justify current practice, make adjustments, and also develop theories.

### **Respondents**

The respondents of the study were the graduates of the College of Business and Management from different programs in the Academic Year 2015–2017. There were 926 respondents to this study out

of a total of 1,053 graduates. The respondents will be assessed according to their socio-demographic profile in terms of civil status, gender, age, educational background, and professional licenses.

| <b>Indicators</b> | <b>2014-2015</b> | <b>2015-2016</b> | <b>2016-2017</b> | <b>Total No. of Graduates</b> |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|
| BSBA-FM           | 210              | 154              | 175              | 539                           |
| BSBA-MM           | 53               | 55               | 56               | 164                           |
| BSBA-HRDM         | 23               | 16               | 29               | 68                            |
| BSHRM             | 54               | 57               | 44               | 155                           |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>340</b>       | <b>282</b>       | <b>304</b>       | <b>926</b>                    |

### **Procedure**

In gathering data, there were some procedures that had to be undertaken. First, the proponents sought approval of this study. Second, the proponents launched the validated survey questionnaire. Then, a request letter was submitted to the registrar's office in order to acquire the address and contact numbers of the respondents and to get the total list of the respondents. Third, after securing the data from the registrar, the proponent sent a questionnaire to each of the respondents through Facebook, chat, or email. For those who could not be reached through the internet, they were contacted through personal interviews and phone calls. After which the proponents distributed the questionnaire through the address obtained from the registrar's office, the proponents retrieved the questionnaire and tabulated the data gathered, analysed, interpreted, and came up with conclusions and findings.

### **Treatment of Data**

The data gathered from the respondents has been tabulated and interpreted. The researchers used frequency counting and percentage for the tabulation of consolidated data in tabulating and interpreting the data gathered from the respondents. The researchers identified the significant relationship by the use of a null hypothesis and employed a margin of error of 5% or 0.05 as the basis. For the problem, 1, 2, 3, and 4 frequency counts and percentages were used. For problems numbers 5 and 6, chi-square tests were used.

### **Research Instrument**

The instrument used by the respondents in gathering data for the study was a survey questionnaire that was modified from the standard institutional tracer study of the University and the classification of position adopted from CHED. It had undergone validation from the three experts in the academe including the college dean and assistant dean. Questionnaires were distributed to the College of Business and Management graduates of Surigao del Sur State University from batch 2015 to 2017.

The questionnaire was divided into the following parts: respondents' profile, employment data, competency, and suggestions of the graduates. The profile of the respondents included the assessment of civil status, gender, age, educational background, professional/ sub-professional licensure. Employment data discussed the information about the respondents' status of employment, nature of present occupation, job-level position and promotion, length of time to take to stay for a job, and initial gross monthly earning. Competencies evaluated the acquired, applied, and found useful to work by financial management graduates. Lastly, the suggestions indicated the opinion of each respondent used for the improvement of the college as well as the university.

To supplement the data gathered from the interview, following methods of gathering data were applied: phone call, personal interview, email interview and chat interview. The instrument used by the respondents in gathering data for the study was a survey questionnaire that was modified from the standard institutional tracer study.

## RESULTS and DISCUSSION

**Table 1: Profile of the Respondents**

| Indicators                  |               | 2014-2015 |     | 2015-2016 |    | 2016-2017 |    |
|-----------------------------|---------------|-----------|-----|-----------|----|-----------|----|
|                             |               | Freq.     | %   | Freq.     | %  | Freq.     | %  |
| Civil Status                | Single        | 307       | 90  | 272       | 96 | 296       | 97 |
|                             | Married       | 33        | 10  | 10        | 4% | 8         | 3  |
| Gender                      | Male          | 120       | 35  | 89        | 32 | 107       | 35 |
|                             | Female        | 220       | 65  | 193       | 68 | 197       | 65 |
| Age                         | 19-25         | 175       | 70  | 145       | 85 | 124       | 61 |
|                             | 26-30         | 76        | 30  | 25        | 15 | 79        | 39 |
| Educational Background      | MBA Grad      | 4         | 2   | 1         | 15 | 2         | 27 |
|                             | Non-MBA Grad. | 37        | 16  | 15        | 94 | 27        | 13 |
|                             | MBA Car Units | 2         | 1   | -         | -  | -         | -  |
|                             | None          | 190       | 81  | 154       | 90 | 174       | 85 |
| Prof. / Sub. Prof. Licenses | Prof.         | 8         | 3.5 | 4         | 2  | 1         | 1  |
|                             | Sub. Prof.    | 8         | 3.5 | 1         | 1  | -         | -  |
|                             | None          | 214       | 93  | 165       | 97 | 202       | 99 |

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents through different courses offered in the College of Business and Management in the Academic Year 2015–2017. In batch 2014-2015, 90% of the graduates were single and 65% were female, while 70% were between 19 and 25 years of age. Most of them have no professional license (93%) and are not taking further studies (81%).

The data also reveals that most of the graduates were single (96%), female (68%), and aged 19–25 years old (85%). Likewise, they are not taking further studies and have no licenses. Thus, in this batch, most of the graduates want a stable job first before settling down. Lastly, batch 2016-2017 also discloses that 97% of the graduates were single, 65% were female, and 61% were between 19 and 25 years of age. In terms of educational background, 85% were not taking any further studies and 99% had no professional licenses. According to the information given by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2010), female employment participation has generally increased and gender gaps in labor force participation have narrowed; improving female labor market outcomes is needed to ensure strong, sustainable, balanced economic growth in the future.

**Table 2: Employability Status of the Respondents**

| Indicators                      |                             | 2014-2015 |    | 2015-2016 |    | 2016-2017 |    |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|----|-----------|----|-----------|----|
|                                 |                             | Freq.     | %  | Freq.     | %  | Freq.     | %  |
| Status of Employment            | Employed                    | 257       | 77 | 212       | 69 | 174       | 57 |
|                                 | Not-employed                | 71        | 21 | 80        | 26 | 85        | 27 |
|                                 | Self-employed               | 7         | 2  | 8         | 3  | 11        | 3  |
|                                 | Never been employed         |           | -  | 7         | 2  | 50        | 16 |
| First job related to the course | Yes                         | 88        | 75 | 77        | 79 | 130       | 71 |
|                                 | No                          | 30        | 25 | 20        | 21 | 52        | 29 |
| Reasons for being not employed  | Advanced or further studies | 1         | 2  | 2         | 4  | 2         | 2  |
|                                 | Family concerned            | 27        | 44 | 12        | 24 | 27        | 24 |
|                                 | Health related reasons      | 6         | 10 | 11        | 22 | 4         | 4  |
|                                 | Lack of work experience     | 4         | 7  | 10        | 20 | 17        | 15 |
|                                 | No job opportunity          | 3         | 5  | 2         | 4  | 26        | 23 |

|                         |                          |     |    |     |    |     |    |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----|----|-----|----|-----|----|
|                         | Did not look for a job   | 1   | 2  | 3   | 6  | 12  | 11 |
|                         | Husband salary is enough | 3   | 5  |     | -  |     | -  |
|                         | Other reasons            | 16  | 26 | 10  | 20 | 25  | 22 |
| Present occupation      | Regular/ permanent       | 119 | 55 | 75  | 46 | 32  | 27 |
|                         | Contractual              | 40  | 19 | 40  | 25 | 36  | 30 |
|                         | Casual                   | 21  | 10 | 21  | 15 | 62  | 12 |
|                         | Trainee                  | 4   | 2  | 9   | 3  | 24  | 10 |
|                         | Temporary                | 10  | 5  | 5   | 1  | 17  | 4  |
|                         | Job Order                | 22  | 10 | 18  | 10 | 63  | 18 |
| First Job after college | Yes                      | 102 | 36 | 137 | 75 | 109 | 70 |
|                         | No                       | 180 | 64 | 46  | 25 | 47  | 30 |

Table 2 presents the employability status of the respondents by batch in the Academic Year 2015-2017 in the College of Business and Management. In batch 2014-2015, it shows that 77% of the respondents are employed in their present occupation as regular employees (55%). Seventy-five (75%) also say that their first job is related to their course, although it is not their first job after college (64%). On the other hand, 2% are self-employed and 21% are unemployed, mainly because of family concerns and a decision not to find a job (44%).

As to employability status, 69% of graduates are employed and 46% are already permanent and consistent in their current job. Likewise, 75% of the graduates say that their first job is related to their course after college. Nonetheless, 24% were not employed because of family concerns and decided not to find a job. Therefore, the reason for unemployment is also the same, probably because family can affect the decisions in choosing a job and a workplace to stay in. However, Jayasingam et al. (2019)'s study discovered that graduates' employability was negatively impacted by their degree of choosiness. Fundamentally speaking, being picky has a negative impact on graduates' employment. The high demand for specific soft skills requested by employers, including graduates with high-quality communication/interpersonal skills, foreign language proficiency, ICT/technical skills, high spirit of teamwork, and specific personal attributes, was revealed in the study of Aziz (2012) as another factor that limited graduates' employability. The findings indicated that graduate unemployment will increase in the absence of graduates and higher education institutions (HEI) that are willing to hone their soft skills in line with market niches. It is recommended that the HEI build university-industry link collaboration that will act as a catalyst for the improvement of soft skills in order to interact more closely with businesses, professional associations, and society.

Lastly, batch 2016-17 graduates are 54% employed with a contractual status. Even so, 70% respond that their employment is related to their course, and 70% say that it is their first job after college. However, 27% of those who are still unemployed (24%) express that their reason for not being employed is basically family concerns. It indicates that graduates are competent enough as proof of their employment and that which is related to the course they have taken. Although some graduates are still unemployed, it is mainly because they have responsibilities to their families and therefore decide not to find a job. The highest rate of employment (87%) was verified by the Department of Labor and Employment in the CARAGA Region (2015). The employment rate in April 2015 has been constantly increasing with an average growth rate of 2%. Furthermore, in today's rapidly changing work environment, concepts of work-readiness, especially among vocational (VE) and higher education (HE) graduates, have increasingly permeated the global discourse, and organizations are increasingly attaching importance to this major labor market requirement.

**Table 3: Nature of Present Occupation**

| Indicators                         |                             | 2014-2015 | 2015-2016 | 2016-2017 |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|                                    |                             | Sub-Total | Sub-Total | Sub-Total |
| Employed                           | Government                  | 54        | 6         | 24        |
|                                    |                             | 25        | 13        | 20        |
|                                    | Private                     | 165       | 40        | 99        |
|                                    |                             | 75        | 87        | 80        |
|                                    |                             | 219       | 46        | 123       |
| Financial Institutions             | Bank                        | 10        | 15        | 8         |
|                                    |                             | 24        | 37        | 30        |
|                                    | Cooperative                 | 5         | 3         | 15        |
|                                    |                             | 12        | 7         | 56        |
|                                    | Pawnshop                    | 7         | 12        | -         |
|                                    |                             | 17        | 29        | -         |
|                                    | Lending Investors           | 14        | 8         | 3         |
|                                    |                             | 33        | 20        | 11        |
|                                    | Insurance                   | 2         | 2         | 1         |
|                                    |                             | 5         | 5         | 4         |
| Foundation                         | 4                           | 1         | -         |           |
|                                    | 10                          | 2         | -         |           |
|                                    |                             | 42        | 41        | 27        |
| Non-Financial Institution Position | Government Organization     | 43        | 27        | 27        |
|                                    | Non-government Organization | 33        | 31        | 43        |
|                                    |                             | 88        | 59        | 36        |
|                                    | Financial Related           | 75        | 69        | 57        |
|                                    |                             | 70        | 62        | 47        |
|                                    | Non-Fin. Related            | 49        | 53        | 65        |
|                                    |                             | 73        | 55        | 25        |
|                                    |                             | 51        | 47        | 35        |
|                                    |                             | 143       | 117       | 72        |
| Place of work                      | Local                       | 225       | 47        | 126       |
|                                    |                             | 97        | 100       | 100       |
|                                    | Abroad                      | 7         | -         | -         |
|                                    |                             | 3         | -         | -         |
|                                    |                             | 232       | 47        | 126       |

Table 3 presents the nature of the present occupation of the respondents by batch. The data from Batch 2014-2015 shows that 75%, or 165, of the respondents are employed in the private sector. As for financial institutions, 33% of the respondents are lending investors. Non-financial institutions account for 67% of all non-financial institutions. As to positions, 51% of the respondents are employed in non-financial positions and choose to work locally (97%).

It implies that most of the graduates landed in private companies because most are not yet licensed as required by government agencies. In addition, working in the government means that you have job security as it will last. However, a pile of requirements and an eligibility license from the Civil Service Commission are mandatory and are employed in non-financial-related positions. Most of the graduates of the College of Business Management were employed locally, maybe because they found more opportunities here and chose to stay. As stated by Sharpless (2017), working in the private sector often provides higher salaries than in other sectors, particularly if promoted. Sharpless (2017) also added that within the private sector, fresh graduates will find organizations of all shapes and sizes with differing organizational cultures and values. This is supported by Stewart (2017) when he pointed out that the

private sector provides more growth opportunities and flexibility in allowing employees to move to more interesting roles within the company.

The Batch 2015-2016 reveals that 87% of the respondents are employed in the private sector. As to financial institutions, 37% of the respondents are in banks, which ranks first. As to positions, 53% of the respondents are working for financial institutions and choose to work locally (100%). The Batch 2016-2017 shows that the respondents are employed in the private sector, with 80% under cooperative. As to positions, 65% are related to financial positions and choose to work locally (100%). It proves that most of the respondents landed in the private sector but were working for financial institutions. Even though they are fresh graduates and least experienced, it is the best way to start and be involved in the working industry to unleash their abilities and hidden talents as well as the realization of their passion in life. According to the Victorian Government's (2012), having a career strategy is important. It can help you manage the direction you want your career to take, the job skills and knowledge you'll need, and how you'll get them, as explained by Honsen (2014).

**Table 4: Job Level Position and Promotion**

| Indicators         |                       | 2014-2015 |    | 2015-2016 |    | 2016-2017 |    |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------|----|-----------|----|-----------|----|
|                    |                       | Freq.     | %  | Freq.     | %  | Freq.     | %  |
| Job level Position | Rank/ Clerical        | 18        | 75 | 108       | 81 | 93        | 94 |
|                    | Supervisory           | 4         | 15 | 17        | 13 | 6         | 6  |
|                    | Managerial/ Executive | 4         | 15 | 9         | 7  | -         | -  |
|                    | Self Employed         | 1         | 4  | -         | -  | -         | -  |

Table 4 presents the job level position of the respondents by batch. Most of the graduates belong to ranked or clerical job level positions (67%). Graduates from the 2015-2016 batch (81%) and the 2016-2017 batch (94%), both belong to the rank/clerical category.

The table points out that among the three batches, the majority of them landed in a clerical position since they were fresh graduates and have no licenses yet. They will more than likely be doing a little bit of everything as they gain skills and are able to have further experience where they take time to be more capable for a higher position. As stated by Menez (2014), new graduates tend to accept a lower position in their first job after college since they are just getting started; he also added that it will take more than four to six years to make the profession profitable. Promotions are also an important aspect of a worker's career and life, affecting other aspects of their work experience. They constitute an important aspect of workers' labor mobility, most often carrying substantial wage increases. Kostean (2009) shows that job characteristics such as responsibilities and subsequent job attachment can have a significant impact on other job characteristics. Pergamit (1999).

**Table 5: Length of Time to Take and Stay a Job**

| Indicators                          |                   | 2014-2015 |     | 2015-2016 |    | 2016-2017 |    |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|-----|-----------|----|-----------|----|
|                                     |                   | Freq.     | %   | Freq.     | %  | Freq.     | %  |
| Duration to take the first job      | Less than a month | 86        | 32  | 53        | 27 | 59        | 48 |
|                                     | 1-6 mos.          | 113       | 42  | 73        | 38 | 45        | 37 |
|                                     | 7-11 mos.         | 25        | 9   | 36        | 19 | 9         | 7  |
|                                     | 1-2 yrs.          | 42        | 15  | 30        | 15 | 4         | 3  |
|                                     | 2-3 yrs.          | 1         | 3   | 2         | 1  | -         | -  |
|                                     | 3-4 yrs.          | 5         | 2   | -         | -  | 5         | 4  |
| Duration and staying your first job | Less than a year  | 148       | 56  | 103       | 54 | 51        | 39 |
|                                     | 1-2 yrs.          | 100       | 38  | 38        | 20 | 7         | 5  |
|                                     | 2-3 yrs.          | 1         | .04 | -         | -  | -         | -  |
|                                     | 3-4 yrs.          | 9         | 3   | 1         | .5 | -         | -  |
|                                     | 5 yrs. or more    | 8         | 3   | -         | -  | -         | -  |
|                                     | Not Applicable    | -         | -   | 50        | 26 | 73        | 56 |

Table 5 presents the length of time the graduates take and stay at their jobs by batch in the academic year 2015-2017. In batch 2014-2015, 42% of the graduates took only 1-6 months before getting to their first job. Additionally, most of them stay at their job for less than a year, at 56%.

For the 2015-2016 batch, 38% of them also take 1-6 months before having their first job, and most of them stay at their job for less than a year, at 54%. Specifically, given the time gaps between graduating from college and landing their first job, graduates may appear to have more job opportunities when they graduate from college to take 1-6 months before landing their first job and fewer opportunities for those graduates who take longer. The less than a year job duration at their first job could indicate that they have a contract that expired less than a year ago and are looking for a new job to expand their skills and experience. For batch 2016-2017, they landed their first job less than a month after graduation with 48%, because this year they have more job opportunities to apply for in line with their different courses, but most of them state that in their job duration, 56% are not applicable.

Most of the graduates were employed in less than 6 months because they started applying before graduation and some were already potential employees of the companies where they took their on-the-job training. Graduates who took a year to find a job were a little choosy in accepting job offers, and graduates who took 2 years or more to find a job were those who did not look for a job and resorted to coming up with small businesses or joining the family business, Medina (2015).

**Table 6: Initial Gross Monthly Earnings**

| Indicators                     |                | 2014-2015 |    | 2015-2016 |    | 2016-2017 |    |
|--------------------------------|----------------|-----------|----|-----------|----|-----------|----|
|                                |                | Freq.     | %  | Freq.     | %  | Freq.     | %  |
| Initial Gross Monthly Earnings | Below 5,000    | 32        | 12 | 36        | 15 | 43        | 26 |
|                                | 5,000- 10,000  | 149       | 54 | 126       | 53 | 95        | 58 |
|                                | 10,000- 20,000 | 71        | 26 | 58        | 24 | 21        | 13 |
|                                | 20,000-25,000  | 17        | 6  | 17        | 7  | 4         | 2  |
|                                | 25,000 above   | 5         | 2  | 2         | 1  | -         | -  |

Table 6 shows the Initial Gross Income by Batch in Academic Years 2015–2017. According to the three consecutive years, 54% of graduates from the 2014-2015 batch have an initial monthly income of 5,000-10,000, batch 2015-2016 has 53% and batch 2016-2017 has 58% with the same monthly income earning from 5,000-10,000. It indicated that their salary is intrinsically based on two factors. It was the impact of wage rates equally in which employers gave a balanced salary to their newly hired employees. Another is that it was their first job and their first initial gross monthly income from a first job.

Most of the respondents had almost the same monthly salary because of the kind of job they chose after they graduated. The salaries differ because of the different classifications of the jobs of the graduates, their positions, and where they are based. Employed respondents differ in their salaries because of their location in either urban or rural areas. Most college students place a high priority on a high salary as they anticipate employment after graduation. Salary was the most important consideration for post-graduate employment (Doyle, 2107). According to Jobstreet.com (2017) reports, fresh graduates with 1 year or less of experience that work as clerks in any office got the minimum wage of 7,000, an average of 8,000, and a maximum of 10,000, which is appropriate and tangible on data presentation, selecting on their initial gross monthly earnings at their first job experience.

**Table 7: Generic and Business-Related Competencies**

| Indicators   |                       | 2014-2015 |    | 2015-2016 |    | 2016-2017 |    |
|--------------|-----------------------|-----------|----|-----------|----|-----------|----|
|              |                       | Freq.     | %  | Freq.     | %  | Freq.     | %  |
|              | <b>Generic Skills</b> |           |    |           |    |           |    |
| Professional | Communication         | 209       | 29 | 183       | 35 | 205       | 28 |

|  |                                    |                       |    |     |    |     |    |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------|----|-----|----|-----|----|
| Skills Acquired in College                                     | Skills                             |                       |    |     |    |     |    |
|  | Human Relation Skills              | 158                   | 22 | 72  | 14 | 155 | 21 |
|  | Leadership Skills                  | 70                    | 10 | 40  | 8  | 67  | 9  |
|  | Research Skills                    | 43                    | 6  | 34  | 6  | 44  | 6  |
|  | Information Technology Skills      | 78                    | 11 | 59  | 11 | 88  | 12 |
|  | Critical Thinking Skills           | 81                    | 11 | 71  | 13 | 92  | 13 |
|  | Problem Solving Skills             | 78                    | 11 | 69  | 13 | 76  | 10 |
|  | <b>Business Skills</b>             |                       |    |     |    |     |    |
|  | Entrepreneurial Skills             | 135                   | 30 | 98  | 29 | 138 | 30 |
|  | Marketing Skills                   | 78                    | 17 | 51  | 15 | 81  | 18 |
|  | Accounting Skills                  | 81                    | 18 | 59  | 18 | 84  | 18 |
|  | Record Keeping Skills              | 41                    | 9  | 59  | 18 | 48  | 10 |
|  | Management Skills                  | 114                   | 25 | 66  | 20 | 110 | 24 |
|  | Professional Skills Applied in Job | <b>Generic Skills</b> |    |     |    |     |    |
| Communication Skills   |                                    | 82                    | 25 | 149 | 31 | 92  | 27 |
| Human Relation Skills  |                                    | 76                    | 23 | 106 | 22 | 64  | 19 |
| Leadership Skills  |                                    | 35                    | 11 | 34  | 7  | 28  | 8  |
| Research Skills  |                                    | 17                    | 5  | 18  | 4  | 18  | 5  |
| Information Technology Skills                                  |                                    | 25                    | 8  | 34  | 7  | 32  | 9  |
| Critical Thinking Skills                                       |                                    | 49                    | 15 | 117 | 24 | 53  | 16 |
| Problem Solving Skills   |                                    | 48                    | 14 | 26  | 5  | 51  | 15 |
| <b>Business Skills</b>   |                                    |                       |    |     |    |     |    |
| Entrepreneurial  |                                    | 70                    | 32 | 64  | 22 | 71  | 31 |
| Marketing Skills   |                                    | 36                    | 16 | 52  | 18 | 35  | 15 |
| Accounting Skills  |                                    | 35                    | 16 | 57  | 20 | 36  | 16 |
| Record Keeping Skills  |                                    | 28                    | 13 | 56  | 20 | 35  | 15 |
| Management Skills  |                                    | 50                    | 23 | 57  | 20 | 49  | 22 |
| Competencies Learned in College that found very useful in work | <b>Generic Skills</b>              |                       |    |     |    |     |    |
|  | Communication Skills               | 62                    | 25 | 101 | 31 | 59  | 25 |
|  | Human Relation Skills              | 58                    | 24 | 92  | 28 | 57  | 25 |
|  | Leadership Skills                  | 28                    | 11 | 24  | 7  | 24  | 10 |
|  | Research Skills                    | 13                    | 5  | 18  | 6  | 13  | 6  |
|  | Information Technology Skills      | 23                    | 9  | 32  | 10 | 30  | 13 |
|  | Critical Thinking Skills           | 21                    | 9  | 20  | 6  | 27  | 12 |

|                        |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Problem Solving Skills | 19 | 8  | 38 | 12 | 22 | 9  |
| <b>Business Skills</b> |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Entrepreneurial Skills | 26 | 16 | 34 | 13 | 27 | 17 |
| Marketing Skills       | 32 | 20 | 58 | 21 | 29 | 18 |
| Accounting Skills      | 35 | 22 | 65 | 24 | 36 | 22 |
| Record Keeping Skills  | 25 | 16 | 52 | 19 | 29 | 18 |
| Management Skills      | 43 | 27 | 63 | 23 | 42 | 26 |

Table 7 presents the professional skills acquired, applied and found useful in the College of Business Management in the Academic Years 2015–2017. It was divided into generic skills and business skills. In Batch 2014-2015 graduates, 29% acquired communication skills as their generic skills and 30% acquired entrepreneurial skills as their business skills gained for their four-year stay in college. As to professional skills acquired in college that were able to be applied in work, 25% of the generic skills are communication skills, while 32% of the business skills are entrepreneurial skills. As to competencies learned in college that are found very useful in work, 25% of the generic skills are communication skills, and 27% of the business skills are management skills.

Communication skills accounted for 35% of generic skills and 29% of entrepreneurial skills. The skills which they are able to apply the most in their job are communication skills (31%) and entrepreneurial skills (22%) in generic and business skills respectively. Further, skills that are found very useful in work are communication skills (31%) in generic skills, while 24% are accounting skills in business skills. According to Gokuladas' (2011) research, a language's proficiency is a significant predictor of on-going employability. Additionally, the findings of Hosain's study from 2021 showed that graduate employability can be greatly and positively impacted by communication abilities. Additionally, soft skills, particularly communication skills, are one of the most significant characteristics sought after by new graduates, according to studies by Archer and Davison (2008) and Pereira et al. (2019). Lastly, batch 2016-2017 reveals that the graduates acquired communication skills (30%) as their generic skills and entrepreneurial skills (30%) as their business skills. As to skills that are able to be applied in work, 22% are communication skills in generic skills, while 31% are entrepreneurial skills in business skills. Furthermore, in generic skills, communication skills accounted for 55% of the most useful skills in their present job. However, 26% of business skills were found to be very useful at work. According to Yuzainee et al. (2011)'s study, the most important employability skill is "communication skills," which employers view as "necessary."

Based on the respondents' professional skills acquired, applied, and found useful in their work, it is clear that communication skills in generic skills are more efficient in business-related courses. Communication in the workplace is one of the major parts of what makes a business work; employees must frequently work together on projects, communicate ideas, and provide motivation to get things done. Communication skills are important, especially during the process of seeking a job. The new graduates would be tested on their communication skills during job interviews. Therefore, colleges and faculties have to ensure that students are equipped with the ability to communicate clearly and effectively.

On the other hand, as to business skills, professional skills acquired, applied, and found useful in a job are mostly entrepreneurial skills. This is mainly because entrepreneurial skills are one of the skills enhanced and practiced in the College of Business Administration for business students. The respondents were able to apply entrepreneurial skills to the nature of their business, and they found it very useful in engaging business in the corporate world. Furthermore, Li and Liu's (2011) research shown that entrepreneurship had a favorable effect on job performance. It has been demonstrated that entrepreneurial education improves employment. According to Linayage et al., the main professions in which the majority of graduates found permanent employment include entrepreneurship, marketing management, and business information systems. These professions are also the main ones in which graduates found employment in the private sector.

**Table 8: Suggestions of the Respondents**

| Suggestions  | Frequency            |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. SDSSU must offer more courses such as accountancy, criminology, MedTech, Law and Social Work for the next top.  | <b>1</b>             |
| 2. In faculty performance, they suggested that the standard of teaching should be improved.  | <b>1</b>             |
| 3. Improvement Of facilities like providing more electric fans, renovating school buildings and extension rooms.   | <b>1</b><br><b>1</b> |
| 4. For the students, enrich them with more learning activities, seminars, and training related to business courses.  | <b>1</b>             |
| 5. The University must be fully equipped to add more computer laboratories with secure internet connection.  | <b>1</b>             |
| 6. The Human Resource Development Management is a rare course, however, the university should collaborate with their partner agency for the qualification they want for they can recommend their graduates and prepare them for what the employer needs. | <b>1</b>             |
| 7. The University should practice in more training, seminars, and workshops.   | <b>1</b>             |
| 8. Other also wants to continue the efficient and effective way of teaching.   | <b>1</b>             |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>8</b>             |

Table 8 shows some of the respondents' suggestions for the betterment of the university as well as for the colleges. As part of the school's adhering to the students' call for better education, some of their suggestions say that SDSSU must offer more courses such as accountancy, criminology, MedTech, Law, and Social Work for the next level. In faculty performance, they suggested that the standard of teaching should be improved. They should teach not just theories but more on actualization for the better understanding of the students. On the other hand, some of the graduates also suggested that improvements to facilities like providing more electric fans, renovating school buildings, and adding extension rooms are beneficial to sustain the academic needs of the students aside from obtaining more knowledge and focusing on their classroom discussions.

As part of the institution, the respondents suggested that students be enriched with more learning activities and seminars related to business courses because this can help the student's preparation for their future career. The university should be fully equipped to add more computer laboratories with secure internet connections, which has a big impact on all students' ability to upgrade their application in learning. Furthermore, the Human Resource Development Management graduates proposed that the university recommend their graduates and prepare them for what the employers required. It is also suggested that the university should put their faculties through more training, seminars, and workshops so that they can continue teaching efficiently and effectively.

**Table 10: Correlation between Profile and Employability Status**

| Variable Tested                               | Computed R | P-Value | Decision              | Conclusion      |
|---|------------|---------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Sex vs. Employability                         | .221       | .151    | Reject H <sub>0</sub> | Not Significant |
| Age vs. Employability Status                  | .201       | .158    | Reject H <sub>0</sub> | Not Significant |
| Educational Attainment vs. Educational Status | .157       | .252    | Reject H <sub>0</sub> | Not Significant |

The table shows the significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and their employability status in Marketing Management, Human Resource Management Development, Financial Management, and Hotel and Restaurant Management, and it reveals that the computed P-Value in terms of sex versus employability status is 0.151, in terms of age 0.158, and educational attainment 0.252, respectively. Thus, the relationship between sex, age, and educational attainment towards employability status is statistically not significant.

However, the findings of Nikusekela's (2016) study revealed that only two variables—sex and practical experience—used in determining employability were significant, whereas all other variables were insignificant. The impact of demographic factors on university students' propensity for entrepreneurship is also underlined. Promoting internships, work-based learning, and placements are the first steps in improving the employability of recent graduates from higher education in the study area. Next comes including employers in committees and policies on employability, and finally implementing employability awards and programs. Poor socioeconomic status was one of the six criteria identified by Harry (2018)'s investigation as having an impact on employability.

**Table 11: Correlation between Employability Status and Competencies**

| Variable Tested  | Computed <i>r</i> | P-Value | Decision     | Conclusion      |
|--|-------------------|---------|--------------|-----------------|
| Employability Status Vs. Generic and Business Competencies | .532              | .534    | Reject $H_0$ | Not Significant |

The table shows the significant relationship between the employability status of the respondents and their competencies from every course in the College of Business Management, and it reveals that the null hypothesis was rejected wherein the P-Value is less than 0.05, in which the computed P-Value is 0.534. Thus, the relationship between employability and competency is statistically not significant. Sumanasiri (2015) came to the conclusion that employability is influenced by faculty, curriculum, pedagogy, employers who hire graduates, and their expectations, in addition to the attributes of the individual graduates, such as subject knowledge, experience, talents, and personality traits. Furthermore, a study by Hui (2021) found a positive correlation between the competencies most students developed and work performance in the 2019–2020 placement year.

### Conclusion

It can be inferred that there is a need for particular employability skills and soft skills. If higher education institutions (HEIs) and graduates are unwilling to prepare graduates to hone their soft skills in accordance with market niches, graduate unemployment will continue to rise. It is recommended that the HEI build university-industry link collaboration that will act as a catalyst for the improvement of soft skills in order to interact more closely with businesses, professional associations, and society.

Despite the fact that there is no statistically significant correlation between the respondents' socio-demographic profiles and their employment status (or competency), the institution must continue to enhance its faculty development programs, curricula, and student support services with a focus on improving outcomes-based education and student job placement assistance. A survey of employers' feedback is advised for further study. This supports our hypothesis that, in order to successfully promote employability as a meaningful and valuable outcome of higher education, there should be clear communication and consensus among stakeholders in employability. This exploratory project will aid companies in finding qualified applicants with the necessary abilities while assisting recent graduates in acquiring the employability skills they need.

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