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# A Tracer Study on the Employment Status, Job Relevance, and Underemployment Factors of BSHS Graduates as Basis for Intervention

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**ABSTRACT:** This study assessed the employment status, job relevance, and factors influencing underemployment and unemployment among graduates of Baliwasan Senior High School–Stand Alone (BSHS-SA) as a basis for developing an evidence-based intervention program. Specifically, it examined graduates' employment type, nature of work, position or rank, the extent to which their current employment was related to their SHS strand or track, and differences in perceived employment-related factors according to sex, SHS strand and track, year graduated, and college course. The study employed a quantitative descriptive-comparative research design. A total of 338 BSHS-SA graduates from School Years 2017–2018 to 2025–2026 participated; an attempted total enumeration was adopted, and the final sample consisted of graduates who were reached and voluntarily completed the survey. Data were gathered using a structured tracer study questionnaire administered through Google Forms and analyzed using frequencies, percentages, weighted means, independent-samples t-test, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Results revealed that while many graduates were employed, a considerable number remained unemployed, pursued further studies, or sought employment. Graduates were engaged in various employment sectors, with many occupying service, sales, administrative, and entry-level positions. Their current employment was moderately related to their SHS strand or track, indicating that their jobs did not always correspond directly to their academic specialization. The factors affecting underemployment and unemployment were experienced to a great extent, particularly low salary offers, preference for further studies, lack of work experience, and inadequate communication skills. Significant differences were found in the perceived factors affecting underemployment and unemployment when graduates were grouped according to year graduated and college course, while no significant differences were found according to sex and SHS strand and track. The findings highlight the importance of strengthening career guidance, work immersion, employability skills development, industry partnerships, and graduate employment monitoring to improve career readiness, job matching, and graduates' access to suitable employment opportunities.

**KEYWORDS:** Career Guidance, Employment, Graduate Tracer Study, Job Matching, Underemployment

## I. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role in national development by equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for productive participation in society and the labor market. Globally, educational systems continue to strengthen their programs to improve graduates' employability, address skills mismatch, and facilitate the transition from education to employment. However, unemployment and underemployment remain significant concerns, particularly among young people entering increasingly competitive labor markets. The International Labour Organization (2022) emphasized the challenges faced by young workers in accessing productive employment, while the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2019) highlighted the importance of developing competencies that respond to changing workplace demands. These concerns underscore the need to examine how educational preparation translates into actual employment opportunities.

In the Philippines, Republic Act No. 10533, or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, institutionalized the K to 12 Basic Education Program, which includes Senior High School (SHS) as a means of preparing learners for higher education, employment, entrepreneurship, and further skills development. Through its various tracks and strands, SHS seeks to equip graduates with competencies relevant to their chosen educational and career pathways. Furthermore, Republic Act No. 10931, or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act of 2017, expanded opportunities for qualified learners to pursue tertiary education and technical-vocational training. These policies reflect the government's efforts to strengthen educational access and improve graduates' preparation for future opportunities.

Despite these initiatives, the transition from senior high school to employment remains challenging for some graduates. Limited work experience, inadequate employability skills, job–education mismatch, and differences in labor-market opportunities may influence graduates' ability to secure suitable employment. The International Labour Organization (2022) identified persistent challenges in young people's transition into decent employment, while the Asian Development Bank (2021) discussed broader economic and labor-market conditions affecting recovery and employment opportunities. These circumstances highlight the importance of examining not only whether graduates are employed but also whether their employment corresponds to their educational preparation and acquired competencies.

Graduate tracer studies provide a systematic means of examining graduates' educational and employment experiences after completing their studies. Such investigations generate information on employment status, occupational characteristics, job relevance, and challenges encountered in seeking or maintaining employment. Schomburg (2016) emphasized the value of graduate tracer studies in assessing educational outcomes and informing institutional improvements. Similarly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2019) highlighted the relevance of skills information in understanding the relationship between education and employment. Through these approaches, educational institutions may identify areas requiring stronger career guidance, skills development, and employment support.

At the institutional level, Baliwasan Senior High School Stand-Alone (BSHS-SA), under the Schools Division of Zamboanga City, recognizes the importance of examining the post-graduation experiences of its former learners. Understanding graduates' employment status, the relevance of their current jobs to their SHS strands and tracks, and the factors associated with underemployment and unemployment may provide useful information for strengthening school-based career development initiatives. Moreover, examining differences according to sex, SHS strand and track, year graduated, and college course pursued may help identify variations in graduates' employment-related experiences and support more responsive interventions.

Although existing studies have examined employability, skills mismatch, and graduates' transitions into the workforce, the need remains for institution-specific evidence that reflects the experiences of senior high school graduates within their local context. In particular, examining employment characteristics alongside job relevance and perceived employment barriers may provide a more comprehensive basis for identifying appropriate support measures. For BSHS-SA, such evidence may help determine which employment-related concerns require attention and how partnerships with educational institutions, government agencies, and prospective employers can be strengthened.

Hence, this study assessed the employment status, job relevance, and common factors associated with underemployment and unemployment among graduates of Baliwasan Senior High School Stand-Alone. Specifically, it examined graduates' employment type, nature of work, and position or rank; the relevance of their current employment to their SHS strand and track; and differences in employment-related factors when grouped according to selected demographic and educational characteristics. The findings served as the basis for developing a proposed intervention program aimed at strengthening graduates' career readiness, employability, and access to appropriate employment opportunities.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Education–Employment Linkages and Graduate Employment Status.** The relationship between education and employment is an important consideration in evaluating educational outcomes and graduates' readiness for the labor market. Graduate tracer studies provide information on employment status, occupational characteristics, and career progression, allowing educational institutions to assess how their programs contribute to graduates' professional development. Schomburg (2016) emphasized the value of tracer studies in evaluating educational outcomes, while the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2019) highlighted the importance of aligning acquired competencies with changing employment requirements. These perspectives establish the relevance of monitoring graduates' transitions from education to employment.

In the Philippine context, graduate tracer studies have been used to examine employment outcomes and identify areas for institutional improvement. Melendez, Sawalan, and Escalona (2025), in their study involving Bachelor of Arts in English Language graduates, examined employment characteristics and occupational roles that may inform curriculum enhancement. Meanwhile, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies graduate tracer study (Tutor, Orbeta, and Miraflor 2021) identified concerns regarding education–occupation mismatch, which may affect employment quality and the utilization of graduates' qualifications. These findings suggest that obtaining employment does not necessarily indicate that graduates are working in positions aligned with their educational preparation.

Furthermore, employment outcomes may be examined through employment type, nature of work, and position or rank. These indicators provide a broader understanding of graduates' participation in the labor market, particularly in distinguishing regular

employment from part-time, contractual, and self-employment arrangements. The OECD (2019) and World Bank (2018) have emphasized the importance of education and skills in supporting employment opportunities. Accordingly, examining these characteristics among BSHS-SA graduates may provide information on their employment circumstances and the extent to which their educational preparation supports their career pathways.

**Skills Mismatch and Job Relevance.** The alignment between educational preparation and employment requirements is essential in understanding graduates' career outcomes. Human Capital Theory explains that education and training contribute to the development of knowledge and skills that may improve individuals' productivity and employment opportunities (Becker 1993). However, the benefits of educational preparation may depend partly on whether graduates can apply their acquired competencies in available employment. This highlights the importance of examining job relevance and the possible effects of skills mismatch.

Research involving senior high school graduates has emphasized the relationship between acquired competencies and employability. Carada et al. (2022) reported an association between graduates' employability and selected technical and emotional skills, suggesting the importance of developing competencies that respond to workplace expectations. Similarly, Tengco (2025) examined concerns regarding the alignment of work immersion experiences with students' academic strands, indicating the need to strengthen the relationship between educational preparation and practical workplace exposure.

Employer expectations also influence the relevance of graduates' educational preparation to available employment. Ebdane (2024) discussed the importance of professionalism, communication skills, and workplace readiness in employment opportunities for senior high school graduates. These competencies complement strand-specific knowledge and technical preparation. Taken together, the literature suggests that employment relevance involves both the alignment of graduates' specialization with occupational requirements and their readiness to perform workplace responsibilities. This provides a basis for examining the relationship between BSHS-SA graduates' SHS strands and tracks and their current employment.

**Underemployment and Unemployment Factors.** Underemployment and unemployment represent different but related employment challenges. Unemployment generally refers to the absence of employment among individuals who meet the applicable labor-force criteria, while underemployment concerns individuals who are employed but experience insufficient work opportunities or other forms of employment inadequacy. Broader discussions of underemployment also consider the underutilization of workers' qualifications and competencies (Feldman 1996; Allan et al. 2017). These distinctions are important in examining the employment experiences of graduates and identifying the challenges they encounter.

The Person–Job Fit perspective emphasizes the importance of compatibility between individuals' qualifications, abilities, and job requirements. McKee-Ryan and Harvey (2011) discussed underemployment in relation to the mismatch between workers' capabilities and their employment circumstances. Similarly, Allan et al. (2017) examined issues associated with underemployment and its implications for workers. These perspectives suggest that employment quality may be influenced not only by the availability of work but also by the suitability of available positions to individuals' skills and qualifications.

Employment challenges may also arise from limited job opportunities, insufficient work experience, inadequate employability skills, and weak connections between educational institutions and industries. Faustino, Gabasa, and De Jesus (2025) discussed employment-related barriers associated with skills mismatch and labor-market conditions. Such concerns highlight the need to examine graduates' perceptions of the factors affecting their employment opportunities. In the present study, these factors are considered in relation to graduates' educational and demographic characteristics to identify areas that may require targeted intervention.

**Perceptions of Skill Relevance and Employability.** Graduates' perceptions of their acquired competencies provide useful information on how educational preparation relates to employment experiences. Employability involves not only technical knowledge but also transferable competencies that support workplace performance, communication, collaboration, and adaptation to changing job requirements. The OECD (2019) emphasized the continuing importance of developing relevant competencies, while Carada et al. (2022) highlighted the association between selected skills and the employability of senior high school graduates.

Communication, problem-solving, adaptability, digital literacy, and interpersonal skills may contribute to graduates' readiness for different occupational settings. These competencies are particularly relevant when graduates enter positions requiring skills beyond their strand-specific preparation, as employers increasingly value transferable skills that can be applied across occupations and work contexts (OECD 2021; OECD 2023). Likewise, opportunities for practical training and workplace exposure may help graduates recognize the relevance of their educational experiences to employment expectations. Work-based learning provides

opportunities for young people to develop practical skills, gain hands-on experience, and become familiar with actual workplace requirements (OECD 2024).

Examining graduates' perceptions of skill relevance may therefore provide additional context for understanding employment challenges and identifying areas for improvement. For BSHS-SA, information concerning acquired competencies and their applicability to employment may help guide career development activities, employability training, and collaboration with industry partners.

**Gaps in Current Knowledge and Policy.** Existing literature provides important insights into graduate employment, skills mismatch, workplace readiness, and the relationship between education and labor-market opportunities. However, the studies reviewed address these concerns across different educational levels, populations, and institutional contexts. Research on graduate work readiness has shown that employability is understood differently by various stakeholders and is influenced by geographical and institutional conditions (Winterton and Turner 2019). Similarly, comparative research on school-to-work transitions emphasizes that educational systems and labor-market institutions shape graduates' employment outcomes (Marczuk 2024). Consequently, findings from broader or different contexts may not fully explain the employment experiences of graduates from a particular senior high school.

In the context of Baliwasan Senior High School–Stand-Alone, institution-specific evidence is needed to examine graduates' employment type, nature of work, position or rank, and the relevance of their employment to their SHS strands and tracks. Philippine tracer studies have demonstrated the importance of examining graduates' curriculum exits, career pathways, and the alignment of their educational preparation with their subsequent employment or educational pursuits (Andaya et al. 2023; Ramintas-Nieves and Peregrino 2023). There is also a need to understand the factors associated with underemployment and unemployment and determine whether graduates' assessments of these factors differ according to sex, SHS strand and track, year graduated, and college course pursued. Orbeta and Potestad (2025) emphasized the need for sustained monitoring and further empirical research to understand the labor-market outcomes of SHS graduates.

Addressing these concerns may provide a more comprehensive understanding of graduates' transition from senior high school to employment. By integrating employment characteristics, job relevance, and perceived employment barriers, the present study seeks to generate institution-specific evidence that may guide the development of responsive career guidance, skills enhancement, employment linkages, and other school-based interventions. This is consistent with the recommendations of Philippine SHS tracer studies, which highlight the value of using graduate outcomes to assess curriculum relevance and strengthen career guidance and program implementation (Ramintas-Nieves and Peregrino 2023; Orbeta and Potestad 2025).

## III. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### *A. Theoretical Framework*

The study is anchored on Human Capital Theory and Person–Job Fit Theory, which provide the theoretical foundation for understanding graduates' employment experiences. Human Capital Theory emphasizes that education and training contribute to the development of knowledge, skills, and competencies that may enhance individuals' productivity and employability (Becker 1993). Meanwhile, Person–Job Fit Theory explains the importance of compatibility between individuals' qualifications, abilities, and job requirements in understanding employment outcomes (Edwards 1991). These theories support the examination of graduates' employment status, job relevance, and factors associated with underemployment and unemployment.

### *B. Conceptual Framework*

The conceptual framework focuses on three major areas of investigation. The first is employment status, examined in terms of employment type, nature of work, and position or rank. The second is job relevance, which determines the extent to which graduates' current employment corresponds to their Senior High School (SHS) strand and track. The third involves the common factors associated with underemployment and unemployment, including perceived employment-related challenges such as low salary offers, preference for further studies, lack of work experience, inadequate communication and technical skills, family responsibilities, financial constraints, geographic limitations, limited job opportunities and professional networks, health-related reasons, and skills mismatch. These areas provide information on graduates' employment circumstances and challenges.

The framework also considers selected demographic and educational characteristics, namely sex, SHS strand and track, year graduated, and college course pursued. These serve as grouping variables in determining whether significant differences exist in graduates' assessments of the common factors associated with underemployment and unemployment. Examining these differences may help identify employment challenges experienced by different groups of graduates and provide a basis for more responsive interventions.

As illustrated in Fig. 1, the theoretical foundations guide the examination of graduates' employment characteristics, job relevance, and perceived employment-related challenges.

| Component | Elements |
|---|---|
| Theoretical Foundations | Human Capital Theory (Becker 1993): education and training enhance knowledge, skills, and competencies that improve employability. Person–Job Fit Theory (Edwards 1991): employment outcomes are influenced by the compatibility between individuals' qualifications and job requirements. |
| Grouping Variables | Sex; SHS strand and track; year graduated; college course pursued |
| Major Areas of Investigation | Employment status (employment type, nature of work, position or rank); job relevance (relevance of current employment to SHS strand and track); underemployment and unemployment factors (perceived employment-related challenges) |
| Research Findings | Employment characteristics of graduates; level of job relevance to SHS strand and track; common factors associated with underemployment and unemployment; significant differences according to sex, SHS strand and track, year graduated, and college course pursued |
| Proposed Intervention Program | Career guidance and job-matching services; employability skills enhancement; work experience and industry exposure; skills matching and career upskilling; professional networking and employment linkages; entrepreneurship and alternative livelihood support; financial and geographic employment assistance; gender- and cohort-responsive career support; education–industry alignment and monitoring |

**Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study**

The grouping variables are considered in comparing graduates' assessments of the factors associated with underemployment and unemployment. The findings from these areas provide the basis for identifying employment concerns and determining appropriate support measures. The framework presents the organization of the study rather than establishing causal relationships among the variables.

This framework guides the development of a proposed intervention program aimed at addressing the employment-related challenges identified in the study. The program focuses on career guidance, employability skills enhancement, work experience, job matching, industry partnerships, and other graduate support initiatives. Through these interventions, Baliwasan Senior High School Stand-Alone may strengthen its career development programs and promote graduates' readiness for suitable employment opportunities.

## IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCOPE

### A. Research Questions

The general objective of this tracer study was to assess the employment status, job relevance, and factors influencing underemployment and unemployment among BSHS graduates as basis for developing an evidence-based intervention program.

Specifically, it aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the current employment status of the graduates in terms of:
   - **a.** employment type;
   - **b.** nature of work; and
   - **c.** position or rank?
2. To what extent is the graduates' current employment related to their SHS strand and track?
3. What are the common factors for underemployment and unemployment among graduates?
4. Is there a significant difference in the common factors for underemployment and unemployment among graduates when they are categorized according to:
   - **a.** sex;
   - **b.** SHS strand and track;
   - **c.** year graduated; and
   - **d.** college course?

5. On the basis of the findings, what intervention program can be crafted to address the factors on underemployment and unemployment?

**B. Null Hypothesis**

There is no significant difference in the common factors for underemployment and unemployment among graduates when they are categorized according to sex, SHS strand and track, year graduated, and college course.

**C. Scope and Limitation**

This study examined the employment status, job relevance, and factors associated with underemployment and unemployment among graduates of Baliwasan Senior High School Stand-Alone (BSHS-SA), Schools Division of Zamboanga City. It covered 338 graduate respondents from School Years 2017–2018 to 2025–2026. Specifically, the study assessed graduates' employment status in terms of employment type, nature of work, and position or rank. It also determined the extent to which their current employment was relevant to their Senior High School (SHS) strand and track.

Furthermore, the study identified common factors associated with underemployment and unemployment and examined whether significant differences existed in these factors when graduates were grouped according to sex, SHS strand and track, year graduated, and college course pursued. The findings served as the basis for developing a proposed intervention program intended to strengthen graduates' employability, career readiness, and access to appropriate employment opportunities.

The study was limited to BSHS-SA graduates who participated in the survey and could be reached through available institutional records and communication platforms. Data were primarily collected using a structured survey questionnaire. Consequently, the findings relied on respondents' self-reported employment circumstances and perceptions, which may be affected by recall limitations or differences in individual interpretation. The results therefore describe the experiences of the participating graduates and should not automatically be generalized to all BSHS-SA graduates or graduates of other educational institutions.

The study did not directly assess graduates' actual workplace performance, employer satisfaction, salary levels, or long-term career progression. It also did not evaluate the overall effectiveness of the K to 12 Basic Education Program. Although broader economic conditions, employment opportunities, and labor-market demands may influence graduates' employment experiences, these external factors were not independently measured or analyzed.

Finally, the study examined employment characteristics, perceived employment barriers, and differences across selected groups without establishing causal relationships between educational preparation and employment outcomes. The proposed intervention program was developed from the findings but was not implemented or evaluated as part of the study. Accordingly, its effectiveness remains subject to future implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

## V. METHOD

**A. Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-comparative research design to examine the employment status, job relevance, and factors associated with underemployment and unemployment among graduates of Baliwasan Senior High School Stand-Alone (BSHS-SA). The design was appropriate for describing graduates' employment experiences and determining differences in employment-related factors across demographic and educational groups.

The descriptive component was used to determine graduates' employment status in terms of employment type, nature of work, and position or rank. It also examined the relevance of graduates' current employment to their Senior High School (SHS) strand and track and identified common factors associated with underemployment and unemployment. Job relevance was determined descriptively among employed respondents, while the comparative component determined whether significant differences existed in employment-related factors when graduates were grouped according to sex, SHS strand and track, year graduated, and college course pursued.

Data were gathered using a structured graduate tracer study questionnaire and analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. The findings served as the basis for developing a proposed intervention program intended to strengthen graduates' career readiness, employability, and access to appropriate employment opportunities. As a nonexperimental investigation, the study examined existing employment conditions and group differences without manipulating variables or establishing causal relationships.

**B. Research Participants**

The participants of the study were 338 graduates of Baliwasan Senior High School Stand-Alone (BSHS-SA), Schools Division of Zamboanga City, who completed their Senior High School education from School Years 2017–2018 to 2025–2026. The participants

represented different graduation batches and SHS strands and tracks, providing information on their educational backgrounds and employment experiences after graduation.

The participants provided data concerning their employment status, the relevance of their current employment to their SHS strand and track, and the factors associated with underemployment and unemployment. Their demographic and educational characteristics, particularly sex, SHS strand and track, year graduated, and college course pursued, were also considered in examining differences in employment-related factors.

Participation in the study involved completing a structured graduate tracer study questionnaire. The information gathered from the 338 respondents served as the basis for describing their employment circumstances, examining the identified research variables, and developing the proposed intervention program.

### C. Sampling Procedure

The study targeted graduates of Baliwasan Senior High School Stand-Alone (BSHS-SA) from the graduating cohorts covered by the research. An attempted total enumeration approach was adopted, wherein the researchers intended to reach all eligible graduates regardless of their Senior High School strand or track and year graduated. However, because of limitations in contacting former students and obtaining survey responses, not all graduates were able to participate. The study therefore relied on voluntary responses from graduates who were reached through available communication channels and completed the online questionnaire.

**Table I. Distribution of Respondents According to Year Graduated**

| Year Graduated | Corresponding School Year | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2018 | 2017–2018 | 29 | 8.58 |
| 2019 | 2018–2019 | 36 | 10.65 |
| 2020 | 2019–2020 | 57 | 16.86 |
| 2021 | 2020–2021 | 40 | 11.83 |
| 2022 | 2021–2022 | 34 | 10.06 |
| 2023 | 2022–2023 | 19 | 5.62 |
| 2024 | 2023–2024 | 47 | 13.91 |
| 2025 | 2024–2025 | 37 | 10.95 |
| 2026 | 2025–2026 | 39 | 11.54 |
| Total | Nine graduating cohorts | 338 | 100.00 |

Table I presents the distribution of the 338 respondents of Baliwasan Senior High School Stand-Alone according to year graduated, covering nine graduating cohorts from School Years 2017–2018 to 2025–2026. The largest proportion of respondents belonged to the 2020 graduating cohort, comprising 57 graduates (16.86%), followed by the 2024 cohort with 47 (13.91%) and the 2021 cohort with 40 (11.83%). Conversely, the 2023 graduating cohort recorded the lowest participation, with 19 respondents (5.62%). The distribution indicates that the study obtained responses from graduates across different years, although participation varied among cohorts. These respondents provided information on their employment status, job relevance, and perceived factors associated with underemployment and unemployment, serving as the basis for the subsequent analyses and proposed intervention program.

### D. Research Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-made structured graduate tracer study questionnaire as the primary instrument for gathering data on the employment status, job relevance, and factors associated with underemployment and unemployment among graduates of Baliwasan Senior High School Stand-Alone (BSHS-SA). The questionnaire was administered through Google Forms and consisted of six parts containing closed-ended questions, five-point rating scales, and open-ended items intended to obtain additional explanations and recommendations from the respondents.

To establish content validity, the researcher-made questionnaire was submitted to experts for review and evaluation in terms of the relevance, clarity, appropriateness, and alignment of the items with the objectives and research questions of the study. Their comments and recommendations were considered in refining the instrument. Subsequently, the questionnaire underwent pilot testing to determine its reliability. The reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.80, indicating good internal consistency among the questionnaire items and demonstrating that the instrument was sufficiently reliable for data collection.

**Part I,** Personal and Educational Profile, gathered information on the respondents' sex, year graduated, SHS strand and track, and educational background, including college enrollment and course pursued. These characteristics were used to describe the respondents and group their responses for comparative analysis.

**Part II,** Current Employment Status, determined the respondents' employment circumstances, including employment type, nature of work or industry, current position or rank, and other employment-related information. This section provided the data needed to describe graduates' participation in the labor market.

**Part III,** Job Relevance to SHS Strand and Track, assessed the extent to which the respondents' current employment was related to their Senior High School specialization. A five-point rating scale was used to obtain respondents' assessments of the relevance of their employment to their educational preparation wherein 5 – Very Highly Related, 4 – Highly Related, 3 – Moderately Related, 2 – Slightly Related, and 1 – Not Related.

**Part IV,** Factors Contributing to Underemployment and Unemployment, examined perceived employment-related challenges, including skills mismatch, limited employment opportunities, inadequate employability skills, financial constraints, geographical limitations, and low salary offers. Respondents assessed these factors using a five-point rating scale with 5 – To a Very Great Extent, 4 – To a Great Extent, 3 – To a Moderate Extent, 2 – To a Slight Extent, and 1 – Not at All.

Part IV of the questionnaire consisted of 12 structured statements measuring perceived factors associated with underemployment and unemployment, rated using a five-point Likert scale. An additional item (Item 13) provided respondents with an opportunity to specify other factors not covered by the structured statements. Since this item was intended to gather supplementary information, it was not included in the computation of the weighted means and overall mean. The quantitative analysis was therefore based on the 12 structured indicators.

**Part V,** Perceived Relevance of SHS-Acquired Skills, assessed the applicability of competencies developed during Senior High School to graduates' employment experiences. These included communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, information and communication technology, technical skills, leadership, and entrepreneurship. It utilized a five-point Likert scale with 5 – Very Highly Relevant, 4 – Highly Relevant, 3 – Moderately Relevant, 2 – Slightly Relevant, and 1 – Not Relevant. Responses to this part served as supplementary information in interpreting job relevance and designing the proposed intervention program.

**Part VI,** Suggested Interventions, gathered respondents' recommendations regarding programs and support services that the school could provide to address employment-related challenges. The responses served as supplementary information in developing the proposed intervention program.

The questionnaire generated quantitative data for describing employment characteristics, assessing job relevance, and examining differences in employment-related factors. The open-ended responses provided additional information on graduates' experiences and suggested interventions. The collected data were subsequently organized and analyzed according to the objectives and research questions of the study.

**E. Data Gathering Procedure**

The study gathered data from graduates of Baliwasan Senior High School–Stand-Alone (BSHS-SA) who completed their Senior High School education from School Years 2017–2018 to 2025–2026. The data-gathering process involved institutional coordination, identification of eligible graduate respondents, administration of the research questionnaire, and organization of the collected responses.

Before conducting the study, the researchers secured the necessary permission and approval from the concerned school authorities. Available institutional records and communication channels were used to identify and reach graduates covered by the study. The purpose, scope, and procedures of the research were explained to the prospective respondents. Their participation was entirely voluntary, and those who agreed to participate were asked to provide informed consent before answering the questionnaire. They were also informed that they could decline participation or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or negative consequences.

A structured Graduate Tracer Study Questionnaire was administered through Google Forms to obtain information on respondents' educational backgrounds, employment status, job relevance, perceived factors associated with underemployment and unemployment, and recommendations for possible interventions. The questionnaire included closed-ended questions, five-point rating scales, and open-ended items.

Respondents provided information concerning their employment experiences and the challenges they encountered after completing Senior High School. The researchers observed ethical considerations throughout the data-gathering process. The confidentiality and privacy of the respondents were protected, and the information collected was used solely for academic and research purposes. No personally identifiable information was disclosed in the presentation or reporting of the findings. The

researchers ensured that participation did not expose respondents to unnecessary risks, pressure, or discrimination. Data were handled responsibly, stored securely, and accessed only by authorized individuals involved in the research, in accordance with applicable data privacy principles and the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173).

A total of 338 completed responses constituted the dataset used in the study. Following data collection, the responses were compiled, organized, and prepared for analysis. The quantitative responses were tabulated to determine the employment characteristics of the graduates, assess job relevance, identify common employment-related factors, and examine differences according to selected demographic and educational characteristics. Responses to open-ended questions were considered supplementary information in identifying possible interventions.

The collected information served as the basis for interpreting the graduates' employment experiences and developing a proposed intervention program intended to strengthen career guidance, employability development, and employment-related support services at BSHS-SA.

### F. Data Analysis

The data obtained from the 338 graduate respondents were organized, tabulated, and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. The analyses focused on the graduates' employment status, job relevance, perceived factors associated with underemployment and unemployment, and differences in these factors according to selected demographic and educational characteristics. Frequencies and percentages were used to describe graduates' employment status in terms of employment type, nature of work, and position or rank. These measures provided an overview of the respondents' employment circumstances. Weighted means were used to summarize responses to the five-point rating-scale items concerning job relevance and perceived employment-related factors. The results were interpreted according to the response scales established in the research instrument.

Job relevance was analyzed only among the 197 employed respondents, and the resulting weighted mean was interpreted using the following scale: 4.21–5.00 (Very Highly Related), 3.41–4.20 (Highly Related), 2.61–3.40 (Moderately Related), 1.81–2.60 (Slightly Related), and 1.00–1.80 (Not Related). The independent-samples t-test was used to compare employment-related factor scores according to sex, while one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine differences according to SHS strand and track, year graduated, and college course pursued. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 0.05 level. The respondents' suggestions regarding possible interventions were also considered in interpreting the findings and identifying priority areas for graduate support. The results of the statistical analyses, together with relevant recommendations from respondents, served as the basis for developing the proposed intervention program for Baliwasan Senior High School Stand-Alone.

## VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Current employment status of the graduates in terms of employment type.** Table II presents the distribution of the 338 respondents according to their reported employment type.

**Table II. Distribution of Respondents According to Reported Employment Type**

| Employment Type | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Full-time employment | 114 | 33.73 |
| Part-time employment | 49 | 14.50 |
| Self-employment | 25 | 7.40 |
| Contractual/Project-based employment | 9 | 2.66 |
| Casual employment | 0 | 0.00 |
| Unemployed / Currently studying / Other non-employed respondents | 141 | 41.72 |
| Total | 338 | 100.00* |

*Percentages may not total exactly 100.00 due to rounding.

The data show that 114 graduates (33.73%) are employed full-time, while 49 (14.50%) are employed part-time. Another 25 graduates (7.40%) are self-employed, and 9 (2.66%) have contractual or project-based work, while none reported casual employment. Taken together, these figures show that 197 graduates or 58.28% are currently engaged in some form of employment, with full-time employment as the most common type. This means that more than half of the graduates have already entered the workforce, although not all have obtained regular full-time employment. The Philippine Statistics Authority (2026b) reported that employment conditions in the country continue to include a mix of regular, self-employment, and other forms of

work, while the International Labour Organization (Serrière and Elder 2025) emphasized that young people often move through different stages of education, job seeking, and employment before attaining stable work.

On the other hand, 141 graduates (41.72%) reported that they were not employed at the time of the study. This group combines respondents who were unemployed, those who were currently studying, and other non-employed respondents; because these categories were reported together, the figure should not be read as an unemployment rate. Nonetheless, it is a substantial proportion and indicates that a considerable number of graduates have either not yet secured work or have chosen to continue their studies instead of immediately entering employment. Their situation may be related to limited job opportunities, the need for additional qualifications, lack of experience, or the decision to wait for work that is more closely related to their field. The finding is consistent with Orbeta and Potestad (2025), who noted that the transition from education to employment among Filipino graduates is not always immediate and that labor-market entry can differ according to educational background and individual circumstances. This implies that graduation alone does not automatically lead to immediate employment, as graduates may still need time, experience, additional training, or better job opportunities before obtaining suitable work.

Overall, the findings show a mixed employment situation among the graduates. While the majority are already working, a large group remains outside employment, whether because they are unemployed, still studying, or not yet working for other reasons. The relatively high share of full-time workers is encouraging, but the presence of part-time, self-employed, and contractual workers also shows that graduates enter different forms of employment. This is consistent with Tutor, Orbeta, and Miraflor (2021), whose Philippine Graduate Tracer Study found that graduates' transition to work is influenced by factors such as employability, skills, earnings, and the relevance of their college preparation to the jobs they obtain. This implies that BSHS-SA, in coordination with higher education institutions and industry partners, should continue strengthening career guidance, work-based learning, skills development, industry partnerships, and job-placement support to help more graduates move from graduation into stable and appropriate employment.

**Current employment status of the graduates in terms of nature of work.** Table III presents the distribution of the 338 respondents according to the nature of their work.

**Table III. Distribution of Respondents According to Nature of Work**

| Nature of Work | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Private Company | 34 | 10.06 |
| Retail / Business / Entrepreneurship | 33 | 9.76 |
| Government | 30 | 8.88 |
| Information Technology | 24 | 7.10 |
| Healthcare | 22 | 6.51 |
| Hospitality and Tourism | 19 | 5.62 |
| Education | 15 | 4.44 |
| BPO / Call Center | 12 | 3.55 |
| Manufacturing | 11 | 3.25 |
| Non-Government Organization | 3 | 0.89 |
| Freelance / Self-employed | 1 | 0.30 |
| Not Applicable | 6 | 1.78 |
| Not Specified (Blank) | 128 | 37.87 |
| Total | 338 | 100.00* |

*Percentages may not total exactly 100.00 due to rounding. Overlapping categories in the original responses were consolidated.

The data show that, among the 204 respondents who identified a work sector, Private Company accounted for the largest group with 34 graduates (10.06%), followed by Retail/Business/Entrepreneurship with 33 (9.76%), Government with 30 (8.88%), Information Technology with 24 (7.10%), and Healthcare with 22 (6.51%). Other graduates were working in Hospitality and Tourism (5.62%), Education (4.44%), BPO/Call Center (3.55%), Manufacturing (3.25%), and Non-Government Organizations (0.89%). Meanwhile, only one graduate (0.30%) was engaged in freelance or self-employed work. These figures show that graduates have entered a variety of workplaces, although their employment is spread across several sectors rather than concentrated in only one field. This is consistent with the Philippine Statistics Authority (2026a), which reports that employment in the country is distributed across services, industry, and agriculture, with services accounting for the largest share of employed

persons. This implies that graduates are able to find work in different sectors, depending on their qualifications, available opportunities, and the needs of the local labor market.

A considerable 128 respondents (37.87%) left this item blank, while 6 (1.78%) answered Not Applicable, for a combined 134 (39.64%) with no reported work sector. This likely reflects respondents who were not currently working, including those who were unemployed or still pursuing their studies. However, this figure is lower than the 141 non-employed respondents in Table II, which suggests that a few respondents who were not employed still identified a work sector, possibly referring to previous or intended work. The relatively large number suggests that a substantial portion of the graduates had not yet settled into a specific employment sector. The International Labour Organization (2025) emphasized that young people often experience difficulty making a smooth transition from education to stable and decent work, particularly when suitable opportunities are limited or when additional preparation is needed. This implies that graduating from Senior High School does not always lead to immediate placement in a specific industry, and some graduates may need more time, experience, or further education before entering the workforce.

Overall, the results show that the graduates are employed in a range of areas, with private companies, retail/business/entrepreneurship, government, information technology, and healthcare appearing as the more common fields among those with identified employment. The presence of workers in education, hospitality, BPO, manufacturing, non-government organizations, and freelance work also shows that graduates may take different career paths after completing Senior High School. Recent Philippine research by Vargas, Luzon, and Bayudan-Dacuycuy (2026) highlights the importance of job matching, licensure, and the alignment between graduates' education and the work they obtain. At the same time, the PSA (2026a) continues to document differences in employment across industries and occupational groups, showing that opportunities are shaped by the structure of the labor market. This implies that BSHS-SA and its partner institutions should continue strengthening career guidance, industry linkages, practical training, and job-placement programs so that graduates can find work that is stable and related to their knowledge and skills.

**Current employment status of the graduates in terms of position or rank.** Table IV presents the distribution of the 338 respondents according to their position or rank.

**Table IV. Distribution of Respondents According to Position or Rank**

| Consolidated Occupational Category | Included Responses | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rank-and-file / Staff / Associate | Rank-and-file Employee, Rank-and-file, Sales Associate, Administrative Staff, Office Staff, Staff, Associate, Administrative / Clerical | 90 | 26.63 |
| Service and Sales Workers | Service Crew, Customer Service Representative, Service/Sales Worker | 47 | 13.91 |
| Professional | Professional | 27 | 7.99 |
| Teaching Support / Internship | Teacher Aide, Intern | 29 | 8.58 |
| Technical / Skilled Worker | Technical/Skilled Worker | 4 | 1.18 |
| Supervisory | Supervisory | 3 | 0.89 |
| Managerial | Managerial | 3 | 0.89 |
| Self-employed / Business Owner | Business Owner/ Entrepreneur, Self-Employed/ Freelancer | 3 | 0.89 |
| Not Applicable | Explicit responses | 4 | 1.18 |
| Not Specified | Blank responses | 128 | 37.87 |
| Total | | 338 | 100.00* |

*Percentages may not total exactly 100.00 due to rounding. Similar position titles reported by respondents were consolidated into broader occupational categories.

The data reveal that 128 respondents (37.87%) did not specify a position, while 4 (1.18%) answered Not Applicable, for a combined 132 (39.05%) with no reported position or rank. The 206 respondents who reported a position slightly exceed the 197 employed respondents in Table II, which suggests that a few respondents who were not currently employed reported a previous or intended position. Among those with identified positions, Rank-and-file/Staff/Associate positions accounted for the largest share, with 90 graduates (26.63%), followed by Service and Sales Workers with 47 (13.91%), Teaching Support/Internship with 29 (8.58%), and Professional positions with 27 (7.99%). Only a small number held technical or skilled positions, with 4 graduates (1.18%), while supervisory, managerial, and self-employed/business owner positions each accounted for 3 graduates (0.89%). This shows that many graduates are working in entry-level, service-oriented, or support positions rather than in higher-level or professional roles. The Philippine Statistics Authority (2026a) reported that service and sales workers remained one of the largest occupational groups in the country, reflecting the strong role of the service sector in Philippine employment. This implies that graduates may often begin their careers in positions that are accessible to them even when these jobs do not fully reflect their educational qualifications.

The relatively small number of graduates occupying professional, supervisory, and managerial positions may suggest that many are still building the experience and qualifications needed for higher-level work. Likewise, the presence of 29 graduates in teaching support or internship roles and 90 in rank-and-file, staff, or associate positions suggests that some graduates may be starting from lower or transitional positions before moving to more advanced roles. This situation is understandable, especially for recent graduates who are still gaining practical experience and adjusting to workplace demands. The International Labour Organization (2025) emphasized that the transition from education to decent and stable work can be challenging for young people and often takes time as they gain experience and establish themselves in the labor market. This implies that entry-level employment can serve as an important starting point for graduates as they gain experience, improve their skills, and work toward positions that better match their qualifications.

The findings also show that only 3 graduates (0.89%) were classified as self-employed, freelancers, or business owners, indicating that very few respondents had moved into independent or entrepreneurial work. This figure is lower than the 25 respondents who reported self-employment in Table II, which suggests that some self-employed respondents may have described their position using other titles, such as staff or sales associate, rather than identifying themselves as business owners or freelancers. This may suggest that most graduates still prefer or depend on organizational employment rather than creating their own livelihood opportunities. Recent research by Vargas, Luzon, and Bayudan-Dacuycuy (2026) emphasized the importance of job matching and the relationship between educational preparation, professional credentials, and the work graduates eventually obtain. This implies that graduates need stronger career guidance, practical work experience, professional development, and better job-matching support to help them move from entry-level positions into stable jobs that are more closely related to their education, skills, and career goals.

**Extent to which graduates' current employment is related to their SHS strand and track.** Table V presents the extent to which graduates' current employment is related to their SHS strand and track.

**Table V. Extent to Which Graduates' Current Employment Is Related to Their SHS Strand and Track**

| Extent of Relationship | STEM | HUMSS | ABM | TVL | GAS | Total (f) | Weight (x) | Weighted Score (fx) | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Not Related | 9 | 16 | 2 | 10 | 1 | 38 | 1 | 38 | 19.29 |
| Slightly Related | 7 | 13 | 2 | 7 | 9 | 38 | 2 | 76 | 19.29 |
| Moderately Related | 15 | 21 | 3 | 11 | 14 | 64 | 3 | 192 | 32.49 |
| Highly Related | 13 | 10 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 41 | 4 | 164 | 20.81 |
| Very Highly Related | 1 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 16 | 5 | 80 | 8.12 |
| Total | 45 | 64 | 13 | 38 | 37 | 197 | | 550 | 100 |

| Extent of Relationship | STEM | HUMSS | ABM | TVL | GAS | Total (f) | Weight (x) | Weighted Score (fx) | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Weighted Mean | | | | | | | | 2.79 | Moderately Related |

The results presented in Table V show that the graduates' current employment is moderately related to their SHS strand and track, as indicated by the overall weighted mean of 2.79. Among the 197 employed graduates, 64 or 32.49% reported a moderate relationship between their current employment and their SHS specialization. This was followed by 41 or 20.81% who reported a high relationship, 38 or 19.29% who indicated a slight relationship, another 38 or 19.29% who reported no relationship, and 16 or 8.12% who indicated a very high relationship. These findings suggest that although most graduates have jobs that are connected to their SHS preparation, the degree of alignment varies across the different strands and tracks.

Specifically, among the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) graduates, 15 or 33.33% reported that their current employment was moderately related to their strand, while 13 or 28.89% indicated a high relationship. Seven or 15.56% reported a slight relationship, and 9 or 20.00% stated that their employment was not related to STEM. Only 1 or 2.22% reported a very high relationship. This indicates that some STEM graduates are employed in occupations where their scientific, mathematical, and analytical competencies are useful, although others may have pursued careers outside their specialization.

For HUMSS (Humanities and Social Sciences) graduates, 21 or 32.81% reported a moderate relationship between their employment and their strand. Meanwhile, 16 or 25.00% indicated that their jobs were not related, 13 or 20.31% reported a slight relationship, 10 or 15.63% indicated a high relationship, and 4 or 6.25% reported a very high relationship. This suggests that while HUMSS develops communication, critical thinking, social awareness, and interpersonal skills, not all graduates are employed in occupations directly connected to humanities and social sciences.

In the case of ABM (Accountancy, Business, and Management) graduates, 3 or 23.08% reported moderate, high, and very high relationships, respectively. Two or 15.38% indicated that their employment was slightly related, while another 2 or 15.38% reported no relationship. This shows that some ABM graduates may be working in occupations associated with business operations, accounting, finance, and management. However, the small number of employed ABM graduates (13) should be considered when interpreting these results.

Similarly, among TVL (Technical-Vocational-Livelihood) graduates, 11 or 28.95% reported a moderate relationship between their employment and their track. Ten or 26.32% indicated that their jobs were not related, while 7 or 18.42% reported a slight relationship. Furthermore, 6 or 15.79% indicated a high relationship, and 4 or 10.53% reported a very high relationship. These findings suggest that although the TVL track is designed to develop practical, technical, and occupational competencies, some graduates may be employed in jobs outside their technical specialization.

Lastly, among GAS (General Academic Strand) graduates, 14 or 37.84% reported a moderate relationship between their current employment and their strand, representing the highest percentage of moderately related employment among the five SHS strands and tracks. Nine or 24.32% indicated a slight relationship, another 9 or 24.32% reported a high relationship, 4 or 10.81% indicated a very high relationship, and only 1 or 2.70% reported no relationship. This suggests that GAS graduates may enter different occupational fields because of the broad academic preparation provided by their strand.

The findings are supported by the studies of Ramintas-Nieves and Peregrino (2023), Loquias and Bauyot (2024), Gaddi (2024), and Orbeta and Potestad (2025), which generally emphasize the importance of aligning Senior High School education with graduates' career interests and labor market requirements. Their studies show that while the SHS curriculum helps develop relevant technical, academic, and interpersonal competencies, some graduates still experience difficulties finding employment directly related to their chosen strand or track. These findings support the present study, which revealed a moderate level of employment relatedness (weighted mean = 2.79). This implies that schools need to strengthen career guidance, work immersion, and partnerships with industries to ensure that the competencies developed in STEM, HUMSS, ABM, TVL, and GAS are relevant to graduates' future employment opportunities.

**Common factors for underemployment and unemployment among graduates.** Table VI shows the common factors associated with underemployment and unemployment among graduates.

**Table VI. Common Factors Contributing to Underemployment and Unemployment Among BSHS-SA Graduates (N = 338)**

| Statement | Mean | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|
| Low salary offers | 3.58 | To a Great Extent |
| Preference to pursue further studies | 3.56 | To a Great Extent |

| Statement | Mean | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|
| Lack of work experience | 3.54 | To a Great Extent |
| Inadequate communication skills | 3.52 | To a Great Extent |
| Family responsibilities | 3.47 | To a Great Extent |
| Geographic/location limitations | 3.46 | To a Great Extent |
| Financial constraints | 3.45 | To a Great Extent |
| Lack of job opportunities | 3.44 | To a Great Extent |
| Lack of professional network | 3.44 | To a Great Extent |
| Health-related reasons | 3.42 | To a Great Extent |
| Skills mismatch | 3.41 | To a Great Extent |
| Inadequate technical skills | 3.35 | To a Moderate Extent |
| Overall Mean | 3.47 | To a Great Extent |

**Note.** N = 338. The means were derived from the 338 valid responses recorded for the 12 structured items measuring perceived factors associated with underemployment and unemployment. Mean scores were interpreted using the following scale: 4.21–5.00 = To a Very Great Extent; 3.41–4.20 = To a Great Extent; 2.61–3.40 = To a Moderate Extent; 1.81–2.60 = To a Slight Extent; and 1.00–1.80 = Not at All. Item 13 (Other factors) was excluded from the computation of the overall mean because it was intended to capture additional responses rather than measure a predefined factor on the same scale.

The findings reveal that low salary offers obtained the highest mean of 3.58, interpreted as To a Great Extent, indicating that inadequate compensation is the most influential factor affecting the graduates' employment situation. This may be attributed to the increasing cost of living and the financial expectations of graduates who seek employment to support themselves and their families. When employers offer salaries that are insufficient to cover basic needs, transportation, food, and other expenses, graduates may decline available positions, remain unemployed while searching for better opportunities, or accept jobs unrelated to their qualifications. Consequently, low compensation may also discourage graduates from accepting employment in their fields of specialization. This finding is consistent with Parilla and Evangelista (2025), who emphasized that uncompetitive compensation and limited career advancement opportunities encourage skilled individuals to seek better-paying employment elsewhere.

Preference to pursue further studies ranked second, with a mean of 3.56, followed by lack of work experience, with a mean of 3.54, both interpreted as To a Great Extent. This suggests that some graduates consider additional education and training necessary to improve their qualifications, increase their competitiveness, and qualify for better employment opportunities. However, pursuing further studies may also delay their entry into the workforce because of the additional time and financial resources required. Meanwhile, graduates with limited work experience may find it difficult to compete with applicants who already possess practical workplace knowledge and skills. Supporting this finding, Tutor, Orbeta, and Miraflor (2021), in the 4th Philippine Graduate Tracer Study, identified insufficient work experience as one of the major perceived barriers to obtaining a good job among Filipino graduates.

Inadequate communication skills obtained a mean of 3.52, also interpreted as To a Great Extent. This indicates that communication difficulties may reduce graduates' confidence and effectiveness during job interviews, application processes, and workplace interactions. Employers generally expect applicants to express ideas clearly, understand instructions, collaborate with colleagues, and communicate professionally with clients. Graduates who lack these competencies may have difficulty demonstrating their qualifications even when they possess the necessary academic background. Similarly, Aguilar and Torres (2023) identified social and communication skills, together with course-related competencies, as among the most important attributes required of Philippine graduates for employability.

Other factors, including family responsibilities (3.47), geographic or location limitations (3.46), and financial constraints (3.45), were likewise interpreted as To a Great Extent. These findings suggest that employment decisions are not determined solely by educational qualifications and personal competencies but are also influenced by graduates' socioeconomic circumstances. Family responsibilities may require graduates to prioritize caregiving and household needs, limiting their availability for work or relocation. Similarly, geographic limitations may restrict access to employment opportunities, particularly when available positions are concentrated in urban centers or distant locations. Financial constraints may further prevent graduates from attending job interviews, paying transportation expenses, relocating, or participating in additional training programs. These circumstances may consequently reduce their chances of securing suitable employment. Supporting this observation, Tutor, Orbeta, and Miraflor (2021) explained that household conditions and geographical location influence graduates' educational and occupational choices.

Lack of job opportunities and lack of professional networks both obtained a mean of 3.44, interpreted as To a Great Extent. This indicates that even qualified graduates may experience difficulty finding employment when available positions are limited or when they have insufficient connections with individuals and organizations that can provide job referrals and employment information. Professional networks can help graduates learn about vacancies, receive recommendations, and gain access to opportunities that may not be widely advertised. Without these connections, graduates may experience longer periods of job searching. This is consistent with Tutor, Orbeta, and Miraflor (2021), who identified the lack of personal connections as one of the perceived barriers to obtaining good employment among Filipino graduates.

Health-related reasons obtained a mean of 3.42, while skills mismatch received a mean of 3.41, both interpreted as To a Great Extent. Health-related concerns may affect graduates' capacity to perform particular job responsibilities, maintain regular attendance, or accept positions requiring demanding working conditions. Meanwhile, skills mismatch occurs when the knowledge and competencies acquired through formal education do not sufficiently correspond to the qualifications and skills required by employers. Consequently, graduates may find themselves applying for positions outside their areas of specialization or accepting jobs that do not fully utilize their educational preparation. Tutor, Orbeta, and Miraflor (2021) reported evidence of job-education mismatch among Filipino graduates, including concerns about insufficiently developed communication, critical-thinking, and problem-solving skills. Similarly, Parilla and Evangelista (2025) emphasized the importance of aligning academic preparation with industry requirements to improve graduate employability.

However, the lowest mean was recorded for inadequate technical skills, with a mean of 3.35, interpreted as To a Moderate Extent. Although this factor received the lowest rating, it still suggests that technical competencies influence graduates' ability to secure employment. Some graduates may possess the necessary academic qualifications but lack sufficient hands-on experience, specialized knowledge, or familiarity with workplace technologies. Nevertheless, the relatively lower mean indicates that respondents considered other concerns, particularly salary offers, further studies, work experience, and communication skills, more influential in their employment situation. Aguilar and Torres (2023) emphasized that graduates need both course-related competencies and social and communication skills to meet contemporary workplace expectations. Likewise, Parilla and Evangelista (2025) recommended strengthening competency-based training, internships, and industry-academe partnerships to address gaps between academic preparation and actual workplace demands.

The overall mean of 3.47 was interpreted as To a Great Extent, showing that the identified factors generally contribute to underemployment and unemployment among graduates. The findings suggest that the issue is not caused by only one factor. Rather, graduates' employment situations may be affected by salary expectations, decisions to pursue further studies, limited work experience, communication skills, family responsibilities, location, financial resources, availability of jobs, professional connections, health concerns, and the match between their skills and available work. These findings are consistent with recent discussions by the International Labour Organization (2024), which emphasize the continuing challenges faced by young people in making the transition from education to decent work. The World Economic Forum (2025) also stresses that employers increasingly look for a combination of technical skills, human skills, and adaptable competencies.

In the Philippine setting, recent labor-market reports from the Philippine Statistics Authority (2025) likewise show the continuing importance of employment quality and access to appropriate work opportunities. This implies that reducing graduate underemployment and unemployment requires more than simply producing degree holders; it calls for better preparation for employment, stronger school-to-work linkages, practical work experience, appropriate skills development, career guidance, and access to decent and fairly compensated jobs.

**Significant difference in the common factors for underemployment and unemployment among graduates when they are categorized according to sex.** Table VII presents the test of significant difference in the common factors associated with underemployment and unemployment among graduates when grouped according to sex.

**Table VII. Significant Difference in the Common Factors for Underemployment and Unemployment Among Graduates According to Sex**

| Common Factors | Sex | Mean | t-value | p-value | Decision | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Underemployment and Unemployment | Male (n = 178) | 3.5398 | 1.743 | .082 | Fail to reject Ho | Not Significant |
| | Female (n = 160) | 3.3906 | | | | |

**Note.** Tested at the α = 0.05 level of significance.

Male graduates obtained a mean of 3.54, interpreted as To a Great Extent, while female graduates obtained a mean of 3.39, interpreted as To a Moderate Extent. Although male graduates reported a slightly higher mean, the difference between the two

groups was small (0.15). This finding is supported by the Philippine Statistics Authority (2026a), which reports employment and unemployment indicators separately by sex, reflecting variations in labor-market outcomes between male and female workers.

The computed t-value of 1.743 and p-value of .082 indicate that the difference is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected, suggesting that graduates' assessments of underemployment and unemployment factors do not differ significantly according to sex. This implies that male and female graduates generally perceive similar employment challenges, so career support may address their common needs while remaining sensitive to individual circumstances. Although the International Labour Organization (2025) identified persistent gender disparities in labor-market participation and employment outcomes as a global concern, such disparities were not evident in the graduates' perceived employment-related factors in the present study.

Although male graduates obtained a slightly higher mean (3.54) than female graduates (3.39), the difference was not statistically significant and may be attributed to chance. Both groups perceived employment-related challenges, such as low salary offers, lack of work experience, and limited job opportunities, at broadly similar levels. Any differences in employment expectations, family and financial responsibilities, or the types of jobs sought should therefore be treated as matters for further investigation rather than as explanations supported by the present data.

This result differs from Tutor, Orbeta, and Miraflor (2021), whose 4th Philippine Graduate Tracer Study found that underemployment was significantly higher among male graduates than female graduates. The difference may be explained by the fact that the present study measured graduates' perceptions of employment-related factors rather than actual underemployment rates, and that its respondents were Senior High School graduates rather than college graduates.

Even without a significant difference between male and female graduates, individual employment challenges may still be shaped by the types of jobs graduates pursue, family responsibilities, workplace expectations, access to employment opportunities, and broader socioeconomic conditions. The Philippine Statistics Authority (2026a) provides labor-force statistics disaggregated by sex, reinforcing the importance of examining employment outcomes across male and female groups rather than treating graduates as a homogeneous population. Accordingly, career guidance, employment assistance, and job-matching initiatives should consider the varying needs and circumstances of graduates to help address underemployment and unemployment.

Furthermore, since male and female graduates shared broadly similar concerns, the findings support school-based career guidance and graduate employment support programs that address the common needs of all graduates. Baliwasan Senior High School Stand-Alone may strengthen career orientation activities, establish partnerships with local employers, and provide information on employment and skills development opportunities. Regular graduate tracer studies may also help identify emerging challenges experienced by male and female graduates and inform more responsive interventions. These initiatives may contribute to improving employability, facilitating school-to-work transitions, and reducing graduates' vulnerability to underemployment and unemployment.

**Significant difference in the common factors for underemployment and unemployment among graduates when they are categorized according to SHS strand and track.** Table VIII shows the test of significant difference in the common factors for underemployment and unemployment among graduates when grouped according to their SHS strand and track.

**Table VIII. Significant Difference in the Common Factors for Underemployment and Unemployment Among Graduates According to SHS Strand and Track**

| Common Factors | SHS strand and track | Mean | F-value | p-value | Decision | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Underemployment and Unemployment | STEM (n = 78) | 3.5256 | 1.736 df = (4, 333) | .142 | Failed to reject Ho | Not Significant |
| | HUMSS (n = 114) | 3.4642 | | | | |
| | ABM (n = 18) | 3.0139 | | | | |
| | TVL (n = 68) | 3.4718 | | | | |
| | GAS (n = 60) | 3.5389 | | | | |

**Note.** Tested at the α = 0.05 level of significance.

The mean ratings were 3.5389 for GAS (n = 60), 3.5256 for STEM (n = 78), 3.4718 for TVL (n = 68), and 3.4642 for HUMSS (n = 114), all interpreted as To a Great Extent, while ABM (n = 18) obtained a mean rating of 3.0139, interpreted as To a Moderate Extent. Although the means varied across the different strands and tracks, the differences were not statistically significant, as shown by F(4, 333) = 1.736 and p = .142, which is higher than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not

rejected, indicating that there is no significant difference in the common factors for underemployment and unemployment among graduates when grouped according to SHS strand and track. This implies that graduates from different SHS strands and tracks generally experience similar employment-related concerns despite having different academic backgrounds.

The result suggests that underemployment and unemployment may be influenced by factors that are common across strands, such as salary offers, further studies, work experience, communication skills, family responsibilities, financial limitations, job availability, and access to professional networks. This finding is consistent with Orbeta and Potestad (2025), who found that the labor-market outcomes of SHS graduates were mixed and emphasized the need to continuously examine the work-preparation component of the SHS curriculum and strengthen engagement between schools and employers. Their study also found that many SHS graduates continue with further education rather than immediately entering the labor market. This implies that the employment situation of graduates cannot be explained by their SHS strand alone, since other educational, personal, and labor-market factors also influence their transition to work.

The finding is also supported by Punongbayan and Arapoc (2025), whose study on SHS track and college-degree mismatch found that strand alignment matters in some fields, particularly science and engineering, but does not produce a significant academic penalty across most degree programs. Similarly, Hasigan and Accad (2025) reported that many TVL graduates pursued higher education even though the track was designed to prepare learners for work, showing that graduates' post-school decisions are influenced by broader considerations beyond their SHS track. This implies that efforts to address graduate underemployment and unemployment should focus not only on the strand or track completed but also on strengthening career guidance, work experience, skills development, job matching, and stronger links between schools and the labor market.

**Significant difference in the common factors for underemployment and unemployment among graduates when they are categorized according to year graduated.** Table IX presents the test of significant difference in the common factors associated with underemployment and unemployment among graduates of Baliwasan Senior High School Stand-Alone when grouped according to year graduated.

**Table IX. Significant Difference in the Common Factors for Underemployment and Unemployment Among Graduates According to Year Graduated**

| Common Factors | Year Graduated | Mean | F-value | p-value | Decision | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Underemployment and Unemployment | 2018 (n = 29) | 3.2270 | 2.369 df = (8, 329) | .017* | Reject Ho | Significant |
| | 2019 (n = 36) | 3.2917 | | | | |
| | 2020 (n = 57) | 3.3187 | | | | |
| | 2021 (n = 40) | 3.4875 | | | | |
| | 2022 (n = 34) | 3.8284 | | | | |
| | 2023 (n = 19) | 3.5921 | | | | |
| | 2024 (n = 47) | 3.5975 | | | | |
| | 2025 (n = 37) | 3.3198 | | | | |
| | 2026 (n = 39) | 3.6282 | | | | |

*Significant at the α = 0.05 level.

The mean ratings ranged from 3.23 among the 2018 graduates (n = 29) to 3.83 among the 2022 graduates (n = 34), indicating variations in how graduating cohorts perceived employment-related challenges. The 2022 graduates recorded the highest mean rating, suggesting greater agreement with the identified employment-related factors, while the 2018 graduates obtained the lowest mean. The difference of 0.60 reflects variations in graduates' reported experiences and perceptions. These differences may be associated with employment opportunities, employer expectations, economic conditions, and the timing of graduates' entry into the labor market. Different cohorts may have encountered varying recruitment practices, occupational requirements, and competition for available positions. However, these explanations remain tentative because the study did not directly examine labor-market conditions experienced by each cohort. Bayudan-Dacuycuy et al. (2025) emphasized the relevance of education–occupation mismatch to employment outcomes, suggesting that differences between educational preparation and workplace requirements may contribute to employment-related challenges.

The analysis of variance yielded F(8, 329) = 2.369 and p = .017, indicating a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level of significance. Based on the reported results, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the common factors associated with underemployment and unemployment when graduates are grouped according to year graduated is

rejected. This suggests that mean assessments were not statistically equivalent across all graduating cohorts. However, the significant ANOVA result does not establish that every cohort differed from the others. Post hoc comparisons would be necessary to identify the specific groups responsible for the observed differences. Moreover, variations should not be attributed solely to graduation year because educational attainment, work experience, employment history, and time since graduation may also influence graduates' assessments. Thus, the findings indicate an association between graduating cohort and perceived employment-related challenges rather than a causal relationship.

The findings have important implications for strengthening career guidance and employment assistance programs at Baliwasan Senior High School Stand-Alone. Differences across graduating cohorts suggest that uniform graduate support may not adequately address their varying employment circumstances. Earlier graduates may have accumulated work experience, pursued higher education, or encountered opportunities for career advancement, whereas recent graduates may still be transitioning from school to employment. Although these possibilities were not directly examined, they highlight the need for responsive career development services. Recent graduates may benefit from job-search strategies, interview training, and access to entry-level employment, while earlier graduates experiencing difficulties may require skills upgrading, career redirection, and stronger employer connections. Orbeta and Potestad (2025) examined the employability of Senior High School graduates in the Philippines, providing relevant context for strengthening school-to-work transition initiatives. Partnerships with employers, training institutions, and employment agencies may help the school develop interventions responsive to graduates' changing needs.

Furthermore, the significant differences across graduating cohorts underscore the importance of regular graduate tracer studies in evidence-based planning and continuous school improvement. Establishing a systematic monitoring mechanism may help Baliwasan Senior High School Stand-Alone track employment status, job relevance, educational progression, and recurring employment barriers across graduation years. Comparing successive cohorts may reveal emerging challenges, identify graduates requiring assistance, and provide feedback on the alignment of SHS competencies with workplace expectations. These findings may guide improvements in career guidance, work immersion, employability training, and school–industry partnerships. Nevertheless, cohort differences should be interpreted alongside other relevant characteristics rather than attributed exclusively to graduation year. Overall, the results provide a basis for targeted, data-informed interventions that address employment-related challenges and strengthen graduates' career readiness and employment opportunities.

**Significant difference in the common factors for underemployment and unemployment among graduates when they are categorized according to college course.** Table X presents the results on the common factors for underemployment and unemployment among graduates when grouped according to their college course.

**Table X. Significant Difference in the Common Factors for Underemployment and Unemployment Among Graduates According to College Course**

| Common Factors | College Course | Mean | F-value | p-value | Decision | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Underemployment and Unemployment | Education/ Teacher Education (n = 51) | 3.6650 | 6.772 df = (11, 326) | < .001* | Reject Ho | Significant |
| | Business/ Accountancy/ Management (n = 21) | 3.5159 | | | | |
| | Information Technology/ Computer Studies (n = 14) | 3.8869 | | | | |
| | Engineering/ Architecture (n = 20) | 3.9292 | | | | |
| | Health Sciences/ Nursing/ | 3.5811 | | | | |

| Common Factors | College Course | Mean | F-value | p-value | Decision | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pharmacy/ Medicine (n = 38) | | | | | |
| | Criminology/ Law/ Public Safety (n = 19) | 3.6491 | | | | |
| | Social Sciences/ Psychology/ Communication (n = 9) | 3.6204 | | | | |
| | Agriculture/ Fisheries/ Environmental (n = 3) | 3.8611 | | | | |
| | Arts/ Languages/ Humanities (n = 17) | 3.6667 | | | | |
| | Science/ Mathematics (n = 11) | 4.0303 | | | | |
| | Public Administration/ Political Science (n = 23) | 3.6957 | | | | |
| | Other College Program (n = 0) | — | | | | |
| | Not Applicable/ No Further Study (n = 112) | 3.0141 | | | | |

*Significant at the α = 0.05 level.

The findings show differences in the mean ratings across the various fields of study. Graduates from Science/Mathematics (n = 11) obtained the highest mean of 4.03, followed by Engineering/Architecture (n = 20) with 3.93, Information Technology/Computer Studies (n = 14) with 3.89, and Agriculture/Fisheries/Environmental (n = 3) with 3.86, all interpreted as To a Great Extent. The remaining college programs obtained means between 3.52 and 3.70, also interpreted as To a Great Extent, while no respondents reported taking an Other College Program. On the other hand, graduates classified under Not Applicable/No Further Study (n = 112) obtained the lowest mean of 3.01, interpreted as To a Moderate Extent, and were the only group below the To a Great Extent level. The results show that graduates from different courses may have different experiences and concerns regarding employment. This implies that the employment situation of graduates may be influenced by the field they studied and the kinds of jobs available to them.

The results, $F(11, 326) = 6.772$ and $p < .001$, show that the difference among the groups is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, which means that there is a significant difference in the common factors for underemployment and unemployment when graduates are grouped according to college course. This suggests that the challenges graduates face in finding suitable work are not the same across all fields. Some courses may have more available jobs, while others may have fewer opportunities or may require specific qualifications, licenses, or skills. This implies that the course completed by graduates can affect the type and level of employment opportunities available to them.

The highest mean obtained by graduates from Science/Mathematics (4.03) suggests that these graduates perceived employment-related challenges to a greater extent than those from other fields of study. Together with Engineering/Architecture and Information Technology/Computer Studies, these are specialized, discipline-based programs whose graduates often seek

positions that require specific technical qualifications, licensure, or advanced training. While still completing their studies or entering the labor market, such graduates may find that available jobs offer lower salaries than expected or do not fully match their specialization. They may also lack the work experience that employers in technical fields commonly require. However, because the Science/Mathematics (n = 11) and Agriculture/Fisheries/Environmental (n = 3) groups were small, their means should be interpreted with caution.

The finding is supported by the study of Tutor, Orbeta, and Miraflor (2021), which identified differences in employment outcomes across academic disciplines and reported indications of job-education mismatch among Filipino graduates. Similarly, research on field-of-study mismatch indicates that graduates may have difficulty finding positions that fully utilize their academic knowledge and skills, particularly when available jobs do not match their specialization. These findings support the possibility that graduates from specialized programs such as Science/Mathematics, Engineering/Architecture, and Information Technology/Computer Studies may experience greater employment-related challenges when suitable discipline-specific positions are limited.

In contrast, graduates classified under Not Applicable/No Further Study obtained the lowest mean of 3.01, interpreted as To a Moderate Extent. This suggests that graduates who did not pursue further studies perceived the identified employment-related factors to a lesser extent than those who enrolled in college programs. One possible explanation is that these graduates may have entered work directly after Senior High School, often in entry-level positions that do not require degree-specific qualifications, so factors such as skills mismatch and the preference to pursue further studies may be less relevant to their situation. Because this group was the largest (n = 112) and the only one without a college course, it likely contributed substantially to the significant overall difference. However, the relatively lower mean does not necessarily mean that these graduates are free from employment difficulties; rather, it indicates that they perceived the identified factors as less influential in their employment situation.

Returning to the Science/Mathematics group, its high mean may be related to the study of Ramos (2025), which examined the employability of Bachelor of Science in Mathematics graduates in a Philippine state college. The study found that 67 out of 78 graduates were employed, although only about half reported that their jobs were related to their degree program. Similarly, Paler and Roble (2021), in their study of Mathematics Education graduates at the University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines, examined the employability and satisfaction of mathematics graduates, highlighting the relevance of their academic preparation to employment. These studies suggest that although science and mathematics graduates develop competencies useful in different occupational settings, alignment between their qualifications and actual job responsibilities remains an important concern, which may help explain the high mean obtained by Science/Mathematics graduates in the present study.

The result is supported by Bayudan-Dacuycuy, Vargas, and Luzon (2025), who pointed out that education and occupation mismatch continues to affect employment outcomes in the Philippines. Their study showed that graduates generally have better employment outcomes when their education is closely related to the work they obtain. Vargas, Luzon, and Bayudan-Dacuycuy (2026) likewise emphasized the importance of job matching in improving labor-market outcomes. These findings are also consistent with Monteverde et al. (2025), who noted that the gap between workers' skills and industry requirements can contribute to underemployment. In addition, the World Economic Forum (2025) reported that employers continue to face skills gaps as workplace requirements change. This implies that BSHS-SA, together with partner colleges and universities, needs to strengthen career preparation, practical training, skills development, and industry linkages so that graduates from different fields are better prepared for jobs that match their education and abilities.

**Proposed intervention program.** On the basis of the findings, a proposed intervention program has been developed to address the common factors contributing to underemployment and unemployment among graduates of Baliwasan Senior High School Stand-Alone. The program aims to strengthen graduates' employability, career readiness, access to employment opportunities, and alignment of educational preparation with labor-market demands. It also considers differences in employment experiences according to year graduated and college course. Its implementation may involve collaboration among the school, alumni, higher education institutions, government agencies, and industry partners.

The proposed intervention program consists of the following components:

**Career Guidance and Job-Matching Services.** Provide regular career counseling, career profiling, labor-market information, and job-matching assistance to help graduates identify employment opportunities aligned with their educational background, skills, interests, and career goals. Career orientation sessions and job referrals may also support informed employment decisions.

**Employability and Communication Skills Enhancement.** Conduct training on communication skills, interview techniques, résumé and application letter writing, workplace communication, digital literacy, and other employability competencies. This

addresses the finding that inadequate communication skills and lack of work experience contribute to underemployment and unemployment to a great extent. Practical workshops and simulated interviews may further strengthen workplace readiness.

**Work Experience and Industry Exposure Program.** Strengthen partnerships with companies, government agencies, and other organizations to facilitate internships, apprenticeships, work-based learning, and entry-level employment opportunities. These initiatives may provide practical workplace exposure and help graduates overcome employment barriers associated with limited work experience.

**Skills Matching and Career Upskilling Program.** Facilitate short-term training, certification programs, and skills enhancement activities based on industry requirements. Emphasis should be placed on addressing skills mismatch and developing technical, digital, and transferable skills. Partnerships with training institutions and government agencies may provide graduates with additional qualifications to improve their employment prospects.

**Professional Networking and Employment Linkages.** Establish graduate-employer networks through career fairs, alumni associations, industry forums, mentoring, and professional networking activities. These initiatives may strengthen connections with prospective employers and improve access to job vacancies, employment information, and professional guidance.

**Entrepreneurship and Alternative Livelihood Support.** Provide entrepreneurship orientation, financial literacy, basic business management training, and mentoring for graduates interested in self-employment or business ventures. This responds to the small proportion of respondents classified as self-employed, freelancers, or entrepreneurs and encourages alternative income-generating opportunities.

**Financial and Geographic Employment Assistance.** Coordinate with local government units, employment agencies, and other stakeholders to provide information on accessible job opportunities, financial assistance, and livelihood programs. When feasible, graduates may be referred to available transportation, relocation, or employment support services to address financial and geographic limitations.

**Cohort- and Course-Responsive Career Support.** Develop career interventions that consider the differing employment experiences of various graduating cohorts and graduates from different college courses. Since significant differences were identified according to year graduated and college course, career support activities may be adjusted to address their specific employment concerns and changing labor-market conditions.

**Education-Industry Alignment and Monitoring.** Strengthen collaboration among schools, higher education institutions, employers, local government units, and employment agencies to identify labor-market needs and align educational preparation with employment opportunities. This is particularly relevant to the finding that graduates' current employment was only moderately related to their SHS strand and track (weighted mean = 2.79). Regular graduate tracer studies may also support skills-gap identification, career guidance improvements, and employment monitoring.

Overall, the proposed intervention program provides a coordinated approach to addressing graduates' employment-related challenges. Through stakeholder collaboration, Baliwasan Senior High School Stand-Alone may strengthen career development initiatives, improve graduates' employability, and promote access to suitable employment opportunities. The program may also guide future monitoring, evaluation, and evidence-based school improvement. Table XI summarizes the suggested program matrix.

**Table XI. Suggested Program Matrix**

| Intervention Area | Key Activities | Target Beneficiaries | Persons/ Agencies Involved | Expected Outcome |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Career Guidance & Job Matching | Career counselling, profiling, job referrals, labor-market information | Unemployed/underemployed graduates | Schools, career counsellors | Better job matching |
| Communication & Employability Skills | Interview, résumé writing, communication and workplace skills training | Graduates seeking employment | Schools, trainers, employers | Improved employability |
| Work Experience | Internship, apprenticeship, work-based learning | Fresh graduates | Employers, schools, LGUs | Increased work experience |

| Intervention Area | Key Activities | Target Beneficiaries | Persons/ Agencies Involved | Expected Outcome |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Skills Upskilling | Technical training, certification, digital skills | Graduates with skills gaps | TESDA, HEIs, industry partners | Reduced skills mismatch |
| Professional Networking | Career fairs, alumni mentoring, industry forums | Graduates | Alumni, employers, professional groups | Expanded professional networks |
| Entrepreneurship | Business orientation, financial literacy, mentoring | Interested graduates | LGUs, business groups, agencies | Increased self-employment opportunities |
| Financial/Geographic Assistance | Employment referrals, relocation/transport support where feasible | Financially constrained graduates | LGUs, PESO, partner agencies | Greater access to jobs |
| Monitoring & Follow-up | Graduate tracking and employment monitoring | All graduates | Schools/HEIs | Sustained employment and program improvement |
| Cohort- and Course-Responsive Career Support | Conduct career-needs assessments; provide individualized career counseling, cohort-specific employment orientations, course-aligned job referrals, and targeted employability workshops based on identified graduate needs. | Graduates from different graduating cohorts and graduates pursuing different college courses or educational pathways. | School guidance counselors, alumni coordinators, HEIs, PESO, LGUs, and industry partners. | More responsive and inclusive career support aligned with graduates' educational backgrounds, employment circumstances, and identified needs. |

## VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the employment status of Baliwasan Senior High School Stand-Alone graduates varies in terms of employment type, nature of work, and position or rank. While many graduates are employed, a considerable number remain unemployed, pursue further studies, or seek employment. Graduates are engaged in various sectors, with many occupying service, sales, administrative, and entry-level positions. The graduates' current employment is moderately related to their SHS strand or track, indicating that their work does not always directly correspond to their academic specialization. The factors affecting underemployment and unemployment are experienced to a great extent. Low salary offers, preference for further studies, lack of work experience, and inadequate communication skills are among the most common challenges encountered by graduates. Significant differences exist in the perceived factors affecting underemployment and unemployment when graduates are grouped according to year graduated and college course. However, no significant differences were found when grouped according to sex and SHS strand and track.

The study contributes to the understanding of graduate employability and school-to-work transition by highlighting the relationship between educational preparation, employment outcomes, and the challenges encountered by graduates. It emphasizes that completing Senior High School does not necessarily guarantee immediate employment or work aligned with one's specialization. Practically, the findings may guide Baliwasan Senior High School Stand-Alone in strengthening career guidance, work immersion, employability skills development, industry partnerships, and graduate employment monitoring. These initiatives may help improve graduates' career readiness, job matching, and access to suitable employment opportunities.

**B. Recommendations**

The study recommends that the Department of Education (DepEd) strengthen career guidance, career pathway programs, work immersion, and industry partnerships to better align students' academic preparation with employment opportunities. Senior high schools, colleges, and universities are encouraged to enhance career orientation, communication and technical skills training, internships, work-based learning, and job-placement services to improve graduates' employability. Employers and industry partners may provide more apprenticeship, internship, and entry-level employment opportunities while collaborating with educational institutions to identify relevant workplace competencies.

Local government units (LGUs) and employment agencies may strengthen job-matching services, employment fairs, career counseling, and labor-market information systems, particularly for graduates facing financial and geographical barriers. Graduates are encouraged to continuously improve their competencies, gain practical work experience, expand professional networks, and pursue further education and training. Policymakers may review and enhance existing policies on career guidance, industry-academe partnerships, graduate employment tracking, job placement, skills mismatch, and access to fairly compensated employment. Finally, future researchers may investigate employment-related challenges across different demographic and academic groups and evaluate the effectiveness of career guidance, work immersion, and employment support programs in improving graduate employability.

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