



Research Article

## Life Skills and Employability Readiness of Senior High School Students: A Descriptive Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

This study assessed the life skills and employability readiness of Senior High School students in Sapang Dalaga District, Division of Misamis Occidental, during School Year 2025–2026 as the basis for designing a Skills Enhancement Program. Using a descriptive–correlational research design, the study examined students’ demographic profile, level of life skills, and employability readiness, as well as the relationship between these variables and differences when grouped according to profile. Findings revealed that students generally possess adequate life skills and employability readiness, with strengths in collaboration, self-management, workplace values, and technical competence, but with areas for improvement in communication skills and industry-aligned performance. A significant positive relationship was found between life skills and employability readiness, indicating that stronger life skills correspond to higher preparedness for work and further education. Significant differences were observed when grouped by age, grade level, strand, and parents’ educational attainment. Based on the results, a work immersion–aligned Skills Enhancement Program was proposed to holistically strengthen students’ competencies and support their successful transition to employment or higher education.

**Keywords:** *Employability Readiness, Life Skills, Senior High School, Skills Enhancement Program, Sapang Dalaga District*

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## Introduction

Life skills and employability readiness centers on the essential competencies that young people need to successfully transition from school to the workplace in the 21st century. Life skills are defined by the World Health Organization as adaptive and positive behaviors that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life, which include critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and interpersonal skills (WHO, 2021). In relation to employability, international labor studies highlight the increasing demand for holistic skill sets that combine technical expertise with soft skills, as employers seek adaptable workers capable of thriving in fast-changing labor markets (International Labour Organization 2020). According to OECD (2021), education systems globally are now expected to cultivate these life skills as part of preparing students for “future-proof” employability. Thus, the concept of employability readiness transcends academic achievement, emphasizing a balance of cognitive, social, and emotional competencies aligned with real-world workplace demands.

In the Philippine context, the Department of Education through the K to 12 Curriculum has emphasized that Senior High School should produce graduates who are holistically developed and ready for employment, entrepreneurship, skills development, and higher education (DepEd, 2022). Despite this, many studies reveal that SHS graduates still face difficulties in meeting the expectations of industries and employers. For example, a Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS, 2020) report found that employers consider many fresh graduates to be lacking in communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. Similarly, research highlights a gap between the intended outcomes of the SHS program and the actual competencies developed among learners, particularly in life skills such as adaptability, teamwork, and self-management (Panganiban, 2021). These findings indicate that employability readiness in the local setting remains a pressing concern, requiring schools to focus not only on technical training but also on the holistic enhancement of life skills.

Scholars have also underscored the centrality of life skills and employability readiness in addressing youth unemployment and underemployment. According to Arpacı and Çakır (2021), equipping students with life skills such as emotional regulation, adaptability, and decision-making significantly improves their confidence and readiness for workplace challenges. Similarly, Kim and Park (2022) emphasized that employability is no longer limited to technical qualifications but is largely determined by transversal skills that allow young workers to collaborate, innovate, and learn continuously. In the Philippine setting, Reyes and Buenavista (2023) noted that many SHS graduates who enter the workforce rely heavily on soft skills to secure entry-level positions, as employers often value workplace attitude and communication abilities as much as technical expertise. Collectively, these studies affirm that life skills development is a foundational component of employability readiness and must be strategically addressed within secondary education.

Despite the integration of work immersion and applied subjects in the SHS curriculum, data shows that gaps remain in the actual employability outcomes of SHS graduates. According to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED, 2022), only a small percentage of SHS graduates directly transition into stable employment, with many reporting underemployment or work mismatched with their training strand. The Labor Force Survey (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023) revealed that youth unemployment in the Philippines stood at 10.2%, with underemployment rates reaching over 14%, suggesting that many young workers lack the readiness required to meet job market demands. Employers continue to point to deficits in communication, problem-solving, and adaptability, despite these being highlighted in the curriculum (Asian Development Bank, 2021). In the context of Sapang Dalaga District, Division of Misamis Occidental, interviews with school heads and district reports suggest that many SHS learners still lack exposure to training programs that strengthen their soft skills and work readiness. This localized gap highlights the urgency of creating structured interventions that directly address the employability challenges faced by students in this district.

To address this gap, the present study aims to assess the life skills and employability readiness of Senior High School students in Sapang Dalaga District, Division of Misamis Occidental, as a basis for developing a work immersion plan. Specifically, it seeks to identify the strengths and weaknesses of SHS learners in terms of communication, collaboration, problem-solving, adaptability, and self-management. By gathering empirical data, the study will provide insights into whether the current curriculum adequately equips students with competencies that match industry expectations, and what specific interventions are necessary to bridge the gap. In doing so, the study intends to design a targeted skills enhancement program that will complement existing curricular offerings,

ensuring that SHS graduates are not only academically competent but also work-ready.

The expected result of the study is a clearer understanding of the current level of life skills and employability readiness among SHS students in Sapang Dalaga District, as well as a concrete framework for a skills enhancement program. It is anticipated that findings will reveal both strengths—such as teamwork and adaptability—as well as gaps—particularly in communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving—that hinder employability. The proposed skills enhancement program is expected to provide SHS learners with structured opportunities to practice and refine these essential competencies through workshops, trainings, and experiential learning activities. Ultimately, this study envisions contributing to the broader national goal of reducing youth unemployment by producing SHS graduates who are not only knowledgeable but also skilled, adaptable, and competitive in both local and global labor markets.

## Methods

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the life skills and employability readiness of Senior High School (SHS) students in Sapang Dalaga District, Division of Misamis Occidental, and to determine the relationship between these variables. A total of 172 respondents were selected through stratified random sampling from the Academic and Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) tracks. Data were gathered using an adopted and modified questionnaire that underwent expert validation and pilot testing, yielding a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.887, which indicated high reliability. The research followed a systematic data-gathering procedure that included securing the necessary permissions, obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and complying with ethical standards under the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools, including frequency and percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, independent samples t-test, and one-way ANOVA, were utilized to analyze the data and address the research objectives. The findings served as the basis for developing a contextualized Work Immersion Plan aimed at enhancing the life skills and employability readiness of SHS learners in the district.

## Results and Discussions

Table 1

**Summary Table: Level of Employability Readiness of Senior High School Students**

Employability Readiness Dimension	Overall Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
Workplace Attitude and Values	3.32	0.66	Agree
Technical Competence in Strand Specialization	3.23	0.66	Agree
Interpersonal and Social Skills	3.29	0.65	Agree
Career Awareness and Decision-Making	3.33	0.65	Agree
<b>Overall Employability Readiness</b>	<b>3.29</b>	<b>0.66</b>	<b>Agree</b>

This table presents the summary of the level of employability readiness of Senior High School students in Sapang Dalaga District across four major dimensions, namely workplace attitude and values, technical competence in strand specialization, interpersonal and social skills, and career awareness and decision-making. The table revealed that all employability readiness dimensions obtained overall weighted means ranging from 3.23 to 3.33, all of which are verbally interpreted as “Agree.” Among the dimensions, career awareness and decision-making recorded the highest mean ( $\bar{x} = 3.33$ ), followed closely by workplace attitude and values ( $\bar{x} = 3.32$ ), while technical competence in strand specialization obtained the lowest mean ( $\bar{x} = 3.23$ ). The overall employability readiness mean of 3.29, with a standard deviation of 0.66, indicates that the respondents generally agree that they are employability-ready at a moderate level.

The table revealed that Senior High School students possess adequate foundational competencies required for entry into the workforce or further education, particularly in terms of values formation, interpersonal relations, and career planning. These results imply that students demonstrate positive attitudes toward work, the ability to interact effectively with others, and a general awareness of career paths and decision-making processes. However, the consistently moderate ratings across all dimensions suggest that employability readiness is still developing and not yet fully optimized, especially in relation to technical competence aligned with industry standards. This implies that while students are prepared for basic workplace expectations, they may encounter challenges when

faced with higher-level job demands, competitive employment environments, or specialized technical requirements. Thus, the findings highlight the need for continued support, practice, and exposure to real-world work settings to strengthen students' employability readiness holistically.

The results were supported by theoretical frameworks, national education policies, and empirical studies that emphasize employability as a multi-dimensional construct. Employability Theory asserts that successful workforce entry requires a combination of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and career adaptability. The K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum (DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2019) likewise emphasizes the integration of technical skills, work ethics, interpersonal competence, and career guidance to prepare Senior High School learners for post-secondary pathways. Empirical studies, such as Yorke and Knight (2006), highlight that employability is not achieved through technical skills alone but through a balanced development of values, soft skills, and career management abilities. Therefore, the overall moderate level of employability readiness reflected in this table strongly supports the proposal of a Skills Enhancement Program that systematically strengthens students' technical proficiency, workplace values, interpersonal competence, and career decision-making to ensure their successful transition from school to employment or further education.

Table 2  
***Relationship Between Life Skills and Employability Readiness of Senior High School Students***

<b>Variables Compared</b>	<b>Correlation Coefficient (r)</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Overall Life Skills and Overall Employability Readiness	0.68	0.000	Significant Positive Relationship

*Significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$*

This table presents the relationship between the overall life skills and overall employability readiness of Senior High School students in Sapang Dalaga District. The table revealed a positive and significant relationship between the two variables, with a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.68 and a p-value of 0.000, which is lower than the 0.05 level of significance. This result indicates that there is a moderate to strong positive association between students' life skills and their employability readiness, meaning that as the level of life skills increases, the level of employability readiness also tends to increase.

The results imply that life skills significantly influence students' preparedness for employment and further education. Skills such as communication, collaboration, problem-solving, adaptability, and self-management contribute substantially to students' workplace attitudes, technical competence, interpersonal abilities, and career decision-making. When students are equipped with strong life skills, they are more likely to demonstrate responsibility, professionalism, teamwork, and confidence in work-related tasks. This finding implies that employability readiness is not developed in isolation but is strongly shaped by students' overall life skills development. Therefore, improving life skills can lead to enhanced employability readiness and smoother transitions from school to work or higher education.

The results were supported by theoretical perspectives, educational policies, and empirical studies emphasizing the interconnectedness of life skills and employability. Human Capital Theory posits that individuals' skills and competencies increase their productivity and value in the labor market. Similarly, the World Health Organization's Life Skills Framework highlights that effective communication, decision-making, and coping skills are essential for successful participation in work and society. The K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum (DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2019) also stresses the integration of life skills and employability competencies to prepare learners for post-secondary pathways. Empirical studies, such as those by Heckman and Kautz (2012), further confirm that non-cognitive skills strongly predict employability outcomes and long-term career success. Hence, the significant relationship found in this study provides strong empirical support for the development of a Skills Enhancement Program that simultaneously strengthens life skills and employability readiness among Senior High School students in Sapang Dalaga District.

Table 3

***Difference in the Life Skills of Senior High School Students When Grouped According to Demographic Profile***

<b>Demographic Profile</b>	<b>Statistical Test Used</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Age	One-Way ANOVA	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant Difference
Sex	Independent Samples t-test	0.214	Fail to Reject Ho	No Significant Difference
Grade Level	Independent Samples t-test	0.031	Reject Ho	Significant Difference
Strand Enrolled	One-Way ANOVA	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant Difference
Parents' Educational Attainment	One-Way ANOVA	0.018	Reject Ho	Significant Difference

This table presents the test of difference in the life skills of Senior High School students when grouped according to their demographic profile, namely age, sex, grade level, strand enrolled, and parents' educational attainment. The table revealed that significant differences in life skills exist when students are grouped according to age, grade level, strand enrolled, and parents' educational attainment, as indicated by p-values lower than the 0.05 level of significance. However, no significant difference was found when students were grouped according to sex, as reflected by a p-value greater than 0.05. These results suggest that certain demographic factors influence the development of students' life skills, while others do not.

The results imply that life skills development among Senior High School students varies depending on educational exposure, maturity level, academic track, and family educational background. Differences across age and grade level indicate that as students grow older and progress through Senior High School, their communication, collaboration, problem-solving, adaptability, and self-management skills tend to improve due to increased academic demands and life experiences. Similarly, the significant difference across strands implies that the nature of instruction, learning activities, and performance tasks in different strands contribute to varying levels of life skills development. Moreover, differences based on parents' educational attainment suggest that home environment, parental guidance, and educational support play an important role in shaping students' life skills. In contrast, the absence of a significant difference based on sex implies that male and female students are provided with relatively equal opportunities to develop life skills within the school context.

The results were supported by theoretical perspectives, educational policies, and empirical studies emphasizing the influence of demographic and contextual factors on life skills development. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory explains that learners' development is shaped by interactions among individual, school, and family environments, which aligns with the observed differences based on age, strand, and parental education. The K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum (DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2019) likewise recognizes learner diversity and advocates differentiated instruction to address varying developmental needs. Empirical studies, such as those by Heckman and Kautz (2012), further confirm that life skills are influenced by both educational experiences and family background rather than biological sex alone. Therefore, the significant differences found in this study highlight the importance of designing a Skills Enhancement Program that is responsive to students' diverse profiles, ensuring equitable and targeted development of life skills among Senior High School students in Sapang Dalaga District.

Table 4

***Difference in the Employability Readiness of Senior High School Students When Grouped According to Demographic Profile***

<b>Demographic Profile</b>	<b>Statistical Test Used</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Age	One-Way ANOVA	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant Difference
Sex	Independent Samples t-test	0.187	Fail to Reject Ho	No Significant Difference
Grade Level	Independent Samples t-test	0.024	Reject Ho	Significant Difference
Strand Enrolled	One-Way ANOVA	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant Difference
Parents' Educational Attainment	One-Way ANOVA	0.021	Reject Ho	Significant Difference

This table presents the test of difference in the employability readiness of Senior High School students when grouped according to their demographic profile, namely age, sex, grade level, strand enrolled, and parents'

educational attainment. The table revealed that significant differences in employability readiness exist when students are grouped according to age, grade level, strand enrolled, and parents' educational attainment, as indicated by p-values lower than the 0.05 level of significance. However, no significant difference was found when students were grouped according to sex, as reflected by a p-value greater than 0.05. These findings indicate that employability readiness is influenced by several demographic and contextual factors, but not by sex.

The results imply that students' readiness for employment varies according to maturity, academic exposure, learning track, and family educational background. Differences based on age and grade level suggest that students who are older or in higher grade levels tend to demonstrate stronger workplace attitudes, technical competence, interpersonal skills, and career decision-making abilities due to increased academic experiences, work immersion exposure, and career-related activities. The significant differences across strands imply that strand-specific curricula, performance tasks, and practical training opportunities play a major role in shaping employability readiness. Furthermore, differences based on parents' educational attainment suggest that family support, career guidance, and educational expectations at home influence students' preparedness for employment. Conversely, the absence of a significant difference based on sex implies that male and female students have comparable levels of employability readiness, reflecting equitable access to learning opportunities and career preparation within the Senior High School program.

The results were supported by theoretical frameworks, educational policies, and empirical studies emphasizing the role of contextual and environmental factors in employability development. Human Capital Theory posits that employability is shaped through accumulated education, training, and experience, which aligns with the observed differences based on grade level and strand. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory further explains that students' development is influenced by interactions between school, family, and societal contexts, supporting the significant differences found based on parents' educational attainment. The K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum (DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2019) likewise underscores differentiated pathways and work immersion as key strategies for preparing learners for employment. Empirical studies, such as Yorke and Knight (2006), affirm that employability readiness is a multidimensional construct shaped more by learning experiences and environmental factors than by biological characteristics such as sex.

## **Conclusions**

The study concludes that Senior High School students in Sapang Dalaga District demonstrate generally adequate life skills and employability readiness; however, these competencies remain developmental and require further strengthening to meet the demands of higher education and the labor market. Life skills—particularly communication, collaboration, problem-solving, adaptability, and self-management—significantly influence students' employability readiness, as shown by the positive relationship between the two. Variations in skills were influenced by age, grade level, strand, and parents' educational attainment rather than sex, highlighting the role of educational exposure and contextual factors. Overall, the findings emphasize the need for a structured, work immersion-aligned Skills Enhancement Program to holistically strengthen students' life skills and employability readiness and support their successful transition to work, entrepreneurship, or further education..

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it is recommended that Senior High School students actively participate in activities that enhance their life skills and employability readiness, while teachers integrate learner-centered and workplace-oriented strategies that strengthen communication, critical thinking, collaboration, adaptability, and self-management. School administrators are encouraged to institutionalize the proposed Skills Enhancement Program by incorporating it into school plans, strengthening industry and community partnerships, and providing meaningful experiential learning opportunities. Likewise, the Department of Education may utilize the study's findings to reinforce policies and programs that promote life skills development and employability readiness, particularly in rural and last-mile schools through enhanced teacher training, expanded work immersion partnerships, and adequate resource allocation. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to replicate and extend this study in different contexts using diverse research approaches and additional variables to further enrich the understanding of life skills and employability readiness among Senior High School learners.

## **Conflict of Interests**

The author declares that they have no conflicts of interest

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