



Qualitative Insights into The Employability of Romblon State University's Latin Honor Graduates

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Abstract

This study investigates the determinants of employability among Latin Honor graduates from Romblon State University (RSU), focusing on how various personal and academic factors contribute to their professional outcomes. Adopting a qualitative methodology, the research examines core themes such as academic excellence, continuous learning, persistence, resilience, career alignment, networking, diligence, and adaptability. Through in-depth analysis, the study underscores the significant influence these elements have on the graduates' success in licensure examinations, career advancement, and job attainment.

Findings reveal that a strong academic background not only prepares graduates for formal assessments but also sets a foundation for lifelong professional growth and opportunities. Continuous skill development and a proactive approach to learning are shown to keep individuals competitive and adaptable in a dynamic job market. Additionally, attributes like resilience in overcoming setbacks, strategic career planning, effective networking, and a commitment to hard work and dedication play pivotal roles in shaping career trajectories and securing employment. These insights are critical for educational institutions aiming to refine their curricula and support services to bolster graduate employability. The study advocates for integrated educational strategies that foster both academic and personal competencies, preparing students not only for immediate job markets but for adaptable and sustained career paths. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the factors that enhance employability, offering a valuable resource for academic policymakers and educators in designing programs that align with contemporary professional demands.

Keywords: Employability, Latin Honor Graduates, Qualitative Research, Academic Excellence, Career Advancement, Licensure Examinations, Continuous Learning, Resilience

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Embarking on a journey through higher education involves not only the pursuit of knowledge but also the courage to overcome challenges that arise along the way. For many students, especially those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, this journey is marked by a complex blend of academic rigor and socio-economic pressures that demand resilience and adaptability. Latin Honor graduates from a state university exemplify this commitment to excellence, often striving to achieve high academic standards despite limited resources. The educational experiences and outcomes of these graduates provide valuable insights into the factors that contribute to employability, especially for students who face considerable financial constraints. This study aims to

explore these factors, shedding light on the pathways that lead to professional success for honor graduates from underprivileged backgrounds.

In response to the needs of economically disadvantaged but academically capable students, a state university in the Philippines has implemented supportive programs designed to aid their educational journey. A prominent initiative, the "Iskolar ng Bayan" program, offers scholarships to top-performing high school graduates with limited financial means. Grounded in Republic Act No. 10648, this program reflects the university's commitment to promoting equal access to quality education by providing scholarships and academic support. However, despite these supportive policies, discrepancies remain in the professional

outcomes of the university's honor graduates, with notable differences in licensure examination pass rates and subsequent employment statuses. These observations raise essential questions about the efficacy of these educational programs in equipping graduates for the demands of the workforce. This study, therefore, seeks to answer the question: How do personal and academic factors shape the employability of Latin Honor graduates from the state university?

Research on graduate employability emphasizes the importance of connecting educational programs with the realities of the job market. Abarro (2017) posits that employability serves as a benchmark for evaluating the relevance of educational programs, focusing on how well academic achievements translate into professional success [1]. Ramirez et al. (2018) similarly highlight that curricula tailored to meet industry standards are crucial for developing the competencies that enhance employability [2]. These perspectives underscore the need for universities to bridge the gap between academic training and professional preparedness. The global urgency of this issue is further emphasized by Erabaddage, Shukri, and Khatibi (2015), who stress that aligning educational practices with workforce demands is essential for institutions to fulfill their role in preparing graduates for successful careers [3].

To structure employability efforts, several models have been developed to standardize approaches in understanding and enhancing graduate readiness. The Graduate Employability Development model, the CareerEDGE model, and the Career Management Employability model are three prominent frameworks that provide structured methods for assessing and fostering employability (Education and Training Journal, 2021). These models offer insights for universities that aim to cultivate graduates with both the technical skills and the adaptability necessary for today's evolving job market. Irene and Greif (2022) further suggest that cultivating individual competencies, such as critical thinking and scientifically inclined skills, can significantly impact career trajectories [4]. This study builds on these frameworks, examining how Latin Honor graduates' experiences reflect these models and identifying the specific attributes that contribute to their professional success.

Beyond educational alignment, resilience and adaptability are critical for graduates to thrive in a competitive employment landscape. He et al. (2022) advocate for a holistic employment training model that integrates psychological resilience with technical skills, underscoring the importance of preparing graduates to navigate the complexities of the modern job market [5]. For the state university in question, continuous efforts are made to align academic programs with national standards, yet detailed data on the professional outcomes of Latin Honor graduates remain limited. This study addresses this gap, offering qualitative insights into the career trajectories of honor graduates and examining how well the university's academic and support structures facilitate their success.

In addressing these questions, the study aligns with two Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs): SDG 4: Quality Education and SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth. By focusing on employability, this research supports SDG 4's objective to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education that prepares graduates for sustainable employment. It also resonates with SDG 8, which aims to promote inclusive economic growth and productive employment for all. Specifically, SDG 8 emphasizes the need to create pathways to decent work, particularly for young people and those in vulnerable situations. This study's focus on understanding the employability of honor graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds speaks to both goals, advocating for educational practices that foster meaningful career opportunities and economic empowerment.

In summary, this qualitative study aims to explore the personal and academic factors that influence the employability of Latin Honor graduates. By examining themes such as academic performance, resilience, alignment with career goals, and personal attributes, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape their professional journeys. Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader conversation on how educational institutions can better prepare students not only for immediate job markets but for lifelong career success, in alignment with global goals for quality education and economic growth. Through capturing the personal narratives and experiences of these graduates, the research offers valuable insights into how universities can enhance their educational and support frameworks to facilitate successful transitions from education to employment.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite a rigorous academic environment and initiatives to support students, there is an evident gap in understanding the translation of educational achievements into successful employment outcomes for Latin Honor graduates. This study addresses the lack of detailed data on graduates' employment rates and the effectiveness of their academic preparation for professional success. It explores the qualitative aspects of employability among graduates, focusing on their preparedness for industry challenges and the extent to which educational practices contribute to their career achievements and satisfaction.

1.3 Objective

The general objective of this study is to examine the employability of Latin Honor graduates from a state university by exploring the personal and academic factors, challenges, and key themes that influence their career trajectories, success in licensure examinations, and overall professional outcomes.

1.4 Specific Objectives

1. To identify specific personal and academic factors that influence the employability of Latin Honor graduates from a state university.
2. To explore the challenges encountered by these graduates in navigating the job market.
3. To examine key themes such as resilience, continuous learning, and networking, and how they shape career trajectories and professional success.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Licensure Examination Preparation

One aspect of understanding the employability of a state university's Latin Honor graduates is by examining their board or licensure performance. It is generally expected that honor graduates will perform better than their peers in these exams. However, comparing academic performance directly with licensure examination performance may not reveal the full picture. This performance is influenced by multiple factors, both external and internal, which interact to enhance the preparedness and capability of students.

Pattaguan (2018) noted that topping the Board Licensure Examination for Certified Public Accountants is a result of multiple contributing factors, categorized into external and internal environments [6]. External factors include the school, peer, and home environments, while internal factors encompass personal attributes. School factors involve curriculum, faculty, learning resources, review programs, and administration; home factors highlight family support, particularly parental involvement; peer factors include review groups; and personal factors cover study habits, a strong prayer life, consistent academic excellence, a positive outlook, and proactive reading habits. The harmonious interaction of these factors significantly enhances the preparedness and capability of students to excel in board examinations. Notably, two out of three topnotchers in this study were cum laude graduates, and one had academic distinction.

Supporting this integrated view, Abela, R., Bellen, J., & Truya, R. (2018) establish a strong positive correlation between academic achievement and performance in licensure exams, especially among education graduates [2]. Their study reveals that college-level academic performance significantly predicts success in the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET), particularly for Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) graduates. By presenting statistical evidence, they demonstrate that students with consistent academic success in college tend to perform better in licensure exams, indicating that knowledge and skills gained during their education directly influence their professional assessments. This correlation highlights the importance of maintaining rigorous academic standards to ensure that graduates are well-prepared for the demands of professional licensure.

The development of higher-order thinking skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical abilities, is critical for success across various professional domains, as highlighted by Rind, I. A., & Malik, A. (2019) [7]. The examination trends at the secondary and higher secondary level in Pakistan. Their study on educational assessments in Pakistan reinforces the need for curricula that actively foster these competencies. In the context of RSU, incorporating assessments that evaluate these skills ensures that graduates are prepared to tackle complex, real-world challenges in their careers. By focusing on such higher-order skills, RSU can equip its graduates with the ability to think critically, analyze situations from multiple perspectives, and solve intricate problems—abilities that are increasingly demanded by employers.

In a rapidly changing job market, professionals who possess these skills are more adaptable and better positioned to innovate and excel in their fields. Therefore, embedding critical thinking and problem-solving assessments within the educational framework not only enhances the competitiveness of RSU graduates but also prepares them for sustained success in an ever-evolving professional landscape.

Further expanding on these factors, Albite (2019) focused on the preparation factors and related attributes contributing to passing the licensure examination among topnotchers [8]. Her study revealed that out of seven topnotchers, only two were cum laude graduates. Despite this, the study identified common traits among top achievers, such as goal setting, a passion for reading, test-taking skills, early preparation, and responsiveness to review programs. The study emphasized the importance of internal factors like metacognitive skills, a strong faith, a solid educational foundation, and test-wise strategies, complementing external factors such as support systems, study groups, and review programs.

Tamayo (2015) concluded that stringent academic standards, while resulting in lower scholastic performance due to raised expectations, ultimately prepared students better for actual licensure examinations. His study of criminology students found that rigorous academic demands contributed to better performance in licensure exams compared to simulated exams, highlighting the importance of a challenging academic environment in fostering exam readiness.

The role of technology in improving educational outcomes is another important factor. Muhideen Sayibu et al. (2021) highlighted the role of technology-enhanced learning tools in improving educational outcomes [9]. Their study showed that graduates who used mobile learning platforms like Tencent APP improved their learning behaviors and innovative performance, essential for passing licensure exams. This integration of technology enhanced study habits and exam preparedness.

Additionally, Eduard M. Albay's study on the problem-solving approach in teaching emphasized how adopting such strategies can significantly improve students' performance and attitudes towards challenging subjects. By applying problem-solving strategies in licensure exam preparation, graduates can enhance their analytical and critical thinking skills, crucial for passing these exams.

The findings from these studies provide valuable insights into the employability of Latin Honor graduates. Understanding the multifaceted preparation for licensure exams, encompassing both external and internal factors, highlights the importance of a supportive and challenging academic environment. Incorporating technology-enhanced learning tools and problem-solving strategies can further enhance graduates' readiness for licensure exams, thereby improving their employability. By focusing on these comprehensive preparatory methods, educational institutions can ensure that their honor graduates are not only academically excellent but also well-prepared to excel in their professional

careers, thereby enhancing their overall employability.

2.2 Understanding the Employability and Career Trajectories of Latin-Honor Graduates

Employability of graduates has consistently been a focal point of policy interest in higher education, with both regional and national agencies urging State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) to enhance curricula to better align with industry needs. For Latin-Honor graduates, employability is often presumed to be higher compared to their non-honor counterparts. This presumption raises essential questions: Were the skills learned in college and the program areas sufficient to secure employment? Did the university provide a curriculum that fostered the necessary competencies and skill sets required by the industry? Addressing these questions is crucial for evaluating the efficacy of educational programs and ensuring that Latin-Honor graduates are adequately prepared for professional success.

A study by Abarro (2017) underscores the importance of employability as a crucial indicator of the relevance of higher education program offerings [1]. His research demonstrates that the curricula studied were relevant to the job's graduates secured, with skills acquired in school contributing directly to employability. This highlights the need to trace the employment statuses of honor graduates as a measure of program effectiveness. Such efforts can reveal the strengths and weaknesses of academic programs and offer actionable insights for curriculum enhancement to align better with job market demands.

The global demand for improving graduate employability has also been a significant concern, with various stakeholders pressing universities to make this a central objective. As noted by Erabaddage, Shukri, and Khatibi (2015), understanding and researching employability within universities is complex, and aligning educational practices with job market demands is essential to address these challenges [3]. This study emphasizes that enhancing employability is not only a matter of skills development but also involves addressing theoretical coherence and avoiding politicization in employability research, thus promoting a balanced approach to higher education reforms.

In exploring models that aid in understanding and enhancing employability, the "Education and Training" journal (2021) offers a comprehensive exploration of three prominent conceptual frameworks: The Graduate Employability Development model, the CareerEDGE model, and the Career Management Employability model. These frameworks provide standardized approaches to assess and enhance employability, which facilitates clearer communication among researchers, educators, and policymakers. By adopting such frameworks, universities can develop more structured and effective employability initiatives that cater to the evolving demands of the job market.

Personal attributes also play a significant role in career development, particularly for Latin-Honor graduates. Research by

Irene and Greif (2022) emphasizes the importance of scientifically inclined competencies in shaping career trajectories [4]. This study suggests that cultivating these attributes can profoundly impact career outcomes, underlining the need for educational institutions to prioritize the development of academically and scientifically oriented skills. For Latin-Honor graduates, focusing on such areas ensures that they are better equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in their professional lives.

Addressing challenges posed by expanded enrollment and increased competition, He et al. (2022) propose an innovative employment training model that integrates deep learning technology [5]. This model emphasizes the development of psychological resilience alongside technical skills, underscoring the importance of both hard and soft skills in navigating a competitive job market. By fostering a holistic approach to training, this model prepares graduates not only for immediate job demands but also for long-term career success, thereby enhancing employability in a comprehensive manner.

Educational pathways and conducive work environments further influence career progression. Choi's (2021) research demonstrates how varied educational achievements impact labor market outcomes, suggesting that diverse pathways can positively affect career advancement [10]. Additionally, Mgaiwa's (2021) study on job satisfaction among Tanzanian academics highlights the importance of a supportive work environment in enhancing both job performance and career development. Similarly, Shara and Nawab (2020) stress that leadership skills and community engagement play crucial roles in professional progression, indicating that these elements are vital for creating enriching professional environments [11].

Socio-economic contexts also significantly affect employability, particularly in light of recent global disruptions. Antipova's (2021) research on the economic impacts of COVID-19 illustrates the importance of considering social vulnerabilities when analyzing employment outcomes [12]. Likewise, Mgaiwa's (2021) work on employment status in Tanzania highlights the impact of supportive work conditions on job satisfaction and retention. Integrating indigenous knowledge systems with Western education, as advocated by Seehawer and Breidlid (2021), can further enhance employability by making education more contextually relevant, thus preparing graduates for diverse workplace demands [13].

Inclusivity and mentorship are equally crucial in shaping graduates' employability. Naparan and Balimbingan (2020) emphasize that an inclusive educational environment is essential for preparing graduates to thrive in diverse work settings [14]. Similarly, Marey et al. (2020) underscore the role of continuous professional growth and mentorship in supporting job performance and career stability. Higher-order thinking skills, as discussed by Rind and Malik (2019), along with problem-solving approaches highlighted by Albay, are vital for developing analytical and critical thinking abilities, which are highly valued in professional settings [7].

The findings from these studies underscore the multi-dimensional nature of employability for Latin-Honor graduates. Preparation for licensure exams, encompassing both internal and external factors, plays an integral role in enhancing employability. Incorporating technology-enhanced learning tools, problem-solving strategies, and diverse educational pathways further enhances graduates' readiness for licensure exams and job market challenges. Additionally, the importance of supportive work environments, leadership skills, inclusivity, and higher-order thinking underscores the need for a comprehensive and well-rounded educational experience.

Studies by Abas and Imam (2016) further support this perspective by demonstrating that foundational skills such as problem-solving and cognitive abilities positively impact job outcomes, especially in the public sector [15]. Their findings suggest that cognitive skills and continuous learning provide a competitive edge, allowing graduates to perform well in dynamic work settings. This supports the idea that cultivating such competencies is essential for enhancing job performance and adaptability, thereby ensuring that graduates are prepared for various professional challenges.

Career-guidance programs are pivotal in shaping the career trajectories of graduates, especially among those who have achieved academic distinctions, such as honor graduates and student leaders. Rara, Mateo, and Subia (2018) conducted a study that highlights how these graduates tend to secure stable employment positions with competitive salaries and opportunities for regular promotions. This trend underscores the potential long-term benefits of career-guidance programs, which often provide students with the tools they need to navigate the job market successfully. These programs not only help students identify their strengths and career interests but also support them in setting realistic and strategic career goals. By offering mentorship, skills development workshops, and access to professional networks, career-guidance programs empower honor graduates and student leaders to make informed decisions about their professional paths. Consequently, these initiatives contribute to both career stability and professional fulfillment, as graduates enter roles that align with their ambitions and values. Ultimately, this structured approach to career planning enhances job satisfaction and retention, as graduates are well-prepared to meet the challenges and expectations of their chosen fields.

The phenomenon of overeducation, particularly among UK graduates as studied by Chevalier and Lindley (2009), highlights the critical importance of aligning educational outcomes with labor market demands [16]. Overeducation occurs when individuals possess higher qualifications than their jobs require, leading to a mismatch between their skill sets and job roles. Chevalier and Lindley categorize graduates into three groups based on the alignment of their skills with their roles: matched, overeducated, and genuinely overeducated. Their research reveals that while the rate of overeducation has increased, the associated wage penalties remain a persistent issue, especially for genuinely overeducated individuals who often lack the specific non-academic skills valued in the workplace. These findings suggest that the financial and

professional costs of overeducation can be significant, as graduates may face lower wages and limited career growth opportunities. The study underscores the necessity for educational institutions to design curricula that closely align with industry requirements, fostering the development of both academic and practical skills. By addressing these alignment issues, universities can help graduates avoid the wage penalties and career disadvantages linked to overeducation, thereby enhancing their overall employability and job satisfaction in a competitive labor market.

Exploring theoretical frameworks within employment relations provides valuable insights into the dynamics that shape workforce practices and policies. Chidi and Okpala (2012) examine various employment and industrial relations theories, comparing traditional and modern perspectives across economic, social, and organizational contexts [17]. Their work illuminates the complex interplay between labor relations theories and real-world applications, showing how different frameworks influence employment practices, workforce policies, and organizational culture. For example, classical theories may emphasize hierarchy and structured job roles, while modern perspectives might focus on collaboration, worker empowerment, and flexible work arrangements. By analyzing these theoretical models, Chidi and Okpala offer a nuanced understanding of the factors that impact employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention. This analysis is particularly relevant for contemporary workplaces that are increasingly dynamic and diverse, requiring adaptive management approaches. Recognizing the strengths and limitations of various employment theories enables organizations to design practices that promote positive labor relations, thereby fostering a work environment conducive to both employee well-being and organizational success.

The study conducted by Cuadra, Aure, and Gonzaga (2019) underscores the importance of continuous assessment through tracer studies, which are vital for evaluating the outcomes of university graduates and informing curricular improvements [18]. By using a structured survey with a sample of 1,983 graduates, the study tracks the employment status and workplace performance of graduates from a Philippine state university. Notably, findings reveal that while many graduates are employed in fields related to their degrees, certain areas of the curriculum require enhancement to better meet industry demands. Consequently, the study highlights the value of tracer studies in providing data-driven insights, which can refine educational programs to align with key areas such as mobility, credit transfers, quality assurance, and research clusters. These refinements, aligned with ASEAN standards for higher education, ensure that graduates are adequately prepared for both local and regional job markets.

Similarly, the concept of employability as a multi-dimensional construct is further elaborated by Fugate, Kinicki, and Ashforth (2004) [19]. They introduce employability as a complex psychosocial framework essential for adapting to the evolving demands of the modern workforce. Specifically, the authors define employability as encompassing three main dimensions: career

identity, personal adaptability, and social and human capital. These dimensions empower individuals to navigate job transitions, address career-related challenges, and maintain relevance in a rapidly changing job market. Furthermore, by integrating these dimensions, the study emphasizes how employability influences organizational behavior, especially in contexts of job loss and job search. Thus, this framework highlights the critical role of career development and resilience, elements that are increasingly necessary for long-term professional success.

In addition to these findings, Maratas (2018) conducted a graduate tracer study to assess the employability and career outcomes of Bachelor of Science in Criminology graduates from Jose Rizal Memorial State University (JRMSU) in Dapitan City, covering the period from 2010 to 2014 [20]. Interestingly, the study found that over half of the graduates were unemployed or had not passed the licensure exam. For those who were employed, many held contractual or part-time positions, such as security guards, with earnings ranging from Php 3,000 to Php 9,000 per month. This outcome highlights a perceived mismatch between academic preparation and industry requirements. Consequently, the findings underscore the pressing need for educational institutions to align curricula more closely with the actual demands of the labor market, ensuring that graduates possess both the technical and soft skills required by employers.

Likewise, Remaidia et al. (2021) explore the value of personality assessments as a tool in the hiring process, with a specific focus on their effectiveness in selecting candidates that align well with organizational needs and values [21]. Conducted by researchers in Morocco, this study emphasizes that personality assessments can aid employers in evaluating traits beyond technical skills, such as adaptability, work ethics, and interpersonal abilities. Additionally, the authors compare various personality tests to analyze their applicability in improving hiring outcomes. The study reveals that a suitable match between a candidate's personality and the company's environment significantly contributes to higher job performance and reduced turnover. This suggests that, alongside cognitive and technical skills, personality traits play an essential role in shaping employability.

Similarly, Ogunbameru's study (2004) on personality dimensions and cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions, although primarily addressing cultism, offers insights with broader implications for employability [22]. While the study examines the impact of personality traits on social behavior within academic environments, its findings highlight the importance of positive personality traits—such as resilience, ethical conduct, and adaptability—in maintaining academic distinction and translating it into professional success. This insight is particularly relevant for Latin Honor graduates, who, by virtue of their academic achievements, could benefit from structured support in personality development. Such support could enhance their employability, especially in roles that require integrity, adaptability, and leadership.

The significance of targeted skills development in enhancing

employability is further exemplified by Ballon (2007), who investigates the factors influencing the employability of graduates from the Technological Institute of the Philippines, Quezon City [23]. This study underscores the critical role that higher education institutions play in equipping students with specialized knowledge and competencies necessary for securing employment. Ballon identifies several predictors of employability, including graduate-related factors (such as age, civil status, and educational background), acquired competencies (especially in human relations, communication, and IT), job search strategies, and career-related motivations. As a result, the findings suggest that graduates with strong interpersonal and technical skills, as well as a clear professional passion and effective job-seeking networks, are more likely to achieve early employment success. This underscores the importance of targeted skills development, which not only enhances job readiness but also fosters long-term career resilience.

The findings across these studies present a comprehensive view of the multifaceted nature of employability. For Latin-Honor graduates, employability is influenced by a combination of curriculum relevance, personality traits, and targeted skill development. Incorporating technology-enhanced learning tools, problem-solving strategies, and diverse educational pathways can further strengthen their readiness for both licensure exams and dynamic job markets. Furthermore, supportive work environments, inclusive educational practices, and access to mentorship are essential for fostering a well-rounded educational experience. Thus, by addressing these factors holistically, universities can ensure that their honor graduates are not only academically excellent but also thoroughly prepared for professional success and long-term career stability in an increasingly competitive job market.

3. Methods

3.1 Research Design

The research design for this study focused on exploring the experiences and perceptions of Latin honor graduates from 2015-2020. This qualitative component was part of a larger mixed-methods study and employed thematic analysis to interpret data from focus group discussions and interviews. Utilizing quota sampling ensured a diverse demographic representation, capturing a wide range of perspectives. The data collection methods involved semi-structured interviews and focus groups, specifically designed to elicit detailed narratives about employability and career development. By employing these methodologies, the study aimed to gain a deep understanding of the factors that influenced the professional success of Latin honor graduates, allowing participants to share in-depth insights and personal experiences, thereby enriching the data collected.

Evidence from the collected narratives was analyzed to identify recurring themes and patterns, providing insights into how graduates perceived their academic preparation, the challenges they faced in the job market, and the skills and attributes they found most valuable in their careers. This thematic analysis systematically categorized and interpreted these narratives, revealing key factors

that contributed to the employability of Latin honor graduates. Ultimately, the study aimed to link these findings to broader educational and professional contexts, offering recommendations for how institutions could better prepare students for successful careers. This comprehensive approach ensured that the research contributed valuable knowledge to the field of employability and career development. By understanding the nuanced experiences of these graduates, educational institutions could implement strategies that enhanced both academic and professional outcomes, thereby bridging the gap between education and employment.

3.2 Participants and Sampling

Participants were selected from bachelor’s degree holders who earned Latin honors between 2015 and 2020 at a state university in the Philippines. Utilizing quota sampling, the study included a diverse group of 51 graduates, aiming to capture a wide range of experiences and views that reflected the demographic variability of the alumni. This sampling approach ensured that the participants represented a broad spectrum of backgrounds, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing their employability and career development. The selection process focused on including graduates from different fields of study, socio-economic backgrounds, and geographic regions to provide a well-rounded perspective on the challenges and successes they encountered in their professional journeys. By incorporating such diversity, the study aimed to offer insights that were both specific to individual experiences and broadly applicable to the wider population of Latin honor graduates.

4. Data Collection Methods

Data collection was conducted through focus group discussions

(FGDs) and semi-structured interviews, designed to elicit detailed narratives about the graduates' employment experiences. The FGDs and interviews were strategically chosen to gather in-depth insights into the personal and professional journeys of the participants. The discussions were guided by a semi-structured questionnaire, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of topics relevant to employability and career development. This method allowed for flexibility in responses while maintaining a consistent framework for data collection. Evidence from these discussions highlighted various aspects of the graduates' experiences, such as the influence of academic training on job readiness, the challenges faced in the job market, and the strategies employed to overcome these obstacles. By systematically analyzing these narratives, the study aimed to draw meaningful connections between the graduates' educational background and their career outcomes, providing valuable insights for enhancing educational practices and policies.

5. Data Analysis Procedures

The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes related to employability, professional growth, and the impact of educational experiences on career outcomes. This analysis was crucial for understanding the nuances of employment challenges and successes as experienced by the graduates. By systematically coding the data and categorizing it into key themes, the analysis provided a detailed examination of how various factors influenced the graduates' career trajectories. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the individual and collective experiences of the graduates, shedding light on the critical elements that contribute to their professional development and success in the job market.

6. Results

Themes	Passing Licensure Examinations	Career Progression	Employment Status
Academic Excellence	Graduates credited their strong academic foundation for their success in licensure exams.	High academic standards served as a basis for promotions and further academic pursuits.	Employers recognized their academic achievements, leading to better job opportunities.
Continuous Learning	Graduates maintained study habits that prepared them for exams.	Pursued advanced degrees and professional development.	Continuous skills enhancement made them competitive in the job market.
Persistence and Resilience	Overcame exam failures through consistent efforts.	Tackled career obstacles and secured promotions.	Managed job rejections and challenges in job searches.
Alignment with Career Goals	Pursued relevant licenses.	Made career moves aligned with personal goals.	Found job satisfaction in roles matching their interests.
Networking	Gained support from peers and mentors.	Leveraged networks for career advancement.	Used connections for job searches and career opportunities.
Hard Work and Dedication	Intensive preparation led to success.	Demonstrated commitment resulted in recognition.	Seen as dedicated employees by employers.

Flexibility and Adaptability	Adjusted study strategies as needed.	Adapted to new roles and responsibilities.	Flexibility in job roles enhanced employment opportunities.
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Table 1: Matrix that encapsulates the themes related to the success stories of Romblon State University’s Latin Honor Graduates, focusing on passing licensure examinations, career progression, and employment status:

The success of Latin Honor graduates from a state university can be attributed to several key factors that collectively contribute to their employability and career advancement. One primary element is the strong academic foundation they received at the university. The rigorous academic standards and thorough preparation provided them with the knowledge and skills necessary to excel in licensure exams and initial professional roles. This solid academic background was instrumental in their continued professional growth, as employers often recognized the academic achievements of these graduates, leading to better job opportunities. The prestige associated with academic excellence translated into greater employability and career advancement prospects, highlighting the importance of maintaining high academic standards for producing well-prepared graduates.

Additionally, the emphasis on continuous learning played a significant role in the graduates' success. Those who maintained continuous study habits and engaged in lifelong learning were well-prepared for licensure exams and stayed competitive in their respective industries. Many pursued advanced degrees and professional development activities, which enabled them to progress in their careers, acquire new skills, and adapt to changing job market demands. Employers valued this commitment to ongoing education, often resulting in better employment opportunities. This underscores the importance of fostering a culture of continuous learning to enhance both academic and professional success.

Furthermore, persistence and resilience were critical attributes that helped graduates overcome challenges in both their academic and professional journeys. Graduates who faced exam failures and career obstacles demonstrated remarkable persistence and resilience, eventually achieving success through consistent efforts. This ability to persevere in the face of setbacks was crucial for passing licensure exams and securing promotions. Additionally, graduates who managed job rejections and challenges in job searches by remaining persistent were able to navigate the job market effectively and secure employment. These findings indicate that cultivating persistence and resilience is essential for achieving success in both academic and professional realms.

Moreover, aligning educational and career goals significantly contributed to graduates' job satisfaction and professional fulfillment. Graduates who pursued licenses and career paths that were relevant to their long-term goals reported higher levels of job satisfaction and targeted career progression. This alignment ensured that their efforts were focused on achieving their personal and professional aspirations, leading to greater job satisfaction and overall professional success. This highlights the importance of aligning educational and career goals to enhance job satisfaction and career progression.

In addition to individual efforts, networking played a crucial role in graduates' success. Support from peers and mentors provided valuable resources and encouragement, helping graduates succeed in licensure exams and advance in their careers. Professional relationships facilitated access to insights, opportunities, and support, which were instrumental in career growth. Networking also aided in job searches, as strong professional connections often led to better job positions through referrals and recommendations. This suggests that fostering strong networking skills is vital for both academic success and career development.

Hard work and dedication were also key factors in the graduates' achievements. Intensive preparation and a strong work ethic contributed to their success in licensure exams and professional roles. Graduates who consistently demonstrated commitment and hard work were valued and rewarded by their employers, enhancing their employability and career stability. This highlights the importance of instilling a strong work ethic in students to prepare them for professional success.

Lastly, flexibility and adaptability were essential for effective preparation and career development. Graduates who adjusted their study strategies and adapted to new roles and responsibilities were able to meet the demands of licensure exams and advance in their careers. Flexibility in job roles enhanced employment opportunities, as graduates who could adapt to different job requirements were more likely to find and maintain employment in a dynamic job market. This underscores the importance of developing flexibility and adaptability to enhance both academic and professional outcomes.

The success stories of Latin Honor graduates from a state university provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted factors that contribute to their achievements. By focusing on academic excellence, continuous learning, resilience, career alignment, networking, hard work, and adaptability, educational institutions can better prepare students for the complexities of the professional world and help them achieve sustained success. This holistic approach ensures that graduates are not only well-prepared for licensure exams but also equipped for long-term career success.

7. Discussion

This section examines the key findings of the study, highlighting the primary themes that influence the employability and career success of Latin Honor graduates from a state university. By contextualizing these results within existing literature, a broader understanding emerges of how specific qualities—such as resilience, continuous learning, networking, and career alignment—contribute to professional outcomes. Additionally, this section outlines the study's limitations and provides recommendations to further

enhance educational practices that support graduate employability.

8. Conclusion

The employability of Latin Honor graduates from a state university is shaped by a combination of academic excellence, continuous learning, persistence, alignment with career goals, networking, hard work, and adaptability. These factors collectively enhance their ability to pass licensure exams, progress in their careers, and secure stable employment. Educational institutions can draw lessons from these findings to better prepare their students for professional success by emphasizing these key areas in their curricula and support services.

Key Themes Shaping Employability and Career Success

The qualitative results from the study on a state university's Latin Honor graduates reveal several key themes that contribute to their success in licensure examinations, career progression, and employment status. These findings can be contextualized within the broader scope of existing literature to provide a deeper understanding of their implications on employability and professional development.

The success stories of Latin Honor graduates from a state university underscore the multifaceted factors that contribute to their achievements. Emphasis on academic excellence aligns with the findings of Antipova (2021), who highlights resilience in challenging economic conditions [12]. Graduates with a strong educational background are well-prepared to excel in competitive job markets, similar to regions with robust economic structures that fare better during crises. The rigorous academic standards at a state university equip students with essential skills and knowledge, enhancing their employability and adaptability in diverse economic environments. This foundation supports initial career success and promotes long-term professional growth, crucial for navigating dynamic job markets.

Additionally, the role of continuous learning in enhancing employability aligns with insights from recent studies, such as those by Sayibu et al. (2021), which examine the effectiveness of mobile learning platforms like Tencent APP [9]. These platforms facilitate ongoing education and adaptability among students, similarly benefiting graduates of state universities by enhancing their adaptability and competitiveness in dynamic professional environments. Continuous skill enhancement is particularly critical in post-COVID recovery phases, where the ability to adapt to new technologies and methodologies can distinguish candidates. Graduates who actively pursue lifelong learning are better equipped to meet the evolving demands of their professions, ensuring sustained career success.

Furthermore, the persistence and resilience demonstrated by state university graduates in overcoming challenges and adapting to their professional environments underscore the importance of grit and perseverance. Choi's (2021) research on non-traditional education paths highlights how vocational training can lead to successful employment outcomes, similar to how graduates consistently

strive to overcome obstacles and maintain a positive outlook, achieving career advancement and job stability. This showcases the critical role of resilience in professional development.

Moreover, aligning educational pursuits with career goals enhances job satisfaction and overall career success. This strategic alignment ensures that graduates are not only employed but are also in positions that are fulfilling and conducive to long-term career development. Graduates who align their educational and career aspirations tend to experience greater job satisfaction and professional fulfillment, reflecting the findings from Mgaiwa's (2021) study on job satisfaction among academics. Networking also plays a crucial role in career progression and employment, providing access to diverse professional circles and opportunities. This integration of social capital is particularly vital in environments where the job market is tight, and opportunities may be limited. Graduates who actively engage in networking can leverage their connections to gain insights, support, and opportunities that significantly impact their career trajectories, echoing the themes from Seehawer and Breidlid's (2021) research on integrating diverse knowledge systems [13].

In addition to networking, the importance of hard work and dedication in achieving professional success is universally recognized. The commitment to excellence and continuous improvement, as demonstrated by graduates in their professional endeavors, underscores the value of a strong work ethic in achieving career stability and advancement. Graduates who exhibit consistent dedication and effort are more likely to be recognized and rewarded in their professional lives, paralleling the findings from Shara and Nawab's (2020) exploration of teacher leadership practices [11].

Finally, the flexibility and adaptability of graduates are essential for embracing new opportunities and coping with job market fluctuations. This adaptability is crucial for success in a competitive and evolving job market, as highlighted by Rind and Malik's (2019) analysis of examination trends. Graduates who can adjust their strategies and approaches in response to changing circumstances are better equipped to succeed.

Therefore, the success stories of a state university's Latin Honor graduates provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted factors contributing to their achievements. By focusing on academic excellence, continuous learning, resilience, career alignment, networking, hard work, and adaptability, educational institutions can better prepare students for the complexities of the professional world and help them achieve sustained success. This holistic approach ensures that graduates are not only well-prepared for licensure exams but also equipped for long-term career success.

Limitations of the Study

While the findings of this study are insightful, several limitations need to be acknowledged.

The study focused on a specific group of graduates (Latin Honor graduates) from a state university, which may not represent the

broader student body. The sample size, though adequate for qualitative research, may not capture all possible experiences and viewpoints of graduates from diverse academic backgrounds and disciplines. Additionally, the study relies heavily on qualitative data obtained through interviews and focus groups. While this approach provides in-depth insights, it may introduce subjective biases in data interpretation. The findings may not be generalizable to all graduates due to the qualitative methodology used.

Furthermore, the research is limited to graduates from a single institution. Thus, the findings may not be applicable to graduates from other universities or regions with different academic environments and support systems. The study examines graduates from a specific period (2015-2020). The evolving job market and educational practices mean that findings may not fully apply to graduates from other periods, especially considering changes due to events like the COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, the study relies on self-reported data from graduates, which may be subject to recall bias or social desirability bias. Participants may present themselves in a more favorable light or may not accurately remember details about their educational and employment experiences.

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Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the appropriate review board, ensuring that the study met all necessary ethical standards. All participants provided informed consent, and measures were taken to guarantee their confidentiality and anonymity. Throughout the research process, ethical standards were rigorously followed to respect participants' rights and maintain the integrity of the data. This commitment to ethical rigor underscored the importance of safeguarding participants' privacy and ensuring the responsible handling of all collected information.

Researcher Reflexivity

As the researcher, I acknowledge my affiliations with a state university and past interactions with some participants. To counteract potential biases, I engaged in reflexive practices, carefully separating personal insights from empirical data analysis. This involved maintaining a reflexive journal to document

my thoughts and decisions throughout the research process. By continuously reflecting on my positionality and potential influence on the data, I aimed to ensure objectivity and reliability in interpreting the findings. Engaging in regular discussions with peers and mentors also helped to challenge my assumptions and enhance the rigor of the study.

Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed, including data triangulation, participant validation, and detailed documentation of the research process. Data triangulation was achieved by using multiple sources and methods to gather data, thus providing a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Participant validation involved sharing preliminary findings with participants to confirm the accuracy and authenticity of the interpretations. Additionally, the inclusion of direct quotes from participants enriched the narrative and provided evidence for the themes identified. The rigorous approach to thematic analysis, combined with transparent and detailed documentation, further strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the study's findings. These measures collectively ensured that the research findings were both reliable and reflective of the participants' true experiences.

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