

Preferred College Degree Programs Among Senior High School Students: A Policy Recommendation

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Abstract: This looks into the basic information about the student's course preference, the degree program's availability, and employability in the Philippines and among ASEAN members. In particular, this study will answer the following questions: (1) What is the status of high school students in choosing a degree program (2) What are the degree programs enrolled by the students in the Visayas, in terms of courses offered, number of students enrolled? (3) How prepared are the Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)? (4) What are Higher education programs or initiatives for international students? (5) What are the PQF (Philippine Quality Framework) and AQRF (ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework)? and (6) What policy recommendations can be made based on the findings? This is a mixed method of both qualitative and quantitative. A combination of research designs is also used to answer the statement of the problem. At the same time, some questions about the problem may be answered by a mixed research design, which uses a survey questionnaire and is supplemented by descriptive analysis, which may come from published articles. Students living in the city prefer business subjects since they are the most viable for them as there are more business opportunities in the city than in the Province. The family upbringing and history could also factor in the decision aside from the students' likes. The student's grade is the biggest factor, which normally shows their preference. Thus, the higher the grade of a particular subject, the more it interests students. It means that the subject having a higher grade is what they also like. STEM is those who are good in science and math subjects, while HUMSS are those who are good in history values and often possess warm behavior.

Keywords: College Degree Programs; Senior High School Students; International Students; ASEAN Community Economic Integration; Integration and Help Circumspect; Statement of Problem; Policy Recommendation.

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1. Introduction

In order to solve the job mismatch in the Philippines, where education does not meet the industries' needs and eventually results in the rise of the unemployment rate, more research should be conducted. In line with this study is the government program that strengthens graduates' employability here and abroad. Specifically, this study focused first on ASEAN members since there is agreed Economic Integration. At the start, several reforms embedded in different laws and executive orders became an integral part of this study. Finally, the study also evaluates the pros and cons of the ASEAN Community Economic Integration, which may be determined after the data is presented.

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This study is focused on the preparation of the student's employability in the Philippines and among member-states of the ASEAN Community in Economic Integration. This looks into the basic information about the student's course preference, the degree program's availability, and employability in the Philippines and among ASEAN members. In particular, this study will answer the following questions: (1) What is the status of high school students in choosing a degree program in terms of age, Strands or classification of High school students, schools currently enrolled in, preferred University, Preferred course, and Factors in choosing a preferred university? (2) What degree programs are enrolled by the students in the Visayas, in terms of courses offered and number of students enrolled? (3) How prepared are the Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in curricula, program offerings, and employability? (4) What are Higher education programs or initiatives for international students? (5) What are the PQF (Philippine Quality Framework) and AQRF (ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework)? and (6) What policy recommendations can be made based on the findings?

The study is worth noting, with its significance both in the academic world and industries, as it helps students prepare for employment. Even now, ASEAN Economic Community Integration is an important issue that will affect the marketability of graduates later on. This made the topic more popular and even more so in the future as its effect plays an important role in the student's decision-making. But, its popularity has both advantages and disadvantages. One of the notable disadvantages is that there are only a few sources of information regarding this topic since people do not fully understand it. Only seminars and a few journal publications talk about this matter. It seems that the topic is uninteresting that no one talks about it, and if they talk, it has less value to them.

The idea of this integration is only confined to classrooms, conferences, and meetings, which are, of course, only attended by a few individuals. Despite that, this must be known to everybody since everyone's venture might be at stake. Indeed, this topic is not widely known but has a tremendous effect on our lives. The effect would certainly be catastrophic to the country, in general, if the people are not well-informed. In addition, applying this community integration would affect the graduates' future and employability. Thus, so that students will have an edge over other countries, it is important to know the entire concept of this integration. Furthermore, this will help leaders and the students who will soon become leaders to understand the concept of ASEAN Economic Integration and help circumspect its adverse effects.

2. Review of Literature

Salvador [3] expressed that the majority of the respondents responded with a moderate level of awareness ($M = 3.29$) and receptiveness ($M = 3.34$) to the prospective changes that most likely to happen in education under the ASEAN Integration. Furthermore, regarding the advantages of ASEAN Integration, the respondents listed the global competitiveness of graduates and professionals ($N = 35$) as the predominant advantage of the profession and the synchronization of the educational system in other ASEAN countries ($N = 49$). ASEAN Integration benefits students by allowing them to develop and become more competitive with other ASEAN countries.

Almost all aspects of the ASEAN Integration have been developed in health. In the article, Progress toward Universal Health Coverage in ASEAN, it is found that ASEAN countries generally have made good progress toward Universal Health Care (UHC), partly due to sustained political commitments to endorse UHC. However, all the ASEAN countries face several common barriers to achieving UHC. These barriers are the following: 1) financial constraints, including low levels of overall and government spending on health; 2) supply-side constraints, including inadequate numbers and densities of health workers; and 3) the ongoing epidemiological transition at different stages characterized by increasing burdens of non-communicable diseases, persisting infectious diseases, and the re-emergence of potentially pandemic infectious diseases [2].

3. Research Method

This is a mixed method of both qualitative and quantitative. A combination of research designs is also used to answer the statement of the problem. At the same time, some questions about the problem may be answered by a mixed research design, which uses a survey questionnaire and is supplemented by descriptive analysis, which may come from published articles. A mixed method, as it was used in this research, offers four (4) specific designs: (1) triangulation (Qual + Quant); (2) embedded (Qual(Quan)) or (Quan(Qual)); (3) explanatory (Quan supporting Qual); and (4) exploratory (Qual supporting Quan).

The mixed method is deliberated as being 'cross-sectional' since it acquires the paramount of both worlds, qualitative and quantitative [3]. Another problem in this research was that it utilized the mixed research method using a survey questionnaire and focus group discussion (FGD). Thus, this research qualifies to be a mixed method of research. As a research methodology, the qualitative research method infuses an added advantage to the exploratory capability that researchers need to explore and investigate their research studies. Qualitative methodology allows researchers to advance and apply their interpersonal and subjective skills to their research exploratory processes [1].

Some research questions apply descriptive surveys as a research design. The descriptive survey, a descriptive research method, was utilized in this study. Random sampling gave the chosen respondents an equal chance to contribute data to the study. In addition, cross-sectional research also applies to the qualitative research problem of this study.

When researchers analyse the similarities and differences within and between groups, they are conducting a cross-sectional research study. Participants are typically selected based on shared factors, including age or gender. Many times, the group stands in for the whole population. Researchers keep tabs on participants without changing any of the factors, much like in longitudinal studies. Another way to classify this study is as conclusive. Finding definitive and final solutions to research questions is the goal of conclusive investigations. That is precisely what happened in this study; the findings provided a conclusive response to every research question.

3.1. Research Subjects and Respondents

The subjects of the research are the students, colleges, and universities. Those subjects are necessary for problems 1,2, 3, 4 and 5. But for problem number 6, the answer is derived from the conclusion of the data gathered. The study focuses particularly on the schools in the Visayas region, for which data is necessary. Specifically, the researcher looked into sectarian or religious schools, private colleges or universities, and public colleges or universities subject to the records' availability. There will be two schools in each category, private or public. If the school is private, it will be categorized further as sectarian or non-sectarian. Sectarian refers to schools that are owned or managed by a religious group.

Non-sectarian schools are private schools that religious groups do not own. Since the data are available on their respective website, the interview with the person in charge of the data is not needed except for the number of international students enrolled where an interview is necessary. Other agencies or departments were also used for other sources of information.

The students are selected randomly from the selected schools which were chosen randomly based on the category predetermined to represent the different types of schools in the Visayas. Each problem has different sets of respondents to fit the desired information required in the problem. Thus, high school students in their last stage before college enrollment were respondents in problem number 1. The researchers chose the Grade 12 students as the study respondents. The researchers limited their study to Grade 12 for problem number 1. The participants in this problem resided in Cebu and were chosen based on their qualifications, availability, and willingness to participate voluntarily in the research study.

College students who were enrolled in different colleges and universities in the provinces of the Visayas were the respondents of problem 2. International students in the interview and school administrators through their website site were the key informants in problem number 4. Some problems were answered in cross-sectional references and literature reviews available online. Problem 6 is the conclusion of the study's facts and findings, which does not require respondents in a quantitative research problem or key informants in a qualitative research problem.

3.2. Research Environment

The study was conducted in the Visayas. The schools were chosen based on the category predetermined to represent the type of schools. This is to ensure that all schools of their type are fully represented. The Visayas is one of the three major Philippine archipelago divisions and comprises regions 6,7 and 8. The study is focused more on Region 7 since the latter region is known for established universities.

Students from Mindanao and other regions in southern Luzon also went to Visayas, particularly Cebu, to study. Leyte and Bohol were also part of this study, as public universities and colleges are located in these provinces. The subject provinces were chosen based on the schools that it is known for. Leyte is in Region 8 and is known for the University of the Philippines, a public university. Bohol is also known for another public university, the Bohol Island State University (BISU), and Wisdom College represents a private college.

In Cebu province, different high schools were selected to answer research problem number 1. Those schools were chosen randomly to represent the population of high school students in Cebu Province. There were also schools in Cebu City chosen to have a complete representation of the entire Island of Cebu. Regarding initiatives for international students, the respondents' schools and students are in Cebu City. The city is known for the best schools in the Visayas and Mindanao. This is why international students enrolled in Universities found in Cebu City.

4. Results and Discussions

Each research problem is answered in this paper based on the objective results of the research. A discussion of the results of the research problem is incorporated. Only significant figures such as the highest or the second to the highest and the lowest or second to the lowest response are emphasized as they are more responsive to the research problem than the other responses. In general, however, these answers to the survey questions and interviews illuminate the entire research. Still, for purposes of the discussion, only those readily noticeable are put into significance by discussing their meaning. Status of high school students in choosing a degree program, in terms of age, Strands or classification of High school students, schools currently enrolled in, preferred University, Preferred course, and Factors in choosing a preferred university (Figure 1).

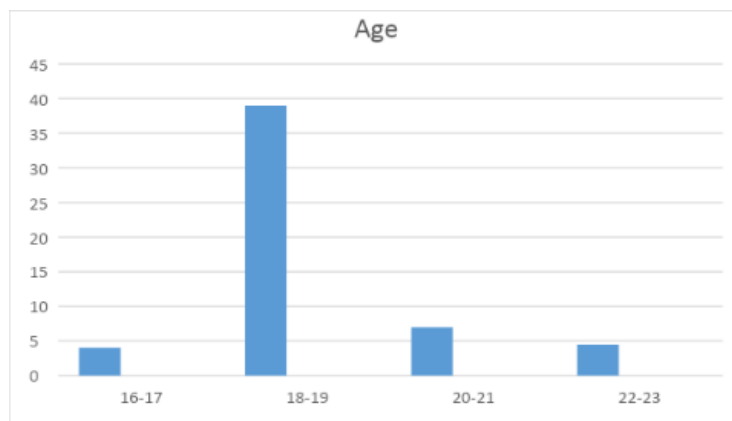


Figure 1: Age of high school students in choosing a degree programs

Using the sample of grade 12 students randomly selected, it can be inferred that students are generally 18-19 years old, as indicated in the graph. This is true for all students but more accurately in the Cebu province where the respondents live. This is the average age of senior high school students. This means that after high school graduation, students are now of legal age and employability in the Philippines. In applying for a job, the employer and the employee will sign a contract. However, only a person of legal age must enter this contract.

The legal age in the Philippines is eighteen (18). Thus, only after senior high school can a student be employed. The K-12 program, which adds two years in high school, follows the employability age in the Philippines, aside from the fact that among the ASEAN countries, only Philippine high school graduates are the youngest, as other countries' high school graduates are 18 years old. Indeed, adding two more years in high school is a move that will put Philippine high school graduates on par with the graduates of other countries. As many other countries have a long number of years in high school and have only one language to be spoken and used, there is more reason why additional years must be added since several languages are used and taught in schools.

The language students speak differs from the language they read in the books used in school. Thus, the previous system could not produce the best and most innovative students compared to the present system, where there is now an additional two years in high school before high students graduate at 16, which will eventually force them to go to college since that age is not yet employable. Now, after graduation, students may be employed, reducing the number of unemployed. If everything goes well, eventually, this will increase productivity and improve the country's economy in general.

It is important in this study to evaluate and use the results on the preparedness of the ASEAN Economic Integration to plan effectively for the future of the Philippine economy. Consequently, the data from grade 12 students who are 18-19 years old and about to enroll in college is important for the validity of the result of this study. It is equally important to know their preferred course of study as soon as they enroll in college, which is only a few months ahead.

At that time, they decide on their preferred course, and perhaps after considering the options available, they already have a fixed idea of what to take in college. Hence, using the respondents' preferred course also applies to a general student in the same situation. Figure 2 shows that although most of the students in Grade 12 are aged 18-19, there are also students enrolled at the same year level but are aged 20 and above. This shows that students stop attending school because of poverty and other factors. This is noticeable in rural areas where students prefer to work on the farm rather than go to school. Poverty also contributes to this dropping out of students. They sometimes prioritized other siblings going to school over themselves.

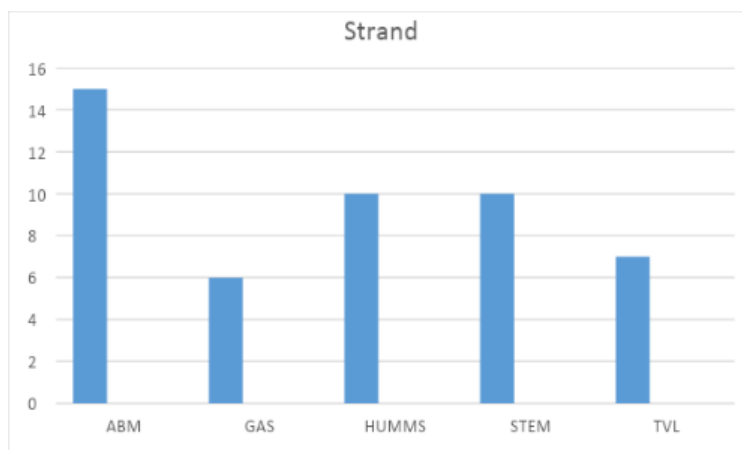


Figure 2: Strands or classification of High school students

Based on their strengths in several disciplines, high school pupils are categorised into five Strands. From what we can see, the vast majority of responders are majoring in ABM (Accountancy and Business Management), with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and HSS (Humanities, Social Sciences) students following closely after (HUMSS). Students living in the city prefer business subjects since they are the most viable for them as there are more business opportunities in the city than in the Province. The family's upbringing and history could also be factors. The student's grade is the biggest factor, which normally shows their preference. Thus, the higher the grade of a particular subject, the more it interests students. It means that the subject having a higher grade is what they also like. STEM is those who are good in science and math subjects, while HUMSS are those who are good in history values and often possess warm behavior. In other words, these are values-driven students.

Equally important, but only a few students subscribed, are the Technological-Vocational Livelihood (TVL) and General Academic Strand (GAS) students. In the graph shown, it received the lowest number of responses. The reason for the low response to TVL is the culture where people look down on those working in the blue-collar industry. Those working in those industries receive low salaries compared to those working in white-collar jobs, and these views cause inequality in the number of students who subscribe to TVL. Students who have not decided yet or cannot classify to those mentioned strands may opt for GAS, which is broader than categorizing to any strand.

In the survey, various high school students were the respondents, both public and private schools, Madredijos National High School, University of Cebu (UC), Cebu Technological University (CTU), and Compostela Science and Technology High School (CSTHS). Looking at the representation of the students, those living in the urban area, which is the case in this survey, it would appear that they prefer ABM. Of course, there are several factors to consider in arriving at this decision, but looking at it objectively, accountancy and business management are enticing to students. HUMSS and STEM are at the same level, meaning students are divided equally. Probably, those who will be enrolled in college in the Bachelor of Arts (which is the HUMSS category) are the same as those who will enroll in the Bachelor of Science (which is the STEM category).

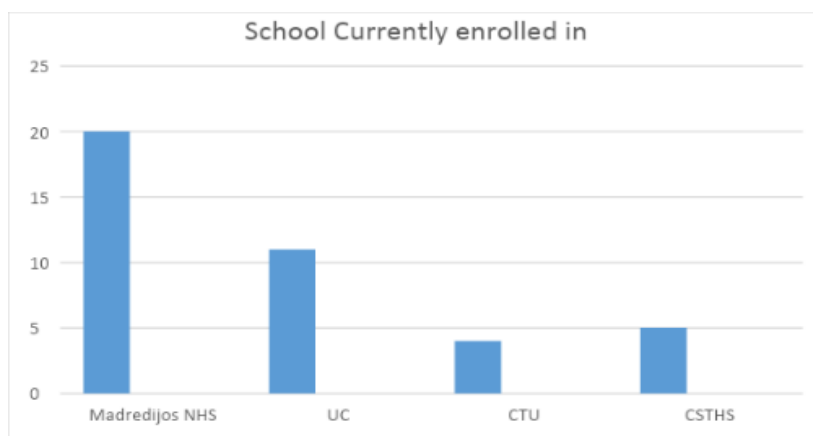


Figure 3: Schools Currently Enrolled

Of these schools where respondents were enrolled, wanted to take the ABM strand, STEM, and HUMSS as the top three priorities, wanted to enroll in UC as the highest, followed by CNU, which is HUMSS, as the school is known for its teachers' training school in the country. It offers several courses under the HUMSS strand. This is followed by CTU, a public school that offers various courses throughout the Province. Figure 3 shows that most respondents enrolled in Madredijos National High School, followed by all UC, CTU, and CSTHS campuses. This is because of the random sampling of the respondents; all types of students or schools where they are enrolled are also represented in the study. This eliminated the possibility of monopoly of the respondents to make the result statistically reliable.

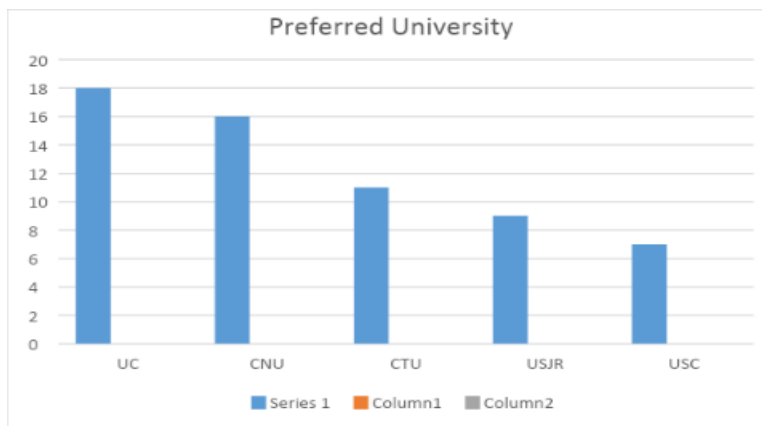


Figure 4: Preferred University

Figure 4 shows that the student preferred to enroll in the University of Cebu (UC all campuses), Cebu Normal University (CNU), Cebu Technological University (CTU), University of San Jose-Recoletos (USJR), and the University of San Carlos (USC). UC, which is a private school, offers low tuition fees. Its degree programs are complete. Thus, if the student wants to enroll in a private school, UC offers affordable tuition. In this time of crisis, saving money for education is important; thus, choosing the school that will fit the budget without compromising the quality of education is now necessary. When everybody is affected by the pandemic, it is important to save money without compromising the quality of education for the students. All schools are of similar importance to students but probably would differ on the availability of the degree programs it offers.

Noticeable is the consistency of the priority schools of the student and the distance of its decline to the next school in priority. This shows the different courses available and affordable; the next in rank is the school that offers affordable education courses, which is the most sought-after degree program among high school students. It is followed by another public university, which also offers a variety of courses for a low tuition fee. A religious group also owns a private university owned by a religious group and the next. Currently, these religious schools have the highest number of students in Visayas. USC alone has the most students enrolled among the Universities in Cebu. Consequently, the majority of grade 12 students, who fall within the 18–19 age bracket, are eager to continue their studies. The results show that the University of Cebu campus is the most cost-effective option.

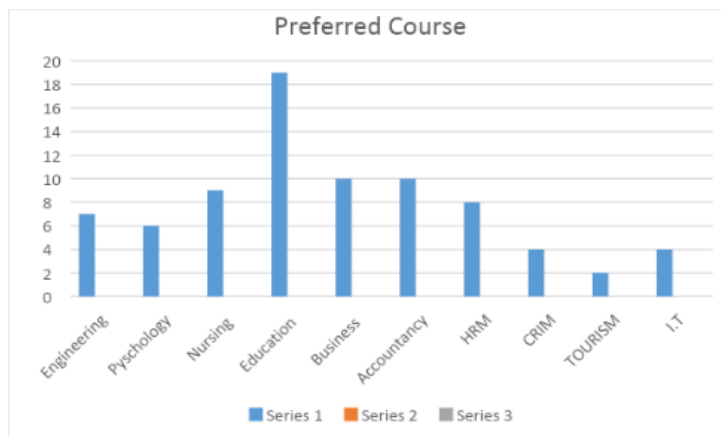


Figure 5: Preferred Course

The majority of responders (as seen in Figure 5) were interested in nursing, business courses, and education. Specifically, it is important to know the degree program or course that high school students would like to subscribe to as soon as they enroll in college. Knowing this and the strand or classification of students in high school will prove that students' preferred courses are their exact classification or strand in senior high school. Figure 5 reveals the specific course that the student wanted to take. The graph also reveals the strand to which most respondent students belong. Although ABM was the highest in the graph, it is so broad since it comprises several courses in commerce.

Education, on the other hand, shows a high in the graph. Education has several courses under it but is classified only as one under education as a whole. It is concentrated even if it also includes BEED and BSED. Thus, education becomes the first choice of all the respondents. During a pandemic, the most secure professions are those in the public sector. Even when teachers are not allowed to report to school due to the coronavirus, they still receive full salaries. This is why many students currently want to take education courses, not only because of the above reason but also because of the new positions created along the teaching positions. A few years back, the former secretary of the Department of Education noticed the difficulty of teachers moving to the next rank due to the limited number of positions in the upper rank. As a result, only a few teachers can move to the next rank. Hence, additional positions were created for each rank.

According to the data collected by the researchers, the order of preference for the subjects offered by various schools among Grade 12 students was as follows: education, business and accounting, and nursing. The remaining courses were selected by a small number of responders. But before deciding on a major, they think about which university offers a good education at a cheaper price. Placing first, second, and third, respectively, are the University of Cebu, Cebu Normal University, and Cebu Technological University.

The graph displays the results of the research showing that among the subjects chosen by the 12th graders from various schools, education was the most popular, followed by business and accounting, and finally nursing. The remaining courses were selected by a small number of responders. Conversely, students look for a university with a reasonable tuition rate that nonetheless provides a good education before deciding on a major. Ranked first, second, and third, respectively, in Cebu are the University of Cebu, Cebu Normal University, and Cebu Technological University.

Figure 5 shows that the business course is also the second priority. This category also comprises several commerce-related courses, to which accountancy also belongs. Thus, accountancy and business have similar responses. Adding accountancy and business will result in the highest graphical representation of the data. Nursing is one of the most sought-after courses as it is now in demand in the Philippines and abroad, offering higher salaries. This is so because of the pandemic, which increases the demand for nurses to care for those who contracted the deadly coronavirus.

Tourism is the lowest since tourism-related businesses were stopped and prohibited from operating. Authorities consider this type of business to be the super spreader of the virus as people from different countries and other provinces in the Philippines, which have a high record of contamination by the virus, might flock to this business. This type of business will encourage travel to resorts or related businesses, which the government prohibits. It is equally important to know the factors behind the students' decisions in choosing the college course they want to attend. Figure 6 will show the factors in arriving at that decision. An explanation of how it is arrived is also incorporated below.

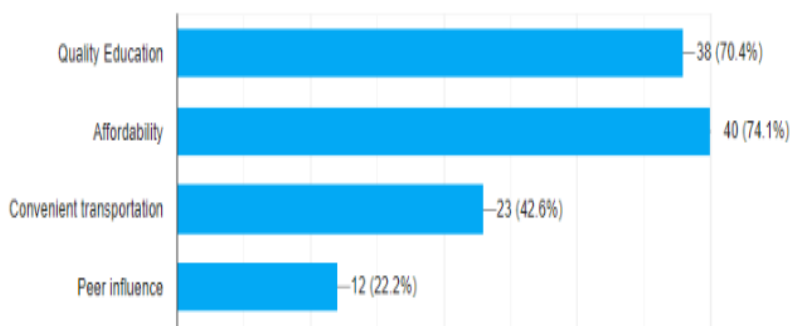


Figure 6: Factors in Choosing Preferred University

The affordability of a university is the most important element, according to Figure 6, followed by the quality of education and the accessibility of transportation. It shows practicality, and at the same time, it shows the eagerness of the student to learn and be employed later. The decision indicates the pandemic's effect, which resulted in their parents' work stoppage. Figure 6 reveals the importance of saving money, especially when exactly this pandemic will end. That is why choosing an affordable school is now the top priority. Closer to that factor is the quality of education, which is also of similar importance. The two other factors that are not so important are convenient transportation and peer influence. These minor factors can be eliminated if there are enough funds.

Degree programs enrolled by the students in the Visayas are equally important to fully understand the actual courses offered in the Visayas using samples of schools under this study. Below is a sample of the schools showing a few courses the school is known for. In addition, it is also important in this study to include the actual course enrolled. Several factors must be considered in determining the college course students want to take. Of the several factors, one must choose a course of high employability, a course that a student likes or interests, salary when employed, affordability, nature of work, which may vary on the student's gender, the possibility of leaving the parents if employed, etc. All of these contribute to the students' decisions. One thing that may differ is the Province where the student lives. The decision on what to enroll in college would also vary depending on the accessibility of the school location. Students will not enroll in schools far from where they live.

However, if the parents of the students can afford to study outside the Province, they will do so if the degree program is offered by the best school located outside the Province. So long as it is the best for the future of their children. In Bohol, most of the students enrolled in the education program. There are several reasons to consider their choice, including the school's accessibility. Two distinguished schools in Bohol province offer this degree program: the Bohol Island State University (BISU) and the Bohol Wisdom College.

Students wanted to take education courses, and the highest number of students enrolled in private and public higher institutions. This is why one school only offers education courses, and as a result, it ballooned to nearly 1000, including Bachelor of Technology Education. Thus, education, in general, is the top sought-after degree program among students. Several students also subscribed to engineering but were divided into different subfields. The highest, however, is Civil Engineering. Other courses offered in public schools are similar, ranging from 60 to 80 students in every degree program. Courses, however, would vary based on the expertise of the school.

Consequently, students opt to enroll in schools where the degree or program they want to enroll in is the best. Looking at the various courses that Bohol Island offers, it is indeed self-sufficient to meet the demand for labor in the entire Province. This ranges from engineering, Information Technology, Education, Tourism, and other courses on business. Private universities and colleges of Bohol Province offer medical and social services. If all are educated and finished with a degree, it is enough to supply the labor demand of the Province.

In Leyte, the University of the Philippines was the sample of this study, which also shows a remarkable contribution to educating the Eastern Visayas region. A sample of this study is the Bohol Island State University (Main Campus), which offers 17 courses and has an estimated total of 1,612 students. The graph below shows that the highest number of students is BS Industrial Technology, which has 248 students, and the course with the lowest number of students is Bachelor of HRST and BS in Computer Engineering, which has 40 students (Figure 7).

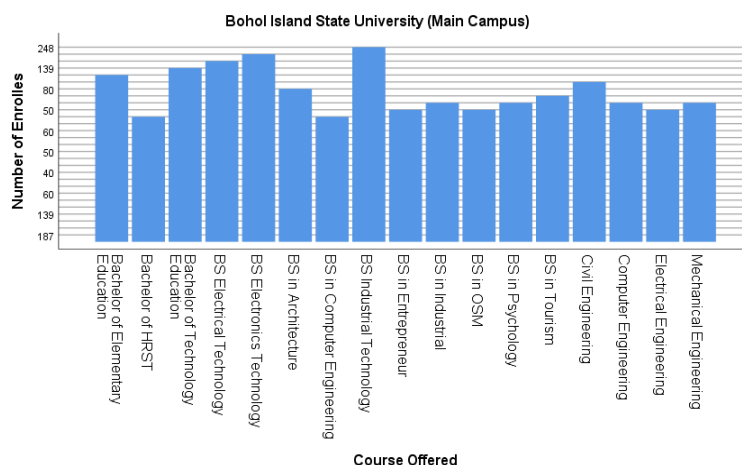


Figure 7: Courses offered in BISU

In summary, Engineering and computer courses were ranked highest among the courses offered by this state-owned University on the Island of Bohol. All other courses have a relatively similar number of students subscribed. Thus, students are fairly distributed to all the courses it offers.

Bohol Wisdom College offers two courses only and has an estimated total of 450 students. Based on the graph below shows that the highest number of students is BSED, which has 252 students, and BEED, which has 198 students. Right now, at the height of this pandemic due to COVID-19 or a virus outbreak that originated in Wuhan, China, economies suffer due to the locked down of places. During the lockdown, no one is allowed out of their houses except front liners. Thus, the economy suffers and eventually depletes the family's long-term savings. In the long run, this affects the choice of schools for all students. The pandemic led to the migration of students from private schools to public schools. Notably, enrollment in private schools is not comparable to public schools (Figure 8).

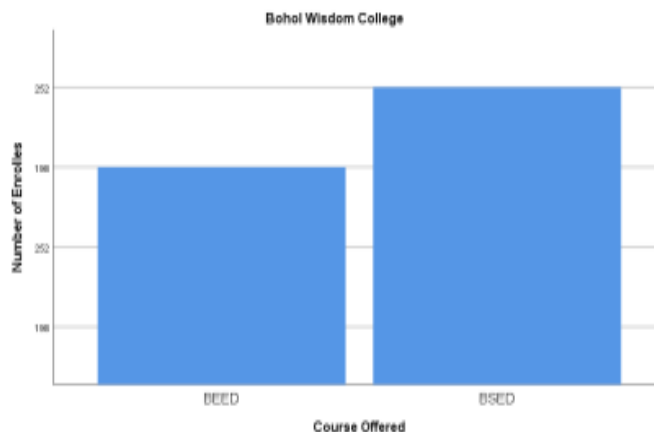


Figure 8. Courses offered at Bohol Wisdom College

The Bohol Wisdom College study sample reveals several options for all Boholanos to enroll and finish their desired degree program. If one factor in choosing a school is the family's economic aspect, several schools in the Province may be near the students to enroll. A comparison of the islands in the Visayas shows the coherence of the courses or degree programs offered in public higher institutions. In the Eastern Visayas, particularly in Leyte, using the SPSS application, the bar graph indicates that BS Management and BA Communication Arts ranked highest. BS Computer Science follows as the third highest. The gender of the student has no significant relationship to the courses enrolled. Both males and females still render similar results to degree programs the students subscribed to. In other words, there is a similarity in the number of students enrolled regardless of their sex (Figure 9).

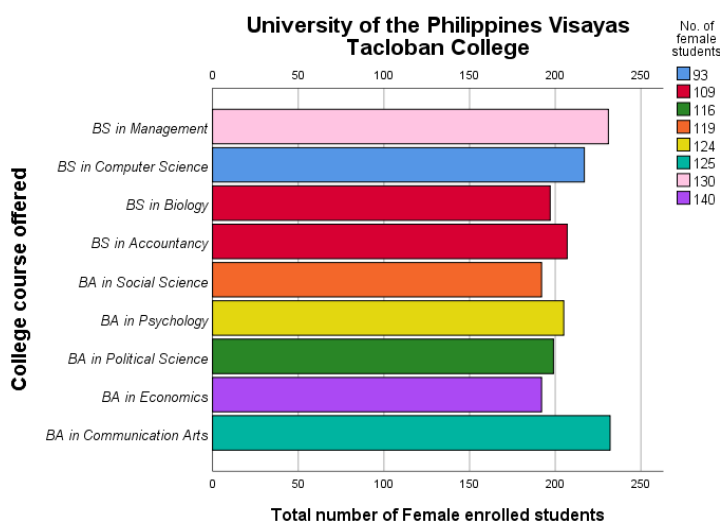


Figure 9: Female Students enrolled in UP Tacloban

Female students prefer Communication Arts and Management as their top priority. At the same time, other courses are equally distributed except Computer Science, which is next to Management and is ranked third among the subjects that most students subscribe to. The tuition fee is low as a public university since the government subsidizes its budget. The university budget is prepared by the head of the agency and defended during the budget hearing in Congress for approval. This budget includes the Capital Outlay (CA), Personal Services (PS), and Miscellaneous and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE). Thus, the school does not have to rely on the student's tuition fees (Figure 10).

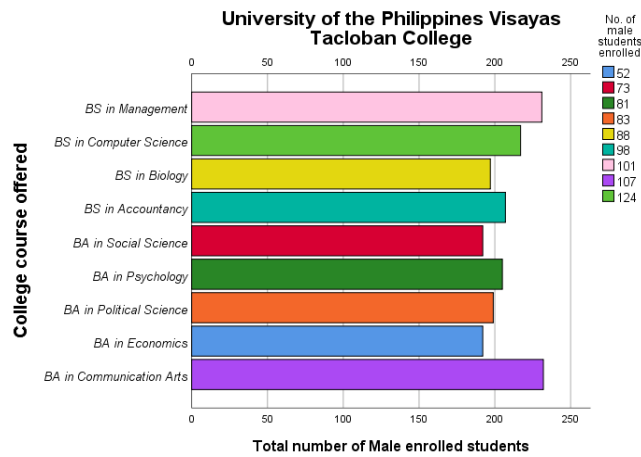
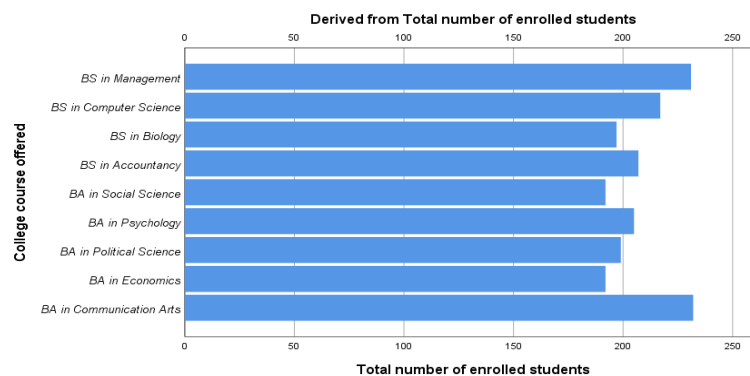


Figure 10: Male Students enrolled in UP Tacloban

There is an equal proportion of female and male students in every course offered at the University of the Philippines. Significantly, there is a similar graph of male and female students enrolled in all courses. This means that male and female students are similar and widely distributed equally in every course.

The University of the Philippines Visayas Tacloban College (UPVTC) is a satellite college that is part of the University of the Philippines Visayas. It was established on May 23, 1973, in Tacloban, Philippines. They offered nine (9) Bachelor in Arts and Sciences courses. The data in the first chart represents the number of female students enrolled in each course. The highest is from the BA in Communication Arts, down to the lowest number of students enrolled, the BS in Computer Science. At the same time, the 2nd data chart represents the number of male students enrolled. It indicates that there are fewer male students than females enrolled in each course, but it is not significant that there is consistency in the number of male and female students enrolled in each course. In general, female students are more numerous than male students in college. In provinces where agriculture is the primary source of livelihood, male students normally stop studying after finishing high school. The reason is, of course, they are needed on the farm. Farm work needs physically strong men to do this effectively. As a result, male students eventually stop schooling after high school. Significantly, the highest number of students enrolled is still the same with female students, but the lowest number is from BA Social Science. Finally, the 3rd and last data chart indicates the total number of male and female students enrolled. The sum of both is estimated at 1,872 total students enrolled in the University of the Philippines Visayas Tacloban College (UPVTC) (Figure 11).



The chart above represents the total amount of students, both male and female that enrolled in each college course offered in the University of the Philippines Visayas - Tacloban College.

Figure 11: Total Number of Students enrolled in UP Tacloban

The equality between men and women now manifests in the courses offered and subscribed to by students in state-owned universities such as the University of the Philippines Tacloban campus. Gender sensitivity issues have probably been put emphasis such that there is equality in the number of different sexual orientations in all courses. It could also mean that its courses are gender-sensitive so that gender can be accommodated. The nature of the jobs that can be performed later by these courses can be equally performed by both genders.

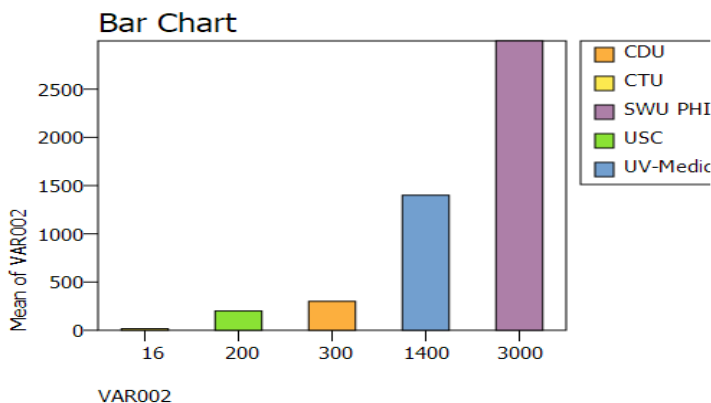


Figure 12: Foreign Students Enrolled in Cebu

Figure 12 shows the number of international students enrolled in different universities in Cebu. They are enrolled in the universities in Cebu City, which is known for the results show that there are 16 international students enrolled at Cebu Technological University (CTU), 200 students at the University of San Carlos (USC), 300 students at Cebu Doctors’ University (CDU), 1400 at UV Gullas College Of Medicine (UV-Medicine) and 3000 international students in Southwestern University PHINMA (SWU) respectively. This shows that the latter has the highest number of students, doubling the sum of all the schools that accept international students. UV College of Medicine follows it. A keen observer of the graph, it is notable that international students only enroll in private universities that offer medical courses. The top two highest schools are prestigious schools that are best for medical courses in the region. This is confirmed by the study result, which states that the lowest ratings, although interpreted as strongly agree, were “allows the exchange of student scholars,” “provides a subsidy for the accommodation of scholars,” and “allows the exchange of faculty members.” This means that the exchange of international students’ scholars is visible but limited in number. This practice is common in private schools where international students are welcome for several reasons. One of these is the increase in the tuition fee and prestige of the school.

Cebu Technological University became the center of international students who wanted to become a Master in Engineering Technology (MET). The University has become popular among international students since its opening to the present academic year. There are 16 international students from Africa (Sudan, Nigeria, and Somalia), Southwestern Asia (Syria), and Western Asia (Yemen and Palestine). Courses offered to international students: Doctor of Philosophy in Technology Management, Doctor in Public Administration, Bachelor in Industrial Technology major in Automotive, Bachelor of Science in Mechatronics, Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management, Bachelor of Science in Information Technology, and Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering. The number of students varies in the different courses and is widely distributed.

Another school popular school is the University of San Carlos (USC), which has about 16,000 students (as of 2020) who are called Carolinians, of which 200 are international students, enrolled in collegiate undergraduate and graduate programs and served by about 800 academic faculty and staff with a teacher to student ratio of 1:20. Some of these students are exchange students from European countries. A medical school that also accepts international students is the Cebu Doctors University. This school is known for its medical courses; it also established hospitals in the region using the name of the place where the hospital is located.

The hospital became widely known worldwide as it produced medical practitioners working in different parts of the world. The hospitals where the school is connected and where the students can practice also contributed to the country when catering to COVID-19 patients. The hospital is used for the students' practice and, at the same time, hires employees from different medical schools. Today, with about 300 students enrolled yearly from 30 different countries in Asia, America, Australia, Africa & Europe, harmoniously co-existing with the local students, CDU’s learning environment, while focused on providing intensive training, creates a fun and safe atmosphere where local and international students can freely learn and exchange ideas.

Another popular University in Cebu City is the University of the Visayas (UV) Gullas College of Medicine. More than 1400 students from India alone enrolled in UV Gullas College of Medicine and are pursuing their MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine-Bachelor of Surgery) at the UV Gullas campus. MBBS is an undergraduate, first professional degree in medicine.

Finally, Southwestern University PHINMA has 3000 international students enrolled from over 32 countries worldwide. Southwestern University Philippines provides the highest care and compassion toward its international students. These students are foreign nationals from the USA, SA, Singapore, Maldives, Mauritius, China, Malaysia, UAE, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, etc. The University is also known for its medical courses, which international students can enroll in. The modern trend in schools is to offer medical courses since they attract international students. There is an increase in international students studying in the Philippines, particularly in Cebu.

5. Summary of Findings

The respondents were enrolled in senior high school and wanted to take the ABM strand, STEM, and HUMSS as their top three priorities. They also wanted to enroll in UC, as the highest, followed by CNU, which is HUMSS, as the school is known for its teachers' training school in the country and offers several courses under the HUMSS strand. This is followed by CTU, a public school that offers various courses throughout the Province. Based on their strengths in several disciplines, high school pupils are categorised into five Strands. Accountancy and Business Management (ABM) students were the most popular choice among respondents, followed by STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and HSS (Humanities and Social Sciences) (HUMSS). The average age of a student is between eighteen and nineteen years old.

Education was the most popular elective among 12th graders from various schools, followed by accounting and business and nursing. The remaining courses were selected by a small number of responders. Conversely, students look for a university with a reasonable tuition rate that nonetheless provides a good education before deciding on a major. Ranked first, second, and third, respectively, in Cebu are the University of Cebu, Cebu Normal University, and Cebu Technological University.

Several factors must be considered in determining the college course students want to take. Of the several factors, one must choose a course of high employability, a course that a student likes or interests, salary when employed, affordability, nature of work, which may vary on the student's gender, the possibility of leaving the parents if employed, etc. All of these contribute to the students' decisions. The preparation of the ASEAN Integration curriculum is a result of the convention of the member-states. The curriculum is the result of both the PQF and AQRF.

The latter is the basis of the former, cascaded to all higher education institutions in the Philippines. Thus, the curriculum was unified and is now by the AQRF. The top degree programs highly demanded in the ASEAN countries are Engineers, Accountants, Computer Programmers, Draftsmen, and Animators. All these courses are offered in several universities and colleges in Cebu City. Doctors, nurses, and healthcare representatives in demand are also produced in several medical schools in Cebu City.

Agriculturists, however, are not produced by schools in Cebu City, but several schools in the Visayas, such as the Visayas State University in Leyte, offer this course. There is a demand for jobs in the ASEAN countries, but they do not. Specify specific courses to work in these vacancies. The above jobs available are offered in many colleges and universities in the Visayas. Cebu City alone has all the necessary courses leading to the employment of those vacancies. Some vacancies do not specify a particular course or degree program to subscribe to in college or universities but can be filled by the different relevant courses offered in colleges and universities.

The modern trend in schools is to offer medical courses since they attract international students. There is an increase in international students studying in the Philippines, particularly in Cebu. The country supports recognition of qualifications, encourages the development of qualifications frameworks that can facilitate lifelong learning, encourages the development of national approaches to validating learning gained outside formal education, promotes and encourages education and learner mobility, supports worker mobility, improves understanding of qualifications systems, and promote higher quality qualifications systems.

Thus, ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRA) aim to facilitate the mobility of professionals within ASEAN by recognizing qualifications, experience obtained, requirements met, or licenses or certifications granted by the relevant authorities in an AMS for mutual recognition by other AMS. A comparison among participating AMS can do this. This results in the free flow of skilled labour and establishes national skills frameworks. The goal is to develop a highly integrated and cohesive economy and human capacity. AQRF tries to develop human resources through closer education and lifelong learning cooperation to empower the ASEAN people and strengthen the ASEAN Community.

6. Conclusions

Students living in the city prefer business subjects since they are the most viable for them as there are more business opportunities in the city than in the Province. The family upbringing and history could also factor in the decision aside from the students' likes. The student's grade is the biggest factor, which normally shows their preference. Thus, the higher the grade of a particular subject, the more it interests students. It means that the subject having a higher grade is what they also like. STEM is those who are good in science and math subjects, while HUMSS are those who are good in history and values and often post warm behavior. The average age of senior high school students is 18-19. This means that after high school graduation, students are now of legal age and employability in the Philippines. In applying for a job, the employer and the employee will sign a contract. The universities and colleges offer the courses needed in the ASEAN countries. Students, however, are not fairly distributed as to how many should enroll in a particular course. Thus, the enrollees enroll in all those degree programs needed for employment in the ASEAN countries. Still, it cannot be determined if it lacks or exceeds the enrollees. Because of the pandemic, the family is now practical, and they are looking for an affordable school within the area without compromising the quality of education. The choice of school is dependent on affordability. Business courses are now becoming attractive to high school students. Working in the government, like becoming a teacher, is also another priority of students. Medical schools also increase enrollment due to international students taking medical courses in general. However, few international students are enrolled in private and public universities, which are not known as medical schools, but most take science courses. The country is now prepared for the ASEAN integration. Right from the start of this ASEAN Economic Integration, the country has been seriously reorganizing and retooling to adapt to these new challenges. K-12 was introduced to address this gap of 2 years in high school. The college school curricula were re-engineered to be at par with the rest of the ASEAN countries.

6.1. Recommendations

Based on the Summary of Findings and Conclusions, problem statement number 5, which is the proposed recommendations, can be summarized as follows: Increase in the number of business courses, as there is an increase in the number of students interested in the courses under this category. Education courses should be offered in rural areas since many of the students from rural areas want to take this course. The same applies to engineering subjects as these have the same demand in the results and discussion. Agriculture, also in demand in the ASEAN countries, should be incorporated into high-school subjects. While the students are still living with their parents, they can apply what they learn in school to actual practice. The strength of these high school students is enough to do farm work. The decrease in farm production in the Philippines is due to the decreasing number of young generation doing farm work. At this time, it is important to reduce the tuition fee so that the students can enroll in courses they want or are interested in. Students often select the course solely based on its affordability. Investigating the impact on these students' affordability decisions in relation to excellent education should be a priority for research. Depending on a country's unique circumstances and pressing requirements, the study's conclusions can be rather different. Given the current state of affairs in the nation, the student's decision is relevant for the time being. Plus, there needs to be a certain proportion of students who are committed to a specific field of study so that people don't sign up for already-full degree programmes.

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