Research Paper

The Human Resource Graduates' Attributes: An Assessment

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Abstract

This study examines the employability and professional attributes of Human Resource (HR) graduates in the Philippines. A quantitative descriptive-correlational method was used to evaluate alumni's perceptions of their competencies in areas such as communication, critical thinking, and information technology. Based on the findings, most of the respondents were female, aged between 20 and 25, single, graduates from batch 2018-2019, and regular private employees with 1-3 years in service. Results showed that while graduates feel highly proficient in soft skills and human relations, they demonstrate a lower mastery of specialized technical software. Surprisingly, the analysis found no statistically significant association between these academic attributes and actual employment status, suggesting that a degree alone does not guarantee a career. The researchers suggest that higher education institutions (HEIs) must collaborate more closely with the private sector to bridge the gap between classroom learning and industry demands.

Keywords: *Graduates' Attributes, Communication Skills, Critical Thinking Skills, Human Relation Skills, Problem Solving Skills, Information Technology Skills, Entrepreneurial Skills, Employability*

INTRODUCTION

Education is a valuable instrument that may be applied to anyone's life. It helps a person make a better, more informed decision by allowing them to draw on their knowledge. Education in the Philippines is divided into three (3) levels: primary, secondary, and higher education. The Commission on Higher Education is the Philippine government agency governing higher education in the country. It is responsible for promoting pertinent, high-quality higher education; safeguarding academic freedom to sustain intellectual development; advancing learning and research; establishing accountable, effective leadership; training high-level professionals; and enriching historical and cultural heritage.

According to the University of South Florida (2018), higher education is valuable since it opens up more professional options. On a deeper level, higher education is where a student charts a course through life that may lead them to places they never imagined. A subsequent study further narrowed the benefits of higher education. Finding, for example, that a bachelor's degree now means earning 84% more than someone with no post-secondary education. In addition, with the ongoing demand for multi-talented and adaptable critical thinkers in our jobs, education is — and will continue to be — the most significant way to prepare for an unpredictable future.

Higher education institutions in the Philippines offer a variety of Business Administration majors, such as but not limited to Marketing Management, Business Economics, and Human Resources. In line with the Sustainable Development Goals, quality education is prioritized to support lifelong learning. This is why higher education institutions continually produce graduates who are capable of adapting to technology and knowledge-based information to meet the demands of their workplaces.

Caingcoy et al. (2021) highlight that the emphasis of tracer studies varies depending on the institution's primary motivation. Various tracer studies on employability have been conducted in the past. However, there needs to be more studies on graduates' employability immediately after graduating from university.

According to the International Monetary Fund (2020), employability has long been a source of worry for higher education institutions. It is common knowledge that the longer a graduate waits to pursue a career, the more valuable the opportunities they will miss. A 2017 study by an India-based employment solutions firm found that only 1 in 3 Filipino college graduates is "employable," meaning roughly 65% lack the skills and training needed to qualify for the jobs they seek. Therefore, the assessment of employability and graduates' attributes among students, including the adequacy of college-acquired abilities, is necessary.

In line with Sustainable Development Goal 4, the researchers undertook this study to assess the attributes of Human Resource (HR) graduates in relation to their employability. The findings of this study will have implications for policymakers, particularly for the development of academic programs tailored to the actual demands of the modern labor market. Additionally, it will provide a clearer picture of the specific skill sets needed in a dynamic work environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Philippines is not an exception to the widespread economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the industries most impacted by the nation's combined economic and health crisis was the labor market. The second quarter of 2020 saw a double-digit unemployment rate due to government-mandated lockdowns and business closures. It increased significantly from 5.3% in January 2020 to 17.6% in April 2020.

Comparatively, the number of unemployed individuals almost tripled in April 2020 to over 7.2 million, up from roughly 2.4 million in January 2020, the pre-pandemic era. For the rest of 2020, the unemployment rate remained high, registering at 10.0% in July and 8.7% in October (Bank for International Settlements, 2021).

Likewise, the Philippine Statistics Authority (2020) identified regions with unemployment rates higher than the national average (17.6%). These were the following: Davao Region (17.9%), Ilocos Region (22.3%), Zamboanga Peninsula (23.9%), Central Luzon (27.3%), BARMM (29.8%), and CAR (25.3%). Northern Mindanao had the lowest unemployment rate, at 11.1%. Those aged 25 to 34 had the highest unemployment rate (31.5%), followed by those aged 15 to 24 (28.2%). In addition, the majority of those without jobs (67.0%) were men, with women making up the remaining 33.%.

Some educational institutions aim to respond by producing graduates who possess the necessary values, knowledge, and abilities. Higher education institutions have been concerned with the development of the whole person, who possesses knowledge, attributes, and skills, and can be considered educated by the time of graduation (Abas & Imam, 2016).

According to Oraison et al. (2019), higher education institutions formulate graduate attributes to align with students' proficiencies in 21st-century professional skills and competencies, all while considering the demands of the respective professions and industry standards. Universities are under growing pressure to produce marketable graduates due to recent changes in education and labor market policies.

The study of Albina and Sumagaysay (2020) listed graduates' attributes, which are communication skills, human relation skills, problem-solving skills, information technology skills, entrepreneurial skills, and critical thinking skills, as variables that respondents found useful for their job. Effective communication skills have been demonstrated to enhance professional relationships and cooperation. Especially in job interviews, communication skills have been a key

employability criterion since the 20th century (Krishnan et. al., 2021).

In addition, human relations skills encompass an eagerness to comprehend others, their strengths and vulnerabilities, talents, and capabilities. It underscores pivotal virtues such as trust, care, teamwork, inspiration, and growth. These qualities stimulate employees to deliver their utmost performance (Balakrishnan et al., 2014). Therefore, having adept human relations skills places graduates in a favorable position to effectively establish and manage their own businesses, thereby showcasing their competence in commerce (Jaja & Arugu, 2015).

Problem-solving skills are qualities that allow individuals to evaluate both types of circumstances and calmly find answers, which is what organizations seek. Some attributes of problem-solving skills in the workplace include analytical thinking, creativity, decision-making, persistence, collaboration, time management, and adaptability (Herrity, 2023).

Due to advancements in information technology (IT), the function of Human Resource Management (HRM) has transitioned from administrative to strategic. Incorporating technology enables the company to improve its operations. As a result, information technology skills are needed in every company, since technology is used daily (Joseph et al., 2021).

Entrepreneurial skill was defined as a broad range of skill sets, including technical, leadership, business management, and creative thinking. Developing this skill also entails building several skill sets applicable across many job roles and industries (Herrity, 2023). The concept of "critical thinking" encompasses qualities that are sometimes treated as interchangeable in definitions, namely critical and creative thinking abilities (Birgili, 2015).
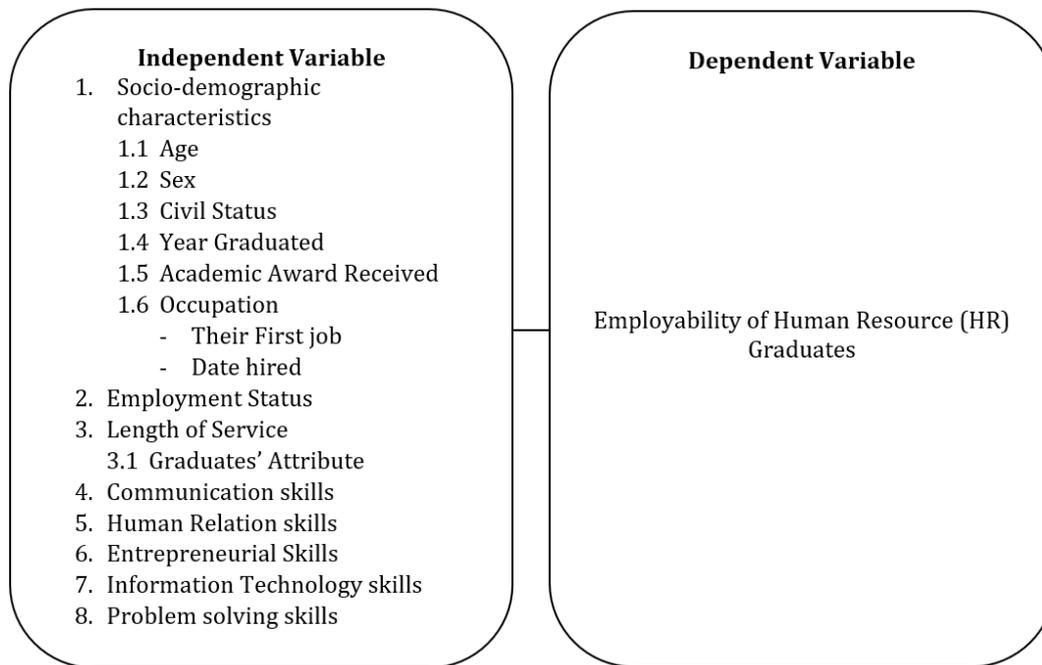
Indeed, employability is a problem that frequently arises in the context of job-seeking, where low employability impedes individuals' entry into the labor force. Taking that into consideration, higher education must reconsider how it creates and assesses graduates' attributes in the context of lifelong learning.

RESEARCH METHOD
Conceptual Framework

This study used a quantitative research design, specifically employing the descriptive-correlational method. This research design is useful for measuring the degree of association between two variables and for formulating informed predictions based on the identified relationship (Bhandari, 2021). Descriptive statistics were used to describe the socio-demographic profile of the respondents using frequencies and percentages, while the mean was used to describe the attributes of the respondents' graduates.

On the other hand, a correlational approach was employed to determine whether a significant relationship exists between these attributes and current employment status. The conceptual framework guiding this analysis was illustrated in Figure 1, which follows the independent-dependent variable (IV-DV) model. The IV-DV model was often used in quantitative research studies. Independent variables are the presumed cause of the dependent variable. Consequently, dependent variables are the presumed outcome of the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2021). The IV-DV model was used in this study to explain how the socio-demographic characteristics and the respondents' attributes affect their employability.

Independent Variable
1. Socio-demographic characteristics
   1.1 Age
   1.2 Sex
   1.3 Civil Status
   1.4 Year Graduated
   1.5 Academic Award Received
   1.6 Occupation
      - Their First job
      - Date hired
2. Employment Status
3. Length of Service
   3.1 Graduates' Attribute
4. Communication skills
5. Human Relation skills
6. Entrepreneurial Skills
7. Information Technology skills
8. Problem solving skills

Dependent Variable

Employability of Human Resource (HR) Graduates

Figure 1: Research Paradigm of the Study

Sampling Design

A stratified random sampling technique was used in this study. According to Simkus (2023), it is an approach in which researchers divide a population into smaller subgroups, or strata, based on shared characteristics of the members, and then randomly select from these strata to generate the final sample.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents Per Stratum

Stratum	Total Number of Respondents	Sample Size
2021-2022	85	44
2020-2021	1	1
2019-2020	11	6
2018-2019	128	65
2017-2018	155	80
	Total	**191**
	Achieved Sample Size	**176**
	Percentage Achieved	**89%**

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents per stratum. Sample sizes for each year were computed using proportional allocation to determine the number of respondents needed for this study. To compute the overall sample size, the academic year was used as a stratum, and the number of graduates from 2017 to 2022 was the sampling unit. Slovin's formula was used to calculate the sample size (n) given the population size (N), which is 380, and a 0.05 margin of error (e), resulting in a total of 191 respondents. Proportional allocation was then used to compute the number of respondents per stratum, where nh/n = Wh.

However, this study achieved an 89% response rate, with only 176 respondents. According to Hinteregger et al. (2023), the 61% response rate is good and falls within the typical range for email-based surveys (25-70%) and web-based surveys (20-47%). Thus, 89% response rate can be considered appropriate for this study.

Research Instrument

To conduct the study and gather data thoroughly, the researchers modified a survey questionnaire from Albina and Sumagaysay (2020) to better align with the current objectives. Specifically, the researchers expanded the respondents' demographic profile to identify their transition from academic to corporate settings.

These modifications include inquiries about their academic award, first job, and date hired to provide a more comprehensive basis for the correlational analysis. On the other hand, the study's graduate attributes were based on CHED Memorandum Order No. 17, Series of 2017, for the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the questionnaire's reliability.

As shown in Table 2, the reliability test yielded an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.941, indicating excellent internal consistency. Furthermore, all six sub-scales representing graduate attributes produced coefficients well above the generally accepted threshold.

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of the Questionnaire

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient	Interpretation	Recommendation
Communication Skills	0.845	Good	Proceed to the actual survey
Human-Relation Skills	0.883	Good	Proceed to the actual survey
Problem-Solving Skills	0.923	Excellent	Proceed to the actual survey
Information Technology Skills	0.914	Excellent	Proceed to the actual survey
Entrepreneurial Skills	0.889	Good	Proceed to the actual survey
Critical Thinking Skills	0.924	Excellent	Proceed to the actual survey

Further, the survey questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part seeks to identify the respondents' profile. In contrast, the second part seeks to answer how many respondents assess their employability in terms of their graduates' attributes, such as communication, human relations, problem-solving, information technology, entrepreneurial, and critical thinking skills. To rate the statements, a four-point Likert-type scale was used as follows: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 3 shows the socio-demographic profile of the respondents. From the data gathered, there are more female HR graduates than male graduates. The 20-25 age bracket has the highest proportion. On the other hand, the 31-35 age bracket had the lowest proportion.

Table 3: Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Profile	Frequency (n=176)	Percent (%)
Sex		
Male	32	18.20
Female	144	81.80
Age		
20-25	151	85.80
26-30	24	13.60

31-35	1	0.60
Civil Status		
Single	167	94.90
Married	5	2.80

Table 4 shows the educational background of the respondents in terms of year graduated and academic award received during their higher education. The highest proportion of respondents graduated in S.Y. 2018-2019, while the lowest was in S.Y. 2020-2021 and 2019-2020. During those years, the implementation of the K-12 curriculum led to a significant decrease in the number of students entering higher education over two consecutive school years. In terms of academic awards received, most respondents answered "None" in comparison to the proportion of those who stated that they graduated "Cum Laude" during their higher education.

Table 4. Educational Background of the Respondents

Educational Background	Frequency (n=176)	Percent (%)
Year Graduated		
2021-2022	45	25.60
2020-2021	1	0.60
2019-2020	13	7.40
2018-2019	67	38.10
2017-2018	50	28.40
Academic Award Received		
Cum Laude	32	18.20
None	144	81.8

Table 5 shows the respondents' occupations. Most of the respondents stated that they are private employees. Unlike government agencies and organizations, where regularization requires meeting civil service eligibility and other standards, most employees prefer to work for private businesses, where tenure is guaranteed (Cervantes et al., 2019). Additionally, college graduates with Latin honors are encouraged to apply for eligibility with the Civil Service Commission, which can be utilized to apply for government posts (Civil Service Commission, 2023). This may be attributed to the fact that most respondents have not received an academic award during their higher education, which is why employees prefer to work for private companies.

In terms of employment status, most respondents are regular employees (79.50%), while seasonal employees account for the lowest percentage (0.60%). It can be seen that the majority of recent graduates are employed regularly, as this is a widespread practice in the nation, particularly in the private sector. Most respondents had 1-3 years of employment service (35.20%), while those with less than a year had the fewest (30.10%).

**Table 5.** Occupation of the Respondents

Occupation	Frequency (n=176)	Percent (%)
Private Employee	128	72.70
Government Employee	36	20.50
Self-Employed	7	4.00
Unemployed	5	2.80
Employment Status		
Regular	140	79.50

Contractual	35	19.90
Seasonal (Job Order)	1	0.60
Length of Service		
Less than a year	53	30.10
1-3 years	62	35.20
More than 3 years	61	34.70

Figure 2 shows the percentage of respondents who stayed in their first job. 60.80% responded "yes," while 39.2% responded "no." Overall, the data gathered shows that most human resource graduates secured and remained in their first job immediately after completing their higher education and are currently employed in various employment statuses.

This can be explained by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted employees' intentions to remain in their current positions, sparking concerns about job stability, willingness to remain employed, and perceptions of job security during crises. This encompasses not only fears of unemployment but also apprehensions about factors that could disrupt their job status *(Ali et. al., 2021)*.

Salvosa (2015) highlights that despite the Philippine government's efforts to improve job quality, unemployment has remained a persistent issue for many years. However, by fostering employment and engaging in economic activities with the private sector, the Philippine government has been steadily raising its employment rate.
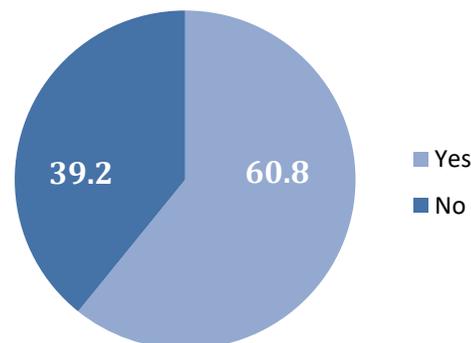
Figure 2. Percentage of the Respondents who Stayed in their First Job

Graduates' Attributes' Assessment

Table 6. Assessment of Communication Skills

Communication Skills	Mean	Description
1. Ability to listen	3.77	Strongly Agree
2. Ability to communicate with clarity and concision	3.62	Strongly Agree
3. Ability to communicate through non-verbal cues effectively	3.39	Strongly Agree
4. Ability to maintain a healthy relationship with co-workers	3.67	Strongly Agree
5. Ability to perform confidently	3.64	Strongly Agree
6. Ability to show empathy for co-workers dealing with a difficult situation	3.63	Strongly Agree
7. Ability to understand other people's points of view	3.66	Strongly Agree
8. Ability to show respect to co-workers	3.80	Strongly Agree

9. Ability to give and receive feedback in the workplace	3.66	Strongly Agree
10. Ability to pick the right communication channel depending on the seriousness of the matter	3.57	Strongly Agree
Grand Mean	**3.64**	**Strongly Agree**

Legend: 1-1.75 Strongly Disagree, 1.76-2.51 Disagree, 2.52-3.27 Agree, 3.28-4.00 Strongly Agree

Table 6 presents the interpretation of the respondents' communication skills. The total grand mean obtained (3.64) indicates that all questions in this skill were rated "strongly agree". This means that respondents gained communication skills during their higher education. The statement "ability to communicate through non-verbal cues effectively" obtained the lowest mean (3.39).

As the CHED Memorandum Order Series of 2017 stands on their objective of providing these essential skills to every student; these core competencies have been achieved before hopping to their professional life; through this fulfillment, it further aims that the inclusion of enhancing verbally speaking under the program is highly effective, however, it obtained the lowest mean due to these being expected/innate with the students.

On the other hand, the statement "ability to show respect to co-workers" obtained the highest mean (3.80). This is because activities within the major include group work, which strengthens their sense of affiliation and, through interdependence, increases their respect for one another. According to Doyle (2018), regardless of the field you work in, having the capacity to communicate effectively with superiors, coworkers, and employees is crucial. In contrast, employees in the digital age need to be capable of communicating and receiving information both personally and via online platforms, email, and phone.

Table 7. Assessment of Human-Relation Skills

Human-Relation Skills	Mean	Description
1. The ability to be aware of and manage your own emotions, as well as the emotions of others.	3.59	Strongly Agree
2. The ability to truly listen to what someone else is saying, without letting your own biases, judgment, or assumptions get in the way.	3.55	Strongly Agree
3. The ability to identify and manage conflict in a constructive way that leads to a positive outcome.	3.56	Strongly Agree
4. The ability to understand and share the feelings of another person.	3.47	Strongly Agree
5. The ability to understand and work effectively with people from different cultures.	3.53	Strongly Agree
6. The ability to resolve conflicts in a timely and effective manner	3.60	Strongly Agree
7. The ability to negotiate with people for any future changes.	3.47	Strongly Agree
8. Ability to maintain ethical standards within the workplace	3.74	Strongly Agree
9. The ability to accurately record and organize data.	3.65	Strongly Agree
10. The ability to adapt to different individuals	3.65	Strongly Agree
Grand Mean	**3.58**	**Strongly Agree**

Legend: 1-1.75 Strongly Disagree. 1.76-2.51 Disagree, 2.52-3.27 Agree, 3.28-4.00 Strongly Agree

Table 7 presents the assessment of respondents' human relations skills. The grand mean shows that all questions in this skill were rated "strongly agree," as this is the focal point of the curriculum's development. The development of human relation skills is necessary in the field, and the exertion dominates management subjects. The questions "the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person" and "the ability to negotiate with people for any future changes"

received the lowest mean, indicating that these specific skills may be perceived as needing improvement compared to others.

On the other hand, "ability to maintain ethical standards within the workplace" had the highest mean. In the Human Resource program, there is a practice of incorporating good governance and social responsibility. The program focuses heavily on management courses, which help students develop an understanding of ethical standards in the workplace.

The findings support Günthner's (2023) claim that understanding and studying human relations can benefit us at work and help us advance professionally. Students are more likely to advance both personally and professionally, depending on the strength of their interpersonal skills. From a personal standpoint, having strong human relations skills has several benefits. First, several of the top ten reasons for firing someone can be traced to poor interpersonal skills. Furthermore, communication and conflict resolution, as part of human relations skills, for example, can help build stronger connections.

Table 8. Assessment of Problem-Solving Skills

Problem-Solving Skills	Mean	Description
1. The ability to analyze a situation, identify the cause of the problem, and evaluate potential solutions.	3.65	Strongly Agree
2. The ability to think outside the box and come up with creative solutions.	3.55	Strongly Agree
3. The ability to make informed decisions based on available information.	3.63	Strongly Agree
4. The ability to collaborate and work in teams to find a solution.	3.64	Strongly Agree
5. A sense of urgency to address the issue before it becomes more significant.	3.61	Strongly Agree
6. The ability to adapt to changing circumstances	3.62	Strongly Agree
7. The ability to use your imagination to look at a problem freshly and come up with a new solution.	3.51	Strongly Agree
8. The ability to influence when managing valuable and complex client relationships.	3.38	Strongly Agree
9. The ability to solve problems on time is essential.	3.56	Strongly Agree
10. The ability to stick with a problem until you find a solution, even if it takes multiple attempts.	3.45	Strongly Agree
Grand Mean	**3.56**	**Strongly Agree**

Legend: 1-1.75 Strongly Disagree. 1.76-2.51 Disagree, 2.52-3.27 Agree, 3.28-4.00 Strongly Agree

Table 8 shows that all questions in this skill were rated "strongly agree". Thus, respondents gained problem-solving skills during their higher education. The results validate Schwencke's (2023) assertion that workers with outstanding problem-solving skills will thoroughly examine the issue, identify a range of viable alternatives, and accurately determine which option best addresses the situation. This guarantees that workers in difficult jobs who are trusted to solve important company problems are best prepared to handle the contemporary issues businesses face in the twenty-first century.

The highest mean among the problem-solving skills is "ability to analyze a situation, identify the cause of the problem, and evaluate potential solutions," with a mean of 3.65, indicating that respondents improved their problem-solving abilities to address difficulties and challenges more effectively. According to Choudhar et al. (2022), individuals who can handle problems and situations calmly and collectedly may achieve their academic and work goals in a well-defined

manner and are seen as assets by organizations.

On the other hand, "*the ability to influence when managing valuable and complex client relationships*" obtained the lowest mean. In the context of customer relationship management, technologies enable firms to analyze data and interact with consumers more quickly and at a larger scale (Krafft et al., 2020). However, Kalogiannidis (2021) discussed the shift to remote work due to COVID-19, noting both negative and positive implications for professionals and the need to adapt remote work strategies, with varying impacts on job retention, client handling, and the well-being of fresh graduates.

In light of the aforementioned points, these individuals generate new concepts, improve execution methods, simplify understanding, and help customers save time and money. Employers value adept problem solvers not only for their ability to address challenges but also for their diverse skill set, encompassing logic, creativity, perseverance, innovation, unconventional thinking, and tenacity.

Table 9. Assessment of Information Technology Skills

Information Technology Skills	Mean	Description
1. The knowledge of basic operations, such as maintaining and updating technology for increased efficiency.	3.63	Strongly Agree
2. The ability to use search engines and educational sites for research and setting up methods of accumulating data.	3.60	Strongly Agree
3. The ability to gather information from social media audiences and develop strategies tailored to their preferences.	3.52	Strongly Agree
4. The ability to ensure respect for online communication, commonly referred to as netiquette.	3.59	Strongly Agree
5. The ability to manage database and spreadsheet software for businesses and organize data for others to understand.	3.51	Strongly Agree
6. The ability to create documents using software that prepares the digital information for transition to a physical medium, whether it is a webpage, postcard, brochure, business card, or label.	3.36	Strongly Agree
7. The ability to conduct data entry, which can involve organizing data in spreadsheets, and presenting this data through visual aids that can be created using slideshow creation programs.	3.45	Strongly Agree
8. The ability to help other coworkers with their technological challenges, such as helping them learn new software or troubleshoot issues.	3.31	Strongly Agree
9. The ability to help organizations find the technology or programs that can best meet their needs.	3.19	Agree
10. The ability to manage schedules digitally, organize files for easier access, and clean out technology for better efficiency.	3.48	Strongly Agree
Grand Mean	**3.46**	**Strongly Agree**

Legend: 1-1.75 Strongly Disagree. 1.76-2.51 Disagree, 2.52-3.27 Agree, 3.28-4.00 Strongly Agree

Table 9 shows that most questions in this skill were rated "strongly agree". This means that respondents gained information technology skills during their higher education. The statement *"the knowledge of basic operations, such as maintaining and updating technology for increased efficiency"* gained the highest mean score. It indicates that they possess the fundamental skills and knowledge needed to manage and improve technology to enhance efficiency and productivity.

According to Khan et al. (2022), information technology skills have rapidly emerged as an

important job requirement across companies, as employers actively seek individuals with IT skills due to the contemporary job landscape's increasing demand for digital proficiency. Additionally, the majority of the respondents belong to the 'Gen Z' cohort, which is well-known for its tech-savvy nature. This is a key factor contributing to their skill in basic technological operations.

However, the statement "the ability to help organizations find the technology or programs that can best meet their needs" received the lowest mean score of 3.19 (Agree), indicating that the circumstances primarily drove the adoption of new technology during the pandemic, which necessitated compliance with government-imposed community guidelines. For instance, this trend is evident in the implementation of HRIS (Human Resources Information Systems), where organizations sought technological solutions to adapt to the changing environment brought about by the pandemic. As companies are in the early stages of adopting new technologies, this practice has not yet become standard within the organization.

Table 10. Assessment of Entrepreneurial Skills

Entrepreneurial Skills	Mean	Description
1. Ability to achieve goals, particularly planning, and autonomy to achieve results.	3.61	Strongly Agree
2. Self-confidence to achieve defined goals and overcome obstacles.	3.59	Strongly Agree
3. Sense of responsibility for the success or failure of the business.	3.64	Strongly Agree
4. Ability to learn using failure as a learning experience in a positive way.	3.69	Strongly Agree
5. Ability to develop and maintain a successful business through hard work and effort.	3.56	Strongly Agree
6. Ability to develop innovative new approaches to the market, new concepts, new products, and services.	3.50	Strongly Agree
7. Capacity of initiative, identifying and implementing new business opportunities.	3.52	Strongly Agree
8. Ambition to achieve goals.	3.76	Strongly Agree
9. Persistence to face obstacles and reset strategies.	3.69	Strongly Agree
10. Ability to establish a network of contacts, to develop and maintain business relationships.	3.56	Strongly Agree
Grand Mean	**3.61**	**Strongly Agree**

Legend: 1-1.75 Strongly Disagree. 1.76-2.51 Disagree, 2.52-3.27 Agree, 3.28-4.00 Strongly Agree

Table 10 shows that all questions in this skill were rated "strongly agree". Thus, respondents gained entrepreneurial skills during their higher education. The study by Kucel et al. (2016) found that developing entrepreneurial skills is significant, as students who possess these skills are considered more market-aware and creative in their job search. They are also expected to anticipate which job offers would and would not match their skills.

The statement ″ambition to achieve goals," which obtained the highest mean of 3.79, can be explained by the study of Janke and Dickhäuser (2019). The result of their study suggests that ambition is a natural human trait that motivates people to achieve their goals. Therefore, it can be acquired by anyone through life experiences, even before higher education.

On the other hand, the statement "Ability to develop innovative new approaches to the market, new concepts, new products, and services" obtained the lowest mean. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted organizational operations and necessitated the use of both offline and online media to continue their business activities, underscoring the need for greater digitalization (Srivastava, 2021). However, the use of digital technologies in the Philippines is still below its

potential.

These pose problems in the workplace, as employees are forced to transition from in-person operations to online media (Tizon & Vargas, 2021). These studies explain why the statement received the lowest mean. Consequently, the subject entrepreneurship was recently adopted in the College of Business Administration and Accountancy, having previously been under the College of Agriculture.

Table 11. Assessment of Critical Thinking Skills

Critical Thinking Skills	Mean	Description
1. Ability to think about a topic or issue in an objective and critical way.	3.60	Strongly Agree
2. Ability to identify the different arguments there are about a particular issue.	3.58	Strongly Agree
3. Ability to evaluate a point of view to determine how strong or valid it is.	3.56	Strongly Agree
4. Ability to recognize any weaknesses or negative points that are in the evidence or argument.	3.61	Strongly Agree
5. Ability to notice what implications there might be behind a statement or argument	3.53	Strongly Agree
6. Ability to provide structured reasoning and support for an argument that we wish to make.	3.51	Strongly Agree
7. Ability to collaborate and get feedback from others—especially people with different backgrounds than your own	3.66	Strongly Agree
8. Ability to generate possible solutions, particularly out-of-the-box ideas	3.56	Strongly Agree
9. Ability to make a decision or come to a conclusion.	3.63	Strongly Agree
10. Ability to present and communicate the decision or conclusion.	3.63	Strongly Agree
Grand Mean	**3.59**	**Strongly Agree**

Legend: 1-1.75 Strongly Disagree. 1.76-2.51 Disagree, 2.52-3.27 Agree, 3.28-4.00 Strongly Agree

Table 11 shows that all questions in this skill were rated "strongly agree". The results indicate that critical thinking skills have improved during respondents' higher education. Subjects that utilize case studies serve as the foundation to build students' critical thinking skills that single-handedly hone them to make better decisions and ultimately, better employees.

The highest mean under the critical thinking skills is the "ability to collaborate and get feedback from others- especially people with different backgrounds than your own". The results of this study support the idea that during higher education, Human Resources focuses on teamwork. This is why students can also collaborate with different people, as they know how to maintain ethical standards in the workplace. According to Plotnikova and Strukov (2019), when education is structured around team-based learning, it fosters an environment in which students not only develop essential interpersonal and teamwork skills but also cultivate critical thinking.

On the contrary, the statement "the ability to provide structured reasoning and support for an argument that we wish to make" obtained the lowest mean. This result can be associated with Kamaruddin (2021), who states that a person with low self-confidence would struggle to present their ideas properly; this is because individuals with a lack of self-confidence are convinced that their beliefs cannot be supported by clear arguments that serve as their reason or evidence.

Table 12. Overall Respondents' Assessment of their Employability

Graduates' Attributes	Grand Mean	Description
Communication Skills	3.64	Strongly Agree
Human-Relation Skills	3.58	Strongly Agree
Problem-Solving Skills	3.56	Strongly Agree
Information Technology Skills	3.46	Strongly Agree
Entrepreneurial Skills	3.61	Strongly Agree
Critical Thinking Skills	3.59	Strongly Agree

Table 12 shows that communication skills were the highest-rated graduate attribute among the others, as they are exercised in their day-to-day activities. The Department of Business Administration emphasized communication skills because human resources and psychology are closely associated with human behavior. Therefore, it is important in the workforce to use communication skills to ensure efficiency.

In contrast, information technology skills have been ranked the lowest among graduates' attributes due to the late implementation of HR software in organizations. The result of this study proved true the study of Anderson et al. (2018), which states that "information technology skills are the least utilized skill within the course of their respondents' employment. According to Siddiquah and Salim (2017), students excel in basic skills such as using MS Word and MS PowerPoint, browsing the internet, social networking, emailing, attaching files, and playing computer games.

However, their proficiency in other skills, such as using digital libraries, participating in discussion forums, and managing blogs, is lacking. Students primarily use computers for leisure and non-academic purposes, believing that doing so enhances their learning. Further, many students encounter challenges, including slow computer speeds, internet signal issues, virus threats, poor computer working conditions, and a lack of internet access.

Relationship Between Graduates' Attributes and Their Employability

Table 13. Overall Relationship Between Graduates' Attributes and Employability

Skills	Occupation		First Job		Employment Status		Length of Service	
	Correlation Coefficient	P-Value	Correlation Coefficient	P-Value	Correlation Coefficient	P-Value	Correlation Coefficient	P-Value
Communication Skills	0.115	0.128	-0.045	0.555	0.035	0.644	-0.033	0.664
Human-Relation Skills	0.089	0.241	-0.005	0.945	-0.030	0.692	0.078	0.302
Problem-Solving Skills	0.031	0.683	-0.053	0.487	0.053	0.487	0.052	0.493
Information Technology Skills	-0.078	0.306	0.025	0.746	-0.036	0.637	0.048	0.528
Entrepreneurial Skills	0.039	0.683	0.137	0.069	0.033	0.662	0.092	0.223
Critical Thinking Skills	0.022	0.777	0.060	0.432	0.007	0.927	0.074	0.332

*5 % level of significance

Table 13 illustrates that there is no significant relationship between human resource

graduates' attributes and their employability. This suggests that possessing high-level communication, human relations, problem-solving, information technology, entrepreneurial, and critical thinking skills does not automatically guarantee employment in the current market.

The results of this study corroborated those of Abas and Imam (2016), which call for matching the employability skills needed in both current and future workplace contexts with the skill levels of graduates from higher education institutions (HEIs). The lack of correlation in this study reinforces their theory that the mere acquisition of skills is insufficient without a proactive partnership between the government and the education sector to align curriculum directly with evolving job descriptions.

The findings of this study also align with Nazron et al. (2017), who found that graduates' employment status is not significantly related to the skills they gained during higher education. According to the data, 61% of employed graduates were hired based on their performance during industrial training (OJT) at private institutions rather than their graduates' attributes alone. As a result, this initiative facilitates the hiring of human resources in private companies.

CONCLUSIONS

This study reveals that the majority of the demographic profile are single, female young adults (20-25) primarily employed in regular status in the private sector. This asserts that the private sector remains the primary absorber of graduates who lack the civil service eligibility typically required for government regularization. While the respondents demonstrated a high level of self-perceived competence across all attributes—meeting the standards of CHED Memorandum Order No. 17, Series of 2017—a notable gap exists: Communication Skills were rated highest due to its being constantly applied in the curriculum, whereas Information Technology (IT) skills were rated lowest, due to delayed institutional adoption of specialized HR software.

Most significantly, this study shows no significant relationship between graduates' attributes and employability. It challenges the traditional assumptions of Human Capital Theory, which posits that skill acquisition leads directly to employment. Instead, this finding aligns with the study of Abas and Imam (2016) and Nazron et al. (2017), suggesting that in the contemporary HR landscape, academic attributes are merely "entry-level" prerequisites rather than decisive competitive advantages. This implies that employability is likely driven by external factors—such as on-the-job training or specific technical certifications—rather than general degree-based competencies, necessitating a shift toward a more proactive, industry-aligned partnership between Higher Education Institutions and the corporate sector.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

This study is limited to Human Resource graduates of S.Y. 2017-2022. Specifically, it represents only those who responded, as it achieved an 89% response rate. As a result, graduate studies should be conducted more frequently. They should include a wider range of respondents from previous years to establish more reliable data that better represents their employability.

Moreover, other factors can be examined, such as how closely their current job relates to what they studied, how long it took them to get their first job, how long they were unemployed for, how many times the respondents changed jobs, and how closely their education matches what employers look for in potential employees. It is important to consider the employer's perspective to ensure that the implemented curriculum can develop qualified, skilled human resources who meet industry and current market needs. Most importantly, future researchers should consider K-12 implementation to determine whether the curriculum change was helpful for graduates' employability.

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