



# NAVIGATING THE JOB MARKET: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY ON SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES IN JOB SEARCHING

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## ABSTRACT

*This multiple case study aimed to discover and understand the experiences of Senior High School graduates in job searching in Davao Region. The data were taken from the three (3) participants and three (3) informants whose responses were collected through in-depth interviews. Using the thematic analysis, essential themes were extracted from the participants' responses. On the lived experiences related to job searching, the results revealed nine (9) major themes: preference for college graduates over SHS graduates, difficulty in job application process, stress and pressure in job searching, sense of unfulfilled career potentials despite K to 12 training, job instability and short-term opportunities, impediments to self-confidence and job security, importance of preparation before a job interview, economic insecurity, and deprivation of field experience during the work immersion. Furthermore, on how they overcome their struggles from job searching, six (6) themes emerged: preventing burnout from rejections through leisure activities, earning income through side hustles, intensifying self-reliance and independence, cultivating positive mindset, seeking advice and preparing for interviews, and applying for an industry that accept SHS graduates. Moreover, from the insights gained by the participants, six (6) major themes emerged: disregard the educational-based bias, nurture job resiliency, enhance the job readiness skills for practical experiences, call for work immersion opportunities for SHS students, meet the demands of the industry, and invest in career guidance programs. Cross-case analysis were also utilized to determine the similarities and differences of the themes that transpired. The results of this study were deemed significant to senior high school graduates, parents, teachers, school administrators, DepEd authorities, and future researchers.*

**KEYWORDS:** job searching, multiple case study, senior high school graduates

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines has launched the MATATAG program to strengthen the resilience of schools to natural disasters and other emergencies. However, the MATATAG initiative also recognizes other concerns that affect the future of Senior High School (SHS) graduates in the Philippines. One of the concerns identified by the program is the challenge of finding employment opportunities after graduation. Despite the increasing number of SHS graduates each year, there are still concerns about their employability and their readiness to enter the workforce.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics in United States [Department of Labor] revealed in February 2022 that the lowest unemployment rate, accounting for 2.2%, was among those with more senior high school graduate students (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023). Meanwhile, the problem of increasing unemployment in Indonesia arises from high school graduates of both vocational high schools (VHS) and general high schools (non-VHS). The national average unemployment rate of both school graduates was 8.72% and 11.11% respectively in 2016, and 7.92% and 10.42% respectively in 2019. The causes of unemployment from VHS and non-VHS graduates are: 1) the

competence of VHS and non-VHS graduates unable to satisfy demands of the labor market; 2) the number of graduates higher than available job vacancies, and 3) the educational system in Indonesia not involving industry in the curriculum planning process (Ohara et al., 2020).

In the Philippines, 35% of the companies are not willing to hire and 41% are indefinite or are reluctant in hiring SHS graduates as they lack the necessary specialized skills for the job needed. On the other hand, research stressed out that some SHS graduates also do not apply because they think they lack the competencies, aside from not having confidence in competing with college graduates. More specifically, they added that most of the job openings were for college graduates (36%), SHS graduates were not qualified (25%), employers have no job openings for any position (20%), and SHS graduates lack work experience (16%) (Orbeta et al., 2019).

Hence, the researchers believed it is a need and essential to carry out the study to explore the challenges faced by SHS graduates in their job search and identify potential solutions to address these challenges. For educators, career counselors, and policymakers, they can develop programs and policies that may include offering job search skills training, career



counseling, and advocating for policies that promote equal access to employment opportunities for all.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this multiple case study was to discover and understand the challenges faced by senior high school graduates in job searching in Davao Region.

At this stage in the research, the experiences of senior high school graduates in job searching were generally defined as their quest in landing a job after graduating and if they pursue not to go in college. To give a clearer view of the story, this study explored the unique characteristics, experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of the senior high school graduates.

### **Research Questions**

This multiple case study aimed to find out the experiences of senior high school graduates in job-searching through the following questions:

1. What are the unique characteristics of each case of the senior high school graduate in finding a job?
2. What are the challenges encountered by the senior high school graduates in finding a job?
3. How does the senior high school graduate cope with the challenges of finding a job?
4. What are the insights of the senior high school graduates regarding finding a job that can be shared with others?
5. What are the similarities and differences of one case to the other cases?

### **Theoretical Lens**

This study was gleaned through the Trait and Factor theory of Parsons (1909), which is a well-known career development theory. It emphasizes the importance of assessing individual characteristics such as interests, values, skills, and personality traits to make informed decisions. This examines how a senior high school graduate's abilities, interest, and personality traits match with the demands of the job market, and how it affects their career choices and job search strategies (Armitage & Amar, 2021).

Furthermore, this study was hinged on the Social-Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) developed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett in 1994 which suggests that individuals' career choices and employability are influenced by their social environment, personal factors, and cognitive processes. This also emphasizes the role of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals in career development. Moreover, this explores how they perceived job security or work-life balance in different industries (Lent & Brown, 2019).

Moreover, this was supported with the Attribution Theory proposed by Fritz Heider (1958) which explains the causes of events and behaviors of individual by making attributions, which are inferences about the underlying causes of those events and behaviors. Attributions theory suggest that SHS graduates may make attributions about the reasons why they are successful or unsuccessful in finding a job. This also explains how feedback from job applications or interviews affects SHS

graduates' attributions about their job search outcomes (Hewett et al., 2018).

## **CHAPTER 2 METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative multiple-case study approach to produce a high-quality description that accurately depicts the experiences of senior high school graduates in job searching. The goal of qualitative research is to thoroughly examine, comprehend, and explain social phenomena in their natural environment (Creswell, 2013).

### **Research Participants**

In choosing the research participants, the researchers utilized purposive sampling. In this multiple case study, there were three (3) participants who are all senior high school graduates in the Davao Region. Also, one (1) informant for each of the participants was interviewed to support their distinct responses to the given research questions. These informants are friends or relatives who have known them so well.

The participants' selection was based on the following criteria, through which the researcher can get a reliable and rich understanding of the unique characteristics of senior high school graduates in job searching. As for the inclusion criteria for identifying the participants, we considered the following: (a) must be female or male; (b) must be aged between 18-26 years old; (c) must be a senior high school graduate in Davao Region; and (d) have experienced being rejected in a job application at least three times. For the exclusion criteria, individuals who have already secured a stable job and who are self-employed will be excluded.

### **Data Analysis**

The results of the gathered data will be the basis for conclusions and recommendations for further research. Creswell (2013) developed the five steps in data analysis: data logging, anecdotes, vignettes, data coding, and thematic analysis. In this study, we will utilize data coding, thematic analysis, and even cross-case analysis in relation to a multiple-case study approach.

## **CHAPTER 3 RESULTS CROSS CASE ANALYSIS**

This section provides a cross-case examination of all three cases in this study.

In this study, we have three (3) cases that are presented individually from the preceding chapters.

Table 1 displays the profile of each case. Firstly, Seeker in Rural Area is a resident of a rural area, which according to him has limited job opportunities. On the other hand, living in an urban area with diverse job opportunities, Applicant in Urban Area has been rejected five times. Lastly, PWD Job Aspirant faces challenges with limited job opportunities as a Person with Disability.



**Table 1**  
**Profile of the Students**

CASE (Pseudonym)	Job Opportunities	Rejection Frequency	Graduation Year	SHS Strand
Seeker in Rural Area	Limited Job Opportunities in a Rural Area	Three Times Rejected	Graduated SHS Year 2020	General Academic Strand
Applicant in Urban Area	Diverse Job Opportunities in an Urban Area	Five Times Rejected	Graduated SHS Year 2018	General Academic Strand
PWD Job Aspirant	Limited Job Opportunities for PWD	Three Times Rejected	Graduated SHS Year 2019	TVL (Cookery) Strand

**Cross-Case Analysis on the Experiences of Senior High School Graduates in Job Searching**

Table 3 illustrates a cross-case examination of senior high school graduates in job searching. After a rigorous and thorough investigation of the three cases' results, common essential themes were identified. Using the analysis of the responses of the participants in all cases, the researchers identified nine (9) essential themes that are shared by the two,

if not all three, cases: 1) preference for college graduates over SHS graduates; 2) difficulty in job application process; 3) stress and pressure in job searching; 4) sense of unfulfilled career potentials despite K to 12 Training; 5) job instability and short-term opportunities; 6) impediments to self-confidence and job security; 7) importance of preparation before a job interview; 8) experiences on economic insecurity; 9) deprivation of field experience during the work immersion.

**Table 3**  
**Cross Case Analysis on the Experiences of Senior High School Graduates in Job Searching**

Essential Theme	Cases		
	1	2	3
Preference for College Graduates over SHS Graduates	✓	✓	✓
Difficulty in Job Application Process	✓	✓	✓
Stress and Pressure in Job Searching	✓	✓	✓
Sense of Unfulfilled Career Potentials Despite K to 12 Training	✓	✓	✓
Job Instability and Short-Term Opportunities	✓	✓	
Impediments to Self-Confidence and Job Security		✓	✓
Importance of Preparation Before a Job Interview	✓	✓	
Economic Insecurity	✓	✓	
Deprivation of Field Experience during the Work Immersion	✓		✓
Numerous Career Choices for College Graduates		✓	
Hesitation to Cause Damage in Workplace			✓
Importance of Dressing Well and Making a Good First Impression	✓		
Difficulty in Finding Suitable Job for PWD			✓
Disparity of Salary in the Workplace	✓		
Envy of Friends Who Are Graduating			✓

**Preference for College Graduates over SHS Graduates**

The first common thread in all three examples is a preference for college graduates over high school graduates. All of the participants were able to experience the difficulties and results of an unfavorable attitude toward undergrads seeking employment. All three cases provided various contexts, each with indications of the inequality they face.

**Difficulty in Job Application Process**

Another theme that arises was difficulty in job application process. As evidenced by the responses in all three cases, the

job application process may be a difficult and frustrating experience. They discussed their difficulties in finding jobs as a result of unfair hiring practices, a highly competitive job market, and the demand for specified requirements, such as a college degree.

**Stress and Pressure in Job Searching**

The theme stress and pressure in job searching is also present in all three cases. For many people, especially SHS grads seeking employment, the job search process may be a scary and stressful experience. Participants shared their struggles with



financial concerns, commuting expenses, and the pressure of finding work to support themselves and their families.

**Sense of Unfulfilled Career Potentials Despite K to 12 Training**

The K-12 program was implemented in the Philippines with the goal of providing senior high school graduates with the necessary abilities and expertise to enter the workforce. This is not the case on all of the three cases. All participants offered their perspectives on whether the K-12 Program is truly beneficial in preparing students for the workforce.

**Job Instability and Short-Term Opportunities**

The themes of work insecurity and short-term prospects were both present in the replies to Seeker’s case in rural areas and Applicant’s example in urban areas. Working in an occupation that requires hard work for little in the way of compensation can be physically and financially stressful. The issue is that stable jobs need college degrees, which they lack.

**Impediments to Self-Confidence and Job Security**

Job searching is already an exhausting experience; being rejected is significantly a more challenging circumstance that can have a detrimental impact on one's self-confidence, mental health, and well-being. This is the case for Applicant in Urban Area and PWD Job Applicant.

**Importance of Preparation Before a Job Interview**

Both Seeker in Rural Area and Applicant in Urban Area both agree that excellent work preparation is critical to acquiring employment, especially in a competitive job market. From looking at the company's history to formulating potential

interview questions. Both individuals used a variety of strategies, which they discussed throughout the interview.

**Economic Insecurity**

Economic insecurity is a substantial barrier to employment for many people. This has been particularly the case for Seeker in Rural Area and Applicant in Urban Area. Both cases shed light on the financial pressures that come with the complicated world of job searching. Alongside this, they also mentioned some techniques they employed to deal with these particular challenges.

Along with the abovementioned similarities, there are certain essential themes that distinguish their experiences as senior high school graduates in job searching. These include numerous career choices for college graduates, hesitation to cause damage in workplace, importance of dressing well and making a good first impression, difficulty in finding suitable job for PWD, disparity of salary in the workplace, and envy of friends who are graduating.

**Cross-Case Analysis on the Coping Mechanisms of Senior High School Graduates in Job Searching**

Table 4 presents the cross-case analysis of the coping mechanisms of senior high school graduates in job searching. It seems that participants are trying to overcome their challenges in order to acquire employment. As a result, the following essential themes emerged: 1) preventing burnout from rejections through leisure activities; 2) earning income through side hustles; 3) intensifying self-reliance and independence; 4) cultivating positive mindset; 5) seeking advice and preparing for interviews; 6) applying for an industry that accept SHS graduate.

**Table 4**  
**Cross-Case Analysis on the Coping Mechanisms of Senior High School Graduates in Job Searching**

Essential Theme	Cases		
	1	2	3
Preventing Burnout from Rejections Through Leisure Activities	✓	✓	✓
Earning Income through Side Hustles	✓	✓	✓
Intensifying Self-Reliance and Independence	✓	✓	✓
Cultivating Positive Mindset	✓	✓	✓
Seeking Advice and Preparing for Interviews	✓	✓	
Applying for an Industry that Accept SHS Graduates	✓	✓	
Identifying Strengths and Neglecting Difficulties			✓
Aspiring to be an Entrepreneur			✓

**Preventing Burnout from Rejections Through Leisure Activities**

The entire process of job searching has an impact on every part of a job seeker's life. It is critical to be aware of strategies for dealing with burnout and the frantic reality of job searching. All three individuals discuss their personal coping mechanisms and beliefs as they negotiate the harsh reality of job searching and rejection.

**Earning Income through Side Hustles**

Since SHS graduates had difficulty finding employment, the three participants all looked for means and solutions to add to, if not generate, their income. Life can be challenging now, and it is hard to provide for everyday needs without sufficient funds. During their unemployment, all of the individuals worked hard and found menial side hustles to increase their sources of income.





**Intensifying Self-Reliance and Independence**

Another theme that appears in all three cases is intensifying self-reliance and independence. All three of the participants agree that self-reliance and independence are crucial attributes in life, particularly in their journey of seeking employment despite being merely undergrads.

**Cultivating Positive Mindset**

Despite difficulties, particularly job rejections, as mentioned by the three participants, it is extremely important that you possess a positive mentality. Rather than perceiving rejection in a negative way, use it as fuel to improve. Not giving up is already an achievement in itself.

**Seeking Advice and Preparing for Interviews**

Seeking advice and preparing for interviews are one of the themes that are present in two cases. Both Seeker in Rural Area and Applicant in Urban Area talked about their instances of seeking guidance from several different people in order to improve and maximize their chances of employment.

**Applying for an Industry that Accept SHS Graduates**

Job searching is already difficult; doing it without a college degree is considerably harder. Both Seeker in Rural Area and Applicant in Urban Area both stated that they had difficulty finding work as SHS graduates. Most employers prefer college grads. As a result, the two of them both said that they looked for jobs that did not require such qualifications.

While there were some similarities in the coping mechanisms of senior high school graduates in job searching, there were also some differences. These include identifying strengths and neglecting difficulties and aspiring to be an entrepreneur.

**Cross-Case Analysis on the Insights of Senior High School Graduates in Job Searching**

Table 5 presents the cross-case analysis of the insights of senior high school graduates in job searching. As analyzed, the following common themes have emerged; 1) disregard the educational-based bias; 2) nurture job resiliency; 3) enhance the job readiness skills for practical experiences; 4) call for a work immersion opportunity for SHS students; 5) meet the demands of the industry; 6) invest in career guidance programs.

**Table 5**  
**Cross-Case Analysis on the Insights of Senior High School Graduates in Job Searching**

Essential Theme	Cases		
	1	2	3
Disregard the Educational-Based Bias	✓	✓	✓
Nurture Job Resiliency	✓	✓	✓
Enhance the Job Readiness Skills for Practical Experiences	✓	✓	✓
Call for Work Immersion Opportunities for SHS Students	✓	✓	✓
Meet the Demands of the Industry	✓	✓	
Invest in Career Guidance Programs	✓		✓
Promote Alternative Career Paths	✓		
Job Accessibility and Equal Opportunity for PWDs			✓
Stay Confident and Manage Time		✓	

**Disregard the Educational-Based Bias**

Education and physical attributes aren't only the indicators of success. One of the themes that appear in all three cases is disregard the educational-based bias. This answers the still prevalent preference for college graduates over SHS graduates. The three participants came together and appealed for a fair and unbiased judgment, without prejudices.

**Nurture Job Resiliency**

Another theme that resurfaces in all three cases is nurture job resiliency. Things like staying positive, adapting, and persevering are some of the key concepts that emerged from the participants' responses. These are crucial during the job search process, especially in the face of rejection.

**Enhance the Job Readiness Skills for Practical Experiences**

In the job market, experience is undeniably crucial. A theme that emerges in all three cases is enhanced job readiness skills

for practical experiences. The three participants agreed on the importance of having relevant experience and abilities in the industry you wished to work in. As a result, their response included suggestions to emphasize this component more in high school.

**Call for Work Immersion Opportunities for SHS Students**

The last theme that appears on all of the three cases' responses is call for work immersion opportunities for SHS students. When applying for a job, all three participants stressed the importance of having prior experience. They are disappointed that an opportunity to learn something valuable was not properly implemented in the work immersion program that they participated in.

**Meet the Demands of the Industry**

Time is gold, and it should not be spent applying for jobs that do not match your interests, abilities, and other factors. Knowing the job hiring requirements entails being aware of



what areas you need to improve or what skills you must possess. This is the initial stage in developing and improving yourself until you are qualified for the job. Both Seeker in Rural Area and Applicant in Urban Area emphasize this idea to increase chances of getting employed.

### Invest in Career Guidance Programs

Investing in career advice programs is critical, particularly for students who have not gotten appropriate instruction or support from their schools. Seeker in Rural Area remarked that he wished they had been educated about a specific issue, such as what to do during an interview, and feels it should be included in the high school curriculum.

While there were some similarities in the insights of senior high school graduates in job searching, there were also some differences. These include promote alternative career paths, job accessibility and equal opportunity for PWDs, and stay confident and manage time.

### Implications for Educational Practices

The results showed that the senior high school graduates were struggling to seek job opportunities and faced difficulties primarily due to the requirement of having a college degree or diploma.

Based from the findings, the researchers wanted to address the issue by delving into their experiences and know their struggles to give awareness to higher authorities. With this, the researchers find it significant to intensify the career guidance programs and the Gender and Development (GAD) principles, vocational education program as well as to foster relationship with the local industry, establish career centers, orient SHS students with Republic Act 11261 which is about the first-time job seekers assistance act, and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 of UNESCO.

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