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Research Article

A Tracer Study on the Employability of the 2022-2025 BSED-Math Latin Honor Graduates

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic rapidly increased the number of Latin honor graduates; however, this increase is not reflected in the number of employed Latin honor graduates. To explore this issue, this descriptive study examined the employability of BSED-Math Latin honor graduates from the classes of 2022 to 2025 in Tacloban City by providing comprehensive information about their demographics, education, and employment. Results indicate that the respondents are predominantly female, young, and single. In 2025, a rapid increase in cum laude graduates was observed, with 50% of the graduates receiving a Latin honor. The 2025 Latin honor graduates are unemployed because they are fresh graduates who have not yet received their teaching licenses, making them ineligible to teach. Aside from the class of 2025, most respondents are employed either permanently or contractually in teaching and related jobs. The minority of those unemployed from the classes of 2022-2024 chose to remain unemployed to pursue graduate studies and scholarships. The majority of respondents believe that graduating with Latin honors is helpful in securing a job. Overall, with the exclusion of fresh graduates, Latin honor graduates are employable. This study recommends revisiting the Latin honor guidelines and conducting a follow-up study on the 2025 graduates. **Keywords:** Employability, Latin Honors, Tracer Study, Grade Inflation.

Introduction

Grades serve as indicators of a student's academic capabilities, skills, and career preparedness, which motivates students to strive for the highest grades possible. However, over the past few decades, grade inflation has become prevalent in many schools and universities worldwide, as evidenced by the rise in students' grade point averages (GPA) over the last 30 years (Chowdhury, 2018). In the years 2020 and 2021, grade inflation was at an all-time high due to the changes in the educational system brought by the COVID-19 pandemic (Sanchez and Moore, 2022).

Changes in the modality of teaching, from on-site to online, have given opportunities for students to cheat on their exams (Jenkins *et al.*, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic also caused a significant increase in mental health problems from students due to academic stress and anxiety (Nuryana *et al.*, 2023). This forced schools to adjust how they give grades in order to alleviate the students' mental health problems. In most schools, standardized exams were removed in order to lessen cheating and for humanitarian reasons. This change in the assessment of grades of the students is evident across schools all over the world, such as in Italy (Doz, 2021), the United Kingdom (Shaw and Nisbet, 2021), some Saudi universities (Al-Jarf, 2022), and others.

These changes were also implemented in the Philippines with the COVID Advisory No. 6 series of 2020 by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), which gave authority to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to adapt their assessment and evaluation methods. Consequently, Advisory No. 3 was released to provide HEIs the jurisdiction to outline the necessary steps they deem necessary to continue their provision of education. Following this, some universities employed new policies to cater to the needs of the students; such policies include no-fail and mass promotion (Estrellado, 2021). These policies allowed a system where students are not given failing grades in order to alleviate mental health issues during the pandemic. While it may have positive effects like alleviating mental health issues, the policy has various negative effects on the quality of education (Cartalava *et al.*, 2021).

Because of these, there has been a rapid increase in the number of graduates receiving Latin honors. For instance, in the 2023 graduating class at the University of the Philippines (UP) Diliman, more than half of the graduates, 2,243 out of 3,359, received Latin honors, including 305 summa cum laude, 1,196 magna cum laude, and 742 cum laude (Dalisay, 2023). At Mindanao State University (MSU), 3,517 out of 10,193 students also graduated with Latin honors that same year ("34% of MSU students," 2023). Most recently, 61% of UP Diliman's graduating class of 2025 earned Latin honors, including 241 summa cum laude, 1,143 magna cum laude, and 985 cum laude (Garcia, 2025). This trend is not confined to these universities; it is evident across many institutions throughout the Philippines.

Only the top graduating students receive the prestigious Latin honors award. Therefore, many people view it as a guaranteed path to securing a job after graduation and ultimately achieving a stable and respectable career. In addition to the prestige associated with it, graduating with Latin honors provides graduates with a competitive edge in the job market. According to Presidential Decree (PD) 907, graduates with Latin honors are eligible for civil service positions, which are a prerequisite for many jobs (Civil Service Commission, 2022). While the increasing number of Latin honor graduates might suggest a corresponding rise in employment rates, the reality is more complex. Despite a decrease in unemployment, as of May 2025, there are still 2.03 million unemployed Filipinos (Trading Economics, 2025).

From the perspective of the labor market, grades and academic credentials serve as indicators, or signalers, for employers to assess whether a candidate is qualified for a working position. According to the labor market signaling theory, employees use their educational background and credentials to signal their qualification to employers (Linde, 2025). Because of this, market information asymmetry exists, where employees can signal their potential skills through education success and credentials as much as they want, while the employers have little to no information about the employees' skills and qualifications (Vuksanovic and Aleksic, 2017; Penn and Szamado, 2020). Because of this, employees can also use credentials that are not related to the position they are applying for, which describes the handicap principle (Penn and Szamado, 2020).

This highlights the role of formal education in the labor market. Tertiary education is considered the final stage of formal learning to prepare graduates with skills for professional positions in the labor market (Thornhill-Miller *et al.*, 2023). If tertiary education becomes dysfunctional and unreliable because of grade inflation, it will eventually affect the other components of formal education, such as elementary and secondary (Henrekson and Wennstrom, 2020). With that, grade inflation is not only a problem in the education sector but also in the job market. If grades increase without a corresponding rise in capabilities and achievements, then employers lose valuable information about the employees (Tyner, 2024).

From the perspective of the employers, they generally look for hard skills and soft skills from the employees. While having technical skills (hard skills) is also important, employers give favor to values (soft skills) like the ability and willingness to learn, teamwork and cooperation, willingness to take on extra work, self-control, and analytical thinking (Pang *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, according to Chan *et al.*, (2024), employers value holistic competencies (soft skills) the most when looking for employees. When hiring, employers prefer that graduates show these holistic competencies in their resumes and portfolios, rather than focusing on their educational background.

Contrary to these studies, the findings of Chidebe *et al.*, (2025) state that foundational skills (hard skills), such as literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving, in work and curricular mastery are equal in terms of hiring. Entry-level employees must possess these skills because their qualifications align with the competencies and characteristics valued by employers (Garcia-Aracil *et al.*, 2023). Hence, what the employers look for in their employees is inconclusive. Damoah *et al.*, (2021) underscore that the perception of what is essential for work differs between employers and employees. Hence, there is a disagreement between employers and employees, highlighting the gap in the education sector in producing employable graduates. This finding is in agreement with the study of Gyekye and Amo (2024), where significant gaps were found between the expectations of the employers and the skills demonstrated by the employees.

To gain an understanding of the current landscape of Philippine education regarding the employability of its graduates, the researcher compiled and extracted results from various graduate tracer studies conducted between 2015 and 2022. According to the studies, the majority of the graduates from different fields and universities are employable. For example, the tracer studies include findings from the 2016-2020 graduates of Negros Oriental State University (Tayco *et al.*, 2022), the 2019 graduates of Isabela State University-Ilagan

Campus (Vidania *et al.*, 2023), the 2015-2022 graduates of Romblon State University (Villanueva *et al.*, 2025), the 2014-2018 graduates of Batangas State University (Bacay and Mame, 2022), and graduates from Cebu Technological University-Daanbantayan Campus (Penera *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, the studies cover graduates in the field of BS Forestry from DMMMSU from 2015 to 2022 (Cortado, 2024) and those from Occidental Mindoro State College (Casanova and Paguia, 2022).

While most tracer studies indicate that Filipino graduates from 2013 to 2022 have secured employment, Pono's (2024) study contradicts this. When the employment rate of the Philippines between 2019 and 2023 was analyzed using the ARIMA model, the forecasts from 2024 to 2050 suggest fluctuating unemployment rates until 2034, followed by a gradual decline. This implies that employability in the Philippines is still low.

Research Gap

These studies highlight three major gaps. First is the lack of consensus on whether employers prefer graduates who possess soft skills over hard skills, hard skills over soft skills, or those who are capable in both. Second, there are minimal graduate tracer studies focusing on the employability of graduates with Latin honors. Academic excellence contributes to career success, but studies on Latin honors graduates' employability are limited. Last but not least, recent graduate tracer studies conducted in the Philippines concentrated on students who graduated between 2013 and 2022. Hence, there is a need to study the employability of students who graduate from 2022 and beyond, as these classes were the ones who experienced the educational changes brought by the pandemic. These gaps in the existing literature serve as the foundation and motivation for this study.

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to describe the employability of the Latin honor graduates. Specifically, this study answered the following questions:

- 1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents, in terms of:
- 1.1. Age
- 1.2. Sex
- 1.3. Civil status?
- 2. What is the educational profile of the respondents, in terms of:
- 2.1. Latin honor received?
- 3. What is the employment profile of the respondents, in terms of:
- 3.1. Employment status
- 3.2. Nature of work
- 3.3. Level of relevance of the current work to the college degree of the employed respondents
- 3.4. Reasons for unemployment of unemployed respondents
- 3.5. Helpfulness of graduating with Latin honors to employment?

Materials and Methods

Research Design

This research utilized a descriptive research design. According to Creswell (2014), the descriptive research design seeks to describe the characteristics of a group or the respondents of the study. The descriptive research design does not aim to establish causality, correlations, predictions, and comparisons. Specifically, this study described the employability of the respondents.

Respondents

The respondents in this descriptive study are the Latin honor graduates from the BSED-Math program at a state university in Tacloban City, specifically those from the graduating classes of 2022 to 2025. One state university in Tacloban City was selected for this study to ensure uniformity in the selection process of Latin honor graduates, as different institutions may have varying criteria for selection. The BSED-Math program was chosen due to the differences in grading systems among various programs and specializations. Total enumeration sampling was employed, with a total of 67 BSED-Math Latin honor graduates participating as respondents in this study.

Total enumeration sampling is applicable when the total population of the target group is small and manageable and when there is a distinct and specific characteristic within that group. In this study, the total

population comprises 67 individuals, all sharing the well-defined characteristic of being Latin honor graduates from the BSED-Math program at the state university.

Instrument

The researcher used a researcher-made survey questionnaire that is parallel to the tracer study of the Commission on Education (CHED). The questionnaire was evaluated for content validity by experts. The content validators are experts in the field of research and mathematics education. The Lawshe's Content Validity Ratio (CVR) and Content Validity Index (CVI) were used for interpreting the evaluation. Furthermore, pilot testing for internal consistency was implemented, wherein a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87 was obtained from the pilot testing.

Specifically, the research instrument is composed of the following parts:

Informed Consent Form: The informed consent form followed the World Health Organization (WHO) template for informed consents and was evaluated by the Leyte Normal University Research Ethics Committee. The informed consent form is where respondents voluntarily agree to participate in this study and allow their data to be used for research purposes.

General Information: This part is optional, wherein the respondents will be asked for their names, email addresses, and contact numbers. This allowed the researcher to contact the respondents in case they won the raffle for participating in this study. None of this information is disclosed to the public, and everything is confidential.

Demographic Profile: This part asked about the respondents' age, sex, and civil status.

Education Profile: This part asked about the respondents' educational background, such as degree programs in college and Latin honors they received in college.

Employment Profile: This part of the survey asked about the respondents' employment status (employed, unemployed, etc.), nature of work (permanent, contractual, etc.), relevance of current work to college degree program (4-point scale), reasons for unemployment, and helpfulness of graduating with Latin honors to securing a job (4-point scale).

Data Collection

The data for this descriptive study was gathered using online survey software, specifically, Google Forms. The communication letter and survey questionnaires was administered through Facebook Messenger and Google Mail. The data gathering procedure started by contacting all of the respondents and adding them to a Facebook Messenger group chat. After that, they were oriented about the study and their role in the data gathering procedure, all of their questions regarding the study will be addressed. This orientation took place virtually in Google Meet. Then, the communication letter, informed consent form, and survey questionnaire were administered. To ensure the confidentiality of data from the online survey, the survey is only be visible to the respondents, and the editor access and the data is only accessible to the researcher. Once the data was gathered, the Google Form was closed and no longer be accepting responses. Then, the data was downloaded to a computer in an excel file, which was used in the data analysis.

Data Analysis

Since this is a descriptive study and collected nominal and ordinal data, descriptive statistics, such as frequency count, percentage, and mode were used. The data was presented using frequency tables, pie charts, and bar graphs. The statistical software, Microsoft Excel, was used in analyzing and presenting the data from this study.

Results and Discussion

 $Demographic\ Profile\ of\ the\ 2022-2025\ BSED-Math\ Latin\ Honor\ Graduates$

Table 1. Frequency distribution of the respondents' demographic profile.

		Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	23	34%
	Female	44	66%
Age	22-23	49	73%
	24-25	10	15%
	26-27	8	12%
Civil status	Single	67	100%
	Married	0	0%

The demographic profile of the respondents shows a predominantly female population; most of the Latin honor graduates are female (66%), while a smaller percentage are male (34%). In addition, the Latin honor graduates are also composed of mostly young graduates, with the majority (73%) aged between 22 and 23. This is followed by those in the 24-25 age range (15%). Respondents aged between 26 and 27 years are only 12% of the sample. Finally, all respondents (100%) reported being single. According to the demographic data, the majority of the BSED-Math Latin honor graduates are females. This follows the global trend in the field of education, wherein the teaching profession is a female-dominated career, and more females choose to be teachers compared to males (Schaeffer, 2024). This aligns with data from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2025), which indicates that as of 2022, women comprise 70% of the workforce in the fields of education and medicine. Although more are females, the distribution of the sexes is not very deviated, and the disparity is close to a 6:4 ratio between female and male respondents, respectively. This follows the findings of the OECD (2022), which showed that the disparity between the number of female and male secondary or high school teachers is less compared to the disparity in the preschool and primary levels. This is because males generally prefer to teach in high school, compared to preschool and primary level, where child rearing is involved. Nevertheless, the predominantly female population follows the general societal trend in the field of teaching.

When it comes to age, it is evident that the respondents are generally young, with 27 years old as the oldest and 22 years old as the youngest. This data suggests that the Latin honor graduates had undergone a timely degree completion and can transition into the workforce when they are relatively young. Lastly, all of the respondents reported being single. Having young and single respondents means that the Latin honor graduates prioritize building a career over forming long-term relationships and building a family (Villanueva et al., 2025).

Figure 1 shows the age distribution of the Latin honor graduates, from the oldest to the youngest. The upward trendline indicates that the number of BSED-Math Latin honor graduates is increasing among younger graduates. The increase is also rapid and not gradual, especially in the 22-23-year-old age range. This rapid upward trend is attributed to the graduation years of these Latin honor graduates, specifically between 2024 and 2025. The graduating classes entered college in 2020 and 2021, and according to Estrellado (2021), CHED released COVID Advisory No. 6 and Advisory No. 3 in 2020, which led to a modified curriculum that eased student activities for humanitarian reasons, primarily causing grade inflation. This data implies that the graduates in the age range of 22 to 23 years old started college in the years when grade inflation was ramping up, compared to the other age ranges that started college before the pandemic. This phenomenon explains why there is a significant increase in the number of Latin honor graduates among the younger respondents.

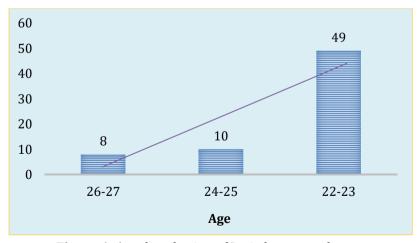


Figure 1. Age distribution of Latin honor graduates.

Education Profile of the 2022-2025 BSED-Math Latin Honor Graduates

Table 2. Frequency distribution of the respondents' education profile.

Latin honors received	Frequency	Percentage
Cum laude	54	81%
Magna cum laude	13	19%
Summa cum laude	0	0%

The education profile of the respondents indicates that 81% graduated as cum laude. Secondly, a minority of 19% of the respondents graduated as magna cum laude. Lastly, none of the respondents graduated as summa cum laude.

According to Figure 2, which illustrates the distribution of honors among the graduates, 27% graduated as cum laude, 7% graduated as magna cum laude, while 66% did not receive any Latin honor award. This distribution conforms with the typical distribution for Latin honors, where only the top 1% to 5% (or none) are designated summa cum laude, the top 5% to 15% are awarded magna cum laude, and the top 15% to 30% of the graduating class receive cum laude honors (Indeed Editorial Team, 2025).

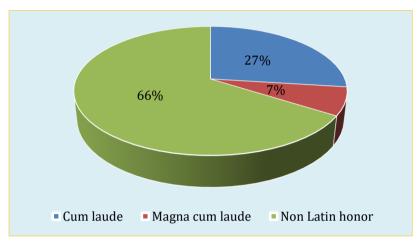


Figure 2. Distribution of graduates based on honors received.

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of Latin honor graduates by graduating class. The data reveals that the classes of 2022 and 2023 have nearly identical numbers of Latin honor graduates, with each class producing one magna cum laude and 8 and 7 cum laude graduates, respectively. In the class of 2024, there is a notable increase in magna cum laude graduates, rising from one to six, while the number of cum laude graduates remains relatively stable. The class of 2025 shows a significant jump in cum laude graduates, increasing from 9 to 30. This trend indicates that grade inflation is most pronounced at the entry level of Latin honors, such as cum laude, while it appears less prevalent among magna cum laude graduates. Consequently, grade inflation has enabled more students to meet the entry-level requirements for Latin honors; however, it has not necessarily facilitated advancement to the higher tiers for those who are already excelling. Thus, while average students find it easier to graduate with Latin honors, the path to the higher distinctions remains challenging for top-performing students.

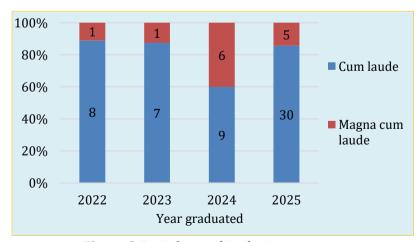


Figure 3. Latin honor distribution per year.

Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of Latin and non-Latin honor graduates per year. The figure indicates that the years 2024 and 2025 do not conform to the distribution of Latin honors as outlined by (Indeed Editorial Team, 2025). This discrepancy supports the assertion by Sanchez and Moore (2022) that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly increased instances of grade inflation during the years 2020 and 2021. Specifically, 44% of graduates in 2024 and 50% in 2025 received Latin honors, marking a substantial

increase from 26% and 14% of total graduates in 2022 and 2023, respectively. This suggests that grade inflation is evident in the years 2024 and 2025.

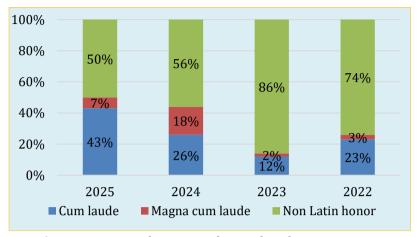


Figure 4. Latin and non-Latin honor distribution per year.

Employment Profile of the 2022-2025 BSED-Math Latin Honor Graduates

Table 3. Frequency distribution of the respondents' employment profile.

		Frequency	Percentage
Employment status	Employed	25	37.3%
	Unemployed	41	61.2%
	Self-employed	1	1.5%
Nature of work	Permanent employment	12	48%
	Job order	0	0%
	Contractual employment	13	52%
	Part-time	0	0%
	Others	0	0%
Relevance of college degree	Very relevant	13	52%
to work	Relevant	8	32%
	Somewhat relevant	3	12%
	Not relevant	1	4%
Reasons for unemployment	Further study	5	12%
(does not add up to 100%	Scholarship prohibiting employment	3	7%
because the respondents	Waiting to be hired	12	29%
can have multiple reasons)	Not yet a licensed professional	34	83%
Helpfulness of graduating	Very helpful	22	33%
with Latin honors to	Helpful	25	37%
employment	Somewhat helpful	18	27%
	Not helpful	2	3%

When it comes to their employment profile, data shows that the majority (61.2%) of the Latin honor graduates are unemployed, 37.3% of them are employed, and 1.5% are self-employed. The number of respondents who are employed, both permanent and contractual, is nearly equal. The respondents who are employed with permanent positions compose 48% of the population, while those employed in contractual settings compose 52% of the respondents. When asked about how relevant their current job to their college degree, a majority (52%) of the respondents said that their current job is very relevant to their college degree, 32% said that it is relevant, 12% said that it is somewhat relevant, and 4% said that it is not relevant. Moving on to the unemployed respondents, when asked why they are unemployed, a wide majority (83%) of the Latin honor graduates said that they are unemployed because they are not yet licensed professionals. Secondly, 29% of the unemployed respondents are still waiting to be hired, 12% are undergoing further studies or enrolled in graduate school, and 7% have scholarships that prohibit them from being employed. Lastly, when asked about how helpful graduating with Latin honors is in getting employed, 33% said that it is very helpful, 37% of the respondents said that it is helpful, 27% said that it is somewhat helpful, and only 3% said that graduating with Latin honors is not helpful at all in getting employed.

Based on the data regarding the respondents' employment profiles, most BSED-Math Latin honor graduates are unemployed, with only a minority employed, and just one self-employed. The employed respondents hold either permanent or contractual positions, with an almost equal number in each category (12 permanent and 13 contractual). Additionally, most employed respondents work in teaching or teaching-related roles, because when asked about the relevance of their jobs to their college degrees, the majority indicated that their degrees are at least relevant to their current positions.

While the majority are unemployed, this does not imply that the BSED-Math Latin honor graduates are unemployable; it is essential to explore the reasons for their unemployment. A significant majority (83%) of the unemployed respondents stated that their primary reason for being unemployed is their status as non-licensed professionals. This statistic suggests that nearly all unemployed respondents are recent graduates lacking a teaching license. Therefore, these factors should be considered when interpreting the results, as a teaching license is a fundamental requirement for becoming a professional teacher (Professional Regulation Commission, 2025).

According to a tracer study conducted by Tutor *et al.*, (2021), the median job search duration for fresh graduates is nine months after graduation. For positions that require a Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) license, such as teaching, the average job search length extends to eleven months, while for jobs that do not require a PRC license, it averages five months. This data helps explain why the graduates of 2025 remain unemployed.

Figure 5 shows the frequency distribution based on the employment status of the BSED-Math Latin honor graduates from 2022 to 2024. The graduates from 2025 are excluded from the data because they are fresh graduates and not yet licensed professionals, which mainly causes their unemployment. The figure shows that the majority of Latin honor graduates from 2022 to 2024 are in employment, while only a small percentage are unemployed or self-employed. This result implies that the BSED-Math Latin honor graduates are employable.

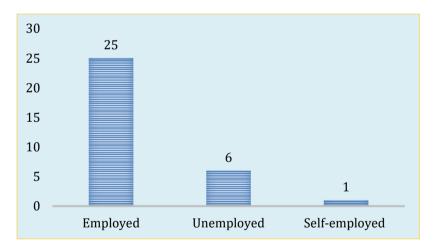


Figure 5. Distribution of employment status of Latin honor graduates from 2022 to 2024.

In addition, although there is a minority of unemployed graduates, their primary reasons for their lack of employment are their pursuit of graduate studies, scholarships that prohibit most of them from working, and others awaiting job offers. Thus, considering that most respondents are fresh graduates, it can be concluded that Latin honor graduates in BSED-Math are generally employable, and a significant portion of the unemployed graduates are choosing to remain so in order to focus on their graduate studies. Finally, it follows that being a Latin honor graduate helps with employment, especially since most of the respondents believe that graduating with Latin honors is at least helpful in securing a job.

Conclusion

The BSED-Math Latin honor graduates are predominantly female, young, and single. These findings on the respondents' sex conform to the trend in general society where more females prefer to become teachers. Since all of them are young and reported as single, it implies that they prioritize building their careers over entering long-term relationships and building a family in their early 20s. The overwhelming representation of 22-year-old to 23-year-old BSED-Math Latin honor graduates supports the notion that rampant grade inflation was observed during the pandemic.

The distribution of BSED-Math Latin honor graduates fits the typical distribution of Latin honors, where most are cum laude, few are magna cum laude, and there is rarely any summa cum laude. Grade inflation in the BSED-Math program is more pronounced in the number of cum laude graduates. Which means that grade inflation eased up the entry requirement to qualify as cum laude for average students, but it did not make it easier for already excelling students to move up the ranks.

The majority of the BSED-Math Latin honor graduates are unemployed; however, this is due to the overwhelming representation of the 2025 graduates who lack teaching licenses, and not enough time was given to them to find a job after graduating. Hence, excluding the class of 2025, the BSED-Math Latin honor graduates are employable, with most holding permanent and contractual teaching and teaching-related jobs. Reasons for the unemployment of the minority in classes 2022-2024 are the pursuance of graduate studies, graduate scholarships that prohibit jobs, and waiting to be hired. Lastly, most of the respondents believe that graduating with Latin honors is helpful in securing a job.

Recommendations

The following are recommended from the findings of this study:

- Since most of the unemployed respondents are fresh graduates from the graduating class of 2025 who are not yet licensed professional teachers, it is recommended to conduct a follow-up tracer study specifically on the BSED-Math Latin honor graduates of this batch. This approach would provide a more accurate assessment of the graduates' employability.
- Additionally, it is advisable to investigate any connections, such as correlation or association, between the respondents' demographic, educational, and employment profiles. Further studies should explore additional variables that may influence the employability of these graduates.
- Conducting tracer studies across various degree programs is also recommended. This would allow for a broader examination of the employability of Latin honor graduates throughout the university and facilitate the exploration of relationships between different degree programs.
- Lastly, the researcher suggests revisiting the guidelines for selecting Latin honor graduates. The findings indicate that grade inflation has significantly increased the number of Latin honor graduates, particularly the rapid rise in cum laude graduates. A productive first step may be to examine why obtaining Latin honors has become less challenging.

Declarations

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Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

Research Content: The research content of manuscript is original and has not been published elsewhere.

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