

Employability of Latin honor graduate in a state university in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the employability of Latin-honor graduates from Romblon State University (RSU) between 2015 and 2022, addressing the factors that influence their transition into the workforce. The research investigates how academic performance, board examination results, and advanced education impact employment outcomes. Using a mixed-method approach, including surveys and binary logistic regression analysis, the study identifies key predictors of employability. Results indicate that achieving academic honors, passing licensure exams, and pursuing further education significantly enhance graduates' chances of securing permanent employment and advancing in their careers. These findings highlight the need for aligning RSU's curriculum with labor market demands and underscore the importance of continuous professional development. The study offers practical recommendations to improve graduate employability and informs policy initiatives aimed at supporting career progression for Latin-honor graduates.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Assessing the employment outcomes of graduates is essential for measuring the effectiveness of academic programs and their broader socio-economic impact. Romblon State University (RSU) has introduced initiatives, such as the "Iskolar ng Bayan" scholarship under Republic Act No. 10648, to support equitable access to education and foster student success. These efforts align with sustainable development goal (SDG) 4: quality education, which emphasizes preparing graduates for real-world challenges. Recent studies suggest that institutions integrating academic rigor with skill development can significantly enhance student outcomes in competitive job markets [1]. However, despite these efforts, a critical gap remains in understanding the career paths of RSU's Latin honor graduates, who are expected to demonstrate strong employability and career stability. Addressing this gap is essential for aligning RSU's educational programs with labor market needs and improving institutional effectiveness.

Despite initiatives to enhance employability, the career development of RSU's Latin honor graduates remains underexplored, especially concerning long-term career stability and success. Latin honor graduates, known for their academic excellence, are expected to thrive in competitive job markets; however,

there is limited research on how these distinctions influence career advancement, particularly in regional settings like RSU [2]. Studies on licensure outcomes underscore that academic performance, while critical, may need support from both intrinsic and extrinsic factors to translate into employability gains [3]. Understanding these outcomes is vital to ensure that academic distinctions lead to meaningful employment, aligning with SDG 8: decent work and economic growth, which promotes employment contributing positively to the economy. In addressing this need, our study examines specific academic and socio-economic factors that may influence career success among RSU's honor graduates.

Employability for Latin Honor graduates is complex, intersecting with factors such as licensure, advanced education, gender, and socio-economic background. For instance, gender may influence career advancement, particularly in traditionally male-dominated fields, highlighting the need for equitable opportunities across demographics [4]. Likewise, socio-economic disparities can create barriers to accessing resources and networking, impacting employability outcomes and aligning with SDG 10: reduced inequalities [5]. Research also emphasizes that institutions must support students' employability through a comprehensive approach that includes skill development alongside academic [1]. By analyzing these intersecting factors, this study offers a refined understanding of employability for Latin honor graduates, addressing often-overlooked influences on career success.

This study introduces a comprehensive model that assesses how various factors, including academic distinctions, gender, socio-economic background, and digital skills, impact the employability of RSU's honor graduates. The proposed model integrates academic achievements with the role of technology-enhanced learning and digital competencies, emphasizing SDG 9: industry, innovation, and infrastructure [6]. By addressing the need for both soft skills and technical expertise in a digital economy, the model aims to bridge the gap between educational preparation and labor market demands. This approach not only contributes to a better understanding of employability for honor graduates in regional universities but also provides actionable insights for academic policy to support market readiness. The study's findings hold significant implications for RSU and similar institutions, offering strategies to enhance employability for high-achieving graduates.

Through an analysis of these multidimensional factors, this study aims to provide RSU with valuable insights to improve employability outcomes and adapt academic programs to evolving market demands. By examining the career success of Latin honor graduates, the study contributes to aligning educational strategies with labor market requirements, thus supporting regional workforce development. Findings will inform policy adjustments at RSU, ensuring that honor graduates are well-prepared to succeed in their careers and contribute to both local and national economies. This research underscores the importance of tailoring academic programs to meet diverse socio-economic, technological, and market challenges in today's dynamic job landscape, reinforcing RSU's commitment to promoting sustainable career success for its graduates. These insights are crucial for strengthening RSU's role in aligning educational outcomes with broader economic and societal goals.

Employability and career success are key indicators of how effectively higher education institutions prepare students for the workforce and support their professional growth. However, there is limited empirical data on the factors influencing the employability of Latin honor graduates, particularly at RSU. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the employment status and career paths of these graduates, focusing on their demographic profiles, career advancements through exams, training, and further education. By identifying key factors that contribute to their employability and documenting their success stories, the research will use a mixed-method approach and binary logistic regression modeling to understand how academic honors, credentials, and continuous learning impact career outcomes. The findings will inform policy and practice, supporting RSU's mission of delivering quality education and contributing to global educational goals.

The general objective of the study is to comprehensively analyze the employability outcomes and career trajectories of Latin-honor graduates from RSU, with a focus on demographic profiles, career advancement factors, and success indicators. Specifically, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

- i) What are the key factors influencing the employability and career progression of Latin-honor graduates from RSU?
- ii) How do demographic characteristics, professional licensure, and advanced education affect their long-term career success?

Specifically, the study seeks to find answers to the following problems: i) determine the proportion of Latin-honor graduates in terms of the demographic profiles of the graduates; ii) trace the career advancement of Latin honor graduates in terms of professional examination/licensure examination, seminars/trainings, and post degree courses; iii) determine the relationship between demographic profiles of the respondents and career employability; iv) identify significant factors that contribute to the employability of Latin-honor

graduates; and v) capture and plot the success stories of the honor graduates in terms of passing the licensure examinations, career progression and employment status.

Figure 1 shows the variables of the study to find significant factor that would model the employability for Latin-honor graduates of RSU from academic year 2015-2020. Using binary logistic regression employment status was modeled based on the different predictors such as age, gender, civil status, Latin-honor received, board examination results, advanced education, income, and curriculum alignment. Employability represents the likelihood of graduates securing employment after completing their education. The paradigm is important because it visually represents how various factors can contribute to employability of Latin-honor graduates, particularly highlighting the role of other predictors. It illustrates that while academic achievements like Latin honors can influence employability, they are not the sole determinants towards being tenured since workplace demands more competition in terms of work experience, field of study, extracurricular activities, and soft skills. This comprehensive view emphasizes that employability is multifaceted, and success in the job market requires more than just strong academic performance. The framework serves as a reminder to students, educators, and employers that a balanced development of both academic and practical skills is essential for enhancing graduates' employability. The result of this analysis would serve as a model for validating the success stories of the Latin-honor graduates through focus group discussion (FGD).

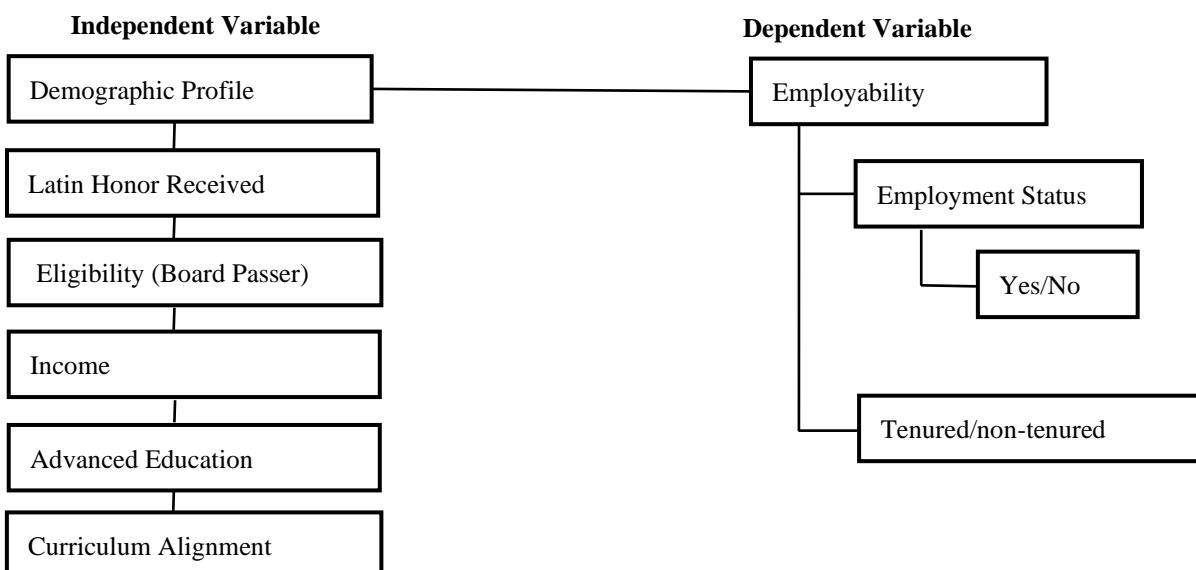


Figure 1. The paradigm of the study

2. THE COMPREHENSIVE THEORETICAL AND LITERATURE BASIS

2.1. Theoretical basis and related literature

The employability of graduates has been a focal point in recent research, with multiple studies highlighting the significant factors that influence successful employment outcomes. Employability is shaped not only by academic performance but also by a combination of socio-economic conditions, skill development, digital proficiency, and mentorship opportunities. This section organizes the literature into four main themes, providing an in-depth examination of the theoretical underpinnings and empirical findings that inform this study.

2.2. Academic and institutional factors in employability

Academic performance and institutional support systems are fundamental to enhancing licensure success and broadening employability for graduates. Studies demonstrate that excelling in licensure examinations, such as the board licensure examination for certified public accountants (CPA), is influenced by both external and internal factors. For instance, Pattaguan [3] underscores the significance of supportive external elements like a positive school environment, peer influence, and family support, combined with intrinsic factors such as personal study habits, positive attitudes, and strong faith. This balanced approach emphasizes the need for institutions to foster a nurturing academic setting, which, when paired with students'

personal resilience and dedication, maximizes their chances of licensure success. A comprehensive support system from institutions and peers can thus play a critical role in preparing students to excel in licensure examinations and in their professional fields.

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

Building on these findings, Albite [7] identifies specific attributes among top-performing licensure candidates that further contribute to their success, such as goal setting, a passion for reading, and proactive participation in review programs. These qualities, which align with Pattaguan [3] emphasis on both intrinsic and extrinsic supports, illustrate that success in licensure exams is driven by personal dedication complemented by external support systems. For example, students who frequently set academic goals and engage actively in review programs tend to demonstrate higher levels of readiness and confidence when approaching licensure exams. This blend of personal commitment and supportive review frameworks helps to optimize licensure outcomes.

Employability outcomes are similarly shaped by a combination of academic performance and essential skill development, reflecting both the student's individual efforts and institutional support. Manjunath [8] study demonstrates that strong academic performance enhances employability, as students with higher grades are more attractive to employers. However, the study also reveals that academic success alone is not sufficient; employers highly value soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, and adaptability, which complement academic knowledge in job markets. Together, these findings suggest that institutions should emphasize both academic excellence and the cultivation of soft skills to better prepare students for professional environments. By focusing on both areas, educational institutions can support students in developing a well-rounded profile that increases their employability, aligning with Albite [7] observations on the importance of holistic student preparation for licensure and career success.

The importance of both soft and technical skills, alongside academic performance, is essential for enhancing graduate employability. In a study by Mwita *et al.* [9], the researchers examine how these attributes impact graduates' job readiness, using human capital theory as a guiding framework. By surveying 217 final-year students from a Tanzanian higher education institution, the study reveals that soft skills have the strongest correlation with employability, followed by technical skills and academic performance. This finding suggests that employers place significant value on interpersonal and communication abilities, as well as specialized skills, in addition to academic achievements. Consequently, the study underscores the need for a collaborative approach among educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders to equip students with a balanced skill set and provide a supportive learning environment that fosters their professional readiness.

Furthermore, a study by Tayco *et al.* [1] investigates the employability of graduates from Negros Oriental State University (NORSU), revealing how the alignment of institutional values with job requirements contributes to their professional success. They found that graduates' employability and performance are shaped not only by technical competencies, such as communication and critical thinking, but also by values instilled through NORSU's vision, mission, goals, and objectives (VMGOs). These findings imply that institutions that emphasize specific competencies and values through their curriculum enhance their graduates' alignment with industry expectations, thereby increasing employability. The study suggests that institutional values are pivotal in shaping graduates' readiness to meet job market demands.

Similarly, Cruz [10] examines the employability of graduate school alumni in Tagudin Campus, focusing on their qualifications, job satisfaction, and alignment of skills with workforce needs. High satisfaction rates among graduates employed in public school and permanent positions indicate that the curriculum and institutional support effectively meet industry standards. These findings emphasize the importance of continuous curriculum review, improved facilities, and strengthened partnerships to maintain alignment with employer needs. This focus on institutional support through curriculum relevance highlights the role of education programs in preparing graduates for long-term employment and satisfaction in their respective fields.

The tracer study by Pentang *et al.* [11] further explores the relevance of academic training to job preparation among teacher education graduates of Western Philippines University–Puerto Princesa Campus. Their findings indicate that graduates feel well-prepared for teaching roles, with strong alignment between academic preparation and job requirements. Additionally, the study identifies challenges faced by graduates and offers insights into areas for curriculum enhancement, suggesting the importance of aligning educational content with real-world job demands. This highlights the need for ongoing program improvements and curriculum adjustments to help future educators meet evolving job expectations.

Taking a broader perspective, Sumanasiri *et al.* [12] provide a literature review on the global importance of employability as a central objective of higher education. The authors discuss how universities face pressure from various stakeholders, such as governments and funding agencies, to demonstrate the employability outcomes of their graduates as a measure of educational quality. They highlight that while extensive research exists, barriers such as the lack of standardized definitions and diverse stakeholder expectations create challenges in aligning educational outcomes with workforce needs. The review suggests that a unified, globally recognized approach to employability would help institutions respond effectively to evolving labor market demands.

In a similar vein, Shivoroirs *et al.* [13] critically analyze the literature on graduate employability and the pivotal role of higher education in workforce preparation. Their review outlines the evolution of employability from a conceptual phase to practical applications, such as embedding employability attributes within educational curricula. They emphasize the need for stronger collaboration between academia and industry to meet workforce needs, advocating for the development of frameworks that align academic output with market demands. This perspective reinforces the need for academic institutions to foster employability attributes systematically within their programs.

In the context of ongoing curriculum enhancements, Salendab and Sanchez [14] conducted a tracer study to assess the employability status of BEED graduates from Sultan Kudarat State University (SKSU)-Kalamansig Campus. Their findings reveal that key competencies, such as communication, critical thinking, and technology skills, are essential for BEED graduates, especially for teaching roles with competitive salaries. They recommend curriculum updates and ongoing professional development to enhance employability outcomes, underscoring the importance of educational alignment with market trends to prepare graduates for future roles in the education sector.

Finally, Tight [15] addresses the shifting focus within higher education towards employability as a primary objective, especially amid policy changes. Tight [15] explores the debate around whether higher education should prioritize employability over traditional academic goals, pointing out the potential limitations of reducing education to a means for employment alone. While employability is valuable, Tight [15] argues for a balanced approach that retains broader developmental goals within higher education. This nuanced perspective suggests that employability should complement, rather than overshadow, the traditional academic and intellectual objectives of higher education.

2.3. Socio-economic and skill development factors

Employment outcomes are influenced by more than just academic success; socio-economic backgrounds and employability skills are equally critical. The economic and social conditions surrounding graduates can significantly impact their job prospects, as illustrated by Antipova [5] research on economically disadvantaged regions. The study highlights the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, revealing that areas with pre-existing social inequalities experienced amplified economic setbacks. This indicates the necessity of addressing socio-economic vulnerabilities as a component of employability, allowing graduates from diverse backgrounds to better adapt to and succeed in the labor market. Consequently, understanding and mitigating socio-economic disadvantages is vital to developing comprehensive employability strategies.

Additionally, research conducted by Tayco *et al.* [1] supports the notion that skill development in areas such as communication, human relations, and critical thinking aligns closely with job market requirements. Their study on NORSU graduates reveals that the employability of graduates is strengthened by these competencies, which employers highly value. Furthermore, these skills support career adaptability and progression, ensuring graduates are better equipped to meet evolving job demands. By aligning educational objectives with the competencies valued in the job market, educational institutions can effectively enhance the employability of their graduates.

The method of education delivery also affects the acquisition of employability skills, as shown in Kulal *et al.* [16] comparative study on distance versus in-person learning environments. Kulal *et al.* [16] found that students in traditional, in-person learning environments demonstrated stronger employability skills, such as teamwork and interpersonal abilities, compared to their counterparts in distance education. While distance education cultivates competencies like self-directed learning and technological proficiency, it may lack opportunities for hands-on experiences and collaborative activities that are critical to employability. These findings underscore the importance of integrating experiential learning in distance education to better equip students with the full spectrum of skills required for employment. Therefore, balancing technical competencies with interpersonal skills is essential for holistic skill development.

Further exploring the dynamic nature of employability, Green and Henseke [17] study on the British labor market reveals how economic conditions and skill alignment with job requirements affect graduates' employment prospects. Their analysis shows that while the number of graduates in the workforce has grown,

there has not been a corresponding increase in adequately matched graduate-level jobs. The study highlights a widening wage disparity, where wages for adequately matched graduates rose at the upper end, while those for mismatched graduates declined. This indicates an economic penalty for skill mismatch, emphasizing the importance of aligning graduate qualifications with actual market demands. Such findings suggest that graduates face ongoing challenges in securing roles that match their skill levels, underscoring the need for educational institutions to adapt curricula that closely reflect labor market needs.

In summary, socio-economic factors, skill development, education delivery methods, and labor market conditions collectively shape graduate employability. Addressing socio-economic disadvantages and emphasizing employability skills such as critical thinking, adaptability, and communication can enhance job performance and resilience. Furthermore, balancing technical skills and interpersonal experiences, especially in distance learning environments, is essential for comprehensive skill development. Finally, ensuring that educational programs align with labor market requirements can help graduates navigate economic challenges and optimize their employability.

2.4. Technology integration and adaptive learning in employability

Integrating technology into education holds transformative potential, particularly in enhancing employability by cultivating essential digital skills and fostering adaptive learning. Sayibu *et al.* [18] highlight how mobile learning platforms like Tencent APP have reshaped learning behaviors, promoting innovative performance that equips students for technology-driven workplaces. Their study underscores that digital literacy, coupled with adaptive learning tools, can significantly bolster graduates' ability to navigate the complexities of modern job markets. This insight is particularly relevant to institutions like RSU, where incorporating such technologies could substantially enhance graduates' adaptability and competitiveness.

The importance of practical digital skills in education is further supported by Choi [19], who demonstrates the advantages of vocational education pathways that incorporate hands-on technology training. His study finds that these pathways often lead to better employment outcomes than traditional academic routes, as they prepare students with directly applicable technological skills. This hands-on approach to technology within vocational education underscores the need for educational frameworks that prioritize digital proficiency as a core component of employability. Consequently, vocational training that emphasizes technical competencies can better align student capabilities with job market requirements, enhancing their employment prospects.

In a broader perspective, Butum and Nicolescu [6] review employability models for higher education graduates, particularly in response to rapid technological advancements in the 21st century. Their systematic review of various studies reveals a consensus among employers, educators, and graduates on the need for key competencies that align with workforce demands. They propose an integrated employability model where higher education institutions, policymakers, and employers collaboratively shape employability outcomes. This model emphasizes that aligning academic curricula with market needs, particularly in digital competencies, is essential for addressing the evolving requirements of the labor market. Therefore, a coordinated effort among stakeholders is vital to close the skills gap and ensure that graduates are fully prepared for a technology-centric economy.

These studies collectively affirm the value of embedding technology and adaptive learning frameworks within educational institutions to enhance employability. Digital literacy, practical skills, and technology-enhanced assessments equip students with competencies necessary for success in the digital economy. Additionally, the proposed integrated employability model highlights the need for a cohesive approach, where academia and industry collaborate to develop curricula that reflect the skills essential in today's evolving workforce. For institutions like RSU, these findings suggest that adopting a technology-focused, industry-aligned education model could significantly improve graduates' career prospects and long-term success.

2.5. Inclusivity, mentorship, and leadership in career preparation

An inclusive educational environment, coupled with mentorship and leadership development, is foundational to enhancing graduate employability. Inclusive practices within education prepare students for diverse workplaces, as shown by Seehawer and Breidlid [20], who argue that integrating culturally relevant education, such as indigenous knowledge, into academic programs equips graduates for both local and global job markets. This approach not only respects and incorporates diverse knowledge but also fosters adaptability, making graduates more resilient and prepared for a range of professional contexts. By aligning education with socio-economic realities, inclusive curricula enable graduates to engage meaningfully in multicultural settings, which is increasingly valued in modern workplaces.

In addition to fostering inclusivity, mentorship plays a critical role in graduates' career readiness by providing them with guidance and support for professional growth. Marey *et al.* [21] propose a mentorship-based evaluative framework that promotes adaptability and continuous development. Through mentorship,

graduates receive guidance that helps them navigate complex professional challenges and fosters a proactive approach to career advancement. This mentorship model aligns well with the goal of preparing students for competitive job markets, as it offers sustained support that extends beyond traditional academic instruction. Graduates who experience structured mentorship are better equipped to transition smoothly into their careers, benefiting from a network of support that bolsters both professional competence and resilience.

Leadership skills and community engagement also emerge as pivotal elements in career success, contributing to graduates' ability to take on impactful roles within their organizations and communities. Sharar and Nawab [4] underscore the value of leadership skills, showing that graduates who actively engage in community-based initiatives are more likely to develop competencies necessary for leadership positions. Such skills foster a sense of responsibility and initiative, qualities that are highly sought after in professional settings. Similarly, Naparan and Balimbingan [22] highlight the importance of addressing the unique challenges faced by minority students, such as Muslim students in predominantly Catholic institutions, to foster equitable career outcomes. This comprehensive approach to inclusivity, mentorship, and leadership prepares graduates not only to succeed individually but also to contribute constructively to diverse professional environments.

Further supporting the role of inclusivity and tailored development, Patulin *et al.* [23] explore the employment trajectories of alumni from Surigao Del Norte State University in the Philippines. Their tracer study of graduates from the college of teacher education (CTE) and graduate school reveals differences in career paths, noting that while younger CTE graduates often enter teaching roles with modest salaries, older graduate students (GS) alumni are more likely to hold supervisory positions. The study emphasizes the need for continuous professional development tailored to each career path, recommending enhanced alumni engagement and support structures to ensure long-term job satisfaction. By acknowledging the diverse needs of alumni, this study underscores the importance of individualized support that enables graduates to thrive in varied professional roles.

High-honor graduates, who frequently transition to international careers, provide another perspective on the value of adaptability and continuous learning. Villanueva *et al.* [24] explore how graduating with honors cultivates resilience, optimism, and a commitment to growth, attributes that support graduates in navigating the challenges of overseas employment. Their research emphasizes the importance of fostering a strong work ethic and a goal-oriented mindset in students, suggesting that honor graduates possess a natural inclination toward self-improvement. To support similar outcomes for a broader student population, the authors recommend that institutions encourage resilience and ongoing skill development, which are key to achieving professional success in competitive job markets.

Career-guidance programs also play a valuable role in supporting graduates' long-term success and job stability, particularly among honor graduates and student leaders. Rara *et al.* [25] investigate the career trajectories of honor graduates and student leaders, showing that many enter stable positions in education with competitive salaries and regular promotions. Their findings suggest that honor graduates and student leaders benefit from environments that encourage skill development and provide clear career advancement opportunities. The study advocates for career-guidance programs that help students develop a vision for their careers, thereby promoting both stability and professional fulfillment.

Finally, a study by Casanova and Paguia [26] highlights the relationship between employability, job performance, and leadership skills among graduates from Occidental Mindoro State College. By examining employment outcomes, job satisfaction, and career progression, their research finds that graduates who have developed leadership skills tend to achieve greater career success and are often promoted to middle-level management positions. Additionally, the study reveals that demographic factors such as age and gender, along with continuous professional development, significantly contribute to employability and job success. The findings underscore the importance of integrating leadership training and professional development within academic programs to ensure graduates can meet the evolving demands of the job market.

Therefore, creating an inclusive educational environment and prioritizing mentorship and leadership development are critical to preparing graduates for successful careers. These elements collectively foster resilience, adaptability, and a commitment to continuous learning, qualities that are increasingly valued by employers. By supporting diverse student needs and promoting skill development, institutions can equip graduates with the tools to navigate complex professional landscapes and excel in varied roles.

3. METHOD

3.1. Research design

This study employs a mixed-method approach specifically explanatory sequential design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to comprehensively address the research question on the employability of Latin-honor graduates from RSU for AY 2015-2022. The quantitative component

involves the use of a standardized survey questionnaire developed by the commission on higher education (CHED) for tracer studies, enabling the collection of objective data regarding graduates' demographic profiles, employment status, educational background, and participation in training or seminars. The qualitative component complements this by employing FGD and gathering written narratives from participants, which aim to provide deeper insights into the personal experiences of honor graduates concerning their licensure examinations, career progression, and employment outcomes. The integration of both methods ensures a well-rounded understanding of the graduates' career trajectories.

3.2. Population, sample, and sampling procedure

The population for this study consists of all Latin-honor graduates—Cum Laude, Magna Cum Laude, and Summa Cum Laude—who earned their bachelor's degrees from RSU between 2015 and 2022. According to data provided by the university registrar's office, a total of 253 graduates were identified. The distribution across the three honor categories indicates that the majority of graduates (87%) received Cum Laude honors, while fewer achieved Magna Cum Laude and Summa Cum Laude distinctions.

To determine the appropriate sample size, Cochran's formula was applied, using a 90% confidence level and a margin of error of 10.34%. This calculation resulted in a required sample size of 51 graduates. Quota sampling was then employed to ensure proportional representation across all Latin-honor categories, mirroring the actual distribution of Cum Laude, Magna Cum Laude, and Summa Cum Laude graduates. This method was chosen to ensure that the sample captured a diverse range of employment outcomes and perspectives from the graduates.

However, due to the challenges of tracking alumni, particularly those difficult to locate, adjustments were made to the sample size. The final sample included 40 Cum Laude graduates and 11 Magna Cum Laude graduates, with no Summa Cum Laude participants, as those graduates were rare or unavailable. These adjustments highlight the challenges in maintaining contact with graduates and emphasize the importance of stronger alumni networks. Future studies could address these challenges by utilizing social media platforms and digital tools to track graduates more effectively and ensure a reliable data collection process.

The list of Latin-honor graduates was ethically obtained from the university registrar's office, guaranteeing the accuracy and representation of the study's population. Table 1 presents the frequency distribution of Latin-honor graduates across academic years from 2015 to 2020. This data, systematically gathered from official university records, confirms that a total of 253 graduates earned Latin honors during this period, with Cum Laude distinctions dominating. The number of graduates varied each year, peaking in 2017–2018, suggesting an outstanding academic performance during that time. A significant drop in 2019–2020 may reflect various factors, including changes in academic standards or the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. These procedures ensured that the sample for the study accurately represented the broader population of RSU Latin-honor graduates.

- Step 1: identify total population (Latin-honor graduates from AY 2015-2020)

In the past six years, a total of 253 students graduated with Latin honors wherein mostly were Cum Laude (221, 87%). The number of students receiving Latin honors each year ranges from 18 in 2019-2020 to 56 in 2017-2018. The peak in 2017-2018 suggests that this particular year had the highest academic achievements among students, while the significant drop in 2019-2020 could be attributed to various factors, potentially including changes in academic standards or the impact of external factors like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of Latin-honor graduates across campuses from academic year 2015-2020

Latin honor received/academic year	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	Total
Cum Laude	34	31	48	52	40	16	221
Magna Cum Laude	3	7	5	4	10	1	30
Summa Cum Laude					1	1	2
Total	37	38	53	56	51	18	253

Data source: RSU office of the university registrar

- Step 2: sample size estimation at 90% level of confidence

Estimation of the samples of the study using Cochran equation for finite population proportion was utilized with 10.34% margin of error and a 90% level of confidence. Assuming 50% of the honor graduates were employed the moment the survey was administered. In (1) was used to estimate the representative sample.

$$n = \frac{\frac{(z^2)((\hat{p}*(1-\hat{p}))}{e^2}}{1 + \frac{\left(\frac{(z^2)((\hat{p}*(1-\hat{p}))}{e^2}\right)-1}{N}} \quad (1)$$

Where:

n=sample size

e=the margin of error

z=critical value at 90% level of confidence

\hat{p} =the assumed proportion of being employed

N=total number of graduates with Latin-honors from 2015-2020

The study's estimated sample size was 51 participants, selected using quota sampling to ensure a representative sample of graduates who received Latin-honors. By proportionally allocating the samples based on the type of Latin honor received (e.g., Cum Laude, Magna Cum Laude, Summa Cum Laude), the researchers aimed to capture a balanced view of employability across different Latin-honors category. This approach allows the researchers a more precise reflection of the population's characteristics, ensuring that the data collected can provide meaningful insights into the experiences and outcomes of graduates with varying employment status. Quota sampling was used to help maintain the study's focus on the diversity within the group of Latin-honors, enhancing the reliability and relevance of the findings.

Figure 2 shows the expected number of samples for Cum Laude graduate was 45 while 6 for Mag Cum Laude, but the actual graduate who were traced was 40 and 11 respectively, with 5 sample difference due to the difficulty of tracing the graduate's whereabouts. This situation highlights the necessity for improved alumni tracking methods to enhance graduate monitoring and achieve more precise tracking. These problems can also be lessened by urging graduates to maintain ties and involvement with their universities. Making more use of social media and building stronger alumni networks may make it easier to find former students in the future.

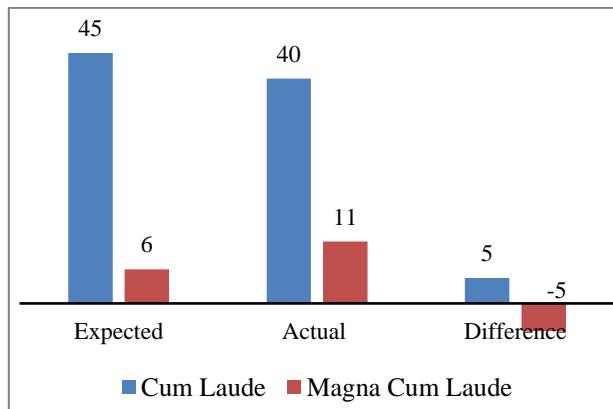


Figure 2. Expected samples vs. actual samples

3.3. Instrumentation

Data collection was facilitated through a structured questionnaire adapted from the CHED tracer study guidelines. The questionnaire focused on gathering comprehensive data regarding graduates' general information, employment status, educational background, and professional development. The instrument underwent a thorough validation process, with a panel of five experts assessing its face and content validity. Their feedback was incorporated to refine the instrument, ensuring clarity and relevance to the study's objectives. The revised questionnaire was subjected to inter-rater reliability testing, achieving an intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) of 0.896, which indicates strong agreement among raters and confirms the internal consistency of the instrument.

3.4. Data processing and statistical tools used

After establishing the validity and reliability of the instrument, the process of data collection and organization commenced. The data were carefully encoded, decoded, and subjected to thorough cleaning to ensure accuracy and quality, which was essential for the subsequent analysis. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency tables, were used to describe the demographic profiles of the

respondents. Additionally, non-parametric tests, such as Spearman's rank correlation, were employed to assess the correlation between two scale variables, while chi-square tests were utilized to analyze relationships between categorical or count data. To further understand factors influencing the employability of Latin-honor graduates, binary logistic regression modeling was conducted to identify significant contributors. The entire quantitative analysis was supported by the use of statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) version 29, ensuring reliable and efficient statistical operations.

In addition to the quantitative analysis, FGD were employed to validate and complement the findings. These FGDs were meticulously planned to ensure productive and insightful contributions from participants. A presentation outlining preliminary quantitative findings was developed, allowing participants to engage with key themes and statistical relationships prior to the discussions. Moderators, who received extensive training, facilitated the FGDs, promoting open communication and managing group dynamics effectively. The discussions were conducted in neutral and comfortable settings, either in person or virtually, based on participants' availability. Each session lasted between 60 to 90 minutes, involving 6 to 10 participants. With participants' consent, all sessions were audio-recorded to ensure accurate transcription and analysis. The discussion flow was structured to begin with an introduction and presentation of findings, followed by participant discussions aimed at confirming the accuracy of the data, gathering feedback, and reaching consensus. Each session concluded with a summary and final comments. This structured approach provided valuable qualitative data, which added depth to the initial quantitative findings and ensured a comprehensive integration of participants' perspectives into the overall research.

The qualitative data collected through FGDs were analyzed using thematic analysis. This process involved systematically organizing the data into codes, identifying broader themes, and refining those themes to ensure they accurately represented the participants' insights. Special care was taken to define each theme clearly, ensuring that the data were faithfully captured and interpreted.

Following the initial data cleaning, encoding, and organization, the quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 29. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations, were utilized to provide a clear overview of the graduates' demographic characteristics. Spearman's rank correlation was applied to test relationships between ordinal and scale variables, while Chi-square tests were used to examine associations between categorical variables. Finally, binary logistic regression modeling was employed to determine the significant factors influencing the employability of Latin-honor graduates.

3.5. Qualitative data collection and analysis

The qualitative aspect of the study involved conducting FGD with selected graduates. These discussions were designed to explore various themes, such as career progression, the role of academic honors in securing employment, and the impact of personal resilience and continuous learning. Each FGD session lasted between 60 to 90 minutes and involved 6 to 10 participants. With participants' consent, discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Moderators were trained to foster open communication and effectively guide the discussions.

Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes in the FGDs and written narratives. The qualitative data were systematically coded, and the resulting themes were refined and validated to ensure they accurately reflected the participants' shared experiences. These themes provided critical insights into the graduates' perspectives on their employability and career advancements. This mixed-method approach, combining rigorous quantitative analysis with rich qualitative insights, offers a comprehensive examination of the employability of Latin-honor graduates from RSU. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative data allows for a detailed exploration of the factors influencing career success, delivering a holistic understanding of the graduates' professional experiences.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the demographic profile of Latin honor graduates in terms of the basic general attributes, educational backgrounds, and employment statistics. Additionally, it highlights the discussion on the different factors that contribute to employability.

4.1. Summary statistics on the demographic profile of Latin honor graduates

The demographic profile of the Latin honor graduates reflects a predominantly young cohort as reflected in Table 2, with the majority (56.9%) of the graduates aged between 25 and 30 years, followed by those below 25 years (39.2%). The result suggests that RSU's educational system is effective in facilitating timely degree completion and transition into the workforce. A notable finding is that 65% of these honor graduates are female, highlighting the success of women in excelling academically. This reflects broader societal trends in gender equity in education, particularly in traditionally male-dominated fields. RSU's focus

on supporting gender equity has likely contributed to this outcome, and it is recommended that the university continue its efforts to enhance programs that encourage female participation in underrepresented disciplines.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics on the demographic profile of Latin honor graduates

	Demographic profile of the respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 25 years old	20	39.2
	25 to 30 years old	29	56.9
	36 to 40 years old	2	3.9
Gender	Male	18	65
	Female	33	35
Civil status	Single	40	78.4
	Married	10	19.6
	Single parent	1	2.0
Degree of specialization	Bachelor of Secondary Education-Major in English	17	33.3
	Bachelor of Secondary Education-Major in Mathematics	9	17.6
	Bachelor of Secondary Education-Major in Filipino	3	5.9
	Bachelor of Secondary Education-Major in Biological Science	11	21.6
	Bachelor of Secondary Education-Major in General Science	1	2.0
	Bachelor of Elementary Education	6	11.8
	Bachelor of Information Technology	1	2.0
	Bachelor of Technical Teacher Education	1	2.0
	Bachelor of Science in Financial Management	1	2.0
	Bachelor of Science in Business Administration	1	2.0

In terms of civil status, 78.4% of the graduates are single, suggesting that many prioritize their education and career development before pursuing marriage or long-term relationships. This aligns with global trends where younger generations delay personal commitments in favor of career advancement. The high proportion of graduates from education-related fields, particularly in English (33.3%), biological science (21.6%), and mathematics (17.6%), underscores RSU's strategic focus on teacher education, positioning itself as a center of excellence in this field. This emphasis may create a ripple effect on the quality of education in the region and beyond, further solidifying the university's role in producing top educators.

The findings of this research highlight the effectiveness of RSU educational system in fostering timely degree completion, particularly among a young cohort of graduates, with most between 25 and 30 years of age. The notable success of female graduates, who comprise 65% of Latin honor recipients, underscores RSU's efforts in promoting gender equity, especially in fields traditionally dominated by males. This reflects a broader societal shift towards gender balance in higher education. Furthermore, the high percentage of single graduates prioritizing career over personal commitments aligns with global trends of younger generations focusing on professional development. RSU's strategic emphasis on education-related fields, particularly in English, biological science, and mathematics, positions it as a vital contributor to regional educational quality, cementing its role as a center for producing highly qualified educators.

4.2. Educational profiles of Latin honor graduates

Table 3 presents various reasons cited by RSU Latin honor graduates for selecting their course of study and pursuing advanced education, trainings, and seminars. The most common reason for choosing a course was the affordability for the family (53%), followed by the availability of course offerings (43%) and the influence of role models (41%). This suggests that practical considerations, such as financial constraints and accessibility, play a significant role in students' decisions, while personal inspirations also have a notable impact. Interestingly, prospects for immediate employment (29%) and strong passion for the profession (35%) were also key motivators, indicating a blend of pragmatic and personal factors in course selection. Regarding advanced education, the majority (65.9%) of the graduates pursued graduate education, while a smaller percentage participated in technical and vocational trainings (7.3%) and seminars or workshops (26.8%). The main reason for pursuing advanced studies was professional development (70.6%), followed by the need for promotion (29.4%).

These findings imply that RSU Latin honor graduates recognize the value of continuous learning and professional growth, particularly through formal education, as a pathway to advancing their careers. The relatively lower percentages for technical and vocational trainings and seminars suggest that graduates may prioritize formal degree programs over shorter-term skill-building opportunities. The implications of these findings highlight the importance of both course selection and ongoing education for professional development and career growth. The fact that affordability and availability are key factors for course choice underscores the need for RSU to maintain accessible programs that can cater to a wide range of students,

particularly those with financial constraints. Furthermore, the strong emphasis on graduate education for professional development signals that RSU should continue to support advanced studies, as it directly correlates with the graduates' prospects for career advancement, promotion, and enhanced employability. This emphasis on lifelong learning is crucial for maintaining competitiveness in the job market, particularly in fields like education, where continuous improvement is often necessary for long-term success.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics on the educational profiles of the Latin honor graduates

	Frequency distribution based on educational profiles	Count	Percentage (%)
Reasons for taking the course	Good grades in high school High grades in the course or subject Inspired by a role model Prospect for immediate employment Strong passion for the profession Influence of relatives and families Availability of course offering in chosen institution Availability of course offerings Status or prestige of the profession Affordable for the family Peer influence Prospect of career advancement Opportunity for employment abroad No choice or no better idea Prospect of attractive compensation	15 13 21 15 18 20 0 22 10 27 9 8 2 2 1	29 25 41 29 35 39 0 43 20 53 18 16 4 4 2
Advanced education/training/seminars	Graduate education (masteral and doctoral) Technical and vocational trainings Seminars and workshops	27 3 11	65.9 7.3 26.8
Reasons for taking advance studies	Professional development For promotion	36 15	70.6 29.4

4.3. Employment profile of Latin honor graduates

The employment statistics of RSU Latin honor graduates reveal a strong rate of employability as shown in Table 4. Finding revealed that 96.1% of the graduates are currently employed, with 62.7% holding permanent positions. The high rate of permanent employment signifies that RSU graduates, particularly those with Latin honors, are well-positioned for stable careers. Moreover, a majority (84.3%) of these graduates find that their jobs align with their course of study, which suggests that the curriculum offered by RSU equips students with the relevant knowledge and skills for the job market. The short duration between graduation and employment, with 45.1% finding jobs within 1 to 6 months, further highlights the university's effectiveness in facilitating a swift transition into the workforce. In terms of job retention and motivation, 65% of the graduates cite salaries and benefits as the primary reason for staying in their job, followed by career challenges (51%) and job alignment with their field of study (59%). These factors suggest that RSU graduates not only secure employment but also find value in their work, which can contribute to long-term career satisfaction. Additionally, 92.2% of graduates report that the curriculum aligns well with their current jobs, demonstrating the practical relevance of the academic programs at RSU. The competencies acquired during college, particularly communication skills (96.1%), human relations skills (70.6%), and critical thinking skills (70.6%), have likely played a critical role in securing employment and fostering career growth.

The findings underscore the importance of RSU's curriculum and academic support in securing early and stable employment for its Latin honor graduates. The strong alignment between academic programs and employment, coupled with the development of essential skills, positions RSU graduates to thrive in the competitive job market. The relatively short time frame for securing employment, along with the high rate of permanent positions, also reflects the effectiveness of RSU's education in preparing students for long-term career success. These outcomes highlight the importance of maintaining strong industry partnerships and continuously aligning the curriculum with labor market demands to ensure sustained graduate employability.

4.4. Significant factors associated with employment status

The results of the Chi-square tests in Table 5 examine the relationship between various factors and employability status (employed vs. not employed) among Latin-honor graduates. Age was found to have a significant association with employability, $\chi^2(2)=12.52$, $p=0.002$, indicating that age plays an important role in employment outcomes. Similarly, civil status was significantly related to employability, $\chi^2(2)=26.56$, $p=0.001$, suggesting that one's civil status might influence their likelihood of securing a job. The data also showed a significant relationship between board examination status and employability, $\chi^2(1)=5.12$, $p=0.024$, highlighting the importance of professional licensure in enhancing job prospects.

Another notable finding is the significant association between employability and training or advanced education, $\chi^2(2)=6.62$, $p=0.036$. This result emphasizes the critical role of continuous professional development and post-graduate education in securing employment, particularly in fields that may require specialized knowledge or skills. Training and advanced education seem to enhance the competitiveness of graduates in the job market, allowing them to meet the demands of employers and secure positions in a timely manner. These findings suggest that factors such as age, civil status, board examination status, and continuous education are crucial in securing employment shortly after graduation. Age and civil status may reflect life stage priorities, with younger and single graduates possibly more focused on career building. Passing a board examination enhances employability, especially in fields where licensure is required. The positive impact of advanced education on employment status underscores the importance of lifelong learning in achieving permanent employment, as employers value employees who are committed to professional growth and skill development.

Table 4. Summary statistics on the employment profile of Latin honor graduates

	Frequency distribution based on employment profiles	Count	Percentage (%)
Currently working	No	2	3.9
	Yes	49	96.1
Employment status	Non-permanent	19	37.3
	Permanent	32	62.7
Reasons of staying in the job	Salaries and benefits	33	65
	Career challenge	26	51
	Related to special skill	23	45
	Related to course or program of study	30	59
	Proximity to residence	14	27
	Family Influence	9	18
	Peer Influences	6	12
	No	8	15.7
	Yes	43	84.3
Number of months before employment	Less than a month	13	25.5
	1 to 6 months	23	45.1
	7 to 12 months	10	19.6
	13 to 18 months	2	3.9
	25 to 30 months	1	2.0
	31 to 36 months	1	2.0
	Above 36 months	1	2.0
	Below five thousand	1	2.0
	Five to ten thousand	21	41.2
Monthly income	Ten to fifteen thousand	6	11.8
	Fifteen to twenty thousand	9	17.6
	Twenty to twenty-five thousand	10	19.6
	Twenty-five thousand – thirty thousand	4	7.8
	No	4	7.8
	Yes	47	92.2
	Communication skills	49	96.1
	Human relations skills	36	70.6
	Entrepreneurial skills	9	17.6
Competencies acquired during college	Problem-solving skills	34	66.7
	Critical thinking skills	36	70.6
	Emotional and life skills	35	68.6

Table 5. Significant factors that are associated if currently employed and employment status for Latin honor graduates

Dependent variables vs independent variables on the test for relationship	Chi-square statistic	Df	p-value (2-sided)	Decision rule
Currently employed (yes/no)	Age	12.52	.002	Reject Ho
	Civil status	26.56	.001	Reject Ho
	Board examination status	5.12	.024	Reject Ho
	Training and advanced education	6.62	.036	Reject Ho
Employment status (permanent/non-permanent)				

4.5. Modeling significant factors for employment regularization

The results in Table 6 show the logistic regression analysis, findings revealed that several factors significantly predict regular employment among graduates. Specifically, advanced education ($B=-1.16$, $SE=0.48$, $p=0.016$) was found to be a negative predictor, indicating that those who pursued further studies were

less likely to be regularly employed because they often pursue further studies or specialized training, delaying their entry into the full-time workforce. Additionally, they might seek more competitive or specialized career opportunities, which may take longer to secure compared to immediate employment options. On the other hand, board passer status ($B=3.45$, $SE=1.52$, $p=0.023$) significantly increased the likelihood of regular employment, suggesting that passing professional licensure exams is a key factor in securing stable employment. Moreover, receiving Latin honors ($B=-2.58$, $SE=1.23$, $p=0.036$) was associated with a lower probability of regular employment because such individuals might pursue further studies, research, or specialized career paths that delay full-time employment. Additionally, employers may prioritize practical experience or industry-specific qualifications, such as board licensure, over academic honors when hiring.

The Wald statistics emphasize the strength of these predictors. Board passer status ($\text{Wald}=5.17$, $p=0.023$) shows a strong positive relationship with regular employment, with a confidence interval of 0.48 to 6.43, reinforcing the value of licensure exams for career advancement. Conversely, advanced education ($\text{Wald}=5.83$, $p=0.016$) was a significant negative predictor, with a confidence interval of -2.10 to -0.22, indicating that while advanced degrees may offer long-term benefits, they may temporarily reduce the odds of immediate employment. Factors such as income ($p=0.082$), age ($p=0.177$), civil status ($p=0.728$), and curriculum alignment ($p=0.643$) were not statistically significant in predicting regular employment.

The implications of these findings for human resource practices are critical. The significant role of board exams in predicting regular employment underscores the need for companies, educational institutions and private sectors to prioritize applicants with professional credentials, particularly in fields where licensure is a requirement. Conversely, the negative relationship between advanced education and regular employment highlights a potential gap in employment opportunities for those pursuing higher studies, suggesting that organizations might need to adjust hiring timelines or offer flexible roles to accommodate such individuals. As this model continues to be refined, it can play a pivotal role in shaping recruitment and selection strategies, ensuring that key predictors like licensure and educational background are systematically considered to identify top candidates for permanent roles.

Table 6. Significant factors that contributed on the regularization employment status of Latin honor graduates

Parameter estimates							
Source of variations	Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	Df	Sig.	95% confidence interval	
Y [Employment status=0]	-3.27	3.81	.74	1	.391	-10.74	4.20
X Advanced education	-1.16	.48	5.83	1	.016	-2.10	-.22
Board passer	3.45	1.52	5.17	1	.023	.48	6.43
Latin honor award received	-2.58	1.23	4.40	1	.036	-4.99	-.17
Income	.55	.31	3.03	1	.082	-.07	1.16
Age	.92	.68	1.82	1	.177	-.42	2.26
Civil status	.21	.61	.12	1	.728	-.98	1.41
Curriculum alignment	-.66	1.43	.22	1	.643	-3.46	2.14

Link function: Logit.

4.6. Overall model fitting for employability

The logistic regression model assessing the employability of Latin honor graduates revealed significant findings as presented in Table 7. The model's -2 Log likelihood value decreased from 57.200 for the intercept-only model to 39.906 for the final model. This reduction indicates that the final model significantly improves the fit over the null model, suggesting that the predictors included in the model effectively contribute to understanding the employability of Latin honor graduates. The Chi-square statistic for the model was 17.29 with 7 degrees of freedom, yielding a significance level of 0.016. This result signifies that the model is statistically significant, meaning that at least one of the predictors has a meaningful association with the likelihood of employability among the graduates.

Table 7. Overall model fitting for employability of Latin honor graduates

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-square	df	Sig.	Cox and Snell Pseudo r^2	Nagelkerke Pseudo r^2
Intercept only	57.200					
Final	39.906	17.29	7	.016	.288	.392

The Cox and Snell Pseudo- R^2 value for the final model was 0.288, while the Nagelkerke Pseudo- R^2 was 0.392. These values indicate that the model explains approximately 28.8% to 39.2% of the variance in employability outcomes for Latin honor graduates. Although these values suggest moderate explanatory power, it is important to recognize that Pseudo- R^2 values in logistic regression do not have the same

interpretation as R^2 in linear regression, which typically indicates the proportion of variance explained. Therefore, while the model demonstrates a meaningful contribution to the understanding of employability, there remains room for additional factors or variables that may further clarify the employability landscape of these graduates.

The implications of these results are significant for RSU and other institutions aiming to enhance graduate employability. The statistically significant model suggests that specific predictors contribute to the likelihood of employment among Latin honor graduates, warranting further investigation into which factors, such as academic performance, industry connections, or practical experience are most influential. Moreover, the moderate level of explained variance indicates the need for continued development of support services, such as career counseling and internship programs, to better prepare students for the job market. By focusing on these areas, the university can refine its educational strategies to enhance the employability prospects of its graduates, ultimately contributing to their career success in a competitive job landscape.

4.7. Accuracy of the model for employability

The results of assessing the model accuracy for the employability of Latin-honor graduates are presented in Table 8. The goodness-of-fit tests, specifically the Pearson Chi-square and deviance tests, yielded Chi-square values of 35.022 and 34.467, respectively. Both tests had degrees of freedom (df) equal to 29. The significance values (Sig.) for the Pearson Chi-square and deviance tests were 0.204 and 0.223, respectively, exceeding the conventional threshold of 0.05, indicating that the model demonstrates a good fit for the data, suggesting that the predictors included in the model adequately explain the variability in employability among the Latin-honor graduates.

The findings imply that the logistic regression model accurately represents the relationship between the independent variables and the employability of the graduates. A non-significant result in both tests suggests that the observed frequencies of employability categories do not significantly differ from the expected frequencies based on the model predictions. This result reinforces the notion that the model is well-specified, providing a robust framework for understanding the factors influencing employability among graduates with Latin honors. The implications of these results are significant for both policymakers and educational institutions. The successful fit of the model indicates that the variables identified, such as academic performance, advanced education, and skills acquired, play crucial roles in predicting employability. This insight can guide RSU in refining its educational programs and support services to enhance employability outcomes. Moreover, understanding the factors that contribute to employability can assist the university in developing targeted interventions aimed at increasing the job readiness of graduates, ultimately enhancing their career prospects and the university's reputation for producing employable graduates.

Table 8. Test on the accuracy of the model for employability of Latin-honor graduates

Goodness-of-fit			
Summary statistics	Chi-square	Df	Sig.
Pearson	35.022	29	.204
Deviance	34.467	29	.223

Link function: Logit.

4.8. Themes related to the success stories of Latin honor graduates

The success stories of RSU Latin honor graduates are rooted in several key themes that significantly contribute to their achievements in passing licensure examinations, career progression, and employment status, as shown in Table 9. Academic excellence provides a strong foundation, with high academic standards preparing graduates for licensure exams, serving as a basis for promotions, and being recognized by employers, thus leading to better opportunities. Continuous learning through ongoing study habits and advanced degrees ensures graduates remain competitive in the job market, further enhancing their skills and professional development. Additionally, persistence and resilience play a crucial role, as graduates overcome exam failures and career obstacles, secure promotions, and manage job rejections and search challenges effectively. Alignment with career goals ensures that graduates pursue licenses relevant to their aspirations, make targeted career moves, and find satisfaction in job roles that match their interests. Networking supports career advancement and job search opportunities through connections with peers and mentors. Hard work and dedication result in intensive preparation for exams, commitment recognition, and being valued as dedicated employees. Flexibility and adaptability enable graduates to adjust study strategies, adapt to new roles and responsibilities, and maintain flexibility in job roles, thereby enhancing their employment opportunities. These themes collectively underscore the importance of a comprehensive and dynamic approach to professional success.

Another prominent theme is the graduates' commitment to continuous learning, which was emphasized through ongoing study habits and professional development. Many graduates pursued advanced degrees and engaged in lifelong learning opportunities, enabling them to enhance their skills and remain competitive in the job market. The connection between persistence and resilience emerged as another critical theme, highlighting graduates' ability to overcome challenges, such as initial exam failures and job search rejections. This persistence translated into career progression, with many graduates securing promotions and successfully navigating career obstacles, showcasing the importance of a resilient mindset in achieving long-term career success. The implications of these results suggest that academic institutions should focus on fostering a culture of academic excellence and resilience while promoting continuous learning and networking opportunities. This multifaceted approach will not only prepare graduates for licensure examinations but also enhance their employability and career progression in an increasingly competitive job market.

Table 9. Matrix of themes related to the success stories of RSU Latin honor graduates

Themes	Passing licensure examinations	Career progression	Employment status
Academic excellence	Strong foundation due to high academic standards	Basis for promotions and further academic pursuits	Recognized by employers, leading to better opportunities
Continuous learning	Prepared through ongoing study habits	Advanced degrees and professional development	Skills enhancement making them competitive in job market
Persistence and resilience	Overcoming exam failures, consistent study efforts	Overcoming career obstacles, securing promotions	Coping with job rejections and job search challenges
Alignment with career goals	Pursuing licenses relevant to career aspirations	Targeted career moves aligned with personal goals	Satisfaction with job roles that match their interests
Networking	Support from peers and mentors	Networking leading to career advancement	Connections aiding in job search and career opportunities
Hard work and dedication	Intensive preparation leading to success	Demonstrated commitment leading to recognition	Seen as dedicated employees by employers
Flexibility and adaptability	Adjusting study strategies to meet exam demands	Adapting to new roles and responsibilities	Flexibility in job roles aiding employment opportunities

4.9. Discussion

The analysis of the employability and career paths of Latin-honor graduates from RSU presents significant findings from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. From a quantitative viewpoint, the demographic data shows that most graduates are young, predominantly female, and focused on education-related careers. This trend aligns with the findings of Bellen *et al.* [2] and Albite [7], both of whom emphasized the important role a strong academic foundation plays in achieving professional success. A substantial proportion of these graduates are currently employed in permanent positions, particularly in the education sector, reflecting the high level of preparation provided by RSU's academic programs. Additionally, the high pass rates in the LET [2] underscore the importance of professional qualifications. Together, these outcomes highlight the critical role of consistent academic effort and demonstrate the effectiveness of RSU's academic curriculum in equipping graduates for successful careers.

Advanced education and continuous professional development were identified as crucial factors influencing the career progression of these graduates. Many pursue further studies and actively participate in seminars and workshops, motivated by professional development and promotion opportunities. This trend underscores the value of lifelong learning in remaining competitive in the job market, as discussed by Sayibu *et al.* [18]. Additionally, the data reveals that a large number of graduates' secure employment within a relatively short period after graduation, demonstrating both their preparedness for the workforce and the strong demand for their skills. These findings emphasize the need for educational institutions to support professional growth by offering continuous learning opportunities, ensuring that graduates can remain competitive and adaptable in a rapidly changing job market.

Qualitative analysis revealed key themes such as academic excellence, continuous learning, persistence, resilience, alignment with career goals, networking, and hard work as the primary factors contributing to graduates' career success. Graduates often attribute their success in licensure exams to intensive preparation and high academic standards. Career progression is frequently linked to advanced degrees and professional development, while employment status benefits from recognized competencies and alignment with career goals. Furthermore, the importance of networking and support systems in facilitating job searches and career advancement is highlighted. These findings are consistent with Choi [19], who underscores the importance of diverse educational pathways and professional networks in achieving career success. The collective impact of these themes points to a comprehensive approach to professional success, emphasizing both individual dedication and the critical role of institutional support systems.

The study's findings resonate with Pattaguan [3] insights on the importance of both external and internal factors in excelling in licensure examinations. A well-rounded education that combines strong academic foundations, continuous professional development, and personal resilience significantly enhances the employability and career success of Latin-honor graduates. Supported by effective institutional programs and policies, RSU's holistic approach to education not only prepares graduates for immediate employment but also equips them with the skills and attributes necessary for long-term professional growth and stability. This highlights the importance of comprehensive strategies that address both academic and personal development, ensuring that graduates are ready to meet the evolving demands of the workforce.

Achieving success in licensure examinations is closely linked to the quality and consistency of academic efforts during college years. A study by Bellen *et al.* [2] reveals that students who maintain steady academic commitment throughout their college experience are better prepared for licensure exams, highlighting the cumulative value of sustained effort over time. Supporting this, Albite [7] research identifies specific personal attributes—such as goal-setting, a strong interest in reading, and active engagement in review programs—as essential traits among top-performing students. These findings underscore the role of a supportive educational environment that not only encourages academic rigor but also fosters intrinsic motivation and external support. Together, these studies emphasize that a structured academic environment, combined with personal dedication and resilience, is critical for students aiming to achieve professional success through licensure.

Similarly, Tayco *et al.* [1] research on the employability of graduates from NORSU highlights how challenging academic environments play a pivotal role in preparing students for professional success. Their findings demonstrate that while students in demanding programs may not always achieve top academic performance, the rigorous expectations foster deeper learning and essential skills for professional readiness, particularly for roles requiring licensure. Through an alignment with institutional VMGOs, these environments cultivate perseverance, discipline, and a solid grasp of core competencies. The current study supports this view, showing that RSU graduates who underwent rigorous training exhibit strong preparedness for licensure exams, underscoring the long-term advantages of a curriculum that emphasizes critical thinking, resilience, and adaptability—attributes vital for sustained professional achievement.

Choi [19] research on vocational education provides further evidence that alternative educational pathways can lead to superior employment outcomes. In particular, Choi [19] found that vocational programs often result in higher wages and more stable employment compared to traditional academic routes. This suggests that different educational approaches may offer distinct advantages depending on the industry and the career goals of students. The current study's emphasis on continuous learning and skill development aligns with Choi [19] findings, underscoring the importance of adapting educational programs to meet the evolving demands of the labor market. By recognizing the value of diverse educational paths—including vocational training, internships, and industry certifications—institutions can ensure that their graduates are equipped with practical skills and industry-specific knowledge. This approach ensures that all students, whether pursuing traditional academic degrees or vocational education, are well-prepared for success in a variety of professional fields.

The transformative potential of technology-enhanced learning tools is another critical area emphasized by Sayibu *et al.* [18]. Their research illustrates how tools such as mobile learning platforms can significantly shape learning behaviors, foster innovation, and cultivate the critical skills needed in today's digital economy. The integration of modern technologies into educational practices not only enhances learning efficiency but also develops essential competencies like digital literacy, adaptability, and creative problem-solving. These skills are increasingly in demand in today's technology-driven global economy. The current study's findings echo this perspective, showing that technology-enhanced learning plays a pivotal role in preparing graduates to thrive in competitive and dynamic employment landscapes. Moreover, this highlights the importance of educational institutions actively embracing technological innovations to keep pace with rapid changes in the job market, ensuring that their graduates are future-ready and capable of thriving in evolving, tech-centric industries.

Similarly, Naparan and Balimbingan [22] research underscores the importance of inclusive and supportive educational environments in enhancing employability. Their findings highlight the need for educational institutions to understand and address the diverse challenges faced by students, particularly those from underrepresented or marginalized backgrounds. The creation of an inclusive environment is essential to help students overcome obstacles, ensuring that they have the necessary support to succeed academically and professionally. For RSU graduates, fostering such an environment can help them navigate the various barriers they may face during their career journeys, from discrimination in the workplace to limited access to professional networks. By promoting inclusivity, institutions not only enhance job satisfaction but also improve long-term career outcomes. Furthermore, inclusivity in education promotes diversity in the workforce, enabling graduates to work effectively in multicultural and globalized professional settings. Such

environments encourage collaboration, mutual respect, and innovation, which are key to sustained career success in today's interconnected world.

In a broader perspective, Butum and Nicolescu [6] review of employability models reveals that academic excellence alone does not guarantee employment success. Their findings suggest that while academic performance is valuable, it must be complemented by key competencies aligned with workforce demands, particularly digital and soft skills. Butum and Nicolescu [6] propose an integrated model that emphasizes not only academic achievement but also critical thinking, adaptability, and experiential learning. They argue that collaboration among higher education institutions, policymakers, and employers is crucial for aligning curricula with real-world needs, helping students develop resilience, adaptability, and practical skills through a rigorous and holistic educational experience. These attributes, alongside traditional academic accomplishments, are essential for sustained career success in a technology-centric economy.

Educational institutions, therefore, should focus not only on academic achievement but also on fostering personal growth, professional development, and the cultivation of soft skills like communication, leadership, and problem-solving—qualities that are crucial for success in today's competitive job market. Seehawer and Breidlid [20] emphasize the transformative potential of culturally relevant education in improving employability outcomes. Their research, conducted in Sub-Saharan Africa, focuses on the integration of indigenous knowledge systems with Western education, demonstrating that blending local cultural context with academic rigor can significantly enhance the relevance and applicability of education. This approach not only respects and acknowledges local traditions and knowledge but also ensures that the education provided is tailored to the socio-economic realities of the region. For RSU graduates, this highlights the importance of creating an educational framework that is culturally responsive, fostering a deep connection between students and their studies. By making education relevant to both local and global contexts, students are more likely to be engaged in their learning, and the skills they acquire become more applicable in the job market. A culturally inclusive curriculum helps graduates navigate diverse professional environments, equipping them with adaptability and cultural awareness, which are critical for success in today's globalized workforce.

The importance of continuous professional growth and supportive supervision is underscored by Marey *et al.* [21], who propose transforming traditional evaluators into mentors as a means to foster professional development. Their study advocates for a mentor-based model where supervisors not only assess performance but also provide guidance, feedback, and personalized support to promote long-term growth. This model is highly applicable to RSU graduates, where such mentorship programs can be implemented to help graduates navigate the complexities of various career paths and job roles. Mentorship programs offer tailored advice, help develop career goals, and provide a platform for graduates to expand their professional networks, thus enhancing their ability to meet the demands of a competitive job market. Additionally, mentoring relationships encourage lifelong learning and continuous improvement, which are key components of sustained career development. By fostering such growth-oriented supervisory systems, educational institutions can ensure that graduates are not only prepared for immediate job entry but also equipped for long-term career success.

Sharar and Nawab [4] place significant emphasis on the role of leadership skills and community engagement in ensuring career success. Their research highlights the importance of mentorship, instructional decision-making, and active community involvement in shaping effective leaders. For RSU graduates, incorporating these elements into their employability model is essential to preparing them for leadership roles in both professional and community settings. Developing leadership skills allows graduates to take initiative, make informed decisions, and contribute to organizational success, while community engagement fosters a sense of responsibility and connectedness to the broader social context. This integration of leadership and community-oriented values not only prepares graduates to excel in management positions but also encourages them to drive positive change in their professional environments and communities. By empowering graduates to lead with empathy and insight, RSU ensures they are well-prepared to take on significant responsibilities and play pivotal roles in their industries.

The development of higher-order thinking skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical abilities, is critical for success across various professional domains [27]. The study on educational assessments in Pakistan reinforces the need for curricula that actively foster these competencies. In the context of RSU, incorporating assessments that evaluate these skills ensures that graduates are prepared to tackle complex, real-world challenges in their careers. By focusing on such higher-order skills, RSU can equip its graduates with the ability to think critically, analyze situations from multiple perspectives, and solve intricate problems—abilities that are increasingly demanded by employers. In a rapidly changing job market, professionals who possess these skills are more adaptable and better positioned to innovate and excel in their fields. Therefore, embedding critical thinking and problem-solving assessments within the educational framework not only enhances the competitiveness of RSU graduates but also prepares them for sustained success in an ever-evolving professional landscape.

Finally, Albay [28] research on problem-solving approaches is particularly relevant for RSU's Latin-honor graduates, as it underscores the value of training in analytical thinking and critical evaluation. Graduates who are adept in problem-solving strategies are better equipped to approach challenges logically, break down complex issues, and devise innovative solutions—skills that are highly valued in the modern job market. By integrating these teaching methods into RSU's curriculum, the institution can further enhance the employability of its graduates, ensuring that they are capable of thriving in a fast-paced, complex professional environment. The ability to critically assess situations and develop solutions not only improves job performance but also positions graduates as valuable assets to employers seeking individuals who can drive efficiency, innovation, and success within their organizations. Thus, problem-solving training becomes an integral part of the educational experience at RSU, ensuring graduates are fully prepared to excel in diverse, modern career landscapes.

The discussion highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of employability for Latin-honor graduates from RSU. By addressing critical factors such as socio-economic conditions, leveraging technology-enhanced learning, recognizing diverse educational pathways, fostering inclusive environments, and developing essential skills like critical thinking and leadership, educational institutions can play a pivotal role in enhancing graduate employability. This holistic approach not only prepares students for immediate entry into the workforce but also equips them with the tools necessary for sustained professional success. The integration of culturally responsive education, practical skill development, and continuous learning into curricula ensures that graduates remain adaptable and competitive in an increasingly dynamic job market.

The findings of this study carry significant implications for both educational practices and policy formulation. Educational institutions must prioritize revising curricula to incorporate practical skills that align with industry demands while also investing in comprehensive support systems, such as mentorship programs, career counseling, and professional development workshops. These support structures help ensure that graduates are well-prepared for long-term career progression. For policymakers, the study highlights the importance of evidence-based policies, such as the "Iskolar ng Bayan" program, which directly contribute to enhancing graduate employability. By continuously refining curricula, strengthening support systems, and promoting data-driven policies, educational institutions and policymakers can collaboratively create a more resilient and adaptable workforce capable of thriving in the rapidly evolving global economy.

5. CONCLUSION

The demographic analysis of Latin honor graduates from RSU underscores their strong potential for academic and professional growth, while also revealing the impact of factors such as age, civil status, and board examination results on employment status. The findings confirm that continuous education and skill development are vital in enhancing employability, emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive approach that considers both academic achievement and personal circumstances. These insights demonstrate the need for holistic assessments that integrate demographic factors to better understand and support the diverse career paths of Latin honor graduates.

The experiences of these graduates highlight the significance of academic excellence, resilience, and alignment with personal aspirations in achieving career success. This study confirms that a strong academic foundation, complemented by ongoing professional development, plays a crucial role in securing permanent employment and fostering long-term career stability. Furthermore, the role of continuous learning in maintaining competitiveness in the job market is evident, reinforcing the value of lifelong professional growth.

Looking ahead, the broader implications of this study suggest that educational institutions should consider more tailored support mechanisms for different demographic groups within their graduate populations. Additionally, future research could benefit from exploring the long-term career progression of Latin honor graduates and the specific impact of various types of continuous learning and professional development programs. By addressing these areas, institutions can better equip their graduates with the resources and support necessary to succeed in an ever-evolving job market, ensuring they are well-prepared for both immediate employment and sustained professional growth.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

This journal uses the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) to recognize individual author contributions, reduce authorship disputes, and facilitate collaboration.

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C : Conceptualization

M : Methodology

So : Software

Va : Validation

Fo : Formal analysis

I : Investigation

R : Resources

D : Data Curation

O : Writing - Original Draft

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The researchers declare that there are no financial, personal, or institutional conflicts of interest that could unduly influence or bias the conduct, analysis, or reporting of this study. While the study involves graduates from Romblon State University (RSU), and the researchers are affiliated with the institution, all efforts have been made to ensure objectivity, integrity, and transparency in data collection, interpretation, and analysis. Measures have been taken to prevent any undue influence from RSU's administration, faculty, or stakeholders in shaping the findings or conclusions of this research. Furthermore, the study adheres to ethical research standards, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, and unbiased data analysis, to ensure the credibility and reliability of the results. Any potential conflicts that may arise during the research process were disclosed and appropriately addressed in accordance with ethical guidelines and institutional policies.

INFORMED CONSENT

The conduct of data collection in this study adheres to the provisions mandated in Data Privacy Act of 2012 or also known as Republic Act 10173 wherein the researchers seek voluntary participation from the respondents to ensure that their data will be collected, processed, and stored securely, ensuring confidentiality and used solely for research purposes.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data supporting the findings of this study are available upon request from the corresponding author, [ERV]. Due to privacy restrictions, raw data containing participant information cannot be publicly shared.

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