Bridging the Gap: Employability Outcomes of State University Graduates in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the employability outcomes of Negros Oriental State University (NORSU) graduates from 2021 to 2024, aiming to understand how curriculum competencies, institutional values, and employer expectations shape career trajectories. Using a mixed-methods design, the research combined a cross-sectional survey with thematic analysis of employer feedback. Data were collected from 1,192 graduates and 74 employers through online and offline questionnaires. Quantitative analysis included frequency counts, weighted means, and Spearman's Rho to explore relationships between curriculum relevance, VMGO alignment, and job performance. Qualitative insights were drawn from open-ended employer comments, analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework. Results showed a high employment rate and strong internalization of VMGO, with employers rating graduates positively in terms of values and general competencies. However, weak correlations between curriculum and job performance indicated gaps in digital literacy, entrepreneurial skills, and program-level alignment. Thematic analysis revealed employer appreciation for graduate attitudes, alongside calls for technical upskilling, broader alumni recognition, and improved feedback mechanisms. The study highlights NORSU's strengths in producing values-driven graduates while identifying areas for strategic reform. Its findings can inform curriculum audits, alumni engagement strategies, and digital tracer improvements— contributing to more responsive, inclusive, and competitive higher education in regional Philippine contexts.

INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the employability outcomes of graduates from Negros Oriental State University (NORSU) between 2021 and 2024, focusing on employment status, job relevance, competencies, and alignment with institutional goals. Using a descriptive-correlational design, it explores how curriculum, skills, and values translate into real-world job performance as perceived by both graduates and employers. The research aims to provide evidence-based insights into how higher education institutions can better prepare students for the evolving demands of the labor market.

Globally, employability has become a critical benchmark for higher education institutions. The 2025 Global Employability University Ranking and Survey (GEURS) highlights that employers now prioritize adaptability, digital fluency, and practical experience over academic credentials alone (*timeshighereducation.com*). Similarly, the 2025 Cengage Group Report reveals that only 30% of graduates secure jobs aligned with their field of study, with nearly half feeling unprepared for entry-level roles due to gaps in job-specific skills (*cengagegroup.com*). These findings highlight a growing disparity between academic training and labor market expectations, prompting calls for closer collaboration between industry and academia, as well as reform of the curriculum. Recent studies highlight a widening gap between higher education outputs and employer expectations, which is exacerbated by technological disruptions and the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

A 2025 tracer study by Reyes et al. on Laguna University graduates found that while most graduates were employed, many held contractual or unrelated positions, reflecting underemployment and skill mismatches. Dela Cruz and Dela Cruz (2023) emphasized the importance of communication, problem-solving, and human relations skills in securing employment among graduate

school alumni in Northern Luzon. Meanwhile, the PATHWAY Project (2024) noted that Filipino employers increasingly value soft skills and practical competencies, yet many graduates lack sufficient exposure to real-world applications (*pathway2employability*).

The study by Tayco, Supat, and Estrope (2022) provided foundational insights into the employability of NORSU graduates from 2016 to 2020, highlighting the role of curriculum and institutional values in shaping job readiness. However, updated data reflecting post-pandemic shifts, digital transitions, and employer expectations remain scarce. This study addresses that gap by analyzing a broader and more recent cohort (2021–2024), incorporating employer feedback and correlational analysis to assess the relevance of the curriculum and its impact on job performance.

This research aims to assess the employability of NORSU graduates from 2021 to 2024 by examining employment status, job relevance, competencies acquired, and alignment with the university's Vision, Mission, Goals, and Objectives (VMGOs). It also seeks to determine the relationship between curriculum design and job performance, as perceived by employers. Ultimately, the study aspires to inform institutional strategies, curriculum development, and policy reforms that enhance graduate readiness and workforce integration.

METHODOLOGY

This descriptive study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to comprehensively assess the employability, employment outcomes, and personal profiles of Negros Oriental State University (NORSU) graduates from the 2021–2024 batch. A cross-sectional survey design was used to collect data from a census of graduates, aiming to minimize non-response bias. Data collection was conducted through both online (Google Forms) and offline (printed questionnaires delivered personally or via courier) methods to ensure accessibility and inclusivity across campuses and geographic locations.

The study utilized two structured questionnaires—one for graduates and another for employers—adapted from the instrument developed by Tayco, Supat, and Estrope (2022), which focused on the employability of state university graduates in the Philippines. The quantitative component involved descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, and weighted means to summarize graduate profiles and employment outcomes. Correlation analysis was applied to examine the relationships between curriculum and competencies, the manifestation of
NORSU's Vision, Mission, Goals, and Objectives (VMGOs), and job performance as perceived by employers.

To enrich the numerical findings, the study also incorporated a qualitative component through open-ended responses from employers. These comments were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework, which enabled the identification of recurring patterns and provided more profound insights into employer perceptions. This integration of quantitative and qualitative data provided a more holistic understanding of graduate employability, highlighting both measurable outcomes and contextual nuances that inform institutional improvements and policy recommendations.

Background of the Respondents Table
NORSU graduate demographics reveal strong female representation, youth mobility, and skill-based credentials that support employability; yet, rural disparities and gender gaps persist.

Table 1. Background of the Respondents

Variables	N	%
Gender Male		
	451	37.84
Female	739	61.99
Others (Gay)	2	0.17
Marital Status Single		
	1120	93.96
Married	71	5.96
Others (Widowed)	1	0.08
Educational Attainment (Baccalaureate Degree) CAS		
	171	14.35
CAFF	93	7.80
CBA	270	22.65
CCJE	143	12.00
CEA	82	6.88
CIT	198	16.61
CNPAHS	42	3.52
CTE	193	16.19

Year Graduated 2024	238	19.97
2023	416	34.90
2022	432	36.24
2021	106	8.89
Campus		
Main Campus 1 & 2 and Pamplona Campus	522	43.79
BSC	299	25.08
Siaton	70	5.87
Mabinay	121	10.15
Bais	70	5.87
Guihulngan	110	9.23
Honor(s) or Award Received Academic Honor	1	0.61
Special Academic Award	39	23.93
Leadership Award	8	4.91
Other Awards: *Dean's List*	41	25.15
Presidential Academic/Technology Award	67	41.10
Most Proficient	4	2.45
Service Award	3	1.84
Professional Examinations /National Certifications Passed: Licensure Exam - PRC	200	64.52
National Certificate – TESDA	50	16.13
Civil Service	60	19.35

N = 1,192

Table 1 presents a detailed demographic profile of 1,192 graduates from Negros Oriental State University (NORSU), covering cohorts from 2021 to 2024. These data offer valuable insights into how age, gender, academic background, and location influence employment outcomes in a regional Philippine setting.

The gender distribution shows a clear female majority (61.99%), consistent with national trends in higher education, where women comprise over 60% of enrollees and graduates. While female graduates often outperform their male counterparts in academic completion, they still face challenges in entering male-dominated fields, such as engineering and management, where wage gaps and limited leadership roles persist (Perez et al., 2025). This imbalance affects employability, as women may rely more on local networks but face systemic barriers in specific industries.

Most respondents are single (93.96%), aged 21–25, reflecting a young and mobile workforce. Being unmarried often allows graduates to pursue opportunities more freely, which can lead to quicker job placement and advancement. However, in economically constrained areas like Negros Oriental, this mobility may be limited by financial instability or lack of access to urban job markets (Gumba, 2022)

Academic diversity is evident across colleges, with the College of Business and Accountancy (22.65%) and College of Industrial Technology (16.61%) leading. These programs align with the province's growing business and industrial sectors, which tend to absorb graduates more quickly than those in agriculture or humanities tracks (*edcom2.gov.ph*). Studies show that business and industrial graduates in the Philippines have higher employment rates within six months of graduation (*www.pathway2employability.eu*).

Graduation year data highlights the impact of the pandemic, with the majority of graduates from 2022 and 2023. These cohorts faced delayed job entry and heightened competition, yet may have developed resilience and digital adaptability, traits increasingly valued by employers (Amahan et al. 2024).)

Campus affiliation reveals urban-rural disparities. Graduates from Main Campus 1 & 2 (43.71%) benefit from better access to resources and job placement services, while those from satellite campuses often face limited local opportunities. This pattern reflects broader challenges in rural employability, where geographic isolation can hinder career growth. *(www.pathway2employability.eu).*

Recognition and certifications boost employability. Among a subset of respondents, 41.1% received Presidential Academic/Technology Awards, and 64.52% passed the PRC licensure exam. These credentials are crucial for regulated professions and correlate with faster job placement and higher public sector employment (*www.statista.com*). According to CHED's 2022 tracer study, graduates with certifications are 25% more likely to secure stable jobs (*www.pna.gov.ph*).

Overall, NORSU graduates are predominantly young, female, and credentialed, traits that support employability. However, gender equity programs and rural outreach remain essential for addressing persistent gaps and ensuring inclusive career development.

Employment Data Table

NORSU graduates exhibit strong employment rates and rapid job acquisition, but face challenges in job relevance, stability, and underemployment—trends that mirror national and regional trends.

Table 2. Employment Data

Presently Employed		
Yes	935	78.44
No	257	21.56
Type of Company/Organization		
Private	683	73.05
Government	238	25.45
NGO	14	1.50
Reason (s) why you are not yet employed. You may check (/) more than one answer.		
Advance or further study	49	18.63
The family was concerned and decided not to find a job	59	22.43
Health-related reason (s)	13	4.94
Lack of work experience	49	18.63
No job opportunity	53	20.15
Did not look for a job	32	12.17
Other reason (s): *End of contract*	3	1.14
Resigned / Quit	5	1.90
Present Employment Status		
Regular or Permanent	482	46.39
Contractual	270	25.99
Temporary	148	14.24
Self-employed	93	8.95
Casual	33	3.18
Other reason (s): *Online / Freelance*	13	1.25
Place of Work:		
Local	959	97.26
Abroad	27	2.74
Is this your first job after college		
Yes	584	55.04
No	477	44.96
Reasons for staying on the job? You may check (√) more than one answer.		
Salaries and benefits	408	27.96
Career challenge	314	21.52
Related to a special skill	219	15.01
Related to the course or program of study	262	17.96
Proximity to residence	128	8.77
Peer influence	40	2.74
Family influence	68	4.66
Other reason (s): *Return of Service*	11	0.75
No other choice	4	0.27
Working Environment	5	0.34

Is your first job related to the course you took up in college?

Yes	544	50.42
No	527	48.84
Maybe/Partly	8	0.74

Your reasons for accepting the job? You may check (/) more than one answer.

Salaries and benefits	576	32.11
Career challenge	428	23.86
Related to special skills	407	22.69
Proximity to residence	10	0.56
Other reason (s): *No other choice*	2	0.11
Related to the course or program of study	369	20.57
Breadwinner	2	0.11

Your reasons for changing jobs? You may check (/) more than one answer.

Salaries and benefits	480	37.53
Career challenge	302	23.61
Related to special skills	196	15.32
Proximity to residence	113	8.84
Other reason (s): *Business*	5	0.39
Related to the course or program of study	156	12.20
End of contract	5	0.39
Irregular duties	1	0.08
Personal Reason	11	0.86
Experience	4	0.31
Health Reason	6	0.47

How long did you stay in your first job?

Less than a month	52	5.28
1 year to less than 2 years	258	26.19
1 to 6 months	353	35.84
2 years to less than 3 years	137	13.91
7 to 11 months	125	12.69
3 years to less than 4 years	51	5.18
Others, please specify: *4 years and above*	9	0.91

How did you find your first job?

Response to an advertisement	160	12.68
As a walk-in applicant	358	28.37
Recommended by someone	438	34.71
Information from friends	202	16.01
Arranged by the school's job placement officer	23	1.82
Family business	34	2.69
Job Fair or Public Employment Service Office (PESO)	31	2.46
Others, please specify: *Absorbed from OJT*	11	0.87
Elected	5	0.40

How long did it take you to land your first job?

Less than a month	531	51.30
1 year to less than 2 years	79	7.63
1 to 6 months	337	32.56
2 years to less than 3 years	16	1.55
7 to 11 months	50	4.83
3 years to less than 4 years	12	1.16
Others, please specify: *1 week*	10	0.97

Job Level Position		
Rank or Clerical	175	17.31
Professional, Technical, or Supervisory	748	73.99
Managerial or Executive	13	1.29
Self-employed	75	7.42

The employment data of 1,192 NORSU graduates from 2021 to 2024 reveals a promising yet uneven transition into the workforce. A total of 78.44% are employed, exceeding the national average of 65–70% for recent college graduates in the Philippines (*www.ceicdata.com*). This reflects the university's emphasis on vocational and skill-based programs, which are increasingly aligned with labor market needs.

Most employed graduates (73.05%) work in the private sector, followed by government (25.45%) and NGOs (1.5%). This pattern is consistent with global trends in developing countries, where private firms dominate youth hiring due to their flexibility and rapid growth. (*www.ilo.org*). However, government roles remain attractive for their stability, especially in rural economies like Negros Oriental.

Unemployment reasons highlight structural barriers, including family decisions (22.43%), lack of opportunities (20.15%), gaps in further studies and experience (18.63% each), and health concerns (4.94%). These reflect broader issues of underemployment and job mismatch in the Philippines, where 38.2% of unemployed Filipinos are college graduates, often working in roles unrelated to their degrees (*www.onenews.ph*).

Job stability varies widely; only 46.39% hold permanent positions, while the rest are in contractual (25.99%), temporary (14.24%), self-employed (8.95%), casual (3.18%), or freelance (1.25%) roles. This precarious landscape is typical in rural areas, where informal employment sustains over 60% of youth workers (cids.up.edu.ph).

Most graduates (97.26%) work locally, with only 2.74% employed abroad. This suggests strong regional retention, likely due to family ties and limited migration resources. However, it also limits exposure to higher-paying international opportunities.

Job relevance is split: 50.42% say their first job matched their college course, while 48.84% did not. This mismatch is a common issue in developing countries, where curriculum updates lag behind industry demands (www.statista.com).

Despite this, job acquisition is rapid; 51.3% found work in less than a month, often through personal networks, such as referrals (34.7%) and walk-ins (28.3%), rather than formal school placements (1.8%) (*everythingatwork.com*).

Retention is driven by salaries (27.96%) and career challenges (21.52%), while job changes are primarily due to better pay (37.53%). These motivations reflect a pragmatic approach to employment, where financial stability and growth opportunities take precedence over loyalty or alignment with academic training.

Most graduates enter professional or technical roles (73.99%), indicating mid-level entry points into the workforce. While this demonstrates NORSU's success in preparing graduates for immediate employment, the data also highlights the need for more substantial curriculum alignment, digital upskilling, and career support to mitigate turnover and underemployment.

Curriculum and Competencies Table

NORSU's curriculum demonstrates strong job relevance and soft skill development; however, gaps in entrepreneurship and digital readiness suggest areas for improvement.

Table 3. Curriculum and Competencies

Variables	N	%
Was the curriculum you had in college relevant to your job?		
Yes	795	74.30
No	270	25.23
Maybe	5	0.47
Did the competencies learned in college prove instrumental in your job? check (/) more than one answer.	**You**	**may**
Communication skills	760	26.40
Human Relations skills	563	19.56
Entrepreneurial skills	299	10.39
Problem-solving skills	613	21.29
Critical Thinking skills	633	21.99
Other skills, please specify: *Technical Skills*	7	0.24
Leadership Skills	4	0.14
N = 1,192		

Table 3 highlights how NORSU graduates perceive the usefulness of their college curriculum in preparing them for employment. A solid 74.3% of respondents say their curriculum was relevant to their job, while 25.23% found it unrelated and 0.47% were unsure. This result is notably higher than the national average, where only 40–60% of graduates believe their education aligns with job demands, often due to outdated course content and limited practical experience (Reyes et al., 2025).

The data support NORSU's focus on applied learning, especially in technical programs, which helps graduates adapt quickly to workplace expectations. However, the real strength lies in developing soft skills. Among 2,879 responses on functional competencies, communication skills ranked highest (26.4%), followed by critical thinking (21.99%), problem-solving (21.29%), and human relations (19.56%). These skills are increasingly valued by employers, with studies showing that Filipino companies prioritize soft skills over technical expertise, particularly in roles that require teamwork, adaptability, and emotional intelligence (*ph.jobstreet.com*).

Despite these strengths, entrepreneurial skills were cited by only 10.39% of respondents, revealing a gap in innovation readiness. This is concerning, given that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) comprise 99.5% of businesses in the Philippines, and entrepreneurship is a key driver of local economic growth, as noted by Reyes et al. (2025). The low uptake suggests that NORSU's curriculum could benefit from integrating more business incubation, startup exposure, or innovation modules.

Philippine tracer studies also indicate that communication gaps contribute to up to 30% of hiring challenges; however, NORSU's emphasis on cognitive skills appears to mitigate this barrier, resulting in improved job retention by up to 20% (Dela Cruz & Dela Cruz, 2023). Still, the mismatch between theory and practice remains a concern. Experts recommend experiential learning strategies—such as internships, capstone projects, and industry immersion—to better align academic training with real-world expectations (Saquin, 2023).

To remain relevant, NORSU must continue to engage stakeholders—employers, alumni, and curriculum experts—to integrate digital and green competencies into its programs. These emerging skill sets are essential for graduates to thrive in fast-changing industries and contribute meaningfully to sustainable development.

Manifestation of Negros Oriental State University VMGOs Table

NORSU graduates strongly affirm the university's values and mission goals, showing that institutional values are well-embedded—but aligning objectives with global standards could further enhance their impact.

Table 4. Manifestation of Negros Oriental State University VMGO's

Variables	WM	Verbal Description
Vision	4.60	Strongly Agree
Mission	4.60	Strongly Agree
Goals	4.60	Strongly Agree
Corporate Values/Core Values/Graduate Attributes	4.60	Strongly Agree
Course/Program Objectives	4.56	Strongly Agree

Legend: 5   *4.21 – 5.00 Strongly Agree*
         4   *3.41 – 4.20 Agree*
         3   *2.61 – 3.40 Neutral / Neither Agree nor Disagree*
         2   *1.81 – 2.60 Disagree*
         1   *1.00 – 1.80 Strongly Disagree*

Table 4 shows that NORSU graduates consistently rated their agreement with the university's Vision, Mission, Goals, and Objectives (VMGOs) as "Strongly Agree", with weighted means of 4.6 for Vision, Mission, Goals, and Core Values, and 4.56 for Course/Program Objectives. This suggests that institutional values are clearly communicated and internalized, contributing to graduates' sense of purpose, ethical grounding, and professional identity.

Such strong alignment is essential. Studies show that clear and well-disseminated VMGOs can improve student motivation, academic engagement, and institutional pride by 10–15% (Limama et al., 2025). In Philippine state universities, VMGO awareness has also been linked to 20% higher satisfaction and more substantial alignment between student goals and institutional services. NORSU's high scores likely reflect the effectiveness of strategies such as orientation programs, visible campus signage, and the integration of VMGOs into course syllabi and assessments. These practices help students connect their academic journey with broader institutional goals, fostering holistic development.

However, the slightly lower score for program objectives (4.56) suggests room for improvement. This may indicate that while students understand the university's broader mission, they may not fully see how their specific courses or programs contribute to those goals. Periodic curriculum reviews and stakeholder consultations, including input from alumni and employers, can help ensure that program objectives remain relevant and aligned with both institutional values and evolving industry needs (Sanchez, 2025)

To stay competitive, NORSU may also consider integrating global competencies—such as digital literacy, sustainability, and intercultural communication—into its VMGO framework. These additions would prepare graduates for dynamic labor markets and reinforce the university's commitment to producing globally competent professionals.

Employer's Background Table

Most employers of NORSU graduates are local, supporting community-based hiring, but limited global exposure may hinder skill growth and competitiveness.

Tables 5. Employer's Background

Variables	N	%
Place of Company		
Local	71	95.95
Abroad	3	4.05

N = 74

Table 5 shows that 95.95% of employers hiring NORSU graduates are based in the Philippines, while only 4.05% are international. This strong local orientation reflects the reality of rural regions like Negros Oriental, where proximity, cultural familiarity, and cost efficiency drive hiring decisions. Local employment helps graduates stay close to their families and contribute to community development. However, it also limits access to higher-paying jobs abroad, which can offer incomes two to three times higher than domestic roles (*www.statista.com*).

This pattern is typical in provincial economies, where the business and industrial sectors are dominant, and local firms tend to prefer hiring graduates from nearby universities. While this supports regional retention and reduces migration, it may also lead to skill stagnation, especially if graduates lack exposure to global standards, technologies, or diverse work environments (*www.pathway2employability.eu*).

To address this, experts recommend hybrid models that combine local employment with global engagement. For example, virtual internships, remote work opportunities, and international collaborations can help graduates build competitive skills without leaving their communities. These approaches are especially relevant in the post-pandemic era, where digital platforms have made cross-border work more accessible (*impact.economist.com*).

For NORSU, this means strengthening partnerships with both local and international employers, integrating global competencies into the curriculum, and promoting programs that prepare students for remote or hybrid work. Doing so can help graduates remain locally rooted while becoming globally competitive.

Job Performance of NORSU Graduates

Employers rate NORSU graduates highly in terms of values, knowledge, and soft skills; however, digital and commercial competencies require strengthening to meet global standards.

Table 6. Job Performance of NORSU Graduates

Variables	WM	Verbal Description
Attitude and Values		
Individual Values	4.46	Strongly Agree
Professional Values	4.51	Strongly Agree
Commercial Attitude and Understanding	4.32	Strongly Agree
Self-Sufficiency and Self-Career Management	4.42	Strongly Agree
Digital Literacies	4.35	Strongly Agree
Skills and Competencies		
Transferable Skills	4.43	Strongly Agree
Communication/Interpersonal Skills	4.35	Strongly Agree
Tactile/Technical Skills	4.41	Strongly Agree
General Skills	4.43	Strongly Agree
Manual/Physical Skills	4.41	Strongly Agree
Knowledge		
Understanding Skills	4.51	Strongly Agree

Job Knowledge/Skills	4.34	Strongly Agree
Critical Thinking Skills	4.38	Strongly Agree
Initiative/Problem-solving Skills	4.46	Strongly Agree
Work Habits	4.46	Strongly Agree

Legend: *5   4.21 – 5.00 Strongly Agree*
4   3.41 – 4.20 Agree
3   2.61 – 3.40 Neutral / Neither Agree nor Disagree
2   1.81 – 2.60 Disagree
1   1.00 – 1.80 Strongly Disagree

Table 6 presents employer feedback on the job performance of NORSU graduates, with an average rating of 4.4 out of 5, indicating strong agreement with positive traits. Employers especially praised Understanding Skills (4.51) and Professional Values (4.51), followed by Initiative (4.46) and Transferable Skills (4.43). These scores reflect graduates' strengths in ethics, adaptability, and general workplace readiness.

However, lower ratings in Commercial Attitude (4.32) and Digital Literacies (4.35) suggest areas for improvement. These competencies are increasingly important in today's job market, where employers seek graduates who can navigate digital tools and understand business dynamics. A 2025 JobStreet Report found that 80% of Philippine employers prioritize soft skills, but also expect basic digital fluency and entrepreneurial thinking for long-term growth (*ph.jobstreet.com*).

NORSU's strong performance in values and interpersonal skills aligns well with regional expectations, especially in community-based or service-oriented roles. However, compared to global benchmarks, the university may lag in preparing students for tech-driven industries and commercial environments. This gap can impact employability in sectors such as e-commerce, digital marketing, and remote work, where digital skills are now considered essential for success.

To address this, NORSU could strengthen its curriculum through partnerships with industry, the development of digital training modules, and entrepreneurship programs. Studies show that competency-based reforms can increase graduate hiring rates by up to 25%, especially when aligned with employer needs and market trends. Embedding real-world business scenarios, startup simulations, and tech certifications into academic programs can help graduates become more versatile and competitive.

Correlation Analysis on the Curriculum and Competencies to Manifestation of NORSU VMGOs, and Job Performance of NORSU Graduates

Correlation analysis reveals weak links between the curriculum, VMGOs, and job performance, highlighting the need for better alignment and more comprehensive data tracking.

Table 7. *Correlation Analysis on the Curriculum and Competencies to Manifestation of NORSU VMGOs, and Job Performance of NORSU Graduates*

Relationship	Spearman's Rho (ρ)	pvalue	Significance (α=0.05)	Interpretation
Curriculum & Competencies and Manifestation of NORSU VMGOs	-0.35	0.56	No	Weak inverse, nonmonotonic
Curriculum & Competencies, and Job Performance of NORSU Graduates	0.46	0.43	No	Modest positive, non-significant

Note:
1. If p-value ≤ 0.05, Reject Ho. There is sufficient evidence to support the claim.
2. If p-value > 0.05, Fail to reject Ho. There is no sufficient evidence to support the claim.

To explore the relationship between NORSU's curriculum competencies, graduates' understanding of the university's Vision, Mission, Goals, and Objectives (VMGOs), and their job performance, the study applied Spearman's Rho, which is commonly used in tracer studies, especially when data do not follow a normal distribution, making it ideal for analyzing graduate feedback. The analysis focused on five core competencies: communication, human relations, entrepreneurial, problem-solving, and critical thinking, and compared them with VMGO alignment scores and employer-rated job performance indicators.

The results revealed non-significant correlations, indicating no strong or consistent pattern between how graduates rated the usefulness of their competencies and how well they embodied VMGOs or performed in the workplace. Several factors may explain this weak correlation: the VMGO scores were uniformly high (ranging from 4.56 to 4.60), which limited variation and made it difficult to detect meaningful differences; the use of aggregated data may have masked individual or program-level patterns; and sample limitations, such as small subgroup sizes and uneven representation across disciplines, may have affected the results. Despite these limitations, the findings suggest that while NORSU's curriculum is generally effective, there are opportunities better to connect competencies with institutional values and job readiness.

To strengthen these links, NORSU could embed entrepreneurial thinking into missiondriven learning outcomes and consider strategies such as longitudinal tracking of graduates to monitor how competencies evolve, conducting program-level audits to identify alignment gaps, and engaging stakeholders—including employers, alumni, and faculty—in the refinement of the curriculum. Research shows that aligning academic programs with institutional goals and labor market needs can significantly improve graduate outcomes, including job satisfaction, retention, and performance (CHED, 2023; PIDS, 2023). These steps would help ensure that NORSU's mission is not only well understood but also effectively applied in real-world settings.

Correlation Analysis on the Manifestation of NORSU VMGOs and Job Performance of NORSU Graduates

Correlation analysis indicates that VMGO values support graduate performance; however, high scores and limited variation may mask stronger links, suggesting that NORSU refine its program-level integration.

Table 8. Correlation Analysis on the Manifestation of NORSU VMGOs and Job Performance of NORSU Graduates

Relationship	Spearman's Rho (ρ)	pvalue Significance (α=0.05)		Interpretation
Manifestation of NORSU VMGOs and Job Performance of NORSU Graduates	0.35	0.56	No	Slight positive, nonsignificant

Note:
1. If p-value ≤ 0.05, Reject Ho. There is sufficient evidence to support the claim.
2. If p-value > 0.05, Fail to reject Ho. There is no sufficient evidence to support the claim.

To explore the relationship between NORSU's institutional values and graduate job performance, the study employed Spearman's Rho, a statistical method well-suited for analyzing data such as Likert-scale ratings. Five VMGO indicators (Vision, Mission, Goals, Core Values, and Objectives) were compared with five job performance traits (e.g., Professional Values, SelfSufficiency), using weighted means from Tables 4 and 6.

The results showed directional but non-significant correlations, meaning that while VMGO alignment and job performance moved in the same direction, the relationship was not strong enough to be statistically confirmed. This is likely due to score compression; VMGO ratings were uniformly high (4.56–4.6), leaving little room for variation and making it hard to detect meaningful differences.

This pattern is typical in self-reported tracer studies, where respondents tend to rate institutional values positively, especially when they feel a strong sense of loyalty to their alma mater. However, the modest correlation still suggests that VMGOs play a foundational role in shaping graduate behavior, particularly in areas like ethics, initiative, and professionalism.

In the Philippine context, studies show that VMGO awareness can improve job outcomes by 10–20%, especially when values are clearly linked to course content and workplace expectations (Sanchez, 2025; ICCEPH, 2024). The weak correlation in this study highlights the need for program-specific integration, ensuring that each academic discipline aligns its learning outcomes with the university's broader mission.

Future research could utilize mediation models to investigate how competencies (e.g., communication, problem-solving) serve as bridges between internalization of VMGO and job performance. This approach has been shown to reveal stronger links in other Philippine universities, especially when data is disaggregated by campus or program.

For NORSU, this means refining how VMGOs are taught and assessed—moving beyond general orientations to discipline-specific applications that help students see how institutional values translate into workplace success.

Thematic Analysis for Comments from the Employers

Thematic analysis of employer feedback offers a rich qualitative layer to the tracer study, revealing how NORSU graduates are perceived beyond numerical ratings. Using Braun and

Clarke's six-phase framework, the analysis distilled from employer responses into four major themes. These themes not only reflect employer sentiments but also provide actionable insights for enhancing curriculum, promoting alumni engagement, and improving institutional responsiveness.

Theme 1: Positive Endorsement and Satisfaction

Employers consistently praised NORSU graduates for their professionalism, reliability, and ethical values. Comments like "Good employee" and "You did a great job!" reflect appreciation for graduates' soft skills and workplace attitude. These traits are increasingly valued in Philippine workplaces, where employers prioritize character and adaptability over technical mastery (*ph.jobstreet.com*).

This theme validates NORSU's emphasis on VMGO integration, showing that institutional values are translating into real-world performance. However, the modest volume of praise (20%) may suggest that while employers are satisfied, they may not feel compelled to elaborate unless prompted. Future surveys could include open-ended prompts that invite more profound reflections on graduate strengths.

Theme 2: Calls for Skill and Competency Enhancements

This theme reveals gaps in practical skills, especially in communication, digital literacy, and applied knowledge. Employers noted the need for training in tools such as CAD, Excel, and Google Sheets, as well as the development of stronger critical thinking and work ethic. These concerns align with findings from CHED's 2022 report, which found that 30–40% of employers cited skill mismatches due to outdated curricula and limited hands-on experience.

For NORSU, this feedback underscores the importance of expanding OJT programs, integrating workplace simulations, and embedding digital tools into coursework. Doing so could increase employability by 10–25%, especially in competitive fields such as engineering, business, and IT.

Theme 3: Feedback on Institutional Recognition and Alumni Support

A few employers expressed disappointment over the lack of recognition for alumni achievements, particularly those who excel outside of licensure exams. This theme highlights a gap in inclusive alumni engagement, where only those who pass the board receive public acknowledgment.

In Philippine higher education, alumni visibility is linked to stronger institutional branding and graduate advocacy, which can influence job placement and employer trust (Sanchez, 2025). NORSU could benefit from celebrating the diverse successes of its alumni, including leadership awards, national recognitions, and community impact stories. This would foster pride and strengthen the alumni network.

Theme 4: Suggestions for Survey and Process Improvements

Employers offered thoughtful feedback on the survey design, suggesting individualized ratings, clearer job relevance indicators, and more granular data collection. These suggestions align with UNESCO's tracer study guidelines, which recommend the use of modular and customizable instruments to enhance response quality and stakeholder engagement (unesdoc.unesco.org).

Future tracer studies could explore digital platforms that enable post-graduate evaluations, campus-specific feedback, and real-time analytics, such as those used by NORSU. This would enhance data precision and support targeted interventions across programs and campuses.

Implications for NORSU

The thematic analysis reveals a narrative of qualified optimism. Employers value the strong work ethic and professional values of NORSU graduates, but they also highlight areas for improvement, particularly in technical skills, alumni recognition, and feedback mechanisms. These insights point to several strategic reforms that the university can pursue, including competency-based workshops tailored to employer needs, expanded alumni recognition programs across disciplines, digital tracer platforms for richer and more timely feedback, and curriculum audits to better align technical training with current industry tools. By triangulating employer feedback with graduate data, NORSU is well-positioned to co-design reforms that not only sustain high performance ratings but also address regional disparities and enhance global competitiveness.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the employability outcomes of Negros Oriental State University (NORSU) graduates from 2021 to 2024, integrating quantitative survey data and qualitative employer feedback. With an employment rate of 78.44%, NORSU graduates demonstrate strong integration into the workforce, particularly in the private sector. Most respondents found their curriculum to be relevant to their jobs, and employers rated graduates highly in terms of values, communication, and general competencies. However, gaps in digital literacy, applied technical skills, and entrepreneurial readiness were identified, suggesting the need for curriculum updates and expanded experiential learning opportunities.

Correlation analyses revealed weak but directional links between curriculum competencies, VMGO alignment, and job performance. While graduates strongly internalized
NORSU's institutional values, the uniformity of responses limited statistical significance. These findings highlight the importance of refining program-level objectives and embedding global competencies, such as digital fluency and sustainability, into academic offerings. Employer feedback further emphasized the need for targeted upskilling, inclusive alumni recognition, and improved survey mechanisms to capture nuanced performance insights.

Overall, the study affirms NORSU's strengths in producing values-driven, employable graduates while identifying areas for strategic improvement. Recommendations include enhancing industry partnerships, integrating competency-based reforms, and adopting digital tracer platforms for individualized feedback. By aligning curriculum, institutional values, and employer expectations, NORSU can sustain graduate competitiveness and foster institutional agility in a dynamic labor market.

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