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Alignment of Workforce Competencies of Marketing Management Graduates in the Philippines: Evidence for Academia and Industry

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the alignment of workforce competencies of Bachelor of Science in Business Administration major in Marketing Management graduates of North Eastern Mindanao State University, Philippines, with the competencies used in their current employment. Using a quantitative descriptive tracer-study design, data were obtained through a structured survey from 151 traced graduates from the 2022 to 2024 cohorts, drawn from 172 target graduates. The study described graduates' socio-demographic profile, workforce status, job level, income category, professional eligibility, and the usefulness and workplace application of generic, specific, and marketing-related competencies. Results showed that most respondents were female, single, and within the 25-27 age bracket, while most had no professional eligibility. The majority were employed in the private sector, but many remained in rank-and-file or clerical positions and lower income bands. Competency ratings indicated strong perceived usefulness and application of generic skills and marketing-related skills, particularly market research, communication, brand management, team collaboration, and human relations. However, lower ratings were observed in technical areas such as web development, bookkeeping, digital marketing, and data interpretation. Chi-square results showed that eligibility was significantly associated with employment status and job level/promotion, while age was significantly associated with job level/promotion. Correlation results further indicated that generic skills were significantly related to employment status, while marketing-related skills were significantly related to job level/promotion. The findings suggest that the marketing curriculum provides a strong foundation in transferable and core marketing competencies, but requires further strengthening in digital marketing, analytics, web-based tools, and applied technical skills. The study offers evidence for curriculum enhancement, career development programming, professional certification support, and stronger academia-industry collaboration in marketing education.

Keywords: Curriculum Alignment, Graduate Employability, Marketing Management Graduates, Tracer Study, Workforce Competencies
JEL Classifications: M31, M51, J24, I23, A22

1. INTRODUCTION

The alignment between higher education outcomes and workforce requirements has become a central issue in management and marketing education. Workforce competencies refer to the knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and behaviors that graduates need to perform effectively in professional roles. In a labor market shaped by technological change, digitalization, service innovation, and shifting employer expectations, graduates must be prepared not only to obtain employment but also to adapt, progress, and contribute meaningfully in the workplace.

Marketing Management education is particularly affected by these changes. Marketing graduates are expected to understand consumers, interpret markets, communicate value, manage brands, support sales strategies, use digital channels, analyze data, and coordinate with teams across functional areas. Thus, the quality of

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marketing education can be assessed not only through completion rates or academic performance but also through the extent to which graduates use and apply program-acquired competencies in employment.

In the Philippine higher education context, tracer studies provide relevant evidence for evaluating program outcomes. They allow higher education institutions to examine employment trajectories, job relevance, career progression, competency application, and possible gaps between curriculum content and workplace demands. For state universities serving regional labor markets, tracer evidence is especially important because graduate outcomes may be shaped by local economic conditions, availability of professional opportunities, public-sector credential requirements, and the readiness of industries to absorb graduates. Abella et al. (2024) posited that tracer studies are essential for assessing the efficacy of educational programs by documenting graduates' employment status, challenges, and skill application. Similarly, Fajaryati et al. (2020) highlighted that employers' highly value employability skills such as communication, problem-solving, and adaptability. Timiyo and Sriram (2021), schooling is a vital investment in human capital development, and advanced graduate programs are likely to boost individuals' knowledge and abilities to be competent at work. In addition, Woya (2019) highlighted that graduate tracer studies can provide pertinent and beneficial information for assessing the outcomes of education and training at a specific institution of higher education. These studies suggest that evaluating workforce competencies through graduate feedback can lead to more responsive and adaptive curriculum development in higher education institutions.

This study focuses on BSBA Marketing Management graduates of North Eastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU) Main Campus from academic years 2022 to 2024. These cohorts entered the labor market during a period of transition from pandemic-related learning conditions to more hybrid, digital, and competency-driven workplaces. Their employment outcomes and competency use therefore provide timely evidence on the responsiveness of marketing education to changing academic and industry requirements. The study identifies a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application and skills gap among marketing graduates, emphasizing the need for enhanced curriculum integration of career preparation and networking opportunities to improve workforce readiness and align with real-world job demands (Abir et al., 2024).

Specifically, the study determines the socio-demographic and workforce profile of graduates; assesses the competencies learned from the program that were considered useful in their current jobs; evaluates the competencies acquired from the program that were applied in the workplace; and tests the relationship between profile variables, workforce status, and competency categories. The study contributes to academia by generating evidence for curriculum review and program improvement, and to industry by identifying the competencies that support employability and career advancement among marketing graduates.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Workforce Competencies of Graduates

Competency development in higher education is widely regarded as a foundation for graduate employability and career success (Varma and Malik, 2023). Competencies include observable capabilities such as knowledge and technical skills, as well as underlying attributes such as attitudes, motives, habits, and behaviors that influence workplace performance (Pang et al., 2018). This concept extends beyond technical abilities and expertise for a specific role to include personal qualities and behaviors that enhance effectiveness in the workplace. In business education, this means that graduates must possess both discipline-specific competencies and transferable skills that allow them to work productively in varied organizational settings. The work skills of graduates play a crucial and significant role, not only in assessing the quality of graduates produced by educational institutions but also in a broader sense, (Rahmaningtyas et al., 2023). They ensure that industries receive competent workers who meet their needs, thus creating an efficient and enjoyable work environment (Shariff and Abd Razak, 2022). These facts emphasizes that tertiary institutions play a key role in fostering competency through coursework, practical training, and collaborative projects (Kenayathulla et al., 2019). These experiences help students apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts and assess their readiness for the workforce (Berger-Estilita et al., 2022).

Recent literature emphasizes that industries need graduates who can communicate effectively, solve problems, collaborate, adapt, think critically, and use digital tools. In the Philippines, discussions on workforce readiness have increasingly pointed to transversal competencies (Bernardo et al., 2023), technological literacy, adaptability, leadership, and resilience as important responses to skills mismatch (Lopez, 2025) and changing job demands. Tamaray (2024) of DOLE led mapping of workforce competency and identified key gaps include digital skills, STEM, critical thinking, green skills, and entrepreneurship. These competencies are especially relevant to marketing graduates because marketing roles increasingly require both human-centered and technology-enabled capabilities.

Tracer studies serve as practical tools for identifying whether graduates have acquired competencies that are useful in employment. They also help institutions detect areas where graduates perform strongly and areas where curriculum enhancement is needed. The current study extends this logic by examining whether the competencies learned from the BSBA Marketing Management program are related to graduates' workforce status.

- H_1: There is no significant relationship between the respondents' workforce status and the competencies learned from the program that were very useful in the current job.

2.2. Workforce Competencies in Higher Education

Higher education institutions are expected to prepare graduates for the demands of the labor market through coursework, practical

learning, research, internships, and industry collaboration. The challenge is not simply to transmit theoretical knowledge, but to help students apply this knowledge in real workplace situations (Adegbite et al., 2025). It is crucial in determining the program's relevance and effectiveness as posited by Hinayon et al. (2024). Moreover, Varma and Malik (2023) believed that competency development in higher education is essential for preparing students to succeed in their careers. For marketing programs, this requires a balance between foundational business knowledge, marketing strategy, customer analysis, brand management, selling, communication, digital marketing, and data-informed decision-making.

One of the main issues facing academicians today is how to connect college degrees and employability (Vicera et al., 2023). A nation's economy depends on the people's knowledge and talents (Alferez et al., 2023; Amihan and Sanchez, 2023; Carvajal and Sanchez, 2023; Muńoz and Sanchez, 2023). With external investment, technological advancements, and globalization, the skill requirements change. People need to have the knowledge and skills necessary to be productive and make a good livelihood in order to keep up with change, and the only way to do this is through education (Salendab, 2021; Salendab, 2023; Salendab and Akmad, 2023; Sanchez, 2023; Sanchez and Sarmiento, 2020; Sanchez et al., 2022).

The literature on graduate employability shows that employers continue to value communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, and critical thinking. However, marketing work has become more technical and analytics-driven (Alrifai and Raju, 2019). Cabutotan (2025) assessed those competencies in digital marketing, web platforms, customer data, marketing analytics, and content management are increasingly important. This makes curriculum alignment a continuing concern for business schools (Achim et al., 2021), particularly when graduates report strong generic capabilities but relatively weaker technical and specialized competencies.

In the context of NEMSU Marketing Management graduates, it is necessary to determine whether competencies acquired from the program are actually applied in current work. Application is a stronger indicator of curriculum relevance because it shows whether academic preparation translates into workplace use. The following hypothesis was therefore tested.

- H_2: There is no significant relationship between the respondents' workforce status and the competencies acquired from the program that were applied in the current job.

2.3. Conceptual Framework

The study assumes that graduate profile variables, professional eligibility, and competency categories are linked to workforce outcomes. Workforce status is represented by employment status, work organization, occupational class, job level/promotion, and monthly income. Competencies are grouped into generic skills, specific skills, and marketing-related skills. Generic skills are expected to support initial employability, while marketing-related skills are expected to support advancement and role performance. Specific and technical skills are expected to become increasingly relevant as marketing work becomes more digital and analytics-oriented.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design using a tracer-study approach. The design was appropriate because the study aimed to describe the employment status, job relevance, and workforce competency alignment of BSBA Marketing Management graduates. It also examined selected associations between profile variables, workforce outcomes, and competency categories.

3.2. Population and Sampling

The target population consisted of BSBA major in Marketing Management graduates from North Eastern Mindanao State University Main Campus, covering academic years 2022-2024. The official list contained 172 graduates. A purposive sampling technique was used because the study specifically targeted graduates of the Marketing Management program within the covered years. A total of 151 graduates provided usable responses for the competency and workforce-status analyses.

3.3. Measures

The study used a customized questionnaire adapted from the institutional tracer-study instrument of the university and modified to include variables relevant to Marketing Management competencies. The instrument captured socio-demographic profile, professional eligibility, employment status, job level/promotion, monthly income, and competencies learned and applied in the current job. Competencies were categorized into generic skills, specific skills, and marketing-related skills. Responses on competency usefulness and application were interpreted using mean scores and descriptive ratings.

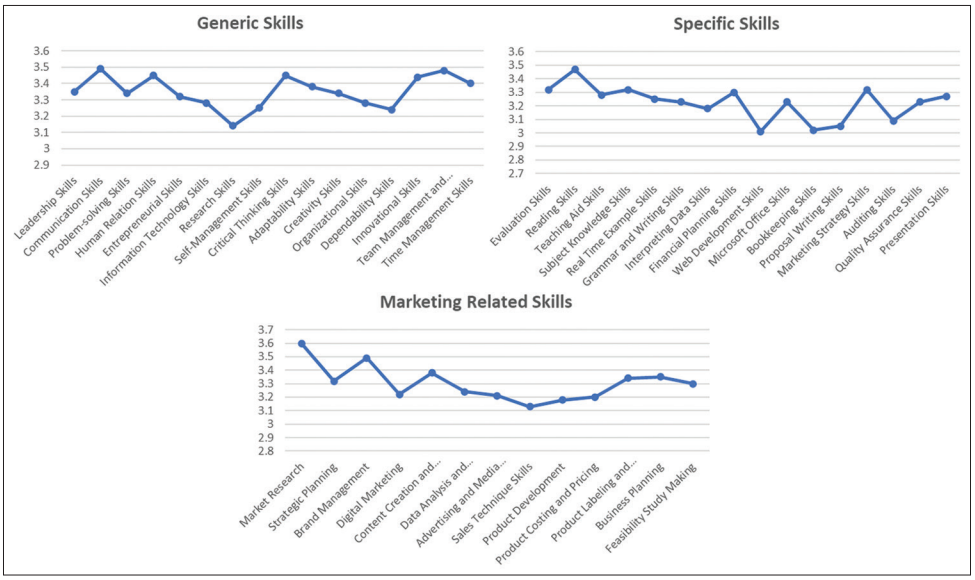
3.4. Data Collection Procedure

Data were gathered through a structured online survey administered using Google Forms and shared through appropriate graduate contact channels and social media platforms. The instrument underwent content and face validation by experts from the academe before data collection. Responses were encoded, cleaned, summarized, and statistically analyzed to determine graduate profile, workforce status, competency ratings, and relationships among variables.

3.5. Data Analysis

Frequency counts and percentages were used to summarize graduate profile and workforce status. Mean scores were used to describe the usefulness and application of competencies. Chi-square tests were used to determine the relationship between profile variables and workforce outcomes. Correlation analysis was used to examine relationships between workforce status and competency categories. The study retained the original quantitative values generated from the dataset.

Figure 1: Competencies learned from BSBA Marketing Management education in NEMSU that was considered very useful in the current job of the graduates *(In alignment with the Standard Institutional Tracer Study of North Eastern Mindanao State University and CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 17, Series of 2017)*



4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Socio-demographic Profile of Respondents

Most respondents were female, representing 68.90% of the sample, while males accounted for 31.10%. The largest age group was 25-27 years old (49.70%), followed by 22-24 years old (38.40%). Most respondents were single (89.40%). In terms of year graduated, the largest groups came from AY 2023-2024 second semester (34.44%), AY 2022-2023 second semester (33.77%), and AY 2021-2022 second semester (31.12%). A major concern is that 79.50% of respondents reported having no professional eligibility, while only 8.60% had professional civil service eligibility and 11.90% had other forms of eligibility. The dominance of young, single, and early-career respondents is expected for young people tend to focus on life course priorities deferring marriage until they are done their employability or skill-building phase in their lives (Cohen, 2020). However, the high proportion without professional eligibility suggests an important employability issue. In Philippine labor markets, civil service eligibility and other professional credentials may function as gateways to public-sector employment (Gaines, 2023) and may also strengthen competitiveness in formal employment settings (Gonzales and Trinidad, 2023).

4.2. Workforce Status of Graduates

Majority of the 172 tracked graduates were employed in the private sector (58.14%), while 14.53% were employed in government, 8.14% were unemployed, 6.98% were self-employed, and 12.21% were not tracked. Among 151 respondents with job-level information, 41.70% were in rank or clerical positions, 11.90% were supervisory, 9.30% were managerial or executive, and 37.10% were self-employed. Monthly income was concentrated in SG 01-05 (78.10%), indicating that most respondents were in early-career income bands. The findings indicate that most graduates have entered employment, particularly in private organizations. However, the concentration in rank-and-file positions and lower income categories reflects a normal but still important early-career pattern. It suggests that the program supports labor-market entry, while career advancement may require stronger marketing specialization, certification, workplace experience, and technical capability development.

4.3. Competencies Learned from the Program Considered Useful in Current Job

The competency ratings show that graduates considered generic skills highly useful in their current jobs, with a category mean of 3.35. Marketing-related skills followed closely with a mean of 3.30, while specific or technical skills obtained a lower mean of 3.22. The highest-rated individual competencies included market research (3.60), brand management (3.49), communication (3.49), team collaboration (3.48), and human relations or critical thinking (3.45). The lowest-rated competencies were web development (3.01), bookkeeping (3.02), interpreting data (3.18), and digital marketing (3.22) (Figure 1).

This pattern suggests that the program has developed strong transferable and core marketing foundations. Recent synthesis claimed they connect insight generation and the use of engagement in innovation performance which is exactly the capability tapped by market research (Stremersch et al., 2025). Similarly, studies reported that brand orientation and internal branding, frequently provided through cross-functional collaboration, are positively related to brand performance (Yu et al., 2022). Graduates appear confident in people-centered, communication-based, and insight-oriented work as these echoed consistent results from employability studies and viewed as the most important, transferrable skills across occupations (Tushar and Sooraksa, 2023). However, the lower ratings in web development, digital marketing, data interpretation, and bookkeeping indicate selective technical gaps. These are important because contemporary marketing work increasingly requires digital fluency, analytics literacy, and the ability to coordinate with technology-enabled systems. Reviews of student competencies in recent higher education offer similar cautionary tales in that where student digital competencies are

dependent on the technology competence of the instructors - and the assessment framework - designing a program to reduce gaps is important (Lopez et al., 2024).

When looking at the aggregate, the category means reaffirm that graduates do feel strongest in generic interpersonal and thinking skills (M=3.35, Strongly Agree) and in core marketing capabilities such as Market Research and Brand Management (marketing-related M=3.30, Strongly Agree). The softer ratings on analytics-adjacent tasks (Interpreting Data 3.18; Digital marketing 3.22), imply a selective "skills gap" and not a broad deficiency. The pattern is consistent with evidence that firms value insight pipelines from data capture through interpretation and action more than discrete tool proficiency. Stated more simply, the highs in the figure track what organizations say they need, the lows mark areas where capability development is likely to produce disproportionate value for firms.

As far as implications are concerned, the results suggest feasible, evidence-based wrap-arounds, rather than an all-in approach. By incorporating live, analytics-based projects, we could leverage analytics to bolster confidence in Data Analysis skills, while leaving to one side our strengths in communication, collaboration, and brand thinking (Kurtzke and Setkutė, 2021). This resonates with more recent indicative advice to consider "technology-augmented" approaches to marketing education and research priorities (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Stremersch et al., 2025). That combination preserves what works in graduates' skill sets and targets the few lower-scoring levers most likely to raise workplace influence.

4.4. Competencies Acquired from the Program Applied in Current Job

Figure 2 shows competencies acquired from the BSBA Marketing Management program that were applied in the graduates' current jobs. Generic competencies obtained a mean of 3.36, followed by marketing-related competencies with 3.30 and specific competencies with 3.25. The overall mean was 3.30. The strongest applied competencies were market research (3.60), communication (3.53), and brand management, team management, and collaboration (3.50). The lowest applied competencies were web development (3.07), digital marketing (3.14), bookkeeping, auditing, and sales technique (3.17), and interpreting or data analysis skills clustered around 3.19-3.20.

The results confirm that graduates actively apply generic and marketing-related competencies in their current work. Nonetheless, the lower scores for technical and analytics-related competencies indicate that curriculum enhancement should focus not on replacing existing strengths but on expanding them. Marketing education should retain its emphasis on communication, collaboration, market understanding, and brand thinking for these are durable skills across industry which are transferable from school to workplace (Tushar and Sooraksa, 2023), while integrating applied digital marketing, web-based tools, customer analytics, and data storytelling for it aligned with the current "T-shaped" conception of division of labor, looking for breadth not depth in technical roles (Caputo et al., 2023), for marketers to work alongside specialists rather than replicate their role.

4.5. Relationship between Profile and Workforce Status

Table 1 presents the Chi-square results for profile variables and workforce outcomes. Most relationships were not statistically significant. However, eligibility was significantly associated with employment status (Chi-square = 9.93, P = 0.043), age was significantly associated with job level/promotion (Chi-square = 10.00, P = 0.034), and eligibility was significantly associated with job level/promotion (Chi-square = 7.62, P = 0.042). No profile variable was significantly associated with monthly income.

These findings indicate that formal eligibility matters for entry and advancement but does not necessarily translate into higher income in the early career stage. Recent work has demonstrated that licensure may act as a marker of quality that produces better individual outcomes (e.g., higher wages, more stability), although its aggregate effects can be more nuanced (e.g., wage premiums along with lower overall employment in some contexts) (Blair and

Figure 2: Competencies acquired from BSBA Marketing Management education in NEMSU that were applied in current job of graduates

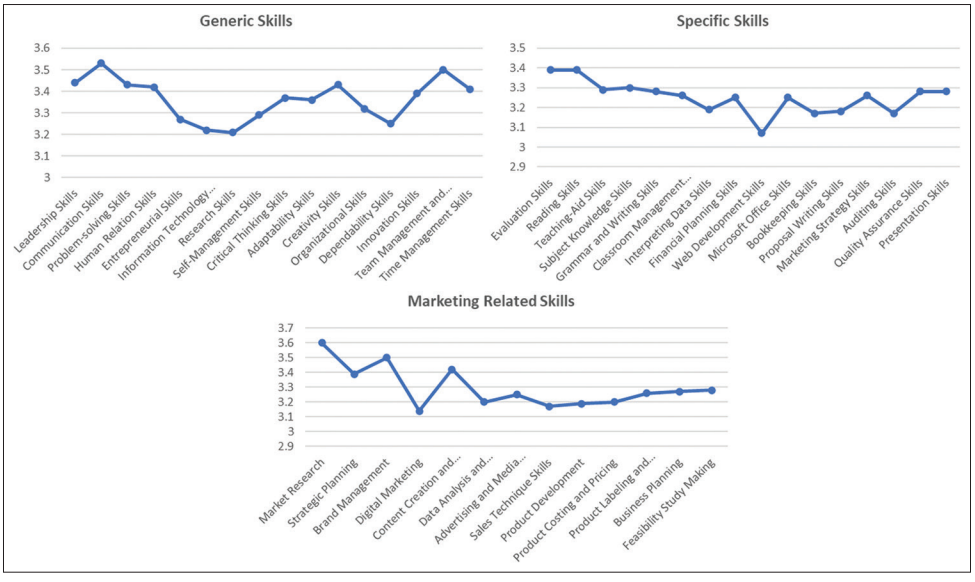


Table 1: Significant relationship between profile of respondents and workforce status

Variable tested	Chi-square value	P-value	Conclusion
Status of employment			
Sex	4.76	0.313	Not significant
Age	5.35	0.253	Not significant
Civil status	3.35	0.268	Not significant
Year graduated	3.34	0.339	Not significant
Eligibility	9.93	0.043	Significant
Job level position and promotion			
Sex	2.42	0.869	Not significant
Age	10.0	0.034	Significant
Civil status	1.98	0.495	Not significant
Year graduated	2.14	0.511	Not significant
Eligibility	7.62	0.042	Significant
Monthly income			
Sex	2.18	0.353	Not significant
Age	1.48	0.116	Not significant
Civil status	2.04	0.234	Not significant
Year graduated	2.23	0.453	Not significant
Eligibility	2.02	0.561	Not significant

Chung, 2025). Age may also reflect accumulated work experience, maturity, or longer exposure to employment pathways, which can influence job level (Batinovic et al., 2023). The non-significant results for sex, civil status, and year graduated suggest that these variables did not strongly differentiate workforce outcomes within this cohort; so, results that were not statistically significant here are likely more plausible than strange (Schaerer et al., 2023).

4.6. Relationship between Workforce Status and Competencies Learned from the Program

Table 2 shows that employment status was significantly related to generic skills (r = 0.26, P = 0.034). Job level/promotion was significantly related to marketing-related skills (r = 0.22, P = 0.045). Other relationships were not statistically significant, including monthly income and all competency categories.

The results suggest that generic skills are at the top of employer's priorities (Tushar and Sooraksa, 2023) helping graduates enter or maintain employment, while marketing-related skills become more relevant to advancement as these illustrates similar performance-related improvements for firms who are able to systemically create and apply marketing knowledge (Al Azzani et al., 2024). This distinction is important for curriculum design. Transferable skills support employability across sectors, whereas specialized marketing capabilities such as market research, brand management, and customer analysis may help graduates move into higher roles once they are already employed. For program design, this all leads to a pragmatic conclusion: make generic skills a priority for supporting employability, and enhance the marketing-specific elements (including analytics and strategy) to further progression - especially as employers continue to highlight gaps in graduates' digital/analytics skills (Ye et al., 2024).

4.7. Relationship between Workforce Status and Competencies Acquired from the Program Applied in Current Job

Table 3 presents the relationship between workforce status and competencies acquired from the program that were applied in the current job. Employment status was significantly related to generic skills (r = 0.17, P = 0.037), while job level/promotion was significantly related to marketing-related skills (r = 0.26, P = 0.040). Other relationships were not significant.

Table 2: Relationship between workforce status and competencies learned from the program that were very useful in current job

Workforce status variable competency category	Computed r	P-value	Conclusion
Status of employment			
Generic skills	0.26	0.034	Significant
Specific skills	0.12	0.126	Not significant
Marketing related skills	0.13	0.114	Not significant
Job level position and promotion			
Generic skills	0.13	0.113	Not significant
Specific skills	0.10	0.221	Not significant
Marketing related skills	0.22	0.045	Significant
Monthly income			
Generic skills	0.04	0.644	Not significant
Specific skills	0.10	0.198	Not significant
Marketing related skills	0.08	0.326	Not significant

Table 3: Relationship between workforce status and competencies acquired from the program that were applied in current job

Workforce status variable competency category	Computed r	P-value	Conclusion
Status of employment			
Generic skills	0.17	0.037	Significant
Specific skills	0.13	0.100	Not significant
Marketing related skills	0.12	0.114	Not significant
Work organization			
Generic skills	0.06	0.481	Not significant
Specific skills	0.07	0.392	Not significant
Marketing related skills	0.01	0.916	Not significant
Classes by occupational services			
Generic skills	0.09	0.767	Not significant
Specific skills	0.04	0.599	Not significant
Marketing related skills	0.07	0.414	Not significant
Job level position and promotion			
Generic skills	0.09	0.767	Not significant
Specific skills	0.03	0.713	Not Significant
Marketing related skills	0.26	0.040	Significant
Monthly income			
Generic skills	0.04	0.584	Not significant
Specific skills	0.07	0.355	Not significant
Marketing related skills	0.06	0.443	Not significant

The findings reinforce the same pattern observed in the previous relationship test. Generic skills are associated with employment status, confirming their role in workplace entry level roles across industries and retention (Iqbal et al., 2023). Global evidences note these skills as the most consistently requested by employers across graduate roles, giving credence to their prominence in finding and keeping work (Tushar and Sooraksa, 2023). Marketing-related competencies are linked with job level and promotion, suggesting that marketing capabilities gain importance as graduates assume broader responsibilities. Firm-level evidence that marketing capabilities, and especially digital marketing capabilities, are related to performance, and that firms expect these

capabilities in roles of strategic scope; moreover, individuals who effectively utilize these capabilities are usually in advancement roles where these capabilities are needed and increasingly used (Homburg and Wielgos, 2022) subsequently agreed that more supervisory/managerial people who have also reported using more marketing-related competencies on the job. The absence of significant relationships with income may reflect early-career wage compression, employment context, limited tenure, or labor-market structures that do not immediately reward competency application.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study show that BSBA Marketing Management graduates of North Eastern Mindanao State University are generally equipped with competencies that support workplace entry and early career performance. The graduates reported strong usefulness and application of generic skills and marketing-related competencies, particularly in communication, collaboration, market research, brand management, team management, and human relations. These results suggest that the program has provided graduates with a functional foundation for employment, especially in roles that require interaction with customers, coordination with co-workers, understanding of market behavior, and participation in basic business operations.

Generic skills emerged as the strongest competency area in both usefulness and application. This finding is important because many graduates enter the workforce through entry-level, rank-and-file, clerical, sales, service, or administrative positions where employers often expect strong communication, teamwork, adaptability, customer handling, and problem-solving skills. The significant relationship between employment status and generic skills confirms that these transferable competencies help graduates gain access to employment and remain functional in different workplace settings. In practical terms, graduates who can communicate clearly, work with others, manage basic tasks, and respond to workplace demands are more likely to adjust successfully to employment, regardless of the specific sector or organization.

The study also found that marketing-related competencies were strongly useful and applied in the workplace, particularly market research, brand management, and customer-oriented skills. This indicates that graduates were able to draw from their marketing education when performing tasks related to customer understanding, brand awareness, sales support, communication, and business decision-making. More importantly, marketing-related competencies were significantly associated with job level and promotion. This suggests that while generic skills may help graduates enter the labor market, stronger marketing competencies may support career movement once graduates are already employed. As graduates assume broader responsibilities, they are more likely to use competencies connected with market analysis, branding, customer relationship management, promotional planning, and strategic thinking.

The findings further reveal that most graduates were employed in the private sector, while a smaller proportion entered government employment, self-employment, or remained unemployed. This employment pattern reflects the role of the private sector as a major absorber of marketing graduates, especially in business, sales, retail, service, and administrative functions. However, many graduates remained in rank-and-file or clerical positions and were concentrated in lower income bands. This suggests that while the program supports employability, career advancement and income growth may require additional credentials, work experience, technical proficiency, and industry exposure. Employment alone, therefore, should not be treated as the only indicator of program success. The quality of employment, job level, income progression, and competency utilization must also be considered in curriculum review and graduate outcome assessment.

One notable finding is the significant relationship between professional eligibility and both employment status and job level or promotion. This implies that eligibility and formal credentials matter in the labor market, particularly in the Philippine context where civil service eligibility and other professional qualifications may influence access to government work, promotion, and formal career pathways. The large number of graduates without professional eligibility presents a relevant concern for the program and the university. While marketing graduates are not always required to obtain licensure, additional certifications, civil service eligibility, and industry-recognized credentials may strengthen their competitiveness and career mobility. This finding supports the need for institutional assistance in professional examination preparation, career coaching, and certification programs.

At the same time, age was significantly related to job level and promotion. This may reflect the influence of maturity, accumulated work experience, job tenure, and broader exposure to employment opportunities. Older graduates may have had more time to develop workplace confidence, build networks, and assume greater responsibilities. However, the study did not find significant relationships between sex, civil status, year graduated, and most workforce outcomes. This indicates that, within the sample, these demographic characteristics did not strongly determine employment status, job level, or income. The results suggest that workforce outcomes were more closely associated with employability-related factors such as eligibility, age-related work exposure, generic skills, and marketing-related competencies.

Despite the generally positive competency ratings, the study also identified specific areas for improvement. Technical and specialized competencies such as web development, digital marketing, data interpretation, bookkeeping, and analytics-related skills received relatively lower ratings compared with communication, collaboration, market research, and brand management. These lower ratings do not necessarily mean that the program is weak overall. Rather, they indicate a selective skills gap in areas that are becoming increasingly important in modern marketing practice. Marketing work today is no longer limited to traditional selling, promotion, and customer service. It increasingly requires digital content creation, social media campaign management, e-commerce awareness, data interpretation, web-based communication, and analytics-supported decision-making.

This gap has important curriculum implications. The program should preserve its strengths in generic and core marketing competencies, but it should also strengthen applied digital and technical learning. Courses may integrate practical projects involving digital marketing campaigns, social media analytics, customer data interpretation, search engine marketing, content planning, e-commerce simulations, and basic web-based tools. These activities should not be treated as isolated topics but as recurring applied outputs across marketing courses. By doing so, students can develop confidence not only in understanding marketing concepts but also in applying them through tools and platforms used in actual business environments.

The findings also suggest that curriculum alignment should be viewed as a continuing process rather than a 1-time revision. Labor market expectations change rapidly, especially in marketing, where technology, consumer behavior, and business communication platforms evolve constantly. The university must therefore maintain active feedback loops with graduates, employers, industry partners, and faculty members. Tracer studies such as this provide valuable evidence for identifying which competencies are working and which areas require reinforcement. However, graduate feedback should also be complemented by employer assessments and industry consultations to obtain a fuller picture of competency alignment.

Overall, the study shows that the BSBA Marketing Management program has produced graduates with strong employability foundations, particularly in interpersonal, communication, collaborative, and core marketing competencies. These competencies are useful for employment entry and workplace functioning. However, the results also point to the need for stronger technical, digital, and analytics-oriented preparation to support career advancement and long-term competitiveness. For academia, the findings provide evidence for curriculum enhancement and outcomes-based improvement. For industry, the study identifies the competencies that graduates can bring to the workplace and the areas where industry partnership can help strengthen graduate readiness. The central implication is that marketing education must balance human-centered skills with technology-enabled competencies so that graduates can remain relevant, adaptable, and competitive in a changing labor market.

6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study examined the alignment of workforce competencies of BSBA Marketing Management graduates of North Eastern Mindanao State University with the competencies they considered useful and applied in their current employment. The findings show that the graduates are generally equipped with strong generic and marketing-related competencies, particularly in communication, collaboration, market research, brand management, team management, and human relations. These competencies provide a useful foundation for workplace entry, especially in private-sector, service-oriented, sales-related, administrative, and customer-facing roles.

The results further show that generic skills are significantly associated with employment status. This means that transferable skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, and interpersonal competence remain important in helping graduates enter and remain in the labor market. These skills are valuable because they can be applied across different sectors and job functions. For early-career graduates, the ability to communicate clearly, work with others, respond to workplace demands, and adjust to organizational expectations is essential for employability.

Marketing-related competencies were also found to be significantly associated with job level and promotion. This indicates that while generic skills help graduates gain access to employment, discipline-specific marketing competencies may help them move into higher roles. Competencies such as market research, brand management, customer understanding, promotional planning, and strategic marketing thinking become more relevant as graduates assume broader workplace responsibilities. This finding confirms the importance of strengthening not only general employability skills but also the specialized competencies that support career advancement in marketing-related work.

The study also highlights the importance of professional eligibility and certification. Eligibility was significantly associated with employment status and job level or promotion, suggesting that formal credentials continue to influence employment access and career mobility in the Philippine labor market. Although marketing graduates are not always required to obtain licensure, civil service eligibility, professional certifications, and industry-recognized credentials can strengthen their competitiveness. This finding points to the need for institutional support in examination preparation, career advising, certification training, and professional development programs.

At the same time, the study identified areas requiring curricular improvement. Technical and specialized competencies such as digital marketing, web development, data analysis, bookkeeping, and other applied digital tools received lower ratings compared with generic and core marketing competencies. This does not suggest that the program lacks relevance. Rather, it indicates that the curriculum must respond more strongly to the changing nature of marketing work. Modern marketing practice increasingly requires graduates who can use digital platforms, interpret customer data, manage online campaigns, understand e-commerce tools, create digital content, and make decisions based on analytics.

For academic institutions, the findings provide evidence for curriculum review and outcomes-based enhancement. The BSBA Marketing Management curriculum should preserve its strengths in communication, collaboration, market research, and brand management while strengthening experiential and technology-enabled learning. Courses may include live digital marketing campaigns, customer analytics projects, social media performance analysis, e-commerce simulations, content development tasks, and industry-based marketing cases. These activities can help students apply classroom concepts to practical marketing situations and develop stronger confidence in using digital and analytical tools.

For industry partners, the study identifies both the competencies graduates already bring to the workplace and the areas where stronger collaboration is needed. Industry may support the program through internship placements, guest lectures, curriculum consultations, workplace immersion, case-based projects, certification partnerships, and feedback on emerging competency requirements. Such collaboration can help ensure that graduates are not only academically prepared but also responsive to actual employer expectations.

For students and graduates, the findings emphasize the importance of continuous competency development. Graduates should not rely only on the competencies acquired during their degree program. They must continue to build digital marketing skills, data literacy, communication competence, customer relationship skills, and professional credentials. In a changing labor market, employability depends not only on having a degree but also on the ability to adapt, learn new tools, and demonstrate relevant competencies in actual workplace settings.

Overall, the study concludes that the BSBA Marketing Management program has provided graduates with a strong foundation in generic and core marketing competencies. These competencies support employment entry and workplace performance. However, stronger integration of digital, analytical, technical, and certification-oriented training is necessary to improve long-term competitiveness and career progression. Graduate employability in marketing is strengthened when academic preparation is continuously aligned with the real competencies demanded by industry.

This study was limited to BSBA Marketing Management graduates of one state university and covered cohorts from academic years 2022 to 2024. The use of self-reported competency ratings may also be influenced by personal perception and current job role. Future studies may include employer assessments, comparative data from other universities, longitudinal tracking of career progression, and qualitative interviews to explain how specific competencies are used in different marketing roles.

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