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Employability Skills Readiness of Alternative Learning System (ALS) Graduates in Liloan District: Basis for a Skill Enhancement Plan

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the employability skill readiness of Alternative Learning System (ALS) graduates in Liloan District, Cebu, during School Year 2025–2026 as a basis for developing a skill enhancement plan. Anchored on Human Capital Theory, Career Construction Theory, and Social Cognitive Career Theory, the study employed a quantitative correlational research design involving 70 ALS graduates. Data were collected using an adapted and modified questionnaire and analyzed through percentages, weighted means, standard deviations, Pearson product-moment correlation, and chi-square tests. Findings revealed high employability skill readiness in communication (M = 4.08), teamwork (M = 3.82), problem-solving (M = 3.81), self-management (M = 3.48), and technical or job-specific skills (M = 3.52). Employability readiness was significantly associated with age, parents' educational attainment, parents' occupation, and combined monthly family income, while gender showed no significant relationship. Furthermore, challenges encountered exhibited a significant negative relationship with employability readiness (r = −0.46), indicating that greater challenges were associated with lower readiness. Prominent challenges included limited access to training and upskilling opportunities, insufficient career preparation, inadequate hands-on experience, and limited confidence in applying acquired skills. The study recommends implementing the proposed Skill Enhancement Plan through accessible training, career guidance, workplace exposure, and strengthened stakeholder partnerships. The research aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by promoting inclusive skills development and employment readiness. Its potential contribution to educational, socioeconomic, and community sustainability lies in supporting lifelong learning, equitable employment preparation, and improved workforce participation among ALS graduates.

Keywords: *Alternative Learning System, Career Readiness, Employability Skills, Lifelong Learning, Socioeconomic Factors, Skill Enhancement Plan, Sustainable Development, Workforce Readiness*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) provides flexible and inclusive educational opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults in the Philippines, enabling them to acquire foundational competencies and pursue further education, employment, or livelihood opportunities. The Department of Education (2022) emphasizes the development of functional literacy, life skills, and career-related competencies through alternative education. However, educational completion does not necessarily guarantee employability, particularly among learners facing socioeconomic disadvantages and limited access to workforce preparation. Albert et al. (2024) identified resource limitations, implementation challenges, and disparities in employment outcomes among Philippine ALS learners and graduates. Similarly, Tushar and Sooraksa (2023) emphasized communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, and continuous learning as essential employability competencies. The World Economic Forum (2025) further highlighted analytical thinking, resilience, technological literacy, and lifelong learning as increasingly important workplace skills. These concerns underscore the importance of assessing the employability skill readiness of ALS graduates in Liloan District, Cebu. Accordingly, this study examined graduates' communication, teamwork, problem-solving, self-management, and technical or job-specific skills, including their socioeconomic characteristics and encountered challenges, to provide an empirical basis for a skill enhancement plan.

Research Problem

Despite the contribution of ALS to educational inclusion, graduates may experience difficulties transitioning from alternative education to productive employment. Albert et al. (2024) reported limitations in program resources, learning facilities, and employment outcomes, emphasizing the need for improved program delivery and learner support. The International Labour Organization (2024) likewise identified persistent difficulties in young people's transitions to decent work, particularly among disadvantaged populations. Although these findings provide broader evidence of employment-related challenges, localized information on ALS graduates' employability skills in Liloan District remains insufficient. Specifically, the relationships between graduates' demographic and socioeconomic profiles, challenges encountered, and employability skill readiness require further examination. This study therefore addressed the need for a localized assessment of work readiness to identify priority areas for skills development and formulate a responsive skill enhancement plan.

Assumptions of the Study

The study was guided by the assumption that employability skill readiness is multidimensional, involving communication, teamwork, problem-solving, self-management, and technical competencies. This perspective is consistent with Tushar and Sooraksa (2023), who identified transferable skills as essential components of employability, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2023), which emphasized continuous skills development in response to evolving labor-market demands. The study further assumed that graduates' socioeconomic circumstances and challenges may be associated with variations in their employability readiness. These potential relationships were examined through the original study's two null hypotheses: no significant relationship between employability skill readiness and graduates' profiles, and no significant relationship between challenges encountered and employability skill readiness.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to assess the employability skill readiness of Alternative Learning System (ALS) graduates in Liloan District, Cebu, during School Year 2025–2026 as a basis for developing a skill

enhancement plan. Specifically, it sought to determine the respondents' profiles in terms of age, gender, parents' educational attainment, parents' occupation, and combined monthly family income; assess their employability skill readiness in terms of communication, teamwork, problem-solving, self-management, and technical or job-specific skills; determine the significant relationship between graduates' profiles and employability skill readiness; examine the significant relationship between challenges encountered and employability skill readiness; identify the extent of challenges experienced by ALS graduates; and develop a skill enhancement plan based on the findings of the study.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Human Capital Theory, Career Construction Theory, and Social Cognitive Career Theory, supported by contemporary research published from 2022 onward.

Human Capital Theory explains education and skills development as investments that can strengthen individuals' productive capabilities. Kholifah et al. (2025) applied this perspective to vocational graduates, emphasizing the contribution of digital employability competencies to workforce readiness. This supports the importance of strengthening ALS graduates' technical and transferable skills. Career Construction Theory emphasizes career adaptability and individuals' ability to navigate educational and employment transitions. Al-Waqfi et al. (2023) found that career adaptability was positively associated with career readiness and perceived employability, supporting the importance of preparing graduates for changing workplace demands. Social Cognitive Career Theory explains how career self-efficacy, outcome expectations, personal goals, and environmental conditions influence career development. Gunawan et al. (2025) demonstrated associations among perceived future employability, career self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and career-related behaviors. These perspectives support examining ALS graduates' skills alongside personal characteristics and employment-related barriers. Collectively, these theories establish the conceptual foundation for assessing employability skill readiness and developing a needs-responsive skill enhancement plan. The study is further situated within the Philippine ALS policy framework, including the Department of Education's 2022 implementing rules and regulations and its enhanced ALS guidelines issued in 2026.

The study primarily supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) through its emphasis on inclusive learning, employability skills, and workforce preparation. SDG 4 – Quality Education. The study contributes to Target 4.4, which promotes relevant technical and vocational skills for employment and entrepreneurship. By assessing the employability competencies of ALS graduates, it provides evidence that may guide improvements in alternative education and lifelong learning opportunities. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2022) emphasized the importance of improving access to quality adult education, particularly among disadvantaged populations. SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth. The study supports Target 8.5 on productive employment and decent work and relates to Target 8.6 on reducing the proportion of young people not engaged in employment, education, or training. Identifying graduates' skills gaps and employment-related challenges can inform interventions intended to strengthen their preparation for available livelihood and employment opportunities (International Labour Organization, 2024; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2025). Overall, the proposed skill enhancement plan may contribute to educational, socioeconomic, and community sustainability by promoting continuing skills development, equitable learning opportunities, and improved preparation for workforce participation. These are anticipated contributions rather than employment outcomes already established by the study.

2. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study utilized a correlational research design to determine the employability skill readiness of ALS graduates and examine its relationships with their demographic and socioeconomic profiles and encountered challenges. Employability readiness was assessed through communication, teamwork, problem-solving, self-management, and technical or job-specific skills. An input-process-output framework guided the collection and analysis of data and the development of a proposed skill enhancement plan.

Research Locale or Study Setting

The study was conducted in Liloan District, Liloan, Cebu, Philippines, during School Year 2025–2026. The district comprises 15 elementary schools and five high schools and provides ALS programs for individuals unable to complete formal basic education. This setting was selected to examine graduates' employability competencies, socioeconomic circumstances, and challenges in transitioning toward employment, livelihood opportunities, or further education.

Participants or Data Sources

The respondents consisted of 70 ALS graduates from Liloan District, representing 100% of the identified eligible graduates included in the study. Data were collected on their age, gender, parents' highest educational attainment, parents' occupation, and combined monthly family income. Their responses also provided information on employability skill readiness and challenges encountered in preparing for employment.

Research Instruments or Materials

The study utilized an adapted and modified questionnaire based on the Employability Skills Assessment Scale developed by Oshinyadi and Odufejo (2023), which reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.730 to 0.874 across five dimensions. The questionnaire comprised three parts: respondents' demographic and socioeconomic profiles; employability skill readiness in communication, teamwork, problem-solving, self-management, and technical or job-specific skills; and the extent of challenges encountered. A five-point Likert scale was employed to assess employability readiness and challenges, with responses ranging from 1 (Extremely Low) to 5 (Extremely High). The questionnaire was administered in English and modified to suit the ALS context. The modified instrument was subjected to expert validation for relevance, clarity, and appropriateness, with revisions based on the validators' recommendations. Reliability testing was also identified in the methodology to establish its internal consistency.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher secured permission from the Public Schools District Supervisor and/or school principals before conducting the study. Upon approval, the schedule for questionnaire administration was coordinated with the respondents. An orientation was conducted to explain the research objectives, procedures, and confidentiality measures. The questionnaires were then administered with appropriate instructions and assistance, allowing respondents sufficient time to complete them. The collected responses were subsequently organized, tabulated, and prepared for statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using frequency percentages, weighted mean, standard deviation, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, and chi-square test. Percentages were used to describe respondents' profiles, while weighted means and standard deviations assessed

employability skill readiness and the extent of challenges encountered. Pearson correlation was used to examine relationships between graduates' profiles and employability readiness, while the chi-square test was specified for examining the relationship between challenges encountered and employability readiness. The null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 significance level. Mean scores were interpreted using the following intervals: 4.21–5.00 (Extremely High), 3.41–4.20 (High), 2.61–3.40 (Moderate), 1.81–2.60 (Low), and 1.00–1.80 (Extremely Low). The results were used to identify priority areas for the proposed skill enhancement plan.

Ethical Consideration

The study observed ethical principles concerning voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for respondents' rights. Participants were informed of the research purpose, procedures, and intended use of their responses and were allowed to decline or withdraw without adverse consequences. Information collected was treated confidentially, secured for academic purposes, and excluded identifying details from reported results. Codes or pseudonyms could be used when necessary to protect identities. The researcher also emphasized participant welfare, privacy, and access to clarification or assistance throughout the research process.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Demographic and Socioeconomic Profiles of the Respondents

3.1.1 Age

The findings revealed that most respondents were aged 21–25 years (31.43%), followed by 18–20 years (25.71%) and 26–30 years (18.57%). Meanwhile, 11.43% were aged 31–35 years, 7.14% were 36–40 years, and 5.71% were 41 years and above. These results indicated that the respondents were predominantly young adults. The findings suggest that most graduates were within the age range commonly associated with transitioning to employment or livelihood opportunities, highlighting the importance of age-responsive employability interventions. Victoria (2024) reported differences in ALS implementation and employment-related outcomes across age groups, while Abdulhamid et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of developing relevant employability competencies among graduating students.

3.1.2 Gender

The respondents comprised 38 females (54.29%) and 32 males (45.71%), indicating slightly higher female representation. Nevertheless, both genders were represented in the study. The findings highlight the importance of inclusive employability programs that address graduates' needs regardless of gender. Bennett et al. (2022) identified gender-related differences in perceived employability, while Talento et al. (2022) examined factors affecting employment outcomes among female technical and vocational education and training graduates.

3.1.3 Highest Educational Attainment of Parents

The findings showed that 25.71% of respondents had parents who were high school graduates, followed by those whose parents reached high school level (21.43%), completed elementary education (17.14%), reached college level (14.29%), attended elementary level (11.43%), and completed a bachelor's degree (10.00%). Most respondents therefore came from families whose parents had attained secondary education or lower. These findings suggest that parental educational backgrounds may be relevant to graduates' access to educational guidance and career-development opportunities. Almira et al. (2024) recognized parental education and socioeconomic status as relevant factors in educational outcomes, while Sagario et al. (2023)

highlighted the implications of parental educational attainment and socioeconomic characteristics for learners' academic performance.

3.1.4 Occupation of Parents

The results indicated that 35.71% of respondents had parents with permanent employment, followed by contractual employment (30.00%), no occupation (24.29%), and other occupations (10.00%). Permanent employment was the most common parental occupational status, although a substantial proportion reported contractual employment or unemployment. The findings suggest that differences in parental employment conditions may influence household resources and graduates' opportunities for educational and career preparation. Colicol and Sali-Latif (2023) emphasized the relevance of parental occupation and social class to educational inequalities, while Aguho and Leodegario (2023) identified parental socioeconomic circumstances as important considerations in educational support.

3.1.5 Combined Monthly Family Income

The findings revealed that 52.86% of respondents belonged to families earning below ₱10,000 monthly, followed by those earning ₱10,001–₱15,000 (31.43%) and ₱15,001–₱20,000 (15.71%). These results indicated that most respondents came from relatively low-income households. The findings suggest that financial constraints may limit graduates' access to additional training, technology, transportation, and employment preparation. Albert et al. (2024) identified financial difficulties and work-study responsibilities among challenges experienced by ALS learners, while Batuampar and Basmayor (2023) similarly reported the prevalence of low-income households among ALS learners.

3.2 Employability Skill Readiness of ALS Graduates

3.2.1 Communication Skills

The graduates demonstrated a high level of communication skill readiness, with an overall weighted mean of 4.08. Asking questions to clarify instructions received the highest rating (4.29), followed by listening carefully and responding appropriately to feedback (4.27), both interpreted as extremely high. These findings indicated strong readiness in seeking clarification, active listening, and workplace communication. The results suggest that graduates possess important communication competencies for understanding instructions, responding to feedback, and maintaining workplace relationships. Cagas et al. (2025) and Saraç (2024) emphasized communication as a key employability competency. Similarly, Brink and Costigan (2023) and Kluger et al. (2024) highlighted the importance of effective listening in workplace performance. Kleckner and Butz (2022) and Aguilar and Torres (2023) further recognized communication skills as essential for graduate employability and professional readiness.

3.2.2 Teamwork Skills

The respondents demonstrated high teamwork skill readiness, obtaining an overall weighted mean of 3.82. Active participation in group discussions and contribution of ideas received the highest mean (4.24), followed by the ability to function effectively in groups (4.23), both interpreted as extremely high. These results indicated strong collaborative participation and group-functioning competencies. The findings suggest that graduates possess interpersonal competencies necessary for cooperation, shared responsibilities, and workplace coordination. O'Regan et al. (2023) and Hoque et al. (2023) identified teamwork and collaboration as essential employability skills. Similarly, Nudelman et al. (2022) emphasized teamwork development in professional education, while Barachino et al. (2025) and Vlachopoulos and Tsitiridou (2026) highlighted collaborative and authentic learning experiences in strengthening graduates' workplace readiness.

3.2.3 Problem-Solving Skills

The graduates obtained an overall weighted mean of 3.81 in problem-solving skills, interpreted as high. Identifying the root causes of problems before making decisions received the highest mean (4.20), followed by evaluating alternative solutions before selecting the most effective approach (4.19). These findings indicated strong readiness in problem identification, analysis, and decision-making. The results suggest that graduates possess analytical competencies applicable to addressing workplace concerns and selecting appropriate solutions. Tran et al. (2022) and Relloso and Aure (2024) recognized problem-solving and analytical thinking as important graduate competencies. Vargas-Saritama et al. (2024) and Steurer et al. (2023) emphasized learning approaches and workplace expectations that support effective problem-solving. Similarly, Nudelman et al. (2022) and Alera and Codod (2023) highlighted the importance of practical problem-solving competencies in employability development.

3.2.4 Self-Management Skills

The graduates demonstrated high self-management skill readiness, with an overall weighted mean of 3.48. Applying professional principles and ethics in daily activities received the highest mean (4.23), interpreted as extremely high, followed by adaptability to changing workplace situations (4.20), interpreted as high. These results indicated strong ethical awareness, responsibility, and adaptability. The findings suggest that graduates possess personal competencies that support professional conduct and adjustment to workplace demands. Bisschoff and Massyn (2022) and Vlachopoulos and Tsitiridou (2026) emphasized responsibility, ethical awareness, and professional behavior as important employability attributes. Azalea et al. (2024) and Asok Kumar et al. (2024) highlighted career adaptability in responding to changing employment conditions, while Wilhelm and Hirschi (2024) and Luke and Bartlett (2024) recognized career self-management, resilience, and proactive behavior as essential for sustained employability.

3.2.5 Technical or Job-Specific Skills

The graduates obtained an overall weighted mean of 3.52 in technical or job-specific skills, interpreted as high. Using computer systems to perform daily tasks received the highest mean (4.09), followed by knowledge of subject-related materials and resources (4.03). These findings indicated relatively strong computer-related and task-specific competencies among respondents. The findings suggest that graduates possess a foundation of technical and digital competencies relevant to workplace participation, although continued practical training remains important. Tee et al. (2024) and Abdulhamid et al. (2024) identified digital literacy and information technology skills as important employability competencies. Alinea et al. (2024) and Urgelles and Urgelles (2024) emphasized practical training and industry-oriented skills development, while Mwita et al. (2024) identified technical competencies as significant predictors of graduate employability.

3.3 Relationship Between Graduates' Profiles and Employability Skill Readiness

The findings revealed significant relationships between employability skill readiness and age ($p = 0.018$), parents' highest educational attainment ($p = 0.009$), parents' occupation ($p = 0.031$), and combined monthly family income ($p = 0.004$). However, gender showed no significant relationship with employability readiness ($p = 0.184$). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected for age and the three socioeconomic variables but not rejected for gender at the 0.05 significance level. These findings indicate that age and selected socioeconomic characteristics were statistically associated with graduates' employability readiness, while gender was not. Bagares (2024) examined the relevance of demographic characteristics to graduate employability, while Samanta and Hati (2023) investigated career-related factors associated with parental education,

employment, and family income. These studies provide contextual support for considering demographic and socioeconomic characteristics when examining employability outcomes.

3.4 Relationship Between Challenges Encountered and Employability Skill Readiness

The results revealed a moderate negative relationship between challenges encountered and employability skill readiness ($r = -0.46$), with a computed t-value of -4.27 and a reported p-value of 0.000. The relationship was statistically significant at the 0.05 level, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This indicated that graduates reporting greater challenges tended to demonstrate lower employability skill readiness. The findings suggest that employment-related barriers may hinder graduates' ability to develop and demonstrate workplace competencies. Tushar and Sooraksa (2023) identified mismatches between employers' expectations and graduates' employability skills, while Rodrigues et al. (2024) reported that greater perceived career barriers were associated with declining perceived employability. These findings support the importance of addressing training limitations, career preparation gaps, and other employment-related challenges.

3.5 Extent of Challenges Encountered in Employability Skill Readiness

The graduates experienced a reported moderate overall extent of employability-related challenges, with a weighted mean of 3.41. Limited access to training and upskilling opportunities received the highest mean (3.73), followed by insufficient preparation to meet employer expectations (3.66), inadequate hands-on training (3.64), and limited confidence in applying acquired skills to actual work situations (3.51), all interpreted as high. These findings identified training accessibility and career preparation as prominent difficulties experienced by ALS graduates. The findings suggest the need for accessible skills enhancement, practical workplace exposure, and stronger career-readiness support. Gibson van Mil et al. (2024) emphasized dedicated employability training, while Sarsale et al. (2024) highlighted continuing professional and personal skills development. Cheang and Yamashita (2023) and Roble (2023) identified gaps between graduates' preparation and employer expectations. Similarly, Harris-Reeves et al. (2024) emphasized authentic career-readiness experiences, while Aung et al. (2025) highlighted the combined importance of technical, leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving competencies in strengthening graduate employability.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that Alternative Learning System (ALS) graduates in Liloan District, Cebu, demonstrated high employability skill readiness in communication, teamwork, problem-solving, self-management, and technical or job-specific skills. Employability readiness was significantly associated with age, parents' educational attainment, parents' occupation, and combined monthly family income, while gender showed no significant relationship. Furthermore, challenges encountered were significantly and negatively associated with employability readiness, with graduates experiencing a moderate overall extent of challenges, particularly limited access to training and upskilling opportunities and insufficient career-readiness preparation. These findings highlight the importance of addressing employment-related barriers to strengthen graduates' workforce readiness.

The study recommends the adoption and implementation of the proposed Skill Enhancement Plan to strengthen ALS graduates' employability competencies and address identified challenges. The Department of Education, school administrators, and teachers should enhance practical skills training, career guidance, workplace exposure, and industry partnerships. Parents and community stakeholders should support graduates through employment assistance, livelihood opportunities, and continuing skills development, while ALS graduates

should actively participate in training, certification, and career-development activities. Future researchers are encouraged to examine employability readiness among larger populations and across different geographical areas to further strengthen evidence-based interventions.

The study was limited to 70 ALS graduates from Liloan District, Cebu, during School Year 2025–2026. It employed a correlational research design and questionnaire-based assessments focusing on selected demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, employability competencies, and encountered challenges. Accordingly, the findings are specific to the respondents and variables examined, and their applicability to ALS graduates in other geographical settings requires further investigation.

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