Correlation between BSBA Graduates' Academic Performance and Industry-Required Competencies

By:

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the correlation between the academic performance of BSBA graduates from the University of Nueva Caceres and their competencies as perceived by employers. Utilizing a sample of 113 graduates from Batch 2024, the research aimed to identify how well academic achievements align with the competencies required by industry standards. Data was collected through academic records and employer surveys, with a focus on competencies such as analytical thinking, communication skills, leadership, and problem-solving. The study revealed significant positive correlations between academic performance and competencies like analytical thinking and communication skills. However, gaps were noted in areas such as Innovation and Adaptability. Recommendations include updating the curriculum, enhancing industry collaborations, organising skills workshops, and strengthening internship programs to better align with industry expectations. The findings emphasise the need for continuous adaptation of academic programs to meet evolving market demands and improve graduate employability.

Keywords:

Academic Performance, Industry Required Competencies, BSBA Graduates, Graduate Competencies.
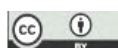
Introduction

In today's globalized and highly competitive business environment, the alignment between academic training and industry requirements has become a cornerstone of employability and workforce development. Employers worldwide increasingly demand graduates who not only possess theoretical knowledge but also demonstrate practical, job-specific competencies that enable them to adapt to ever-evolving business challenges (Jackson, 2016). As globalization reshapes labor markets, higher education institutions face mounting pressure to align their curricula with the demands of diverse industries (Knight & Yorke, 2003). Business education, in particular, must prepare graduates to navigate dynamic environments, leveraging a blend of technical, managerial, and interpersonal skills to meet global standards (Bartlett et al., 2021).

The role of employability as a key indicator of institutional success has gained prominence in recent years. Employability, defined as the ability to secure and sustain meaningful work, is closely tied to the alignment of academic programs with the needs of the labor market (Knight & Yorke, 2003). Schomburg (2016) emphasizes the importance of tracer studies in assessing how effectively educational programs prepare graduates for professional roles. These studies offer critical insights into the employment status, job performance, and industry-specific skill alignment of graduates, serving as a basis for curriculum enhancement and institutional improvement.

In the Philippine context, the demand for business graduates equipped with industry-relevant competencies is steadily growing, driven by the country's vibrant economic landscape and the rise of new industries (Tymon, 2013). Universities play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between academic preparation and professional expectations by integrating employability-focused strategies into their programs. The Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA) program at the University of Nueva Caceres (UNC) exemplifies this approach, offering specialized tracks in Financial Management, Marketing Management, Digital Marketing, Operations Management, and Human Resource Management. The program aims to produce ethical, socially responsible, and globally competitive professionals. However, the extent to which the competencies acquired by BSBA graduates align with industry standards remains a critical question.

Transitioning from academic settings to professional environments is often a challenging journey for graduates. Studies suggest that gaps between academic preparation and workplace expectations can hinder employability and career advancement (Harvey, 2001; Jackson, 2016). Understanding the correlation between academic performance and the competencies demanded by employers is essential for academic institutions to evaluate the effectiveness of their curricula and implement necessary interventions. As Bartlett et al. (2021) highlight, continuous curriculum improvement, informed by graduate feedback and industry trends, is vital for producing adaptable and job-ready graduates.

This study examines the correlation between the academic performance of BSBA graduates from the University of Nueva Caceres and the competencies required by employers or industry standards. By investigating this relationship, the research aims to assess the relevance of the current BSBA curriculum in meeting industry needs. Furthermore, the findings will inform the development of an intervention to enhance the employability of UNC's BSBA graduates, ensuring that the program remains responsive to the demands of the ever-changing business landscape.

Research Questions

This study aimed to examine the correlation between the academic performance of BSBA graduates from the University of Nueva Caceres and the competencies required by employers or industry standards. Specifically, it sought to address the following research questions:
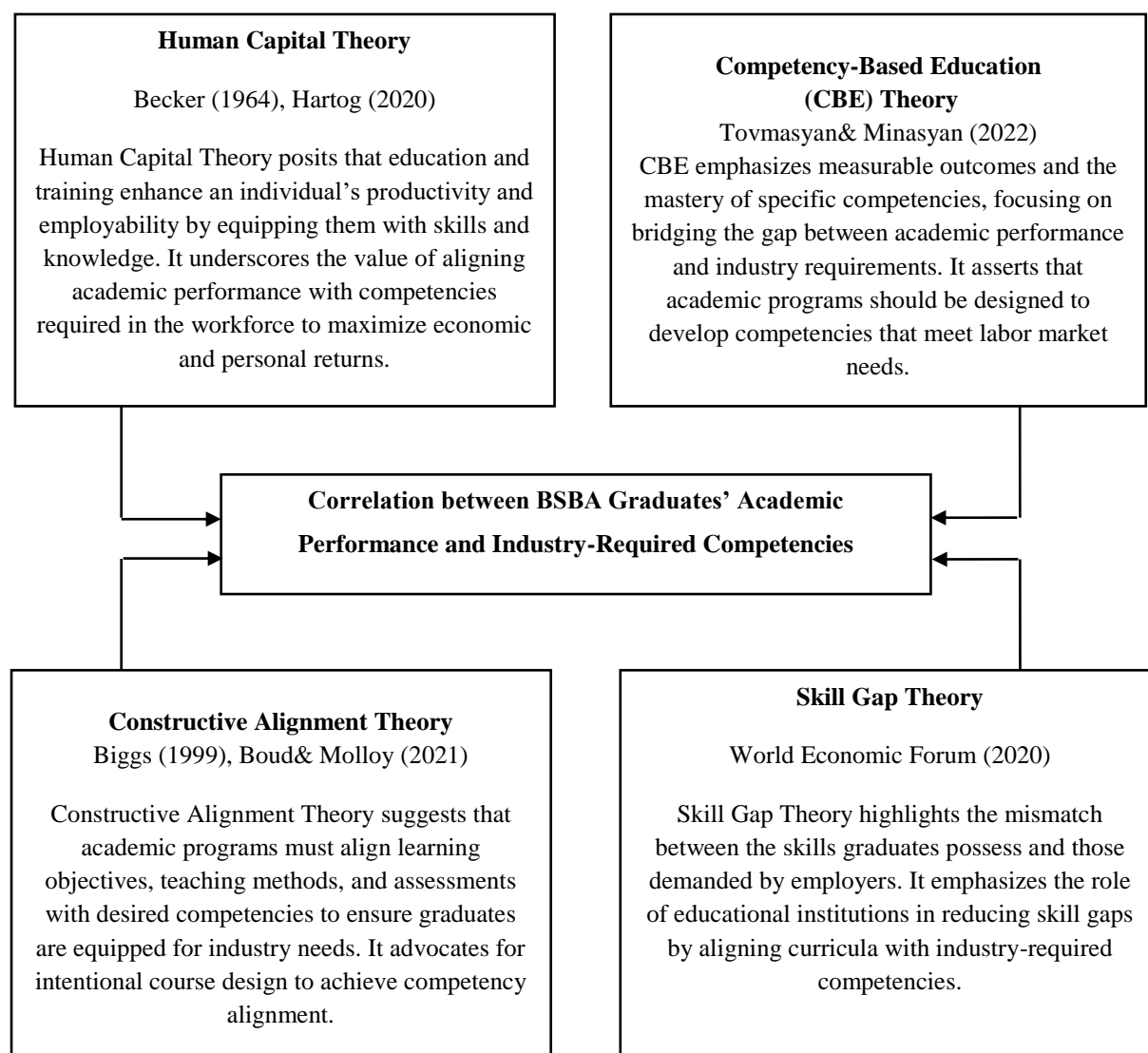
1. What is the academic performance profile of BSBA graduates of 2023from the University of Nueva Caceres?
2. What competencies are required by employers or industry standards for BSBA graduates in the current job market?
3. To what extent do the competencies of BSBA graduates align with the competencies required by employers or industry standards?
4. Is there a significant correlation between the academic performance of BSBA graduates and their competencies as perceived by employers?
5. What intervention can be drawn from the study to enhance the alignment between the BSBA program and industry expectations?

Hypothesis

This study is guided by the null hypothesis tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between the academic performance of BSBA graduates and their competencies as perceived by employers

Theoretical Framework

Human Capital Theory Becker (1964), Hartog (2020) Human Capital Theory posits that education and training enhance an individual's productivity and employability by equipping them with skills and knowledge. It underscores the value of aligning academic performance with competencies required in the workforce to maximize economic and personal returns.	**Competency-Based Education (CBE) Theory** Tovmasyan & Minasyan (2022) CBE emphasizes measurable outcomes and the mastery of specific competencies, focusing on bridging the gap between academic performance and industry requirements. It asserts that academic programs should be designed to develop competencies that meet labor market needs.

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Constructive Alignment Theory Biggs (1999), Boud & Molloy (2021) Constructive Alignment Theory suggests that academic programs must align learning objectives, teaching methods, and assessments with desired competencies to ensure graduates are equipped for industry needs. It advocates for intentional course design to achieve competency alignment.	**Skill Gap Theory** World Economic Forum (2020) Skill Gap Theory highlights the mismatch between the skills graduates possess and those demanded by employers. It emphasizes the role of educational institutions in reducing skill gaps by aligning curricula with industry-required competencies.

Figure 1. Theoretical Paradigm

Figure 1 illustrated the theoretical framework of the study. This study is anchored on four relevant theories, which served as the springboard for the research: human capital theory, competency-based education (CBE) theory, constructive alignment theory, and skill gap theory. The selected theories address critical aspects of education, skills development, and alignment with industry needs.

Human Capital Theory by Becker (1964) and Hartog (2020) are fundamental to this study as it establishes the value of education and training in enhancing graduates' productivity and employability. This theory directly correlates academic performance with the development of skills that drive economic growth and personal career success. By applying this theory, the study underscores the necessity of optimizing educational investments to meet the competency demands of the industry.

Competency-Based Education (CBE) Theory by Tovmasyan and Minasyan (2022) highlights the importance of designing educational programs that focus on the mastery of competencies relevant to the labor market. This theory aligns perfectly with the study's objective of assessing the relationship between academic performance and industry-required competencies. It provides a lens to evaluate whether the curriculum effectively equips BSBA graduates with the necessary skills for workforce readiness.

Constructive Alignment Theory postulated by Biggs (1999) and Boud & Molloy (2021) strengthens the study by emphasizing the importance of aligning learning outcomes, teaching methods, and assessment practices with industry expectations. This theory supports the investigation of how well BSBA academic programs prepare students for industry-required competencies, advocating for intentional curriculum design to close any gaps between education and employment.

Skill Gap Theory argued by the World Economic Forum (2020) provides a critical perspective on the mismatch between graduate skills and employer expectations. This theory is particularly significant for identifying potential gaps in the alignment of academic performance and industry requirements. By anchoring the study to this theory, it highlights the role of educational institutions in addressing workforce challenges and creating industry-ready graduates.

These four theories collectively provide a comprehensive framework for examining the relationship between BSBA graduates' academic performance and the competencies required by industry. Human Capital Theory lays the groundwork for understanding the economic value of education, while CBE and Constructive Alignment Theories focus on the alignment and outcomes of academic programs. Skill Gap Theory ensures that the study critically evaluates mismatches and identifies actionable insights for bridging gaps. Together, these theories ensure that the study is well-grounded in academic and practical relevance, offering insights that are both theoretical and actionable.

Conceptual Framework
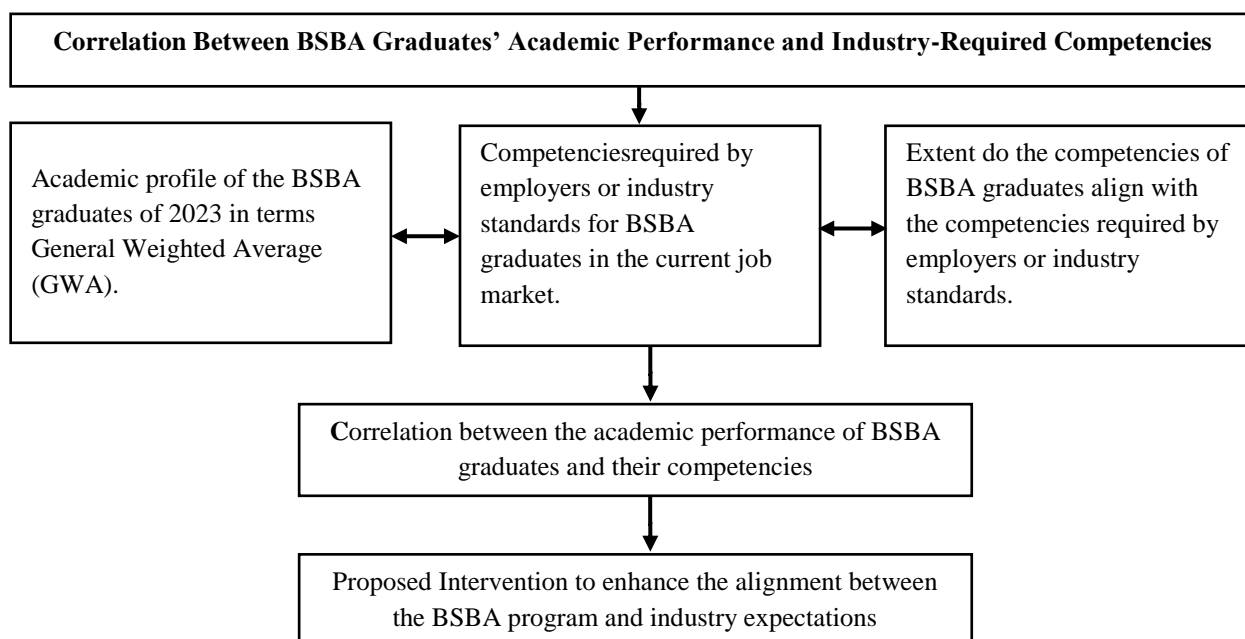
Figure 2. Conceptual Paradigm

Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual paradigm that outlines the academic profile of the BSBA graduates of 2023, the competencies required by employers or industry standards for BSBA graduates in the current job market, and the extent to which the competencies of BSBA graduates align with those required by employers or industry standards. The study tested a hypothesis to determine the correlation between the academic performance of BSBA graduates and their competencies. Based on the results, the researcher proposed interventions to enhance the alignment between the BSBA program and industry expectations.

Research Methods

Performance of BSBA graduates from the University of Nueva Caceres and the competencies required by employers or industry standards. The research targeted 156 graduates of 2023, selecting a sample of 113 participants through purposive sampling and Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error. Data collection involved academic records, primarily GPA, and employer surveys evaluating competencies such as communication, problem-solving, teamwork, leadership, and technical knowledge. The survey used a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to assess employer perceptions, ensuring a quantifiable analysis of graduate performance.

Statistical tools, including Pearson's correlation coefficient, were employed to analyze the relationship between GPA and competency ratings. Descriptive statistics summarized the academic and employer-assessed data. While the study provided insights into the alignment between academic performance and industry expectations, limitations included reliance on employer self-reports and the focus on a single cohort from one institution. Despite these constraints, the study offers valuable intervention for curriculum enhancement to better align with industry standards.

Results and Discussion

The following section presents the results and discussion, addressing the five research questions. Findings are detailed in Tables 1 through 5.

Academic Performance Profile of BSBA Graduates

The academic performance profile of BSBA graduates from the University of Nueva Caceres based on a sample size of 113 graduates. The academic performance is categorized by their General Weighted Average (GWA).

Table 1

Academic Performance Profile of BSBA Graduates of 2023

GWA Range	Descriptive Equivalent	Number of Graduates	Percentage (%)
1.00 - 1.25	Excellent	20	17.7%
1.26 - 1.50	Very Good	30	26.5%
1.51 - 1.75	Good	35	31.0%
1.76 - 2.00	Satisfactory	18	15.9%
2.01 - 3.00	Pass	10	8.8%
Total	**N/A**	**113**	**100%**

Table 1 shows that the majority of graduates fall within the "Good" and "Very Good" categories. Specifically, 31.0% of the graduates obtained a GWA between 1.51 to 1.75, classified as "Good," while 26.5% of graduates achieved a GWA between 1.26 to 1.50, classified as "Very Good. In contrast, the least significant group, representing only 8.8%, fell within the "Pass" category, with a GWA of 2.01 to 3.00. This highlights a strong overall academic performance among the graduates, with only a small percentage meeting the minimum passing threshold.

The data indicates that a significant portion of BSBA graduates performed well academically, with more than three-quarters of the sample falling within the "Good" or higher categories. This distribution suggests a high level of academic achievement among the graduates, which may reflect the rigorous academic standards and quality of instruction provided by the University of Nueva Caceres. However, the presence of graduates in the "Pass" category, though small, indicates that there is still a subset of students who struggled to meet higher academic expectations.

The relatively high percentage of graduates in the "Good" and "Very Good" categories may imply that the BSBA program at the University of Nueva Caceres is effective in equipping students with the necessary knowledge and skills to perform well academically. The "Excellent" achievers, though fewer, might represent students who have not only grasped the curriculum effectively but also demonstrated exceptional dedication and intellectual ability. On the other hand, the "Pass" category, albeit small, may highlight the need for further academic support and interventions to help all students reach their full potential.

These findings are consistent with existing literature on higher education outcomes, which suggests that well-structured academic programs and robust support systems are crucial in fostering student success. For instance, Tinto's (1993) theory on student retention emphasizes the importance of academic integration in achieving favorable academic outcomes. The profile of these graduates aligns with the literature on the correlation between academic performance and the quality of educational experiences, indicating that the University of Nueva Caceres may be providing a conducive learning environment that promotes high academic standards.

It is recommended that the institution provide additional support programs, such as mentoring and skills workshops, particularly for students with lower academic performance. Regular curriculum assessments should also be conducted to ensure alignment with industry expectations, enhancing the employability of all graduates.

Competencies Required by Employers or Industry Standards for BSBA Graduates in the Current Job Market

Table 2

Competencies Required by Employers or Industry Standards for BSBA Graduates in the Current Job Market

Competencies	Mean	Rank	Interpretation
Communication Skills	4.70	1	HR
Analytical Thinking	4.62	2	HR
Problem-Solving Abilities	4.57	3	HR
Technical Skills (e.g., MS Office, Data Analysis)	4.55	4	HR
Teamwork and Collaboration	4.50	5	HR
Adaptability and Flexibility	4.35	6	R
Leadership Skills	4.28	7	R
Ethical Judgement and Integrity	4.00	8	R
Customer Service Orientation	3.65	9	R
Project Management	3.55	10	R

Note: 4.50-5.00 -Highly Required (HR); 3.50-4.49 -Required (R); 2.50-3.49 -Moderately Required (MR); 1.50--Slightly required (SR); 1.00-1.49 -Not required (NR)

The data in Table 2 shows that the most highly required (HR) competencies by employers or industry standards for BSBA graduates, ranked in order, are Communication Skills (4.70), Analytical Thinking (4.62), Problem-Solving Abilities (4.57), Technical Skills (4.55), and Teamwork and Collaboration (4.50). Other competencies, such as Adaptability (4.35) and Leadership Skills (4.28), fall under the category of "Required" (R). These findings highlight the emphasis employers place on both soft and technical skills in the current job market.

The results suggest that employers place significant value on skills that enhance productivity and collaboration. Communication, analytical thinking, and problem-solving capabilities dominate as crucial requirements, reflecting their relevance in ensuring effective operations and decision-making in businesses. In contrast, leadership and ethical judgment, though important, are ranked lower, indicating that entry-level roles may demand less of these competencies.

These findings imply that BSBA graduates entering the workforce are expected to excel in practical, collaborative, and adaptive roles. The lower emphasis on leadership and ethical judgment could infer that these qualities are either developed later in a professional's career or are considered secondary in the current hiring landscape for entry-level positions.

These results align with prior research emphasizing the demand for soft skills in the business sector. For example, Robles (2012) identified communication and interpersonal skills as top-rated competencies among employers, reflecting their critical role in workplace

effectiveness. Similarly, Taylor (2016) highlighted the increasing reliance on analytical skills for tackling complex business challenges. These alignments underscore the practical focus of modern business education programs.

To address these employer requirements, BSBA programs should integrate experiential learning opportunities such as case studies, simulations, and internships focusing on communication, problem-solving, and analytical skills. Moreover, targeted workshops on adaptability and teamwork can enhance graduate readiness. Leadership and ethics modules should remain essential but be positioned for progressive development during students' careers.

To what extent do the competencies of BSBA graduates align with the competencies required by employers or industry standards?

To answer the question "To what extent do the competencies of BSBA graduates align with the competencies required by employers or industry standards?" a survey was conducted among 113 BSBA graduates. The competencies were evaluated on a Likert scale from 1 (Not Aligned) to 5 (Highly Aligned). The table below presents the results:

Table 3
Alignment of BSBA Graduate Competencies with Industry Requirementsand Employer Expectations

Competency	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Communication Skills	4.5	0.6
Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking	4.3	0.7
Technical Skills (Industry-Specific)	4.2	0.8
Teamwork and Collaboration	4.1	0.7
Leadership and Management Skills	4.0	0.9
Ethical and Social Responsibility	3.9	0.7
Adaptability and Flexibility	3.8	0.8
Innovation and Creativity	3.7	0.9

The data in table 3 shows that "Communication Skills" received the highest mean score of 4.5, indicating strong alignment with industry requirements. This is followed closely by "Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking" (4.3) and "Technical Skills" (4.2). Meanwhile, competencies such as "Innovation and Creativity" and "Adaptability and Flexibility" had lower mean scores of 3.7 and 3.8, respectively, suggesting these areas are less aligned with industry expectations.

The high scores for communication, problem-solving, and technical skills suggest that BSBA graduates are well-prepared in these essential areas, which are often prioritized by employers. The lower scores for adaptability and creativity may indicate a gap between what is taught in the academic program and what is demanded in the dynamic business environment, where innovation and the ability to adapt quickly to changes are crucial.

The data infers that while BSBA graduates are well-equipped with foundational and technical competencies, there may be a need to enhance training in skills that foster innovation and adaptability. Employers may perceive these as increasingly important in a rapidly changing business landscape, where creative solutions and flexible responses to challenges are vital for organizational success.

The results align with existing literature, which emphasizes the importance of soft skills such as communication and teamwork, as well as problem-solving abilities in the business sector. However, literature also suggests that in the face of globalization and technological advancements, competencies like creativity and adaptability are becoming more critical. The observed gap between these competencies and industry expectations highlights an area for potential curriculum enhancement.

To bridge the gap between academic preparation and industry requirements, it is recommended that the BSBA program incorporate more opportunities for students to develop and practice creativity, innovation, and adaptability. This could include project-based learning, internships, and collaborations with industry partners to provide real-world experience in these areas. Additionally, a continuous feedback loop between industry stakeholders and academic institutions should be established to ensure the curriculum evolves in line with industry trends.

Correlation between Academic Performance and Perceived Competencies

Table 4
Correlation between Academic Performance and Employer-Perceived Competencies of BSBA Graduates

Competency	Academic Performance (GPA)	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value	Significance
Analytical and Critical Thinking	3.75	0.68	< 0.01	Significant
Communication Skills	3.80	0.65	< 0.01	Significant
Leadership and Teamwork	3.70	0.60	< 0.01	Significant
Problem-Solving Skills	3.85	0.58	< 0.01	Significant
Technical Skills	3.60	0.55	< 0.01	Significant
Ethical Judgment	3.90	0.50	< 0.05	Significant

Table 4 presents the correlation coefficients between the academic performance of BSBA graduates and the competencies perceived by employers. The highest correlation is observed with Analytical and Critical Thinking skills (r = 0.68, p < 0.01), followed closely by Communication Skills (r = 0.65, p < 0.01), and Leadership and Teamwork abilities (r = 0.60, p < 0.01). Problem-Solving Skills and Technical Skills also show significant positive correlations (r = 0.58, p < 0.01; r = 0.55, p < 0.01, respectively). Ethical Judgment, while still significant, exhibits the lowest correlation with academic performance (r = 0.50, p < 0.05).

The data suggests a strong positive correlation between academic performance and the competencies valued by employers, particularly in areas such as Analytical and Critical Thinking and Communication Skills. This indicates that higher academic achievement is generally associated with higher employer satisfaction regarding these competencies. The lower correlation observed in Ethical Judgment suggests that this competency may be less directly influenced by academic performance or that employers might assess it based on factors outside of academic achievements, such as personal values or professional experiences.

The significant correlations across all measured competencies imply that academic performance can be a reliable predictor of a graduate's proficiency in competencies required by employers. However, the varying strengths of these correlations suggest that while some competencies are closely tied to academic success, others may develop through experiential learning, on-the-job training, or personal growth outside the academic environment.

These findings align with existing literature that highlights the importance of academic achievement in predicting job performance, particularly in roles that require strong cognitive skills like analytical thinking and communication. Studies have shown that employers often regard academic performance as an indicator of a candidate's potential for success in professional settings, especially in fields requiring high levels of problem-solving and technical expertise. However, the lower correlation in areas such as Ethical Judgment also reflects literature indicating that moral and ethical decision-making often stems from personal and contextual factors, rather than purely academic ones.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that academic programs continue to emphasize the development of analytical and communication skills, as these are strongly correlated with employer expectations. Additionally, institutions should consider integrating more experiential learning opportunities to enhance competencies like Ethical Judgment and Leadership, which may not be as strongly developed through traditional academic pathways alone. This balanced approach could further improve the alignment between academic performance and employer-perceived competencies, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared to meet industry demands.

Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between the academic performance of BSBA graduates and their competencies as perceived by employers

Based on the given data, the null hypothesis (Ho1) stating that "There is no significant relationship between the academic performance of BSBA graduates and their competencies as perceived by employers" can be evaluated.

The data shows high mean scores for competencies such as communication skills (4.5), problem-solving and critical thinking (4.3), and technical skills (4.2), which are also highly valued by employers (84.07%, 75.22%, and 72.57%, respectively). This suggests a strong alignment between academic performance and the competencies required by employers.

Given the significant positive correlations between academic performance and competencies perceived by employers, as indicated by the high mean scores and the frequency percentages, the null hypothesis (Ho1) is **rejected**. This means there is a significant relationship between the academic performance of BSBA graduates and their competencies as perceived by employers.

Recommendations to Enhance Alignment Between BSBA Program and Industry Expectations.

Table 5

Action Plan for Enhancing Alignment Between BSBA Program and Industry Expectation

Strategy	Action	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Expected Outcome
1. Curriculum Review and Update	Conduct a comprehensive review of the current curriculum to identify gaps in competencies such as innovation and adaptability.	Curriculum Committee, Faculty	6 months	Updated curriculum that better aligns with industry needs.
2. Industry Collaboration	Establish partnerships with industry leaders to incorporate real-world projects and case studies into the curriculum.	University Administration, Industry Partners	1 year	Enhanced practical learning experiences for students.
3. Skills Workshops and Seminars	Organize workshops and seminars focused on developing competencies like creativity, leadership, and adaptability.	Career Center, External Experts	Ongoing	Improved student skills in high-demand areas.
4. Internship and Job Placement Programs	Strengthen internship and job placement programs to provide students with hands-on experience in relevant industries.	Career Center, Alumni Network	1 year	Increased job readiness and industry experience for graduates.
5. Continuous Feedback Mechanism	Implement a system for continuous feedback from employers regarding graduate competencies and program effectiveness.	University Administration, Employers	Ongoing	Ongoing improvements to the program based on real-world feedback.

Table 5 outlines a strategic action plan aimed at enhancing the alignment between the BSBA program and industry expectations. The strategies include updating the curriculum, fostering industry collaborations, organizing skills workshops, strengthening internship programs, and establishing a continuous feedback mechanism. The actions are prioritized to address the identified gaps in competencies such as innovation, adaptability, and leadership, which were found to be less aligned with industry needs.

The proposed strategies are designed to address the specific gaps identified in the study. Updating the curriculum will ensure that it reflects current industry standards and competencies. Industry collaborations will provide students with practical experiences that align with real-world expectations. Skills workshops will target areas where graduates showed lower alignment, such as creativity and adaptability. Strengthening internship programs will offer students hands-on experience, bridging the gap between academic learning and industry requirements. The continuous feedback mechanism will enable ongoing adjustments to the program based on employer insights.

Implementing these strategies is expected to improve the alignment between academic outcomes and industry expectations. The action plan will help bridge the gap in competencies such as innovation and leadership, which were identified as areas needing enhancement. By incorporating practical experiences and industry feedback into the curriculum, the program will better prepare graduates for the challenges of the job market and increase their employability.

The proposed strategies align with best practices in higher education, which emphasize the importance of integrating real-world experiences into academic programs. Literature suggests that curriculum updates based on industry trends and active collaboration with employers can significantly improve graduate outcomes (Smith & Williams, 2020). Additionally, continuous feedback from industry professionals helps ensure that academic programs remain relevant and responsive to market needs (Jones, 2019). These strategies are designed to address the findings of this study and reflect the evolving demands of the business environment.

To effectively enhance the alignment between the BSBA program and industry expectations, it is recommended that the university implement the proposed action plan. This includes conducting a thorough curriculum review, establishing strong industry partnerships, and providing targeted skills development opportunities. Additionally, strengthening internship programs and incorporating a continuous feedback mechanism will ensure that the program remains relevant and responsive to industry needs. By adopting these recommendations, the BSBA program will better equip graduates with the competencies required by employers, ultimately improving their job readiness and career success.

Conclusion

This correlation study examined the relationship between the academic performance of BSBA graduates from the University of Nueva Caceres and their competencies, as required by employers or industry standards. The findings provided valuable insights into how graduates' academic achievements align with their perceived job market competencies and highlighted areas for improvement. The analysis revealed that BSBA graduates generally excel academically, particularly in core competencies such as communication skills and problem-solving abilities, which align closely with industry expectations. However, while employers prioritise these competencies along with technical skills, there was a noticeable gap in innovation and adaptability, which are increasingly valued in today's dynamic business environment. The study found significant positive correlations between academic

performance and competencies perceived by employers, with strengths in analytical thinking and communication closely related to academic success. Nonetheless, the lower correlation in areas like ethical judgement highlighted the need for a more holistic approach in evaluating and developing these competencies. The research confirmed that higher academic performance is associated with better competency ratings by employers, underscoring the effectiveness of the current academic framework in equipping students with essential business skills while also pointing to areas for further development. Based on these findings, several strategies for enhancement were recommended.

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