

**Research Article**

## **Project 4-Doors: Developing Opportunities of Real Success: An Assessment of Four Senior High School Curriculum Pathways**

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### **Abstract**

This study used mixed method of research to investigate the curriculum pathways of fifty-five (55) grade 12 students for the School Year 2025-2026. Eighteen (18) students were randomly selected from different tracks and strands, and they were interviewed to determine their perceptions of the 4-DOORS, the SHS curriculum exits using three guide interview questions. Students per section were selected such as Grade 12-SPT, Grade 12 HE, Grade 12-IA, and Grade 12 VA for a total of eighteen participants. All fifty-five (55) Grade 12 students answered the survey questionnaire that showed their demographic profile in terms of gender, age, socioeconomic class, and SHS tracks and strands. Their preferred curriculum exits were identified and ranked to find significant correlation with their demographic profile. To test all significant relationship Chi-Square Test of Independence was used. The results showed that higher education was the preferred curriculum exit, with only two who considered entrepreneurship and one who considered middle-skills development. Factors such as family influence, personal goals, career opportunities, social influence, financial factors, and personal interests emerged influential in their preferences. In terms of demographic profile such as sex and socio-economic class, there was no significant relationship with their curriculum exits observed, while there existed significant relationship between age and their curriculum exit preferences. It is recommended that schools shall enhance its guidance career programs to guide students on their career preferences after senior high school.

**Keywords:** Curriculum Exits, Career Guidance, Influential Factors in Decision Making.

### **Introduction**

Philippine Republic Act No. 10533, an act enhancing the Philippine basic education system by strengthening its curriculum and increasing the number of years for basic education, appropriating funds therefor and for other purposes (also known as Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013) was signed into law last May 15, 2013. Through DepEd Order No. 43, s. 2013 or Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act No. 10533, information and guidance were provided to effect RA's implementation. Highlighted in the K to 12 curriculum were the four pathways of Senior High School graduates in the Philippines, i.e., Higher Education, Middle-Level Skills Development, Employment, and Entrepreneurship. With these identified curriculum exits, the law mandates that the curriculum must be learner-centered and responsive to the needs of students, to ensure that they are being prepared for the abovementioned exits.

Andaya, *et al.*, (2023) under the Bureau of Curriculum Division of the Department of Education in collaboration with State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) made a comprehensive national tracer study to offer insights into the educational and career journeys of the first wave of Senior High School (SHS) graduates in the Philippines who completed the K to 12 Basic Education Program in the 2017-2018 academic year. Participants were selected from range of public schools across major regions, encompassing Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao, and the National Capital Region. Their findings showed that the most popular track that participants chose was Technical-Vocational Livelihood (TVL), followed by the academic track. In terms of the curriculum exits, findings showed that higher education was the predominant trend, followed by employment, entrepreneurship, and middle-level skills development. A minority did not choose any of the

four exits. In terms of factors affecting their choices, participants identified personal aspirations to economic considerations and familial influences.

Bacaling (2018) due to perceived hesitancy and anxiety of the first batch who completed the K to 12 curriculum, conducted action research to examine the career decision of the students and how such decision was related to curriculum exits. Results revealed that majority of students wanted to pursue higher education and enroll to college or university, followed by students who wanted to land a job already, and with a big margin, a few chose to enroll to a vocational school while very few opted to own a business, with very small number of undecided students.

Ebardo-Florida (2023) revealed in her study that although senior high school graduates were aware of the program, they still could not choose any college course because of accessibility of tertiary education and their reluctance to apply for a job. Findings also showed that they were not properly oriented to learning opportunities, thus it was recommended that a senior high school provider must design program on students' college readiness. Colobong (2023) made a comparative study of the curriculum exits of first to fourth batches of SHS graduates aiming to localized policy guidelines and monitoring tool on senior high school program. Results showed that most of the graduates enrolled in college, followed by employment, middle-level skills and entrepreneurship.

Based on the above reviewed related studies, the researcher developed similar empirical curiosity to determine the preferences of the graduating students from Biñan City Senior High School-Sto. Tomas Campus (BCSHS-STC) for the School Year 2025-2026. What was special about this DepEd SHS provider in the SDO Biñan? This is the only DepEd SHS provider in the Division of Binan that offered specialized tracks such as Sports and Arts and Design. It also offered Home Economics but with specialization in Front Office Servicing and Events Management which were identified as different specializations compared with other Technical-Vocational Livelihood SHSs within the SDO Binan. The researcher opted to conduct this study titled: Project 4-Doors: Developing Opportunities of Real Success: An Assessment of Four Senior High School Curriculum Pathways, which aimed to explore the preferred curriculum exits of the graduating SHS students and the relevance of their chosen college course to their tracks and strands.

### **Material and Methods**

Mixed method of research was used to investigate the curriculum pathways of the participants. All fifty-five (55) enrolled Grade 12 students in BCSHS-STC for the School Year 2025-2026 were included in the study, while eighteen (18) students randomly selected from different tracks and strands were interviewed to determine their perceptions of the 4-DOORS, the SHS curriculum exits using three guide interview questions. Stratified random sampling was used to identify the participants for qualitative interviews. Students per section were selected such as Grade 12-SPT, Grade 12 HE, Grade 12-IA, and Grade 12 VA for a total of eighteen participants.

All fifty-five (55) Grade 12 students answered the survey questionnaire that showed their demographic profile in terms of gender, age, socioeconomic class, and SHS tracks and strands. Their preferred curriculum exits were identified and ranked to find significant correlation with their demographic profile. To test all significant relationship Chi-Square Test of Independence was used. Eighteen participants were interviewed. They were allowed to discuss their perceptions of the 4-DOORS using prepared interview guide questions. The predominantly evident responses were analyzed using thematic approach wherein themes were developed that deepened the clarified the results of the quantitative study.

### **Results and Discussion**

The following presentations revealed the results of the study based on the quantitative and qualitative data gathered through survey questionnaire and interviews through FGDs respectively.

#### **Demographic Profile of Grade 12 Students in Terms of: Sex, Age, Socio-Economic Status, and Tracks and Strands**

**Table 1.** Students' demographic profile in terms of gender.

| <b>Sex</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Male       | 29               | 52.73             |
| Female     | 26               | 47.27             |
| Total      | 55               | 100               |

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of students in terms of sex. As shown in the table, there were fifty-two-point seventy-three percent (52.73%) male respondents or a total of twenty-nine (29) male students, while there were forty-seven-point twenty-seven percent (47.27%) female respondents or a total of twenty-six (26) female students. Overall, there were fifty-five (55) Grade 12 students who served as research respondents.

These data were not found parallel to the findings of the PIDS or Philippine Institute for Development Studies (David *et al.*, 2018) which revealed that two-thirds (65.0%) of Out of School Children OOSC in the Philippines in 2017 were boys because there still a higher of male students who were enrolled. To venture on the data whether there was a higher proportion of male than female students who will be found OOSC would be another call for research study.

**Table 2.** Students' demographic profile in terms of age.

| Age   | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|-----------|------------|
| 16-17 | 42        | 76.36      |
| 18-19 | 9         | 16.36      |
| 20-21 | 4         | 7.27       |
| Total | 55        | 100        |

Table 2 shows the demographic profile in terms of age. The respondents were grouped into three categories such as group of students who were sixteen to seventeen years old (16-17 y/o), eighteen to nineteen years old (18-19 y/o), and twenty to twenty-one years old (20-21 y/o). The youngest age category obtained the biggest number with forty two (42) students or seventy-six-point-thirty-six percent (76.36%), followed by the age group of eighteen to nineteen (18-19) with nine (9) students or sixteen-point-thirty-six percent (16.36%), lastly, age group of twenty to twenty-one (20-21) with only four (4) students or just seven-point twenty-seven percent (7.27%) of the total Grade 12 population. Stated in PSA, FLEMMS, 2019, about 1.6 million children and adolescents (5–17 years old) were out of school representing 6% of school age children from kindergarten to senior high school.

Based on such data, adolescents were less likely to complete secondary education with 12% of those aged 16 and 17 not attending school for reasons such as employment and lack of interest. In this present study, however, the number of respondents was among students aged 16-17 with 76.36%. This might not contradict the study presented in PSA, FLEMMS in 2019 but at least it showed that in this group of respondents where this study was conducted, at least students from such age bracket remained interested in school.

**Table 3.** Students' demographic profile in terms of tracks and strands.

| Tracks and strands  | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| Sports              | 17        | 30.91      |
| TVL-home economics  | 19        | 34.55      |
| TVL-industrial arts | 8         | 14.55      |
| Arts and design     | 11        | 20.00      |
| Total               | 55        | 100        |

Table 3 shows the demographic profile in terms of tracks and strands. Home Economics students had the biggest number of enrolled students with nineteen (19) or thirty-four-point-fifty-five percent (34.55%), followed by the Sports track students with seventeen (17) or thirty-point-ninety-one percent (30.91%), then by the Arts and Design track with eleven (11) students or twenty percent (20%), lastly by Industrial Arts students with only eight (8) students or just fourteen-point-fifty-five percent (14.55%) of the total Grade 12 students' population.

Table 4 shows the demographic of students in terms of socio-economic class. As shown in this table, majority of students belonged to "low income (but not poor)" and "lower middle income" classes with both group categories obtained fifteen (15) students for a total of thirty (30) students. These were equal with twenty-seven-point-twenty seven percent (27.27%). It was followed by "middle middle-income class" with twelve (12) students or twenty-one-point-eighty two percent (21.82%). Eight (8) or fourteen-point-fifty-five-percent (14.55%) belonged to the "upper middle class", while only five (5) students or just nine-point-zero nine percent (9.09%) belonged to the "poor".

**Table 4.** Students' demographic profile in terms of socio-economic class.

| Class*                            | Monthly family income (estimated)* | Description*                                    | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Poor                              | Below ₱12,082                      | Below the official poverty threshold            | 5         | 9.09       |
| Low income (but not poor)         | ₱12,082 – ₱24,164                  | Between poverty line and twice the poverty line | 15        | 27.27      |
| Lower middle-income class         | ₱24,165 – ₱48,328                  | Between 2x and 4x the poverty line              | 15        | 27.27      |
| Middle middle-income class        | ₱48,329 – ₱84,574                  | Between 4x and 7x the poverty line              | 12        | 21.82      |
| Upper middle-income class         | ₱84,575 – ₱145,000                 | Between 7x and 12x the poverty line             | 8         | 14.55      |
| Upper-income class (but not rich) | ₱145,001 – ₱241,640                | Between 12x and 20x the poverty line            | 0         | 0.00       |
| Rich                              | ₱241,641 and above                 | At least 20x the poverty line                   | 0         | 0.00       |
| Total                             | -                                  | -                                               | 55        | 100.00     |

Source: Defining and profiling the middle class (Albert *et al.*, 2018).

### Curriculum Exits Preferred by Grade 12 Students

**Table 5.** Students' curriculum exits' preferences.

| Curriculum exits                | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Higher education                | 39        | 70.91      |
| Employment                      | 14        | 25.45      |
| Entrepreneurship                | 2         | 3.64       |
| Middle-level skills development | 0         | 0.00       |
| Total                           | 55        | 100.00     |

Table 5 shows the curriculum exit preferences of students. As shown in this table, curriculum exit “higher education” was preferred by the biggest number of students which was thirty-nine (39) or the highest percentage of seventy-point ninety-one percent (70.91%), followed by curriculum exit “employment” with fourteen (14) students or twenty-five-point forty-five percent (25.45%), lastly, by the curriculum exit “entrepreneurship” with two (2) students or just three-point sixty-four percent (3.64%) of the total respondents, while there was no student who considered “middle-level skills development” as curriculum exit.

### Significant Relationship Between the Demographic Profile of Students in Terms of Gender, Age, and Socio-Economic Classes and Their Curriculum Exits Preference?

**Table 6.** Significant relationship between gender and curriculum exits preferences of students.

|                             |                  | $\chi^2$ (df, N) | p-value  | Interpretation                       |
|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------|--------------------------------------|
| Sex                         | Curriculum exits | 3.2349           | 0.356805 | No significant relationship observed |
| Level of significance: 0.05 |                  |                  |          |                                      |

Table 6 shows significant relationship between the demographic profile of students in terms of sex and curriculum exits. Using Chi-Square Test of Independence, the null hypothesis that there was no relationship between students' sex and their curriculum exits preferences was tested. Table 6 shows the computed value of  $\chi^2$  (df, N) which was 3.2349, while the p-value was 0.356805 which was greater than the assigned level of significance of 0.05, therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted, and it was concluded that there was no significant relationship observed between students' gender and their curriculum exits preferences.

Nazareno *et al.*, (2021) in their study found out that socio-demographic variables such as sex, age, birth order, number of siblings, and monthly family income have a moderate association with the SHS track/strand choice. Rosario (2024), revealed in his study that the graduates' sex had an either positive or negative impact on the curriculum exit paths that they pursue. Tagnawa and Tagnawa (2023) found out that there was a significant difference in the influences in the selection of curriculum exits based on sex and strands. The abovementioned studies affirmed that socio-demographic variables like gender had relevance

to students' curriculum exits choices. However, in this current study, it was found out that there was no significant relationship observed in terms of gender and their curriculum exits preferences.

**Table 7.** Significant relationship between age and curriculum exits preferences of students.

|                             |                  | $\chi^2$ (df, N) | p-value  | Interpretation                    |
|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------|-----------------------------------|
| Age                         | Curriculum exits | 24.5996          | 0.000405 | Significant relationship observed |
| Level of significance: 0.05 |                  |                  |          |                                   |

Table 7 shows significant relationship between the demographic profile of students in terms of age and curriculum exits. Other variable was tested using Chi-Square Test of Independence with the assigned level of significance of 0.05. Students' age and their curriculum exits preferences were tested and the results showed that with  $\chi^2$  (df, N) of 24.5996 and with the p-value of 0.000405, the result revealed that there was a significant relationship observed between students' age and their curriculum exits preferences. Likewise, Rosario (2024), revealed in his study that the graduates' age had an either positive or negative impact on the curriculum exit paths that they pursue. No research study was found directly stating that age was a factor in students' preferences in choosing their curriculum exits after SHS graduation. This was not parallel to the result of this current study which revealed that there was a significant relationship observed between age and curriculum exits.

**Table 8.** Significant relationship between socio-economic class and curriculum exits preferences of students.

|                             |                  | $\chi^2$ (df, N) | p-value  | Interpretation                       |
|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------|--------------------------------------|
| Socio-economic class        | Curriculum exits | 19.8886          | 0.069222 | No significant relationship observed |
| Level of significance: 0.05 |                  |                  |          |                                      |

Table 8 shows the significant relationship between the demographic profile of students in terms of socio-economic class and curriculum exits. The last variable tested using Chi-Square Test of Independence was students' socio-economic class and their curriculum exits preferences. The value of  $\chi^2$  (df, N) was 19.8886, with the p-value of 0.069222 which was greater than the assigned level of significance of 0.05, thus it was concluded that there was no significant relationship observed between students' socio-economic class and their curriculum exits preferences.

Nisola (2025) revealed in her study that parental education, socioeconomic status, and family structure had a statistically significant influence on students' curriculum exit choices. She likewise revealed that parents' higher educational attainment had effect on students who would more likely choose to pursue college. On the other hand, students who came from low-income or single-parent households opted to go to employment or middle-level skills development. Therefore, these results highlighted the critical role of parental background in students' career preferences. Such findings of Nisola did not find parallelism with the results of this study which stated that there was no significant relationship between socioeconomic class of students, and their curriculum exits preferences.

To further validate the quantitative data and findings, interviews were conducted to a few of the respondents. They were randomly selected, and using thematic approach, their responses were analyzed.

#### **Students' Awareness of Four (4) Curriculum Exits Stipulated in the RA 10533**

There were eighteen (18) students who voluntarily participated in the interviews. In terms of their awareness of the four curriculum exits stipulated in RA 10533, students' responses were summarized into the following: (1) There was evidence of their general awareness and familiarity of the curriculum exits. (2) According to them, their sources of information were their parents and their teachers who discussed the exits even before they enrolled in senior high school. Ideas about these exits were also disseminated through school programs. (3) Being aware of these exits was important for future decision-making and planning for their future careers. Such awareness enhances their preparedness and life-skills development.

#### **Curriculum Exits Preferences of Students**

Of eighteen (18) students who voluntarily answered the question on their preferences for curriculum exits, fifteen (15) of them considered higher education, two (2) considered entrepreneurship, while one (1) considered middle-level skills development. According to them, pursuing higher education was the key for better opportunities. Many of them posited the idea that a college diploma would lead to more job

opportunities and career advancement. Pursuing higher education for several students was a concrete road towards more knowledge and skills. Their responses were related to their pursuit of their dreams. They were motivated to pursue their personal dreams and reach future goals through higher education. For a few students focusing on entrepreneurship or skills development would emphasize practical application of their developed skills and self-employment opportunities. This study was found parallel with the study of Andaya *et al.*, (2023) who revealed that the curriculum exits pursued by graduates unveiled a predominant trend toward higher education.

### **Influential Factors Affecting Students' Preferences**

There were six (6) themes formulated based on the responses of the students when asked on the influential factors affecting their curriculum exits preferences. (1) Family influence was common among the students. Such influence was rooted on their parents' expectations and family encouragement. (2) Personal goals also emerged as a theme based on students' responses. They professed their personal desire to achieve their own dreams and to pursue their education successfully. (3) Career opportunities were another reason for choosing higher education as curriculum exit. They associated education in higher education to their future job prospects and plans. (4) Social influence was also pinpointed as another factor which included their peers, the society itself, and the environment. These were factors that shaped their decisions. (5) Financial factors were also significant among their responses. According to them, economic capability and affordability had effects on their choices. (6) Personal interests were also evident in the students' responses. They also related their personal interests as necessary in pursuing their self-development, talents, and passions. Andaya *et al.*, (2023) also revealed that a complex interplay of internal and external factors influenced graduates' decisions, ranging from personal aspirations to economic considerations and familial influences, which are also parallel with the results of this study.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

Test on the significant relationships between the demographic profile of students in terms of sex, age and socio-economic class and their curriculum exits after graduation from senior high school emerged as follows: It was inferred that sex and socio-economic class of the students had no significant relationship with their curriculum exits preferences which was confirmed through the qualitative data that such factors were not influential in their preferences. However, between age and their curriculum exits preferences, it was inferred that this factor was considered by the students as significantly related. This was related to their views on career opportunities after considering higher education as their preferred curriculum exit after graduation. Based on the findings and conclusions, it was recommended that schools shall enhance their guidance career programs to properly guide students on their curriculum exits preferences and eventually on their career choices.

### **Declarations**

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