

Assessing college and career readiness of senior high school grade 12 students in a private school: A basis for instructional support program

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Abstract

This study assessed the college and career readiness of Grade 12 Senior High School students of Apayao Community Learning Center (ACLC) for the School Year 2025–2026 as a basis for an instructional support program. Specifically, it examined the respondents' profile in terms of age, sex, and family income; determined their academic performance; identified significant differences in readiness when grouped according to profile variables; determined the level of college and career readiness; examined the relationship between readiness and academic performance; identified factors contributing to readiness; and proposed instructional activities to enhance readiness. The study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed-method research design involving quantitative and qualitative approaches. A total of 89 Grade 12 students served as respondents. Data were gathered through an adapted survey questionnaire from Cuy and Salinas and analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, weighted mean, t-test, ANOVA, Pearson's *r*, and thematic analysis.

Findings revealed that most respondents were 16 years old, male, and belonged to low-income families. The overall academic performance of the students was categorized as Satisfactory with a mean GWA of 83.16. Female students demonstrated significantly higher levels of college and career readiness than male students, while older students showed higher college readiness. No significant differences were found when grouped according to family income. The overall level of college readiness ($M = 2.52$) and career readiness ($M = 2.66$) were both interpreted as Ready. Students showed strengths in motivation, self-confidence, and responsibility but demonstrated weaknesses in digital literacy, communication skills, college exploration, and career awareness. A significant weak positive relationship was found between college readiness and academic performance, while career readiness showed no significant relationship with GWA. Thematic analysis identified access to career information, financial support, family support, personal motivation, peer influence, and school support as contributing factors to readiness. Proposed instructional activities included ICT and digital literacy training, work immersion programs, and strengthened career guidance and counseling services to further improve students' preparedness for higher education and future careers.

Keywords: College Readiness; Career Readiness; Grade 12 Students; Academic Performance; Instructional Support Program; Senior High School; General Academic Strand; Mixed-Method Research; Apayao Community Learning Center; Philippines

1. Introduction

Education plays a vital role in improving individuals' quality of life and promoting social mobility by enhancing learners' cognitive abilities, academic competencies, and readiness for lifelong learning. As increasing numbers of students aspire to pursue higher education, the transition from senior high school to college has become a critical stage that influences academic success, employability, and career sustainability. In this context, college and career readiness has emerged as an important area of educational research, particularly among Senior High School (SHS) learners in the Philippines.

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Recent studies emphasize that students' aspirations and expectations strongly influence their educational and career trajectories. Learners from different socioeconomic backgrounds may possess high aspirations that are not always matched with adequate academic preparation or institutional support. These aspirations reflect students' beliefs, motivation, and perceived abilities toward achieving long-term educational and career goals. International studies revealed that academic achievement and extracurricular involvement significantly affect college readiness. Uy and Kwon (2020) found that Southeast Asian American college students experienced difficulties adjusting to college demands and career pathways, while Khattab (2015) highlighted that aspirations, expectations, and academic performance collectively shape students' educational behavior and future decisions.

Several factors contribute to inadequate college and career readiness, including academic preparedness, learning attitudes, behavioral expectations, and limited knowledge about college and career opportunities (Mueller and Lee, 2019). Although age alone is not a strong predictor of readiness, academic stress and motivation significantly influence students' self-directed learning readiness and college performance (Heo and Han, 2024; Gaertner and McClarty, 2024). Gender-related differences have also been identified, where female students often demonstrate stronger academic performance but experience lower confidence and limited access to career guidance services (ACT Organization, 2015; Anthony, 2010; College Board, 2024; Southern Regional Education Board [SREB], 2024; YouScience, 2024).

Socioeconomic status remains one of the strongest determinants of college and career readiness. Students from financially stable families are more likely to benefit from rigorous coursework, academic assistance, and career counseling, whereas learners from low-income households often experience limited access to educational resources and preparatory programs (Barnett, 2024; Daiek, 2024; Greene, 2020; Hardermam, 2024; Heartfield, 2024; Lindstorm and Berzin, 2010; Mitra and Gross, 2021; Ruffalo, 2023; Schmiders, 2020; Vacunda, 2020). Despite these barriers, many students continue to maintain high educational aspirations, emphasizing the importance of institutional interventions that transform motivation into actual readiness.

Local and international studies further support the need to strengthen students' preparedness for higher education and employment. Carada and Palacio (2018) examined the self-perceived employability skills of SHS graduates in San Pablo, Philippines, and reported high levels of cognitive, technical, and emotional competencies that positively influence employment opportunities. However, only a limited number of firms actively hired SHS graduates, highlighting the need for stronger collaboration between educational institutions and industries. Similarly, Pajios and Lejano (2017) revealed that many Filipino K-12 graduates demonstrate low proficiency in core academic subjects such as Science and Mathematics, creating gaps between college readiness standards and actual competencies, particularly among students from lower-income families.

In response to learning gaps, the Department of Education (2023) implemented the National Learning Camp through DepEd Order No. 014, series of 2023, which aims to improve learners' competencies in Reading, Mathematics, and Science through targeted interventions and higher-order thinking activities essential for college and career readiness. Meanwhile, studies by Magbag et al. (2020) utilized machine learning techniques to predict college academic performance using pre-enrollment data, while Del Rosario and Einreb (2010) emphasized the significant relationship between self-efficacy, resilience, and student success. These findings suggest that combining academic indicators with psychological factors may provide a more holistic understanding of student readiness.

Maslang (2023) emphasized that strengthening college and career readiness in the Philippine K-12 context requires contextualized and collaborative learning approaches aligned with CHED College Readiness Standards. The study highlighted the importance of developing foundational competencies in Science, Mathematics, and Communication while also considering students' aspirations, motivation, and self-efficacy as predictors of readiness. Furthermore, aligning SHS strands with intended college courses and career pathways through career guidance, mentorship, and early career exposure can improve students' adaptability and long-term success.

Similarly, the descriptive-correlational study of Mandia (2020), anchored on David Conley's College and Career Readiness framework, found that academic achievement significantly predicts college and career readiness among public SHS students in Mandaluyong City, although no significant differences were observed across academic strands. Romero et al. (2024) further stressed the importance of assessing and strengthening the career readiness of Technical Vocational Livelihood-Home Economics (TVL-HE) graduates by improving technical competencies, employability skills, entrepreneurial mindset, and alignment between education and labor market demands.

Among the academic tracks offered in Senior High School, the General Academic Strand (GAS) provides a flexible and exploratory curriculum intended for students who remain undecided about their future college course or career path. Unlike specialized strands such as STEM, ABM, and HUMSS, GAS offers a balanced combination of subjects that allows

learners to explore their interests, abilities, and potential career directions before pursuing higher education. Given the diverse backgrounds, aspirations, and readiness levels of GAS students, examining their college and career readiness is essential in developing effective educational interventions and support programs that can better prepare them for higher education and future employment opportunities.

Apayao Community Learning Center is one of the private schools in Kabugao, Apayao that offers the General Academic Strand (GAS) in Senior High School. The GAS strand provides students with a balanced curriculum that develops communication, research, organizational, and leadership skills while allowing them to explore different academic disciplines and career opportunities. Since many students are still undecided about their future college course or career path, GAS serves as a flexible strand that helps learners discover their interests, strengths, and potential career directions.

Despite the efforts of Apayao Community Learning Center in implementing the GAS program, challenges remain in career guidance, parental orientation, and work immersion activities. Grade 12 students are limited to in-school work immersion, reducing their exposure to actual workplace environments and practical experiences. These concerns highlight the need to assess the college and career readiness of students. Thus, this study aimed to determine the level of college and career readiness among Grade 12 students as a basis for improving instructional practices and support programs.

This study aimed to assess the college and career readiness of Grade 12 Senior High School students in a private school during the School Year 2025–2026 as a basis for an instructional support program. Specifically, it sought to determine the students' profile in terms of age, sex, and family income; assess their academic performance through General Weighted Average (GWA); identify significant differences in college and career readiness when grouped according to profile variables; determine the level of college and career readiness; examine the relationship between readiness and academic performance; identify factors contributing to increased readiness among students of Apayao Community Learning Center; and propose instructional activities to enhance students' college and career readiness.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

This study utilized an Explanatory Sequential Mixed Method research design. In this design, quantitative data were collected and analyzed first to determine the level of college and career readiness of Grade 12 Senior High School students and to identify significant differences and relationships among the variables studied. The quantitative phase involved the use of survey questionnaires and statistical analysis to obtain measurable and objective data. After the quantitative results were obtained, a qualitative phase was conducted through open-ended responses to further explain, clarify, and support the findings of the study. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data provided a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the students' college and career readiness, particularly regarding the factors affecting their preparedness for higher education and future careers.

2.2. Locale of the Study

This study was conducted at Apayao Community Learning Center located in Poblacion, Municipality of Kabugao, Province of Apayao. The school is one of the private secondary educational institutions in the province offering Senior High School programs, including the General Academic Strand (GAS). For the School Year 2025–2026, the institution had a total enrollment of 483 students and was staffed by 15 full-time teachers and 7 non-teaching personnel. The locale was selected because it caters to Senior High School learners whose college and career readiness served as the focus of the study.

2.3. Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this study were the Grade 12 students of Apayao Community Learning Center for the School Year 2025–2026, with a total population of 89 students. The respondents were composed of two sections: Section Mount Zion, which consisted of 42 students, including 30 males and 12 females; and Section Mount Eremos, which consisted of 47 students, including 23 males and 24 females. These students were selected as respondents because they were directly involved in the study on college and career readiness.

2.4. Research Instrument

The main instrument used in this study was a survey questionnaire adapted from the study of Edwin M. Salinas and Cuy published in the Open Journal of Social Sciences, Vol. 7, No. 55. The questionnaire was designed to assess the college and career readiness of Grade 12 students.

The instrument consisted of two parts. The first part focused on college readiness and contained 14 items assessing cognitive skills, content knowledge, academic behavior, and contextual skills. The second part focused on career readiness and consisted of 12 items that measured students' perceptions, behaviors, and personal attributes related to career preparedness. The questionnaire utilized a four-point Likert scale to determine the respondents' level of readiness. This instrument was selected because of its relevance and suitability to the objectives of the present study.

2.5. Statistical Analysis

The study utilized frequency counts and percentage analysis to describe the profile of the respondents, while weighted mean was used to determine the level of college and career readiness of Grade 12 SHS students. To identify significant differences in readiness levels, an independent samples t-test was applied for sex, and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used for age group, family income, and GWA categories. Pearson's r was employed to determine the relationship between college and career readiness and students' academic performance. Furthermore, thematic analysis was used to examine and categorize the respondents' open-ended responses regarding factors contributing to readiness and proposed instructional activities.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Profile of the Grade 12 Respondents

The profile of the respondents was examined in terms of age, sex, and monthly family income. Table 1 presents a consolidated summary of the demographic characteristics of the 89 Grade 12 respondents.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Grade 12 Respondents (n = 89)

Profile Variable	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age (years)		
16	58	65.17
17	17	19.10
18	6	6.74
19	3	3.37
20 and above	5	5.62
Total	89	100.00
Sex		
Male	53	59.55
Female	36	40.45
Total	89	100.00
Monthly Family Income		
Below Php 14,560.00	70	78.65
Php 14,560 - Php 29,120.00	8	8.99
Php 29,120 - Php 58,240.00	9	10.11
Php 58,240 - Php 116,480.00	2	2.25
Total	89	100.00

The respondents in the study were predominantly 16 years old (65.17%), followed by those aged 17 (19.10%) and 18 (6.74%), while a smaller proportion (9.99%) were 19 years and above, yielding a mean age of 16.75 years. This age profile aligns with the expected progression under the Philippine K-12 curriculum, where learners typically complete Grade 12 at ages 16 to 17, and the presence of older students may reflect delayed enrollment, grade repetition, or interruptions in schooling due to socioeconomic challenges. In terms of sex distribution, male students comprised the majority (59.55%), while females accounted for 40.45%, indicating slightly higher male enrollment but still allowing balanced gender-based analysis of college and career readiness. This finding is consistent with prior studies highlighting gender differences in enrollment patterns and course selection across academic tracks. Regarding socioeconomic status, most respondents (78.65%) reported household incomes below Php 14,560, which is under the national poverty threshold, while smaller proportions belonged to lower-middle (8.99%), middle (10.11%), and upper-middle income groups (2.25%). This suggests that the majority of learners come from low-income households, limiting access to educational resources and preparation opportunities, a trend supported by existing research linking economic constraints to reduced college readiness. Overall, the demographic profile reflects typical age progression under K-12, a slightly male-dominated enrollment, and a strong prevalence of low-income backgrounds that shape students' educational experiences.

3.2. Academic Performance (GWA) of the Grade 12 Students

Table 2 presents the academic performance of the respondents categorized according to the DepEd grading scale.

Table 2 Distribution of Respondents by Academic Performance-GWA (n = 89)

GWA Descriptive Category	GWA Range	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Outstanding	90–100	12	13.48
Very Satisfactory	85–89	14	15.73
Satisfactory	80–84	30	33.71
Fairly Satisfactory	75–79	33	37.08
Total		89	100.00

The academic performance of the respondents shows that the largest group fell within the Fairly Satisfactory range (75–79), accounting for 37.08% of students, followed closely by those in the Satisfactory range (80–84) at 33.71%. A smaller proportion achieved higher marks, with 15.73% classified as Very Satisfactory and 13.48% attaining Outstanding grades. Notably, no respondent recorded a GWA below 75, and the overall mean GWA of 83.16 (SD = 4.74) situates the group's average performance within the Satisfactory level. While all students met the minimum passing requirement, the fact that more than one-third performed only at the Fairly Satisfactory level suggests that a considerable portion may require academic reinforcement to bridge the gap between current achievement and the demands of college-level coursework. These findings are consistent with Rodriguez Jr., who reported that most senior high school students obtain grades within the 80–84 range, interpreted as Satisfactory, while several fall into the Fairly Satisfactory category. This supports the conclusion that although students generally achieve passing performance, many still need additional support to strengthen their readiness for higher education.

3.3. Significant Difference in the Level of College and Career Readiness When Grouped According to Profile

This section addresses whether there is a significant difference in the level of college readiness and career readiness of Grade 12 SHS students when grouped according to their profile variables: age, sex, family income, and academic performance (GWA). An independent samples t-test was used for sex (two groups), while a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed for age group, family income, and GWA category, which each contain three or more groups. The level of significance was set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

3.3.1. Sex

Table 3 Difference in College and Career Readiness Level by Sex

Sex	College Mean	College SD	Career Mean	Career SD	t-value	p-value
Male (n = 53)	2.42	0.29	2.60	0.32	-3.7230	0.0003**
Female (n = 36)	2.66	0.31	2.74	0.30	-2.1818	0.0318*

** Highly Significant at $\alpha = 0.01$; * Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

The results of the t-test reveal significant gender differences in both college readiness and career readiness among the respondents. Female students demonstrated higher levels of readiness in both dimensions, with mean scores of 2.66 (SD = 0.31) for college readiness and 2.74 (SD = 0.30) for career readiness, compared to male students who scored 2.42 (SD = 0.29) and 2.60 (SD = 0.32), respectively. The differences were statistically significant, as indicated by t-values of -3.72 ($p = 0.0003$) for college readiness and -2.18 ($p = 0.0318$) for career readiness, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. These findings suggest that female students are more academically motivated, future-oriented, and deliberate in their post-secondary planning, consistent with prior studies in the Philippine educational context. Research by Dela Cruz and Garcia (2021) similarly reported higher college readiness among female senior high school students, particularly in motivation and academic engagement, while Guevarra and Cimene (2020) found stronger career planning behaviors among females. Taken together, these results highlight the need for gender-responsive programs to address readiness gaps among male students and ensure balanced preparation for post-secondary education and employment.

3.3.2. Age Group

Table 4 Difference in College and Career Readiness Level by Age Group

Age Group	College Mean	College SD	Career Mean	Career SD	F-computed (College)	F-computed (Career)
16 years (n = 58)	2.45	0.28	2.62	0.29	4.0090	1.5488
17 years (n = 17)	2.67	0.34	2.77	0.44		
18 and above (n = 14)	2.62	0.37	2.65	0.22		
p-value					0.0216*	0.2184

* Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

The ANOVA results show a significant difference in college readiness across age groups, with older students demonstrating higher readiness levels. Specifically, 17-year-olds ($M = 2.67$) and those aged 18 and above ($M = 2.62$) scored higher compared to 16-year-olds ($M = 2.45$), $F = 4.01$, $p = 0.0216$. This suggests that greater academic maturity, exposure to more Senior High School subjects, and clearer post-secondary planning contribute to stronger college readiness among older learners. In contrast, no significant difference was found in career readiness across age groups ($F = 1.55$, $p = 0.2184$), indicating that competencies such as motivation, self-efficacy, and goal-setting are relatively uniform regardless of age. These findings align with Villarino and Gonzales (2022), who reported that older students exhibit higher college readiness due to maturity and planning, while career readiness remains consistent across ages. Similarly, Bernardo et al. (2023) emphasized that career readiness is more strongly shaped by guidance programs and personal motivation than by age alone. Overall, the results highlight that while older students are more prepared academically for college, structured career guidance programs are essential to elevate career readiness uniformly across all age groups.

3.3.3. Family Income

Table 5 Difference in College and Career Readiness Level by Family Income

Family Income Bracket	College Mean	College SD	Career Mean	Career SD	F-computed (College)	F-computed (Career)
Less than Php 14,560	2.47	0.31	2.63	0.31	2.5150	0.7118
Php 14,560 – 29,120	2.71	0.20	2.71	0.36		
Php 29,120 – 58,240	2.70	0.37	2.79	0.37		
Php 58,240 – 116,480	2.61	0.25	2.58	0.12		
p-value					0.0638ns	0.5476 ns

ns-not significant

The ANOVA results for family income groups indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in college readiness across income levels ($F = 2.52$, $p = 0.0638$). Although a descriptive trend suggests that students from higher-

income households scored somewhat higher (e.g., Php 14,560–29,120 group: $M = 2.71$ vs. below Php 14,560 group: $M = 2.47$), the difference did not reach significance, likely due to the small sample sizes in the higher-income categories. Similarly, career readiness showed no significant variation across income groups ($F = 0.71$, $p = 0.5476$), suggesting that motivational and attitudinal aspects of career readiness are relatively uniform regardless of household economic status. These findings imply that school-based interventions can play a critical role in equalizing readiness opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The results are consistent with Pagulayan et al. (2021), who found that while higher-income students may show slightly stronger college readiness, differences were not statistically significant, and with Villarino and Gonzales (2022), who reported that career readiness is not strongly influenced by family income. Overall, the study highlights that economic status alone does not determine readiness levels, reinforcing the importance of structured guidance programs to support students across all socioeconomic groups.

3.4. Level of Readiness of Grade 12 SHS Students

The level of college and career readiness of the respondents was measured using a four-point psychometric scale adapted from Cuy and Salinas (Open Journal of Sciences, Vol. 7 No. 55). The scale and corresponding verbal interpretations are as follows:

Scale of Means and Verbal Interpretations

Scale	Range	Verbal Interpretation
4	3.26 – 4.00	Highly Ready
3	2.51 – 3.25	Ready
2	1.76 – 2.50	Moderately Ready
1	1.00 – 1.75	Not Ready

3.5. College Readiness

Table 6 presents the weighted mean scores and verbal interpretations for each of the 14 college readiness items, along with the overall mean.

Table 6 Level of College Readiness of Grade 12 SHS Students ($n = 89$)

No.	College Readiness Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1	I have the ability to analyze and evaluate information from various sources.	2.74	1.22	Ready
2	I am confident in my ability to complete assignments and projects on time and to a high standard.	2.54	0.74	Ready
3	I can identify and develop problem-solving strategies for complex tasks.	2.31	0.78	Moderately Ready
4	I can organize and structure my work in a clear and coherent manner.	2.42	0.74	Moderately Ready
5	I regularly monitor and confirm the precision and accuracy of my work.	2.35	0.72	Moderately Ready
6	I feel I have a solid understanding of the core subjects required for college-level work in my chosen field.	2.29	0.79	Moderately Ready
7	I am confident in my ability to learn and apply new knowledge and skills.	2.88	0.78	Ready
8	I am skilled at using technology for academic research and learning.	2.06	0.73	Moderately Ready
9	I can communicate my ideas effectively in writing and in oral presentation.	2.10	0.80	Moderately Ready
10	I am self-disciplined and can manage my time effectively to balance my studies with other commitments.	2.79	0.86	Ready
11	I take responsibility for my own learning and academic progress.	2.81	0.77	Ready

12	I am optimistic about my ability to succeed in college.	2.74	0.82	Ready
13	I can manage my stress and maintain a positive attitude when facing academic challenges.	2.78	0.70	Ready
14	I have strong executive functions such as planning, organizing, and self-monitoring.	2.49	0.79	Moderately Ready
	Overall	2.52	0.32	Ready

The overall results show that Grade 12 students achieved a Ready level of college readiness, with a weighted mean of 2.52 ($SD = 0.32$), which falls just above the threshold of the Ready category (2.51–3.25) on the four-point scale. Out of the 14 indicators, six were rated Ready, while eight were rated Moderately Ready. The strongest area was Item 7, “I am confident in my ability to learn and apply new knowledge and skills,” which obtained the highest mean score of 2.88, reflecting strong academic self-efficacy and adaptability—key competencies for college success. In contrast, the lowest score was recorded in Item 8, “I am skilled at using technology for academic research and learning,” with a mean of 2.06, highlighting a critical gap in digital literacy. Other Moderately Ready indicators included subject matter competency and communication skills, pointing to areas needing targeted instructional support. While the overall Ready rating is encouraging, its position at the lower boundary suggests that students are just meeting the minimum threshold and require sustained academic interventions to elevate readiness to the Highly Ready level. These findings are consistent with Bernardo et al. (2023), who reported that Filipino senior high school students generally show moderate preparedness for college, with strengths in adaptive learning but weaknesses in technology use, communication, and subject mastery. Overall, the study underscores the importance of structured academic support programs to strengthen competencies and ensure students are fully prepared for post-secondary education.

3.5.1. Career Readiness

Table 7 presents the weighted mean scores and verbal interpretations for each of the 12 career readiness items.

Table 7 Level of Career Readiness of Grade 12 SHS Students ($n = 89$)

No.	Career Readiness Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1	I have a clear understanding of my career interest and aspirations.	2.65	0.85	Ready
2	I am confident in my ability to achieve my long-term career goals.	2.76	0.97	Ready
3	I have set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals for my future.	2.49	0.87	Moderately Ready
4	I have explored different career paths and know what they require.	2.34	0.82	Moderately Ready
5	I have explored various college institutions and I am familiar with their application process.	1.96	0.84	Moderately Ready
6	I understand the financial demands of college life.	2.58	0.93	Ready
7	I am aware of job opportunities available in the market that align with my knowledge, interest, and skills.	2.44	0.95	Moderately Ready
8	I am motivated to work hard to achieve my educational and career goals.	2.93	0.82	Ready
9	I believe I have the skills and abilities needed to be successful in college and my chosen career.	2.91	0.78	Ready
10	I am proactive in seeking guidance and support when I need it.	2.96	0.84	Ready
11	I have a strong sense of self-efficacy regarding my career goals.	2.91	0.95	Ready
12	I am confident in my ability to make informed decisions about my future.	2.93	0.91	Ready
	Overall	2.66	0.32	Ready

The results show that Grade 12 students' overall career readiness was at the Ready level, with a weighted mean of 2.66 (SD = 0.32), slightly higher than their college readiness score, indicating stronger confidence and awareness in career-related aspects. Out of twelve items, eight were rated Ready, with the highest scores in Item 10 ("I am proactive in seeking guidance and support when I need it," M = 2.96), Item 8 ("I am motivated to work hard to achieve my educational and career goals," M = 2.93), and Item 12 ("I am confident in my ability to make informed decisions about my future," M = 2.93). These results highlight students' strong motivation, confidence, and proactive help-seeking behavior, which are positive indicators for career development. However, four items were rated Moderately Ready, with Item 5 ("I have explored various college institutions and I am familiar with their application process") recording the lowest mean at 1.96, pointing to limited knowledge of college admissions. Items related to career path exploration and labor market awareness also fell in the Moderately Ready range, suggesting gaps in concrete career planning and institutional familiarity. Taken together, the findings indicate that while students are generally Ready in both college and career dimensions, weaknesses in digital literacy, subject mastery, communication skills, college exploration, and career pathway awareness require targeted reinforcement. These results align with Gonzales and Villarino (2022), who found that senior high school students were motivated and confident but lacked familiarity with college processes and career opportunities. Overall, the study underscores the need for strengthened career guidance programs and transition support to ensure students are fully prepared for post-secondary education and employment.

3.6. Relationship Between College and Career Readiness and Academic Performance

Table 8 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients examining the relationship between college and career readiness (CCR) and academic performance as measured by General Weighted Average (GWA) among the senior high school respondents.

Table 8 Pearson Correlation Coefficients Between College and Career Readiness and GWA

Variable	Pearson (r)	p	Interpretation	Decision
College Readiness vs. GWA	0.321	0.002**	Significant, weak positive	Reject Ho
Career Readiness vs. GWA	0.094	0.382	Not significant	Accept Ho

Note. **p < .01.

The correlation analysis shows that college readiness has a statistically significant weak positive relationship with GWA ($r = 0.321$, $p = 0.002$). This indicates that students with higher academic performance tend to report higher college readiness scores, though the relationship is modest. This finding aligns with Conley's assertion that stronger academic skills and learning strategies contribute to greater preparedness for college. In contrast, career readiness did not show a statistically significant relationship with GWA ($r = 0.119$, $p = 0.266$), suggesting that career readiness is not directly tied to academic grades. Instead, it appears to be influenced more by motivation, self-confidence, and career guidance, as highlighted by Guevarra and Cimene. Overall, the results support the conclusion that while academic performance is linked to college readiness, career readiness depends more on personal and contextual factors rather than grades alone.

3.7. Factors Contributing to Increased Readiness Among Students

The responses of the respondents were analyzed using thematic analysis. Similar answers were coded and grouped into common themes based on recurring ideas and patterns.

Table 9 presents the themes on Factors Contributing to Increased Readiness

Table 9 Themes on Factors Contributing to Increased Readiness

Theme	Sample Responses
Access to Career Information	"Need more information about careers and colleges"
Financial Support	"Need financial assistance for studies"
Family Support	"Parents encourage and support us"
Personal Motivation and Skills	"Self-confidence and determination"
Peer Influence	"Friends help motivate me"

School Influence	"Teachers and school activities help"
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The thematic analysis highlights several key factors shaping the college and career readiness of Grade 12 SHS students. Access to career information emerged as one of the most common themes, with students expressing the need for more knowledge about available college courses and career opportunities, underscoring the importance of strengthened career awareness programs. Financial support was also identified as crucial, as economic constraints remain a major barrier to pursuing higher education. Family support played a significant role, with parental encouragement motivating students to continue their studies and achieve their goals. Personal motivation and skills, such as self-confidence and determination, were cited as essential contributors to academic and career aspirations, while peer influence provided encouragement and motivation. School influence, through teacher support and school activities, was also recognized as enhancing preparedness.

Overall, the findings suggest that readiness is shaped by informational, financial, personal, social, and institutional factors, pointing to the need for a holistic approach that integrates career guidance programs, financial aid systems, family and peer involvement, and school-based interventions. These results are consistent with Pagulayan et al. (2021), who emphasized the importance of access to information, financial capability, and family support, and with Guevarra and Cimene (2020), who highlighted motivation, self-confidence, peer interaction, and school guidance as positive influences. Together, these findings reinforce that readiness is multidimensional and requires coordinated support across different domains to fully prepare students for higher education and future careers.

3.8. Proposed Instructional Activities to Enhance College and Career Readiness

The responses of the respondents regarding the proposed instructional activities to enhance college and career readiness were analyzed using thematic analysis. Similar responses were coded and grouped into common themes based on recurring ideas and patterns identified from the students' answers.

Table 10 Themes on Proposed Instructional Activities

Theme	Sample Responses
ICT and Digital Literacy Training	"Provide computer training and research activities," "Improve ICT skills and technology use"
Work Immersion Programs	"More work immersion and actual job experience," "Exposure to real workplaces"
Career Guidance and Counseling	"Conduct career orientation seminar and counseling," "Guide students in choosing careers and colleges"

The analysis of Table 10 highlights three major themes that students consider essential for enhancing their college and career readiness: ICT and digital literacy training, work immersion programs, and career guidance and counseling services. Students emphasized the importance of ICT skills for research, communication, and adapting to modern academic and professional demands, pointing to the need for stronger technology-based instruction and adequate digital learning resources. Work immersion programs were also identified as critical, as hands-on workplace exposure helps students develop practical skills, confidence, and a clearer understanding of career expectations. In addition, career guidance and counseling services were viewed as necessary to assist students in selecting appropriate college courses and career paths, underscoring the role of structured support systems in increasing awareness of opportunities and personal strengths.

Overall, the findings suggest that readiness can be strengthened through a combination of ICT training, work immersion, and career guidance. These results are consistent with Bautista et al. (2021), who emphasized the value of experiential learning through immersion programs, Montebon (2020), who highlighted ICT training as vital for academic engagement and adaptability, and Samala and De Chavez (2022), who stressed the importance of career counseling in informed decision-making. Together, these studies support the conclusion that technology-based instruction, workplace exposure, and structured guidance programs are key instructional interventions for improving college and career readiness among senior high school students.

4. Conclusion

The results of the study demonstrate that the Grade 12 Senior High School students of ACLC are generally at the Ready level of college and career readiness, though their preparedness sits at the lower boundary of this category. Demographically, most respondents were 16 years old, male, and from low-income households, reflecting the expected K–12 progression but also highlighting socioeconomic challenges that may affect readiness. In terms of academic performance, the mean GWA was 83.16 (Satisfactory), yet more than one-third of students were only Fairly Satisfactory, suggesting the need for academic reinforcement. Significant differences in readiness were observed when grouped by sex and age, with female and older students showing higher readiness levels, while no significant differences were found across family income groups. College readiness showed a weak but significant positive correlation with academic performance, whereas career readiness did not, indicating that career preparedness is shaped more by motivation, guidance, and support systems than by grades. Thematic analysis revealed that access to career information, financial support, family encouragement, personal motivation, peer influence, and school support are key contributors to readiness, while students identified ICT and digital literacy training, work immersion programs, and career guidance and counseling as essential instructional activities to further enhance preparedness.

Overall, the study underscores the significance of providing structured academic and career interventions to strengthen areas of weakness such as digital literacy, communication skills, subject mastery, and career pathway awareness. The null hypotheses were partly disproved: differences in readiness were found by sex and age but not by income, and college readiness was significantly related to academic performance while career readiness was not. These findings highlight the importance of gender-responsive, age-sensitive, and school-based programs that integrate technology training, experiential learning, and career guidance to ensure that all students, regardless of background, are adequately prepared for higher education and future careers

Compliance with ethical standards

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The study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards. Permission to conduct the study was secured from the school administration prior to data gathering.

Informed consent was obtained from all respondents before their participation in the study. Participation was voluntary and confidentiality of responses was assured.

Disclosure of conflict of interest

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

Authors' contributions

May-Gay M. Gosi designed the study, conducted data gathering, analyzed the results, and prepared the initial manuscript draft. Jay Bee B. Omaweng supervised the study, reviewed the literature, refined the manuscript, and provided technical and academic guidance. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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