

Factors Influencing Employers' Decision in Hiring Newly BSBA Graduates for Management Trainee, Supervisory or Managerial Positions

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Abstract - There are more Filipinos who have jobs now than ever before, that could have been a source of happiness for many people, except that a closer look at the data shows that the available jobs are limited and are of low quality. While educational institutions aim to equip students with the requisite theoretical knowledge and practical skills, study shows that there exists a gap between academe and industry requirements. This study aimed to identify the key factors influencing employers' decision in hiring newly graduates of the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration program for management trainee, supervisory or managerial positions, more specifically, to assess the factors considered by employers relative to the newly BSBA graduates' physical appearance, academic background, technical skills and professional competencies, leadership qualities and experiences, internship and other work experiences, professional certifications or accreditation, soft-skill competencies, and industry-specific knowledge and expertise. This study used quantitative and descriptive research design and a self-made survey questionnaire to answer the queries and objectives. In determining the sample size, this study utilized stratified-random sampling. Among 188 qualified businesses in Alaminos City, 65 were included in this study. Frequency distribution, percentage, weighted mean, and Pearson's Chi-Square Test were also used in statistical analysis. The study found out that supervisory or managerial positions that are available for newly BSBA graduates are Operations Manager, General Manager, and Supervisor. Physical Appearance, Soft-Skill Competencies, and Industry-Specific Knowledge and Expertise were the highest-ranked key factors that can influence employers' decision in hiring newly BSBA graduates for management trainee, supervisory or managerial positions. While the least scored factor was Academic Background. There was no significant relationship between key factors influencing employers' decision in hiring newly BSBA graduates for management trainee, supervisory or managerial positions and the business profile. This study recommends that students must give focus on their physical appearance particularly in dressing appropriately, maintaining professional grooming, and the importance of confidence at all times, also the integration of soft-skill training, such as communication, leadership, problem-solving, and teamwork into the curriculum of BSBA programs, and the acquirement of in-depth knowledge and understanding of the industry to help students and newly BSBA graduates build a strong profile critical for supervisory or managerial positions.

Keywords: employer's preferences, newly bsba graduates' employability, associated key factors

INTRODUCTION

Entering the labor market marks a major transition for graduates, requiring adaptation to business culture, career advancement, and independence. Higher education institutions (HEIs) aim not only to produce work-ready individuals but also to develop future entrepreneurs (Lowden et al., 2011). While many view college as a path to stable employment, most graduates seek entry-level positions aligned with their qualifications.

The Philippine agency Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order No. 17, Series of 2017, outlines the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA) program, ensuring graduates are equipped with skills suited to a global business environment.

The program targets supervisory or managerial readiness within a few years of graduation. However, a persistent gap exists between employer expectations and the competencies of new BSBA graduates. Research highlights the need for updated skills and closer collaboration between academia and industry (Hosain et al., 2021; Guo, 2023).

Employability skills as defined by Fajaryati et al. (2020) are the personal qualities that enable a person to secure a job and succeed in their careers. These groups of skills enable individuals to perform a particular job including technical skills, high order thinking skills, people skills/social skills, generic skills, and self-perceived employability skills.

Business education as emphasized by Wilton (2011), plays a pivotal role in enhancing these skills, particularly for Business Administration graduates, to meet evolving job expectations.

Studies identify weaknesses among graduates—such as low motivation, poor communication, and limited problem-solving—which contribute to unemployment (Rahman, 2021; Moisaner, 2013). Despite increased employment in the Philippines, many jobs remain low-quality. In 2023, college graduates made up 25.6% of the unemployed and 38.6% of the underemployed (PSA, 2023). Tracer studies and curriculum alignment are crucial to address job mismatch (Briones et al., 2021; Weligamage, 2014).

Employers' preferences vary by industry, often emphasizing soft skills, work experience, and education (Caiyod et al., 2015). Upskilling and reskilling are increasingly vital, as some employers favor vocational graduates for technical ability while others value degree holders for adaptability (McDonald & Korber, 2023).

This study explores employer preferences in hiring BSBA graduates for management roles to help students understand workplace expectations and guide HEIs in improving curricula. Aligning education with industry needs enhances employment prospects and organizational outcomes (Luther, 2023). Ultimately, evolving curricula that integrate employer feedback are essential for preparing business graduates for the demands of a changing global market (Hussain et al., 2018; Schleicher, 2020).

Employability Skills

Employability is viewed as a key concept in education reform and a measure of teaching quality in higher education (Smith et al., 2001). Employers emphasize teamwork, problem-solving, and a strong work ethic (LinkedIn). Maingay et al. (2022) define employability as the combination of skills, knowledge, and behaviors that help graduates obtain, perform, and advance in jobs. Critical thinking and adaptability are essential for innovation and workplace success (Harvey et al., 1997; Lees, 2002).

Despite the importance of employability, many graduates lack the necessary technical and soft skills to meet labor market demands (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2018). A mismatch remains between university training and industry needs, as many work outside their fields (Hanapi & Nordin, 2014). Knight and Yorke (2004) note that employability varies by degree class, subject, and background, while Raybould and Sheard (2005) found that most vacancies are open to graduates from any discipline if they possess the right skills.

Key employability traits include professionalism, reliability, creativity, communication, teamwork, time management, and a willingness to learn (McLarty, 1998; Nabi, 2003). These transferable soft skills enhance

performance across industries (Indeed, 2020). Studies stress aligning education with job market demands to improve graduate outcomes (Trunk et al., 2006; Rej et al., 2021).

Recent research on BSBA Marketing graduates from Nueva Ecija University showed high competence in communication and adaptability but mixed results in technical knowledge and teamwork, prompting curriculum updates (Arjhel et al., 2024). Communication, leadership, and problem-solving remain top employer priorities (Clokic & Fourie, 2016; Crowne, 2019).

Katz's (1955) three-skill theory and Mumford's (2000) leadership model highlight technical, human, and conceptual skills as core to employability. Leadership and management skills—planning, organizing, leading, and controlling—are highly valued (Abbass, 2012). Surveys show employers prioritize planning, organization, and commercial awareness as top graduate competencies (NACE, 2013; McMurray et al., 2016).

In essence, employability encompasses a blend of soft, technical, and cognitive skills that allow graduates to thrive in dynamic work environments. Strengthening these competencies through education–industry collaboration remains vital to improving graduate readiness.

Factors Influencing Employers' Decision in Hiring

Employers place high value on communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and a positive work attitude (Mehrotra & Elias, 2017; Liptak, 2005). Beyond technical knowledge, personal traits such as flexibility, integrity, and willingness to learn strongly influence job fit and workplace success (Liptak, 2018; Pang et al., 2019). Generic competencies—analytical, problem-solving, and learning abilities—are essential across professions (Heijke et al., 2003; Frazer, 2021). Studies show employers prioritize both hard and soft skills equally and expect universities to align curricula with labor market needs (Saunders & Zuzel, 2010).

Despite academic qualifications, many graduates struggle to secure jobs due to skills mismatches and oversupply in certain fields (Ahmad Asrul, 2009). Employers prefer candidates who demonstrate practical knowledge, adaptability, and critical thinking (Robles, 2012; Heckman & Kautz, 2012). Academic performance alone is insufficient; soft skills and professional experience gained through internships are critical for employability (AACU, 2018).

Employers consistently emphasize personal attributes—work ethic, communication, and teamwork—as core hiring criteria (Ranasinghe & Herath, 2011; Clarke, 2018). Collaborations between universities and industries, including mentorships and training programs, help develop workplace readiness. Recent trends show less focus on GPA and greater emphasis on soft skills such as leadership and problem

solving (NACE, 2023). Entrepreneurship and innovation are also increasingly valued (Kadderi et al., 2010).

Studies highlight that employers favor graduates who fit company culture, show initiative, and possess non-technical competencies like professionalism and adaptability (Stewart et al., 2016; De Guzman et al., 2020). Soft skills—including communication, decision-making, and teamwork—remain top hiring factors (Catacutan et al., 2020; Briones et al., 2021). Appearance and demeanor also affect first impressions and perceived credibility (Woffenden, 2020).

Internships play a major role in hiring decisions. Evidence shows students with internship experience are more employable and likely to receive job offers (Hora et al., 2020; NACE, 2023). Bibliometric studies confirm internships enhance skill development and industry connections, though not all guarantee employment (Saidani et al., 2022; Choe et al., 2023). Surveys reveal that over 60% of employers consider internship experience a key hiring factor, with many offering full-time positions to former interns (AACU, 2023; U.S. Department of Labor, 2023).

Employers' hiring decisions depend on a combination of academic preparation, technical proficiency, and interpersonal competencies. Continuous collaboration between educational institutions and industries is crucial to bridge skill gaps, enhance employability, and prepare graduates for an evolving job market.

Managerial Positions Commonly Filled by Newly BSBA Graduates

A Business Administration degree offers graduates diverse career opportunities across industries. The program builds a strong foundation in business fundamentals such as management, finance, marketing, accounting, IT, and human resources, preparing students for leadership and operational roles. It develops both hard and soft skills—problem-solving, communication, and critical thinking—valued by employers.

According to the University of Wisconsin System, BSBA graduates often begin as Office or Operations Supervisors, Administrative Service Managers, and General or Production Managers. Emsi (2019) projects a 9.5% rise in demand for BSBA-related jobs nationwide over the next decade, though hiring gaps indicate strong competition and the need for graduates with both technical and interpersonal skills.

Under CHED's CMO No. 27, Series of 2017, BSBA graduates specialize in fields offering varied entry-level roles. Financial Management majors may become Finance Trainees, Credit Analysts, Treasury or Financial Assistants, and Traders. Human Resource Management graduates typically begin as HR Trainees, Recruitment or Compensation Assistants, and Administrative Staff.

Marketing Management graduates qualify for positions such as Marketing Trainees, Sales Executives, Product Assistants, or Customer Service Representatives. Operations Management graduates can work as Production or Logistics Assistants, Project Management Aides, and Operations Trainees.

With experience and further education, BSBA graduates can progress to middle or senior management roles or establish their own businesses. The degree's broad, skill-based curriculum equips them to adapt to evolving business environments and pursue leadership opportunities in multiple sectors.

Research Design and Methodology

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to identify key factors influencing employers' hiring decisions for newly graduated BSBA students applying for management trainee, supervisory, or managerial positions. Descriptive research is used to describe population characteristics, behaviors, and patterns that can be generalized to a broader context (Bhandari, 2020).

The study was conducted in Alaminos City, Pangasinan, a 4th-class city known as the commercial and educational center of Western Pangasinan. The respondents were employers from various industries, selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation. Of 188 qualified businesses, 65 participated: 21 from Food and Beverage, 17 from Hospitality and Tourism, 15 from Retail, 4 from Health and Wellness, 3 from Technology, and 1 each from BPO, Real Estate, Construction, Electrical, and Automotive sectors.

A structured survey questionnaire served as the primary data-gathering instrument (Adi Bhat, 2020). The instrument, validated by five experts from academia and industry, obtained a weighted mean of 4.58, indicating very high content validity. Validation emphasized clarity, logical sequencing, and alignment with research objectives.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts: (1) respondents' profiles; (2) available managerial positions for BSBA graduates; and (3) a Likert-scale rating (1 = not relevant to 5 = very highly relevant) assessing key factors in hiring decisions. Data were collected personally by the researchers after securing permission and ensuring respondent consent and confidentiality.

For analysis, frequency and percentage distribution described respondents' profiles and job opportunities (SOP 1–2), while average weighted mean measured the relevance of key hiring factors (SOP 3). To test hypotheses, Pearson's Chi-Square Test was employed using the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) software (SOP 4).

Ethical considerations included voluntary participation, confidentiality of responses, and proper acknowledgment of sources using APA citation standards.

Data Analysis

As indicated in table 1, majority (32.31%) of the employers in Alaminos City, Pangasinan were aged 31-40 years old; 26.15% were 41-50 years old; 23.08% of the employers were aged 25-30 years old; 9.23% of the total respondents were 18-24 years old; and another 9.23% were aged 50 years old and above. Majority (69.23%) of the total respondents were female employers and only 30.77 percent were male employers. A significant majority (80%) of employers hold Bachelor's degree; 7.69% holds high school diploma; 6.15% holds Associate's degree; 4.62% holds Master's degree; and only 1.54% holds vocational certificate.

Majority (26.15%) of employers have 4-6 years' experience in management; 23.08% has 1-3 years of experience in management; employers with experience in management for less than 1 year and more than 10 years have 18.46% respectively; only 13.85% of the total respondents have an experience in management for 7-10 years.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Profile of Employers in Alaminos City, Pangasinan n=65

PROFILE OF EMPLOYERS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Age		
18-24 years old	6	9.23%
25-30 years old	15	23.08%
31-40 years old	21	32.31%
41-50 years old	17	26.15%
50 years old and above	6	9.23%
Sex		
Male	20	30.77%
Female	45	69.23%
Highest Educational Attainment		
High School Diploma	5	7.69%
Vocational Certificate	1	1.54%
Associate's Degree	4	6.15%
Bachelor's Degree	52	80%
Master's Degree	3	4.62%
Years of Experience in Management		

Less than 1 year	12	18.46%
1-3 years	15	23.08%
4-6 years	17	26.15%
7-10 years	9	13.85%
More than 10 years	12	18.46%

In table 2, majority (32.31%) of businesses in Alaminos City, Pangasinan were from Food and Beverage industry; 26.15% of businesses were from Hospitality and Tourism; Retail with 23.08%; 6.15% were from Health and Wellness; 4.62% were from Technology industry; and businesses from Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), Construction, Electrical, and Automotive received 1.54% of the gathered data respectively.

High percentage (72.31%) of the surveyed businesses in Alaminos City have 1-20 number of employees; 18.46% has 21-40 employees; 6.15% has 41-60 employees; and business with 61-100 employees and more than 100, has 1.54% respectively.

Total of 38.46% of surveyed businesses have been operational for 1-5 years; 26.15% have been operational for 6-10 years; businesses that are operational for 11-20 years and more than 20 years have 13.85% respectively; only 7.69% have been operational for less than 1 year.

Total of 87.69% of surveyed businesses in Alaminos City, Pangasinan have 1-3 supervisory or managerial positions; 7.69% has 4-6 supervisory or managerial; and 4.62% of total surveyed businesses have more than 10 supervisory or managerial positions.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Profile of Businesses in Alaminos City, Pangasinan n=65

BUSINESS PROFILE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Industry Sector		
Hospitality and Tourism	17	26.15%
Retail	15	23.08%
Technology	3	4.62%
Business Process Outsourcing (BPO)	1	1.54%
Health and Wellness	4	6.15%
Real Estate	1	1.54%

Food and Beverage	21	32.31%
Construction	1	1.54%
Electrical	1	1.54%
Automotive	1	1.54%
Number of Employees		
1-20	47	72.31%
21-40	12	18.46%
41-60	4	6.15%
61-100	1	1.54%
More than 1000	1	1.54%
Years in Operation		
Less than 1 year	5	7.69%
1-5 years	25	38.46%
6-10 years	17	26.15%
11-20 years	9	13.85%
More than 20 years	9	13.85%
Number of Managerial Positions in Company		
1-3	57	87.69%
4-6	5	7.69%
More than 10	3	4.62%

For the managerial positions available, it is shown in table 3 that majority (48%) of the employers in Alaminos City, Pangasinan said that Operations Manager is the most suitable managerial position for newly BSBA graduates; 37% of the employers says General Manager; 35 % agree that Supervisor is also suitable for newly BSBA graduates. 26% says that Store Manager can also be filled by newly BSBA graduates; Sales Manager and Assistant Manager were suggested by employers with 17% votes respectively; similarly, Team Leader and Manager Trainee were also suggested by employers with 15% votes respectively; 14% of employers suggest Customer Service Manager.

Twelve percent (12%) of the total respondents suggests Marketing Manager; 9% suggests for Finance Manager; Shift Manager, Operations Supervisor, Social Media Manager, and Assistant Marketing Manager, received 8% votes respectively; Business Development Manager and Coordinator received, 6% votes respectively; Administration Manager, Facility Manager, Retail Manager, Assistant Sales Manager, Compliance Manager, have 5% votes respectively.

Procurement Manager, Quality Assurance Manager, have 3% votes respectively; and lastly, Human Resource Manager, Supply Chain Manager, Junior Project Manager, Risk Manager, Brand Manager, Sales Supervisor, Logistic Manager, and Public Relations Manager received 2% votes respectively.

Table 3. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Managerial Positions Available for Newly BSBA Graduates in Alaminos City, Pangasinan
n=65

MANAGERIAL POSITIONS AVAILABLE FOR NEWLY BSBA GRADUATES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
General Manager	24	37%
HR Manager	1	2%
Operations Manager	31	48%
Shift Manager	5	8%
Assistant Manager	11	17%
Supervisor	23	35%
Store Manager	17	26%
Business Development Manager	4	6%
Administration Manager	3	5%
Facility Manager	3	5%
Public Relations Manager	1	2%
Team Leader	10	15%
Finance Manager	6	9%
Procurement Manager	2	3%
Operations Supervisor	5	8%
Sales Manager	11	17%
Social Media Manager	5	8%
Marketing Manager	8	12%
Customer Service Manager	9	14%
Retail Manager	3	5%
Manager Trainee	10	15%
Supply Chain Manager	1	2%
Junior Project Manager	1	2%
Assistant Marketing Manager	5	8%
Assistant Sales Manager	3	5%
Coordinator	4	6%

Risk Manager	1	2%
Brand Manager	1	2%
Quality Assurance Manager	2	3%
Sales Supervisor	1	2%
Logistics Manager	1	2%
Compliance Manager	3	5%

For the perceived level of relevance of the key factors influencing employers' decision in hiring newly BSBA graduates for management trainee, supervisory or managerial positions in Alaminos City, Pangasinan, the physical appearance, has received an overall weighted average of 4.73, the highest-ranked factor influencing employers' decision in hiring newly BSBA graduates and verbally interpreted as *Very Highly Relevant*.

Table 4. Summary of the Perceived Level of Relevance of the Key Factors Influencing Employers' Decision in Hiring Newly BSBA Graduates for Management Trainee, Supervisory or Managerial Positions in Alaminos City, Pangasinan

n=65		
Area	Average Weighted Mean	Descriptive Rating
1. Physical Appearance	4.73	Very Highly Relevant
2. Academic Background	3.88	Highly Relevant
3. Technical Skills and Professional Competencies	4.31	Very Highly Relevant
4. Leadership Qualities and Experiences	4.22	Very Highly Relevant
5. Internship and Other Work Experiences	4.18	Highly Relevant
6. Professional Certifications or Accreditations	4.16	Highly Relevant
7. Soft-Skill Competencies	4.68	Very Highly Relevant
8. Industry-Specific Knowledge and Expertise	4.52	Very Highly Relevant
Overall Average Weighted Mean	4.35	Very Highly Relevant

Legend: 4.21-5.00(VHR), 3.41-4.20(HR), 2.61-3.40(MR), 1.81-2.60(SR), 1.00-many1.80(NR)

Such finding aligns with research showing that appearance often conveys professionalism, confidence, and competence (Dion et al., 1972; Eagly et al., 1999). First impressions, therefore, play a significant role in hiring decisions.

In contrast, academic background received the lowest relevance rating of 3.88 (highly relevant). While still valued, employers place greater emphasis on practical experience and applied skills than on formal credentials. Lindawati (2017) noted that employers continue to assess academic records to gauge foundational knowledge, yet experience often predicts performance more effectively in today's dynamic job market (Pearl, 2023).

Technical skills and professional competencies obtained a mean of 4.31 (very highly relevant), emphasizing the importance of specialized knowledge in modern industries. Quigley (2024) stressed that such skills are now career necessities. Similarly, leadership qualities and experience (M = 4.22) were viewed as critical indicators of teamwork and communication ability (Grasse et al., 2014).

Internship and work experience (M = 4.18) also ranked high, showing that employers value practical, hands-on exposure that demonstrates readiness for workplace challenges (Lopez, 2023). Professional certifications (M = 4.16) were considered important for verifying specialized expertise and enhancing earning potential (Indeed Editorial Team, 2024).

Soft-skill competencies, including communication, emotional intelligence, and teamwork, received a high mean of 4.68, reinforcing their importance in effective management (Robles, 2012; Bholane, 2022). Industry-specific knowledge followed with a mean of 4.52, as employers value awareness of market trends and adaptability to evolving consumer behavior (Corporate Finance Institute, n.d.).

The overall weighted mean of 4.35 (very highly relevant) indicates that employers prioritize well-rounded candidates—those who demonstrate professionalism, technical competence, leadership potential, experience, and strong interpersonal skills. Possessing these attributes significantly enhances the employability of newly graduated BSBA students seeking managerial roles.

The study found a significant relationship between the industry sector and leadership qualities, particularly on how leaders inspire and motivate their teams to achieve collective goals, with a p-value of 0.023. Other factors, such as appearance, academic background, and technical skills, showed no significant correlation with the industry sector.

The study found a significant relationship between the number of employees in a business and the importance of

professional certifications or accreditations, with a p-value of 0.027. Businesses with fewer employees tend to prefer candidates who actively pursue certifications to enhance their qualifications, while other factors like appearance, academic background, and technical skills showed no significant connection to the number of employees.

The study reveals three significant correlations between years of operation and factors influencing employers' decisions. Businesses in operation for 1-5 years prefer candidates with a strong academic background, particularly those with a solid foundation in Business Administration or past scholarship grants (p-value 0.029). Employers also prioritize candidates with internship and work experience, especially those who can apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings (p-value 0.019) and have completed 600 internship hours (p-value 0.031). However, there were no significant correlations found with other factors such as physical appearance, technical skills, leadership, certifications, soft skills, and industry-specific knowledge. Therefore, academic background and job experience are the key factors for businesses with fewer years of operation.

The study found a significant correlation between the number of managerial positions in an organization and technical skills, particularly for applicants with experience using software like QuickBooks, Microsoft Office, and SAP, with a p-value of 0.043. Other factors, including physical appearance, education, leadership, and job experience, showed no significant correlation, indicating that employers prioritize technical competencies related to software knowledge when considering candidates for managerial roles.

Conclusions and Recommendations

For the profile of employers in Alaminos City, Pangasinan, most employers were aged 31-40 years old. Majority of the total respondents were female employers and most of them holds Bachelor's degree. In terms of their experience in management, most of them has 4-6 years experiences already. For the business profile, most of the businesses in Alaminos City were from food and beverage industry with most have 1-20 employees and majority have been operational for 1-5 years. Then, most of the businesses have 1-3 supervisory or managerial positions.

Majority of the employers said that newly BSBA graduates can fill up Operations Manager, General Manager, and Supervisor positions. Appearance, Soft-Skill Competencies, and Industry-Specific Knowledge and Expertise were the highest-ranked key factors that can influence employers' decision in hiring newly BSBA graduates for management trainee, supervisory or managerial positions.

The study identified several significant relationships between key factors influencing employers' decisions. It

found that leadership qualities, particularly the ability to inspire teams, are strongly linked to the industry sector. Businesses with fewer employees tend to value candidates with professional certifications, while companies with 1-5 years of operation prioritize academic background and internship experience. Lastly, the number of managerial positions in a company positively correlates with technical skills, especially software proficiency. For all the significant relationships found in the study, the null hypothesis shall be rejected.

The following recommendations are presented: Encourage the curriculum developers to integrate soft-skill training, such as communication, leadership, problem-solving, and teamwork into the curriculum of BSBA programs. Consider regular review of curriculum to ensure that contents stay relevant and aligned with current educational standards. Universities and Colleges in Alaminos City, Pangasinan should encourage all students to dress appropriately, maintain professional grooming, and stress the importance of confidence at all times. Universities and Colleges in Alaminos City, Pangasinan should provide guidance on how to effectively develop soft skills as well as teaching industry knowledge and how they can apply it to real-business settings to help students build strong profile aligned with employers' expectation.

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