

## Social Capital on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Employment Competencies

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**ABSTRACT:** Graduating students must think critically, work well in teams, and handle challenging situations to succeed in today's fast-paced world. The objective of this study was to explore how the dimensions of social capital (economic, symbolic, cultural, and social) influenced the development of critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills in graduating students. Using a descriptive-correlational design with regression analysis an adapted and modified questionnaire was conducted to 329 graduating students through stratified random sampling using Slovin's formula from Manolo Fortich and Alae High Schools. Findings revealed that students perceived social connections as the most prominent aspect of their social capital, with collaboration emerging as the most valued 21<sup>st</sup> century employment skill. Through collaboration, social connections, and team trust, the students adapted by openly discussing diverse perspectives, challenging assumptions, and collectively innovating solutions to intricate technical challenges. While the symbolic, cultural, and social dimensions positively correlated with employment skills, the symbolic dimension showed the strongest relationship. The economic dimension, however, did not exhibit a significant correlation. The study highlighted the symbolic dimension as the most influential predictor of employment skills, followed by the cultural dimension. It was recommended to focus on improving the economic dimension to enhance overall social capital, positively impacting 21<sup>st</sup> century employment skills.

**KEYWORDS:** 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, Critical Thinking, economic, social capital, symbolic

### I. INTRODUCTION

Social capital was a useful tool that helped people navigate the difficulties of the modern workforce. It was based on social network theory and the strength of interpersonal relationships. It included social, cultural, symbolic, and economic aspects, all of which had a significant influence on a person's employment and future professional opportunities. As students prepared to enter a workforce characterized by innovation, collaboration, and adaptability, understanding how social capital influenced their development of 21st century employment competencies, including critical thinking, creative thinking, effective communication, and collaboration, became imperative. By probing into the levels of social capital across its various dimensions and assessing the proficiency of students in critical employability skills, this study endeavors to provide valuable insights into the mechanisms through which social capital may either facilitate or impede their readiness for the workforce. In a high school where the administration had noticed a decline in students' performance in 21st century employment competencies such as critical thinking, creative thinking, effective communication, and collaboration, the students suspected that the level of social capital within the school community might have influenced their proficiency in these areas.

This research investigated the connection between social capital and the development of essential employment skills for the 21st century among senior high school students (Grade 12) in Manolo Fortich National High School and Alae National High School, Division of Bukidnon, during the academic year 2023 to 2024. The study focused on 329 students and aimed to answer specific questions. First, it assessed the current level of social capital across four dimensions: economic, symbolic, cultural, and social. Second, it evaluated the students' proficiency in critical thinking, creative thinking, effective communication, and collaboration – all considered crucial competencies for employment in the 21st century. Finally, the research explored the relationship between social capital and these competencies. It determined if a link existed and, if so, which specific aspects of social capital (or combinations thereof) most significantly influenced the students' preparedness for the modern workforce.

This study served as a guide for policymakers and educational institutions as the students adjusted to the changing needs of the labor market. It oversaw programs and regulations designed to give graduates the tools they needed to thrive in a rapidly

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evolving labor market. This study offered insightful information about how to prepare for the workforce to meet the needs of the contemporary labor market.

This study was anchored in the theoretical foundations of Pierre Bourdieu's seminal work on social capital and cultural capital. Bourdieu's theories were fundamental in sociology, emphasizing the critical role of social networks, relationships, and affiliations in determining an individual's access to resources and opportunities in society. Bourdieu's introduction of social capital as a distinct entity from economic and cultural capital was particularly pertinent to understanding how individuals navigated the socioeconomic landscape (Bathmaker, 2021).

Bourdieu's work extended to cultural capital theory, which delved into the transmission of cultural knowledge, skills, and habits within different social groups, as evident in *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*, co-authored with Jean-Claude Passeron. This perspective was crucial in contextualizing how educational institutions and social structures played a role in shaping individuals' cultural capital, and consequently, their social mobility.

Social Network Theory further highlighted the significance of weak ties bridging social capital and strong ties bonding social capital in facilitating access to diverse information and resources. This access, in turn, influenced the development of critical thinking, creative thinking, communication skills, and collaboration capabilities among K to 12 graduating students. This perspective was instrumental in understanding how social networks could contribute to the acquisition of 21st century employment competencies.

Moreover, the theory delved into the structural aspects of social networks, including network density, centrality, and brokerage, which shaped individuals' ability to bridge different social circles and leverage their social capital effectively. By integrating Social Network Theory with Bourdieu's framework, this conceptual model provided a more comprehensive understanding of how social capital and social networks collectively shaped students 21st century employment competencies.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a combination of descriptive-correlational and causal research designs. A correlational study sought to understand the natural relationships between existing variables. In simpler terms, correlational research aimed to determine if two or more variables were related and, if so, how (Katzukov, 2020). Furthermore, it also incorporated causal elements by identifying which independent variables, singly or combined, influenced 21st century employment competencies (Indeed Editorial Team, 2021).

In this research, given the specific focus on senior high school students on the point of graduating and potentially entering the job market aligned with their chosen field of study. To achieve this, the researchers chose a stratified random sampling technique using Slovin's formula, a method to determine the required sample size. When deciding on the minimum number of samples necessary for a study, it is important to consider the set error tolerance criteria (Anugraheni et. al., 2023).

The total enlistment number of 329 senior high school students is shown in Table A, carefully chosen to ensure the students met the essential prerequisites for the research objectives. The sampling approach allowed for a meticulous selection process, aligning the participants closely with the study's core focus. It was calculated that the sample size from a total population of approximately 1209 was 329, as shown in Table A, given the specified combination of precision, a confidence level of 95%, and a variability of 0.5.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Problem 1.** What is the prevailing level of Social Capital, encompassing:

- 1.1 economic;
- 1.2 symbolic;
- 1.3 cultural; and
- 1.4 social dimensions?

**Table 1: Overall Social Capital Dimensions**

Variable	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
Economic Dimension	3.11	0.53	Undecided	Moderate
Symbolic Dimension	3.20	0.62	Undecided	Moderate
Cultural Dimension	3.16	0.58	Undecided	Moderate
Social Dimension	3.24	0.60	Undecided	Moderate
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.18</b>	<b>0.58</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

**Note:** 4.5-5.0 Very High; 3.50-4.49 High; 2.50-3.49 Moderate; 1.50-2.49 Low; 1.0-1.49 Least Moderate

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Table 1 provides a summary of the social capital dimensions and reveals that students are unsure about their employment status upon graduation. This uncertainty is highlighted by an overall Mean of 3.18 with SD=0.58, which falls within the undecided category, interpreted as moderate. This rating means that the social capital of graduating students, encompassing economic, symbolic, cultural, and social aspects, is at a moderate level.

Among the four social capital, social dimension has a Mean of 3.24 with SD = 0.60 rank as the highest Mean, describe as Undecided, interpreted as Moderate. Mishra, (2020) stressed that social networks encompass the relationships and interactions students have with peers, teachers, family members, and other individuals within their academic environment. These networks can offer valuable resources, support, and opportunities for learning and growth. Similarly, social capital refers to the collective benefits derived from these social connections, including access to information, mentorship, and emotional support. Students who possess strong social capital often have greater resilience, confidence, and academic motivation.

Moreso, symbolic capital with a Mean of 3.20 with SD = 0.62 rank as the second Mean score describe as Undecided, interpreted as Moderate. Tomlinson et. al., (2022), stressed that a student's believe their degrees hold some value and recognition but are not overwhelmingly confident that this will translate directly into employment opportunities. This could be due to a variety of factors, such as the perceived value of their institution's reputation or their field of study (Vu et. al., 2021).

In addition, cultural capital has a Mean of 3.16 with SD = of 0.58 the third Mean score describe as Undecided, interpreted as Moderate. Diouani, (2023) stated that the educational qualifications, skills, and cultural knowledge that students possess. The moderate rating implies that while students feel to have acquired relevant skills and knowledge, students are uncertain about how effectively these will be utilized or recognized in the job market. This could be a reflection of the gap between academic training and industry requirements, or concerns about the applicability of their skills. This implicates that in this dimension the students have some level of social networks and support, but may not be extensive enough to significantly boost their employment prospects.

Finally, economic dimension got the lowest Mean of 3.11 with SD = of .53 described as Undecided, interpreted as Moderate. The data suggests that while there are variations in the mean ratings across the four constructs of social capital dimensions, graduating students are actively engaged in building their symbolic, cultural, and social capital. From the basis of Boadi et. al., (2022), the economic dimension refers to the financial resources available to the students, which can impact their job prospects and financial stability post-graduation. The moderate rating indicates that students feel neither confident nor entirely pessimistic about their economic opportunities. Therefore, graduating students may benefit from targeted interventions aimed at bolstering their economic resources and enhancing their confidence in securing employment and achieving financial stability after graduation. These interventions could include career counseling services, workshops on financial literacy, internships or experiential learning opportunities, and networking events with alumni and industry professionals. By addressing the perceived uncertainty in the economic dimension of social capital, educational institutions can better prepare their students for the transition into the workforce and empower them to thrive in their chosen career paths.

Overall, by recognizing and addressing the multidimensional nature of social capital, educational institutions can play a pivotal role in equipping students with the resources and skills necessary to navigate the complexities of the modern economy and achieve their goals.

**Problem 2.** To what extent do Senior High School Students exhibit 21<sup>st</sup> century Employment Competencies:

- 2.1 critical thinking;
- 2.2 creative thinking;
- 2.3 effective communication; and
- 2.4 collaboration?

**Table 2: Overall 21<sup>st</sup> Century Employment Competencies**

Variable	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
Critical Thinking	3.21	0.53	Undecided	Moderate
Creative Thinking	3.24	0.54	Undecided	Moderate
Communicating	3.32	0.55	Undecided	Moderate
Collaboration	3.38	0.51	Undecided	Moderate
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.29</b>	<b>0.53</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

**Note:** 4.5-5.0 Very High; 3.50-4.49 High; 2.50-3.49 Moderate; 1.50-2.49 Low; 1.0-1.49 Least Moderate

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Table 2 presents the students self-assessed competencies in critical thinking, creative thinking, effective communication, and collaboration, all essential for success in the modern workforce. The table disclosed that students rated collaboration as the highest, with a Mean of .38 and SD = 0.51. This rating is described as Undecided and interpreted as Moderate. Followed by the collaboration, effective communication received a mean score of 3.38 and a SD = of 0.55, also described as Undecided and interpreted as Moderate. Third is creative thinking, with a Mean score of 3.24 with SD = 0.54, described as Undecided and interpreted as Moderate. The lowest rating is for critical thinking, with a Mean of 3.21 and SD = 0.53, described as Undecided and interpreted as Moderate.

The results indicate the overall Mean of 3.29 with SD = 0.53, described as Undecided and interpret as Moderate. This means that given the high demand for innovation, educators should prioritize strategies to enhance students' confidence and ability in these areas. The findings highlight a moderate level of self-assessed proficiency in critical thinking, creative thinking, effective communication, and collaboration among students. Educational institutions should use this data to strengthen these competencies through targeted interventions and experiential learning opportunities.

According to Gusta et. al., (2020), the goal of developing the 4Cs—Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication, and Creativity—is to produce graduates who excel in these essential skills. To achieve this, educators must understand each student's unique abilities and strengths. Therefore, by fostering these competencies, teachers can help students become adept at critical analysis, effective teamwork, multi-way communication, and creative problem-solving, all of which are crucial for success in the modern job market. By doing so, learners can better prepare graduates to meet the demands of the 21st century workforce, ensuring to possess the necessary skills to thrive in a dynamic and collaborative professional environment.

**Problem 3.** Is there a significant relationship between the level of Social Capital and the 21st century Employment Competencies among Senior High School Students?

**Table 3: Correlation Analysis**

Independent	r-value	p-value	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Economic Dimension	0.069	0.469	Accept	Not Significant
Symbolic Dimension	0.472	0.000**	Reject	Significant
Cultural Dimension	0.291	0.003**	Reject	Significant
Social Dimension	0.198	0.048*	Reject	Significant

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis reveals relationships between different dimensions and their impact on the variables under study. Table 11 discloses the summary of social capital dimension. It can be deduced from the table that the computed r-value 0.069; p-value=0.469 is higher than the critical p-value 0.05 level of significant. This means that there is no significant relationship. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Economic resources alone may not directly influence employment competencies. This means that simply increasing financial resources or economic support might not be sufficient to enhance student engagement or success. Educational institutions and policymakers should consider complementing economic support with other forms of capital that have a more direct impact on outcomes.

In light of the discussion articulated by Michael (2017), suggests that students from less privileged backgrounds receive fewer benefits in terms of money and prestige from their education compared to those from higher social classes. Therefore, these students often need to work harder to keep up with their wealthier peers. This shows that just giving more financial help might not be enough to help students succeed. Schools and policymakers should also think about giving support in other ways, like helping students build social connections or effective communications, which can have a bigger impact on how well they do in school. Moreso, the results of symbolic dimension computed r-value 0.472 P:value:0.000 is lower than the critical p-value of 0.01 level of significant of symbolic dimension. This means that institutions should invest in building and maintaining their reputations, and students should be encouraged to achieve distinctions and awards that enhance their symbolic capital. This dual approach, providing financial support while also building social and symbolic capital—could help level the playing field for students from diverse backgrounds. Social connections can offer networking opportunities, mentorship, and access to resources that are often readily available to more privileged students. Similarly, effective communication skills can empower students to advocate for themselves, seek help when needed, and build valuable professional relationships.

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These efforts can help improve students' prospects in the job market and their overall success, also the computed r-value 0.291; P:0.003 of cultural dimension. This means that there is a significant relationship between the social capital and 21<sup>st</sup> century employment competencies of the 329 graduating students resulted that the null hypothesis is rejected. Lastly, the social dimension computed r-value 0.198; P:0.048 is lower than the critical p-value of 0.05 level of significant of social dimension. This means that there is a significant relationship between the social capital and 21<sup>st</sup> century employment competencies of the 329 graduating students resulted that the null hypothesis is rejected. These findings align with Kuo et al. (2021), who highlight the crucial role of social capital in developing employment competencies. By rejecting the null hypothesis in both cultural and social dimensions, it becomes clear that educational institutions must adopt a holistic approach to student development. This approach should integrate financial support with initiatives that build social and cultural capital, ensuring that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, have equal opportunities to succeed. Therefore, the significant relationships between social capital and 21<sup>st</sup> century employment competencies indicate that enhancing both cultural and social dimensions of social capital is vital. Educational institutions should prioritize programs and policies that foster social connections, cultural knowledge, and academic excellence. These efforts would help bridge the gap between students from different backgrounds, improve their job market readiness, and ultimately contribute to their overall success.

### Problem 4. Which of the independent variable/s singly or in combination influence/s the dependent variable?

Regression analysis is a statistical tool used to explore relationships between variables. Typically, researchers aim to determine the causal effect of one variable on another, such as the impact of a price increase on demand (Montgomery et al., 2021). The multiple regression analysis conducted aimed to explore the relationship between four predictor variables—Economic Dimension, Symbolic Dimension, Cultural Dimension, and Social Dimension—and the dependent variable, which is 21<sup>st</sup> Century Employment Skills. The model's overall significance is confirmed by an F-statistic of 9.649 with a p-value of 0.000, indicating that the predictors collectively provide a meaningful explanation of the variance in the dependent variable. Examining the unstandardized coefficients, we see that the constant term is 1.586, which is significant with a t-value of 4.592 ( $p < 0.001$ ). This means that when all predictors are held at zero, the expected value of the dependent variable is 1.586. Among the predictors, the Symbolic Dimension has a high standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.434) and a significant t-value of 4.922 ( $p < 0.001$ ), highlighting its strong positive effect and significance as a predictor.

**Table 4: Regression Analysis**

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standard Coefficient Beta	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
Constant	1.586	0.345		4.592	0.000
Economic Dimension	0.044	0.073	0.054	.601	0.550
Symbolic Dimension	0.275	0.056	0.434	4.922	0.000
Cultural Dimension	0.158	0.067	0.209	2.350	0.020
Social Dimension	0.065	0.058	0.100	1.111	0.269
	R=0.538	R <sup>2</sup> =0.289	F=9.649	Sig.=0.000	

a. Dependent Variable: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Employment Skills

b. Predictors: (Constant), economic, symbolic, cultural, social dimensions

The Cultural Dimension also shows a significant positive relationship with the dependent variable. This finding means that the more culturally competent graduating students are, the more employable to become. Cultural competence may include understanding and valuing diversity, being adaptable to various cultural contexts, and effectively communicating across cultures (Tan, 2020). Its t-value of 2.350 is significant ( $p = 0.020$ ), indicating that increases in the Cultural Dimension are associated with moderate increases in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Employment Skills. Furthermore, the R<sup>2</sup> value explains the influence of the whole set of independent variables taken as one on the 21<sup>st</sup> century employment competencies. The measure of the total variation of the dependent variable consisted of 28.9 percent, which reflects the amount of variance explained by the five (4) independent variables. In comparison, 71.1 percent of the influence can be attributed to other factor variables not included in the study.

On the other hand, the Economic Dimension, is not a significant predictor. While the economic dimension was hypothesized to influence employment competencies, the data shows that it does not have a significant impact. This could be factors such as students economic background or economic conditions during their studies do not directly enhance their

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employability skills (Pham et al., 2019). Similarly, the social dimension was expected to influence employment competencies, the data indicates it does not have a statistically significant impact. This means that social factors such as networking skills, community engagement, or social support systems might not directly enhance the employability of students to a significant degree (Martin et al., 2020). The regression analysis reveals that while the model as a whole explains a moderate portion of the variation in 21st century employment competencies among graduating students, not all dimensions of social capital contribute equally. Notably, the Symbolic and Cultural Dimensions emerge as significant predictors, with the Symbolic Dimension exerting a particularly strong positive influence. When it comes to preparing graduating students for employment in the 21st century, symbolic and cultural dimensions of social capital are particularly influential. This indicates that factors such as shared values, cultural practices, and symbolic resources like prestige and recognition play a significant role in shaping essential employment competencies. Therefore, symbolic and cultural are most influential in fostering essential employment skills, educators and policymakers can better tailor interventions and support mechanisms to prepare students for success in the modern workforce.

### IV. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the significant findings of the study the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Students considered their social ties to be the most important element of their social capital, appreciating the immediate emotional support, mentorship, and access to information that these relationships provided.
2. Collaboration in workplace prepares students to succeed in future occupations that require teamwork.
3. A comprehensive student support strategy that combines financial assistance with programs that foster social connections, cultural knowledge, and academic excellence will be necessary for improving the multiple facets of employment competencies in the 21st century, emphasizing the importance of developing all dimensions of social capital.
4. Educators have increasingly recognized cultural competency as resulted in the creation of programs that include simulations, workshops, and guest speakers who have shared their cultural experiences. Furthermore, educators have begun to boost the student's employability by giving opportunities for them to gain recognitions. These chances may include internships, awards, or projects that increase a student's symbolic capital in a specific sector.

### V. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the significant findings and conclusions of the study the following are offered:

1. Implementers and institutions should prioritize financial literacy and economic empowerment initiatives, such as budgeting and savings workshops, as well as courses on economic self-sufficiency and entrepreneurship. Targeted interventions such as career counseling, financial literacy classes, apprenticeships, and networking events should also be prioritized by educational institutions to better prepare students for the workforce and help them achieve their career objectives.
2. Integrating critical thinking into the curriculum, creating an inquiry-based learning environment, developing analytical skills, enhancing reflective thinking, and providing constructive feedback are all essential phases toward improving students critical thinking abilities, preparing them for the challenges of the 21st century job market, and promoting their overall academic and professional success.
3. Based on the correlation research, it is recommended that the Economic Dimension be prioritized for improvement, as it currently has the smallest correlation with 21st Century Employment Skills. This emphasized the importance of a comprehensive approach that combines financial assistance with activities aimed at increasing symbolic and cultural capital in order to better prepare students for success in the job market.
4. Cultural competency was widely recognized by educators as an important talent for managing different companies, motivating the inclusion of cultural communication training, worldwide collaborations, and various resources in curriculum. Guest lectures, simulations, apprenticeships, and industry-specific initiatives were highlighted to assist students in developing symbolic capital and reputation in their disciplines, so effectively preparing them for the intricacies of modern industries and competitive labor markets.

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