

Strengthening Career Guidance for Senior High School Students: Insights from a SWOT Analysis

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Abstract

This study used a qualitative-descriptive methodology and SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis to examine the implementation of career guidance programs. Based on Republic Act No. 11206 and Donald Super's Career Development Theory, the study explored how these initiatives help senior high school students in making informed academic and career decisions. Career Guidance Week celebrations, aptitude-based seminars, teacher participation, and alumni partnerships were identified as program successes in focus groups with guidance counselors, guidance designates, faculty advisers, and students. Weaknesses involved inconsistent implementation, lack of monitoring and evaluation, minimal parental and industry involvement, and limited resources. Opportunities were discovered through community support, outside collaborations, and scholarship programs. The study highlights the need for more systematic implementation, improved evaluation, increased funding, and more stakeholder engagement to enhance students' career readiness and success.

Keywords: career guidance program; SWOT analysis; career counseling

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The Philippines' K–12 program restructured the country's educational system to better prepare students for higher education, employment, or entrepreneurship. Students must make important career decisions early on in the senior high school curriculum, which offers academic, technical-vocational, athletic, and artistic tracks (Gestiada et al., 2017). Programs for career counseling are designed to help students align realistic employment alternatives with their own interests, abilities, and aspirations. (Buraga & Caballero, 2018). Despite these objectives, there are still challenges in program implementation, particularly in ensuring that students receive adequate guidance in making wise career choices (Fernandes et al., 2015; Lupas & Farin, 2021). Prior studies show that the effectiveness of career guidance depends heavily on the active participation of teachers, parents, and administrators (Astuti, 2019; Arshad et al., 2018; Gipalin & Madrigal, 2021; Pasco & Fabilla, 2023).

This study assesses the career guidance program using SWOT analysis. This study aims to evaluate how the program's opportunities and strengths can be enhanced, while addressing its threats and weaknesses to improve implementation. It is based on Republic Act No. 11206, also known as the Secondary Career Guidance and Counseling Act of 2019, and Donald Super's (1995) Career Development Theory, which emphasizes career maturity.

Research problem

This study's main objective was to use a SWOT analysis framework to assess the implementation of career counseling program. The research sought to determine how these programs and initiatives are implemented in senior high schools and to evaluate their overall effectiveness in guiding students toward informed academic and career decisions.

Research hypothesis

Although the study employed a qualitative-descriptive approach, it was predicated by the assumption that the effective implementation of career guidance programs depends on the balance of their internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as their responsiveness to external opportunities and threats. It was hypothesized that the career guidance programs possess identifiable strengths—such as active school participation and community partnerships—but also face weaknesses related to lack of funding, inconsistent implementation, and minimal stakeholder involvement. Furthermore, the study presumed that recognizing these internal and external factors would lead to strategic recommendations for enhancing the delivery and effectiveness of career guidance services for senior high school students

METHODS

A qualitative-descriptive design was employed to evaluate the career guidance program using SWOT analysis. Data were gathered through focus group discussions (FGDs) with licensed guidance counselors, guidance designates, faculty advisers, and senior high school students from selected schools in Cebu City.

Participants were selected purposively based on their involvement in or experience with career guidance activities. Structured guiding questions intended to elicit information to elicit insights about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the program was conducted.

Narrative analysis was used to examine the data, capturing informants' lived experiences and perspectives. Emerging themes were categorized into the SWOT matrix to identify internal (strengths, weaknesses) and external (opportunities, threats) factors. Ethical clearance ensuring participant confidentiality and voluntary participation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1

Strengths of the Career Guidance Program

Theme	Description/Interpretation
1. Celebration of Career Guidance Week encourages student participation and awareness	The Career Guidance Week provides interactive and visual activities such as simulations, booths, and dress-up events that enhance student engagement and awareness of diverse career paths.
2. Aptitude-based career talks match student interests and potentials	Aptitude-based talks align with students' interests and highlight job-related pathways, motivating them to pursue courses and careers that match their skills.
3. Involvement of teachers in providing informal guidance	Teachers play an active advisory role, offering personalized encouragement and informal career guidance beyond formal counseling sessions.
4. Simulations and dress-up activities help students visualize career roles	Simulations and costume-based activities allow students to imagine themselves in professional roles, increasing career awareness and motivation.
5. Group and individual counseling options accommodate student needs	Counseling is delivered through group and limited one-on-one sessions, complemented by portfolio-building to support individualized learning and reflection.
6. Collaboration with alumni and professionals increases exposure	Partnerships with alumni and professionals expose students to real-world practices, enriching their understanding of career paths and employability skills.
7. Integration with immersion subjects for practical experience	Embedding career guidance in immersion subjects connects academic learning with hands-on experience, fostering career readiness.
8. Use of portfolios to track academic and career progress	Portfolios encourage reflection, allowing students to monitor growth in both academic and career domains.
9. Strong student interest when activities are hands-on and visually engaging	Hands-on and visual activities increase student motivation, participation, and engagement in career guidance initiatives.
10. Year-long guidance program tailored to SHS students	The continuity of a year-long program allows consistent support and development of students' career awareness and planning throughout senior high school.

The findings of the study showed several notable strengths in the implementation of the career guidance program. One of the most prominent was the Career Guidance Week celebration, which featured engaging activities such as simulations, dress-up events, and career fairs. These programs successfully captured students' interest, increased their awareness of various career paths, and allowed them to visualize possible career. Such interactive activities fostered enthusiasm and helped students relate classroom learning to real-world applications. Another strength was the conduct of aptitude-based career presentations, where teachers and invited speakers tailored their discussions to match students' interests and aptitudes. These sessions motivated learners to explore academic strands and courses aligned with their skills and passions, making the guidance experience more personalized and meaningful. The active involvement of teachers also emerged as a key factor in the program's success. These workshops inspired students to investigate academic tracks and programs that matched their interests and abilities.

Furthermore, collaboration with alumni and industry professionals enhanced the practical dimension of the program. Alumni who had established themselves in various professions returned to share experiences, offer mentorship, and bridge the gap between academic preparation and workplace realities. The integration of career guidance into immersion subjects and portfolio-building activities also provide students necessary experiential learning opportunities. Through these tasks, learners not only applied theoretical knowledge but also reflected on their competencies and future aspirations. Overall, these practices support Gati and Levin's (2015) assertion that exposure to authentic career contexts significantly enhances decision-making skills. Likewise, Brown et al. (2018) emphasized that reflective tools such as portfolios promote self-directed learning and instill a sense of ownership in career development—outcomes that were clearly evident in the strengths identified in this study.

Table 2
Weakness of Guidance Program

Theme	Description/Interpretation
1. Inconsistent implementation across levels	Career guidance activities are inconsistently implemented across grade levels and schools. Some students are unaware of the program's existence, and there is no standardized or monitored framework to ensure continuity and development.
2. Lack of follow-up and evaluation	The absence of consistent supervision, monitoring, and evaluation limits program improvement. Without assessment tools and feedback mechanisms, career guidance remains largely for compliance rather than continuous development.
3. Weak parental involvement	Parental expectations and lack of awareness of labor market demands restrict students' freedom in making career choices. Family influence often outweighs students' personal interests and aptitudes.
4. Low industry engagement	The program has limited collaboration with industries and employers. Existing partnerships are minimal and mostly confined to schools, reducing students' exposure to real-world career experiences.
5. Overworked or undertrained counselors	Many guidance activities are handled by teachers designated as counselors without formal training or licensure. This results in limited planning, weak implementation, and lack of expertise in program delivery.
6. Inadequate career exploration tools	The absence of standardized tools for assessing interests and aptitudes limits students' self-awareness and informed decision-making. Counselors rely on informal methods rather than evidence-based assessments.

The findings show that inconsistent implementation across grade levels remains a major issue. Some students were unaware that a career guidance program even existed, while others noted that activities were only conducted toward the end of the school year, particularly near graduation. This lack of consistent and closely watched framework across schools is reflected in this lack of continuity and standardization. According to Gysbers and Henderson (2015), career guidance programs should be comprehensive, developmental, and systematically implemented throughout a student's schooling to promote consistent student's academic career. The lack of evaluation was also emphasized by participants, as most programs were carried out merely for compliance without structured monitoring or assessment tools. This aligns with the findings of Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2017), who pointed that the absence evaluation and follow-up of programs run the risk of

becoming ceremonial rather than transformative.

Other notable weaknesses include weak parental and industry involvement, overworked or undertrained counselors, and inadequate career exploration tools. Parents often influence students' career decisions without being well-informed about current labor market demands, leading to mismatches between aspirations and opportunities—a concern also noted by Arshad et al. (2018), who found that limited parental career awareness hinders informed decision-making among adolescents. Additionally, the lack of linkages with industries restricts students' real-world exposure, echoing OECD's (2018) recommendation that partnerships between schools and employers are vital for effective career preparation. The shortage of licensed guidance counselors and standardized assessment tools further weakens program delivery. As Gati and Levin (2015) highlight, valid interest assessments and competent counseling support are crucial in helping students make realistic and satisfying career choices. Collectively, these weaknesses underscore the need for stronger structural support, systematic evaluation, and stakeholder collaboration to enhance the effectiveness of the career guidance program.

Table 3
Opportunities of Guidance Program

Theme	Description/Interpretation
1. Government and community support for education	Government programs and local scholarships provide financial support that encourages students to pursue further education and career development. Collaboration with LGUs strengthens program reach and sustainability.
2. Partnerships with private institutions and industries	Partnerships with higher education institutions and private industries expand students' exposure to training, scholarship, and employment opportunities, strengthening their transition from school to work.
3. Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and alumni support	The involvement of PTAs and alumni provides logistical, financial, and motivational support. Alumni participation also enhances student inspiration and career awareness.
4. Collaboration with NGOs and community partners	NGOs and community organizations offer additional resources, training, and programs that supplement school-based career guidance efforts.

Table 3 highlights the presence of government and community support, such as the Sugbu Scholarship and various local government initiatives that promote youth education and employment. These programs extend financial assistance to deserving students, which helps lessen economic barriers to education and career advancement. As emphasized by Villanueva (2017), partnerships between schools and local governments enhance students' access to academic and vocational opportunities, particularly in resource-limited settings. The collaboration with private institutions and industries further expands students' exposure to scholarship programs, work immersion experiences, and career orientation activities. Such partnerships enable schools to connect academic instruction with labor market needs, a recommendation supported by the OECD (2018), which underscores that sustained school-industry linkages are key to successful school-to-work transitions.

Additionally, the involvement of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), alumni, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) creates significant opportunities for resource mobilization and mentorship. Alumni often serve as role models, sharing real-life career experiences that motivate and guide students in their own decision-making. Similarly, PTAs and NGOs contribute through logistical and financial assistance, helping

sustain school activities and enhance student participation. This community-driven approach aligns with Education Scotland (2015), which advocates for whole-community engagement in career development initiatives. Collectively, these opportunities show a strong external support system that, if fully utilized, can improve inclusivity, continuity, and impact of career guidance programs in public schools.

Table 4
Threats of Guidance Programs

Theme	Description/Interpretation
1. Limited budget and logistical constraints	Insufficient funding and logistical support limit the number and quality of career guidance activities. Schools often rely on donations or external sponsors to sustain programs.
2. Family pressure and socio-economic factors	Students' career choices are often constrained by family expectations and financial limitations. Economic pressures lead them to prioritize practicality over personal interest or aptitude.
3. Lack of facilities and materials for program delivery	The absence of adequate facilities, equipment, and updated resources undermines the delivery and impact of career guidance services.
4. Low awareness and participation from stakeholders	Limited stakeholder participation and weak coordination hinder the collaborative implementation of the program. A lack of awareness reduces community engagement and shared responsibility.

The findings reveal that limited budget and constraints in logistics are among the most pressing threats faced by schools. The lack of allocated funds restricts the conduct of comprehensive activities such as career fairs, workshops, and counseling sessions. Consequently, most schools depend on external sponsors and solicitations to sustain the program. This financial limitation aligns with the observations of Villanueva (2017), who emphasized that insufficient funding remains a major obstacle to the continuity and quality of guidance services in Philippine schools. Similarly, Gysbers and Henderson (2015) assert that allocation of resources directly affects the reach and effectiveness of career guidance programs, particularly in public education systems.

Another persistent threat arises from lack of facilities, family pressure, and socio-economic factors. Students often experience parental influence that prioritizes financially stable or “practical” courses over those aligned with their interests, a phenomenon also discussed by Arshad et al. (2018), who noted that family expectations significantly mold career decisions of adolescent. Moreover, many schools lack dedicated guidance offices, updated assessment tools, and access to labor market information, which limits program impact. The low participation of stakeholders—including parents, local government units, and industry partners—further weakens collaboration and shared accountability. This finding echoes OECD (2018), which stresses that multi-sectoral coordination is necessary for career guidance to be effective and sustainable. Collectively, these threats emphasize the urgent need for more funding, stakeholder engagement, and resource development to ensure that career guidance programs are responsive and relevant to the needs of senior high school students.

Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that the Career Guidance Program plays a significant role in helping senior high school students make informed and meaningful career choices. The program's **strengths** lie in its interactive and student-centered activities, such as Career Guidance Week, aptitude-based talks, and teacher-led counseling sessions, which promote self-awareness, motivation and engagement. Opportunities for improvement are also present through the support of community linkages, government scholarship programs, and partnerships with universities, industries, and alumni. These external collaboration contribute positively to enhancing the relevance and sustainability of career guidance efforts.

However, the program continues to face challenges that hinder its full potential. Identified **weaknesses** include inconsistent implementation, lack of standardized monitoring and evaluation, weak parental and industry involvement, and limited access to trained personnel and assessment tools. Moreover, external **threats**—such as limited funding, family pressure, and lack of facilities—further prevent program effectiveness and equity of access. These findings emphasize the need for a more structured and organized approach to career guidance, supported by stronger stakeholder partnership, consistent policy implementation, and sufficient financial and human resources.

Overall, the study concludes that strengthening the career guidance program requires institutional commitment and community collaboration. A unified framework must be developed for implementation, evaluation, and counselor training can ensure that all students receive continuous, developmental, and relevant guidance. By addressing these gaps, the program can more effectively empower students to continue careers aligned with their abilities, interests, and the demands of the current and evolving labor market—fulfilling the vision of holistic student development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it is recommended to strengthen the Career Guidance Program through a more organized, consistent, and developmentally focused framework. A standardized implementation strategy should be established to ensure consistent delivery of career guidance activities across all grade levels. To guarantee effectiveness of program, schools should adopt systematic monitoring and evaluation procedures that incorporate regular feedback from students, teachers, and counselors. Likewise, continuous professional development and capacity-building programs should be provided to guidance counselors and designated teachers to improve their competencies in career counseling, assessment, and program planning. The quality and consistency of service delivery will also be enhanced by ensuring that each school has licensed Registered Guidance Counselors (RGCs)

Moreover, sufficient funds and resource allocation are necessary to maintain effective career guidance program. Schools must be provided with adequate resources, assessment tools, and updated labor market information to make activities relevant and evidence-based. Stronger collaboration with parents, local government units, higher education institutions, industries, and non-government organizations should also be fostered to expand opportunities for career exposure, mentoring, and scholarship. In addition, schools should implement activities that promote parental awareness of labor market trends and the importance of supporting the individual career choices of students. Through these initiatives, the Career Guidance Program can become

more inclusive, sustainable, and empower senior high school students to make informed, purposeful, and realistic career decisions that prepare them for higher education, employment, or entrepreneurship.

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