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Voices From the Field: Unveiling the Struggles of Technical Vocational Livelihood (TVL) Students in Work Immersion Activities

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20492778>

Authors:

¹Mark Anthony L. Gani, LPT
Esperanza National High School

²Jaime Boy U. Ngag Jr., PhD
South Cotabato State College

Publication History:

Date Submitted: April 20, 2026

Date Accepted: April 21, 2026

Date Reviewed: April 22, 2026

Date Revised: May 30, 2026

Date Published: June 01, 2026

How to cite this work:

Gani, M. A., & Ngag, J. B. J. (2026). Voices From the Field: Unveiling the Struggles of Technical Vocational Livelihood (TVL) Students in Work Immersion Activities. *MÉTILEDTÈD: International Multidisciplinary Journal in Language, Education, and Culture*, 2(13), 507–529. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20492778>

ABSTRACT

Work immersion programs are a cornerstone of Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) education, providing learners with practical experiences that bridge classroom learning and industry demands. This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of TVL students during work immersion activities, focusing on the challenges they encounter and the impact on personal and professional development. Specifically, it sought to uncover how these experiences shape students' confidence, skills, resilience, and career readiness in selected secondary schools in Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat, during the school year 2025–2026. A qualitative research design employing the phenomenological approach was utilized to gather in-depth insights into students' perceptions and experiences. Data were collected through reflective journals, interviews, and observation, and were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and themes. Findings revealed that TVL students undergo a multifaceted learning process and growth during immersion. They adjusted to workplace routines, managed responsibilities, and applied technical skills in real-world settings, leading to enhanced confidence, self-esteem, and appreciation for their tasks. Students also faced challenges, including unfamiliar environments, skill-related anxiety, workload pressures, and interpersonal conflicts, which tested their resilience and problem-solving abilities. Support from teachers, supervisors, and peers emerged as a critical coping mechanism. Overall, immersion experiences contributed to the development of essential competencies, including communication, social, and technical skills, alongside personal values such as responsibility, adaptability, and perseverance. Moreover, these experiences informed career readiness and self-awareness, preparing students for future professional roles. In conclusion, confronting and navigating immersion struggles plays a pivotal role in fostering holistic development among TVL learners. These findings highlight the importance of structured orientation, mentorship, and reflective practices in maximizing the benefits of work immersion programs.

Keywords: *TVL students, work immersion, personal and professional development, resilience*



INTRODUCTION

Background of Study

Work immersion programs are integral to Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) education, providing students with practical experience that bridges the gap between classroom learning and industry demands. These programs aimed to enhance employability by providing hands-on training in real-world settings. However, students often face challenges during these immersions, impacting their overall learning experience.

Globally, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems have encountered industry-practice gaps, particularly in aligning technical and transversal skills with labor market needs. Rosen et al. (2018) highlighted that TVET graduates often lack essential employability skills, including human skills, which are crucial for job retention. Additionally, administrative support deficiencies exacerbate these gaps, hindering the effectiveness of TVET programs (Rosen et al., 2018). Addressing these issues necessitates curriculum development, enhanced academe-industry collaboration, and targeted training to meet industry demands (Mohamad et al., 2021). However, there is limited research on the specific challenges TVET students face during work immersion, indicating a liter.

In the Philippines, work immersion is a mandatory component of the Senior High School curriculum, designed to provide students with practical industry experience. Despite its objectives, students encounter various challenges during these immersions. A study by Icban (2019) revealed that TVL students often face a mismatch between their skills and workplace demands, leading to difficulties in meeting industry expectations. Additionally, safety concerns have been reported, with students assigned tasks without adequate training or supervision, posing risks to their well-being (Dela Cruz et al., 2019). Furthermore, the lack of mentorship and guidance during immersion programs leaves students feeling overwhelmed and unsupported (Garcia, 2020). These challenges highlight a gap in adequately preparing students for immersion experiences.

In South Central Mindanao, particularly in Sultan Kudarat, work immersion programs present unique challenges. A study by Depeña (2022) at Pantalan Senior High School identified several issues affecting students' readiness for work immersion. These include a lack of pre-immersion training, insufficient understanding of work immersion concepts, and minimal motivation from immersion teachers. Students also showed unfamiliarity with the nature of work, leading to challenges in adapting to workplace environments. These findings suggest a gap in the preparatory activities and support systems necessary for effective work immersion experiences in this region.

While existing studies have identified general challenges in work immersion programs, research is scarce focusing on the specific struggles of TVL students during these activities, particularly in Sultan Kudarat. Understanding these localized challenges is crucial for developing targeted interventions to enhance the effectiveness of work immersion programs in this region.



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This study aimed to fill this gap by providing an in-depth exploration of the struggles of TVL students during work immersion activities in Sultan Kudarat.

This study sought to uncover the struggles encountered by TVL students during work immersion activities, focusing on secondary schools in Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat for the school year 2025-2026.

Research Questions

This study sought to uncover the struggles encountered by TVL students during work immersion activities, focusing on the selected secondary schools in Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat, for the school year 2025-2026.

Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of TVL students during their work immersion activities?
2. How do TVL students perceive and navigate the challenges they encounter in their immersion programs?
3. In what ways do these struggles impact the personal and professional development of TVL students?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used qualitative research, specifically the phenomenological approach was employed to uncover the struggles encountered by TVL students during work immersion activities, focusing on the selected secondary schools in Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat for the school year 2025-2026.

Phenomenological research is a method that aims to delve into lived experiences to gain deeper insights into how these are interpreted. It assumes that individuals employ a universal structure or essence to derive meaning from their encounters. This research involves participants' emotions, perceptions, and beliefs to shed light on the fundamental essence of the phenomenon under investigation. An essential aspect of the phenomenological research design is the researcher's obligation to set aside any preconceived assumptions about the experience or phenomenon (Delve & Limpaecher, 2012).

Participants of the Study

Table 1 presents the participants' qualifications, based on the established criteria, in selecting eligible informants for the study. The study involved a total of fifteen (15) TVL students



from the selected secondary schools in Esperanza, who met the researcher's specified inclusion criteria:

Table 1. Participants' Inclusion Criteria

Qualifications
<i>Participants: 15 Students</i>
<p>1. Enrollment in the TVL Track – Only students who were officially enrolled in the Technical-Vocational Livelihood (TVL) track in selected secondary schools in Esperanza during the School Year 2025–2026 will be included.</p> <p>2. Participation in Work Immersion – Students must have undergone or are currently undergoing work immersion activities as part of their TVL curriculum requirements.</p> <p>3. Willingness to Participate – Students must voluntarily agree to participate in the study and provide informed consent (and parental consent, if minors).</p> <p>4. Availability for Data Collection – Only students who were available during the scheduled interviews, surveys, or focus group discussions will be considered for inclusion.</p>

Sampling Technique

During the conduct of this study, a Purposive Sampling Technique was used to select fifteen (15) TVL students from the selected secondary schools in Esperanza, division of Sultan Kudarat during the school year 2025-2026, who met the specific inclusion criteria established by the researcher.

Purposive sampling, or judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, constitutes a variant of non-probability sampling. Within this approach, researchers exercise their acumen in selecting individuals from the population to partake in their survey (Alchemer, 2021). This sampling mandates that researchers possess prior knowledge of the objectives underpinning their study to contact with eligible participants through online survey platforms. Researchers resort to purposive sampling in order to secure access to a distinct subgroup of individuals, in which all survey respondents are meticulously chosen based on their alignment with a specific demographic or criterion.

Research Instruments

In this study, a semi-structured interview functioned as an exploratory instrument during both in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to uncover the struggles encountered by TVL students during work immersion activities, focusing on the selected secondary schools in Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat for the school year 2025-2026.



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The validity and appropriateness of this tool were substantiated through a rigorous evaluation process conducted by a panel of experts.

Data Gathering Procedure

To ensure the research's reliability, a strict adherence to a predefined set of procedures was maintained. The primary objective of this study was to uncover the struggles encountered by TVL students during work immersion activities, focusing on the selected secondary schools in Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat for the school year 2025-2026.

In the initial phase, the researcher diligently sought formal authorization from both the Superintendent of DepEd-Sultan Kudarat and the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies (CGS). This authorization is essential to obtain the necessary permissions for the researcher to conduct the study, emphasizing the importance of ethical considerations.

Following this, a secondary authorization letter was sent to the principals, explicitly requesting access to the specific data required for this research.

A meticulously crafted survey questionnaire was developed, subjected to rigorous evaluation, and then administered to the targeted participants.

The researcher employed a Purposive Sampling Technique to carefully select secondary school TVL students as participants in this study. Assuming strict adherence to the established EWMCI-Research Ethics Committee, the researcher proceeded with conducting face-to-face interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

The data collected from interviews and FGDs were systematically organized, analyzed, and interpreted using the thematic analysis approach. This approach is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the issues under investigation.

Data Analysis

This study centered on uncovering the struggles encountered by TVL students during work immersion activities, in the selected secondary schools in Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat, for the school year 2025-2026. A content or thematic analysis approach was employed to examine the collected data. This methodology, as described by Flick (2014), Ngag (2023), and Braun (2009), involved the systematic categorization of textual components, including statements, phrases, and words, into organized groupings or categories. These categories were either derived from established frameworks or custom-developed to align with the study's specific objectives.

To execute this analytical process, a series of essential steps were diligently followed:



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Initially, all data sources, such as interview transcripts, notes from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and relevant documents, were meticulously organized and prepared for analysis. This phase ensured the systematic arrangement and accessibility of the data.

Subsequently, the researcher deeply engaged with the data by conducting a thorough review of interview transcripts and FGD notes. This immersive process aided a comprehensive understanding of the content and context embedded within the collected information.

The third step involved initiating a systematic coding process. Initial codes were generated by identifying meaningful segments or patterns within the data.

These codes captured essential concepts, ideas, or themes of the teachers vis-à-vis the struggles encountered by TVL students during work immersion activities.

Following coding, the identified codes were grouped into preliminary themes based on shared meaning or relevance. This step aimed to establish an initial structure for organizing the data.

Next, the emerging themes and their corresponding codes underwent review. The researchers ensured the consistency and clarity of these themes, making necessary adjustments. Each refined theme was assigned a descriptive name that succinctly represents the content, facilitating easy identification and interpretation.

Relevant data excerpts, such as quotes or segments extracted from interviews and FGDs, were selected and associated with the respective themes. These excerpts served as supporting evidence for the identified themes.

Finally, the thematic analysis has extended beyond surface-level identification. Researchers interpreted the meaning and implications of each theme within the context of the study's objectives. They sought patterns, connections, and variations within the themes to provide a comprehensive understanding of the students' narratives.

This meticulous, structured process of thematic analysis enabled researchers to systematically explore and comprehend the struggles encountered by TVL students during work immersion activities, focusing on the selected secondary schools in Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat, for the school year 2025-2026.

Scope and Limitations

The study focused on exploring the challenges faced by TVL senior high school students during their work immersion programs in selected secondary schools in Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat, for the school year 2025–2026.

It involved gathering insights directly from students through qualitative methods such as interviews and focus group discussions to capture their lived experiences, difficulties, and coping mechanisms.



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The scope of the study was limited to TVL strand students only, excluding those from the Academic, Sports, and Arts and Design tracks. It was conducted within the specified time frame and geographical coverage. By highlighting the struggles encountered in real workplace settings, the study aimed to provide inputs for schools, teachers, and policymakers in enhancing work immersion implementation to better prepare students for future employment and lifelong learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Adjustment to Real Workplace Routines

The participants' narratives reveal that work immersion served as a critical transition phase in which TVL students adjusted to real workplace routines and responsibilities. Statements such as *"A typical day... started with preparing the workplace... assisting in different tasks"* (P1) and *"We arrive early... prepare stations... and clean before leaving"* (P3) illustrate how students gradually adapted to professional expectations, such as punctuality, cleanliness, organization, and multitasking.

These routine activities enabled learners to internalize workplace discipline and time management, which are often absent in traditional classroom settings.

This finding is supported by Anwar et al. (2023), who emphasized that exposure to authentic workplace routines enhances students' adaptability and readiness for employment. Similarly, Delos Reyes et al. (2021) found that regular engagement in daily work tasks helps TVL students develop a strong work ethic and professional behavior. Thus, adjustment to workplace routines is a foundational experience that shapes students' understanding of real-world labor demands.

Skill Acquisition and Hands-on Learning

Skill acquisition emerged as a core experience of TVL students during work immersion. Participants described learning through direct engagement with tools, equipment, and real tasks, as reflected in statements such as *"I experienced knowing how to use every tool and equipment"* (P8) and *"Work immersion provides opportunities to learn new skills and apply what we learned in real situations"* (P9). These experiences highlight the importance of hands-on learning in bridging theory and practice. This theme aligns with experiential learning theory, which posits that knowledge is constructed through direct experience and reflection (Kolb, 2020). Salvador and Tarrayo (2024) further confirmed that supervised work immersion significantly enhances students' technical and practical competencies, allowing learners to apply classroom knowledge in authentic contexts. Hence, immersion becomes a meaningful avenue for developing job-relevant skills essential for future employment.

Meaningful and Memorable Experiences

Participants also described work immersion as emotionally meaningful and memorable. Experiences such as *"The customer told me to treat her like family—that gave me confidence"* (P10) and *"Talking and getting closer to the staff was memorable"* (P11) reveal how positive



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social interactions contributed to students' confidence and sense of belonging. These emotional encounters made the immersion experience enjoyable and personally significant.

Supporting this, Herrington et al. (2021) noted that authentic learning environments that foster positive emotional engagement enhance student motivation and identity formation. Arienzo and Murphy (2023) likewise emphasized that emotionally rewarding workplace experiences strengthen learners' professional self-concept.

These findings suggest that meaningful interpersonal experiences are crucial in making work immersion transformative rather than merely procedural.

Challenges and Workplace Realities

Despite positive experiences, students encountered various challenges and workplace pressures. Participants shared experiences of fatigue, stress, and mistakes, such as *"It was more tiring and complicated because many customers came"* (P4) and *"I accidentally burned the customer's scalp"* (P7). These realities exposed students to the demands and unpredictability of actual work environments.

Research indicates that such challenges are integral to workplace learning. Zulfikar and Yunus (2022) argued that exposure to pressure and mistakes fosters resilience and problem-solving skills among vocational students. Gutierrez et al. (2023) further found that although students initially experience stress during immersion, these challenges ultimately contribute to adaptability and professional growth. Thus, difficulties encountered during immersion serve as learning opportunities that prepare students for future work conditions.

Expectation vs. Reality of Immersion

A recurring theme in the data was the contrast between students' expectations and the reality of work immersion. Participants initially anticipated strict or difficult environments but later realized that workplaces could be supportive and engaging, as reflected in statements like *"I expected them to be strict, but they were kind"* (P1) and *"It turned out fun and exciting"* (P3). Conversely, some students realized the work was more demanding than expected.

This shift in perception aligns with findings by Yilmaz (2021), who noted that experiential learning often reshapes learners' preconceived notions through real-world exposure. Rosales and Taguba (2024) similarly found that students' understanding of work environments becomes more realistic after immersion. These changes in perception contribute to students' maturity and readiness to face actual employment settings.

Support Systems During Immersion

Support from teachers, supervisors, and peers played a crucial role in students' immersion experiences. Participants emphasized guidance and encouragement, seen in statements, *"Our teachers reminded us to be respectful"* (P1) and *"My supervisor and friends helped me gain confidence"* (P7). These support systems fostered a safe and motivating learning environment.



This finding is consistent with Bandura's (2024) social cognitive theory, which emphasizes learning through observation, guidance, and social interaction. García and Torres (2022) further highlighted that strong support systems significantly enhance students' confidence and performance during workplace immersion. Thus, mentorship and collaboration are essential components of successful immersion programs.

Personal Growth and Values Formation

Finally, work immersion contributed significantly to students' personal growth and values formation. Participants reflected on developing responsibility, confidence, and self-awareness, as seen in statements such as "*Mistakes helped me improve*" (P6) and "*Support from teachers and peers helped me grow*" (P14). These reflections demonstrate how immersion experiences shaped students' attitudes and work values.

Kolb (2020) emphasized that reflection on experience leads to transformative learning, while Cruz and Villanueva (2025) found that work immersion promotes values such as discipline, teamwork, and respect. Therefore, beyond technical skills, immersion plays a vital role in shaping students' character and professional identity.

Adjustment to Real-World Work Environment

Participants consistently described work immersion as a **transition shock** from the structured, predictable environment of school to the dynamic and unfamiliar workplace. Statements such as "*Adapting to the new environment from school to an unknown place was challenging*" (P5) and "*Adjusting to the new work environment and adopting company culture was difficult*" (P8) capture the initial struggle to assimilate into workplace norms. This difficulty resonates with extant research, which indicates that learners often experience culture shock and role ambiguity when first entering professional environments (Smith & Johnson, 2021).

The abrupt shift from classroom learning to workplace expectations requires not only technical adaptation but also social and cultural understanding, a transition often described as "reality shock" in vocational education literature (Brown & Gilbert, 2023).

This challenge is exemplified in participants' comments: "*I was adjusting to a new place where I was unfamiliar with some tasks and expectations*" (P13) and "*At first, I found it difficult to adjust to the new work environment and schedule*" (P14). Such sentiments aligned with findings that students in work immersion must adjust to **organizational pace, standards, and professional etiquette** that differ greatly from school routines (Hernandez et al., 2024). This process is not merely logistical but deeply psychological, as learners renegotiate their self-efficacy within unfamiliar structures.

Skill-Related Anxiety and Fear of Making Mistakes

A prominent theme was anxiety tied to performance and fear of errors. Participants reported feelings of nervousness and lack of confidence in performing tasks, as highlighted, "*My*



body was shaking even if I knew I could do it” (P10) and “I was afraid of making mistakes and damaging the client’s hair” (P7). Performance anxiety in work immersion contexts aligns with research showing that novice learners often experience apprehension due to fear of failure and external judgment (Nguyen & Tran, 2021).

This is particularly acute in roles that involve direct customer interaction or safety-sensitive tasks, where mistakes carry visible consequences.

The literature on vocational learning supports this finding, noting that emotional responses such as anxiety are common when learners are thrust into actual application conditions without full mastery of skills (Martinez & Chen, 2023).

P2’s reflection that “*My first mistake happened when I spelled the drink I’m covering*” underscores the internal pressure students place on themselves, often intensified by immediate evaluation from supervisors and customers. Furthermore, P6’s concern that customer infection could result from errors points to heightened stakes in work settings — a condition known to exacerbate anxiety among learners transitioning from school to workplace environments (Yilmaz & Erden, 2025).

Workload Pressure and Time Management Difficulties

Another significant theme was the challenge of managing multiple tasks under time pressure. Several students reported feeling overwhelmed: “*There were many customers and I didn’t know who to prioritize first*” (P1) and “*I struggled to manage my time and keep up with the tasks*” (P14). Balancing work demands with personal responsibilities and expectations reflects what workplace readiness literature describes as task overload and prioritization stress (Lee & Wong, 2024).

This resonates with research showing that time management is often one of the most pressing challenges for students in workplace immersion, wherein they must learn to sequence tasks efficiently and respond rapidly to demands (Dizon & Ramos, 2022).

Importantly, the comments suggest not only cognitive load but also social and leadership pressures, as illustrated by P15: “*As a leader, my first challenge was handling my groupmates.*” This mirrors findings that students in leadership roles within immersion settings encounter compounded pressure due to coordination tasks and peer expectations (Falcon et al., 2023). P9’s mention of discomfort in communication further highlights how workload pressure intersects with interpersonal stressors, emphasizing that effective time management is not solely technical but also relational.

Interpersonal and Emotional Challenges

Participants’ testimonies reveal that workplace relationships and emotional states significantly influenced their immersion experiences. Exposure to conflict and stressful interactions was common, as P1 described: “*The barista and chef had an argument and I didn’t know who to talk to.*” Workplace conflict is a known source of emotional distress for students



entering professional contexts, particularly when they lack experience navigating hierarchical structures (Arora & Desai, 2023).

The emotional toll of difficult personalities was evident in P9's account: "*Our boss was moody, and it affected me emotionally,*" illustrating how supervisory behavior can impact learner morale. Such responses align with studies indicating that negative emotional experiences in workplace settings can hinder learning and confidence development (Kim & Park, 2021). Moreover, P11's discouragement when alone with customers highlights how isolation and emotional strain interact to challenge learners' resilience. According to Sullivan and Brown (2024), emotional regulation is a critical skill in workplace learning, yet many students enter immersion without adequate preparation for such emotional labor.

Guidance, Support, and Mentorship as Coping Mechanisms

Despite the challenges, participants emphasized the crucial role of guidance and support from supervisors, peers, and teachers. Statements such as "*Ate Mohani helped me assist customers and explained things to me*" (P1) and "*My teachers and manager gave me advice and showed me what to do*" (P3) underscore how mentorship fosters learner confidence and competence. Research affirms that effective mentorship plays a critical role in mediating workplace anxieties and enhancing students' ability to navigate complex tasks (Patel & Lee, 2022).

Supportive interactions facilitate not only skill acquisition but also emotional reassurance, enabling students to persist when confronted with difficulties (Rivera et al., 2023).

P4's account of asking supervisors to fix equipment and guide them illustrates how learners actively seek support as part of their coping strategies. Literature on work immersion further emphasizes that peer assistance and supervisory feedback serve as valuable resources that reduce uncertainty and build learners' adaptive capacities (Tsai & Chuang, 2025).

Development of Self-Confidence and Resilience

Over time, participants reported growth in self-confidence, perseverance, and positive mindset. P2's reflection, "*I accepted my mistake and observed more so it won't happen again,*" and P3's statement, "*I told myself I can do this and didn't give up,*" signify internal shifts toward resilience. These experiences align with studies that describe work immersion as a transformative learning process in which confronting challenges promotes psychological growth and confidence (Ocampo & Villanueva, 2023).

Research also indicates that learners who practice self-encouragement and persistence can better translate workplace challenges into skill development (Gonzales & Perez, 2024). In addition, P8's increase in confidence through task repetition reflects what vocational education scholars term mastery experiences, which are central to enhancing self-efficacy (Bandura, 2020).

P14's openness to continuous learning further highlights that developing a resilient mindset is both a coping strategy and an outcome of navigating workplace demands.



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Adaptive Strategies and Problem-Solving Skills

Finally, participants demonstrated **adaptive problem-solving** and flexibility in response to challenges. Statements like “*We used hand stitching so we could finish our outputs*” (P4) and “*I adapted and learned new techniques not taught in school*” (P5) illustrate how students apply creative solutions to overcome task barriers.

Literature on workplace learning emphasizes that **learning by doing** is a core mechanism through which learners build *practical reasoning and flexibility* (Ng & Choy, 2022).

Participants also stressed the value of **listening to experienced workers and applying their suggestions** (P6), echoing Kolb’s experiential learning framework, described as *learning through concrete experiences and reflective observation* (Kolb, 2015/2020 Revision).

Moreover, P15’s choice to “*openly talked to my group to manage the challenge*” indicates collaborative problem-solving, which is recognized as critical for effective workplace participation (Montoya & Tang, 2024). P9’s cognitive reframing of negative thoughts into solutions further demonstrates how students integrate emotional and cognitive strategies to navigate complex situations effectively.

Growth in Confidence and Self-Esteem

The work immersion experience uniquely fosters psychological empowerment in TVL students, especially in confidence and self-esteem. Participants P1, P2, P3, P7, and P14 described how initial feelings of uncertainty and nervousness evolved into self-assuredness as they engaged in workplace tasks and received positive feedback.

P1, for example, shared that preparing drinks increased her confidence because she “was trusted to prepare drinks and the result was good,” while P2 acknowledged courage in interacting with customers. These experiences mirror findings from recent studies indicating that even short-term immersion programs can significantly boost students’ workplace confidence (Tinio, 2025). Tinio’s research showed that immersion participation led to measurable increases in self-perceived readiness and communicative adaptability, validating the lived experiences of TVL learners who felt more confident after immersion (e.g., improved self-esteem through real work challenges).

This theme is anchored in the broader educational literature that highlights confidence as a critical outcome of experiential learning. According to Trinity College London’s 2025 report, education that involves performance and real tasks helps build transferable life skills, including confidence and workplace readiness, by providing students with opportunities to demonstrate their competencies in meaningful contexts. In this sense, the immersion struggles of TVL learners not only challenge their initial self-doubts but also reinforce self-belief and self-efficacy, laying a psychological foundation for future academic and career pursuits.



Development of Communication and Social Skills

Work immersion struggles also contributed to the development of communication and interpersonal competence. Participants P1, P6, P8, P11, and P13 consistently emphasized that daily interactions with customers, colleagues, and managers strengthened their communication skills and reduced social anxiety. P1 noted improved communication with diverse stakeholders, while P11 specifically highlighted the decrease in shyness when interacting with strangers. These firsthand accounts illustrate how real-world immersion contexts compel learners to practice verbal skills and social engagement repeatedly—something that a classroom alone cannot simulate.

This aligns with literature asserting that soft skills such as communication, collaboration, and social interaction are integral to successful work immersion outcomes. Work immersion implementation studies reveal that such programs significantly enhance students' performance, including teamwork and communication, which in turn influence satisfaction and perceived competence (Cabile, 2024).

Additionally, Flores and Dela Cruz (2025) found that senior high school learners developed communication and problem-solving skills as part of coping strategies in real work environments, reinforcing the pattern observed in TVL participants who overcame communication struggles by engaging directly with workplace tasks.

The consistent improvement in communication and social confidence across both qualitative and quantitative research highlights the essential role of immersion in preparing students for both professional interactions and everyday societal engagements, making this theme highly relevant to the personal growth of TVL learners.

Acquisition of Work-Related Skills and Values

Beyond soft skills, work immersion also instills technical competencies and core workplace values. Participants P2, P4, P5, P11, and P14 pointed to specific skill gains, such as bartending, sewing, adaptability, responsibility, and perseverance. P4's account of improved sewing and technical skills alongside values, like patience and responsibility, illustrates the multifaceted impact of immersion activities.

Recent research on TVL programs supports this dual development of technical skills and values. A study on work immersion footprints highlighted that through immersion, students not only develop competencies and work ethics but also internalize values such as responsibility and work discipline, which are core to job readiness and skill performance.

Moreover, implementation literature shows that communication, teamwork, adaptability, initiative, and productivity are key performance markers of quality student outcomes in immersion programs (Cabile, 2024), demonstrating that participants' skill and values reports align with broader empirical evidence.



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Together, these findings validate that immersion does more than transfer technical knowledge; it cultivates workplace values and adaptive skills that are essential in professional and real-life settings.

Resilience and Emotional Regulation

Work immersion challenges often necessitate resilience and emotional control. Participants P3, P7, P9, P10, and P15 described how confrontation with difficult customers, fatigue, and daily stressors increased their emotional regulation and perseverance. For example, P3 stated that staying calm when tired or dealing with rude customers helped her feel more confident. P9's transformation of struggle into inspiration for handling life situations reveals how immersion transcends technical learning and bolsters emotional fortitude.

This theme resonates with current work immersion research that underscores how students use coping strategies such as patience, organization, and building confidence to navigate immersion challenges, contributing to their personal and professional preparation for future work settings. Such emotional competencies are increasingly recognized by employers and educators as essential for workplace success, shaping students' resilience and adaptability in the face of pressure.

Career Readiness and Direction

Work immersion directly influences students' career awareness and direction. Participants P1, P3, P4, P5, and P14 articulated how struggles informed their career goals, future planning, and understanding of strengths and weaknesses. P4, for instance, felt more prepared for a career in dressmaking and entrepreneurial ventures, while P5 viewed dressmaking as a viable career plan.

This supports broader studies, which show that immersion outcomes often correlate with increased career awareness and preparedness for workforce participation. Research on job readiness of TVL students indicates that immersion programs play a significant role in developing competencies, work ethics, and values, although job readiness may still vary depending on alignment with industry standards and technical preparation. The shift in participants from uncertainty to structured career planning aligns with findings that experiential learning environments contribute to clearer career pathways and professional identities.

Personal Growth and Self-Awareness

Finally, immersion struggles fostered significant self-understanding and holistic personal growth among TVL students. Participants P3, P4, P7, P9, and P15 attributed their personal development to immersion challenges; they became more patient, responsible, self-aware, and emotionally mature.

P3 noted the importance of learning from mistakes, while P9 emphasized understanding his own capabilities, suggesting deeper self-reflection arising from workplace challenges.



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Work immersion research supports this finding by demonstrating that immersion fosters skill development, personal growth, and stronger professional identity formation through reflective and active engagement with real tasks (Flores & Dela Cruz, 2025). These personal transformations prepare learners to transcend academic contexts and adapt to diverse life situations.

Conclusion

The following inferences were made considering this study's findings:

The work immersion experience provided TVL students with a realistic understanding of workplace routines and responsibilities, allowing them to translate classroom learning into practical skills while fostering confidence and appreciation for their tasks.

Despite encountering challenges such as unfamiliar environments, time pressures, and interpersonal conflicts, students learned to adapt, develop resilience, and employ effective problem-solving strategies, highlighting the value of guidance and mentorship in navigating workplace demands.

Immersion struggles contributed significantly to the development of essential personal and professional competencies, including self-esteem, communication, social skills, technical abilities, and values such as responsibility, adaptability, and perseverance.

Recommendations

In light of the findings, the following were recommended:

1. The DepEd and Policy Makers may enhance pre-immersion orientation programs by introducing structured preparatory sessions that familiarize TVL students with workplace culture, routines, and expectations.

This can reduce transition shock and build initial confidence before immersion. They may also develop standardized guidelines for work immersion support, and incorporate soft skills training into the curriculum

2. The School Administrators may establish a monitoring and feedback system, provide peer mentoring opportunities, and recognize and reward resilience and skill development.

3. Immersion Coordinators and Supervisors may offer hands-on guidance and structured task assignments, encourage reflective practice, and continue promote supportive work environments



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4. Future Researchers may investigate long-term effects of immersion struggles by conducting longitudinal studies to determine how early immersion challenges influence career readiness and resilience over time. They may also explore intervention programs by examining the impact of structured pre-immersion training, mentorship models, and stress management strategies on students' confidence and skill acquisition. They may also focus on diverse TVL tracks by comparing experiences across different technical-vocational strands to identify unique challenges and tailored support needs.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

In preparation for this study, all the plans and recommendations were presented to East-West Mindanao Colleges, Inc. to ensure compliance with prescribed procedures and protocols within the context of the research focused on examining the struggles encountered by TVL students during work immersion activities, focusing on the selected secondary schools in Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat, for the school year 2025-2026, it is imperative to emphasize the paramount importance of ethical considerations. Before commencing this study, the following ethical principles were highlighted:

Informed Consent: Before participation, consent was obtained from all school heads involved in the study. They must possess a comprehensive understanding of the study's objectives, methodologies, potential risks, and benefits. Furthermore, participation remained entirely voluntary, allowing the participants to withdraw from the study at any juncture without adverse consequences.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: To safeguard the identities and responses, rigorous measures were put in place to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Rather than using actual names, pseudonyms or codes were used to uphold the participants' privacy. The collected data was securely stored with access restricted solely to the research team.

Avoiding Harm: Delicate subjects, such as the challenges inherent in their roles, were discussed with meticulous consideration for the potential emotional and psychological impact on the participants. Strategies were in place to minimize distress, and a support system was readily available to assist participants should the need arise.

Researcher-Participant Relationship: The researcher maintained a professional and respectful rapport when engaging with the school heads. Any actions that may harm the participants were scrupulously avoided, ensuring their utmost dignity and respect throughout the research process.

Data Protection: Adherence to data protection regulations and laws was followed to safeguard the participants' personal information. Stringent measures were employed to ensure the secure storage and transmission of data.



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Voluntary Participation: Participants were assured that their involvement in the study was voluntary, devoid of any coercion or external pressure.

Researcher Bias: The researcher remained vigilant regarding potential biases that might influence data collection and analysis, upholding objectivity and transparency throughout the research endeavor.

Institutional Approval: Before initiating the study, the researcher sought ethical clearance from the pertinent institutional review boards or ethics committees.

Honesty and Integrity: The research findings were reported truthfully and accurately, free from manipulation or distortion to align with preconceived notions or biases.

Beneficence: The potential benefits of the research in educational practices and policies were thoughtfully considered, ensuring that the study contributes to the education system.

Cultural Sensitivity: The researcher demonstrated cultural sensitivity by respecting local customs, beliefs, and practices within the research setting, refraining from imposing external values on participants.

Inclusion and Diversity: The study's structure prioritized inclusivity and diversity, encompassing a wide spectrum of the struggles encountered by TVL students during work immersion activities, focusing on the selected secondary schools in Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat, for the school year 2025-2026.

Acknowledgment

With a heart overflowing with gratitude, the author wishes to acknowledge the incredible individuals who made this study possible. Their support and expertise have been invaluable, and the author is deeply thankful:

MARJUNI M. MADDI, Director General, MBHTE-HIGHER EDUCATION, for his invaluable guidance, support, and dedication and the professional insights that were instrumental in the development of the study.

BAILAH B. SANDIGAN, MAED, East-West Mindanao Colleges Inc., President, for believing in his dreams, even during moments of self-doubt.

EMILIA M. LOTILLA, PhD, Dean, Graduate School, for her approachability, her wise counsel has been invaluable to the author.



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JULIET P. TAMBUNGALAN, MAEd, Graduate Studies Consultant, her all-out support and insightful advice during the manuscript preparation were essential.

JAIME BOY U. NGAG JR., PhD, the adviser, for his constant assurance, unwavering guidance, and boundless motivation.

AMILUDIN G. MASABPI, PhD, and **LEODIE D. MONES, PhD**, the examining committee, for their valuable contributions and for generously sharing their expertise, which were essential for the realization of this study. The author appreciates their brilliance, dedication, and willingness share their knowledge.

CRISPIN A. SOLIVEN, JR., CESO V, Schools Division Superintendent of Sultan Kudarat, for the generous permission to conduct this study. The Schools Division Superintendent's commitment to research-based decision-making is truly commendable and inspiring.

PRINCIPE O. OLINO PhD, the school head of Esperanza National High School, for pushing and motivating the author to finish this study.

The **PRINCIPALS** of New Panay National High School, and Salabaca National High School, the author is grateful for the Principals' openness for allowing him conduct this study within their schools.

The **TVL STUDENT-PARTICIPANTS** of the identified schools for the school Year 2025-2026, the author thanks their honesty, enthusiasm, and willingness to share their experiences during the interviews and discussions. Their voices are the heart and soul of this research.

The beloved parents, **ALBERTO T. GANI** and **OFELIA L. GANI**, the author expresses heartfelt gratitude for their endless love, sacrifices, and unwavering belief in the author's potential.

Wonderful siblings, **CHARITY L. GANI** and **CHARESS G. LAMBAN, MAT**, their constant support, encouragement, and unwavering friendship are deeply valued.

Dearest **RENZO MATTEO R. GANI** and **FRANZ ANDREW R. GANI**, the author's sons. They are the author's greatest source of strength, joy, and motivation. The author



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appreciates them for inspiring the author to always reach for the stars and never give up on his dreams.

Beloved **FLORENCE R. GANI**, the author's wife, for her boundless love, unwavering patience, and unwavering belief in the author.

She is the author's rock, confidante, and everything. The author couldn't have done this without her by the author's side.

Above all, the author offers his deepest and most humble gratitude to the **ALMIGHTY GOD**, the ultimate source of all strength, health, wisdom, and inspiration. All glory, honor, and praise belong to Him, now and forever.

Declaration AI Tools Utilization

I do hereby declare the use AI tools, such as Chat GPT and Grammarly for grammar checking and sentence organization purposes only.

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