

Mixed Method Study on Course Shifting among College Students

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ABSTRACT

This study looked into the real-life factors and experiences that led students to shift courses at Davao de Oro State College and its campuses. Using a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach, it combined survey data from 60 course shifters with in-depth interviews from 10 selected students to gain a fuller picture of the situation. The findings showed that shifting courses was rarely a simple decision. Instead, it was shaped by a mix of personal interests, academic challenges, financial struggles, and a general feeling of disconnect from their initial choices. Students opened up about experiencing discomfort, lack of motivation, self-doubt, and limited support, all of which pushed them toward a different path. These stories highlighted that course shifting is not just about changing programs—it's about seeking personal alignment, purpose, and growth. The study concluded that support systems like career guidance and counseling services must be strengthened to help students make informed choices and adapt to their academic journeys. Doing so could lead to better retention, more meaningful student engagement, and long-term academic and professional success.

Keywords: education, course, career

INTRODUCTION

Course shifting has become a prevalent phenomenon in the dynamic landscape of higher education. It is where students change their academic programs during their college journey, once or multiple times, before successfully graduating from an academic course. Abenales et al. (2024) explained that the complex interplay of intrinsic factors, such as evolving interests and personal growth, and extrinsic factors, including labor market demands, peer influence, and institutional support, often influences students' decisions. Course shifting can be a strategic way of realigning students' academic paths with their career aspirations. However, it may also bring significant challenges, such as the inevitable delays in academic progress, emotional stress, financial burdens, and its effect on the student's overall success and well-being during their academic journey (Lanonte et al., 2025). Globally, course shifting is well-documented. A National Center for Education Statistics (2017) study revealed that approximately 30% of students with four-year degrees in the United States changed their major at least once within three years. Similarly, the Education Advisory Board (EAB) reported that 75-85% of students switch majors before completing their degrees (Venit, 2016). Comparable patterns have been observed in other countries, with course-shifting rates reaching 60% in Canada and 38% in the Middle East (Kanyingi-Maina, 2020), underscoring the widespread nature of this academic phenomenon. Conklin et al. (2013) suggested that there are reasons why students might decide to change their major: their perception towards an academic major through their emotional identification and cognitive evaluation. Additionally, the likelihood of changing majors is higher if these criteria remain positive. In the Philippines, course shifting is also a common occurrence. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) acknowledges that students frequently change academic programs as they navigate their educational paths. A study by Quintos et al. (2020) found that 31% and 39% of Senior High School

graduates of Narra National High School, Bayawan, Negros Oriental experienced course mismatches. This incident happened during the academic years 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, respectively, and was associated with poor career decision-making. Implementing Republic Act No. 10931 (Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act) complicates course shifting. This act provides state and local college students with free tuition and financial assistance. However, the law imposes strict residency rules, and students who exceed the prescribed duration of their programs due to course shifting risk losing their financial aid, thereby increasing their dependence on family support.

At the local level, Davao de Oro State College (DDOSC)-Main Campus has observed a significant rise in course shifting among its students. Institutional data revealed that during the first semester of the Academic Year 2023-2024, 10 students shifted programs. This number surged to 50 in the second semester, marking a 400% increase. In the first semester of Academic Year 2024-2024, the college recorded 48 students as course shifters. This growing trend has raised concerns about the adequacy of career guidance services and the long-term implications for student retention and success. Motivated by these observations, the researcher was inspired to explore deeper to understand the factors influencing DDOSC students and aimed to provide the institution with valuable insights to enhance and tailor career guidance interventions that met the students' needs. Consequently, this study addressed these concerns and supported the institution's efforts in fostering student success.

The primary objective of this convergent parallel mixed-method study is to explore and gain a comprehensive understanding of the course-shifting phenomenon among sixty college students at Davao de Oro State College, encompassing its four branches: New Bataan, Montevista, Maragusan, and Compostela-Main Campus. The study identifies and analyzes the multifaceted intrinsic, extrinsic, and institutional factors influencing students' decisions to shift academic courses. The quantitative component will utilize an adopted standardized questionnaire to systematically assess the factors influencing course shifting. Complementing this, the qualitative component will involve in-depth interviews to capture the personal experiences, reasons, and contextual insights behind students' decisions to change their academic trajectories. The study aspires to provide a holistic perspective on course shifting by integrating quantitative and qualitative data, informing institutional policies and support mechanisms better to address students' academic and personal development needs.

Statement of the Problem

This study explored the factors influencing students' shifting decisions at Davao de Oro State College. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions.

1. What is the level of course shifting at Davao de Oro State College in terms of:
 - 1.1. Intrinsic Factors?
 - 1.2. Extrinsic Factors?
 - 1.3. Institutional Factors?

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions.

1. What do the course shifters encounter when undergoing course shifting?
 - 1.1. What are the reasons that influenced the students to shift courses?
 - 1.2. What insights or realizations did the students gain from their course-shifting experience?

Literature Review

The researcher extensively reviewed pertinent literature and studies to provide solid direction for this study. This review encompasses various materials connected to the study's focus. Career decision-making is a continuous process in one's career path, including choosing a program to enroll in. In today's generation, this complexity has increased due to the impact of modernization and technological advancements (Gati & Tal, 2008). Kulcsár et al. (2020) emphasized that the presence of the Information and Technology Revolution and Robotization has significantly changed the landscape of career choices. The trend creates a high demand for people in science and technology. However, it increases the potential threat of job loss due to automation. This complexity challenges us to rethink our approach to career decision-making, keeping us engaged and striving for better solutions. Poor and inconclusive career decisions can have significant and lasting effects on an individual's career satisfaction, well-being, and standard of living (Gati et al., 2006). It is crucial to understand the career decision-making process

to help individuals make better decisions and reduce regret, including the challenges before and during the process, and identify the causes of these difficulties. The study by Argyropoulou et al. (2007) noted that while some make career decisions easily, others face challenges due to internal factors. These internal factors include personality, interests, and values, while external factors such as parental and economic factors are also important. Thus, individuals have different levels of decision-making.

In the context of education, Lau et al. (2019) suggested that students should decide on their careers well before looking for employment. This decision-making has been a challenge and a significant dilemma for undergraduate students. Thus, it is critical to make career decisions, make career preferences, and commit to a particular career path (Kulcsár et al., 2020). Additionally, Gati et al. (2012) defined career indecision as integrating the difficulties encountered by the individual while making career decisions. These problems could emanate from emotional and personality-related sources, such as fear of failure, lack of self-confidence, or conflicting values, and are among the significant difficulties experienced by college students. Our personality plays a significant role in various aspects of our decision-making. Forthmann et al. (2018) emphasized that personality with general performance directly influences decision-making. The findings of Duru et al. (2021) revealed the need to consider individual personality differences when addressing career indecisiveness, as it can significantly impact a student's ability for self-appraisal, accurately gathering occupational information, planning, setting goals, and developing problem-solving skills. Germeijs and De Boeck (2003) also revealed that the valuation and outcome factors are empirically associated with career indecision. Valuation problems are considered value unclarity, value conflict, and evaluation evenness. On the other hand, outcome uncertainty is outlined as choosing an alternative and not knowing if one alternative is enough and if it will succeed in the study. Presti et al. (2021) stated that difficulties in career choice have been a common problem for university students during their school-to-work transitions, mainly due to the pandemic, which significantly affects graduate students entering the job market. Similarly, Abdul Wahab (2017) found that most graduates in Malaysia between the ages of 22 and 27 experience difficult transitions from education to work. Furthermore, Kulcsár et al. (2020) established that students experience challenges and difficulties in choosing a career. The study by Khan and Rehman (2018) shows that career decision-making difficulties affect one's mental health, putting pressure and stress on an individual, and some are unsatisfied with their chosen career. However, individuals with strong career decision-making skills will experience fewer mental health concerns and greater life satisfaction (Walker & Peterson, 2012).

Course Shifting. Changing one's academic course or major in college is not uncommon—it's a journey many students take as they grow, reflect, and better understand themselves. It's a natural part of academic and personal development, yet it comes with both benefits and drawbacks. According to Gordon and Steele (2015), most college students shift majors at least once during their undergraduate studies. The Education Advisory Board even estimates that between 75% and 85% of students change their academic paths at least once (Venit, 2016). A more recent study by Xu and de Silva (2024) found that 39% of graduate students had changed majors before earning their degrees, with many shifting more than once. Interestingly, these changes often happen during a student's first year—a time when many are still adjusting to college life and exploring different fields. For some, these shifts lead to delayed graduation, increased tuition costs, and a heavier academic load. But for others, it can be the turning point that leads to better alignment with their interests and eventual success. Shifting courses doesn't always mean failure or indecisiveness—it can also mean growth. As Kanyingi-Maina (2020) points out, students who realign their academic paths often report higher satisfaction, better mental health, and improved motivation. It helps reduce skills mismatch in the workforce, leading to more fulfilling careers. Cariaga (2024) reinforces this idea, emphasizing that the development of 21st-century skills—like critical thinking, communication, and creativity—can empower students to make more informed, future-ready decisions. However, the decision to shift should not be taken lightly. Abiola (2012) reminds us that academic performance is a key indicator of life success—it reflects one's discipline, determination, and focus. A mismatch between a student's interests and their course can lead to poor grades, lack of motivation, or even failure. Aminu and Timothy (2014) support this, noting that students often struggle in courses that don't suit them. Conversely, Fatoki (2014) stresses that the right career path can bring satisfaction and meaning to one's academic and professional journey. That's why it's so important for students to explore career information early and make thoughtful choices. Koech et al. (2016) believe that guidance, research, and self-awareness are key to making the right academic decisions. And during these formative years, reflection is crucial. Marade (2015) describes college as a period of discovery—a time when students ask themselves deep questions about their goals, values, and

futures. This aligns with findings from Cariaga et al. (2024b), who discovered that students in rural areas particularly benefit from creative and responsive teaching methods that nurture this kind of self-exploration. Many students make their final decisions about their academic paths by their second year in college (Xu & de Silva, 2024). These early years are critical—they are when students begin to truly understand what they value and where they excel. In this context, the decision to shift courses can be seen not as a setback, but as a sign of maturity. As Daley (2010) notes, self-knowledge is foundational to success in education, relationships, and work. Still, there are trade-offs. One of the main concerns with course shifting is the additional time needed to graduate. This can be frustrating, especially for students who face financial constraints. Under the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act (RA 10931), students in state colleges and universities are entitled to free tuition—but only within the prescribed time frame. If they shift courses and extend beyond that timeframe, they risk losing this benefit (IRR of RA 10931, 2017). This creates pressure, particularly for students from low-income families who rely on government support. In a study on education continuity, Cariaga (2022) emphasized the importance of flexible, student-centered learning environments—especially during challenging times like the pandemic. Policies that don't account for the evolving needs of learners may unintentionally limit students' opportunities to find the path that truly fits them. Moreover, course shifting isn't just about school—it can affect long-term career outcomes. When students end up in jobs unrelated to their degrees, they often earn less and report lower satisfaction compared to those in well-matched roles (Kanyingi-Maina, 2020). This reinforces the importance of meaningful academic guidance. According to Cariaga and El Halaissi (2024), aligning academic programs with real-world demands—while still honoring cultural and personal values—is essential for graduate employability and social impact. Family and school support also matter. Cariaga (2023a) found that strong parental involvement plays a big role in developing foundational skills like literacy and numeracy, which often shape how confident and prepared students feel in their academic decisions. Later work by Cariaga et al. (2024a) showed that students with supportive home environments tend to have better academic and emotional outcomes—factors that may influence whether they stay in a course or feel compelled to shift. In the end, changing majors should be viewed with nuance. It's not just a logistical or financial decision—it's deeply personal. It reflects growth, reflection, and sometimes, the courage to start again. With the right support systems in place—from schools, families, and policies—students can make these transitions with confidence, knowing that it's okay to evolve and change direction.

Factors in Course Shifting. Choosing a course for a student is an intricate decision in establishing what profession they will pursue in their occupational life. Several studies showed that intrinsic and extrinsic factors play significant roles. Students match their career aspirations, aptitudes, personalities, and academic performances while considering their parental dreams (Arif et al., 2019). In the study conducted by Salami (2008), he emphasized that self-beliefs, social identity, intrigue, financial provisions, role models, globalization, and even information accumulated from the media are significant factors that influence students' course choices. Kaneez and Medha (2018) also revealed that most students anchored their career decisions on environmental and personality factors over opportunity factors. Intrinsic Factors refer to the internal motivations, personal interests, and psychological attributes that influence a student's decision to shift from one academic course to another. These factors are deeply rooted in the individual's self-perception, goals, and emotional responses to their educational experiences. The most frequent reasons why college students change their courses are due to evolving interests. Students' interests and passions change as they mature, which leads them to choose alternative academic pathways. Some students are frequently inspired to explore a new academic field that develops their hidden abilities by shifting their interests (Abenales et al., 2024).

Personal Interest. A recent study reported that 67% of students changed their initial courses due to interest and preference in the new study area. It indicated that 52% changed their major because of interest (Kanyingi-Maina, 2020). As cited by Jaradat (2017) in her study about reasons influencing students' decisions to change college majors, one identified factor is personal preferences. Accordingly, (28%) of the students in the Middle East Universities were changing majors in 2014. It also showed that students were positively influenced by their interest in the new majors, with better job opportunities after graduation. Students change their majors to match their interests (Willcoxson & Wynder, 2010). Mann-Isah et al. (2024) concluded that students choose their courses because they find them interesting to study. Students as early as High School and Senior High have already career aspirations ascribed to their interests. It influences them in their chosen courses rather than being dictated by others' choices and course suggestions (Sadjail, 2022). Thus, individuals with a higher alignment between

personality and their chosen career also show higher confidence in their career-decision making (Jemini-Gashi & Bërxulli, 2017). It was also shown in the study by Marade (2015) that once the students realized that their choices conflicted with their career goals, they changed them as it promotes positive personal development and growth. It suggests that personal growth influences the change in the program of study. McKenzie et al. (2017) supported in their findings that students change their majors because of changes in career goals. Additionally, identifying one's career interests helps individuals to make informed career decisions. Understanding students' career interests also means they can identify their strengths and abilities to pursue a vocation that supports their abilities, morals, and principles (Bartlett et al., 2015). Nyamwange (2016) emphasized the importance of acquiring knowledge while exploring a probable career and being conscious of aspects that affect and motivate such significant decisions from adequate understanding. Studies show that personal interest was the primary factor influencing course choices in individualistic settings (Akosah-Twumasi et al., 2018) and science-oriented careers (Bennett et al., 2021). Also, in business-related courses, Atisogbe et al. (2018) reported that personality type may be linked to an interest in the subject. Furthermore, the study by Gallup (2019) shows that graduates whose work aligns with their interests, values, and strengths, and who participate in a class that helps them think of pursuing meaningful work experience and a sense of purpose.

Academic Ability. Fizer (2013) highlighted that academic ability is the basis of many students' choice of majors, especially in some programs such as law, health sciences, and engineering. Seymour and Serumola (2016) stated that if some students cope academically with their major, they change their courses. Students change their majors due to difficulties in their studies (Jaradat, 2017). Failing grades can be a threatening situation to students that may affect their overall academic standing. For some students, it would be advantageous to change majors in which they are more likely to succeed (Stinebrickner, T., & Stinebrickner, R., 2012) and to avoid failing grades that lead to later regrets (Marade, 2015). Thus, to better match their abilities, students with low grades switched majors, Astorne-Figari and Speer (2019) added. Additionally, students saw the difficulty of the major subjects as a significant obstacle to the students' academic performance. It became the reason why students shifted to another program. Difficulties encountered by the students give major setbacks in their learning journey, pushing them to shift to another program. Lanonte et al. (2025) proved that former BSED English students reconsider their choice because they lose interest after experiencing difficulties in the subject. Extrinsic Factors are the external influences that affect a student's decision to change academic courses. The student's environment, social relationships, and economic conditions often shape these factors. It was revealed in the recent study by Abenales et al. (2024) at the National University of Baliwag, which investigates the factors affecting the rate of shift in the university, that family functioning is one of the factors behind every college student who changes their courses. Thus, financial status and environment may be the reasons for their decision.

Economics. The recent study by Gaviola et al. (2023) showed that work opportunities are the dominant factor influencing students' change in their program. Students likely shift courses even if they misalign with their academic strand or track, aiming for better job and work opportunities once they graduate. Additionally, Malubay et al. (2015) noticed that among the first-year students' decisions to take courses are economic factors such as stable wages and in-demand jobs. The findings of the study of Pascual (2014) showed the availability of possible work and potential for career advancement and the major's potential job opportunities as the basis of a student's choice of program (Malgwi et al., 2005). Findings in the study of Lanonte et al. (2025) show that students choose to enroll in the BSED English program due to the potential work opportunities abroad. They view this program as their pathway toward job opportunities and finding a respectable job in the industry in the future. On the other hand, Bodycott and Lai (2012) found that tuition fees and living expenses are factors in choosing courses. University students drop out each year because they cannot afford their program fees, while others juggle academic schedules while making ends meet. Graduating debt-free becomes increasingly complex (Sarkodie et al., 2020). The study of Kusumawati (2013) revealed that the cost influenced Indonesian students' decisions. They primarily considered the expenses and their socioeconomic status before making a choice, and this was consistent with economic models of choice. Moreover, it was revealed in the recent studies by Lanonte et al. (2025) entitled *Reasons and Challenges of Former BSED English Students in Shifting to Other Programs* that students choose to shift to another program due to scholarship assistance. They transfer to another course covered in the CHED Scholarship Program, which offers financial support to students from low-income backgrounds. To lighten the financial burden and give them hope to achieve their academic and personal goals.

Parental Influence. Renner (2013) discussed the two reasons behind students' perception of changing courses and the rise of students shifting their college programs and majors. One of these is parental and societal pressure. Researchers noted that some students choose a specific major because of their parents' wants or because society dictates which course is trending in the professional world. However, when the students understand themselves and know what they want, they leave their initial course and shift to another. On the other hand, parental guidance plays a vital role in their children's course choices (Chen & Fouad, 2013). Humayon et al. (2018) also emphasized that students who get enough social support from their parents would feel optimistic about their careers. Since students primarily get guidance from their homes, adept parents may give their children good guidance and motivational sources. Many students look up to their parents for advice; their parents' occupation and income significantly influence their decisions. Additionally, it acknowledges financial difficulty in considering the choices their parents made for them. (Khatri & Periwal, 2020). Parental influence was prevailing in learner decision-making (Workman, 2015). Nugent et al. (2015) supported this claim, as did several scholars. Moreover, Etiubon et al. (2018) claim that their parents' vocations, professions that show high income, and benefits that attract other people influence some individuals. Muraguri (2011) added that some follow the same career path as their parents or elder siblings. However, the study by Mzobe (2014) conducted in South Africa revealed that family influences students' career decisions more than monetary influences. Moreover, Mbahi (2014) states that even students trying to become more independent still need their parents' help to better understand and address confusion about their career or subject choices. It includes the school they enroll in, which books to read, and even the subjects they get in that school. Thus, Lilian (2017) views parental education and socioeconomic status as affecting the student's subject selection. Daniel (2015) highlighted that every parent only wanted their children to have careers with bright futures. Therefore, parents try to influence their children to have promising careers. That is the danger of parents trying to "live their dreams" through their children's career choices (Maina, 2013).

Peer Influences. Another extrinsic factor is peer influence. Young adults' educational choices are not just influenced by future earnings but also by social image effects. The idea is that people seek approval from their peers or other reference groups if they make a particular choice (Bursztyn & Jensen, 2017). However, young people may not be aware that their peers influence their educational choices (Andersen & Hjortskov, 2022). Kaur (2020) mentions that peer pressure is a strong emotion and that one must do the same thing as other people in their age group to be exactly like them. A recent study in Kenya, Ogutu et al. (2017), found that peer pressure significantly influenced career decision-making among students. Other research shows how peer influence shapes one's perception and attitudes toward the decision-making of the youth (Bett, 2013). Naz et al. (2014) found that other peers focus on making career decisions, as their peers motivate them to do more challenging tasks. Okiror and Otabong's (2015) study in Zimbabwe and Uganda by Mukama (2010) reinforced that peer pressures determine one's career path. On the other hand, adolescents rely on their friends for guidance and career decisions (Shumba & Naong, 2012). Oni (2010) conducted a study in Nigerian schools, showing that peer group pressure determines adolescents' social adjustment. Thus, peer support gives students a sense of motivation to strive for academic success. Hence, supportive friends significantly influence students' career planning (You, 2011).

Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic. In 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic caused substantial changes in all areas of life. Many young people experienced significant changes in their psychosocial and academic lives, to which their career planning and decision-making processes were subjected (Schwartz & Cymrot, 2020). For instance, in the study by Jemini-Gashi and Kadriu (2022), the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the participants' career decision-making process. Findings showed that three main factors facilitated their career decision-making despite the fear of their physical health and the distance learning experience. These were passion and personal interest in a specific field, job opportunities in the economic aspect, information, and family members' influence. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted both academic and employment career choices. The shift in learning modalities forced the students to face challenges with availability and internet connectivity. Thus, the pandemic caused students confusion regarding career decisions (Kobayashi et al., 2023). Moreover, Shi (2023), in her study using the Career Self-Management Model Theory on Chinese undergraduates, revealed that aside from individual detailed factors, students also consider environmental factors that highlighted their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic in choosing a course. Researchers surveyed a total of 2040 medical students at Hubei University. Aside from grades, attitudes toward healthcare and the COVID-19 pandemic have notably shown impacted students' lives in terms of changes in career choices (Wang et al., 2022). The findings of Zheng et al. (2021) revealed evidence that stress induced by the COVID-19 pandemic has affected medical

students' future career choices, and the feeling of loneliness plays a mediating role. The study invites more attention to students' mental health, especially in crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Institutional Factors

The institution's physical and social environment and the teacher's ability to keep students engaged and involved are also factors to be looked at for students' willingness to continue the same academic courses (Hanson et al., 2016). Barley et al. (2017) supported this, which states that teachers' capacity to empower students through their advice and guidance significantly impacts the course selection of students. In his recent study, Lanonte et al. (2025) found that most research participants chose the English program because of their previous teachers in Senior High School, who inspired and influenced them. It became their state of motivation to put that inspiration into practice. On the other hand, a study conducted by Igere (2017) in America found that 20% to 60% of new students enrolled in higher education institutions are usually undecided over their assumed career choices. Also, students become more likely to feel insecure about career decision-making due to having no career guidance in secondary schools (Ogutu et al., 2017). The International Labor Organization (2011) supported this by stating that schools that do not provide early career preparation for learners would make students gain inadequate knowledge about career decision-making. In Kenya, secondary school students face career decision-making challenges (Maraya, 2011). Like in the Philippines, the lack of Guidance Counselors and other professionals to help our students in career decision-making has remained challenging. Schools have teachers who handle careers, but their career and counseling services are limited since they lack training (Wambu & Wickman, 2011). Moreover, in the study by Eliamani et al. (2014) in Tanzania, no trained counselor made career-related services moderately effective in students' academic lives and attitudes toward career choice.

Course Mismatch. Along with the struggles of secondary school students around the globe in making career decisions (Watson et al., 2010). It has been revealed in the study conducted by Quintos et al. (2020) that there is a high rate of mismatch in the Philippines. Course mismatch happens when a student's senior high school transcript does not align with the academic program or courses enrolled in college. The study's findings revealed that in the academic years 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, there were 39% and 31% levels of mismatch among the SHS graduates, respectively. The study also discussed the main factors of course mismatch, such as family, accessibility of the programs, location of the school, and friends and peer pressure. Additionally, many senior high school graduates do not match the tertiary programs. This course mismatch is a concerning trend caused by poor career decision-making and could lead to course shifting, a problem that needs urgent attention (Aguba & Villacruel, 2023). One of the key factors contributing to course mismatch is socioeconomic status. Pascual (2015) highlighted the importance of this factor in her study, emphasizing that socioeconomic status often influences a student's track or strand in senior high school. However, Palmes (2018) found that many students take college courses unrelated to their senior high school track or stand, leading to difficulties meeting their chosen courses' standards. Ahmed et al. (2017) added that students face several challenges when deciding on a career path. Family pressure is a significant factor, often leading to a course mismatch. Many students feel compelled to follow their parents' advice when choosing a college major as a sign of respect and sacrifice for the family (Finlayson, 2012). Furthermore, personal preferences play a significant role in shaping an individual's career choice. As Muranguri (2011) pointed out, personal characteristics, cultural environments, family experiences, and guidance received all contribute to an individual's decision about their chosen field of occupation. Recognizing the importance of personal agency in career decisions, making students feel empowered and in control of their future.

As students enrolled in courses unrelated to their previous senior high school stand, several studies show the challenges college students face that implicate the obstacles of having a course mismatch. In the study by Batu et al. (2018) among former ABM students, findings revealed that the following were the challenges faced by the students: the academic expectations and the pressure from their surroundings. Students faced difficulties in course adjustments since they had no prior experience and familiarity with the task from their previous strand. Additionally, they felt pressure from the expectations of their parents, peers, and other significant individuals in their lives who anticipated that they would choose a course aligned with their strand. Furthermore, Formaran et al. (2022) discussed that mismatched students are in unfortunate situations. These students would need to work extra and even experience sleepless nights to cope with the workload, which can have detrimental effects on their mental health. The findings mentioned above were also present in the study conducted by Andrada and David (2020), which investigated course mismatch among former STEM students. Accordingly, students regret having

misaligned strands and taking courses in college. It was a waste of time, money, and effort for them. Mismatched courses affect their college experience and have long-term implications for their careers, as they are unprepared for the job market due to their mismatched courses. As a mismatched student enrolled in college, multiple challenges can be presented, such as the academic transition and working harder to adjust and blend, as caused by course mismatch. However, coping strategies could help students excel academically (Austria-Cruz, 2019). In dealing with challenges brought by course mismatch, several studies explored how college students adopt and deal with course mismatch. Gallagher et al. (2019) found that college students applied "healthy" coping strategies. These are listening to music, interacting with family and friends, having personal time, exercising, and praying or reading the Bible. However, it also acknowledged the different coping mechanisms and their benefits, as individuals differ in perceptions regarding coping mechanisms. On the other hand, as cited in Sidek (2023), mismatched ABM and HUMS students overcome college transition and course mismatch with the help of social support and self-determination.

Career Guidance Services. Several research studies elaborated on the implications and importance of institutional career guidance services as an intervention for students' career decision-making. Career guidance helps individuals reflect on their interests, ambitions, abilities, qualifications, etc. Understand the job market and education system relative to how one perceives oneself. Career guidance tries to teach individuals to plan and make decisions about work and learning (Roy, 2020). Students guided in their career paths would be more satisfied with their overall education experience. The study of Zahrebniuk (2023) on the United States of America's career guidance system emphasized the role of career counselors in assisting students with their career choices. It is consistent with the study conducted by Sharapova et al. (2023) that career guidance interventions have a reasonably high impact on improving students' career-related skills and knowledge, leading to positive career outcomes. Thus, students with difficulties in career decision-making can benefit from the targeted intervention based on these research findings. Xu and de Silva (2024) suggested that first-year students must be prioritized regarding educational support and interventions when choosing a course major due to their lack of curricular experience in college compared to other college students and transferees. It facilitates the process of primary and course exploration early, gives enough time and opportunities, and allows the students to graduate without delays. Jaradat and Mohammad (2017) supported this through their research findings about academic advising in maintaining majors in schools and universities. Providing students with early, proactive, and practical support in major exploration would decrease the possibility of students changing their majors. Researchers also suggested that universities incorporate career development and workshops into their system to help students decide on their majors and future careers and help them complete their degrees without changing majors or courses. Additionally, Khan and Rehman (2018) find that both males and females face different difficulties, and age does not determine one's decision-making ability. Data shows that adolescents need career guidance to help them decide what they want, rather than making a wrong career choice and regretting it afterward. Thus, informative sessions need to be provided in the schools to make students think over and discover their passions and interests instead of pressuring and forcing adolescents into a career they do not want to pursue in the first place. Moreover, Prescod et al. (2019), in their study about the effects of career-planning courses, strongly speak for the importance of career development interventions to undergraduate students. To encourage students as early as the first year in their academic journey to undergo career planning and decision-making courses to increase their chances of staying in their enrolled courses.

Theoretical Lens

The study is grounded in the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). The theory was based on Albert Bandura's general social cognitive theory and developed by Robert W. Lent, Steven D. Brown, and Gail Hackett in 1994. Social Cognitive Career Theory addresses interrelated aspects of career development, incorporating interests, abilities, values, and environmental factors that influence career paths. This theory highlighted three key variables: self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goals. Self-efficacy is the individual's belief in their ability to accomplish a task. SCCT posits that individuals with strong self-efficacy, supported by their environment, are more likely to be interested in, choose, and excel in their pursuits. Outcome expectations are the anticipated consequences of behaviors, where positive outcomes such as rewards and approval increase engagement and persistence. Personal goals, which include performance goals and choices, aim to achieve specific performance levels that align with one's perceived capabilities and expected outcomes (Lent, 2002). Applying SCCT, this study provides a framework for analyzing course shifting among DDOSC students, illustrating how internal and external factors influence their decisions. For example, students may shift courses due to external pressures and

low self-efficacy, seeking a field where they feel more competent and confident. SCCT also emphasizes the evolving nature of personal goals, leading students to explore different academic paths. The study at Davao de Oro State College employed two distinct instruments to gather data on course shifting. The researcher collected quantitative data on factors influencing course shifting through a questionnaire. Qualitative data on the students' experiences, focusing on their reasons and insights obtained through in-depth interviews using a semi-structured guide. The schematic diagram below illustrates the study's exploration of factors and experiences of students in course shifting. The study's findings will inform the evaluation of career guidance, targeted interventions, and student support systems, ensuring they are responsive to students' needs and aid in informed career decisions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Locale

This research was a college-wide study, including all Davao de Oro State College branches. This fact-finding activity described the college's conditions and the level of course shifting. The respondents of the quantitative inquiry of this study were sixty (60) students who shifted courses from the four branches of Davao de Oro State College situated at New Bataan, Montevista, Maragusan, and Compostela, Davao de Oro. The researcher purposely selected ten (10) informants from these campuses for the qualitative part, believing they possessed the rich information needed for the study. This study explored course shifting at Davao de Oro State College. The researcher delimited the study to sixty students enrolled at Davao de Oro State College for 2023-2024 and 2024-2025. The respondents were DDOSC students who had shifted courses within these two academic years and were enrolled from the various program offerings from the four branches of Davao de Oro State College located at New Bataan, Montevista, Maragusan, Compostela-Main Campus, Davao de Oro, to understand the course shifting comprehensively. Moreover, the researcher focused on identifying the key factors that influenced students to change their academic programs and how these decisions relate to their career decision-making processes. Using an adapted questionnaire, the study investigated intrinsic, extrinsic, and institutional factors influencing course shifting. It includes personal, academic, economic/financial, and social. In-depth interviews were conducted with ten participants to gather insights from the course shifters.

Design

The study used a convergent parallel mixed method to explore the course shifting among Davao de Oro State College students. This mixed-methods approach collects and analyzes quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously and compares and relates results to draw an interpretation. In this study, the descriptive assessment determined the mean scores of the factors of course shifting at Davao de Oro State College utilizing the adopted questionnaire. In-depth interviews explored the experiences. Specifically, the reasons and insights of the students concerning course shifting. The data were collected for quantitative and qualitative purposes to completely understand why students shifted courses and the experiences that led to this decision. According to Creswell and Clark (2007), in a convergent parallel mixed method, researchers concurrently conduct the quantitative and qualitative elements in the same phase of the research process, weigh the methods equally, analyze the two components independently, and interpret the results together.

Respondents/Participants

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-method sampling approach. This sampling involved collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously but independently, then comparing results to give interpretations of the issue being investigated comprehensively. The researcher selected sixty (60) students as respondents for the quantitative approach. These students are enrolled at Davao de Oro State College and experienced course shifting during the academic years 2023-2024 and 2024-2025. A universal sampling technique allowed course shifters to answer the survey questionnaire, ensuring results that reflected the target population precisely as needed.

Instruments

In this study, the researcher utilized two distinct instruments. One is to obtain quantitative data using an adapted test questionnaire originally derived from Yahya, N. (2016), modified by the researcher, and validated by the panel of experts. The questionnaire comprised 50 questions about factors influencing students' decisions to shift courses, including intrinsic, extrinsic, and institutional factors. The five-point Likert scale below will aid the statistical interpretation of the research questionnaire. The quantitative inquiry utilized a 50-item test using an

adapted questionnaire on Factors of Course Shifting. An adopted questionnaire was a ready-to-use instrument that was valid and reliable. The mean scores and descriptive ratings were as follows: 4.50-5.0 for Strongly Agree, 3.50-4.49 for Agree, 2.50– 3.49 for Moderately Agree, 1.50-2.49 for Disagree, and 1.0-1.49 for Strongly Disagree. The researcher used the descriptive rating with its corresponding interpretation to facilitate the interpretation of the mean scores from the respondents' responses to the test questionnaire. For the qualitative data, the researcher utilized a semi-structured interview guide designed to fit the objectives of this study. The Dean of Graduate School identified experts who checked and validated this interview guide questionnaire.

Validation of Instrument

The adapted questionnaire was originally from Yahya, N. (2016). However, the researcher modified the questionnaire to fit the study's requirements. The five experts the Dean of the Graduate School identified validated the questionnaire and pilot-tested it on the students not included as the research respondents.

Research Procedure

Below are the procedures undertaken for this study: The researcher followed the Research Ethics Committee protocol before collecting data and secured ethical clearance and a committee approval certificate. Upon the endorsement of the Dean of Graduate School, the researcher wrote a request letter to the College President and through the Branch Directors for the DDOSC Branches to seek the study's data collection approval. Granted with permission, the researcher presented the letter of approval to the college's registrar's office to obtain the lists of students who shifted and informed the program heads and program coordinators of the various departments about the study. The researcher visited the different branches using the validated adapted survey questionnaire for a quantitative approach and a semi-structured interview guide. To gather data about the factors of course shifting, the researcher collected the data by administering the survey to the respondents from each DDOSC campus. To gather information about the participants' reasons and insights on course shifting, the researcher used a validated semi-structured interview questionnaire as an interview guide for an in-depth interview. The researcher documented and recorded the flow of the interviews with audio recorders to back up notes and analyzed the responses separately. During the interview, the researcher established rapport with the informants to make them feel more comfortable and willing to share their experiences without hesitation. The researcher ensured that the informants felt safe and that everything they shared remained confidential and would be used solely for research purposes, which could contribute to improving the guidance services and programs of the college. Statisticians and data analysts analyzed the collected data. The qualitative data were subjected to proper coding and transcription by the researcher. The informants signed validation and verification forms. Thus, the researcher submitted the collected data to the data analyst, who provided proper thematic analyses.

Statistical Treatment of Data /Data Analysis

This study analyzed the quantitative and qualitative data separately and compared them to draw an overall interpretation. The tools used to analyze these two distinct data sets were the following: The study used only one statistical tool to facilitate the test results regarding course-shifting factors at the four branches of Davao de Oro State College. To determine the mean scores of the factors influencing course shifting at Davao de Oro State College, the researcher used the mean and provided descriptive ratings and interpretations to further identify the level of influence of the factors in course shifting in the four branches of Davao de Oro State College. The study followed a systematic approach to data analysis to provide a clear, in-depth understanding of the experiences of the students who shifted courses, specifically their reasons and insights relating to course shifting. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data collected from interviews systematically. Thematic analysis was an appropriate method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data. After data collection, the researcher thoroughly reviewed all interview transcripts and presented the emerging themes to highlight each transcript segment, representing a significant idea or experience on course shifting. Moreover, the researcher organized the emerging themes into structured themes to represent the reasons and insights of the student's decision to shift courses. Results were presented with detailed descriptions of each reason and insights on course shifting. The researcher provided direct quotes from participants' responses to present rich contextual evidence for each theme. A discussion section linked the findings to existing literature and highlighted their implications for educational policy, career guidance intervention programs, and Davao de Oro State College student support services.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

For the integrity and reliability of the research findings of this study, the trustworthiness and credibility of the study were verified through its credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To establish credibility, the researcher ensured that the findings accurately reflected the participants' perspectives. The researcher achieved the results through a guided questionnaire encompassing the general and specific research questions. It also ensured that the participants were free to express their feelings, opinions, and ideas, allowing the researcher to understand the context of career decision-making and course shifting profoundly. The researcher reviewed the data and interpretations to confirm the accuracy of the insights from the participants' initial views. While the study was specific to the DDOSC context, the research findings were transferable as the researcher provided detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences, institutional factors, and the involvement of academic programs. These could allow readers from other higher education institutions to determine if the findings can be applied to their settings, thus enhancing the research's broader applicability. The researcher followed a systematic process that other studies could replicate in similar contexts to verify the findings. To ensure this transparency, the researcher provides clear documentation of the research design, methodology, data collection, and analysis process. To maintain the study's confirmability, research findings are shaped by the data obtained, not by the researcher's biases. The researcher established confirmability by following an audit trail, which includes notes on the data analysis to avoid researcher subjectivity throughout the study.

Ethical Considerations

According to Bhashin (2020), ethical consideration represents the beliefs and concepts the researcher upholds throughout the study. In line with this, the researcher followed the ethical standards to ensure the integrity of the research process and contribute valuable insights into the factors behind course shifting among DDOSC students. These included social value, written consent, vulnerability of the research participants, risks, benefits, safety, privacy and confidentiality of the informant, justice, transparency, and researcher qualification. The researcher conducted the study to help address the increasing rate of course shifting at Davao de Oro State College. The study aims to explore the factors, reasons, and insights of the students who decided to shift courses. The result will be shared with the community and other stakeholders through the Guidance Office of the institution through its Guidance Services Program. It will be published in an online journal so other related research studies can use it as a reference. The researcher gave the participants written consent forms to ensure they understood their voluntary participation and explained their rights, including their ability to withdraw through the research study. Thus, the researcher provided a detailed orientation about the research's purpose, methods, and the usage of the participant's responses in the study. The researcher ensured that the participants did not expect psychological, emotional, or social factors due to their involvement. The researcher organized interview questions to avoid making participants uncomfortable or exposing them to judgment. Additionally, emotional support was made available during the discussions about career decision-making and course shifting to address possible distress among the participants. The researcher explained the benefits of every participant in the study and conducted the interviews at the most convenient time and place for the participants. The researcher will reimburse them for any expenses. Considering the sensitivity of the topic of career decision-making and the personal factors that influence course shifting, the researcher kept the identities and personal information of the participants confidential. The researcher used Pseudonyms and codes to protect the participants' privacy in all research documents and publications. Thus, the researcher securely stored the data collected solely for this research. The researcher acknowledged the participants' contributions as they are generally part of the success of the research. The researcher gave credit for their involvement in this endeavor. They are entitled to the benefits and risks associated with the study. The study's affiliation and objective are well discussed and disclosed to the participants. The research participants also were given a copy of the transcript of their answers to verify the reliability and validity of the data gathered.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results section of the convergent parallel mixed method reports on the findings from analyzing both quantitative and qualitative databases. The researcher divided it into two parts. The first part is about the results of the quantitative–descriptive assessment of the 60 students who shifted courses utilizing an adapted test questionnaire, and the second part is the results of the qualitative evaluation –utilizing an in-depth interview with 10 informants.

Table 1. Mean Test Scores of Intrinsic Factors-Personal Interest

Personal Interest Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Rating
The chance to be original and creative influences my choice.	3.95	Agree
My intellectual ability plays a role in my decision-making.	4.03	Agree
My values guide my choices.	4.22	Agree
My aspirations shape the decisions I make.	3.95	Agree
Feeling a sense of importance affects my choices.	3.92	Agree
I enjoy exploring and learning new things.	4.33	Agree
I strive to work for the betterment of society.	3.88	Agree
I prefer choosing my path rather than being pushed along by life.	4.20	Agree
I want to bring pride and a good name to my family.	4.42	Agree
I aspire to be a good role model for my siblings.	4.43	Agree
Overall Mean	4.13	Agree

Based on the data presented in Table 1, the students generally agreed with all the identified statements under Intrinsic Factors, specifically in Personal Interest, with an overall mean of 4.13. The highest-rated indicator was *"I aspire to be a good role model for my siblings,"* which got a mean of 4.33. It was followed by *"I want to bring pride and a good name to my family,"* with a mean of 4.42. Respondents also expressed a high level of intellectual curiosity, reflected in the indicator *"I enjoy exploring and learning new things,"* which got a mean of 4.33. The indicator *"I strive to work for the betterment of society"* got the lowest mean of 3.88. Overall, all items received a positive agreement that shows personal values, aspirations, and the desire for autonomy significantly shaped their decision to shift courses. Results demonstrate that Intrinsic motivations influence how Davao de Oro State College students navigate their academic paths.

Table 2. Mean Test Scores of Intrinsic Factors-Academic Ability

Academic Ability Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Rating
I consider the academic program based on the internship opportunities and hands-on experiences.	4.00	Agree
I consider my previous grades when choosing my new course.	3.79	Agree
I reflect on my senior high school strand/track when deciding on a course.	3.60	Agree
I base my new course selection on my academic achievements.	3.70	Agree
I assess my skills when considering my preferred course.	3.98	Agree
I prioritize courses that align with my ability to succeed academically.	4.07	Agree
My learning style plays an essential role in my course selection.	3.97	Agree
I focus on programs that challenge and enhance my intellectual capabilities.	3.92	Agree
My passion for a specific academic field drives my decision.	4.05	Agree
I value academic programs with good reputations for excellence.	4.23	Agree
Overall Mean	3.93	Agree

Similarly, the overall mean on Academic Ability under Intrinsic Factors presented in Table 2 reveals that respondents agree with all the indicators, giving an overall mean of 3.93. The highest-rated item was *"I value academic programs with good reputations for excellence,"* with a mean of 4.23, followed by *"I prioritize courses that align with my ability to succeed academically,"* with a mean of 4.07. Other indicators, such as *"My passion for a specific academic field drives my decision,"* got a mean of 4.05, and *"I consider the academic program based on the internship opportunities and hands-on experiences"* yielded a mean of 4.0. While indicators *"I reflect on my senior high school strand/track when deciding on a course"* and *"I consider my previous grades when choosing my new course"* got the lowest mean of 3.60 and 3.70, respectively. These results show that students at Davao de Oro State College perceived the quality and credibility of a program and assessed personal and practical approaches in selecting new courses. These students shifted courses based on their decision on interest and academic readiness, alignment with their strengths, and future career prospects.

Table 3. Mean Test Scores of Extrinsic Factors-Economic/Financial Factors

Economic/Financial Factors Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Rating
I consider the financial status of my family in making decisions.	4.18	Agree
I evaluate the potential future earnings in my chosen course.	4.23	Agree
I prioritize courses that offer stable and secure career opportunities.	4.35	Agree
I consider programs that allow me to earn an income while studying.	4.05	Agree
The cost of my previous course affects my new choice.	3.43	Moderately Agree
The availability of scholarships and financial aid influences my decision.	3.77	Agree
I focus on courses with low tuition costs to ease the financial burden.	4.00	Agree
The cost of living and expenses in a program's location matters to me.	3.78	Agree
I think about how soon I can start earning after graduation.	4.20	Agree
Family contributions or support play a role in my course choice.	4.00	Agree
Overall Mean	4.00	Agree

Table 3 shows that respondents agree with most of the indicators for Economic Factors under Extrinsic Factors, with an overall mean of 4.00. The highest-rated item was *"I prioritize courses that offer stable and secure career opportunities,"* which got a mean of 4.35. Other highly rated indicators were *"I evaluate the potential future earnings in my chosen course,"* with a mean of 4.23, and *"I think about how soon I can start earning after graduation,"* with a mean of 4.20. Thus, the indicator *"The cost of my previous course affects my new choice"* got the lowest mean of 3.34, interpreted as Moderately Agree. These results highlight that students who shifted courses at Davao de Oro State College heavily consider job security after graduation. It signifies that economic considerations were a driving force behind course shifting among students.

Table 4. Mean Test Scores of Extrinsic Factors-Social Factors

Social Factors Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Rating
My parent's occupation influences my course selection.	3.47	Moderately Agree
The dominant profession in my family guides my choice.	3.45	Moderately Agree
My friends or classmates inspire or influence my decision.	3.32	Moderately Agree
Relatives, such as uncles, cousins, or aunts, have a say in my choice.	3.10	Moderately Agree
Cultural expectations shape my course preferences.	3.43	Moderately Agree
My family's desire for me to follow a particular career path impacts my choice.	3.57	Agree
Social approval or recognition affects my course decision.	3.35	Moderately Agree
I consider the prestige of a profession when choosing a course.	3.62	Agree
Mentors or role models inspire me to take a particular course.	3.80	Agree
The opinions of people I respect influence my academic path.	3.80	Agree
Overall Mean	3.49	Moderately Agree

Similarly, the social factors under extrinsic factors presented in Table 4 yield an overall mean of 3.49, interpreted as "Moderately Agree." The results suggest that while social factors influence students' decisions in course-shifting at Davao de Oro State College, they are less dominant than intrinsic and economic factors. The highest-rated indicators were *"Mentors or role models inspire me to take a particular course"* and *"The opinions of people I respect influence my academic path,"* which generated a mean of 3.80, interpreted as Agree. Meanwhile, factors like *"My friends or classmates inspire or influence my decision,"* with a mean of 3.32, and *"Relatives, such as uncles, cousins, or aunts, have a say*

in my choice," with a mean of 3.10, received lower ratings. Results indicate that social influences are generally present, but peer and extended family influences are less significant. Social factors moderately influence students' decisions to shift courses compared to personal aspirations and financial considerations.

Table 5. Mean Test Scores of Institutional Factors

Institutional Factors Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Rating
Teachers have a significant influence on my course choice.	3.48	Moderately Agree
Career guidance and counselors provide crucial support in my decisions.	3.77	Agree
Career exhibitions introduce me to possible academic programs.	3.75	Agree
Career talks help clarify my course and career preferences.	3.80	Agree
The reputation of the institution influences my course decision.	3.62	Agree
The accessibility of academic facilities and resources matters to me.	3.82	Agree
The teaching style of faculty members impacts my preference for a program.	3.92	Agree
The school's Internship and career placement programs influenced my decision.	3.60	Agree
I consider the alumni success stories from a program of my choice.	3.77	Agree
The campus environment and culture play a role in my decision-making.	3.87	Agree
Overall Mean	3.74	Agree

The data on institutional factors resulted in an overall mean of 3.74, interpreted as "Agree." Results imply that institutional aspects notably influenced the course-shifting of Davao de Oro State College students. Among the high-rated indicators was *"The teaching style of faculty members impacts my preference for a program,"* with a mean of 3.92, it highlights how instructional methods strongly affect students' course choices. Factors such as *"The accessibility of academic facilities and resources matters to me,"* with a mean of 3.82, and *"The campus environment and culture play a role in my decision-making,"* with a mean of 3.87, were also highly valued. Although *"Teachers have a significant influence on my course choice,"* this indicator scored slightly lower with a mean of 3.48, interpreted as Moderately Agree. Generally, institutional support structures like career guidance services, academic resources, and the institution's reputation substantially shape students' decisions when shifting courses.

Table 6. Summary of the overall mean of factors influencing course shifting

Factors	Overall Mean	Descriptive Rating
Intrinsic Factors		
● Personal Interest	4.13	Agree
● Academic Ability	3.93	Agree
Extrinsic Factors		
● Economic/Financial	4.00	Agree
● Social Factors	3.49	Moderately Agree
Institutional Factors	3.74	Agree

The table presents the overall mean scores and descriptive ratings of the factors influencing students' decision to shift courses at Davao de Oro State College. Personal interest received the highest mean score of 4.13 for intrinsic factors, indicating that students strongly value aligning their academic path with their interests. The economic/financial aspect scored the next highest rated factor of 4.00 under the extrinsic factors. It shows that financial considerations play a critical role in shifting courses. Academic ability obtained a high mean of 3.93, highlighting its significance in decision-making. Meanwhile, social factors received the lowest rating, with 3.49, suggesting a moderate influence from peers, family, or societal expectations. Institutional factors had a mean score of 3.74, signifying that the quality of instruction, facilities, and institutional support moderately influence course-shifting behavior. The data shows that while all categories influence students' decisions to shift courses, personal interest and financial considerations are the most impactful factors.

Qualitative Phase

This section presents the responses of the ten informants to the research questions that explored the experiences of students who shifted courses, including their reasons and insights concerning course shifting at Davao de Oro State College. The researcher transcribed the responses correctly, which the informants verified by allowing them to read the soft copies for the correctness and truthfulness of the data collected. Then, these data were thoroughly organized into themes by a data analyst. In keeping with the research ethics for qualitative research, the researcher used codes to conceal the identities of the research participants. The presented themes were emerging themes collected from an in-depth interview of ten (10) participants to answer each research question posed in the qualitative inquiry of this study. These themes generated from the views of the informants, along with the verbatim statements, are further emphasized as follows:

What are the experiences the students encountered concerning course shifting?

This section presents the results of the major research question: 'What are the experiences encountered by the course shifters concerning course shifting?' Two specific research questions guided the data collection to gather data and information for this major research question. The questions were intended to collect information on the research participants' perceptions regarding their reasons and insights regarding course shifting.

Student's Reasons to Shift Courses

The themes in this section came from the specific research question 1.1, 'What are the reasons that influenced the students to shift courses?'. The responses generated nine themes: Uncomfortable, Unmotivated, Parent's Choice, Time Management, Self-Disappointment, Pressured, Financial Problem, Less Competent, and Hard to Comprehend.

Uncomfortable. This theme reflects the discomfort experienced by the student when placed in a program where their interests are misaligned and pressured by others. It brings uneasiness that could affect students' performance. As shared by Informant 1, *Pagsulod jd nako ana nga program [BSED] ma'am is naka feel jd ko na bug-at sa akoang, kanang dili jd ko comfortable na dira ko na field jd maam ba. Dili man jd unta pd ko dinba sa BSED na ano lang pd ko sa akong ate.* (When I entered that program [BSED], ma'am, I felt heaviness in my chest, like I was uncomfortable in that field. I know I was not meant for BSED—it is just that I followed my older sister.)

Unmotivated. This theme encapsulates the lack of enthusiasm that the students feel towards their current academic program. The absence of motivation may lead to students' disengagement and contemplation of shifting to another field. As described by Informant 1, *Then, sa wala pa ang katong kuan, ma'am—sa pag-shift nako—naka-decide na jud ko nga mo-balbin jud ko ng laing program. Na-ano jud nako, ma'am, sa BSED kay dili gani ko motivated mosulod didto na classroom or program [BSED].* (Even before that happened, ma'am—before I officially shifted—I had already decided to transfer to another program. I felt that BSED was not for me because I did not even feel motivated to attend the classes or be part of that program.)

Parent's Choice. This theme shows parental authority in students' academic decisions, particularly when choosing a course. Some students felt obligated to parents' preferences and expectations rather than follow their own. As informant 2 shared, *Pinaka una ana is dili jud ko gusto mag-shift [from BSE to BSED], kanang ginabuhay na nako ang tanan, gud, nga mag-explain sa akoa parents na dili ko gusto mo-balbin. Sila man gud ang gusto, kana gani'ng gusto nila ipa-shift ko ana na course [BSE to BSED]—like, 'kani jud imo kubaon, dapat mo-shift jud ka.* (Initially, I did not want

to shift [from BSE to BSED]. I did everything I could to explain to my parents that I did not want to transfer. However, they were the ones who wanted it—like they were insisting I shift to that course and telling me, ‘This is what you should take; you have to shift.)

Time Management. This theme captures students' struggles balancing academic demands with their personal and family responsibilities. Ineffective time management may lead to academic stress and can influence students' decision to shift to another program that may seem manageable and fit with students' lifestyles. Informant 3 pointed out, Yes, I experienced challenges before shifting to another course, which is BSE. Before the shift, I faced many challenges, especially managing my time between academic responsibilities, family matters, and personal issues. However, I did not face financial challenges because my tuition is currently free.

Self-Disappointment. This theme explains students' feelings of failure after exerting academic effort but falling short of their expectations. Heated by external pressure, this feeling affects the confidence of the students who decide to shift courses in search of a renewed purpose. As informant 4 narrated, *Before ko ni shift sa laing course, I have been experiencing some challenges na akoo na encounter. Personally, I was so disappointed sa akong sarili that time. Kay I feel na kanang gibuhay na nako akong best but in the end wala gihapon and na pressure sab ko sa akong mga ig-agaw kay before working student ko sa ilaba.* (Before I shifted to another course, I faced several challenges. Personally, I was disappointed in myself because I felt I had already done my best, but it still was not enough. My cousins also pressured me since I used to be a working student in their household.)

Pressure. This theme centers on the student's feelings and anticipating other people's reactions, especially those who support and have expectations of them. They fear disappointing these people, which causes them to overthink and fuels emotional and mental distress that leads to their decision to shift to another program. Informant 4 shared that, *Katong pagkabalo nako na failed ko sa ana na course [EDUC], nakulbaan ko, na pressure ko kay wala ko kabalo unsaon nako pag ingon sa ilaba [sa akong gi workingan] ana na basin masuko sila. Maong bisag unsa nalang na mga thoughts or kanang mahunahunaan.* (When I found out I had failed in that course [EDUC], I got nervous and felt pressured because I did not know how to tell the people I was working for—they might get angry. That is why all sorts of thoughts started to run through my mind.)

Financial Problem. Another recurrent theme emerged that became the common reason that influenced students behind course shifting. Several informants shared that they experienced monetary constraints in meetings and school-related needs such as miscellaneous fees, projects, and daily needs. Students initiate to seek programs perceived as less financially demanding as a solution. As narrated by Informant 5, *Before ko nagshift maam, naencounter pd nako ang sa financial problem kay akong both parents pd nako maam kay wala napoy trabaho. So, I decided to shift in ENTREP although naa siyay mga amutan gihapon pero at least medyo dili na ata kaayo bug-at.* (Before I shifted, ma'am, I encountered financial problems because my parents were unemployed. So, I decided to shift to the Entrepreneurship program. Although there are still some expenses, it is not as financially burdensome.) Also, Informant 10 added, *Financial problem ang isa sa reason ngano nagshift ko ani na program [BSE], because katong program nako dati kay gasto kaayo siya, like maghuna-huna ko asa magkuha ug kwata e-bayad sa other bayronon ug asa ko magkuha ug kwarta para makapalit sa akoang mga project.* (Financial problems were one of the reasons I shifted to this program [BSE]; my previous program was costly. I would constantly think about where to get money to pay for different fees and where to get money to buy materials for my projects.) There were also cases in which students refrained from asking their parents for money out of embarrassment, instead quietly bearing the pressure alone. Informant 6 shared, *Financial po ma'am kay usabay ug naay bayronon nga dinagko [AGRI] wala koy ika batag. Maulaw ko mangayo sa akong parents, naa man galing koy kwarta usabay nga dinagko, mga balon nako na nga gina-apon ma'am, dili ko ga recess, then about academic pud ma'am.* (It was financial, ma'am. Sometimes, I cannot contribute anything when there are too many payables in [AGRI]. I felt embarrassed to ask my parents for money. In times when I had extra money from saving my daily allowance, I did not spend it during recess. There were also academic challenges, ma'am.)

Less Competent. This theme highlights the student's feelings toward academic inadequacy. Some students feel they are not academically competitive enough compared to their peers, which lowers their self-confidence. The lack of competence makes these students shift to programs where they feel they might perform better under less pressure. As described by Informant 7, *My personal challenge is academic, kay dili ko tantong bright. Well kung dili pd ko competent enough para mag succeed sa akoo academic. Kay sa una okay ra na average ra akong grado dili ko naga aim ug high nga*

grades dili parehas sa ubang classmates nako sa una [BSED classmates], gina kuan jd nila ilang kaugalingun para makakuha ug grades. Ako sa una maam kay murag sabay-sabay ra siguro sa ilaha. Ginasabayan ra nako akoo mga classmates maam kay average man gihapon akong kuan bunabuna. (My challenge is academic because I am not that smart. I felt like I was not competent enough to succeed in my academics. Before, I was okay with just having average grades—I did not aim for high ones like my classmates in Education, who pushed themselves. Back then, I was trying to keep up with them, but I knew I was just average in terms of thinking.)

Hard to Comprehend. This theme captures the students' academic challenge in which course content becomes difficult to understand. This incident may be due to gaps in foundational knowledge or ineffective teaching methods. These challenges intensified when past learning experiences were left underexplored, especially during the pandemic time when students underwent modular learning modality. Informant 8 shared that, *Nakaagi jd ko ug academic challenges kay kuan man ko BSED-Mathematics tapos naay isa ka subject na daghan jd mi dili makakaya ato na subject. Kay kuan man gd siya gitudlo man gd siya sa amoa pero maglisod mig comprehend kay dili gani thorough pagka explain sa amoa, taz kami na wala kayo background pag junior high ug senior high kay mag lisod mig sabot jd. Ako kay ABM student, naa jd math sa amoa, sa kato man gd na subject kay Algebra. Ang algebra kay natudlo pag ka grade 10 siya pero pagka-grade 10 is nag modular nalang mi kay natungnan man to siya ug covid.* (I experienced academic challenges because I was in BSED-Mathematics. There was one subject that many of us could not handle. It was taught to us, but we had difficulty comprehending it because the explanation was not thorough. Moreover, we struggled since many of us did not have a strong background in it during junior and senior high. I was an ABM student, and while we had math, that subject—Algebra—was only taught in Grade 10. However, we already did modular learning during that year because of COVID-19.)

Student's Insights in Course Shifting Experience

This section presents the results of the specific research question 1.2, 'What are the insights or realizations the students gained from their course-shifting experience?' The following themes served as the results for students' insights, specifically on the challenges they encountered on the course shifting journey: Adjustment, A Bit of Hassle, Long Process, Hesitant, Self-Doubt, Academic Difficulties, and Time Schedule.

Adjustment. When faced with unfamiliar environments, peers, and academic demands, adjustment challenges are common, especially for those students who transfer to a new program. This theme highlights students' emotional and social difficulties in adapting to the different teaching styles of the instructors and academic expectations of their newly enrolled program. Informant 1 shared that, *Mga challenges naa nako didto na program is sa kanang pag adjust napd and kanang maglisod ko usabay mangutana sa ilaha [mga new classmates] or magcommunicate kay nabag-uban pd ko sa akong surroundings. Then, it comes to academic ma'am kay dili pd kaayo ko anad diraa kay naga adjust-adjust pa pd ko ma'am ba.* (The challenges I experienced in that program involved adjusting again. Sometimes, I had difficulty asking questions or communicating with my new classmates because I was still unfamiliar with the environment. Academically, I also struggled because I was not used to the system yet—I was still adjusting.) The adjustment phase includes adapting to new peers, different class schedules, and varied academic cultures. This transition may create feelings of discomfort or awkwardness. Informant 3 shared, after shifting and being here at BSE, I have faced challenges like adjusting to the environment, especially with the major subject of entrepreneurship. Also, Informant 8 elaborated, *Sa pagshift nako sa ENTREP ma'am kay grabi jd kaayo akoo adjustment sa environment, sa among classmates, sa schedule sa among klase. Sa BSED kay afternoon man mi ato, tapos pagka balbin na namo sa ENTREP na butang nami sa panggabi kay wla nay slots sa afternoon. Dayon grabi kaayo bitaw ang kuan ma'am, ana sila BSED mana sila gikan mga bright ni. Ulaw bitaw kaayo ma'am, daghan kaayo mangutana ba, ngano nag shift diay mo sa ENTREP, na bagsak mo no?* (When I shifted to ENTREP, ma'am, adjusting to the environment was tough. It was hard with the new classmates and the new class schedule. In BSED, we had afternoon classes, but when we moved to ENTREP, we were put on the evening schedule because there were no afternoon slots available. It was also difficult because people would say, 'Oh, they came from BSED; they are all smart,' I felt embarrassed. Many asked, 'Why did you shift to ENTREP? Did you fail in BSED?') Informant 10 added, *I think ma'am adjustments sa karon nga program [BSE] is new environment na akong na feel like awkwardness bitaw ma'am sa akong mga classmates sa new course na akong gibalbinan [BSE].* (I think, ma'am, the adjustment to my current program [BSE] is the new environment I felt, like the awkwardness with my new classmates in the course I shifted to [BSE].)

A Bit Hassle. This theme explains how emotional and logistically challenging students experienced during their course-shifting process. The bureaucratic and institutional administrative processes that the students need to follow and comply with, such as documentation, approvals, counseling, and enrollment, are described as being time-consuming and confusing at the same time. These challenges lead to frustration and self-doubt. As Informant 3 shared, *during the process of changing courses, it was challenging for me as I did not know where to start, and it was a bit of a hassle.* However, I had decided a year ago to shift into BSE, so I asked some instructors where to go next. After three days of processing, I successfully shifted to BSE. Sometimes, I doubt whether I chose the right or wrong path. Informant 5 also agreed, *while I am in shifting process po ma'am, medyo kuti jd siya ma'am kay katong nag pa-enroll nako ma'am kay na abtan jd ko ug pila ka days ma'am tungod ata kay shiftee ko. Pero wala man pd ko nagmahay nga nag shift ko kay second choice pd nako ang ENTREP.* (While I was in the process of shifting, ma'am, it was a hassle because when I tried to enroll, it took several days, maybe because I was a shifter. But I do not regret shifting since Entrepreneurship was also my second choice.)

Also, Informant 8 cited that, *during sa akong pag shift, akong na agian na challenges kay ang process itself kay 1 week mi nagbalik-balik sa skwelahan. 1st day kay nag process mi sa papers, 2nd day nag-adto mi sa Guidance Office for counseling, 3rd day mag pa-approved mi sa amoang balhina na Dean, 4th day kay mag enrollment na unta mi pero pabalikon napd mi sa last day sa enrollment kay didto daw mi ipa-enroll tanan mga shiftee ug mga irregular students.* (During my shift, the main challenge was the process itself—it took a week of going back and forth to school. On the first day, we processed our papers; on the second day, we went to the Guidance Office for counseling; on the third day, we sought approval from the Dean of our new program; and on the fourth day, we were supposed to enroll, but they told us to return on the last day of enrollment since all shiftee and irregular students were to be enrolled together.) Likewise, Informant 7 shared that, *Naa gihapon mga challenges na nabitabo, ang katong samtang nag shift pako paminaw nako layo raman gd kaayo ang entrepreneurship sa education more on business man ang gina aim sa entrep tas sa education, murag paminaw nako ug mo balhin pd ko sa laing skol kuan pd siya mahal pd sya. Ang challenge nako kay gi-train nako akong kaugalingon thru observing sa klase unsa jd ang aim sa course [Entrep] tapos mao tong mga challenges na ako gi-agian sa katong gi-ingin nimo ma'am sa process sa enrolling kay as a shiftee kuti jd kaayo siya ma'am sa enrollment palang, adding, dropping murag makalibog usabay pero gikaya raman pod.* (There were still challenges during the shifting process. I felt like Entrepreneurship was very far from Education since entrepreneurship is focused more on business. I also thought transferring to another school would be expensive. My challenge was training myself by observing classes to understand the aim of the course. During enrollment, ma'am, it was quite confusing—being a shiftee, the process like enrollment, adding, and dropping was difficult to follow sometimes, but I managed.)

Long Process. This theme highlights the tedious and time-consuming nature of the course-shifting process. The process may experience delays due to administrative requirements, long waiting times, and unavailability of personnel for the signatories, which adds stress to an already difficult decision made by the student shiftee. Shared by Informant 9, *Ang na-encounter lang nako na challenges kay katong time na nag-undergo sa processes sa shifting. Dugay kaayo like whole week mi sa akong kauban nagbaktas-baktas ra sa campus, wala mi nagsulod sa klase para mapirmahan ang mga papers. Sometimes wala pjd ang mga teachers na mo pirma ma'am.* (The challenge I encountered was the long process during the shifting. It took so long—my classmate and I spent the whole week walking around campus, skipping classes just to get our papers signed. Sometimes, the teachers we needed were not even around to sign them, ma'am.)

Hesitant. This theme shows the student's emotional attachment to their original programs. Uncertainty and self-doubt resurface when deciding to shift courses. Besides financial constraints and academic difficulty, several students still experienced self-doubt during their course-shifting decision-making, reflecting on the fear of making the wrong academic choice. As informant 4 shared, *During sa pag process sa pag shift nako ug pagdecide sa akong gipili na course. Honestly, nagduba-duba jd ko ug sure bako sa akong gipili na course [BSE] kay sa una medyo dili jd kaayo ko ganahan sa kana nga course [BSE] kay akong passion kay labi jd siya but kanang ako pong gibuna-huna ang mga reason or mga factors kung sa labi or kaning transfer ko ug school medyo kanang sa financial pd ba kay medyo pamasabi palang gasto na, kanang gi consider nalang pd nako ang sa financial pd na aspect.* (During the process of shifting and deciding on the course I chose, honestly, I was hesitant about whether I was sure about my decision to choose BSE. At first, I was not interested in that course because my passion was different. But I also considered other factors, like if I transferred to a different school, it would be financially difficult—even just the transportation costs would already be a burden. So, I considered the financial aspect as well.) Also, Informant 6 cited that, *Ga duba-duba jud ko ma'am kay*

*ganahan pud ko sa AGRI [BSA] daghan ko ug natun-an, pero dili man makaya ang uban instructor gud ma'am uy. (I had doubts, ma'am because I also liked AGRI [BSA] and learned much from it. But the problem was, I could not keep up with some of the instructors.) Lastly, informant 10 agreed with this, *Ang challenges na akong gika-atubang ma'am while nag process sa akong documents kay naa jd ang pagduba-duba like tama ba ni akong desisyon or dili kay basin ang program na akong balhinan [BSE], kay wla ana diay na slots, kung maka pa-enroll pa bako sa akong course na balhinan or basin dili ko dawaton.* (The challenge I faced while processing my documents, ma'am, was the uncertainty—was this the right decision or not? What if the program I transferred to [BSE] had no more slots? What if I was not accepted or could not enroll in the new course?)*

Self-Doubt. This theme emerges as a personal and emotional challenge experienced by the students during the course-shifting process. The students question their capacity to succeed in their new program and regret leaving their initially loved program. This inner conflict may cause students to be uncertain about their future. It was pointed out by Informant 8, *Second challenge na akoo na-agian during sa pag shift nako akong personal challenge. Kuan paman ko gaself-doubt pako ato na time, what if dili nako kaya ang akoang balhinan sayangan pd ko sa akoang course [BSED-MATH] na unta akoo gipadayon karon kay mao jd akoo gusto jd ko mag teacher.* (The second challenge I experienced during my shift was personal. I struggled with self-doubt then—what if I could not handle the new course? I also felt a sense of loss, thinking about my previous course [BSED-Math], which I liked and where I originally wanted to become a teacher.)

Academic Difficulties. This theme reflects the continued academic challenges even after the students have shifted courses. Students struggle to understand the lessons while coping with the demands of the new program. While there may be improvements in some areas, the adjustment to academic content and expectations still posed difficulties to the students. Informant 4 pointed out, *Right now, in terms of academic, medyo okay ra pd akoo performance and grades. Naka experience ko ug kalisod sa karon nga course [BSE] nga akoo gikuha sa mga lesson, sa mga topics.* (Right now, in terms of academics, my performance and grades are okay. But I have experienced some difficulties in my current course [BSE] when it comes to the lessons and topics)

Time Schedule. Adjusting to a new class schedule emerged as a challenge among students after shifting to a new program. The change in class hours, especially when involving evening or irregular class schedules, requires students to re-orient their daily routine and adapt to a different academic rhythm. Informant 5 expressed that, *After na nako na magshift sa akong bago na program [BSE], na encounter nako ang challenge sa akong time schedule po maam kay naa koy afternoon shift and also naa koy night shift. Didtoa ko nabaguhon pero nagkadugay nasanay nalang pd ko sa akong time schedule po.* (After I shifted to my new program [BSE], I encountered challenges with my schedule because I had both afternoon and night shifts. Initially, It was unfamiliar, but I eventually got used to it. Moreover, informants also expressed positive insights and realizations based on their experiences in course shifting. The following themes emerged: Feeling Fit In, Feeling Positive and Grateful, having No regrets about Decisions Made, Regrets, Seeing Own Self Graduate, Liking Better the Environment, and Excelling Even More.

Feeling Fit In. This theme shows the most common emotional responses after shifting courses: the sense of alignment and belongingness in their new academic program. Several students shared that their new courses felt more suited to their personal interests, goals, and abilities. It reveals a strong affirmation from students who think they are on the right academic path and that their new program boosts their motivation, engagement, and overall well-being. Informant 1 shared, *Pag pasok nako sa BEED ma'am, na ano na jd nako sa akoo utok nga murag feel nako nga dre na jd ko na program, kay mi excel man akoo kaugalingon gd ma'am. Mas na ano man ko sa program na BEED na drea na program mas naningkamot nako ug maayo para dili ko matanggal ana na program.* (When I entered the BEED program, ma'am, I thought this was the program for me because I saw myself excelling. I became more committed to the BEED program and worked harder to avoid losing my place there.) Also, Informant 2 added, *After na mi stop ko, mi balik ko sa course na akoo gusto, sa ENTREP, na align pd siya tungod atong pagstop nko naka experience ko ug work and then naka feel ko ug align na siya sa akoo. Then, ganahan ko drea na environment kay mao jd sa akoo heart na dira ko na course. Na experience diay nako ani maam, na dili diay ta magbased sa ubang tao, sa ila opinion, sa ilang gusto nila sa atoa kay dapat kita diay mo desisyon sa atong kaugalingon.* (After I stopped for a while, I returned to the course I truly wanted—ENTREP—which I found to be more aligned with me, especially after gaining some work experience. I also like the environment here because I genuinely feel that this is where I belong. I learned from this experience that we should not base our decisions on other people's opinions or what they want for us—we should be the ones to

decide for ourselves.) Similarly, Informant 5 shared, *After nako nga magshift ma'am, nakaingun jd ko na fit jd ko sa akong bagong program [BSE] kay ma feel nako sa akong bagong program [BSE] na align sa kong gusto which is sa future na naa koy own business.* (After I shifted, ma'am, I could say that I fit in with my new program [BSE] because I feel that it aligns with what I want—to have my own business in the future.)

Feeling Positive and Grateful. This theme highlights the sense of positivity and gratitude mentioned by some students after shifting courses. Several students felt renewed hope about their future career paths, gained confidence in their decisions, and looked forward to future opportunities. It also illustrates a personal vision of the future supported by faith. Informant 3 mentioned, *Now, months after shifting courses, I feel optimistic and grateful. I see myself becoming a businesswoman someday with God's help.* It also highlights how social support contributed to the student's optimism. Informant 9 also recounted, *I feel positive na makaya nako ni nga course, bisan pag grabe ka lisod sa Math, to the point na lami na kaayo e-hilak inig human ug exam. Pero kabalo ko na walay dili makaya basta maningkamot lang, though lisod ang math pero lingaw man pd sya basta naa kay mga friends na andam motabang ug motudlo nimo if dili kaayo masabtan ang lesson. Ana man gd tong teacher nako sa una, one of the factors para makabuman or ma motivate ang isa ka estudyante nga makabumnn ug skwela is friends, and supportive pd akong family sa akong pagskwela.* (I feel positive that I can handle this course, even though Math is challenging to the point that I feel like crying after exams. However, I know nothing is impossible if you put in the effort. Math may be challenging, but it is also fun if friends are ready to help and teach you when you do not quite understand the lesson. My previous teacher used to say that one of the factors for a student to finish school and stay motivated is friends, and my family is also very supportive of my studies.) It shows how initial feelings of doubt and anxiety gradually change into positive thinking as students become more comfortable in their new academic environment. Informant 10 expressed, *Sa pag-shift nako ani na program [BSE] ma'am, naa jd mga negative thoughts like basin ma behind ko sa akong mga kabatchmate. Daghan jd kaayo mga "what ifs" na nasulod sa akong hunabuna. And then, after sa katong na adopt na nako ang new environment nako ma'am, naa nay positive thoughts, like kani na program [BSE] is gamit jd kaayo ni siya in the future, labi na ug maka graduate nako ma'am.* (When I shifted to this program [BSE], ma'am, I had many negative thoughts like what if I fall behind my batchmates. There were so many 'what ifs' that crossed my mind. However, after I adapted to the new environment, I started having positive thoughts, like this program [BSE] will be helpful in the future, especially when I graduate.)

Seeing Own Self to Graduate. This theme illustrates the sense of self-assurance developed after shifting courses. A clear vision of themselves graduating and succeeding in their new program. It was shown in their improved academic performances and growing belief in their ability to complete their studies. It positively impacts both academic performance and mindset, contributing to students growing confident about graduation. Informant 7 expressed, *For me ma'am, I could say na makita na nako akong kaugalingon na makagraduate na kay nag improve naman akong academic, grades nako, performance nako, nag excel napd ko sa akong klase.* (For me, ma'am, I can say that I now see myself graduating because my academics have improved. My grades, my performance, I am excelling in my class now.)

Liking Better the Environment. This theme illustrates that some students shift to new courses for an environment that is more supportive and less stressful. Their new environment allowed them to become better versions of themselves and have a more balanced life. It shows that change in the academic environment can reduce stress, greater satisfaction, and better educational outcomes and happiness. Informant 7 shared, *For me ma'am, mas ganahan nako sa akong environment karon, no pressure, naa pakoy time mag lipay-lipay dili parehas atong sa pikas course [BSED] na burden, daghan kaayo gitrabaho, makita nako sa akong classmates sa una looy na kaayo sila, stress na kaayo. Paminaw nako dili nako to makaya ug wla ako nag shift, kung wala ko naka shift. Paminaw nako mas okay akong life karn na nagshift ko, sa environment, daghan napd kog friends, buotan na mga friends, wala koy bagsak, naa napd koy dagko na mga grades.* (For me, ma'am, I like my environment now. There is no pressure; I still have time to enjoy myself, unlike in my previous course [BSED], where there was a heavy burden. My classmates back then looked so pitiful, so stressed. I feel like I would not have been able to handle it if I did not shift. I feel like my life is better now that I shifted. In my new environment, I have gained many kind friends, have no failing grades, and am getting good grades.)

Excelling Even More. This theme illustrates the noticeable improvement of students in their academic performance. Several students noticed they excelled academically in their new courses, which boosted their confidence. Even considering continuing their long-term career goals if given a chance. Informant 8 expressed,

Pag abot nako sa akoang gibalbinan nako na course [ENTREP] ma'am, mas nakita nako akong grades mas nitaas, mas ni excel pd ko. Pero wala nako nakita akong kaugalingon na mosulod sa business industries, kay plan jd nako after mag take ani na course [BSE], mo balik ko ug skewela para ma pursue nako ang pagtudlo, if tagaan kog chance. (When I shifted to my new course [ENTREP], ma'am, I saw that my grades improved, and I excelled even more. However, I do not see myself entering the business industry because my plan after taking this course [BSE] is to go back to school to pursue teaching if given the chance.)

No Regrets to the Decision Made. This theme reveals the students' contentment with shifting courses even after encountering challenges. Some students expressed relief and satisfaction and had confidence in their ability to succeed in their new academic path. Informant 4 shared, *Sa karon for me, wala ko nagmahay sa akong desisyon nga gibubhat [mag-shift ug course]. Sa karon pd dili pd ko pressure about in terms of academically because nakaya rapd nako ang mga exam, quizzes and performance. Moreover, I imagine myself in the future to become a successful businesswoman.* (As of now, I have no regrets about my decision [to shift courses]. I also do not feel pressured academically because I have been able to handle the exams, quizzes, and performance. I imagine myself becoming a successful businesswoman in the future.)

Regrets. While many students found fulfillment in their new academic paths, this theme shows that some students regret their decision to shift courses. Often tied to academic performance, doubts, and meeting expectations, regrets arise. Thus, students are still determined to complete their studies. Informant 6 reflected, *Nag mahay ko ma'am kay nakita nako ang kalabian sa akong grade tong AGRI-student pako ug karun nga ENTREP, dako kaayo ug kalabian ma'am kay karun gagmay kaayo ko ug grades po at the same time na ano pud nko akung self ma'am nga maka graduate ko ani nga course [ENTREP].* (I regret, ma'am because I saw the difference in my grades when I was an AGRI student compared to when I was in ENTREP. There is a huge difference because my grades are low now, but at the same time, I have been telling myself that I will still graduate from this course [ENTREP].)

Quantitative Phase

The quantitative phase of this study sheds light on the influencing factors behind course shifting among students from the four campuses of Davao de Oro State College. The Scale Used to Facilitate Interpretation of Mean Scores is used to interpret the quantitative data. Taking the overall mean scores of each indicator, Personal Interest and Academic Ability, categorized under Intrinsic Factors, Economic/Financial Factors under Extrinsic Factors, and Institutional Factors, had a descriptive rating of Agree. Only social factors under extrinsic factors fell under the descriptive rating of moderately agree. This result signifies that most of the identified indicators under the factors that received a descriptive rating of agree influence students' decisions to shift courses in their academic journey at Davao de Oro State College, as reflected on the administered test questionnaire. Below is the interpretation of each factor influencing course shifting at Davao de Oro State College, supported by the authors of some literature and studies.

Intrinsic Factors Contributing to the Course Shifting at Davao de Oro State College

Under intrinsic factors were personal interest and academic ability, both of which generated an overall mean with a descriptive rating of "Agree." Findings show the significant role of intrinsic factors in the student's decision to shift courses. The results emphasized the realizations among students of their strengths, weaknesses, and inclinations in their previous courses.

Personal Interest

The extent of personal interest in terms of the level of its influences, as indicated by the student shifters, was agreed with an overall mean of 4.13. Finding means students have the same opinion on the items in the survey questionnaire. The following indicators show the implication that students' preferences have significantly influenced their decision to shift courses: *"I enjoy exploring and learning new things," "My values guide my choices," and "The chance to be original and creative influences my choice."* Supported by Jaradat (2017) in her study about reasons influencing students' decisions to change college majors, one identified factor is personal preferences. Students change their majors to match their interests (Willcoxson & Wynder, 2010). A recent study reported that 67% of students changed their initial courses due to interest and preference in the new study area (Kanyingi-Maina, 2020). Thus, individuals with a higher alignment between personality and their chosen career also show higher confidence in their career-decision making (Jemini-Gashi & Bërxulli, 2017).

Academic Ability

Respondents rated the extent to which academic ability influenced course shifting with an overall mean of 3.93 (Agree). The findings suggest that respondents shared the same views on the influence of academic ability on the items in the survey questionnaire. The data revealed that students considered their cognitive skills and capabilities when shifting courses. Reflected in the indicators *"I prioritize courses that align with my ability to succeed academically"* and *"I assess my skills when considering my preferred course."* According to Fizer (2013), academic ability was the basis of many students choosing majors, especially in some programs such as law, health sciences, and engineering. Supported by the study of Seymour and Serumola (2016), if some students could not cope academically with their major, they changed their courses. Students change their majors due to difficulties in their studies (Jaradat, 2017). If failing grades can be a threatening situation to students that may affect their overall academic standing, for some, it would be advantageous to change majors in which they are more likely to succeed (Stinebrickner, T., & Stinebrickner, R., 2012) and to avoid failing grades that lead to later regrets (Marade, 2015). Thus, to better match their abilities, students with low grades switched majors, Astorne-Figari and Speer (2019) added.

Extrinsic Factors Contributing to the Course Shifting at Davao de Oro State College

Categorized under extrinsic factors were economic/financial and social factors, which received an overall mean with a descriptive rating of "Agree" and "Moderately Agree," respectively. These results from the quantitative data highlight the significance of extrinsic factors, particularly economic/financial and social influences, in saponite course-shifting decisions of students at Davao de Oro State College.

Economic/ Financial Factors

Survey results show that economic/financial indicators obtained an overall mean of 4.00 (Agree). It suggests student place considerations in terms of their economic and financial situations in deciding to shift courses. Data also implies that some students look forward to future economic returns, financial stability through job opportunities, and quicker employment from their chosen courses and careers. Reflected in the indicators that got the highest rating: *"I evaluate the potential future earnings in my chosen course," "I prioritize courses that offer stable and secure career opportunities,"* and *"I think about how soon I can start earning after graduation."* Malubay et al. (2015) noticed that among the first-year students' decisions to take courses are the economic factors, such as stable wages and in-demand jobs. The findings of Pascual (2014) showed the availability of possible work, the potential for career advancement, and the major's potential job opportunities as the basis of the student's choice of program (Malgwi et al., 2005). It was also shown in the recent study by Gaviola et al. (2023) that work opportunities are the dominant factor influencing students' change in their program. Students likely shift courses even if they misalign with their strand or track, aiming for better job and work opportunities once they graduate.

Social Factors

Social factors received a lower overall mean of 3.49, interpreted as "Moderately Agree," suggesting that a lesser but still present influence on students' shifting decisions. Among these indicators are those that state, *"My parents' occupation influences my course selection," "My family's desire for me to follow a particular career path impacts my choice,"* and *"The opinions of people I respect influence my academic path."* Renner (2013) discussed the two reasons behind students' perception of changing courses and the rise of students shifting their college programs and majors. One of these is parental and societal pressure. Some students choose a specific major because of their parents' wants or because society dictates which course is in trend in the professional world. However, when the students understand themselves and know what they want, they leave their initial course and shift to another. On the other hand, adolescents rely on their friends for guidance and career decisions (Shumba & Naong, 2012). ni (2010) conducted a study in Nigerian schools, showing that peer group pressure determines adolescents' social adjustment. Thus, peer support gives students a sense of motivation to strive for academic success. Hence, supportive friends significantly influence students' career planning (You, 2011). These results highlight that while social support systems and community influence student academic decisions, students' autonomy and practical concerns still outweigh social expectations in course shifting at Davao de Oro State College students.

Institutional Factors Contributing to the Course Shifting at Davao de Oro State College

Presented in Table 6 shows the role of institutional factors in shaping the course-shifting decisions of Davao de Oro State College students, with an overall mean of 3.74. Results indicate that institutional conditions and support

systems are important contributors to students' decisions to change their courses. Highlighted in the indicators with high rates are *"The campus environment and culture play a role in my decision-making," "The teaching style of faculty members impacts my preference for a program,"* and *"Career talks help clarify my course and career preferences."* Hanson et al. (2016) emphasized that the institution's physical and social environment and the teacher's ability to keep students engaged in the learning process contribute to the student's willingness to continue its academic program. The teacher's capacity to empower students through guidance significantly impacts their course selection, Barley et al. (2017) added. Moreover, data shows that students recognize and appreciate career development services for their course evaluation and realignment. According to the International Labor Organization (2011), schools that do not provide early career preparation for learners would cause students to gain inadequate knowledge about career decision-making.

Qualitative Phase

This section presents the study discussion that sought to explore the experiences of the student shifters, which included their reasons and insights on course shifting. Elicited findings through two specific questions presented as structured themes. Each structured theme contributed to the essential themes discussed below, and corroborated by the authors of some literature and studies.

Student's Reasons to Shift Courses

Nine (9) essential emerging themes emerged from the informants' responses to this structured theme. These emerging themes were uncomfortable, unmotivated, parents' choice, time management, self-disappointment, pressure, financial problems, less competent, and hard to comprehend. According to the informants, the challenges they faced in their first courses became their reason to change programs. It reflects personal and academic discomfort, often leading students to question their initial course choice. These include feelings of discomfort, unmotivated, pressure, and struggles related to time management, financial problems, and difficulty comprehending course content. Respondents cited external influences like parents' choices and internal experiences such as self-disappointment and feeling less competent. Findings show that the challenges experienced by the students who shifted courses at Davao de Oro State College were in conformance with Gati and Tal (2008), as they define career decision-making as a continuous process of choosing one's career path. Gati et al. (2006) emphasized that understanding the decision-making process, including the challenges before, during, and after the decision and identifying the causes of these difficulties, will help individuals make better decisions and minimize regrets, career indecision, as well as integrating the complex problems raised by the individual while making career decisions. Emotional and personality-related sources such as fear of failure, lack of confidence, or conflicting values are the common difficulties experienced by college students, Gati et al. (2012) elaborated. Germeijs and De Boeck (2003) also revealed that the valuation and outcome factors are empirically associated with career indecision. Valuation problems are considered value unclarity, value conflict, and evaluation evenness. On the other hand, outcome uncertainty is outlined as choosing an alternative and not knowing if one alternative is enough and if it will succeed in the study.

Student's Insights into Course Shifting Experience

The following emerging themes in this structured theme were Adjustment, A Bit of Hassle, Long Process, Hesitant, Self-Doubt, Academic Difficulties, and Time Schedule. These themes exposed the difficulties students face in their course-shifting journey. Results revealed that student shifters experienced adjustment challenges that may stem from the need to adapt to new academic expectations and social environments. Thus, the shifters realized hesitation and self-doubt as internal conflict and uncertainty, questioning whether their decisions were right or if they could succeed in their new academic path. The presence of bureaucratic hurdles, described by the informants as "a bit of a hassle" and "a long process," reflects the burdensome administrative requirements. On the other hand, generated from this structured theme expressed positive insights and students' realizations based on their course-shifting experience: Feeling fit in, feeling positive and grateful, having no regrets about the decision made, regrets, seeing their self-graduation, liking the environment better, and excelling even more. Many students felt they fit better in their new courses, accompanied by optimism and gratitude towards their new academic path. Several informants stated they had no regrets about their decision and even envisioned themselves succeeding with their newly found courses. Similarly, some informants also shared that they preferred their new academic environment. Moreover, several informants shared that some of the positive effects of their decision to shift courses were improved academic performance and increased motivation. They elaborated that they felt

more at home in their newly found programs, and finally, it aligned more with their abilities and interests. In contrast, there are still a few informants who expressed some regrets. Regretful thought implies that not all students have experienced positive and satisfying course-shifting transitions and are still working on that. Furthermore, results show that course shifting negatively and positively impacts students' academic journey. Course shifting has several positive effects on students. In such a way, students align their interests, are satisfied with the program, and reduce stress and skills mismatch in the workforce (Kanyingi-Maina, 2020). However, one of the negatives of course shifting for students is regret, walking away from the opportunity once sought. Additional time needed to graduate is one of the disadvantages of course shifting. Marade (2015) emphasized that depending on the year the student made the shift, it could add years to complete the new course, and the cost must be part of the equation. Changing majors may affect the student's academic performance, such as more credit hours to take, lower final cumulative GPA, and the longer it takes for the students to graduate and finish their courses (Xu & de Silva, 2024).

Personal Interest. Results concerning student shifters' intrinsic factor- personal interest revealed a consistent pattern. It demonstrates that students place a high value on creativity, which aligns with their goals, intellectual drives, and desire to make a significant contribution to society. It has a significant effect on the decisions that students make about changing their courses. Survey results showed a high overall mean score of 4.13, interpreted as "Agree." The informants' responses during in-depth interviews reveal that a disconnect between students' interests and their initially chosen courses often leads to emotional distress and disengagement. Several participants shared experiences of discomfort, anxiety, and self-doubt—often describing a loss of motivation and a sense of self-disappointment when forced into programs that didn't reflect their passions or aspirations. These real-life accounts affirm the critical role of personal alignment in sustaining motivation, academic engagement, and healthy self-esteem throughout the college journey. Cariaga et al. (2024a) emphasized that emotional and academic well-being are closely tied to students' experiences both at home and in school. When those experiences are supportive and responsive to individual goals, learners show greater academic and emotional stability. This echoes the reflections of the informants who found greater clarity, purpose, and drive after shifting to programs more in tune with their goals and identity. Moreover, the data suggests that the positive effects of course alignment extend beyond the classroom. Students who choose academic paths based on personal interest tend to report higher motivation, deeper engagement, and overall academic satisfaction. These findings are supported by Gallup (2019), which found that graduates who see their work as a reflection of their values are more likely to find meaning and fulfillment in their careers. Cariaga (2023a) also emphasized that when foundational academic skills—such as literacy and numeracy—are nurtured in alignment with students' needs and interests, they are better equipped to make long-term academic decisions that suit them. In many cases, shifting to new courses brought a renewed sense of academic fit. One informant shared how finding a course that matched their long-term aspirations gave them a deeper sense of purpose, while another stressed the importance of making independent academic decisions rather than simply complying with external expectations. According to quantitative data from the same study, many students made choices primarily based on personal interest rather than pressure from family or peers—highlighting a shift toward more autonomous and self-aware decision-making. This aligns with findings by Cariaga (2024), who discussed how the development of 21st-century skills—particularly critical thinking and self-directed learning—helps students navigate complex educational decisions and reframe change as a positive opportunity for growth. In particular, students who shifted to programs that resonated with their passions showed greater academic performance and personal fulfillment. Another informant noted how their new academic path better represented their vision of the future and professional goals. This illustrates how students are not only reacting to current discomfort but also proactively aligning their studies with the lives they want to build. Cariaga and ElHalaissi (2024) argued that when education is responsive to cultural and personal identities, students are more likely to thrive—not just academically but also in terms of employability and long-term social impact. Overall, both the qualitative and quantitative results of the study reflect a clear pattern: students who realign their studies to match personal values and interests tend to progress better academically and report greater fulfillment. Cariaga et al. (2024b) further confirmed that effective instructional strategies—especially in rural and under-resourced areas—must consider learners' interests and backgrounds to truly support achievement and motivation. These findings are consistent with Leuwerke et al. (2004), who noted that students whose academic majors align with their interests are more likely to persist and succeed in college. Similarly, Tabigne and Musni (2022) emphasized the role of the National Career Assessment Examination (NCAE) in helping students choose courses aligned with their career goals, which enhances direction, confidence, and preparedness. Supporting this, Cariaga (2022) emphasized the need for learning continuity plans that adapt

to students' evolving needs and preferences, especially during challenging times such as the pandemic. Aligning academic paths with personal identity, values, and vision not only benefits students in the short term but also sets the stage for long-term academic and professional success. It is a strong reminder that education is most powerful when it empowers students to become who they truly are.

Academic Ability. The findings on academic ability demonstrated that students place considerable importance on aligning their course choices with their academic strengths, interests, and learning preferences. It was shown in the high overall mean of 3.93 (Agree). Survey results revealed that respondents had high levels of agreement in statements such as assessing one's skills before selecting a course, prioritizing programs where academic success feels achievable, and valuing how one's learning style matches the course requirements. These responses underscore the students' self-awareness in evaluating their academic preparedness, grades, and cognitive strengths. Qualitative data further demonstrated the impact of academic ability on students' shifting decisions. Several informants described situations where their initial course selections did not match their academic background, resulting in comprehension and confidence issues. For instance, some informants who had little exposure to advanced mathematics during their senior high school program were overwhelmed with high math requirements. This curricular gap in previous education frequently caused a mismatch, impairing academic performance, emotional stress, and a sense of inadequacy. Similarly, an informant also described feelings of academic inadequacy and a lack of confidence in their intellectual capacity, adversely affecting their motivation and course satisfaction. Nonetheless, many students who changed their courses reported feeling more confident and performing better academically. Students reported feeling more accomplished and confident and receiving higher grades in their new academic endeavors. Additionally, after their shift, students said they felt more directed and purposeful because of their improved academic standing. Their stories demonstrate that academic fit is more than just performing well in a subject; it also entails balancing aptitude, interest, and long-term goals. It highlights a more comprehensive view of academic success that considers performance, motivation, personal growth, and satisfaction. It implies that matching academic needs with one's aptitudes can improve educational achievements and academic identity. In line with Zimmerman (2000) self-regulated learning theory, when students recognize that their new course suits their skills and strengths, they are more likely to engage proactively in their learning, set higher goals, and monitor their progress effectively. Overall, qualitative and quantitative data on academic ability showed that students frequently reassess and change their academic pathways because of coursework difficulties as well as the desire for personal development and fulfillment. Academic aptitude is vital in determining individuals' educational paths and long-term performance when paired with their interests and goals. According to Leuwerke et al. (2004), students are likelier to stick with and succeed in college settings if they believe they are academically capable and fit in with their majors.

Extrinsic Factors

Economic/Financial Factors. The economic and financial considerations study results showed that students' financial situations played a role in their decision to change academic programs. An overall mean score of 4.00 (Agree) supports the findings, showing a high degree of agreement with statements like giving priority to courses that offer stable and secure career opportunities, assessing future potential, and considering their families' financial situation when making educational decisions. Students viewed the importance of financial practicality influencing their academic choices, as highlighted in their responses. The qualitative data supported these results further. Several informants described how financial difficulties, such as unstable household income and parental unemployment, significantly impacted their choices to change programs. According to one informant, their parents' job loss made it impossible for them to continue in a more expensive program. Another informant recounted the monetary burden their prior course had placed on them, including the difficulties they faced in covering project expenses and additional fees. These accounts demonstrated the pressure students faced to choose less challenging, more affordable courses for their families.

Furthermore, this kind of academic decision reflects a reaction to immediate financial hardship and a forward-looking evaluation of the program's return on investment. Many students showed a strategic approach to course selection, seeking programs with lower educational costs, stronger job market outcomes, future financial security, and income potential. In the recent study by Lanonte et al. (2025), it is evident that students chose to enroll in the BSED English program due to the potential work opportunities abroad. They view this program as their pathway toward job opportunities and finding a respectable job in the industry in the future. Moreover,

quantitative and qualitative data findings revealed that financial constraints are both a barrier and a motivator. For some, economic hardship becomes an obstacle that limits academic options. For others, making more financially sound decisions is a driving force. To choose a program that reduces educational expenses while improving employability. A study conducted by Bodycott and Lai (2012) found that tuition fees and living expenses are factors in choosing courses. University students drop out each year because they cannot afford their program fees, and others juggle academic schedules while making ends meet. Similarly, Kusumawati (2013) revealed that, influenced by costs, the Indonesian students' decisions to shift course. They primarily considered the expenses and their socioeconomic status before making a choice, and this was consistent with economic models of choice. The data underscore how economic factors influenced the program choices and the students' broader pursuit of educational and career aspirations. The desire for financial stability, affordability, and future security prompts course shifts. Students actively seek programs that are not only aligned with their interests and abilities but are also attainable and sustainable within their financial means.

Social Factors. The data on social factors revealed a moderate influence on students' decisions to shift academic programs, as indicated by the overall mean score of 3.49 (Moderately Agree). While most indicators received moderate levels of agreement, certain items, such as the influence of family expectations, inspiration from mentors or role models, and the opinions of respected individuals, reached the "Agree" level. It highlighted that although social dynamics are influential, they are not typically the dominant force behind students' academic transitions compared to more pressing economic or intrinsic considerations. The qualitative data reinforced this finding. Several students indicated familial expectations, especially those of parents, impacted their course selections. One informant initially opposed changing courses but eventually submitted to parental pressure, illustrating a prevalent conflict between individual preference and familial influence. This scenario underscores the role of intergenerational expectations in educational decision-making. That is the danger of parents trying to "live their dreams" through their children's career choices (Maina, 2013). However, while family influence can be a source of pressure, a supportive and positive social environment enhances students' satisfaction and motivation after shifting programs. Some students emphasized how their academic performance and well-being were fostered and improved by their new program's more accepting and relaxed academic environment. They reported improvements in their social relationships, reduced pressure, and greater time for self-care, which collectively led to a more balanced and fulfilling academic experience. According to recent research by Pedler et al. (2022), students in higher education who feel more like they belong are more likely to be motivated, have higher academic self-confidence, be more involved in their studies, and achieve more.

Institutional Factors

Survey results indicated that students generally perceived the role of the different institutional support in their decision to shift courses. The overall mean score of the institutional factors obtained was 3.74 (Agree). Data revealed that most indicators received agreement ratings, particularly for the structured academic guidance and teaching approaches. It also shows the factors contributing to students' clarity and confidence in academic transitions, such as career talks, the impacts of faculty teaching styles, and access to career-related information. Qualitative findings further emphasized the influence of institutional environments on students' shifting experiences. One informant described developing a more positive outlook after transitioning to a new program despite academic challenges. It implies the student's perseverance was personal determination and the support peers and faculty members offered. Another informant revealed their initial apprehension before commencing a new course and articulated concerns around potential social and academic challenges. As the student adapted to the new environment, a more optimistic perspective developed, recognizing the program's utility and enduring benefits. Hanson et al. (2016) highlighted that an institution's physical and social environment and the teacher's ability to keep students engaged and involved are also factors for students' willingness to continue the same academic courses. Influenced by their previous teachers, Lanonte et al. (2025) research participants shared that it became their state of motivation to put their aspirations into practice. Ultimately, findings indicated that institutional elements, which include faculty engagement, student support services, and academic advising, greatly influence students' decisions to shift courses. Despite students' initial experiences, confusion, and self-doubt, institutions' student support systems can cultivate a feeling of belonging. These findings underscore the importance of these support mechanisms to facilitate students' academic transitions. It was aligned with the research of Sharapova et al. (2023), indicating that career guidance interventions significantly enhance students'

profession-related abilities and knowledge, resulting in favorable career outcomes. Consequently, students experiencing challenges in career decision-making may gain from the specific intervention.

Implications for Practice

Based on the study's findings, the researcher offered the following implications for practice: *On strengthening career guidance programs.* As noted in the study's findings, many students shift courses in their first year due to misalignment with their personal interests and academic abilities. It calls for early career orientation and assessment programs, especially for first-year students. These programs should include personality assessments, interest inventories, and career planning sessions to help students make informed decisions early in their academic journey.

On enhancing institutional support systems for Student Shifters. The study found that students who experienced course shifting faced challenges such as adjustment to a new environment, emotional, academic, and even lack of moral support. These observations highlight the need for programs to help students in their transition phase and smooth adaptation; these include self-awareness programs, career decision-making seminars, and adjustment workshops facilitated by Guidance Counselors and other health professionals.

In simplifying the course-shifting process. The study's findings reported that students experienced the institution's administrative process regarding course shifting; they described it as tedious. To minimize the students' difficulties during the process, the institution should provide alternative platforms where students can conveniently access the forms and lists of requirements, clearly communicate the steps involved in the course-shifting procedures, and conduct an information drive or orientation, as this will be a valuable strategy to assist students in navigating the process efficiently.

The reevaluation of curriculum design is based on the course shifting patterns. The findings reported that many students shifted from board to non-board programs. This trend suggests a need to reexamine curriculum structure, delivery, and perceived program value. The school administrators can use the data to identify areas for improvement of the institution's curriculum, such as retention policies and instructional strategies aligned with institutional quality assurance standards.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The course-shifting phenomenon brought a multifaceted journey to every student who wishes to place themselves in an academic program where they see themselves fit. In this study, findings shed light on the lived experiences of the students who experienced shift courses at Davao de Oro State College. It allows us to explore the students' challenges, reasons, and insights, highlighting the factors behind their academic decisions, specifically the intrinsic, extrinsic, and institutional factors. Understanding the quantitative and qualitative data underscores that personal interest is a primary intrinsic motivator influencing students' decisions to shift academic programs. Data implies that aligning personal values and goals will increase academic engagement, motivation, and academic satisfaction. On the contrary, if misalignment is present, emotional distress and lack of academic fulfillment lead to course shifting and program hopping. Another important intrinsic factor that emerged in course shifting was academic ability. Research findings show that students consider their learning preferences and competencies when assessing their academic paths. Students may switch programs due to poor performance brought on by a mismatch between their aptitude and the course requirements. However, when students moved to a different program that better fit their strengths, their performance and academic self-efficacy improved. These findings demonstrate the importance of early academic support and academic self-awareness in assisting students in selecting the best programs. Furthermore, classified under extrinsic factors is economic/financial; findings indicate that students frequently assess the program's affordability and financial aspects, chosen courses, and employment opportunities. Program-related costs, family income limitations, and financial instability influenced students' course choices. On the other hand, social factors, including family expectations and mentorship, show a moderate level of students' course-shifting decisions. Findings suggest that social factors shape students' academic choices, but are not as dominant as the other factors. Nevertheless, a supportive environment reduced academic pressure and positively reinforced students in course shifting. Institutional factors contribute to students' decisions to shift courses. Data shows that institutional support services, faculty engagement, and the overall learning environment influence students' sense of belonging and confidence in their

academic paths. Thus, positive institutional experiences eased the transition and promoted commitment to the new program.

In as much as the study is limited to the responses of the identified students who experienced course shifting in the four branches of Davao de Oro State College, future research could consider the following implications: First, the conduct of future research to explore the long-term academic and career outcomes of course shifters. Longitudinal studies can provide valuable insights into whether students who shifted courses achieve better alignment and satisfaction in their chosen careers than those who did not. Second, considering students who shifted courses are graduates from the academic track, future studies may investigate and explore the impact of SHS Strand-College Program Alignment. To verify the implications of SHS strand mismatch on college performance and course persistence of the students, to inform curriculum and future admission policies in the college. Third, this study focuses on students' experiences with course shifting; future studies could also explore stakeholders' experiences beyond students. The perspectives of parents, guardians, faculty, and guidance counselors are needed to gain a more holistic understanding of the decision-making process and the support system involved in course shifting.

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