

# A Study of the Attribute of Graduates and Employer Satisfaction—A Structured Elements Approach to Competence and Loyalty

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## Abstract

The objective of this study is to obtain information about the state of existence of graduates after graduation and the satisfaction of employers regarding the administrative and professional performance of graduates working in their institutions. The study was carried out for six months, from March 31 to August 10, 2022, in all municipalities, using the survey method with pure descriptive statistics. Google Forms was used to facilitate the completion of an online questionnaire, and we also conducted direct interviews in six municipalities. Thus, 238 graduates and 24 employers were interviewed, totaling 262 respondents. The study's findings revealed that 62.18% of the graduates who participated as respondents in this study were male and 37.82% were female. The description by department showed that about 28.57% of respondents are from the agronomy department, followed by agro-livestock (37.82%), agro-economy (19.75%), agrarian science (0.84%), and animal health (13.03%). About 58.40% of respondents work in agriculture, whether in government institutions, NGOs, or agricultural groups; about 21.85% work in other areas; and 19.75% are unemployed. The results also showed that about 27.28% worked before graduating and 72.72% were waiting for a job for different periods after graduation, namely, around 45.45% needed a maximum of 1 year to get a job, around 21.97% took 2-5 years to find a job, and only about 5.30% waited for the longest, which was around 6-11 years to get a job. According to the findings, despite the country being in the grip of pandemic (COVID-19) and a political crisis from 2019 to 2022, approximately 74.47% of the unemployed are graduates. Results of analysis on the employers' assessment of the performance of graduates who work as employees in these institutions, especially in terms of punctuality at work and assigned tasks, professional and administrative competence, leadership, and communication, showed that about 75.00%

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to 79.17% of employers gave an evaluation with the predicate “Very Good”. However, it still emphasizes that it would be better if it were strengthened with the appropriate disciplines for the deepening of leadership and ethics of communication and professional practices. Thus, it is concluded that about 80.25% of graduates have already worked in the area of agriculture, and in other areas, they have obtained a very good evaluation of their performance from their employers.

### Keywords

Professional Competence, Loyalty, Leadership Ability, Employer Satisfaction

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## 1. Introduction

Essentially, it is critical to being with a culture of valuing and updating professional, managerial, and specialist preparation after completing higher education. To meet these needs, undergraduate courses have been emerging and gaining more relevance, especially in agricultural areas. The Faculty of Agriculture of the National University Timor Lorosa’e (UNTL) is an organic unit created in 2000 and participated in the first UNTL graduation in 2003 with 87 graduates. From 2003 to 2022, the Faculty of Agriculture graduated 2143 graduates, who currently participate and occupy various positions in most public and private institutions, mainly in the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), national and international NGO’s.

The Agricultural Census (2019) pointed out that about 66% of all households in the country depend on the agriculture sector, and need technical assistance and researchers who can exploit the potential resources in this sector, specifically in the process of transferring technological knowledge to farmers who are still using subsistence or traditional production systems. According to [de Paulo Correia et al. \(2022\)](#), technical assistance in the context of technological knowledge transfer is very important to increase farmers’ knowledge in the process of absorbing technologies to improve the quality of agricultural production.

For this case, it is necessary to carry out a survey of data on the attributes of graduates after graduation in the context of obtaining information on competence, loyalty, and leadership capacity in the commitment to work, including the ability in the competition to obtain a job and the will to create one’s own work. In addition, information is also sought on the satisfaction of employers in relation to administrative and professional skills, commitment to teamwork, leadership, and updating of new technical knowledge. It is hoped that the information obtained will contribute to the improvement of the teaching and learning process in the Faculty of Agriculture, which gradually produces graduates in the area of agriculture and livestock, in order to develop a curriculum more suited to the demands of the job market. The general objective of this study is to gather information about the state of existence of graduates after graduation. Thus, the spe-

cific objectives are to identify and analyze the main issues facing graduates, including competence, professionalism, and loyalty, type of employment, and the satisfaction of employers with the professional performance of graduates.

## 2. Research Methodology

### 2.1. Research Site

The research site in all municipalities and divided into two conditions according to the data collection method, that is, through direct (face-to-face) and indirect (via Google form) interviews. In the first phase, in order to be able to contact the graduates, an advertisement was proposed on Facebook to obtain the contact number of the graduates, and then a WhatsApp group was formed, then a questionnaire was applied on the Google Forms platform with 12 quantitative questions to obtain the main reflections and challenges listed by the graduates.

In the second phase, 62 graduates and 24 employers were directly interviewed in the municipalities of Aileu, Baucau, Bobonaro, Ermera, Liquiçá, Manatuto, and Manufahi using the questionnaire, and 176 indirect interviews were conducted via email and WhatsApp group to complete interview data collection and strengthen the data obtained in indirect interviews (online). The study was carried out over six months, from March 31 to August 10, 2022, and its main target audience is graduates of the Faculty of Agriculture and competent institutions, with an emphasis on the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), agricultural technical schools, and national and international NGOs relevant to the study. The municipalities as research sites were visited directly by the researchers are colored green (Figure 1).

### 2.2. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was constituted as a data collection instrument. It will be necessary to explain the structure of the questionnaire so that the questions fulfill



**Figure 1.** Green indicates the location of the survey study site.

the objective of the study. Responses must be short but relevant, and questionnaire administration must be efficient. The investigation necessitates a pre-test (preliminary) questionnaire, which begins with gathering relevant information from field respondents. All the techniques that lead to obtaining a final questionnaire capable of obtaining reliable data are important so that the answer is clear to the respondent (Perera, 2018; Mertens, 2020). The questionnaire used for this study is not excessively long. It has an introduction that aims to obtain the collaboration of the interviewee, using short sentences that facilitate understanding and a logical progression to avoid confusion in the interviewee.

### 2.3. Research Method

In this study, the survey method was used with a purely descriptive character, as recommended by Hill and Hill (2012). The determination of municipalities was identified using the intentional sampling method and to determine the sample size using Slovin's method according to the recommendation of Sugiyono (2012). The samples were obtained indirectly by completing a questionnaire on the Google Forms platform and also through direct interviews in designated municipalities, according to the random result with a confidence interval of 95%. Slovin's formula is as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{N \cdot d^2 + 1}$$

where:

n = Total sample.

N = Total population.

d<sup>2</sup> = Desired percentage.

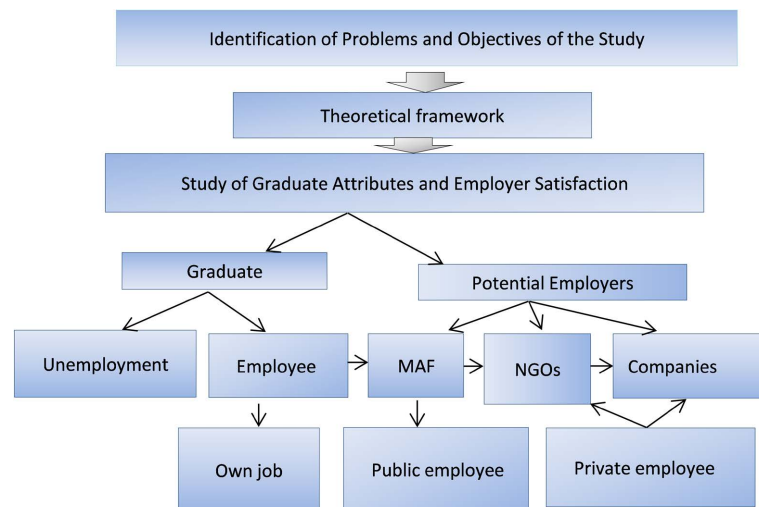
The target population of the study is graduates of the Faculty of Agriculture from 2003 to 2022, totaling 2143 graduates, so the formula is as follows:

$$n = \frac{2143}{1 + 2143 \times (0.07)^2} = 204^{(\text{minimum})}$$

The collected data were coded and subjected to a descriptive analysis to determine the averages, frequencies, and percentages of respondents, based on the recommendations of Hill and Hill (2012). The research progress process follows the steps described in the research conceptual structure in Figure 2 below.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Based on Slovin's formula, the minimum sample size in this study is 204 respondents; however, data collection depends on the data needs of the study. In this study, we were able to obtain 238 graduates and 24 potential employers as respondents. Therefore, we considered them to be representative of a total of 2143 graduates as the study population. The data details are shown in the table and figures below.



**Figure 2.** Research Conceptual Structure.

### 3.1. Description of Respondents According to Year of Graduation

The data obtained showed that the graduates who participated as respondents in this study are representative, since from the first graduation in 2003 to the last graduation in 2022, they are all represented by some graduates as a sample, as shown in **Figure 3**.

#### 3.1.1. Gender Description of Interviewed Graduates

Regarding the gender of the graduates interviewed as respondents in this study, approximately 62.18% of respondents are male and 37.82% are female, as shown in **Figure 4**. The results revealed that there was a balance of gender participation in the study.

#### 3.1.2. Areas of Study of the Graduates Interviewed

The total number of respondents based on each course is shown in **Figure 5**. The results of the descriptive analysis showed that about 28.57% of the respondents are from the department of agronomy followed by agro-livestock 37.82%, agro-economy 19.75%, agrarian science 0.84%, and animal health 13.03%.

#### 3.1.3. Interviewees' Job Description

The results of the descriptive analysis presented in **Figure 6** revealed that about 58.40% of the interviewees work in agriculture, whether in government institutions such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), national and international NGOs, or agriculture groups. About 21.85% work in other fields, such as teachers in secondary schools, police, district administrative staff, the ministry of finance, and others, and 19.75% are unemployed due to limitations in the work area and a lack of access to the resource unit as a financial resource, which is one of the decisive resources in the very creation of work. Therefore, this situation keeps them unemployed for a long time while they wait for a job offer. Details of the classification of areas of activity according to **Figure 6** and by specialization (course) can be found in **Table 1**.

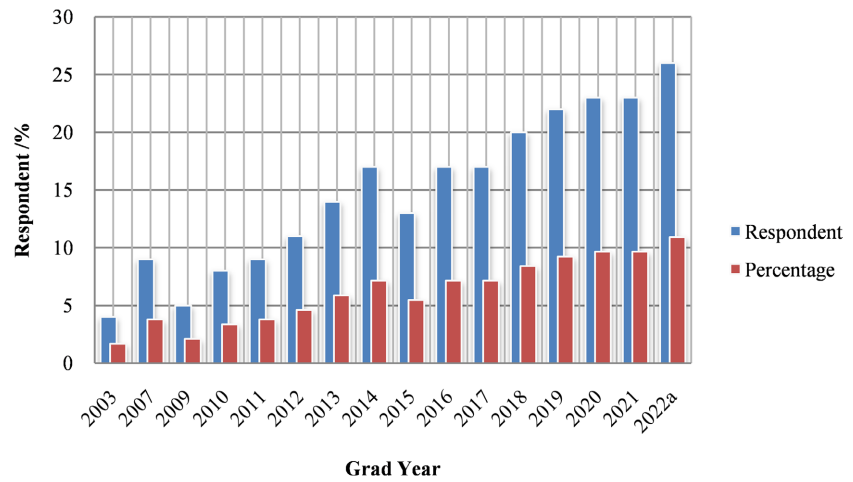


Figure 3. Total graduates interviewed in the respective year of graduation (n = 238).

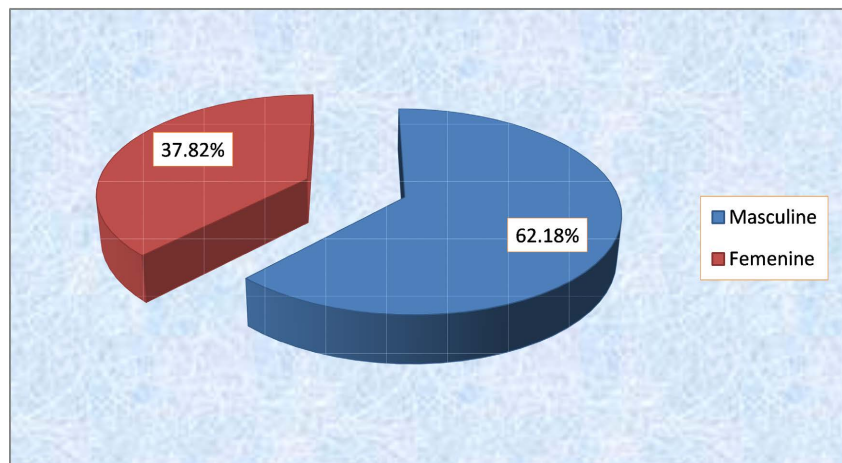


Figure 4. Percentage according to gender of respondents (n = 238).

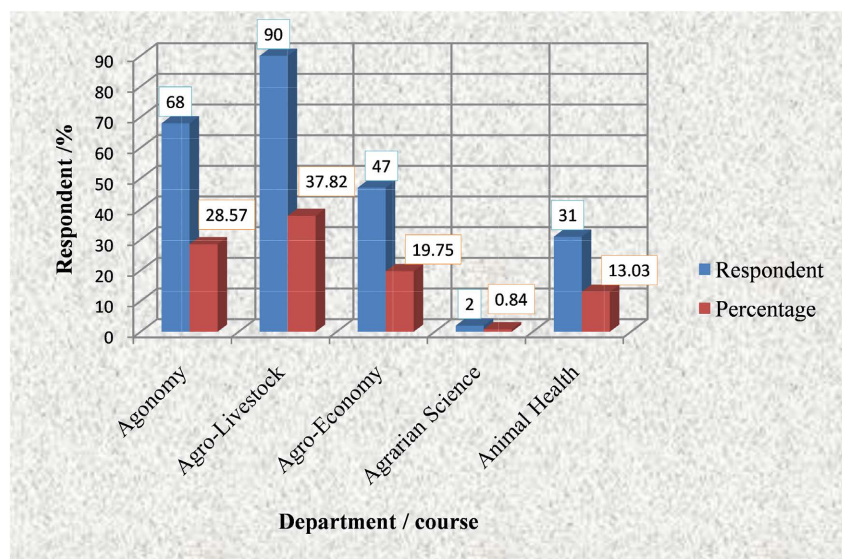
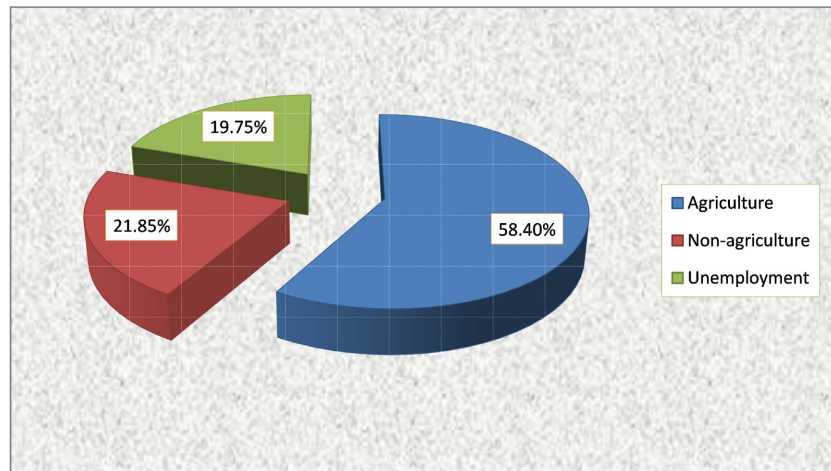


Figure 5. Total respondents according to each course (n = 238).



**Figure 6.** Description of the area of work of the interviewees (n = 238).

**Table 1.** Description of the work area according to the classification of each course.

Depart/Course	Classification area			Total
	Agriculture	Non-agriculture	Unemployed	
Agronomy	47	13	8	68
Agro-Economy	26	14	7	47
Agro-Livestock	48	19	23	90
Animal Health	16	6	9	31
Agrarian Science	2	0	0	2
Total	139	52	47	238
Percentage (%)	58.40	21.85	19.75	100

The results presented in **Figure 5** and **Table 1** showed that most graduates (58.40%) work in agriculture according to the professional competencies of their own area of study and 21.85% work in the non-agricultural area. Higher education quality indicators are important tools for evaluating higher education (Dannenbauer et al., 2015). According to the authors, a complete higher education gives students training in a specific area, which allows them to perform a profession that requires their own training. According to Tontini (2003), quality has become an important factor for the survival of any organization, due to the emergence of numerous options for products and services resulting from globalization. Studies on quality and customer satisfaction are increasingly common, and it is perceived that their importance is already being recognized by organizations.

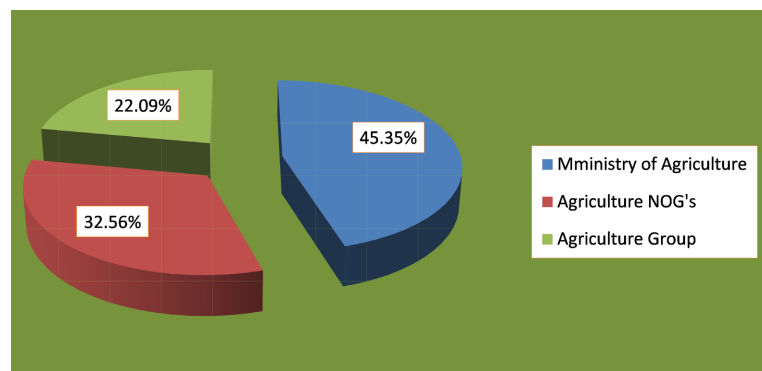
#### 3.1.4. Description Based on the Work Area in Agriculture

It was found that of the respondents who worked in the area of agriculture, with the description of the 139 respondents as shown in **Figure 7**, about 45.35% work in the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), and about 32.26% work in

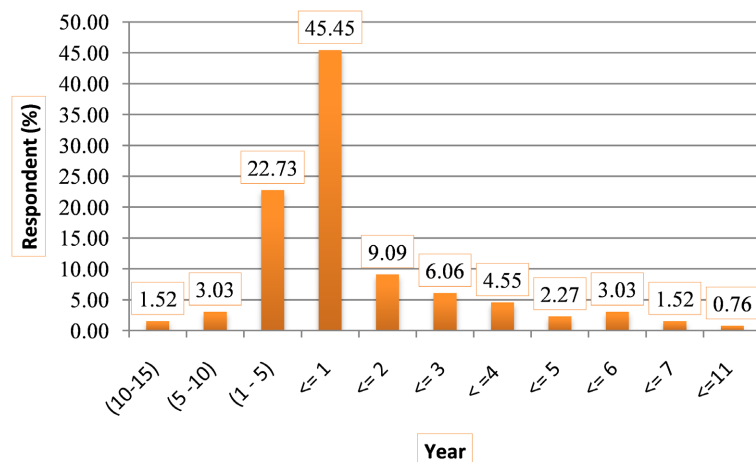
international agencies (NGOs), among others such as FAO, USAID, World Vision, JICA and Timor Crops. However, about 22.09% created agricultural groups, with an emphasis on horticulture, cocoa, and livestock groups.

### 3.1.5. The Interval between the Graduation Period and Obtaining a Job

The results of the descriptive analysis show that around 27.28% worked before graduating and 72.72% waited to work for different periods of time after graduation, namely: around 45.45% needed a maximum of 1 year to get a job, around 21.97% took 2 - 5 years to find a job, and only about 5.31% waited for the longest, which was around 6 - 11 years to get a job. In detail, this can be seen in **Figure 8**. Graduates who take a long time to find employment are often not dependent on or influenced by their graduation year. The data show variations in their graduation years, and this could be due to each individual's skill and agility in finding the desired job. According to **Lopes (1999)**, higher education institutions (HEIs) have differentiated product or service because they sell something intangible, which is knowledge. Its main business is professional training, with teaching and education activities in the dissemination of knowledge, to meet the



**Figure 7.** Description based on institution in the field of agriculture (n = 139).



**Figure 8.** The period between graduation and employment excludes unemployed respondents of the study (n = 192). Obs.: (...) work before graduation period.



demands of its internal and external communities.

### 3.1.6. Graduates as Respondents without Employment in the Survey Period

Figure 9 shows the total number of respondents without a job during the survey period, according to the year of graduation. According to the findings, approximately 74.47% of the unemployed graduated between 2019 and 2022, when the country was in the grip of a pandemic (COVID-19) and political crisis.

### 3.2. Description Results of the Employers' Assessment (n = 24)

Twenty-four (24) employers were interviewed in the municipalities of Aileu, Baucau, Bobonaro, Colima, Ermera, Liquiçá, Manatuto, and Manufahi, with each municipality having a variation of 1 to 5 respondents according to the availability of employers. The results of the analysis on issues of discipline at work, administrative and professional competence, and leadership and communication ethics are presented in Figures 10-12, respectively.

#### 3.2.1. Result of Evaluation of Punctuality at Work and Assigned Tasks

Figure 10 shows the results of the employers' assessment of the attitudes of

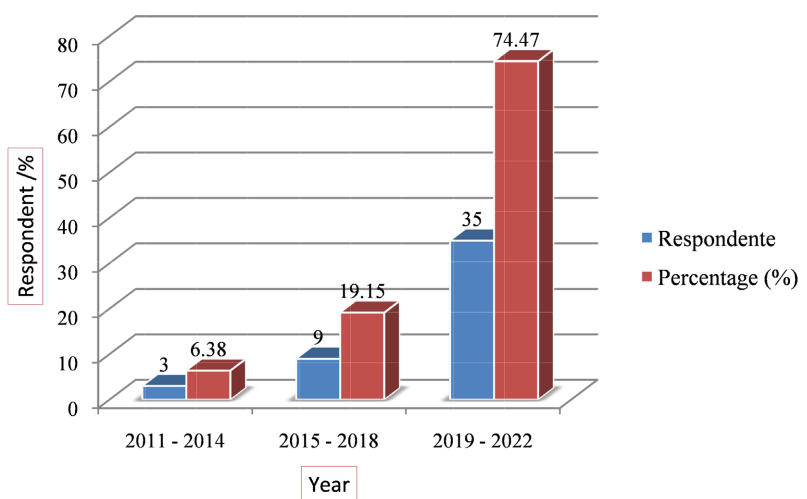


Figure 9. Graduates without a job in the research period (n = 47).

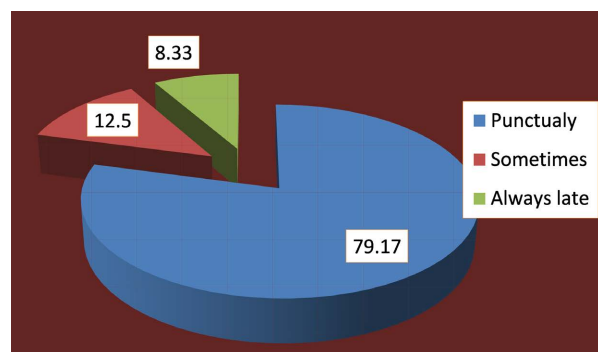


Figure 10. Punctuality in work and assigned tasks.

employees toward complying with working hours and maintaining discipline in carrying out assigned work.

The results of the descriptive analysis on the issue of compliance with working hours and assigned functions revealed that about 79.17% of respondents attributed an evaluation with the predicate “Very Good”. On the other hand, respondents also recommended that teaching and learning methods be maintained and improved so that future graduates stand out in this area. Punctuality at work not only harms the professional image but also compromises the institution’s productivity. Being punctual at work adds value to the individual’s professional image and demonstrates commitment to their responsibilities. Therefore, punctual professionals usually earn the trust of their managers, leaders, and colleagues. As a consequence, it improves your professional credibility and increases your chances of getting opportunities within public or private institutions. Thus, punctuality at work benefits not only the productivity and organization of the institution or company, but also the professional’s own career. According to Tontini (1996a), “quality” is a vague and relative term, which ends up varying from one individual to another. However, he also points out that in most definitions, the consumer is the central point and the satisfaction of his needs is the important thing. The need for quality services and customer satisfaction also occurs with educational institutions (Morreira et al., 2011).

### 3.2.2. Result of the Assessment of Administrative and Professional Skills

Employers’ evaluation results on issues of administrative and professional roles of employees are presented in Figure 11.

The results in Figure 11 show that around 75% of the employers gave an evaluation with the predicate “Very Good” in the aspects of administrative and professional competence of their employees. This result shows that graduates of the Faculty of Agriculture still demonstrate good administrative and professional skills in the day-to-day activities of their jobs. However, employers still pointed out that it would be better if it were strengthened with disciplines related to the deepening of professional practices and the use of formal language for oral and

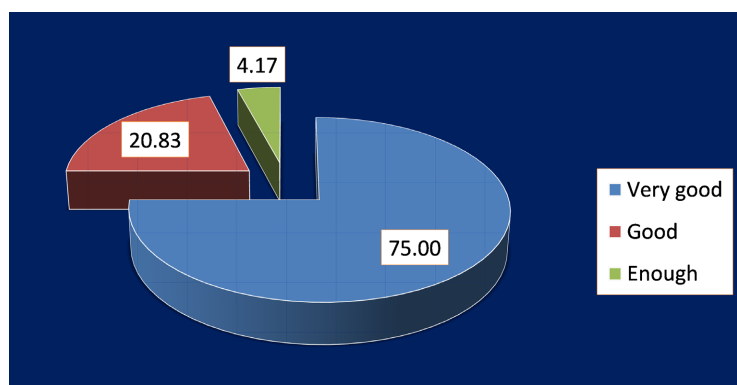


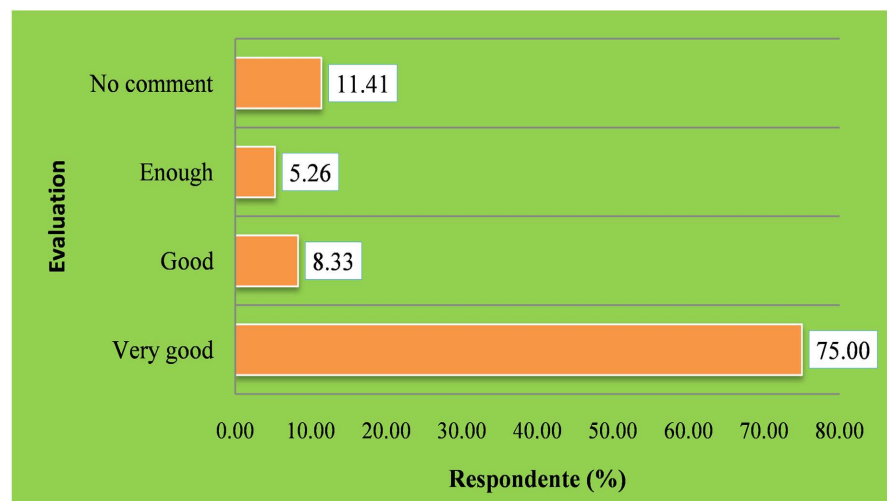
Figure 11. Administrative and professional skills of employees.

written communication at work. According to [Tontini \(1996b\)](#), to achieve quality in an education institution where customers are satisfied, one of the efforts to be made will be the integration between the different departments and the teaching staff. To ensure the motivation and commitment of everyone in the institution, the initiative for implementation must come from senior management. According to [Owlia and Aspinwall \(1996\)](#), there are six dimensions to assess perceived quality in higher education, as follows: 1) tangibles; 2) competence; 3) attitude; 4) content; 5) performance; and 6) reliability.

### 3.2.3. Result of Assessment of Leadership and Communication Skills

Most employers reported that, in general, employees (graduates) demonstrate good leadership and communication skills in the progress of work related to each technical area involved. However, it still emphasizes that it would be better if it were strengthened with the appropriate disciplines for deepening leadership and ethics of communication. According to [Tontini \(1996b\)](#), to achieve quality in an education institution where customers are satisfied, one of the efforts to be made will be the integration between the different departments and the teaching staff. To ensure the motivation and commitment of everyone in the institution, the initiative for implementation must come from top management. Details of the evaluation result can be found in [Figure 12](#).

When referring to this subject, [Walter, Tontini and Domingues \(2005\)](#) point out that the institution must transform the continuous quality improvement process into part of the organizational culture. The authors also point out that it must be attentive to changes and frequently evaluate curriculum, disciplines, and teaching methods. Communication plays a fundamental role in leadership because, through it, managers use strategies to engage employees, which has a positive impact on the organizational climate. As stated by [Chiavenato \(1979\)](#), communication is essential both for the effective coordination of the group's activities



**Figure 12.** Leadership and ethics in communication.

and for the execution of its administrative and technical functions; therefore, a leader's success depends on his ability to communicate effectively with other members of the organization. For an organization to be characterized as successful, it must have dynamic and effective leadership. For [Takahashi and Pereira \(1991\)](#), leadership is the interpersonal influence exercised in a situation and directed, through the communication process, towards the achievement of specific objectives. Leadership is a dynamic process which varies from situation to situation with changes in leaders, followers, and situations. Greater emphasis is therefore given to the dynamic process of leadership, which varies from situation to situation, with changes in leaders and followers. There is the possibility of adapting the leader's style of behavior to the situation ([Takahashi & Pereira, 1991](#)), so we can accept specific training, education and development of more effective leaders. [Munteanu et al. \(2010\)](#) reported that service organizations, including higher education providers, recognize that customers have more and more alternatives to choose from and therefore can easily change institutions if they are not satisfied. Higher education improves the professional curriculum and offers more opportunities to enter the job market. Studies on quality and customer satisfaction are increasingly common, and it is perceived that their importance is already being recognized by organizations.

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the results obtained, it is concluded that around 58.40% of the interviewees work in the area of agriculture, whether in government institutions, national and international NGOs, or agriculture groups. Approximately 21.85% of the interviewees work in other areas, and around 19.75% remain unemployed due to limitations in the area of work and a lack of access to units of resources, mainly financial resources, to create their own jobs through the formation of groups or companies in the area of agriculture. With regard to the satisfaction of employers regarding the competence and loyalty of graduates in the various institutions, they demonstrate a good attitude in complying with working hours, assigned tasks, leadership, and communication. It is recommended that course managers consider the following issues, which are necessary to deepen the character formation of students, especially the character of leadership and the ethics of communication, as well as the deepening of administrative and professional practices and improving practical facilities in the field and laboratories. And finally, it is recommended that the government pay attention to graduates who are unemployed or without agricultural activity due to a lack of labor market and financial resources.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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