

Retention and Migration Factors of Senior High School Students: Basis for a Sustainable Marketing and Branding Program

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Abstract

Background: Student retention and migration are critical challenges confronting Senior High School (SHS) institutions, including the University of Perpetual Help System – DALTA (UPHSD). Understanding the factors that influence students' decisions to remain in or transfer from an institution is essential for developing effective recruitment, retention, and branding strategies.

Methods: This study employed a mixed-methods research design to examine the factors influencing retention and migration among SHS students at UPHSD during the School Year 2022–2023. Participants included 233 students from the Las Piñas, Molino, and Calamba campuses. Data were gathered using a researcher-validated questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative analyses included frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and Kendall's tau-b correlation, while qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis.

Results: Respondents were predominantly aged 16–18 (87%), female (70%), from lower-middle-income families (monthly income ₱20,000–₱40,000; 61%), and enrolled in the STEM strand (64%). Retention was most strongly influenced by career and employment prospects ($M = 3.39$), parental financial support ($M = 3.28$), strict policy implementation ($M = 3.24$), and school cleanliness and maintenance ($M = 3.12$). Migration was driven primarily by difficulties in specialized subjects ($M = 2.88$), high tuition fees, and additional costs ($M = 2.76$). Demographic profile—age, sex, family income, socio-economic status, and strand—exhibited statistically significant relationships with both retention and migration factors ($p < 0.001$). Qualitative findings further highlighted financial constraints, curriculum challenges, facilities adequacy, and service quality as key considerations.

Conclusions: Retention is promoted by strong career pathways, family support, conducive facilities, and consistent policies; conversely, migration is driven by academic difficulties in specialized subjects and financial burden. A sustainable marketing and branding program must address these factors through enhanced guidance services, financial assistance, curriculum adjustments, facility improvements, and responsive policies aligned with the institution's mission of Character Building is Nation Building.

Keywords: *Modern Filipino Identity, cultural thematic analysis, Reflexive Thematic Analysis, contemporary Philippine literature, Ian Rosales Casocot, Bamboo Girls*

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The K–12 Basic Education Program in the Philippines added two years of Senior High School (Grades 11–12) to prepare students for higher education, employment, or entrepreneurship. While the curriculum aims to equip learners with 21st-century competencies, institutions face the persistent challenge of retaining students and preventing migration to other schools. Since launching its SHS program in SY 2016–2017, UPHSD has encountered retention and migration issues that affect enrollment stability, institutional reputation, and service planning.

Effective retention strategies require understanding why students stay or leave. Decisions are shaped by academic experiences, career aspirations, financial capacity, school facilities, policies, and family influence—factors that vary by cultural and socio-economic context. As Brand and Retention Officer, the researcher recognized that identifying these determinants would provide an evidence base for a sustainable marketing and branding program that strengthens student recruitment, satisfaction, and loyalty.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Tinto's Student Integration Model (1975), which posits that retention depends on students' academic and social integration within the institution. Alignment between institutional experiences and student expectations strengthens commitment, whereas poor integration leads to withdrawal. This framework supports the premise that retention and migration are outcomes of interactions between student characteristics, institutional resources, and environmental influences.

1.3 Conceptual Framework

- Input: Student demographic profile (age, sex, monthly family income, socio-economic status, strand); factors related to strand, financial capacity, school facilities, and school policies.
- Process: Data collection via survey questionnaires and interviews; statistical and thematic analysis.
- Output: Evidence-based sustainable marketing and branding program to enhance retention and reduce migration.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

This study determined the factors influencing retention and migration among SHS students at UPHSD System – DALTA during SY 2022–2023. Specifically, it addressed the following:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, monthly family income, socio-economic status, and strand?

2. To what extent do factors related to strand, financial capacity, school facilities, and school policies influence retention?
3. To what extent do the same factors influence migration?
4. What themes emerge regarding the influence of these factors from qualitative data?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' demographic profile and retention factors?
6. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' demographic profile and migration factors?
7. Based on the findings, what sustainable marketing and branding program can be proposed?

1.5 Hypotheses

- Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between the respondents' demographic profile and retention factors.
- Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between the respondents' demographic profile and migration factors.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Tracks and Strands

The SHS curriculum comprises four tracks: Academic (STEM, ABM, HUMSS, GAS), Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL), Sports, and Arts & Design. Students choose strands based on interests, career goals, family influence, and perceived opportunities. Research indicates that academic fit and career relevance strongly influence student satisfaction and persistence.

2.2 Financial Capacity

Financial constraints are among the most frequently cited reasons for student transfer or dropout. Tuition costs, miscellaneous fees, and living expenses disproportionately affect lower-income families. Parental financial support, scholarships, and government vouchers significantly improve retention. Students receiving financial assistance demonstrate higher motivation and persistence.

2.3 School Facilities

Adequate, well-maintained facilities—classrooms, laboratories, libraries, internet connectivity, and amenities—enhance the learning environment and student satisfaction. Substandard facilities correlate with dissatisfaction and the decision to transfer.

2.4 School Policies

Fair, transparent, and consistently implemented policies build trust and a sense of belonging. Issues such as admission procedures, fee structures, and grievance mechanisms directly influence student perception and retention.

2.5 Synthesis

Retention and migration result from a complex interplay of academic, financial, physical, and policy factors. Institutional reputation, career alignment, and support services shape student decisions. Effective interventions must address all these dimensions, tailored to the specific needs and context of the student population.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

A mixed-methods explanatory sequential design was used. Quantitative survey data were collected first, followed by qualitative interviews to elaborate and contextualize the findings.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The study involved 233 SHS students enrolled at UPHSD Las Piñas, Molino, and Calamba campuses during SY 2022–2023, selected through purposive sampling. Guidance personnel also participated in interviews.

3.3 Research Instrument

A researcher-made questionnaire was validated by three experts and tested for reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.746\text{--}0.919$ across dimensions). Semi-structured interviews provided deeper insights into decision-making processes.

3.4 Data Analysis

- Quantitative: Frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and Kendall's tau-b correlation to test relationships between variables.
- Qualitative: Thematic analysis of interview transcripts.

IV. RESULTS

4.1 Demographic Profile

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	16–18	202	87%
	19–21	29	12%
	22–24	2	1%
Sex	Male	162	70%
	Female	71	30%
Monthly Income	₱20,000–₱40,000	143	61%
	₱40,001–₱60,000	27	12%
	₱60,001–₱80,000	27	12%
	₱80,001–₱100,000	20	9%
	Above ₱100,000	16	7%
Socio-Economic Status	Lower-Middle Class	143	61%
	Middle Class	54	24%
	Upper Class	36	15%
Strand	STEM	149	64%
	HUMMS	38	16%
	ABM	35	15%
	GAS	6	3%
	TVL	5	2%

4.2 Factors Influencing Retention

Dimension	Key Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
Strand	Career and job opportunities	3.39	High
	Alignment with interests and strengths	3.15–3.27	High
Financial Capacity	Parental financial support	3.28	High
	Affordability and reasonable costs	2.73–3.03	High
School Facilities	Cleanliness and maintenance	3.12	High
	Adequacy and availability	2.73–3.07	High
School Policies	Strict, consistent implementation	3.24	High
	Fair procedures and support systems	2.80–3.20	High

Overall retention influence: Strand (3.19) > Policies (3.04) > Financial Capacity (2.95) > Facilities (2.94) — all rated High.

4.3 Factors Influencing Migration

Dimension	Key Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
Strand	Difficulties in specialized subjects	2.88	High
	Limited services and opportunities	2.44–2.58	High
Financial Capacity	High tuition and additional costs	2.76	High
	Inadequate funds and delays	2.14–2.30	Low
School Facilities	Inadequate facilities	2.76	High
	Equipment and amenities gaps	2.06–2.23	Low
School Policies	High tuition fees (policy)	2.64	High
	Ineffective procedures and instruction	2.09–2.40	Low

Overall migration influence: Strand (2.59, High) > Policies (2.37, Low) > Financial Capacity (2.45, Low) > Facilities (2.34, Low). Academic difficulty in specialized subjects and cost were the strongest migration drivers.

4.4 Qualitative Findings

Four central themes emerged:

1. Academic and personal fit: Students stay when the institution offers desired strands, quality education, and clear college pathways; they leave when subjects are overly demanding or programs lack alignment with goals.
2. Financial considerations: Tuition and fees are decisive. Vouchers, scholarships, and flexible payment strongly promote retention; cost increases drive migration toward public or more affordable schools.
3. Facilities and infrastructure: Modern, adequate facilities (labs, computers, internet, cleanliness) enhance institutional appeal; deficiencies erode confidence.
4. Service quality and policy experience: Respectful, efficient service from faculty and staff strengthens belonging; unprofessionalism, poor service, and hidden charges contribute to departure.

4.5 Relationship Between Profile and Outcomes

Kendall's tau-b correlation revealed highly significant relationships ($p < 0.001$) across all demographic variables:

Variable	Correlation with Retention	Correlation with Migration
Age	0.517**	0.548**
Sex	0.651**	0.644**
Family Income	0.729**	0.770**
Socio-Economic Status	0.711**	0.789**
Strand	0.725**	0.742**

All null hypotheses were rejected. Demographic characteristics—especially income, socio-economic status, and strand—strongly shape which factors matter most to students.

V. DISCUSSION

5.1 Key Findings in Context

Retention is anchored in career relevance and promise—students remain because they perceive strong pathways to university and employment. Parental support, a safe and well-maintained environment, and consistent policies further strengthen commitment. These findings align with Tinto's model: academic and social integration builds persistence.

Migration is driven primarily by academic difficulty in specialized subjects and financial burden. Many students from lower-middle-income families find tuition and associated costs difficult to sustain, especially compared to free or subsidized alternatives in public institutions. This pattern mirrors national and international research showing that cost and academic challenge are leading transfer triggers.

Demographic factors—particularly income and strand—moderate these experiences. STEM students face heavier academic demands; lower-income students feel cost pressures most acutely. Consequently, one-size-fits-all policies are less effective than targeted interventions.

Qualitative insights deepened these patterns: students weigh tangible benefits—scholarships, facilities, college pathways—against costs and difficulties. Their decisions reflect a perceived value-for-money calculation that directly informs institutional reputation and branding.

5.2 Implications

- Curriculum and instruction: Strengthen academic support, remediation, and progression pathways—especially in STEM specialized subjects.
- Financial accessibility: Expand scholarships, voucher utilization, flexible payment plans, and transparent fee structures.

- Facility investment: Prioritize labs, technology, internet connectivity, and maintenance—visible quality builds trust.
- Service culture: Professionalize all student-facing interactions; streamline enrollment and grievance processes.
- Marketing and branding: Communicate value clearly—career pathways, university alignment, affordability, and support services—targeted by student profile and strand.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusions

1. SHS students at UPHSD are predominantly young, female, from lower-middle-income households, and enrolled in STEM.
2. Retention is positively influenced by career prospects, parental financial support, school maintenance, and consistent policies.
3. Migration is driven by difficulty in specialized subjects, high tuition and fees, and perceived value gaps.
4. Demographic profile—especially income, socio-economic status, and strand—significantly influences which factors determine retention and migration.
5. A sustainable marketing and branding program must integrate academic support, financial accessibility, facility improvement, and responsive service—communicating institutional value to the specific segments it serves.

6.2 Recommendations

1. Guidance and academic support: Strengthen career counseling, academic monitoring, and remedial instruction—particularly for STEM students and younger learners.
2. Financial accessibility: Design and promote scholarship programs, maximize DepEd voucher utilization, offer flexible payment options, and maintain transparent fee schedules.
3. Curriculum and instruction: Review and scaffold specialized subjects; ensure instructional quality and support match student readiness.
4. Facilities and environment: Systematically upgrade and maintain classrooms, laboratories, technology, and common areas—prioritizing cleanliness and functionality.
5. Service and policy excellence: Train personnel in student-centered service; streamline procedures; communicate policies clearly and enforce them consistently.

6. Sustainable marketing and branding program: Position UPHSD as the institution that bridges quality and accessibility—emphasizing career pathways, university alignment, caring support, and community values rooted in *Character Building is Nation Building*. Tailor messaging by strand and student background to maximize relevance and resonance.

VII. PROPOSED SUSTAINABLE MARKETING AND BRANDING PROGRAM

Component	Objective	Key Activities	Expected Outcome
Career Pathway Branding	Highlight college readiness and career alignment	Map SHS-to-UPHSD college pathways; publish success stories; host career fairs	Clear value proposition; stronger continuation into UPHSD college
Affordability & Value Campaign	Demystify costs and showcase support	Promote vouchers, scholarships, payment plans; publish transparent fee comparatives; feature student beneficiaries	Reduced cost anxiety; improved perceived value
Academic Excellence & Support	Signal quality + care	Highlight faculty qualifications; showcase facilities; advertise tutoring/remediation services	Confidence in academic quality; reduced fear of difficulty
Student Experience & Belonging	Build emotional connection	Share student life stories; emphasize safety, cleanliness, support; train all staff on service standards	Stronger institutional pride; word-of-mouth recruitment
Segmented Communications	Speak to each group's priorities	STEM → focus on labs/college pathways; TVL → employability; lower-income → focus on aid/vouchers	Relevant messaging; higher conversion and retention
Feedback & Continuous Improvement	Close the loop with students	Regular satisfaction surveys; exit interviews; responsive policy adjustments	Proactive retention; reputation for listening and improving



Program Goal: Build a distinct, trusted brand where students see UPHSD as the best pathway to their future—accessible, supportive, and aligned with their aspirations—turning satisfaction into retention, advocacy, and enrollment growth.

Keywords: Retention, migration, senior high school, socio-economic status, tuition fees, sustainable marketing, branding