Enhancing Students' Success: An In-Depth Analysis of Support Systems and Strategies for Facilitating Supplemental Short Soft Skill Courses and Micro Badges

Jonah Faye Gaspar, Joepet Portana, Leamor Serrano, Nikki Toga, Nancy Mae Ricio, Renee Christelle Ramos

College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Wesleyan University Philippines, Cabanatuan City

Abstract— This descriptive research analyzed the support systems and strategies for facilitating supplemental short soft skills and micro badges of the 113 College of Hospitality and Tourism management students of Wesleyan University-Philippines. The profile of the respondents was described, as well as their short-term soft skills and micro badges earned. Additionally, support systems by the university and strategies employed by service providers were also explored. The study found that the large majority of respondents are 22-year-old female BSHM students with a moderate weekly allowance. The respondents' top 5 earned skills are communication skills, teamwork, adaptability, time management and hospitality supervisor certificate of American Hospitality Academy (AHA), while their top 5 micro badges are Customer Service Management in Tourism and Hospitality, Travel and Tourism Supervision, Travel and Tourism Operations, Travel Geography, and Destination Analysis. Institutional support is useful for access to soft skills and micro badge programs for the respondents, but improved scheduling and convenience are necessary to facilitate greater participation. Lastly, the strategies offered by the service providers are useful and understandable, but they should be more inspiring to encourage students to stay engaged.

Keywords— College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, micro badges, short-soft skills, strategies, support systems

I. INTRODUCTION

Soft skills such as communication, leadership, flexibility, and emotional intelligence would be instrumental in the success of students in service-oriented fields (Calabrese et al., 2018), hospitality and tourism management being one of them. Conventional classroom instruction is still an important source of knowledge; however, there is no way that it can contribute to experiential and people skills that can only be gained from actual work environments. So, institutions are starting to include short add-on courses for soft skills and micro badge

courses to fill in the gap. Hence, this study intends to probe and analyze the support systems and mechanisms for effective acquisition of these skills among students in the College of Hospitality and Tourism Management (CHTM) (Subia, et al, 2022), Wesleyan University-Philippines, Cabanatuan City.

In addition, it is important to assess the strategies used by CHTM teachers and service providers to provide and market such courses. Clearer definition of the course goals, interesting and relevant material, practical applications, and ongoing feedback measures are all instances of winning strategies

(Sánchez-Mora et al., 2022). Through examining these factors, the researchers can identify the most effective teaching approaches that best motivate students and foster engagement and motivation. This will aid in the development of student-centered and more efficient skill development course delivery models (Sousa, 2018).

The incorporation of the demographic features and the perceptions of the students in the study provides an exhaustive analysis of the reception as well as the impact of such programs. Knowing the situation of the students, including their economic status and their exposure to soft skill development, can assist in assessing the influence of a number of determinants on their learning process. The feedback gathered through the questionnaire confirms the research on the students' experiences, and as proof, their authentic voices (Hailikari et al., 2022).

In the end, this research seeks to develop pertinent findings that could further enhance institutional support and pedagogic practices at CHTM and, possibly, elsewhere. By evoking both strengths and deficit areas of current systems and practices, the research will be a helpful tool for educational leaders, faculty, staff, and curriculum developers. Its findings would affect policy-making, such as resource allocation toward programs, where students will not only gain academic proficiency but also professional preparedness with the soft skills and certifications relevant to the global hospitality and tourism industry.

Statement of the Problem

This research made an in-depth analysis of support systems and strategies for facilitating supplemental short-term soft skill courses and micro badges.

Specifically, the research answered the following questions:

1. How may the Profile of the respondents be described in terms of age, sex, course, weekly allowance, short-term soft skills and micro badges earned?

2. How may the respondents describe the support systems for facilitating Short Soft Skill Courses and Micro badges?

3. How do the respondents describe the Strategies employed by Providers for facilitating Supplemental Short Soft Skill Courses and Micro Badges?

II. METHODOLOGY

A descriptive quantitative research design was employed in this study. Sirisilla (2023) asserts that "scientists and researchers use descriptive research design as a powerful tool to gather information about a particular group or phenomenon." Complete enumeration was used in this study to determine the total number of respondents. This kind of research offers a thorough and accurate picture of the traits and behaviors of a specific community or subject. For this study, all 113 students who had microbadges and short-term soft skills were selected as respondents. The tool used was created by the researchers and approved by subject-matter experts. Using Cronbach's alpha, the instrument's reliability was calculated. The instrument was found to be reliable, as indicated by the value of 0.891. The study is limited to a single year only.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Profile of the Respondents

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents in terms of Age, Sex, Course and Weekly Allowance

Age	Frequency	Percent
20.00	2	1.8
21.00	26	23.0
22.00	45	39.8
23.00	21	18.6
24.00	12	10.6
25.00	4	3.5
26.00	3	2.7
Total	113	100.0
Sex	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Male	44	38.9
Female	69	61.1

Total	113	100.0
Course	**Frequency**	**Percent**
(BSTM)Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management	49	43.3
(BSHM)Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management	61	54.0
(BSND)Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Dietetics	3	2.7
Total	113	100.0
Weekly Allowance	**Frequency**	**Percent**
P500 to less than 1000	11	9.7
P1000 to less than 1500	32	28.4
P1500 to less than 2000	18	15.9
P2000 to less than 2500	26	23.0
P2500 and above	26	23.0
Total	113	100.0
Mean Allowance	P1870	

Table 1 presents the profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, course and weekly allowance. It can be observed on the table that 45 (39.8%) of the respondents are 22 years old, 69 (61.1%) are females and BSHM students and have a mean allowance of P1870.

This suggests that many of the participants are likely in their final years of college, possibly with more academic and life experience. The age distribution may also reflect a maturity level that could influence their perspectives and decision-making. The average weekly allowance reported is ₱1,870, indicating a moderate level of financial support for day-to-day expenses. These details provide a clear picture of the typical respondent in the study, which helps in understanding the context behind their responses and behaviors.

2. Short Soft-Skills

Table 2. Short Soft-Skills Earned by the Respondents

Short Soft Skills Earned (multiple response item, n=113)	Frequency	Percent
1 - Adaptability	23	20.4
2 - Time Management	22	19.5
3 – Teamwork	27	23.9
4 - Communication skills	37	32.7
5 – Emphatic	1	0.9
6 – Flexibility	3	2.7
7 - American Hospitality Academy (Hospitality Supervisor Certificate)	18	15.9
8 - Bartending	1	0.9
9 – CAHP	1	0.9
10 – CATP	1	0.9
11 - Leadership	12	10.6
12 - Critical Thinking	15	13.3
13 - Good Listening	2	1.8
14 – Creativity	4	3.5
15 - Work Ethic	1	0.9
16 - Cooking skills	3	2.7
17 - Decision making	5	4.4

Table 2 exhibits the short soft skills earned by the respondents. The top 5 skills earned by the respondents are communication skills (32.7%), teamwork (23.9%), adaptability (20.4%), time management (19.5%) and hospitality supervisor certificate from American Hospitality Academy (AHA) (15.9%).

According to these results, the respondents are making an effort to develop practical abilities, which are highly valued in both academic and professional settings. The findings imply that students place a high priority on learning soft skills that improve job readiness and productive workplace performance, particularly in the hotel and service-oriented sectors. The large number of students emphasizing communication, teamwork, and flexibility is evidence of increasing awareness of the value of these skills in customer service positions. Secondly, the seeking of

industry-recognized credentials such as the AHA supervisor certificate demonstrates a commitment towards acquiring a competitive advantage within the labor market, realigning their skillsets with industry standards, and improving their chances for employment after graduation (Baert et al., 2021; Elsawalhy & Elzek, 2023).

3. Micro-Badges

Table 3. Micro-Badges Earned by the Respondents

Micro Badges Earned (multiple response item; n = 113)	Frequency	Percent
1. Customer Service Management in Tourism and Hospitality (CSMTH)	46	40.7
2. Travel and Tourism Supervision (TTS)	45	39.8
3. Travel and Tourism Operations (TTO)	45	39.8
4. Certified Associate Tourism Professional (CATP)	31	27.4
5. Travel Geography (TG)	44	38.9
6. Destination Analysis (DA)	41	36.3
7. Travel and Tourism Management (TTM)	5	4.4
8. Certified Associate Hospitality Professional (CAHP)	32	28.3
9. American Hospitality Academy (AHA)	9	8.0
10. Food and Beverage Service Operation (FBSO)	9	8.0
11. Room Division Operations (RDO)	6	5.3
12. Room Division Supervision (RDS)	6	5.3

Table 3 presents the micro badges earned by the respondents. The top 5 micro badges earned by the respondents are Customer Service Management in Tourism and Hospitality (40.7%), Travel and Tourism Supervision (39.8%), Travel and Tourism Operations (39.8%), Travel Geography (38.9%), and Destination Analysis (36.3%).

These findings suggest that students are primarily interested in the main areas of the tourism and hospitality sector. The high figures on these particular badges reflect an intense interest and participation in building specialist knowledge and transferable skills about travel management, customer service, and destination planning.

The implication here is that students are developing specific competencies that directly align with their careers in tourism and hospitality. By achieving micro badges in such areas, they are strengthening their credentials and becoming more employable in the labor market. These badges not only authenticate their knowledge in particular topics but also prove that they are committed to ongoing education and professional development, which are highly appreciated by employers in the sector. This move indicates an aggressive strategy among students to ensure alignment of their skills with industry requirements and prepare themselves for future achievement (Giota & Bergh, 2021; Kao et al., 2022).

IV.   SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Table 4. Support Systems for Facilitating Supplemental Skills and Micro Badges

Support Systems for Facilitating Supplemental Short Soft Skills Courses and Micro Badges (n=113)	Wm	Verbal Description
1. The supplemental short soft skill courses and micro badge programs are very accessible to us because of the support provided by our college.	3.64	Agree
2. The offered soft skill courses and micro badges are very relevant to our academic and career goals.	3.58	Agree
3. The quality of the content provided in these supplemental courses and badges is high.	3.55	Agree

4. The assistance given by the service providers is sufficient in guiding us through the soft skill courses and micro badge programs.	3.51	Agree
5. The technological infrastructure is enough (e.g., online platforms, tools) to assist us in acquiring short soft skills and micro badges.	3.50	Agree
6. We earned short soft skills and micro badges because of the convenient scheduling and preparations given by our service providers.	3.22	Moderately Agree
7. The short soft skills and micro badges attained by the students are well-recognized within the hospitality and tourism industry.	3.54	Agree
8. The support provided by our service providers for obtaining these skills and badges is sufficient.	3.52	Agree
9. The support systems are needed by us students since the soft skills and micro badges contribute to our personal growth and development.	3.58	Agree
10. I am very satisfied with the support systems provided to our service providers for attaining these skills and badges.	3.55	Agree
Overall Weighted Mean	**3.52**	**Agree**

Table 4 shows the support systems for facilitating supplemental short soft skills courses and micro badges as described by 113 respondents. It can be observed on the table that the respondents agreed that support systems are very good, with an overall weighted mean of 3.52. As described by the respondents, "The supplemental short soft skill courses and micro badge programs are very accessible

to us because of the support provided by our college (Wm=3.64)", "The support systems are needed by us students since the soft skills and micro badges contribute to our personal growth and development (Wm=3.58)" and "The offered soft skill courses and micro badges are very relevant to our academic and career goals (Wm= 3.58)".

However, the least in terms of weighted mean is the item, "We earned short soft skills and micro badges because of the convenient scheduling and preparations given by our service providers (Wm=3.22)".

The results show that the support systems for supplemental short soft skills courses and micro badges are seen in a positive light by the respondents, implying that these systems are essential in the accessibility and perceived value of such programs. The participants confirmed that the WUP support hugely facilitates their participation in these initiatives and noted the significance of such systems in supporting personal development and career and academic goal congruence (Chamandy & Gaudreau, 2019). This indicates the power of well-supported soft skills programs to stimulate student development above technical expertise. Nevertheless, the comparatively lower rating of convenience in scheduling and preparations indicates that logistics continue to need enhancement. Meeting this would potentially add to participation and effectiveness, suggesting that although content and institutional support are sound, operational implementation has to be refined to maximize the advantages of such programs (McDonald et al., 2022).

V.   STRATEGIES

Table 5. Strategies Provided by the Service Providers

Strategies Provided by Service Providers for Facilitating Supplemental Short Soft Skill Courses and Micro Badges (n=113)	Wm	Verbal Description
1. The strategies provided by our service providers clearly explain how to earn soft skills and micro badges.	3.25	Agree

2. I find the guidance from our service providers helpful in understanding the importance of earning soft skills and micro badges.	3.52	Agree
3. The resources shared by our service providers are adequate for achieving the required soft skills and micro badges.	3.52	Agree
4. Our service providers encourage active participation in activities that contribute to earning soft skills and micro badges.	3.53	Agree
5. The feedback I receive from our service providers helps me improve my progress toward earning soft skills and micro badges.	3.53	Agree
6. The strategies outlined by our service providers align well with my personal learning goals for soft skills development.	3.24	Moderately Agree
7. I feel motivated to pursue soft skills and micro badges due to the strategies introduced by our service providers.	3.22	Moderately Agree
8. Our service providers provide sufficient opportunities for me to apply the strategies in real-world or practical scenarios.	3.50	Agree
9. The instructions provided for earning soft skills and micro badges are easy to follow and implement.	3.58	Agree
10. I feel confident that the strategies shared by our service providers will help me successfully earn the desired soft skills and micro badges.	3.53	Agree
Overall Weighted Mean	**3.44**	**Agree**

Table 5 presents the strategies provided by service providers for facilitating supplemental short soft skill courses and micro badges as described by 113 respondents. It can be observed on the table that the respondents agreed that the strategies are very good, with an overall weighted mean of 3.44. As described by the respondents, "The instructions provided for earning soft skills and micro badges are easy to follow and implement (Wm=3.58"), "Our service providers encourage active participation in activities that contribute to earning soft skills and micro badges (Wm=3.53)" and "The feedback I receive from our service providers helps me improve my progress toward earning soft skills and micro badges (Wm=3.53)".

The least in terms of weighted mean is the item "I feel motivated to pursue soft skills and micro badges due to the strategies introduced by our service providers (Wm=3.22)".

The participants noted that instructions given carefully, active participation being encouraged, and feedback given constructively are some of the most effective methods in supporting their participation and progress. These factors seem to play a notable role in the effective application of the programs, emphasizing the need for effective communication and interactive assistance in skill development programs. The comparatively lower score for motivation implies that though the strategies work well to execute, they are perhaps not inspiring or engaging enough to maintain student drive. This suggests a requirement for service providers to incorporate more motivational factors, such as systems of recognition, tailored goals, or gamification, to increase learners' intrinsic motivation and long-term dedication to acquiring soft skills and micro badges (Ward et al., 2023).

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are derived from the results of the study:

1. The respondents, predominantly 22-year-old female BSHM students with a moderate weekly allowance, suggest a relatively mature and financially supported group.

2. The top 5 skills earned by the respondents are communication skills, teamwork, adaptability, time management and hospitality supervisor certificate from American Hospitality Academy (AHA).

3. The top 5 micro badges earned by the respondents are Customer Service Management in Tourism and Hospitality, Travel and Tourism Supervision, Travel and Tourism Operations, Travel Geography, and Destination Analysis.

4. The respondents find institutional support helpful for accessing soft skills and micro badge programs, but better scheduling and convenience are still needed to improve participation.

5. The strategies provided by service providers are helpful and clear, but they need to be more motivating to keep students fully engaged.

REFERENCES

[1] Baert, B. S., Neyt, B., Siedler, T., Tobback, I., & Verhaest, D. (2021). Student internships and employment opportunities after graduation: A field experiment. Economics of Education Review, 83. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2021.102141

[2] Bordoloi, R., Das, P., & Das, K. (2020). Lifelong learning opportunities through MOOCs in India. Asian Association of Open Universities Journal, 15(1), 83–95. https://doi.org/10.1108/AAOUJ-09-2019-0042

[3] Calabrese, A., Castaldi, C., Forte, G., & Levialdi, N. G. (2018, August 20). Sustainability-oriented service innovation: An emerging research field. Journal of Cleaner Production. Elsevier Ltd. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2018.05.073

[4] Chamandy, M., & Gaudreau, P. (2019). Career doubt in a dual-domain model of coping and progress for academic and career goals. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 110, 155–167. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2018.11.008

[5] Elsawalhy, H., & Elzek, Y. (2023). What will the Entrepreneurial Students of Tourism and Hotels Intent to do After Graduation? Self-Employment or Green Entrepreneurship. International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Systems, 16(2), 81–91.

[6] Giota, J., & Bergh, D. (2021). Adolescent Academic, Social and Future Achievement Goal Orientations: Implications for Achievement by Gender and Parental Education. Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 65(5), 831–850. https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2020.1755360

[7] Kao, K. Y., Hsu, H. H., Rogers, A., Lin, M. T., Lee, H. T., & Lian, R. (2022). I See My Future!: Linking Mentoring, Future Work Selves, Achievement Orientation to Job Search Behaviors. Journal of Career Development, 49(1), 232–245. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845320926571

[8] Kolade, O., & Owoseni, A. (2022). Employment 5.0: The work of the future and the future of work. Technology in Society, 71. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2022.102086

[9] Hailikari, T., Virtanen, V., Vesalainen, M., & Postareff, L. (2022). Student perspectives on how different elements of constructive alignment support active learning. Active Learning in Higher Education, 23(3), 217–231. https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787421989160

[10] McDonald, K. S., Hite, L. M., & O'Connor, K. W. (2022). Developing sustainable careers for remote workers. Human Resource Development International, 25(2), 182–198. https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2022.2047148

[11] Sánchez-Mora, J., Tamayo, R. M., & Corredor-Aristizábal, J. (2022). Affordances of Audience Response Systems: Effects of Instant and Regular Feedback. Technology, Knowledge and Learning, 27(4), 1063–1080. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10758-021-09528-z

[12] Sirisilla, S. (2023). Bridging the Gap: Overcome these 7 flaws in descriptive research design. https://www.enago.com/academy/descriptive-research-design/

[13] Sousa, M. J. (2018). Entrepreneurship skills development in higher education courses for teams leaders. Administrative Sciences, 8(2). https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci8020018

[14] Subia, G. , O. Gaston, C. , Faye A. Gaspar, J. , Amor S. Padilla, D. and Donna A. Valenzuela, M. (2022) Thesis Writing amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Case of Hospitality and Tourism Management Students of Wesleyan University Philippines. Open Journal of Social Sciences, 10, 191-198. doi: 10.4236/jss.2022.102013.

[15] Ward, R., Crick, T., Davenport, J. H., Hanna, P., Hayes, A., Irons, A., … Walters, J. (2023). Using Skills Profiling to Enable Badges and Micro-Credentials to be Incorporated into Higher Education Courses. Journal of Interactive Media in Education, 2023(1). https://doi.org/10.5334/jime.807