

Exploring the Lives of HRM Graduates in Their Workplaces

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management (BSHRM) graduates in their workplaces, focusing on rewarding experiences, professional challenges, coping strategies, personal and professional development, and recommendations for improving hospitality education. Using a descriptive phenomenological research design, the researcher conducted structured interviews with ten BSHRM graduates employed across four hotels in Cebu. Ethical principles, including beneficence, nonmaleficence, justice, and respect for autonomy, were observed throughout the research process. Findings revealed that graduates experienced positive aspects of employment, including tangible rewards, career advancement, guest satisfaction,

relationship building, and personal and professional growth. However, they also encountered challenges involving difficult guests, interpersonal conflicts, communication barriers, demanding workloads, and workplace pressures. To address these difficulties, graduates employed coping strategies such as establishing professional boundaries, prioritizing rest, maintaining a proactive mindset, strengthening communication skills, and demonstrating adaptability, maturity, and professionalism. Their workplace experiences further contributed to developing advanced technical, managerial, cognitive, and interpersonal competencies essential for hospitality careers. Participants emphasized the importance of specialized instruction, practical and hands-on training, comprehensive health and safety standards, and stronger collaboration between academic institutions and hospitality establishments. The study highlights the importance of aligning hospitality education with actual industry expectations to better prepare graduates for professional responsibilities. These findings provide valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and hospitality stakeholders in enhancing instructional approaches, strengthening industry partnerships, and developing relevant training programs that promote graduate employability, workplace readiness, professional competence, and sustainable career development within the hospitality industry.

Keywords: *BSHRM graduates, hospitality industry, workplace experiences, professional development, hospitality management, Cebu, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

The global travel and tourism industry is experiencing unprecedented growth, with projections indicating a contribution of \$11.1 trillion to the global GDP in 2024, accounting for 10% of the total economic output and supporting nearly 348 million jobs worldwide. This surge underscores the sector's critical role in the global economy (Oladipo, 2024). This continued expansion has increased the demand for a highly competent and adaptable hospitality workforce capable of delivering quality service. As the industry grows, the need for graduates who can effectively meet evolving workplace expectations becomes increasingly important.

Despite this expansion and the growing emphasis on experiential learning through internships, simulations, and field visits, many hospitality graduates continue to report gaps in practical skills when transitioning into high-pressure hotel environments (Sebby & Brown, 2020). This suggests that classroom instruction alone may not fully prepare students for the realities of hotel operations.

Hewitt (2021) emphasizes that higher education institutions must better align their hospitality programs with industry demands to ensure graduates are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge for the workplace. The study also highlights the crucial role of internships in bridging the gap between academic learning and practical experience (Hewitt, 2021). These findings underscore the importance of providing students with meaningful learning experiences that closely reflect actual workplace conditions. Strengthening the connection between academic instruction and industry practice can help graduates transition more effectively into professional roles.

There is also a growing call to strengthen partnerships between educational institutions and hotels to ensure graduates are equipped with the necessary skills (Ngoepe & Wakelin-Theron, 2023). This trend is particularly evident in regions with thriving tourism sectors, where the demand for skilled hospitality professionals continues to increase. Sustained collaboration between the academe and the hospitality industry enables educational institutions to keep their curricula responsive to current industry standards and expectations. Such partnerships also create opportunities for students to gain relevant experiences that enhance their employability and workplace readiness.

In the Philippines, to address the industry skills gap, the Department of Tourism [DOT], in collaboration with the Commission on Higher Education [CHED] and the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority [TIEZA], has issued guidelines to fund industry immersion programs and to upgrade hospitality teaching facilities. These initiatives aim to synchronize academic training with industry needs, ensuring that graduates are well-equipped to meet the demands of the hospitality sector (Garafil, 2025). This initiative aims to harmonize academic and practical training, ensuring students are well-prepared to meet industry demands and produce globally competitive.

Locally in Cebu, the mismatch between graduates' skills and industry needs has been a persistent issue, prompting calls for stronger collaboration between educational institutions and businesses to better prepare students for the workforce through practical training and immersion programs (Sagarino, 2024). In addition, challenges in workforce preparedness exist, with many Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management [BSHRM] graduates struggling to adapt to high-pressure environments. A study by Espellita and Maravilla (2019) found that hotel supervisors in Cebu perceive a gap in employable skills among hospitality graduates, particularly in communication, problem-solving, and adaptability. These findings underscore the need for academic institutions to reassess and enhance their curricula to better prepare students for the realities of the hospitality industry.

While prior research has addressed general skill mismatches and employer expectations, there is a scarcity of studies focusing on the specific workplace experiences of BSHRM graduates in Cebu. Exploring their daily roles, interpersonal dynamics, and career goals is essential for aligning educational outcomes with industry needs. This study seeks insights that can inform curriculum development and enhance graduate preparedness.

The researcher, a graduate of the Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management program and a current faculty member at the University of Cebu–Banilad, College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, possesses a unique dual perspective. This background provides the necessary academic rigor to conduct this study, alongside an industry-informed lens that allows for a nuanced understanding of the transition from student to professional. By occupying this space between the classroom and the workplace, the researcher is positioned to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and the practical realities faced by HRM practitioners, ensuring that the findings are both academically sound and industry-relevant.

This study is further motivated by the personal observations of the researcher within the local hospitality industry and the academic community. While students often demonstrate technical proficiency in controlled settings, the researcher has observed that many graduates struggle with the high-pressure interpersonal dynamics and emotional demands of a real workplace. These firsthand observations of graduates feeling underprepared for the realities of the industry highlight a gap that standardized assessments often overlook. This personal experience provides a practical foundation for exploring the lived experiences of HRM graduates in Cebu.

Theoretical Background

This study is anchored in the Experiential Learning Theory by David A. Kolb (1984) and supported by the Social Capital Theory by James Coleman (1988) and the Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation by Jean Lave & Etienne Wenger (1991).

The Experiential Learning Theory by Kolb (1984) proposes that learning is a cyclical process where knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. It emphasizes that learning is not merely the acquisition of information but a dynamic process involving direct experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation.

Experiential learning theory is based on a four-stage learning cycle: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Concrete experience involves engaging in a new experience or situation. Reflective observation entails reviewing and reflecting on that experience. Meanwhile, abstract conceptualization involves forming abstract concepts and generalizations based on reflection (Kolb, 2014).

In addition, the theory has been applied in various educational and professional development settings, including management training, vocational education, and higher education. Studies have shown that experiential learning enhances skill development, problem-solving abilities, and critical thinking. Additionally, integrating Kolb's cycle into education enhances the acquisition of soft skills, adaptability, and continuous learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2009).

While the framework remains a foundational pillar for understanding experiential learning, it has faced significant academic scrutiny. Some scholars argue that the theory's heavy emphasis on categorized learning styles may oversimplify the inherent complexities of how individuals acquire skills. This simplification may overlook the fluid and nonlinear nature of learning in dynamic environments (Tennant, 2019).

Furthermore, the model is often criticized for focusing too narrowly on the internal cognitive process while neglecting the external environment. Specifically, the theory often fails to account for how various social, political, and cultural factors shape an individual's perceptions and processing of experiences. This lack of contextual depth can limit the theory's applicability when analyzing the diverse settings where learning occurs (Kayes, 2001).

The theory's individualistic nature is also a point of contention regarding group interactions. By focusing primarily on the lone learner, the framework may not adequately account for how group dynamics or established institutional norms shape the learning outcome. This suggests that experience is not just a personal cycle, but one heavily influenced by the collective culture of the workplace (Miettinen, 2000).

A theory that supports the anchored theory is Coleman's (1988) Social Capital Theory, which highlights the importance of social structures and relationships in facilitating individual and collective action. Social capital refers to the resources embedded in social networks that individuals can access and utilize to achieve their goals. Additionally, the theory emphasizes that social capital is a valuable resource within social relationships, enabling individuals to accomplish goals that would be difficult to achieve without these connections.

As outlined by Coleman (1994), key elements of social capital include obligations, expectations, information channels, and social norms that facilitate cooperation and trust. These components are crucial for forming strong social networks that provide access to valuable information, referrals, and support. Such

networks can significantly enhance job prospects by leveraging the resources embedded within social relationships. Furthermore, social capital functions as a public good, benefiting individuals and communities by fostering supportive environments that promote collective success.

In addition, the theory is a versatile framework applied across sociology, economics, and organizational behavior. Research consistently demonstrates that social capital is a primary driver of career success, job satisfaction, and overall organizational performance. By leveraging social connections, individuals can navigate professional environments more effectively and achieve greater workplace integration (Lin, 2001).

Beyond general success, these social assets facilitate direct access to the essential resources required for professional growth. Specifically, social capital provides graduates with critical job referrals, formal and informal mentorship opportunities, and expanded industry networks. These elements are vital for enhancing long-term employability in competitive sectors (Feder, 2021).

The mobilization of these resources is particularly significant for young professionals entering the workforce. Peer and near-peer relationships serve as essential conduits, allowing emerging adults to activate their social networks to achieve specific career objectives. This highlights the crucial role that early-career connections play in professional development and goal attainment (Boat et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the tangible outcomes of a well-developed network are reflected in career advancement expectations. When measured by network size, relationship quality, and the capacity to mobilize support, social capital is directly linked to professional milestones. These include expectations for higher pay raises and more frequent promotions throughout an individual's career trajectory (Rungo et al., 2024).

Despite its widespread influence, the Social Capital Theory has faced scrutiny for its idealistic view of social networks. Critics argue that the framework often overemphasizes the benefits of connections while failing to account for negative outcomes. For instance, strong internal social capital can lead to the exclusion of outsiders and foster environments of discrimination (Portes, 1998).

Other scholars suggest that the theory's broad applicability may actually diminish its depth. Because the concept is frequently used in both academic and practitioner circles with a focus on measurable outcomes, it can sometimes obscure more complex social dynamics. This outcome-driven approach may lead to an underestimation of the intrinsic value of human relationships (Haynes, 2009).

Additionally, the theory faces significant challenges regarding its practical measurement and definition. While social capital is linked to various socioeconomic events, its empirical analysis remains difficult for many researchers. The inherent vagueness of the concept poses a methodological challenge for quantifying and testing consistently across different research settings (Durlauf, 2002).

Another theory that supports the main theory is the Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation by Lave and Wenger (1991). This theory fundamentally reframes learning as a social phenomenon deeply intertwined with the context and activities in which it occurs. This perspective contrasts with traditional views that emphasize the individual acquisition of abstract knowledge, highlighting instead how learning unfolds through active engagement within a "community of practice." Individuals progress from novice roles on the periphery to more central, expert participation, thereby internalizing the knowledge, skills, and values of that community. The emphasis shifts from the transmission of information to the active construction of understanding through social interaction and participation in authentic practices.

At the heart of situated learning lies the principle of "legitimate peripheral participation," describing the process by which newcomers gradually become integrated into the practices of a community, guided by more experienced members. Key theoretical underpinnings include the concept of a "community of practice," a group bound by shared practices and mutual engagement, and the notion that learning is inseparable from the social and cultural context in which it takes place. Learning is thus viewed as a process

of social enculturation, in which individuals learn by doing and participating in the shared activities and meaning-making processes of their community (Wenger, 1998).

Empirical support for situated learning comes from diverse fields. Lave's anthropological studies of apprenticeship in various crafts, such as tailoring and midwifery, vividly illustrate how novices acquire expertise through gradual participation in authentic tasks. Furthermore, research in educational settings has explored the application of situated learning principles through the design of problem-based learning environments that mirror real-world scenarios, showing enhanced engagement and deeper learning outcomes (Herrington et al., 2014).

While the theory has made significant contributions to educational discourse, it has been subject to critical scrutiny for its focus. Some researchers argue that prioritizing the social context may inadvertently overshadow the essential role of individual cognitive processes. This suggests that the internal mechanisms by which a person acquires and processes knowledge can be lost when the emphasis remains solely on the environment (Anderson et al., 1996).

Furthermore, the concept of legitimate peripheral participation has been scrutinized for its idealistic view of community entry. Critics point out that the theory does not fully address the complex power dynamics or the unequal access to participation that often exists within professional communities. This can lead to failure to account for how some individuals are systematically marginalized or prevented from fully integrating into a community of practice (Contu & Willmott, 2003).

The theory has also been questioned regarding its scope and versatility across different types of knowledge. Some scholars argue that its reliance on specific, observable practices makes it difficult to apply to the learning of abstract concepts or knowledge domains that are not tied to a physical workplace. This limitation suggests that situated learning may not be a universal framework for all forms of academic or theoretical mastery (Kirshner & Whitson, 1997).

Recent advancements in higher education have increasingly emphasized the importance of graduate employability. This focus is evident in national and international discussions, including those by organizations such as the International Labour Organization and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2024).

Employability is considered a key aspect of higher education quality, reflecting the relevance and utility of academic programs in preparing students for their careers. The most significant contribution of quality higher education is to equip graduates with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to perform effectively in the workforce. As the tourism industry evolves, graduates must acquire new competencies to adapt to changing circumstances. Consequently, universities are encouraged to integrate critical skills into their curricula to enhance graduate employability (Støren & Aamodt, 2010).

The Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management [BSHRM] is a comprehensive undergraduate program designed to prepare students for careers in the hospitality sector, encompassing both hotel and restaurant operations. According to the Commission on Higher Education [CHED] Memorandum Order No. 30, Series of 2006, the BSHRM curriculum aims to equip students with competencies related to the basic and core requirements, as well as those associated with major and minor areas of concentration and elective courses. The program emphasizes a shift from a supply-driven to a market-driven curriculum, focusing on skills and competencies rather than solely on managerial theory. This approach ensures that graduates are responsive to industry needs and are prepared for various career paths within the hospitality industry.

The hospitality industry is a dynamic and multifaceted sector that offers a plethora of opportunities for graduates of the Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management [BSHRM] program. This sector encompasses a wide array of career paths, including hotel management, event planning, and tourism services, providing graduates with diverse avenues to apply their skills and knowledge (Busulwa, 2020).

The global hotel industry is a cornerstone of the hospitality sector, contributing significantly to the global economy. In 2023, the market size of the hotel and resort industry worldwide reached approximately

\$1.4 trillion, reflecting continued growth from the previous year (Statista, 2024). This sustained expansion demonstrates the increasing importance of the hotel industry as a major source of employment and economic activity worldwide. As the industry continues to grow, the demand for competent and well-prepared hospitality professionals also becomes more critical.

This growth is driven by factors such as the resurgence in travel demand, with global tourism reaching 1.1 billion travelers between January and September 2024, and the increasing appeal of experiential tourism, in which travelers seek meaningful and transformative experiences (Lüthy, 2025). As guest expectations continue to evolve, hospitality professionals are expected to possess not only technical expertise but also adaptability, communication skills, and a strong service orientation.

As the hotel industry continues to expand globally, it presents a promising landscape of career opportunities for BSHRM graduates. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (2024), the travel and tourism sector is projected to contribute a record \$11.1 trillion to global GDP in 2024, accounting for 10% of total GDP. This marks a 12.1% year-over-year increase and a 7.5% rise from the previous record set in 2019. The sector is also expected to support nearly 348 million jobs worldwide, surpassing the 2019 pre-pandemic record by 13.6 million jobs.

In Cebu, hotels reported an average occupancy rate of 60% in 2023, reflecting robust demand in the region (Cacho-Laurejas, 2024). The increasing demand is reshaping the employment landscape, prompting employers to seek candidates with both traditional hospitality expertise and the adaptability to meet evolving guest expectations.

The expansion of the global hospitality sector is increasingly defined by the integration of Industry 4.0 technologies and artificial intelligence. Recent industry analyses indicate that by 2025, a significant portion of core hospitality skills will shift toward human-machine collaboration, requiring graduates to balance traditional service with high levels of digital literacy (Moussa et al., 2024).

Furthermore, as guest expectations evolve, the industry has placed a higher premium on "soft skills" and emotional intelligence as primary indicators of long-term career success. Research suggests that while technical proficiency may secure initial employment, high emotional intelligence serves as a critical buffer against workplace stressors and is positively linked to job satisfaction and retention among early-career professionals (Prentice, 2019).

Within the local context, the Philippine labor market presents a unique landscape for BSHRM graduates characterized by high demand but varying degrees of professional stability. Recent tracer studies conducted in 2024 reveal that while a majority of hospitality graduates are employed, many initially enter the workforce through entry-level or contractual positions that may not immediately reflect their managerial training (Melchor et al., 2025).

In light of these growing opportunities, it becomes increasingly important to understand how BSHRM graduates transition from academic settings to professional environments. While academic training equips students with foundational knowledge, its real-world application in professional settings presents unique challenges and opportunities. Insights into this transition are essential for enhancing educational curricula and supporting graduates in their professional journeys (Papageorgiou et al., 2021).

According to Walker (2017), the hospitality industry's vast scope offers numerous opportunities for graduates, enabling them to explore roles that align with their personal interests and professional strengths. This diversity not only supports career flexibility but also promotes both personal and professional development. The wide range of career opportunities allows graduates to discover areas where they can maximize their skills and interests while continuing to develop professionally. As they gain experience in different roles, they become better equipped to adapt to the changing demands of the hospitality industry.

O'Fallon and Rutherford (2011) emphasize the importance of understanding the operational roles within a hotel, asserting that a comprehensive grasp of each department's functions equips graduates with the adaptability and insight needed to navigate the complexities of the hospitality industry. A strong understanding of hotel operations enables graduates to appreciate how each department contributes to

overall organizational success. This broader perspective also prepares them to collaborate effectively across departments and respond more confidently to operational challenges.

Solomon (2016) underscores the significance of customer service and interpersonal skills in shaping successful careers in hospitality, emphasizing that while technical skills are essential, the ability to connect with guests and create memorable experiences truly distinguishes hospitality professionals. These interpersonal competencies are fundamental to delivering quality service and building lasting guest relationships. Developing these skills alongside technical knowledge enables graduates to meet the expectations of both employers and guests in a highly service-oriented industry.

The shift from academic environments to professional settings can be challenging for many BSHRM graduates. Khalaf & Moutinho (2023) emphasize the importance of adaptability, continuous learning, and networking in successfully integrating into the industry.

On the other hand, Dietschi (2021) stated that graduates need to develop a mindset geared toward excellence and innovation. He argues that the hospitality industry demands professionals who are not only skilled but also passionate and committed to delivering exceptional service.

Additionally, achieving operational excellence in hospitality involves setting clear goals, fostering a positive work culture, and continuously seeking feedback to drive improvement. These elements provide direction, enhance employee engagement, and facilitate continuous growth within the organization (Larkin, 2009).

Despite the opportunities, BSHRM graduates often encounter challenges in their professional journeys. Legrand et al. (2023) highlight that the hospitality industry faces evolving demands, including the integration of sustainable practices and technological adaptability. They argue that graduates must proactively address these challenges to remain competitive and effective in the field.

Furthermore, Szende (2020) addresses key challenges, including high turnover rates, work-life balance struggles, and pressure to maintain service quality. These issues highlight the critical need for resilience, strong communication skills, and effective stress management for professionals in the hospitality industry.

According to Fang et al. (2024), the development of a professional identity is significantly influenced by organizational culture, particularly through collaboration between educational institutions and industry partners in creating learning environments that reflect real-world settings. Such collaboration can facilitate smoother transitions for graduates and foster a sense of belonging in the workplace. This connection between academic preparation and workplace culture can help graduates adjust more effectively to their professional roles. Exposure to realistic work environments may also strengthen their confidence and sense of belonging as they begin their careers.

Building on the importance of a supportive workplace environment, Michelli (2008) emphasizes that employee empowerment and recognition contribute to a cohesive organizational culture that enables graduates to thrive, develop their professional identities, and contribute meaningfully to their organizations. When graduates feel valued and empowered, they may become more engaged in their roles and motivated to develop professionally. Thus, both industry-academe collaboration and supportive workplace practices are important in helping HRM graduates transition into and grow within their professional environments.

As graduates enter the hospitality workforce, their ability to translate academic knowledge into practical workplace skills becomes an important aspect of their employability. Ghani et al. (2025) emphasize that employability challenges in the hospitality sector stem not only from skill gaps and curriculum misalignment but also from graduates' difficulty in applying theoretical knowledge in practical settings.

In addition, Amin (2020) highlights the growing importance of digital literacy and career planning, especially in an industry that is becoming more technology-driven. Addressing this demand calls for an academic curriculum that prepares students not only with technical know-how but also with adaptable competencies for a fast-evolving workplace.

Equally important is the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Subia et al. (2022) stress that graduates who exhibit strong emotional and social intelligence are more equipped to succeed in dynamic, customer-facing environments, which are core to the hospitality profession. These skills enable graduates to respond appropriately to different guest needs and workplace situations while maintaining professional relationships.

This view is reinforced by Goh and Lee (2018), who argue that younger workers perceive the customer-centric nature of hospitality as both a challenge and an opportunity, making emotional resilience and communication vital attributes. Developing these qualities can help graduates manage the demands of guest interactions while remaining composed and effective in challenging situations.

Building on the importance of soft skills, Capua (2021) explored the varying perspectives of students, faculty, and industry partners on employability. Industry partners emphasized professionalism, teamwork, and resource management; faculty prioritized personal traits; and students expressed difficulty with communication and specialized skills, such as baking and bulk cooking. These mismatches call for more targeted training and curriculum alignment with real-world hospitality demands.

Similarly, Mesa (2023) addressed this gap by identifying key areas where students fall short, including emotional intelligence, negotiation, time management, and teamwork. The study suggests integrating competency enrichment programs and ISO-aligned quality frameworks into academic offerings to improve graduate employability.

Ngoepe (2021) revealed that hotel managers are divided on whether hospitality graduates are sufficiently prepared for the workforce. Despite the limitations imposed by online learning, especially in terms of guest interaction and practical exposure, employers emphasized the importance of employability skills, such as creativity, innovation, and adaptability, over institutional prestige.

Ngoepe and Wakelin-Theron (2023) identified creativity, critical thinking, empathy, and adaptability as key competencies required in a post-pandemic hospitality landscape. The study emphasizes the joint responsibility of private higher education institutions, hotel managers, HR personnel, and graduates to ensure graduates are equipped with the competencies needed for success. It also calls for a stronger alignment between curriculum content and industry needs.

From a technological standpoint, Osei et al. (2020) framed the evolving requirements of the hospitality sector within the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. As hospitality organizations adopt smart technologies and decentralized systems, the demand for graduates who are adaptable and digitally literate continues to rise. Their study stresses the importance of integrating technological competencies into educational programs to maintain industry competitiveness.

Correspondingly, Fajaryati et al. (2020) underscored the value of employability skills such as communication, teamwork, and technological literacy in the global job market. Their systematic review supports embedding these skills into the curriculum, as demonstrated by government initiatives in Indonesia aimed at developing globally competitive human resources.

Meanwhile, Dhaliwal and Misra (2020) argued that academic institutions must provide a balanced mix of theoretical and practical training. They stressed that, alongside mainstream competencies, moderately emphasized skills should be nurtured through targeted learning strategies. Equipping students with such a holistic skill set requires mindset shifts and proactive collaboration among educators and learners.

Taking a broader perspective, Cheng et al. (2021) examined how employability is shaped by the views of higher education institutions, students, employers, and government bodies. Their findings reveal a misalignment between employer expectations, particularly soft skills and work ethics, and government policy priorities that emphasize vocational skills and employment statistics. This calls for a more collaborative and context-aware approach to designing employability strategies.

Building on earlier discussions of employability and workplace readiness, recent studies emphasize the critical roles of the work environment and leadership practices in shaping employee retention and

performance. For instance, Halim et al. (2021) identified workplace environment, leader communication, and job satisfaction as essential in reducing employee turnover in the hotel industry. They argue that positive leadership and employee well-being not only foster loyalty but also align staff with organizational goals, ultimately contributing to improved guest satisfaction.

Similarly, Sukmana et al. (2021) highlighted that transformational leadership, work discipline, and clear career development pathways significantly impact employee performance in hospitality settings. Their findings reinforce the need for hotel managers to maintain discipline while promoting growth opportunities and applying leadership practices that inspire employees. These leadership dynamics are especially relevant to enhancing service quality and organizational performance.

In addition to internal organizational dynamics, leadership style also plays a role in encouraging environmentally responsible behaviors. Zheng et al. (2021) found that environmentally specific servant leadership significantly influences hotel employees' green behaviors, especially when corporate environmental responsibility and peer advocacy are evident. Their study stresses the importance of embedding environmental values into leadership practices and organizational culture to promote sustainable hospitality operations.

Moreover, the social aspect of the workplace has been found to influence employee retention. Wu et al. (2023) revealed that opportunities for workplace friendships can reduce intentions to leave, although psychological contract violations moderate this effect. This suggests that while social bonds at work are beneficial, organizations must also uphold employee expectations to leverage the advantages of positive workplace relationships fully.

Ethical behavior in hospitality workspaces is another emerging area of focus. According to Jamaludin and Mehon (2020), personality traits such as openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness are strong predictors of ethical conduct among hotel staff. Their findings emphasize the need for human resource departments to incorporate personality assessments in hiring to foster a work culture grounded in ethical standards.

Furthermore, as the hospitality industry becomes increasingly multicultural, effective communication across cultures is vital. Keizer-Remmers et al. (2021) explored the concept of *handelingsverlegenheid*, which describes hesitation in intercultural interactions due to uncertainty. The study identifies language barriers and limited cultural sensitivity as key challenges, and recommends targeted diversity training and role-playing activities to build employees' intercultural competence and reduce miscommunication.

Parallel to cultural challenges, frontline hotel workers' emotional well-being remains a persistent concern. Yue and Basnyat (2022) found that long work hours, physical demands, and difficult guest interactions primarily drive emotional exhaustion. These pressures lead employees to adopt harmful coping strategies, such as isolation and overeating. The study calls for management interventions that recognize emotional labor and implement supportive policies to protect workers' mental health.

Physical and mental workloads also directly affect safety and well-being in the hospitality sector. El-Sherbeen et al. (2024) demonstrated that excessive workloads negatively influence safe behavior, with psychological resilience acting as a buffer against stress. They recommend resilience training and stress-reduction interventions to sustain workplace safety and performance, particularly in high-pressure departments like kitchens and housekeeping.

Building on the theme of employee well-being, Lestari et al. (2023) examined how awareness of emerging technologies, specifically STARA or Smart Technology, Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, and Algorithms, impacts hotel staff in Jakarta. Their findings showed that greater STARA awareness correlates with lower job stress and insecurity and positively influences job satisfaction. Employees who received training felt better equipped to handle technological change, which enhanced their confidence and focus on service delivery. This highlights the importance of ongoing digital literacy programs in maintaining employee morale and adaptability.

Technological integration also plays a strategic role in service delivery, as explored by Pantelidis and Protopapa (2003). Their study revealed that 5-star hotel employees view customer relationship management systems as tools for improving service quality and guest satisfaction. However, the data also showed that the connection to customer loyalty remains weak despite strong links between Customer Relationship Management [CRM] and customer service performance. This suggests a knowledge gap in understanding CRM's long-term strategic value, pointing to the need for more in-depth employee training on leveraging data for guest retention.

Beyond technology's advantages, Kasa et al. (2020) investigated its unintended psychological consequences, particularly smartphone addiction among hotel workers. Their study identified both positive and negative drivers of excessive smartphone use, such as enjoyment and conformity. While smartphones offered emotional support during stressful shifts, obsessive use disrupted workflow and reduced productivity. The researchers recommend clear guidelines and policies to manage personal smartphone usage and maintain professional boundaries during work hours.

In contrast, Wang and Ho (2025) explored how hotel employees' perceptions of artificial intelligence tools shape their customer service orientation. The study found that perceived usefulness and ease of use positively influence employees' attitudes, boosting customer orientation. Moreover, individuals with proactive personalities derive greater benefits from AI integration. This underscores the value of fostering proactive traits and cultivating positive attitudes to fully leverage AI tools in hotel operations.

Ghanem (2021) emphasized the role of digital citizenship among hotel employees in Alexandria, identifying high levels of digital respect and education, but limited digital protection. His study recommends embedding digital literacy into training programs and using incentive systems to encourage responsible digital behavior. These efforts are crucial to fostering a safer, more ethical digital environment in hospitality workplaces.

In general, this study explores the lived experiences of HRM graduates as they transition and grow within their workplaces. It is grounded in Experiential Learning Theory of Kolb (1984), which highlights how individuals learn through a cyclical process involving concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. This framework is supported by Social Capital Theory of Coleman (1988), which emphasizes the importance of relationships, networks, and social structures in achieving personal and professional success. Additionally, Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation by Lave and Wenger (1991) reinforces the idea that learning and professional development occur through meaningful participation in real-world communities and work settings. Together, these theories offer a holistic understanding of how HRM graduates apply their learning, build workplace connections, and develop their professional identity in dynamic hospitality environments.

Statement of the Problem

This study explored the experiences of Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management [BSHRM] graduates in their workplaces in selected hotels in the cities of Cebu, Mandaue, and Lapu-Lapu, Cebu, Philippines.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following sub-questions:

1. What are the experiences of the informants in their workplaces?
2. How do the informants address the challenges encountered in their workplaces?
3. What are the aspirations of the informants to improve the quality of training among hospitality practitioners for their career advancements and growth?

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-phenomenological method to explore the lived experiences of Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management [BSHRM] graduates in their current workplaces at selected hotels in the cities of Cebu, Mandaue, and Lapu-Lapu.

Qualitative research involves the collection of participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors (Tenny et al., 2022). The researcher chose a qualitative research design for this study because it required narrative and sufficient information about graduates' day-to-day experiences in the workplace.

In addition, qualitative research is the most applicable research design for the researcher to draw conclusions that contribute to understanding participants' lived realities, enabling a rich and meaningful understanding of their workplace narratives. Rather than quantifying results, it seeks to interpret and describe how BSHRM graduates make sense of their professional environment and how these experiences inform their views on training needs and career growth. This approach allows for a rich and nuanced exploration of the phenomenon under investigation, providing valuable insights beyond numerical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Research Environment

This study was conducted in five (4) different hotels with at least 300 rooms in the tri-cities of Cebu, Mandaue, and Lapu-Lapu (*See Appendix D – Location Map*).

Hotel A is a premier 5-star integrated resort located on Kawit Island at the South Road Properties (SRP), Cebu City. This massive development occupies a prime waterfront location and features 1,000 guestrooms across three distinct hotel towers. As an integrated resort, the property houses an expansive gaming floor, a luxury shopping mall, a convention center, and a diverse array of signature fine-dining restaurants and leisure facilities.

Hotel B is a 23-story contemporary property located at the corner of Ouano Avenue and C.D. Seno in Mandaue City. It functions as a major culinary and business destination, offering 668 guestrooms. The hotel is distinguished by its extensive food and beverage portfolio, which includes eight specialized restaurants, ranging from a buffet offering different international cuisines to a premium steakhouse.

Hotel C is located within the primary business district on Archbishop Reyes Ave., Cebu City. This property features 427 guest rooms and is designed with a focus on functionality for both corporate and social use. Its amenities include a modern fitness center exclusive to hotel guests, dedicated adult and kiddie swimming pools, and multiple function rooms specifically outfitted for corporate meetings, seminars, and social gatherings.

Hotel D is situated within the 30-hectare Mactan Newtown township in Lapu-Lapu City, approximately 4 kilometers from the Mactan-Cebu International Airport. The hotel offers 550 guest rooms, many of which provide direct views of the Mactan shoreline and the Hilutungan Channel. The property is integrated into a live-work-play township environment, featuring modern amenities and proximity to a white-sand beach, catering to both the transient airport market and the leisure tourism sector.

These high-capacity establishments provided a diverse operational landscape for exploring the lived experiences of BSHRM graduates. By focusing on hotels with extensive room counts and multifaceted service departments, this study captured a wide range of professional narratives regarding workplace demands and organizational cultures. This setting was instrumental in identifying the specific challenges graduates faced and their subsequent aspirations for professional growth and curriculum enhancement.

Research Informants

The informants of this study were Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management [BSHRM] graduates. The total population of participants for this study is ten (10) graduates currently working or with prior experience in hotels located in Cebu City, Mandaue City, and Lapu-Lapu City. The

inclusion criteria in selecting the informants were: (1) a graduate of the BSHRM program from the University of Cebu - Banilad, and (2) with a combined work experience of at least two (2) years in the hotel industry. The exclusion criteria in selecting the informants were: (1) graduates who did not complete their BSHRM degree at the University of Cebu - Banilad, (2) those with less than two years of combined hotel industry experience, (3) age, and (4) gender. The number of informants is considered sufficient to provide meaningful insights into the lived experiences of BSHRM graduates in the workplace.

Research Instrument

The researcher employed a structured interview approach, enabling on-the-spot interviews and ensuring a clear understanding of the lived experiences of Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management [BSHRM] graduates in their workplaces. The researcher developed an interview guide focused on exploring the professional experiences of the graduates. This guide was validated by the research adviser and the panelists to ensure its clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study's objectives.

The interview guide is divided into two main parts. Part I includes introductory questions to establish rapport and gather general background information about the participant. Part II consists of structured, open-ended questions designed to explore participants' workplace lived experiences. These questions addressed job responsibilities, the skills they use in their roles, the challenges they face in their current work environments, and their personal and professional growth since entering the hotel industry.

Research Procedures

Data Collection. The researcher obtained a Certificate of Approval from the University of Cebu–Academic Research Ethics Committee [UCAREC] before commencing the study. In accordance with ethical guidelines, the researcher prepared an approval letter and a transmittal letter addressed to BSHRM graduates working in hotels. The Research Adviser and the Graduate School Dean endorse these letters.

The researcher contacted potential participants; those who expressed a willingness to participate were provided with an informed consent form. The Informed Consent Form [ICF] consists of two parts: (1) an information sheet, which details the study's objectives and procedures, and (2) a Certificate of Consent, which confirms the participant's voluntary participation (*See Appendix B – Informed Consent Form [ICF]*). The researcher conducted face-to-face or virtual, individual interviews that lasted 30 minutes to a maximum of 1 hour per informant. To ensure accurate and complete data capture, the researcher used audio recording with participants' informed consent. All recorded data will be securely stored for 6 months following the completion of the study. After this period, the audio recordings will be permanently deleted. This ensures adherence to ethical data storage and disposal practices in line with the university's guidelines and the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Data Analysis. This study employed a descriptive-phenomenological approach to analyze data collected through interviews with BSHRM graduates. The descriptive qualitative analysis will focus on capturing and describing participants' lived experiences and perspectives, specifically their workplace experiences after graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management.

The iterative data analysis process includes several key steps. Initially, the researcher will engage in familiarization by thoroughly reviewing all interview transcripts to immerse themselves in the data and gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives in their respective workplaces. Following this, the researcher will proceed to initial coding, assigning codes to segments of the data that capture key concepts, experiences, and challenges graduates face in their work environments. This initial coding phase may be open-ended, allowing new themes to emerge as the data are explored.

Subsequently, the researcher identified themes by reviewing and grouping codes into broader categories that represent recurring patterns and significant aspects of the data. This stage involved refining the initial themes to ensure they accurately reflect the participants' voices and experiences (Nowell et al., 2017). As the analysis progressed, the researcher refined the identified themes to ensure they were well-defined, internally consistent, and reflective of the participants' lived experiences, as suggested by Braun

& Clarke (2006). Finally, the researcher used these themes to construct a rich and detailed description of the lived experiences of BSHRM graduates in their workplaces.

Ethical Considerations

The following ethical principles will guide the research to ensure the protection and well-being of the participants: beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, and autonomy.

Beneficence. The principle of beneficence guided the study to contribute to a broader understanding of the lived experiences of Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management [BSHRM] graduates in their workplaces. The study aims to provide valuable insights that can improve the professional integration of BSHRM graduates into the hotel industry. The findings will offer practical recommendations for both educational institutions and the hotel industry, such as enhancing the academic curriculum to better prepare students for their careers, improving workplace integration strategies, and identifying skills gaps that can be addressed through further training. This will contribute to the overall enhancement of the hotel industry's workforce, benefiting both graduates and hotel management.

Non-maleficence. To uphold the principle of non-maleficence, the researcher prioritized the privacy and well-being of the participants throughout the study. No participant experienced any physical or psychological harm, and they were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The researcher ensured that interviews are conducted in a respectful and comfortable environment, free from pressure, with participants having control over the time and platform used for the interview. Confidentiality is strictly maintained, with all data kept secure and anonymized. Participants are assigned codes to protect their identities, in compliance with the Data Privacy Act. The interview guide underwent validation by an experienced professional to minimize any biases or misinterpretations that could affect the participants' mental well-being.

Justice. The principle of justice was upheld by ensuring fairness in the participant selection process. The selection was based on clear and unbiased inclusion and exclusion criteria, ensuring that all participants are treated equally. The researcher followed strict data-gathering procedures to minimize harm and maximize the benefits for participants. The interview process was conducted following validated guidelines, ensuring that the data was gathered ethically and systematically, while maintaining consistency and accuracy in the findings.

Autonomy. The researcher respected the principle of autonomy by ensuring that participants' decisions were honored throughout the research process. Participants will be fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time for any reason. A formal informed consent process was implemented, where participants will review and sign consent forms, acknowledging their voluntary participation and understanding of the study's objectives. This ensured that participants were making informed decisions about their involvement in the research.

Trustworthiness of the Research

The trustworthiness of this study is crucial to ensuring the quality and reliability of the research findings. To achieve this, the researcher implemented several strategies, including aspects such as credibility, dependability, transferability, confirmability, bracketing, and reflexivity.

Credibility. The researcher conducted online interviews and recorded audio responses to ensure transparent and reliable data collection. The findings were interpreted impartially, with a focus on presenting evidence-based results. This approach enhanced the study's credibility by ensuring that the conclusions are well-supported and objective.

Dependability. The study utilized a validated structured interview guide and audio recordings to ensure consistent and accurate data collection. These methods promoted reliable results, and using the same approach in future research is expected to yield similar findings. This strengthened the study's reliability by allowing others to replicate the methods and obtain comparable results.

Transferability. The results and interpretations of the research will be shared with the faculty of the University of Cebu Graduate School. The insights gained from exploring the workplace experiences of BSHRM graduates in Cebu's hotels can serve as a foundation for future studies. The reliability of this research will enable it to serve as a basis for similar investigations in other contexts, making the findings applicable beyond the scope of the current study.

Confirmability. The researcher remained objective during data analysis and interpretation to minimize personal biases. Analytical tools were used to ensure a fair and accurate evaluation of the responses. This ensured that the findings reflect a rigorous research process, based on the participants' lived experiences, and not shaped by the researcher's personal viewpoints.

Bracketing. To enhance the study's trustworthiness, the researcher employed bracketing, which involves setting aside personal assumptions and biases during data analysis. This ensured that interpretations were based solely on participants' experiences and perspectives, rather than on the researcher's preconceptions. Bracketing allows the researcher to focus on the participants' narratives and provides a more authentic understanding of their workplace experiences.

Reflexivity. The researcher engaged in reflexivity to acknowledge their own subjectivity and potential influence on the research process. This involves reflecting on how personal biases, values, and experiences may shape the way the research is conducted and how the data is interpreted. Reflexivity ensures that the researcher remains aware of their impact on the study, allowing for more transparent and thoughtful analysis of the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I. Lived Experiences of BSHRM Graduates Working in Hotels

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- A.1 Tangible Rewards and Career Growth
- A.2 Guest Satisfaction and Relationship Building
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- B.1 Difficult Guests
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II. Addressing the Challenges Encountered by the Informants in their Workplaces

- 1. Strategic Separation and Boundary Setting
- 2. Prioritizing Rest and Recharge
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III. Aspirations of the Informants to Improve the Quality of the Training of Future BSHRM Graduates

- 1. Specialized Training
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I. Lived Experiences of BSHRM Graduates Working in Hotels

This section presents the themes developed from the lived experiences of BSHRM graduates currently employed in hotel establishments. The narratives focus on how these graduates perceive the

rewarding aspects of their work, highlighting tangible benefits, guest satisfaction, and opportunities for personal and professional growth. The discussion integrates the informants' significant statements to provide deeper insight into their workplace realities.

A. Positive Experiences

1. **Tangible Rewards and Career Growth.** Several informants identified tangible rewards as a primary source of fulfillment in their current jobs. Financial incentives, particularly service charges, were emphasized as a unique benefit of hotel employment compared to other industries.

Informant 1 highlighted the significance of service charge as an added motivation on top of the regular salary, stating:

Actually, kani siya na job, compared to different kinds of jobs, ang rewarding jud kay ang service charge. Bisag asa jud na jobs, wala man jud inani, except some restaurants, service charge jud ang rewarding on top of the sweldo (IDI: 1). (Actually, for this job, compared to different kinds of jobs, the most rewarding thing would be the service charge. Other jobs don't have this, except for some restaurants. Service charge is really the most rewarding thing on top of the salary).

This statement underscores the importance of financial benefits in sustaining job satisfaction and encouraging graduates to remain in the hospitality industry. Aside from monetary rewards, opportunities for career advancement were also highly valued. Informant 6 emphasized professional growth and exposure to diverse cultures as valuable outcomes of their work experience.

The career advancement and cultural exchange with the guests, and to learn more about the diversity (IDI: 6).

Similarly, Informant 7 expressed fulfillment in acquiring technical knowledge related to revenue and preparing for higher responsibilities within the organization.

The most rewarding aspect of my current job is that I learn a lot in terms of figures like revenue, and I am actually planning to step up with my position as I am currently processing for promotion handling QSR – Quest Serviced Residence (IDI: 7).

The narratives above implied that the rewarding aspects of BSHRM graduates' current jobs in hotels are strongly shaped by tangible rewards and opportunities for career growth. Further, it goes beyond receiving a base salary, as graduates emphasized the significance of service charges, bonuses, and other performance-based incentives in making their work fulfilling. Informants described these tangible rewards as recognition for their efforts, which motivated them to perform consistently and maintain high standards. In addition, graduates valued opportunities to acquire technical skills, manage operational tasks, and gain exposure to diverse hotel functions, which contribute to both immediate satisfaction and long-term professional development. Hence, tangible rewards not only provide financial motivation but also reinforce graduates' commitment to the hospitality industry. This supports Kusluvan et al. (2010) findings that supplementary financial incentives, such as service charges and bonuses, are especially important in hotels where base salaries are often lower than in other sectors.

For BSHRM graduates, tangible rewards and structured career growth opportunities are important in sustaining job satisfaction and supporting their vision of a long-term career in the hospitality industry. Walsh and Taylor (2007) found that hospitality professionals place importance on developing technical competencies and engaging in challenging work, suggesting that professional fulfillment may extend beyond financial compensation. In the present study, the informants' experiences with revenue

management, operational coordination, and promotion preparation similarly demonstrate how challenging responsibilities can strengthen professional competence and create a sense of achievement.

Clear opportunities for advancement can also influence employees' motivation and decision to remain in the hospitality industry. Kim and Jogaratnam (2010) reported that career advancement opportunities can contribute to employee retention and encourage greater engagement in their roles. This is particularly relevant to BSHRM graduates, who may be more motivated when they can see how their current responsibilities contribute to future career opportunities.

Beyond career advancement, recognition and meaningful work can further strengthen employees' connection to their organization. Tumati and Yousfi (2023) emphasized that combining extrinsic rewards with intrinsic forms of recognition, such as meaningful work and acknowledgment, can promote employee engagement, loyalty, and proactive career development. The experiences of the informants reinforce the value of recognizing not only what employees receive but also what they accomplish and contribute to the organization.

2. **Guest Satisfaction and Relationship Building.** Another prominent rewarding aspect identified by the informants is the fulfillment gained from building strong relationships with guests and ensuring their satisfaction. Informant 2 shared that forming meaningful client relationships is deeply rewarding, particularly when trust leads to guest loyalty.

I realized na the most rewarding jud noh is the relationship that you've built with the clients... I have one client na ni ingon jud na when I first came here in Nustar... they pulled it out and transferred here kay ganahan sila diri because of me. So that's very rewarding (IDI: 2). (I realized that the most rewarding part is really the relationship you build with clients. That is something truly treasured... I have one client who told me that when I came to Nustar, I informed them that I was already in this property, and they were supposed to have their event in another resort, but they pulled it out and transferred here because they preferred to work with me. So that is very rewarding).

Informant 5 described how positive guest feedback and visible guest satisfaction motivate their work.

Sa atong trabaho, rewarding when we see the guest and they go back sa ilang country, we see their smiles and their are instances na mu comment sila on our website on what are their experience when they cheked-in in here. So far so good, nindot ilang comments (IDI: 5). (In our work, it's rewarding when we see guests leave and return to their countries, and we see their smiles. There are even instances when they comment on our website about their experience when they checked in here. So far, the comments have been very positive).

In addition, Informant 6 emphasized that creating memorable and personalized guest experiences is the core purpose of working in the hospitality industry.

For me ang rewarding aspect gyud is to create memorable na guest experiences since we are working in the hospitality industry, so that's our main goal is to satisfy our guest with our services especially if those services are personalized, it's ano ba, like, the main point is to go beyond and the extra mile (IDI: 6). (For me, the most rewarding aspect is creating memorable guest experiences since we are working in the hospitality industry. Our main goal is to satisfy our guests with our services, especially if those services are personalized. The main point is to go beyond and go the extra mile).

Supporting this view, Informant 8 and Informant 10 stressed that guest satisfaction and returning clientele are strong indicators of successful service delivery.

The most rewarding aspect in working in the industry is when you see your guests are satisfied with your service and how you handled them. As we know, returning guests would not only return because of the facilities of the hotel but also because of the service they received (IDI: 8).

The most rewarding part is seeing how my efforts directly impact customer satisfaction... it feels fulfilling to know that I'm able to make a difference through good communication and service (IDI: 10).

The narratives above implied that one of the most rewarding aspects of BSHRM graduates' work in hotels is the fulfillment gained from building strong relationships with guests and ensuring their satisfaction. Further, it goes beyond routine service delivery, creating meaningful, personalized interactions that foster trust, loyalty, and memorable experiences. Informants described how positive guest feedback, returning clientele, and instances in which guests specifically sought their services enhanced their sense of professional accomplishment. Hence, the ability to form genuine relationships and contribute to guest satisfaction not only provides psychological fulfillment but also reinforces motivation to go the extra mile in service delivery (Lam et al., 2001).

For graduates working in hotels, meaningful interactions with guests and the ability to create positive service experiences contribute to their professional satisfaction. Lee and Ok (2012) found that genuine emotional engagement, or "deep acting," can enhance job satisfaction and reduce burnout by allowing employees to empathize and connect authentically with guests. This is reflected in the informants' experiences, particularly when they received compliments from guests, observed guest satisfaction, or welcomed returning clients. These experiences suggest that positive guest interactions can provide graduates with a sense of accomplishment and reinforce the value of their work.

Guest loyalty is also influenced by the quality of personal service provided by hospitality employees. Prentice (2013) emphasized that personal service can be a stronger driver of guest loyalty than physical facilities, highlighting the importance of employees' individual contributions to the guest experience. This supports the informants' observations that their efforts in serving guests could contribute to repeat patronage. For hospitality graduates, recognizing the direct connection between their service and guest loyalty may strengthen their commitment to delivering personalized and attentive service.

Beyond guest loyalty, helping others and creating memorable experiences can provide hospitality graduates with intrinsic satisfaction. Teng (2007) noted that hospitality graduates can derive intrinsic satisfaction from helping others and fostering memorable experiences. This perspective reflects the personal fulfillment that graduates may experience when they see the positive results of their service. Such fulfillment may encourage employees to remain engaged even when the work itself becomes demanding.

3. **Personal and Professional Development.** Personal and professional development emerged as another rewarding dimension of the informants' experiences. Informant 3 emphasized the trust management placed in them as a meaningful achievement in their career.

I was entrusted to manage three specialty restaurants, I think that was the most rewarding aspect for me... Additionally, meeting experienced chefs who have thought me the "magics" in the kitchen (IDI: 3).

Exposure to diverse cultures and nationalities also contributed to the informants' personal growth. Informant 4 shared that interacting with people from different backgrounds enhanced cultural awareness and communication skills.

I think bati siya for students since it deals with gambling, but you would be able to meet different and really interact with other nationalities... Usahay maka learn sad kag ginagmay lain na language (IDI:

4). (I think it's not ideal for students since it deals with gambling, but you get to meet and really interact with different nationalities... Sometimes, you also get to learn a few words from other languages).

Furthermore, Informants 8 and 9 described their experiences as transformative learning processes that strengthened their professionalism and confidence.

The experience for me was very like process jud talaga siya. You'll be able to learn more about the job and yourself along the way. Especially in terms of your personality, professionalism, how you handle your job (IDI: 8). (For me, the experience was very much a learning process. You learn more about the job and about yourself along the way. Especially in terms of personality, professionalism, and how you handle your responsibilities).

The most rewarding part for me was to overcome my fear of talking with people especially to foreigners. I really didnt know that this would be the reality, abi nako pagwaphay lang smile-smile, but you really need to go out of your comfort zone (IDI: 9). (The most rewarding part for me was overcoming my fear of talking to people, especially foreigners. I really didn't know that this would be the reality; I thought it was just about smiling, but you really need to step out of your comfort zone).

The accounts shared by the informants revealed that personal and professional development is a highly rewarding aspect of hotel work for BSHRM graduates, extending beyond technical skill acquisition to include trust, responsibility, and exposure to leadership roles. Humborstad and Perry (2011) found that assigning greater responsibility and autonomy to employees enhances job satisfaction and professional pride. This is reflected in the informants' experiences of being entrusted with multiple outlets and critical operations, which strengthened their confidence and professional identity. Such responsibilities allow graduates to recognize their capabilities and develop a stronger sense of ownership in their professional roles.

Similarly, empowerment through participation in decision-making can strengthen employees' sense of achievement and professional value. Pelit et al. (2011) emphasized that employee empowerment through decision-making authority significantly improves job satisfaction. The informants' experiences suggest that opportunities to make decisions and take responsibility for important operations can contribute to their perception of personal and professional growth. For BSHRM graduates, being given appropriate levels of responsibility may serve as an important pathway toward greater confidence and workplace competence.

Beyond responsibility and empowerment, continuous learning and mentorship also play a crucial role in the professional development of graduates. McDonald and Wilson-Mah (2022) highlighted the role of mentorship in enriching professional experience through support, feedback, and opportunities for skill development. The informants described experienced chefs, supervisors, and colleagues as sources of informal mentorship who provided practical knowledge and professional guidance. This suggests that workplace relationships can serve as an important extension of formal hospitality education by helping graduates learn from actual industry experiences.

The informants also reported that working with guests and colleagues from different nationalities strengthened their adaptability, communication skills, and self-confidence. Fugate et al. (2004) described employability as involving career identity, adaptability, and social and human capital, which enable individuals to navigate changing work environments. Exposure to diverse people and situations provides graduates with opportunities to develop competencies that extend beyond technical hotel operations.

Furthermore, exposure to multicultural work environments can contribute to the development of cultural intelligence. Yuan et al. (2023) found that cultural intelligence positively influences job satisfaction and employees' confidence in daily operations. The informants' interactions with people from different cultural backgrounds may therefore contribute not only to their communication skills but also to their ability to function comfortably in diverse hotel environments.

B. Negative Experiences

1. **Difficult Guests.** Dealing with guests emerged as a major challenge among the informants. Many noted that guests, while the primary source of income for hotels, also often pose the greatest problems. Informant 1 emphasized this dual nature:

Usually guest jud, mao ang main income sa hotel and mao main problem sa hotel. (IDI: 1) (Usually, it's the guests, they're the main source of income of the hotel, and also the main source of problems).

The challenge of managing client expectations was highlighted by Informant 2, particularly in sales, where clients sometimes expect everything since they are paying for the service:

For sales, lisod man jud e handle ang uban clients kay they have different expectations sa imoha na they think, since they are paying you should give them everything (IDI: 2). (For sales, it's also difficult to handle some clients because they have different expectations of you, and they sometimes think that, since they are paying, you should give them everything).

Informant 4 described more extreme situations where frustrated guests can physically express their anger:

Kanang, ang players kay mapildi, unya ang ilang kalagot kay mapunta sa amoa. Like ma malabayan mig things like cards and chips. Usahay if lagot na jud kaayo, maigo na jud sa imong nawng (IDI: 4). (The players sometimes lose, and their frustration can be directed at us. For example, things like cards and chips can be thrown at us. Sometimes, if they are really angry, they might hit your face).

For supervisors, handling complaints and the associated emotional fatigue was a recurring challenge, as shared by Informant 6:

Guests complaints and the emotional fatigue. Most of the time since I am a supervisor for a year na, so handling guests complaints, mao jud usually main concern but still it's part of the job and it's being paid naman. As they say, as a hotelier, part nana siya sa sweldo (IDI: 6). (Guest complaints and emotional fatigue were also challenges. Most of the time, since I have been a supervisor for a year, handling guest complaints was usually the main concern. But it's still part of the job, and it is paid).

The experiences described by the informants reveal that dealing with difficult guests is one of the most persistent and emotionally demanding challenges faced by BSHRM graduates working in hotels. Further, this difficulty stems from the dual role of guests as both the primary source of revenue and the most frequent source of conflict within hotel operations. Informants shared that unrealistic expectations, entitlement, and frustration often place frontline and supervisory staff in challenging situations that require constant emotional regulation and professional restraint. This observation aligns with the findings of Faller and Aguirre (2021), who described guest conflict in hotel operations as a "natural phenomenon" arising from varied personalities and heightened service expectations. As a result, hotel employees are required to consistently exercise sound judgment, patience, and communication skills when managing guest interactions.

Repeated exposure to complaints, verbal aggression, and emotionally charged encounters can contribute to fatigue and psychological strain among hotel employees. Mullins and Dossor (2013) explained that displaced aggression occurs when guests redirect anger arising from external stressors, such as gambling losses or financial dissatisfaction, toward hotel employees who are perceived as safer targets.

This reflects the informants' experiences of being confronted or receiving anger that was not necessarily related to their actual performance.

Hotel employees may also experience direct verbal aggression from guests, including yelling and humiliating behavior. Tešin et al. (2021) found that hotel employees frequently encounter verbal aggression that negatively affects their emotional well-being and work performance despite their efforts to maintain professionalism. The informants' accounts similarly demonstrate the emotional demands involved in handling difficult guest interactions. This suggests that professionalism alone may not be sufficient to protect employees from the effects of repeated negative encounters.

Beyond individual incidents, continued exposure to discourteous customer behavior can become a significant workplace stressor. Rout et al. (2025) emphasized that customer incivility contributes to emotional exhaustion, reduced job satisfaction, and increased turnover intentions among hospitality employees. Repeated experiences of this nature may affect how HRM graduates perceive their work and their willingness to remain in the hospitality industry. Hotels would need to recognize customer incivility as an occupational concern rather than simply an unavoidable part of service work.

The emotional demands become more pronounced when employees must suppress their genuine feelings while interacting with difficult guests. Amissah et al. (2021) found that sustained emotional regulation through surface acting increases the likelihood of burnout among employees. This helps explain why continuously maintaining a positive or composed demeanor can become exhausting for graduates working in demanding hotel environments.

These findings also point to the importance of organizational responsibility in protecting employees while maintaining quality guest service. Chatterjee (2025) argued for moving beyond the traditional notion that "the customer is always right" toward organizational systems that prioritize employee protection, managerial support, and ethical workplace standards. From the informants' experiences, supportive management can play an important role when employees encounter aggressive or unreasonable guests.

2. **Interpersonal and Communication Issues.** Interpersonal relations and communication with colleagues were also reported as significant workplace challenges. Informant 2 emphasized the difficulty of getting along with colleagues due to differences in personality, perspective, and upbringing:

Number one jud is kanang makisama. Kay of course, we have different personalities and perspective, different upbringings. So very lisod siya (IDI: 2). (Number one is getting along with people because we have different personalities, perspectives, and different upbringings. So it's very difficult).

Language barriers and cultural differences were highlighted by Informant 3, particularly when humor and joking are misunderstood:

There are a lot of challenges that I encountered, especially in language, since each nationality has a different humor, and I like joking around with my team since it also helps with the mood at work, and sometimes when I joke around, they don't get what I mean (IDI: 3).

The experiences shared by the informants indicate that interpersonal and communication issues are significant challenges faced by BSHRM graduates working in hotels. Further, these challenges arise from differences in personality, cultural backgrounds, language proficiency, and workplace expectations, which can lead to misunderstandings and tensions among colleagues. The informants described difficulties getting along with team members due to differing perspectives and approaches to work, as well as misinterpretations of humor or informal interactions that sometimes led to conflict. Hence, graduates must develop strong communication skills, cultural sensitivity, and teamwork abilities to navigate these diverse workplace dynamics effectively. Workplace diversity, when not properly managed, can lead to

miscommunication and conflict, although it also presents opportunities for creativity and organizational growth (Khadija, 2024).

Language barriers and cross-cultural differences can complicate interpersonal relationships in multicultural hotel environments, particularly when employees need to communicate with colleagues from different nationalities. Grobelna (2015) emphasized that intercultural competence, language skills, and respect for cultural differences are essential for effective teamwork and quality service delivery. The informants' experiences reflect this challenge, as additional effort may be required to ensure that messages are clearly understood.

Effective communication is also important in establishing confidence and maintaining positive professional relationships. According to Arun and Disilva (2017), English proficiency and communication skills are critical to professional interactions and directly influence employee confidence, collaboration, and organizational reputation. This supports the informants' experiences in dealing with colleagues and guests from different backgrounds. For HRM graduates, stronger communication skills can reduce misunderstandings and allow them to participate more confidently in daily hotel operations.

Beyond individual communication skills, organizational support can help employees manage the pressures associated with workplace interactions. Ahmad et al. (2020) found that organizational support can reduce the stress associated with emotional labor, improve employee well-being, and minimize interpersonal conflicts. This suggests that communication difficulties should not be viewed solely as the responsibility of individual employees. Supportive supervisors, clear workplace procedures, and an environment where employees can seek assistance may help graduates manage challenging interpersonal situations more effectively.

3. **Workload and Pressure.** Workload, task urgency, and workplace pressure were identified as additional challenges. Informant 5 described the difficulty of managing time, urgent tasks, and multiple responsibilities in purchasing and events management:

Challenges, daghan. Time, frustrations, urgency sa mga butang especially sa akoo na purchasing. Sa Crimson, katong naay mga early check-in niya group, then lack of manning kay absent, probably ma sudden ang duty. Unya didto man gud kay rain or shine kay bungalow ang resort unlike here na highrise, pero pressure gyapon because of the events that we have on our F&B, and they have outside catering, mao pressure gyapon. Especially nako karon na ilang mga request ma punta sa akoo tanan (IDI: 5). (There are many challenges. Time, frustrations, and urgency of tasks, especially in my role in purchasing. At Crimson, for example, when there was an early check-in group and some staff were absent, duties had to be done suddenly. The resort is bungalow-style, rain or shine, unlike here which is high-rise, but there's still pressure because of the events in F&B, and they also have outside catering, so the pressure remains. Especially now, all their requests come to me).

Informant 6 highlighted multitasking, prioritization, and irregular shifts as significant stressors affecting work-life balance:

For me in my years working in Bai, multi-tasking overload gyud, and priorities, pressure sobra gyud siya... Also, the irregular shifts, ang work-life imbalance gyud (IDI: 6). (For me in my years working at Bai, there was a lot of multi-tasking, prioritizing, and pressure... Also, the irregular shifts affect work-life balance).

Similarly, Informant 8 described operational challenges during hotel openings where processes were still in trial-and-error phases and parts of the property were under construction:

Ang challenging jud during my work in Nustar, in the stage paman gud siya sa opening so naa pa sila sa part na murag trial and error ang processes and physically underconstruction nag uban areas sa hotel. Since I was under room service, we would need to transport and delive the food to guest's room and especially katong under construction pa, we would need to be extra creative na dili ma apektohan among operations (IDI: 8). (During my work at Nustar, the hotel was still in the opening stage, so many processes were still trial and error, and some areas were physically under construction. Since I was under room service, we had to transport and deliver food to guests' rooms, and especially in areas under construction, we had to be extra creative to ensure our operations weren't affected).

Informants 9 and 10 further emphasized challenges related to casual employment, low pay, meeting sales targets, and managing time during busy shifts:

I was hired as a casual employee, knowing you're a casual employee and as a bread winner, the pay was quite low even if you graduated from a 4-year program and of course the pressure in work (IDI: 9).

Some challenges I encountered includes handling difficult guests, managing time during busy shifts and adjusting to different management styles. In my current job, the challenge is meeting sales targets while maintaining good relationship with clients especially that I am on calls (IDI: 10).

The experiences shared by the informants indicate that workload and workplace pressure are significant challenges encountered by BSHRM graduates in hotels. Further, the combination of urgent tasks, multitasking demands, and time-sensitive responsibilities creates constant stress, particularly in operational and guest-facing roles. Informants described managing multiple tasks simultaneously, handling unexpected situations, and balancing competing priorities as particularly overwhelming, often leading to emotional and physical fatigue. Rao and Goel (2017) emphasize that excessive workload and unsupportive organizational policies significantly elevate stress levels among hotel employees, negatively affecting productivity and overall organizational performance.

The effects of workplace pressure can extend beyond immediate stress and influence employees' performance and intention to remain in the organization. According to Prabhu (2025), high levels of work-related stress reduce employee performance and service quality while increasing turnover intentions. This supports the informants' accounts of feeling strained when dealing with heavy workloads and competing responsibilities.

In addition to workload demands, irregular schedules and staffing concerns further contributed to the informants' experiences of workplace strain. McHugh et al. (2020) highlighted the negative effects of long working hours on employee health and the associated organizational costs. The informants' experiences of irregular shifts, extended working hours, and staffing shortages similarly show how operational demands can extend beyond the workplace and affect their personal well-being.

During particularly demanding periods, excessive job requirements can further deplete employees' physical and psychological resources. Yikilmaz et al. (2023) found that excessive job demands during peak periods increase turnover intentions and lower life satisfaction. This is relevant to the informants' experiences of managing heavier workloads during peak seasons and events. When intense workloads become recurring rather than occasional, they may affect not only employees' performance but also their overall satisfaction with work and life.

Workload pressure can also become more difficult when employees perceive that responsibilities and recognition are not fairly distributed. Singh (2024) emphasized that inequitable workload distribution and inadequate recognition amplify dissatisfaction and reduce employee morale, and when intense workloads become recurring rather than occasional, they may affect not only employees' performance but also their overall satisfaction with work and life.

In addition, financial rewards alone may not fully address the strain associated with excessive work demands. Pantha et al. (2024) found that competitive compensation alone is insufficient to counterbalance the stress caused by high workloads. The informants' experiences suggest that managing workload requires more than providing compensation for demanding work. A combination of fair compensation, appropriate staffing, balanced task allocation, and supportive management may provide a more sustainable approach to employee well-being.

The cumulative effects of psychosocial and operational demands can also influence employees' health and ability to perform effectively. García-Buades et al. (2024) found that high work pace, emotional demands, and work–life conflict significantly predict job stress and self-rated health among hotel employees. These findings provide context for the informants' experiences of emotional and physical fatigue resulting from demanding hotel operations.

Thematic Categories of the Key Informants' Responses

Common Themes Emanating from the Responses of Key Informants

This section presents the themes generated from the key responses of the research informants regarding their lived experiences as Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management [BSHRM] graduates working in various hotel establishments.

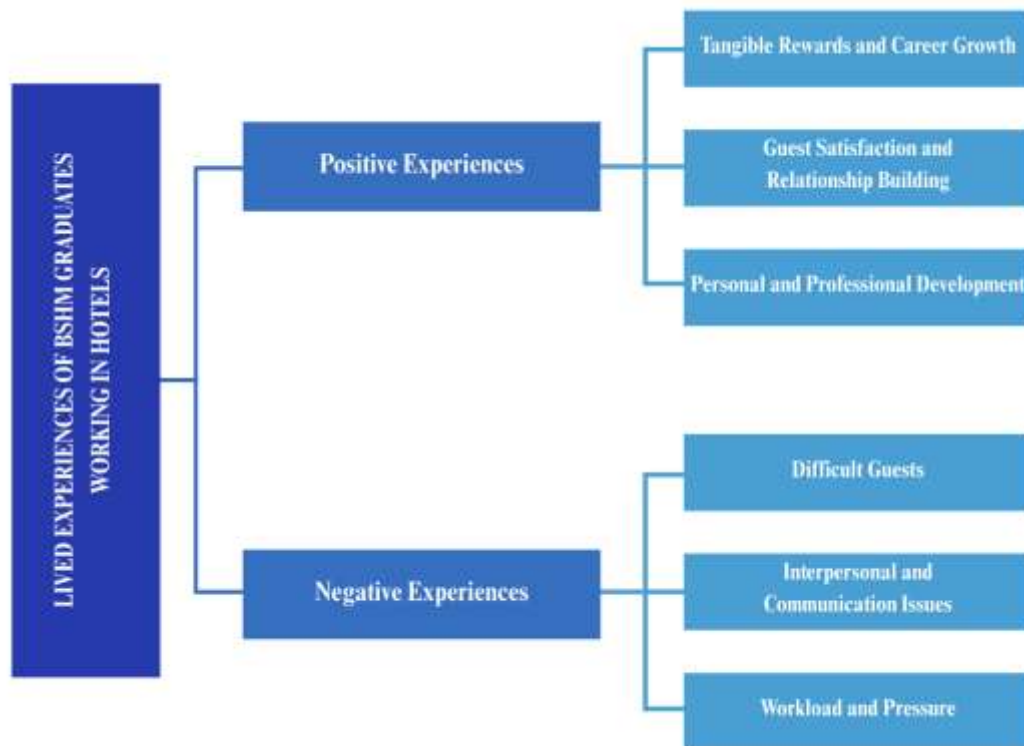


Figure 1. *Lived Experiences of BSHRM Graduates Working in Hotels*

II. Addressing the Challenges Encountered by the Informants in their Workplaces

This section presents how BSHRM graduates manage the demands and pressures inherent in hotel work. The narratives highlight strategies related to achieving work-life balance, managing stress, and developing a proactive mindset. The significant statements illustrate how graduates consciously balance their well-being with professional effectiveness.

1. **Strategic Separation and Boundary Setting.** Strategic separation and boundary setting were identified as fundamental strategies for managing work-related stress. Informants emphasized that clearly defining boundaries between work and personal life helps prevent emotional exhaustion, mental fatigue, and burnout. By intentionally disengaging from work during off-hours, graduates can restore energy and maintain long-term productivity.

Informant 1 underscored the importance of clearly separating professional responsibilities from personal life, illustrating how they consciously distinguish work time from personal time. By fully disengaging from work during days off, the informant allows themselves to mentally recover, which helps reduce accumulated stress and supports emotional well-being:

If maka day off ko or something ana, e laag jud and if work, work ra jud. Private life, pirate life. Separate jud (IDI: 1). (If I get a day off or something like that, I really go out, and if it's work, it's just work. Private life is private life. I really keep them separate).

Informant 2 expressed boundary setting through strict discipline in managing working hours:

My motto in life right now is really simple: I go to work on time, and I log out on time. I try to set clear boundaries between work and my personal life so I don't get too overwhelmed or stressed. That way, I can manage my time better and still take care of myself outside of work (IDI: 2).

While Informant 10 shared how boundary setting is applied in a work-from-home arrangement, this statement highlights the informant's awareness of the blurred boundaries inherent in remote work. By physically and mentally separating workspaces from personal spaces, the informant actively prevents burnout and sustains productivity:

I've learned the importance of setting boundaries and practicing self-care after work. I make it a point to take short breaks and keep my workspace separate from my personal life. These strategies help me manage stress and prevent burnout, which is really important in maintaining my productivity (IDI: 10).

The informants' deliberate efforts to disengage from work during off-hours reflect the importance of psychological detachment in preventing emotional exhaustion and burnout. This is consistent with Sonnentag and Krueger (2006), who found that high workloads significantly reduce employees' ability to mentally detach from work, thereby increasing stress and fatigue. The graduates' conscious practices of logging out on time, fully enjoying days off, and physically separating workspaces from personal spaces demonstrate recovery-oriented behaviors that support mental restoration and sustained work performance.

These boundary-setting practices are particularly relevant in hospitality, where extended working hours and expectations of availability can make it difficult to fully disengage. Huang et al. (2020) reported that extended work hours are strongly associated with burnout, suggesting that limiting work time and disengaging after shifts are important for protecting employee health. The informants' conscious decision to disconnect from work can therefore be understood as a practical response to the demands of hotel employment.

The challenge of maintaining boundaries has become even more complex with the widespread use of information and communication technologies. McDowall and Kinman (2017) highlighted the prevalence of an “always-on” culture driven by unmanaged ICT, which can negatively affect employee well-being when clear boundaries are absent. The informants’ discipline in separating work from personal life, including in work-from-home arrangements, demonstrates an effort to prevent work from extending continuously into personal time. Intentional boundaries can therefore help employees avoid the feeling that they must remain constantly available for work-related concerns.

Work–life balance is also strengthened by having supportive conditions outside and within the workplace. Tamang (2025) emphasized that quality family time and supportive workplace conditions significantly enhance work–life balance and job satisfaction among hotel workers. This complements the informants’ efforts to protect their personal time and maintain relationships outside work. A supportive environment can make it easier to recover from workplace demands while maintaining satisfaction in both their professional and personal lives.

2. **Prioritizing Rest and Recharge.** Prioritizing rest and recovery opportunities emerged as an essential strategy for managing stress in hotel work. Informants emphasized that adequate rest is critical for maintaining physical stamina, mental clarity, and emotional stability, particularly during peak seasons when workloads intensify.

Informant 3 emphasized the importance of rest and sleep as non-negotiable aspects of well-being. It reflects the informant’s recognition that sleep is essential for coping with extended work hours. Prioritizing rest enables sustained performance and reduces the risk of burnout during demanding periods:

For me, I love to rest, that is the most important thing when you start working... sleep is really a priority since we do sometimes work longer hours, especially during peak seasons (IDI: 3).

Informant 5 highlighted the importance of dedicating limited rest days to meaningful personal activities. This narrative demonstrates how the intentional use of rest days for family bonding and leisure helps the informant recharge emotionally. Such practices contribute to maintaining motivation and preventing work-related stress from accumulating:

In my end, di man kog compressed ug time kay 9-5 raman jud ko, usahay mu extend, so Sunday ra gyud akong off. So I make sure na Sunday is family time, bonding time, usahay mu adto mig beach or province. Ana ra gud. Work-life balance (IDI: 5). (In my end, I don’t really have compressed time since I work 9–5. Sometimes I extend, so Sunday is really my only day off. I make sure Sunday is family time, bonding time. Sometimes we go to the beach or to the province. That’s it, work-life balance).

Informant 6 emphasized complete disconnection from work during days off. By turning off communication channels, the informant ensures uninterrupted personal time, which supports mental recovery and stress reduction:

Hatag lang tag time sa atong self especially during day off, as much as possible if day off nimo, naka pawng ang imong cellphone or kung asa mo mag communicate sa inyo company like for us kay WhatsApp, ako jud na e palong (IDI: 6). (Give yourself time, especially on your day off. As much as possible, if it’s your day off, turn off your cellphone or any way your company communicates with you—for us, it’s WhatsApp, and I make sure to turn it off).

Informant 8 highlighted self-awareness and travel as means of recharging:

When you feel exhausted with your work, or you feel like you're going to be burnt out, book a flight. The good thing with our industry is that we are in the advantage since if we want to go somewhere, we are more knowledgeable with the dos and hows. Also, know your limitations also, do not overwork yourself (IDI: 8).

The informants' narratives highlighted the conscious allocation of rest time, whether through adequate sleep, family bonding, or leisure activities, as essential for sustaining stamina and reducing stress. This aligns with Takahashi (2012), who emphasized that sufficient, well-timed sleep enhances alertness, performance, and overall health, while inadequate sleep disrupts recovery and increases fatigue-related risks. Informant 3's emphasis on sleep as a non-negotiable priority reflects this understanding, demonstrating how young hospitality professionals recognize rest as a foundational component of effective work performance.

The deliberate use of rest days for personal and family activities, as described by Informant 5, demonstrates the importance of recovery in maintaining employee well-being. On the other hand, Informant 6's practice of completely disconnecting from communication channels during days off further reflects the importance of establishing psychological and formal boundaries between work and personal life. Bokor-Szőcs (2023) argued that the "right to disconnect" is essential for protecting mental health in contexts of constant digital connectivity. This practice demonstrates that recovery may require not only physical absence from the workplace but also mental separation from work-related communication.

Similarly, Informant 8's use of travel as a means of emotional recharge reflects another approach to recovering from workplace demands. Rehman et al. (2025) found that leisure travel enhances psychological well-being by reducing stress and strengthening social support networks. The informant's experience suggests that engaging in meaningful activities outside work can provide a psychological break from the pressures of hotel operations.

The importance of recovery becomes particularly evident given the long and irregular working hours common in hospitality. Rosemberg et al. (2025) reported that shift work and nonstandard schedules increase vulnerability to chronic fatigue and mental health challenges among frontline hotel employees, while planned overtime with compensation may alleviate some stress. This supports the informants' emphasis on using rest periods effectively. Providing predictable opportunities for recovery may help employees manage demanding schedules without allowing fatigue to accumulate over time.

Adequate rest also provides employees with the physical and psychological resources needed to cope with demanding work conditions. Chiang et al. (2019) highlighted that acquiring energy resources, such as adequate sleep, positively influences physical and mental well-being and reduces stress even under demanding conditions. The informants' emphasis on rest represents more than personal preference; it is an important part of maintaining their capacity to work effectively.

3. **Proactive Mindset.** A proactive mindset emerged as a critical factor in managing pressure and unpredictability in hotel operations. Informants described how reframing stress, organizing tasks, and preparing ahead allow them to function effectively in fast-paced environments. This mindset helps graduates respond constructively to challenges rather than becoming overwhelmed.

Informant 2 challenged the traditional notion of time management, reflecting a shift in perspective toward managing tasks and priorities rather than time itself:

Before mu ingon sila na time management – I don't believe in that kay di man ta maka manage sa atong time, we have to manage our activities (IDI: 2). (Before, when they talked about time management, I didn't believe in that... we have to manage our activities).

Informant 8 explained how preparation and familiarity reduce workplace pressure, highlighting that preparedness and routine reduce anxiety:

The way I handle the pressure kay I would laugh. Overtime man gud, you'll get to master your responsibilities. When I started out, the first thing you would really need to do is to be familiar with your workplace and prepare for your shift. Mise en place not only happens in the kitchen but even in other departments, for us in the F&B it would be preparing the cutleries, trays, plates and the likes. (IDI: 8) (The way I handle pressure is by laughing. Over time, you'll master your responsibilities. When I started, the first thing you really need to do is become familiar with your workplace and prepare for your shift. Mise en place doesn't only happen in the kitchen; in other departments as well. For us in F&B, it means preparing cutlery, trays, plates, and the like).

Similarly, Informant 10 emphasized maintaining positivity and composure:

I manage pressure by maintaining a positive mindset. In hotels, each and everyday is unpredictable so I learned to prioritize tasks and stay composed even when things get hectic (IDI: 10).

This approach reflects a problem-focused coping strategy, in which employees address the underlying causes of stress by organizing their activities and gaining control over their responsibilities (Yusriani et al., 2023). Informant 2's emphasis on managing activities rather than time demonstrates this proactive orientation, highlighting a shift from reactive task completion toward strategic planning and prioritization.

Preparation and familiarity were identified by the informants as important mechanisms for reducing workplace pressure. Informant 8's practice of ensuring shift readiness, including mise en place and task preparation across departments, demonstrates how preparation can reduce uncertainty during hotel operations. Akyürek et al. (2023) showed that interpersonal adaptability and work engagement enhance employees' capacity to handle uncertain and unpredictable work situations. Becoming familiar with operational routines can therefore help graduates approach their responsibilities with greater confidence and efficiency. Preparation may reduce anxiety by allowing employees to anticipate tasks rather than simply react to unexpected situations.

Similarly, Informant 10's emphasis on maintaining positivity and composure reflects the importance of constructive approaches to workplace stress. Rathore et al. (2024) emphasized that cognitive strategies, optimism, and problem-focused coping are effective means of managing stress, particularly among conscientious early-career workers. This aligns with the informant's effort to remain composed when facing demanding situations. Maintaining a positive and solution-oriented mindset can help respond to workplace challenges without allowing stress to interfere with their service performance.

A proactive approach to work can also contribute to longer-term professional development and engagement. Van der Walt (2018) noted that work engagement, vitality, and learning are strengthened when employees experience meaningful work, continuous growth, and supportive work environments. The informants' emphasis on preparation, learning, and maintaining a positive outlook reflects this relationship between proactive behavior and professional growth.

4. **Enhanced Communication and Confidence.** Enhanced communication skills and increased confidence were consistently identified as key areas of growth. Although the informants initially described themselves as introverted or reserved, continuous engagement with guests and colleagues required them to become more expressive, assertive, and confident in professional settings.

Informant 1 described how exposure to front desk responsibilities helped improve confidence despite remaining introverted. The experience allowed the informant to become more comfortable communicating with guests and handling interactions professionally:

Sauna dili kaayo ko talkative makipag sturya ug tao, one pag experience nako sa front desk na enjoy na nako mag communicate which is also good for myself. Actually, introvert jud ko na tao, diba pag college kay introvert jud ko so karon after pila ka years kay wala man diay gyapon na wagtang bisag expose ka. Pero mas confident nako (IDI: 1). (Before, I wasn't very talkative when speaking with people. But when I experienced working at the front desk, I started to enjoy communicating, which is also good for myself. Actually, I'm really an introvert. Remember in college, I was really introverted, and now after several years, it turns out that it still hasn't gone away even if you're exposed (to people. But I'm more confident now).

Similarly, Informant 3 emphasized that working in a fast-paced kitchen environment required assertive communication. Managing multiple outlets made it necessary to speak up, share ideas, and communicate clearly for the benefit of the team:

I learned confidence and enthusiasm. I am actually a quiet person but when I started with different chefs, I have learned that we should be able to say something. Be vocal. If you know something, say it especially if it would help with the task. Since I was managing three different outlet, communication is very important (IDI: 3).

Repeated exposure to customer service interactions also helped Informant 4 overcome fear and hesitation when dealing with guests. Working in a casino setting, where customer interaction is constant, significantly contributed to personal growth and confidence:

Mas naka help siya nakog grow na di nako mahadlok mu atubang ug customer kay as an introvert person, lisod jud kaayo mu atubang lain-lain na klase, especially different silag mga attitude, lisod e approach. Ara ko ni grow jud kay more on man customer service if naa ka sa casino (IDI: 4). (It really helped me grow because I'm no longer afraid to face customers. As an introvert, it's really hard to deal with different types of people, especially with varying attitudes; it's difficult to approach them. I really grew in this area because in a casino, it's mostly about customer service).

Informant 7 shared that despite experiencing stress and overwhelm during the early stages of employment, learning effective communication techniques and coping strategies led to improved confidence and professionalism:

I am not afraid to deal with people na and handle emails. At first, katong telephone operator ko, first month nako naka ingon ko na ganahan ko mu resign kay di jud siya lalim. Ang mga calls sigeg sulod, naa kay kasturya unya naa pay nag que. Stress jud siya, as in. Ang mga tao sa office kay fast-pacing so na overwhelemd ko but as the days goes by, I learned a lot of technique, para dili ko ma overwhelemd sa trabaho. Di nasad ko mauwaw mu sturya sa guests, confident nako (IDI: 7). (I am not afraid to deal with people and handle emails. At first, when I was a telephone operator, during my first month, I actually thought about resigning because it wasn't easy. Calls kept coming in, there were people to assist, and there were queues. It was really stressful. The office environment was fast-paced, so I felt overwhelmed, but as days went by, I learned techniques to avoid feeling overwhelmed at work. I'm no longer embarrassed to speak with guests; I am now more confident).

Repeated engagement with guests and collaborative team tasks was found to be instrumental in developing communication skills, assertiveness, and professional confidence among HRM graduates, particularly among those who initially identified as introverted. Sustained exposure to guest interactions encourages employees to overcome hesitancy and build self-efficacy in service contexts. This is consistent with Hatipoglu and Koc (2023), who noted that personality traits such as introversion influence how hospitality employees perceive and respond to service demands, and that structured work experiences can facilitate competency development in areas previously outside employees' comfort zones.

Enhancing communication skills further supports effective teamwork and operational efficiency among BSHRM graduates. Opportunities to coordinate tasks across multiple outlets or departments require clear, assertive, and timely communication, which can strengthen service delivery. Idayanti et al. (2020) found that communication and competency significantly affect employee performance in hotel settings, highlighting the value of practical, work-based opportunities for skill development. The informants' experiences similarly demonstrate that repeated communication in actual hotel operations can strengthen their confidence in coordinating with colleagues and responding to guest needs.

Communication competence is particularly important among front desk employees because of their direct and frequent interaction with guests. Bigwanto et al. (2024) emphasized that confident and capable front desk employees play a strategic role in guest satisfaction, loyalty, and hotel reputation. The informants' experiences with repeated guest interactions demonstrate how workplace exposure can gradually strengthen their professional self-assurance. As graduates become more comfortable communicating with guests, they may also become more capable of delivering consistent and personalized service.

Beyond direct workplace exposure, organizational support can further strengthen employees' confidence and professional development. Management-backed development programs, coaching, and guidance can help employees acquire practical techniques for managing stress, multitasking, and workflow. Ponsamritinan and Fields (2018) demonstrated that organizational development interventions paired with leadership support improve competencies, confidence, and overall performance in hospitality settings. In addition, guidance from supervisors can help employees turn challenging experiences into opportunities for learning and improvement.

5. **Maturity, Professionalism, and Adaptability.** Maturity, professionalism, and adaptability were also highlighted as important areas of development. Informants learned to regulate their behavior, respond appropriately to feedback, and adjust to varying workplace demands. These qualities were shaped through real-world challenges and continuous learning in professional environments.

Informant 2 discussed how workplace exposure fostered emotional maturity and better decision-making. Learning when to assert oneself and when to remain composed helped the informant navigate professional relationships more effectively:

Personally, I've learned a lot gyud since I started working. Number one is maturity, know your battles. Number two ako na learn is that we are all empowered to make our own decisions, especially in our industry. Know to set boundaries, so for me, i'm the youngest man so daghan kog madungog na immature daw, so that's one of the things ako ge work. Na mas mu mature how you act and deal with people, there are times man sad na pwede ra ta mag bata-bata but naa sad gyud time na need ta mag serious (IDI: 2). (Personally, I've really learned a lot since I started working. Number one is maturity, knowing your battles. Number two, what I learned is that we are all empowered to make our own decisions, especially in our industry. Know how to set boundaries. For me, I'm the youngest, so I hear a lot of comments that I'm immature, so that's one of the things I worked on, becoming more mature in how I act and deal with people. There are times when it's okay to be playful, but there are also times when we really need to be serious).

The importance of flexibility and openness to learning was emphasized by Informant 3, who recognized adaptability as essential in maintaining smooth operations:

Professionally, some things I've learned is to be flexible, understanding, and willingness to learn at work. You have to make sure that all things must be in place (IDI: 3).

Finally, Informant 5 highlighted how accepting correction and guidance from superiors contributed to professional growth. Viewing feedback as a learning opportunity rather than criticism encouraged continuous improvement.

If sermonan ka nila, paminawa lang jud, e keep mind siya. In the later part, ma appreciate ra jud nimo ilang sermon. Mao na maka pa grow nato (IDI: 5). (If they give you a sermon, just listen and keep it in mind. Later on, you will appreciate their guidance. That's what helps you grow).

The development of maturity, professionalism, and adaptability among the informants reflects a combination of emotional regulation, responsiveness to feedback, and flexibility in managing workplace demands. Kaur (2024) emphasized that emotional maturity, characterized by the ability to understand and manage one's emotions, is closely linked to positive interpersonal relationships, professional commitment, and job satisfaction. The informants' experiences suggest that repeated exposure to demanding situations helped them become more composed and responsible in their professional roles. Such maturity allows graduates to respond to workplace challenges thoughtfully rather than reacting solely based on immediate emotions.

Professional maturity is also connected to the development of a clear sense of professional identity. Huliaieva and Poltavska (2024) highlighted that a formed professional identity, characterized by self-reflection and autonomy, supports individuals in managing work challenges independently while reducing reliance on social approval. This complements the informants' development of confidence and independence as they gained experience in hotel operations. For early-career BSHRM graduates, developing self-awareness alongside practical skills can therefore support a stronger transition into professional responsibilities.

Adaptability further allows graduates to adjust their behavior and strategies as workplace conditions change. Park and Park (2019) noted that adaptive performance is influenced by both personal characteristics, such as learning orientation and self-efficacy, and contextual factors, including team climate, leadership support, and organizational culture. The informants' experiences demonstrate that adaptability is developed through the interaction between their personal abilities and the environments in which they work. This means that graduates may become more adaptable when organizations provide supportive teams and leadership alongside opportunities to learn from changing situations.

Workplace relationships can further strengthen employees' ability to adapt to unpredictable situations. Luo et al. (2021) demonstrated that employees with high psychological capital and strong internal social networks show greater adaptive performance because they can draw on resilience, confidence, and workplace relationships. The informants' experiences of relying on colleagues and supervisors reflect the value of these relational resources in managing workplace demands. Supportive professional relationships can therefore serve as an important resource for graduates when they encounter unfamiliar or difficult situations.

6. **Advanced Technical and Managerial Skills.** Several informants reported developing advanced technical and managerial skills that exceeded their initial job expectations. Through hands-on experience in sales, reporting, forecasting, and leadership, the graduates gained competencies that strengthened their operational effectiveness and prepared them for higher responsibilities.

Informant 5 explained that working in a resort environment required direct involvement in sales-related tasks and guest interactions, leading to unexpected development of sales skills and improved language proficiency. Exposure to international guests further enhanced communication abilities, particularly in English:

When I was in Crimson, sales skills kay na develop nako through mamaligya ug tour; north and south tour; airport drop off. Nadevelop sad nako akong English, kay mostly Korean and Japanese other languages, mao nang skills wa nako na expect akong na develop (IDI: 5). (When I was at Crimson, my sales skills developed through selling tours, like north and south tours and airport drop-offs. My English also improved since most guests spoke Korean, Japanese, or other languages. These were skills I didn't expect to develop).

Similarly, Informant 7 highlighted the acquisition of managerial and analytical skills through direct reporting responsibilities and operational oversight. Preparing reports for top management and handling rate strategies contributed to the informant's confidence, leadership ability, and decision-making competence:

Sa akong position karon, mu direct nakog himog report para sa among general manager every month so mas nakamao ko unsaon pag forecast sa occupancy or sa revenue. Ang manager sad nako kay ge train kog maayo with other aspects like monitor sa mga online bookings, kung kanusa ko mag yield ug rates, more on managerial duties since if wala siya ako man pa take-overon. Wala ko nakahibaw na naa diay koy skills to lead with people, coordinate with other departments. And naa diay koy confidence na maka report rako directly with our general manager (IDI: 7). (In my current position, I directly prepare reports for our general manager every month, so I've learned how to forecast occupancy and revenue. My manager also trained me well in other aspects, like monitoring online bookings and knowing when to adjust rates. I handle more managerial duties since I take over in their absence. I didn't know before that I had the skills to lead people and coordinate with other departments. I also discovered that I have the confidence to report directly to our general manager).

The informants' accounts of unexpectedly acquiring advanced technical and managerial competencies reflect how hotel work environments expose employees to responsibilities that extend beyond entry-level expectations. Engagement in sales activities, reporting, forecasting, and operational oversight allows HRM graduates to develop practical skills that strengthen both immediate performance and readiness for higher roles. This is consistent with Onat et al. (2021), who emphasized that employee competency development in hotels is strongly influenced by aligned job requirements, on-the-job training, and management support for human resource policies. When employees are entrusted with real operational and analytical tasks, competency growth is reinforced by motivation, fair opportunities, and clear performance expectations.

Beyond technical proficiency, the development of managerial capability is closely intertwined with service-oriented values and soft skills essential in contemporary hospitality settings. Iunius (2025) introduced the concept of "Hospitudo," emphasizing that modern hospitality competence integrates empathy, emotional intelligence, communication, cultural awareness, and intrinsic motivation alongside technical expertise. The informants' experiences demonstrate that managerial responsibilities require more than operational knowledge because they also involve coordinating people, responding to guests, and making decisions. This suggests that effective hospitality professionals need to combine technical competence with interpersonal qualities that support meaningful service interactions.

As routine processes become increasingly automated, interpersonal and leadership competencies become more important in areas such as sales interactions, cross-departmental coordination, and decision-

making. Santos and Mamacay (2025) found that hospitality graduates generally demonstrate strong communication and teamwork skills, while continued workplace exposure remains important for strengthening multilingual proficiency, interdepartmental coordination, and ICT-related competencies. The informants' experiences support the value of workplace exposure in developing skills that may not be fully acquired through formal classroom instruction.

Workplace learning also contributes significantly to the development of both technical and interpersonal competencies. Shamuni and Yasin (2015) demonstrated that employees in tourism enterprises acquire hard and soft skills through formal, informal, and incidental learning, with these experiences positively influencing job satisfaction and professional growth. This reflects the informants' experiences of unexpectedly developing skills through everyday operational responsibilities.

7. **Higher-Order Cognitive and Relational Skills.** In addition to technical competencies, informants developed higher-order cognitive and relational skills essential in the hospitality industry. These included emotional intelligence, critical thinking, problem-solving, empathy, and the ability to manage complex interpersonal situations.

Informant 6 provided an in-depth reflection on how hospitality work sharpened multiple cognitive and relational abilities. The informant emphasized that empathy and situational understanding became central values, particularly in dealing with guest expectations and frustrations:

It sharpened my communication skills and emotional intelligence, as well as problem solving, critical thinking and multi-tasking skill, and networking skills. Mao jud na ang pinaka importante as a hotelier, kay as they say, gamay ra kaayo ang hospitality industry so magka ila-ila ra jud ang mga tao. Empathy gyud, that goes beyond what I expected. Before, maka ingon sad jud ta na e question nato ang customer is always right, karon makasabot na jud ko. In fact it is jud, na customer is always right kay they are paying man gud. They are paying for the service and you would also understand why frustrations begin if dili ma meet ilang expectations. If we are going to be in their shoes and be situational, maka sabot ra jud ka kung asa sila gikan (IDI: 6). (It sharpened my communication skills and emotional intelligence, as well as problem-solving, critical thinking, multitasking, and networking skills. That is really the most important as a hotelier because, as they say, the hospitality industry is small, so people tend to know each other. Empathy is also important, and that goes beyond what I expected. Before, we might question whether the customer is always right, but now I really understand. In fact, the customer is always right because they are paying. They are paying for the service, and you also understand why frustrations begin if their expectations aren't met. If we put ourselves in their shoes and consider the situation, we can really understand where they are coming from).

Informant 10 similarly noted the unexpected development of problem-solving and multitasking skills, highlighting how understanding guests' emotions and responding appropriately contributed to meaningful service delivery:

I didn't expect to develop such a strong problem-solving and multitasking skills. I also learned empathy, understanding what guests or clients feel and responding in a way that makes them feel valued and heard (IDI: 10).

Personal confidence and self-awareness were also identified as valuable skills developed through workplace exposure. Informant 9 shared that overcoming shyness and learning to trust personal abilities became an important asset, particularly when interacting with individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

I'm a very shy type of person, especially mag atubang ug different nationalities. Believing in yourself is already a skill, knowing your strengths, knowing you can do it. Knowing how to weigh in things. Sa dira pa lang daan, asset na siya for me (IDI: 9). (I'm a very shy person, especially when facing different nationalities. Believing in yourself is already a skill, knowing your strengths, knowing that you can do it, and knowing how to weigh things. Right there, that itself was already an asset for me).

Lastly, Informant 2 discussed the importance of activity management and organization. Transitioning from a spontaneous personality to a more structured approach was necessary to meet the operational demands of hospitality work.

I am a very spontaneous person but when your in the hospitality industry, you really have to know how to manage your activities... I have to align everything gyud (IDI: 2). (I am a very spontaneous person, but when you're in the hospitality industry, you really have to know how to manage your activities... I have to align everything properly).

The development of higher-order cognitive and relational skills among the informants reflects the complex demands of hospitality work, which require emotional intelligence, critical thinking, problem-solving, empathy, and multitasking alongside technical competence. These skills are cultivated through repeated exposure to dynamic workplace situations, guest interactions, and collaborative tasks. Koç and Boz (2019) demonstrated that targeted training in emotion and facial-expression recognition can significantly enhance employees' emotional intelligence, enabling them to respond more effectively to customer needs and improve service quality. The informants' experiences similarly show how repeated guest interactions can strengthen their ability to recognize and respond to different emotional situations.

Emotional awareness is particularly important because hospitality employees regularly encounter different guest emotions and expectations. Hwang et al. (2021) emphasized that emotions such as empathy, gratitude, and hope play important roles in workplace behavior and can encourage prosocial actions and positive organizational outcomes. The informants' experiences demonstrate that responding appropriately to guests requires employees to understand not only what guests say but also the emotions behind their concerns. Developing this awareness can help maintain positive relationships while providing more responsive and empathetic service.

Critical thinking and problem-solving are also strengthened through practical exposure to operational challenges. Indrašienė et al. (2020) highlighted that employees who can reason effectively and address emerging problems add value to organizations by aligning their decisions with workplace expectations. The informants' experiences of handling unexpected situations demonstrate how hotel work provides continuous opportunities to exercise these cognitive abilities. Such experiences can gradually strengthen confidence in making decisions and resolving operational problems independently.

In addition, relational and cognitive competencies can be further strengthened when organizations provide supportive practices and resources. Faraj et al. (2021) showed that total quality management practices, including empowerment, training, and teamwork, enhance employee embeddedness and creative performance. This suggests that the development of higher-order skills is influenced not only by individual capability but also by the organizational environment in which employees work.

Similarly, organizational practices that address workload and employee well-being can create conditions where these competencies are more effectively developed. Hadi et al. (2023) highlighted the role of fair workload distribution, recognition, and stress management in reducing emotional exhaustion. This is particularly relevant to the informants' experiences because sustained workplace pressure can affect their ability to think clearly and interact effectively with others. Providing reasonable workloads and recognizing employees' contributions can help create conditions that support continued cognitive and relational development.

Higher-order skills are developed not only through formal learning but also through consistent and reflective behavior. ŞehiRli (2022) emphasized that deliberate behavioral practices, including mindfulness, attention to intentions, and thoughtful interpersonal gestures, can improve employee well-being and customer satisfaction. The informants' experiences suggest that small, repeated behaviors such as remaining attentive, composed, and considerate can have meaningful effects on workplace interactions.

Thematic Categories of the Key Informants' Responses

Common Themes Emanating from the Responses of Key Informants

This section presents the thematic categories developed in relation to the informants' experiences addressing the challenges encountered in their workplaces.

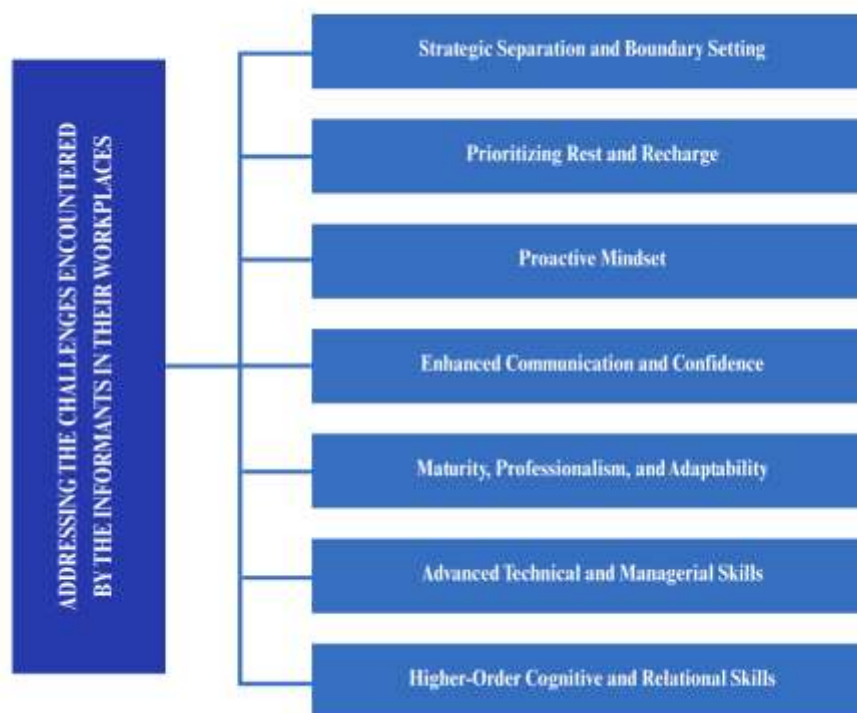


Figure 2. *Addressing the Challenges Encountered by the Informants in their Workplaces*

III. Aspirations for the Training of Future BSHRM Graduates

This theme presents the collective aspirations of the informants regarding how the training of future Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management [BSHRM] graduates can be further strengthened. Drawing from their professional experiences in the hospitality industry, the informants emphasized the need for training programs that are more focused, practical, and aligned with the evolving demands of hotel operations. Their insights reflect a strong desire for graduates who are not only knowledgeable in theory but are also confident, adaptable, and industry-ready.

1. **Specialized Training.** Specialized training was identified as a necessary evolution for the BSHRM curriculum to move beyond broad hotel basics. Informants suggested that the industry's complexity

requires earlier specialization in specific departments, mastery of property management systems, and targeted skills such as hospitality-specific mathematics and proficiency in international languages.

Informant 1 suggested that allowing students to choose a major or a specific department early on would lead to deeper mastery:

Siyempre sa school kay broad man kaayo... for example ganahan ko ani na department, ara ka mu learn maayo. For example if student paka niya ganahan ara ka na department mu work like front office or housekeeping, dira ka mu focus (IDI: 1). (Of course, in school it's very broad... for example if I like a certain department, that's where I would really learn well. Like if you're still a student and you already want to work in a certain department like front office or housekeeping, then that's where you focus).

Informant 6 and emphasized the technical edge provided by mastering industry-standard software:

Lacking of digital or technology. Before, we had the system man, I think it was exposed for one sem, but dili siya exposed everyday like katong Opera. Mas nice gyud if you have the PMS gyud na ma use everyday especially during training and before e onboard sa OJT, mas maayo if naa na ana daan sa school na ma train. (IDI: 6). (There is a lack of digital or technology exposure. Before, we had a system, I think it was introduced for one semester, but it wasn't used every day like Opera. It would be better if the PMS could be used daily, especially during training and before being onboarded for OJT).

Informant 8 further highlighted that specialized training must include numerical and communication competencies often overlooked by students:

Ang thinking sa hospitality industry sa mga students or tao kay walay math... but since akong first assignment was cashiering, grabi jud ang numbers. So more engagement with numbers para dili na mahdlok ig trabaho. Additionally kay ang english communications skills (IDI: 8). (Students or people often think that hospitality doesn't involve much math... but since my first assignment was in cashiering, numbers were everywhere. So there should be more engagement with numbers so that students won't be afraid when they work. Additionally, English communication skills are important).

The focus on specialized training as a necessity for modern BSHRM graduates underscores the transition from general hospitality education to a more targeted, competency-based model. By advocating for mastery of technical systems and industry-specific soft skills, informants suggest that the curriculum must mirror the precision required in the global labor market. This shift ensures that graduates are not merely generalists but possess a competitive edge in specialized niches such as revenue management or front-office operations.

This alignment between academic preparation and industry demands is critical, as a mismatch can significantly hinder graduate employability. According to Radygina (2023), the rapid evolution of the hospitality sector has created a "competency gap" where academic training often fails to keep pace with industry needs. This disconnect is frequently attributed to weak interaction between educational institutions and hospitality enterprises, resulting in graduates who lack the specific practical skills required for immediate employment. This reinforces the informants' suggestions that specialized mastery, such as fluency in Property Management Systems, is essential to bridge the divide between classroom theory and workplace reality.

Furthermore, the implementation of such specialized training is increasingly framed within the global shift toward Competency-Based Education [CBE]. Sangwa (2025) notes that while CBE is essential for preparing students for a highly competitive global economy, its success depends on a delicate balance between broad transferable skills and deep, substantive technical knowledge. Without this depth, there is a

risk of fragmented learning where students only acquire surface-level abilities. For BSHRM programs, this suggests that specialization must be grounded in strong academic foundations to ensure that technical proficiency is integrated into a holistic professional identity.

The necessity for this evolution is further highlighted by the challenges facing technical and vocational training within the sector. Segbefia et al. (2019) point out that specialized hospitality training often faces resource constraints and negative social perceptions, being viewed as a last-resort career option. However, as the industry becomes more demanding, the value of formal, high-level technical training becomes undeniable.

This is echoed by Abd El Hamid et al. (2025), who emphasize that as industry expectations grow, universities must move beyond purely academic knowledge. Their findings suggest that integrating continuous feedback and training is vital for producing competent professionals who can meet the high-stakes requirements of modern hospitality environments.

2. **Hands-on Training.** Another recurring theme was the preference for practical application over theoretical learning. Informants highlighted that the rhythm and pressure of a hotel cannot be captured in a classroom, necessitating department rotations, immersion in graveyard shifts, and rigorous hands-on OJT experiences to build true operational competence.

Informant 2 explained the cognitive benefit of practice over theory:

Sa industry nato more on practice gyud ta, application gyud. Kay mas better man gyud siya ma remember sa students. Though helpful man sad ang theories but pag abot sa workplace murag more on dapat more on na practice na jud siya (IDI: 2). (In our industry, we are more on practice and application. It's easier for students to remember that. Theories are helpful, but when you get to the workplace, it's more on what you have practiced).

Informant 6 argued that limiting OJTs to office hours prevents them from understanding the full scope of hotel life:

Lahi ang situation sa morning, lahi ang situation sa afternoon, gabie and samot na ig graveyard. Para ma experience nila daan ang whole operations sa hotel. Unlike let's say morning shift lang niya ma routine na (IDI: 6). (The situation varies depending on the time—morning is different from afternoon, evening, and even more during graveyard shifts. Students should get exposure to the full operations of the hotel. Otherwise, if they only experience the morning shift, it becomes routine).

Informant 10 summarized the need for early exposure to the emotional and physical demands of the job:

It's important that students experience not just the theory and story, but the actual pressure and rhythm of hotel work. I think more training focused on actual guest interaction and real-life scenarios would've helped (IDI: 10).

The preference for practical application over theoretical learning highlights the importance of experiential learning in BSHRM education. The informants emphasized that the pressures of actual hotel operations, including high-volume check-outs and graveyard shifts, cannot be fully replicated in a traditional classroom. Balyali and Aktaş (2023) supported this view by emphasizing that hands-on training methodologies address the service-oriented nature of hospitality by providing students with realistic and immersive experiences. This suggests that practical exposure can help students become more familiar with the pace, pressure, and demands they are likely to encounter in actual hotel operations.

Immersive approaches can also help address the gap between academic preparation and workplace realities. Giousmpasoglou and Pantelidis (2025) highlighted the persistent disconnection between academic hospitality programs and the practical demands of the industry. The informants' preference for practical training reflects this concern, particularly because hospitality work requires graduates to respond to real-time situations involving guests, coworkers, and operational challenges. Strengthening experiential activities may therefore help students develop both technical and soft skills before entering the workplace.

The value of practical engagement is particularly evident in areas that require repeated physical and procedural practice. Akrofi-Ansah et al. (2024) demonstrated a relationship between practical engagement and improved student comprehension, noting that students may struggle to retain complex procedural knowledge without physical repetition. This supports the informants' aspiration for more opportunities to repeatedly perform hospitality-related tasks rather than relying primarily on classroom discussion. Repeated practice can help transform theoretical knowledge into skills that students can confidently apply in actual operations.

Ultimately, theoretical understanding and practical execution need to complement one another in preparing industry-ready graduates. Quaye et al. (2025) emphasized that theoretical knowledge must be integrated with practical execution to produce hospitality graduates who are prepared for actual workplace pressures and operational demands. The informants' experiences reinforce this need by showing that confidence and competence develop through actual application. Showing that practical training should not be treated merely as an additional component of BSHRM education but as an essential means of preparing students for professional hospitality work.

3. **Health and Safety Standards.** Informants emphasized that technical training in health and safety, specifically Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point [HAACP], is a zero-tolerance area in the industry. This theme highlights a significant gap between school-level awareness and the high-stakes hygiene and safety requirements of international hotel kitchens and service areas. Graduates noted that professional success depends on adhering to these tighter standards and obtaining formal certifications, such as NCII.

Informant 3 recounted the strict discipline required regarding public health standards, illustrating how minor oversights in a professional kitchen can lead to serious corrective action:

One time our chef got angry because I left a wet bowl in the table, which was not allowed. Another instance is that I was scolded when there was almost a microscopic dirt on my trolley. So yeah, public health and HACCP is important... it is zero tolerance on mistakes. I would like to suggest that students would be given more training in HACCP and public health since it is zero tolerance on mistakes if they'll be working in the industry, especially when handling food (IDI: 3).

Informant 9 further emphasized that these safety protocols are now institutionalized through formal accreditation, noting that the industry has become increasingly demanding regarding professional standards:

I do hope mao gyapon ila ge buhat karon especially with the newer generation and with the competition in the industry and with the standards getting tighter and demanding... Since we are also required to have NCII, kay at least kami mga staff mga NCII holders, he encouraged us to do trainings to help students in getting their NCII (IDI: 9). (I hope they are still doing the same now, especially with the newer generation, considering the competition in the industry and with the standards getting tighter and demanding... Since we are also required to have NCII, because at least we staff are NCII holders, he encouraged us to conduct trainings to help students obtain their NCII).

The informants' emphasis on health and safety standards as a zero-tolerance domain highlights a critical transition from academic awareness to industrial accountability. Within the professional landscape, the rigorous application of HACCP systems is not merely a procedural preference but a non-negotiable benchmark for professional survival. Graduates noted that the transition to international hotel environments often involves a reality shock regarding the precision required, where even microscopic dirt or a wet bowl can lead to disciplinary action. This suggests that while schools provide the foundational theory, the industry demands a level of disciplined habituation that is currently under-emphasized in the standard BSHRM curriculum.

This discrepancy between classroom theory and kitchen reality is a recurring theme in contemporary research. Wen et al. (2023) argue that many hospitality programs rely on standardized commercial training that students find unengaging and disconnected from practical relevance. This creates a situated learning gap where students may pass exams but fail to internalize the gravity of food safety protocols in a high-pressure environment.

Similarly, Wandolo (2016) found that even when students possess adequate theoretical knowledge of HACCP, they frequently fail to apply these principles consistently in practice due to a lack of standardized safety guidelines and modern training facilities in educational institutions. This failure to bridge the theory-to-practice divide can lead to real-world contamination risks that academic programs are meant to prevent.

Furthermore, the industry's increasing demand for formal certifications reflects a global trend toward the institutionalization of safety standards. Vukotić et al. (2024) emphasize that food safety management is now a primary determinant of customer satisfaction and business success, particularly in complex hotel operations with diverse raw materials and intricate traceability requirements.

While students may demonstrate strong knowledge in foundational areas like hand hygiene, Ahmad et al. (2024) identify persistent gaps in technical practicalities, such as reheating practices and handling defrosted food. These specific deficiencies underscore the informants' aspirations for more intensive, industry-aligned training that treats food safety not as a subject to be studied, but as a disciplined professional culture to be mastered.

4. **Industry Collaboration.** Effective growth was attributed to the strength of the partnership between academic institutions and hotel partners. Informants noted that active communication between coordinators, guest lectures from industry professionals, and live-in training programs are essential for aligning classroom curriculum with evolving industry standards.

Informant 5 noted the improvement in school-industry communication compared to previous years:

Atong industry and sa atong school, more on open communications naman ang mga coordinator. Unlike sauna na walay coordination. So mas nagka better ang schools ron, communications nila sa atong hotel kay mas okay (IDI: 5). (In our industry and at our school, coordinators now focus more on open communication. Unlike before, when there was no coordination, things have improved. Communications between schools and hotels are better now).

Informant 9 highlighted a specific model of deep collaboration where students experience the hotel as a guest and a trainee simultaneously:

The school has to be really tight not just on theoretical situations but also with the technicalities or realistic situations, some school are doing it now. Like in our hotel, there are some schools that would contact us to have a live-in training for a few days. So they will be checking-in, then the hotel will be preparing the training plans for the next few days. Training partnerships with the school and hotels (IDI:9).

Informant 10 suggested that collaboration should extend to mentorship and soft skill workshops led by current practitioners:

Schools could partner more closely with hotels to provide longer or more intensive internships... invite industry professionals to give talks or workshops on soft skills like communication, time management and conflict resolution (IDI: 10).

The transition from classroom to career is increasingly defined by the depth of industry collaboration. Informants noted that the traditional siloed approach to education, in which schools and hotels operate independently, is being replaced by models of open communication and integrated training. These partnerships, ranging from coordinated administrative dialogue to immersive live-in programs and practitioner-led mentorship, serve as the primary mechanism for aligning BSHRM curricula with the fluid standards of the global hospitality market.

The necessity of this alignment is underscored by Commey et al. (2023), who argue that a significant competency gap persists when industry stakeholders are excluded from curriculum development. Their research proposes a framework where stakeholder consultation is not a formality but a core academic activity, involving industry experts in the design of technical and practical modules. This supports the informants' emphasis on closer collaboration between schools and hotels. Regular industry input can help ensure that what students learn remains relevant to actual workplace practices and expectations.

Furthermore, an industry-ready graduate is often one who has moved beyond the basic and operational focus typical of many academic institutions. Babalola (2019) highlights a mismatch in which schools emphasize technical tasks while industry prioritizes managerial and soft skills. Bridging this gap requires structured, intensive internships that allow for departmental rotation and extended exposure to real-world pressures. This reinforces the informants' call for training that develops communication, professionalism, adaptability, and other interpersonal competencies alongside technical expertise. Extended and structured industry exposure can help students understand how these competencies are applied in actual hotel operations.

Fortunately, there is a strong consensus among educators and employers regarding these goals; Kanta et al. (2024) found that both groups have high, aligned expectations for work-integrated learning. This shared vision suggests that when schools and hotels collaborate closely, they create a feedback loop that continuously refines the curriculum, ultimately ensuring that BSHRM graduates are not just degree holders but work-ready professionals.

Thematic Categories of the Key Informants' Responses

Common Themes Emanating from the Responses of Key Informants

This section presents the thematic categories developed in relation to the informants' aspirations for the training of future BSHRM graduates.



Figure 3. *Aspirations for the Training of Future BSHRM Graduates*

Summary

The hospitality industry offers a dynamic, demanding work environment that significantly shapes the professional and personal lives of its workers.

The primary focus of this study is to explore the lived experiences of Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management (BSHRM) graduates working in selected hotel establishments. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following sub-questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of the informants in their workplaces?
2. How do the informants address the challenges encountered in their workplaces?
3. What are the aspirations of the informants to improve the quality of training among hospitality practitioners for their career advancements and growth?

This study employed a descriptive-phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management [BSHRM] graduates working in hotel establishments. It focused on their experiences regarding the rewarding aspects of hotel work, the challenges and pressures encountered in the workplace, and the strategies they employ to manage these demands while achieving professional growth. The informants of this study were ten (10) BSHRM graduates from the University of Cebu–Banilad who are currently working or have prior experience in

hotels located in Cebu City, Mandaue City, and Lapu-Lapu City. The inclusion criteria for selecting the informants included being a graduate of the BSHRM program from the University of Cebu–Banilad and having a combined work experience of at least two (2) years in the hotel industry. A researcher-made interview guide served as the primary data-gathering instrument, designed to elicit detailed narratives about the informants' workplace experiences, coping mechanisms, and personal and professional development. To ensure the validity, clarity, and content relevance of the interview guide, it was reviewed and validated by the Dean of the Graduate School. The narratives gathered from the informants were transcribed, organized, and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify emerging themes and patterns. Ethical considerations observed in this study included beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, and respect for autonomy to protect the rights, dignity, and well-being of the informants. The trustworthiness of the qualitative findings was ensured through credibility, dependability, transferability, confirmability, bracketing, and reflexivity.

Findings

The following are the significant findings of the study:

1. The themes created from the experiences of BSHRM graduates working in hotels in Cebu: On the Positive Experiences: Tangible Rewards and Career Growth; Guest Satisfaction and Relationship Building; and Personal/Professional Development; On the Negative Experiences: Difficult Guests; Interpersonal and Communication Issues; and Workload and Pressure.
2. The themes created from the graduates' ways of addressing the challenges encountered in their workplaces: Strategic Separation and Boundary Setting; Prioritizing Rest and Recharge; Proactive Mindset; Enhanced Communication and Confidence; Maturity, Professionalism, and Adaptability; Advanced Technical and Managerial Skills; and Higher-Order Cognitive and Relational Skills.
3. The themes created from the graduates' aspirations for the training of future BSHRM graduates: Specialized Training; Hands-on Training; Health and Safety Standards; and Industry Collaboration.

Implications for Practice

1. The implication of this study is to strengthen the preparation and workplace development of BSHRM graduates by addressing the experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and skills identified in the study. The findings emphasize the importance of practical training, supportive supervision, professional growth, effective coping, and the development of technical, cognitive, and relational skills needed in hotel workplaces.
2. The following practices may be considered based on the identified themes:
 - 2.1. Hotels may strengthen recognition and career development by providing appropriate recognition, mentoring, and opportunities for career advancement to enhance employee motivation and support professional growth.
 - 2.2. Supportive workplace practices may be strengthened by improving communication, workload management, scheduling, and workplace support systems to help employees effectively manage difficult guests, work-related pressures, and interpersonal challenges.
 - 2.3. Work-life balance and coping may be promoted by encouraging employees to establish healthy work boundaries, prioritize adequate rest, and practice proactive coping strategies to manage workplace demands effectively.
 - 2.4. Professional and personal development may be supported through strengthened training and mentoring programs that develop communication skills, confidence, maturity, adaptability, leadership, and other competencies essential to employees' growth.
 - 2.5. Specialized departmental training may be strengthened by providing BSHRM students with more comprehensive preparation in Front Office, Housekeeping, Food and Beverage, and Kitchen operations to enhance their readiness for different hotel departments.

- 2.6. Stronger school-industry collaboration may be developed through structured immersion, departmental exposure, mentoring, faculty-industry coordination, seminars, and relevant professional certifications to provide students with meaningful industry experience and better prepare them for employment.

Implications for Future Studies

1. The implication of this study is to provide insights that can enhance the preparation of future BSHRM graduates and strengthen hotel operations by equipping graduates with the skills, knowledge, and resilience needed to navigate the demands of the hotel industry. Moreover, based on the identified themes, this study offers valuable guidance for improving practical training, promoting professional and personal growth, fostering effective coping strategies, and developing higher-order technical and relational skills among BSHRM students.
2. Future researchers may undertake the following studies:
 - 2.1. An evaluation of hospitality education programs to determine how well their educational outcomes prepare BSHRM graduates for actual workplace environments.
 - 2.2. A study on the perspectives of hotel employers and professionals regarding the competencies, challenges, and developmental needs of BSHRM graduates in the workplace.
 - 2.3. A comparative study of BSHRM graduates from different higher education institutions to identify differences in workplace experiences, preparedness, and career development.
 - 2.4. A longitudinal study examining the career development and professional growth of BSHRM graduates from their transition into employment to their advancement within the hospitality industry.

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