

Work Competencies and Employability of Central Mindanao Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management Graduates

Analyn F. Sundo¹, Annie Fritce A. Aballe², Gista Fel B. Barong³, Rubie A. Arroyo⁴

¹Doctor of International Hospitality Management (on going), Central Mindanao University, Philippines

²Doctor of Business Management, Central Mindanao University, Philippines

³Master in Hospitality Management, Central Mindanao University, Philippines

⁴Doctor of Management, Central Mindanao University, Philippines

Corresponding Author Email: anniefritce.aballe@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Received: 24 Dec 2024

Revised: 12 Feb 2025

Accepted: 26 Feb 2025

This study investigates the work competencies and employability of graduates from the Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management at Central Mindanao University. Given the rapid growth of the hospitality industry, the research emphasizes the importance of equipping graduates with the necessary skills to meet market demands. Utilizing a descriptive research design, data were collected from alumni through an online survey, focusing on their demographic profiles, mobility after graduation, and acquired skills. Findings indicate that most graduates prefer immediate employment over further studies, with a significant portion finding jobs within a year of graduation. The results also reveal a strong correlation between acquired skills—intercultural, management, and personal—and actual employability. Additionally, alumni suggested enhancements to the curriculum, advocating for more practical applications, managerial subjects, and industry linkages. This research highlights the critical role of educational institutions in preparing students for the competitive hospitality sector, ultimately contributing to the credibility and effectiveness of the Hospitality Management (HM) program.

Keywords: work competencies, employability, hotel and restaurant management, graduates, Central Mindanao University, skills development, hospitality industry.

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is a crucial employer and a primary service sector globally, encompassing tourism and food services. As one of the fastest-growing sectors in the world economy, it has seen annual tourist arrivals increase by approximately 4.3% from 1950 to 2020, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization. This growth drives a rising demand for skilled professionals, placing a significant responsibility on educational institutions to produce qualified graduates who can meet industry needs. The researchers believe that the employability of graduates is a key indicator of an institution's performance and competency. High-quality instruction and resources are essential to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for success in their chosen fields.

Central Mindanao University (CMU), a prestigious institution in the Philippines, has established a strategic career and job placement program through its College of Human Ecology, particularly within the Hospitality Management Department. This program focuses on developing connections with local and international affiliates to facilitate job placements. With support from organizations like the Junior Tourism and Hospitality Management Association of the Philippines and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, CMU aims to continuously improve its curriculum and educational delivery. The researchers assert that addressing the challenges of the growing international tourism market requires educational institutions to enhance their competitiveness and produce employable graduates, thereby ensuring the relevance and quality of hospitality education.

Furthermore, the findings of this study could contribute not only to the program but also to the credibility and trust of the HRM educators. This research would show the efficacy of the implemented educational initiatives and programs through the number of employed graduates and their competency status.

Objectives

Generally, this study aimed to determine the work competencies and employability of Hotel and Restaurant Management graduates from Central Mindanao University. Specifically, it aimed to achieve the following:

1. Determine the demographic profile of the graduates of CMU in terms of:
 - a. Gender;
 - b. Status as students;
 - c. Current residence.
2. Determine mobility after completion of study such as:
 - a. Percentage of those who had mobility abroad or local during studies;
 - b. Percentage of those who continued studies like Masteral or diploma;
 - c. Duration of time before employment?
 - d. Employment status (regular, temporary, on-call, self-employed, unemployed).
3. Identify the graduate's levels of acquired skills in terms of:
 - a. Intercultural Skills;
 - b. Management Skills;
 - c. Personal Skills.
4. Identify the graduate's actual employable skills in their present and previous employment.
5. Ascertain if there was a significant relationship between the graduate's acquired skills and actual employable skills.
6. Summarized the suggestions of the alumnus for the enhancement of the program in terms of:
 - a. Instruction;
 - b. Research; and
 - c. Extension.

METHODS

The researchers used both quantitative and qualitative research design, particularly a descriptive research method in analyzing the HRM graduate's skills and employability. This type of research design is purely on a theoretical basis where the researchers collected data, analyze, prepare, and then present them in an understandable manner. The study also employed a thematic type of analysis particularly on the recommendations given by the respondents of the study to improve the HRM program in terms of instruction, research, and extension. Participants of the study were traced and asked to answer an online survey questionnaire using Google Forms.

Research Design

The study used a descriptive research design. In presenting the data, Pearson r correlation and simple statistics such as frequency and percentage were used to display the respondents' answers to the different research problems. However, in terms of presenting the different suggestions given by the respondents to improve the HRM program, this study made use of thematic analyses to treat the data gathered.

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were bona fide alumni of Central Mindanao University, particularly the BS Hotel and Restaurant Management graduates. They were referred to as the key data sources whom the researchers submitted the questionnaires via Google Form for them to answer. Based on the registrar's data, Central Mindanao University has produced 137 graduates of the HRM course from 2015-2020. In determining the respondents, the researchers used a stratified random sampling method to pick at least 50% of the graduates per year to be the respondents. However, only 84 of the graduates decided to participate in the study. The respondent's demographic profiles were determined, such as their gender, current residences, and status as a student.

Research Instrument

The researchers adapted five instruments that were used to gather the necessary data for this study. This first instrument utilized the Commission on Higher Education designed Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) and was modified to fit the Mission and Vision of the University, Goals of the College and objectives of the BSHRM program.

The second instrument that assessed the graduate's intercultural skills was adapted from Bennett (2008), which was originally used in evaluating the intercultural knowledge of employees in the hospitality industry. The third instrument was the Management Skills Assessment Instrument (MSAI), which was adapted from Cameron and Quinn (2011). The fourth instrument, adapted from the study of Jefferis and Hutchinson (2020), was used to assess the graduate's personal skills in relation to their work in the hospitality industry. Finally, the fifth instrument used to assess the graduate's actual skills used in their current jobs was adapted from the study of Maravilla (2019).

Statistical Treatment

The study used the following statistical tools to analyze the data obtained from the survey. Frequency and percentage were used to evaluate the profile of the respondents concerning the variables selected. The same descriptive statistics were used in explaining the graduate's mobility and employability status after graduation. On the other hand, Pearson correlation was used to determine if there was a significant relationship between the graduate's acquired skills and their employability. Finally, a thematic analysis was used in determining the recommendations given by the respondents to improve the HRM program, and data were also presented using frequency, and percentage.

RESULTS

Respondent's Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of the respondents is important data for a tracer research study that defines the background and situation of the subjects. According to Koc (2019) gender, among others, is a variable that contributes to higher education outcomes. In tracer studies, gender is an essential variable as it paints a picture of how men and women are faring at work and if equality is a question in the workplace. Table 3 presents the gender profile of the HRM graduates.

Table 3 Respondent's Demographic Profile in terms of Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	24	29%
Female	60	71%
Total	84	100%

As presented in Table 3, the majority of the HRM graduates of Central Mindanao University from 2015 to 2020 were female, which comprised 71% of the total population of the respondents. The result is not surprising as Hotel and Restaurant Management is among the courses in college preferred mostly by women (Matriono, 2018). In the same way, the hospitality industry is also a place reported by the UNWTO's (United Nations World Tourism Organization) Global Report on Tourism (2011) to have displayed a staggering increase in the employment of single and married women. The report constitutes a positive message that things are evolving towards a more inclusive corporate environment compared to the previous years.

A similar conclusion was reached by Ungui et al. (2014) who explained that the tourism industry prefers female employees because of the nature of the job they offer. It is observable that a great number of female employees, compared to men, can be seen in airlines, hotels, and other tourism businesses.

The same findings were seen by Weisskopf (2018), who observed that the tourism and hospitality industry in the world is comprised of 70% of women, which he considered remarkable and inspiring data for gender diversity and parity in the job market. It strongly indicates that women are a workforce to be reckoned with in the industry. In addition, research on the increasing percentage of women in the industry is motivated by the varied viewpoints, approaches, and experiences of what women may offer to group procedures for unconventional situations. In the same way, several management theories have been used as conceptual underpinnings of the supposed link in investigating how gender diversity relates to the hotel and restaurant industry's performance.

Another component of the respondent's demographic profile explored in this study was their status as students at Central Mindanao University. It included descriptions such as being scholars, non-scholars, and student leaders, which were all outlined in Table 4.

Table 4 Respondent's Status as Students

Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Scholars	29	35%
Non- Scholars	55	65%
Student Leader	7	8%

As shown in Table 4, most respondents (65%) were non-scholars while studying at Central Mindanao University. It can also be seen that 29 or 35% of the total population were scholars, while only 7, either scholars or non-scholars, were student leaders before.

Although there is a scarcity of research on the direct relationship between student's status in college and their employability, Daquiz (2015) believed that being actively involved in different collegiate organizations allow an individual to develop their soft skills- the skills that apply across a variety of jobs and life context. She added that after the graduates are honed by the curricular and extra-curricular arms of the university, they should leave it better in many ways than when they entered it. The improvement should be attributable to the tertiary institution's curriculum and how the students capitalize on them to ensure they become equipped with the necessary skills to "sell themselves" to future employers.

In terms of being a student leader, Manjunath (2018) posited that although one would not begin their career in a high-ranking position, it is still great to possess the qualities of a leader, especially for those who want to advance their career quickly. Leadership could take the form of taking charge of a team project or simply taking the initiative with a piece of work. He added that although employers often look at graduates' college achievements as necessary but not sufficient for hiring. However, achievements outside the confines of their field, such as work experience, volunteering, and membership in clubs and organizations, are viewed as having similar relevance in this context as knowledge and experience gained via academic study.

The last sub-variable of the demographic profile explored in this study was the respondent's current province of residence which were all reflected in Table 5.

Table 5 Respondent's Demographic Profile in terms of Province of Residence

Province	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Local:		
Agusan del Sur	3	4%
Bukidnon	54	66%
Camiguin	2	2%
Cavite	1	1%
Cebu	2	2%
Davao	3	4%
Lanao	2	2%
Misamis Occidental	2	2%
Misamis Oriental	1	1%
Surigao	2	2%
Zamboanga	2	2%
Abroad:		
British Columbia	3	4%

Catoosa County	1	1%
Ontario	3	4%
New Jersey	2	2%
Pennsylvania	1	1%
Total	84	100%

As reflected in Table 5, 54 or 66% of the respondents continued to reside in the province of Bukidnon while others are scattered in other areas of the country. It can also be deduced from the table that 12% of the respondents have resided in other countries, particularly in Canada and the USA. Contrary to the findings of Fronda and Villanueva (2015) that most BSHRM graduates in the country prefer to work abroad, the data in Table 4 indicated that a higher percentage of the graduates (88%) decided to find a job and continue to reside in the Philippines.

According to some respondents, there are many work chances abroad, especially in food chains and cruise ships, but they are challenging to obtain due to the extreme qualification and extensive prerequisites. As a result, most of them decided to work locally and gain additional experience so they could be qualified when opportunities come along.

Graduates' Mobility after Completion of Studies

According to Aranas and Evangelista (2012), given the higher degree of mobility among hospitality industry employees, the occupation has provided an excellent opportunity to trace the success, career paths, and career plans of graduates of courses leading to this industry. The graduate's mobility after graduation gives value to career analysis that clearly draws the direction, stages of development, and time spans from one career to another. Table 6 outlined the respondent's mobility after graduation.

Table 6 Respondent's Mobility After Graduation

Mobility	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Local	74	88%
Abroad	10	12%
Total	84	100%

As indicated in Table 6, 88% of the graduate respondents decided to work in the Philippines as opposed to 12% working and living abroad. The data is consistent with the findings of Aranas and Evangelista (2012), De Castro (2017), and Matriano (2018) that most BSHRM graduates choose to stay and work in major cities of the Philippines, still in the hospitality industry. Their studies also noted that most HRM graduates work in famous food chains such as *Jollibee*, *Greenwich*, *Mc Donalds*, and the likes. However, at least a ratio of 1:5 graduates working abroad and locally was found.

Under certain assumptions, the data can be construed as a result of the sprouting hotels and tourism sites in the country despite the industry's significant obstacles due to market inflation and recently the pandemic. During the same time period, the restaurant sub-sector, the number of players, and the diversity of services offered have also been remarkable.

On a different note, this study also explored the possibility of graduates continuing their education after graduation. The graduate's continuing education pathways are presented in Table 7.

Table 7 Respondent's Continuing Education

Education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not Continued	67	80%
Professional Education	8	9%
Master's Degree	6	7%
Other Courses	3	4%
Total	84	100%

As reflected in Table 7, more than half of the graduates, specifically 80%, decided not to proceed to graduate school or earn another degree. The table also showed that 8 graduates earned units in professional education while only 6 took up graduate courses, particularly Masters in Management (MiM) and Masters in Business Management (MBM). The other courses included TESDA short-term courses and one graduate who studied Aircraft Maintenance Technology.

The results cast a new light on the findings of Matriano (2018) that the primary reason for HRM graduates in taking the course is the prospect of immediate employment as well as the opportunity for employment abroad. The promising status of the tourism industry, locally and abroad, where HRM graduates could land a job allowed the graduates to choose employment over professional development courses.

On the other hand, Table 8 presents the length of time that the graduates acquired their first job from the time of their graduation.

Table 8 *Duration Before the First Employment*

Duration	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than a month	18	21%
2 - 3 months	12	14%
4 - 5 months	14	17%
6 - 7 months	10	12%
1 year and more	30	36%
Total	84	100%

It can be seen in Table 8 that 36% of the respondents were able to land a job a year and more after graduation, which is not a remarkable statistic. However, it can also be deduced that 35% found a job just two-three months after their graduation, and a total of 64% landed a job less than a year after earning their degree in HRM.

The result ties well with the assumption of De Castro (2017) that an HRM graduate will not have to wait for very long to find his or her first job which is due to the current industries' increasing demand. The tourism and hospitality industry is considered one of the booming and refurbishing businesses before and after the global health pandemic, thus, creating more opportunities for employment.

In addition, Mejia et al. (2020) explained that the prominence of the school where the graduates come from, particularly in tourism and hospitality education, plays a crucial factor in the graduate's waiting time to be landed on a first job. The idea was emphasized in an earlier study by Ungui et al. (2014), who found that BS Tourism graduates of an autonomous university in the country easily land jobs because their institution is considered a Center of Excellence in Tourism Education in the Philippines.

Matriano (2018), however, emphasized that graduates could exploit multiple ways to look for a job, such as word of mouth, which remains a powerful mechanism even in the digital era. His study found that most of the fresh graduates in BSHRM were hired as a result of being recommended by someone or getting hiring information from friends. Still, his study concluded that the role of government agencies such as the Public Services Employment Office (PESO), school's job placement officer, and social media postings are very crucial for fresh graduates to land their first job easily.

Another important aspect of the graduate's mobility after graduation is their employment status which is presented in Table 9.

Table 9 *Current Employment Status*

Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Regular	50	59%
Contractual	15	18%
Unemployed	9	11%
Self-employed	6	7%
On-call/Part-time	4	5%
Total	84	100%

Data in the table demonstrates that 59% of the total population of this study are regularly employed either in private or public institutions, compared to the 18% who are still on a contractual basis. It further suggests that only 23% are unemployed, self-employed, or working part-time or on-call. The data can be promising considering that those self-employed shared that they own a business related to their course while others mentioned they were waiting for their papers abroad. The results create a good image for Central Mindanao University as an institution that produces successful graduates in their chosen field. Through their curriculum, HRM graduates shared the potential to be hired for regular positions. Because the university emphasizes global competitiveness as one of its fundamental objectives,

the result is also a means of determining whether the college truly produces graduates who meet worldwide standards.

Being a regular employee of a private or government company is not easy, especially for companies that are committed to providing a very high level of service. According to De Castro (2017), work experience, technical and management abilities, and knowledge or mastery of the subject are only a few attributes that employees must possess to secure a regular position in a competitive world. As a result, the study suggested that employment status is a good indicator that the tertiary institution where they came from generates skilled and competitive graduates.

However, the data in Table 9 is contrary to the findings of Otic and Ramos (2020), who found that most Central Visayas HRM graduates from 2010-2016 continued to be contractual employees in the food and beverage industry. Despite earning their NCII competencies, a precondition of most establishments in the hospitality and tourism industry, many of the graduates had difficulty being absorbed by the company they are connected with. The findings also corroborated with Buama's (2018) earlier study that more than half of HRM graduates in the country find it difficult to secure a regular tenure, resulting in an influx of employees abroad. Added to this is the country's minimum wage rate, especially for an entry-level position in the hospitality and tourism industry. The phenomenon sadly results in the country's rate of unemployment.

Thus, Caingcoy et al. (2021) warned that unemployment is crucial as it imposes a huge cost not only to society but also to an individual. More than the financial loss, prolonged unemployment may lead to self-doubt, skepticism, and the loss of the value of education.

Graduate's Levels of Acquired Skills

According to Jefferis and Hutchinson (2020), for graduates to be marketable in their chosen profession, they must have a compilation of employable skills that is comprised of the technical competencies and the soft skills that employers often outline for an employee to carry out their roles to the best of their ability.

Table 10 outlines the HRM graduates' acquired skills from college in terms of intercultural aspects.

Table 10 eGraduate's Level of Acquired Skills in terms of Intercultural Skills

Skills	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
I value cultural diversity.	4.95	0.22	Very true of me
I respect other culture's norms and values	4.92	0.28	Very true of me
I share my culture.	4.70	0.46	Very true of me
I check my assumptions	4.68	0.47	Very true of me
I challenge my stereotypes	4.53	0.50	Very true of me
I reflect on how my culture informs my judgment	4.47	0.62	Somewhat true of me
I accept ambiguity	4.43	0.45	Somewhat true of me
I am aware of my privilege	3.52	0.40	Somewhat true of me
I am aware of social justice issues	3.51	0.48	Somewhat true of me
I understand the impact of racism, sexism, homophobia, and other prejudices	3.51	0.48	Somewhat true of me
I acknowledge the importance of difference	3.50	0.38	Not sure
I know the historical and current experiences of those I label as 'others'	3.47	0.30	Not sure
I understand the influence culture can have	3.47	0.30	Not sure

I commit to learning about other cultures	3.30	0.48	Not sure
I gain from my mistakes	3.23	0.35	Not sure
Total Mean	4.34	0.42	Somewhat true of me

Legend

Scale	Range	Description	Interpretation
5	4.51-5.00	Very true of me	Completely acquired
4	3.51-4.50	Somewhat true of me	Somewhat acquired
3	2.51-3.50	Not Sure	Not sure
2	1.51-2.50	Somewhat untrue of me	Mostly not acquired
1	1.00-1.50	Very untrue of me	Completely not acquired

As reflected in Table 10, the HRM graduates of Central Mindanao University got an overall mean of 4.34, described as *somewhat true of me* and interpreted as somewhat acquired regarding their levels of intercultural skills. It can also be noticed that the statements “I value cultural diversity” got the highest mean of 4.95, followed by “I respect other culture’s norms and values,” and “I share my culture,” with a mean of 4.92 and 4.70, respectively. While the statement that got the lowest mean was “I gain from my mistakes.”

The result confirms that the hospitality sector is considered the most diversified sector in business. Therefore, the demands of a socially and culturally aware employee become necessary to provide an intangible product- that is the services to its diversified clients. Considering that the majority of this study’s respondents are working in the different sectors of the hospitality and tourism industry, it is no wonder that their level of intercultural skills is high.

The results shed new light on the findings of Jhaiyanuntana and Nomnian (2020) that hospitality and tourism management graduates are expected to deal with customers from various backgrounds, and their related needs are expected to be flexible and mobile in the changing workplace locations. An employee’s intercultural understanding and awareness are crucial factors that could help businesses and the tourism industry, in general, to operate effectively and efficiently.

The explanation also ties nicely with the previous study of Grobelna (2015), who posited that the increasing intercultural exchanges between the hospitality and tourism industry employees and customers resulted in a higher demand for cultural awareness of employees so they could effectively cater to customers of different backgrounds. Accordingly, intercultural skills help individuals learn and adapt to different cultures and establish more effective interactions.

A similar conclusion was also reached by Liu, Liu, and King (2022) explaining that the diversity in the hospitality sector implies not only identifying but also valuing differences and understanding how these variations may affect the individual experience. Employees and customers each have their own background, set of experiences, and cultural heritage. Recognizing them helps create stronger cooperation, allowing staff to communicate and collaborate more successfully. It also results in higher job satisfaction, reduces turnover, and produces loyal and productive employees. On the other hand, Table 11 reflects the respondent’s acquired skills from college in terms of management skills which are also essential in their chosen profession.

Table 11 Graduate’s Level of Acquired Skills in terms of Management Skills

Skills	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
I make sure that we assess how well we are meeting our customer’s expectations.	4.92	0.68	Very true of me

I articulate a clear vision of what can be accomplished in the future.	4.85	0.60	Very true of me
I build cohesive and committed teams of people.	4.85	0.50	Very true of me
I facilitate effective information sharing and problem-solving in my group.	4.73	0.48	Very true of me
I coordinate regularly with managers in other units in my organization.	4.58	0.47	Very true of me
I motivate and energize others to do a better job.	4.58	0.47	Very true of me
I create an environment where involvement and participation in decisions are encouraged and rewarded.	4.57	0.50	Very true of me
I actively help prepare others to move up in the organization.	4.53	0.43	Very true of me
I acquire and maintain knowledge of technology and applies it to my working environment for my personal and professional growth.	4.45	0.60	Somewhat true of me
I comfortably coach others to extract lessons and learn.	3.57	0.57	Somewhat true of me
I continually make the link between team mission/aim and company strategies.	3.57	0.57	Somewhat true of me
I am always working to improve the processes we use to achieve our desired output.	3.52	0.52	Somewhat true of me
By empowering others in my unit, I foster a motivational climate that energizes everyone involved.	3.50	0.51	Not sure
I make sure that others in my unit are provided with opportunities for personal growth and development.	3.43	0.33	Somewhat untrue of me
Total Mean	4.52	0.40	Very true of me

Legend

Scale	Range	Description	Interpretation
5	4.51-5.00	Very true of me	Completely acquired
4	3.51-4.50	Somewhat true of me	Somewhat acquired
3	2.51-3.50	Not Sure	Not sure
2	1.51-2.50	Somewhat untrue of me	Mostly not acquired
1	1.00-1.50	Very untrue of me	Completely not acquired

It can be seen in Table 11 that the HRM graduate respondents got an overall mean of 4.52, described as *very true of me* and interpreted as *completely acquired* regarding their management skills. As reflected in the results, the

statement, “I make sure that we assess how well we are meeting our customer’s expectations,” got the highest mean of 4.92, described as very true of me and interpreted as *completely acquired*. It was followed by the statements “I articulate a clear vision of what can be accomplished in the future” and “I build cohesive and committed teams of people,” which got a mean of 4.85 and were interpreted as *completely acquired*. On the other hand, the statement that got the lowest mean of 3.43 was “I make sure that others in my unit are provided with opportunities for personal growth and development.”

Results on the table indicate that since the majority of the respondents are regular employees of different private and public organizations in the hospitality industry, they were able to apply the management skills that they learned in college. Even those who work as self-employed agreed that the different facets of management are all important in their careers as business owners and on-call employees. They expressed their gratitude that the curriculum of Central Mindanao University in B.S Hotel and Restaurant Management included management subjects that are applicable in their profession.

According to Barisic and Maric (2012), management is an important modern innovation, a revolution in and of itself, as well as a product of the modern industrial revolution. It attempts to overcome the environment's complexity and the allocation of limited resources. Management is a difficult process since it involves dealing with unpredictability. However, its mission is to anticipate and regulate new business scenarios in the worldwide market, resulting in people leading and managing information and expertise.

A similar definition of management skills was elaborated by Maravilla (2019) as the individual's ability to process, coordinate, and supervise one's work and the work of others for tasks to be done efficiently and effectively. It is essential for an organized life and is considered the backbone of any organization. The definition gives a clearer picture of management's different constructs, including management as a process, activity, discipline, science, art, and profession.

On the same note, White (2020) explained that management skill is one of the soft skills that, although intangible and challenging to measure, is required by most employers. Effective management is a significant contributor to the success of an organization at both the line and supervisory levels. It comprises the ability to negotiate and deliver client service, leadership skills, communication, and cooperative team building. Additionally, communication skills are related to listening, presenting, verbalizing, and nonverbal communication. They are essential in the hospitality and tourism industries, from the part-time front desk personnel to laundry room attendants, suppliers, and porters to the higher echelons of the business structure. From part-time front desk personnel to laundry room attendants, suppliers, and porters to the higher echelons of the management structure, each employee has a role in the business's ongoing and everlasting functioning.

The third type of skill that the HRM graduates acquired in college investigated in this study was personal skills which are reflected in Table 12. Personal skills are abilities that enable people to interact positively with one another, which are soft talents that people acquire naturally or through practice, rather than formal study (Doyle, 2022).

Table 12 Graduate's Level of Acquired Skills in terms of Personal Skills

Skills	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
I am committed and passionate about my chosen profession.	4.90	0.28	Very true of me
I show desire and confidence to succeed and improve at tasks.	4.85	0.36	Very true of me
I complete tasks with minimal assistance or hand-holding.	4.73	0.45	Very true of me
I always exhibit compassion, professionalism, and excellent customer service even under work pressure.	4.67	0.51	Very true of me
I continually develop a culture of respect, teamwork, and excellence.	4.65	0.34	Very true of me
I delegate duties to the right person.	4.64	0.78	Very true of me
I am readily available at work.	4.62	0.49	Very true of me

I have confidence in the ability of my workmates.	4.53	0.57	Very true of me
I embrace changes in the workplace, especially those that lead to new knowledge.	4.51	0.59	Very true of me
I use a variety of modes of communication.	4.51	0.58	Very true of me
I always demonstrate positive customer care.	3.75	1.67	Somewhat true of me
I always exhibit compassion, professionalism, and excellent customer service even under work pressure.	3.66	0.34	Somewhat true of me
I always observe proper time management.	3.64	0.28	Somewhat true of me
I am highly committed to the organization's goals.	3.60	0.56	Somewhat true of me
I make a decision about what is wanted and outline a way to achieve it	3.52	0.42	Not sure
I have the ability to turn conflicts into opportunities.	3.48	0.22	Somewhat untrue of me
Total Mean	4.51	0.37	Very true of me

Legend

Scale	Range	Description	Interpretation
5	4.51-5.00	Very true of me	Completely acquired
4	3.51-4.50	Somewhat true of me	Somewhat acquired
3	2.51-3.50	Not Sure	Not sure
2	1.51-2.50	Somewhat untrue of me	Mostly not acquired
1	1.00-1.50	Very untrue of me	Completely not acquired

As presented in Table 12, the respondent's overall mean in the level of their acquired skills in terms of personal skills was 4.51, described as *very true of me* and interpreted as *completely acquired*. It can also be seen that the top three statements that got the highest mean were, "I am committed and passionate about my chosen profession," "I show desire and confidence to succeed and improve at tasks," and "I complete tasks with minimal assistance or hand-holding," which were all described as very true of me and interpreted as *completely acquired*. However, the statement, "I have the ability to turn conflicts into opportunities," got the lowest mean of 3.48, described as *somewhat untrue of me* and interpreted as *mostly not acquired*.

It can be deduced from the results in the table that the graduates were able to acquire the necessary personal skills crucial in their profession, as the hospitality and tourism industry is considered a labor-intensive sector that involves a high degree of customer contact. According to the respondents, working in the industry requires a strong character, an impressive work ethic, and an upbeat personality. Moreover, creativity, dedication, enthusiasm, and confidence are some personal skills they mentioned that one should possess to continue working in challenging situations in the industry.

The findings of this study may be explained by the Indeed Editorial Team's (2021) position that because most jobs require people to collaborate, personal skills become essential for employees to be hired and keep jobs. Therefore, highlighting one's personal skills helps graduates land jobs and advance their careers. Fresh graduates are expected to have basic personal skills; however, those who regularly deal with customers and colleagues require advanced personal skills.

Additionally, Doyle (2022) believed that a company's hiring officer looks for candidates with personal skills because they are better equipped to create favorable outcomes for their organizations. They are more dependable, fulfill deadlines, and finish jobs with minimal supervision. Furthermore, individuals with a high level of personal skills are driven and enthusiastic about their profession, contributing to personal, team, and organizational success.

Taken together the significance of personal skills in any workplace, Hartmann (2022) emphasized its critical necessity in the hospitality and tourism industry. He explained that tourism and hospitality are, first and foremost, a "people" industry with internal and external customers. To be effective in the field, a hospitality graduate must work with a team, either as a leader or as a participant. Every team member contributes, and each individual's job is vital to a team's capacity to fulfill its goals. Many positions in the industry require direct customer contact, such as table service, receptionist duties, or managing an in-house spa, wherein personal skills are critical to the business's success. The present research, therefore, contributes to a growing body of evidence (De Leon et al., 2021; Quinn, 2013; Weber, 2017) suggesting that HRM graduates need to have acquired and honed their intercultural, management, and personal skills to be marketable and efficient in their profession. Although these skills are not typically acquired in the classroom, the overall training and education process in an ideal tertiary institution of hospitality and tourism courses emphasizes group work, internships, on-campus and off-campus OJTs- all of which are avenues that provide ample opportunities for students to sharpen their soft skills.

Graduate's Actual Employable Skills

Researchers (Maravilla, 2019; Wang & Tsai, 2015; White, 2020) define employability or employable skills as the skills that prepare students for the world of work, which cover a range of competencies. Specifically, Doyle (2020) referred to them as the core competencies that an employee must possess to be desirable and excel in an organization. This study tried to look at the graduates' actual skills required in the jobs they have had in the past and present. These skills are all outlined in Table 13.

Table 13

Skills	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
A. Hospitality and Tourism Operations			
1. Marketing in the hospitality and tourism industry	4.55	0.61	Very important
2. Front office operational ability	4.51	0.65	Very important
3. Food and beverage management	4.51	0.56	Very important
4. Hospitality and tourism facility planning and development	4.48	0.77	Important
5. Hospitality and tourism finance and accounting	4.46	0.58	Important
6. Business operations	4.0	0.64	Important
1. Lodging administration	4.0	0.57	Important
B. Human Resource Skill			
1. Communication skills	4.55	0.48	Very important
2. Leadership skills	4.30	0.59	Important
3. Cooperative team building	4.28	0.46	Important
4. Negotiating skills	4.20	0.44	Important
5. Harmonious guest relations	4.0	0.48	Important
6. Handling difficult people	3.93	0.48	Important

7. Employee relations	3.89	0.36	Important
8. Public relation skills	3.89	0.36	Important
<hr/>			
C. Personal Skills			
1. Critical- thinking ability	4.55	0.55	Very important
2. Problem-solving identification	4.53	0.52	Very important
3. Decision-making skills	4.51	0.60	Very important
4. Computer applications	4.35	0.51	Important
5. Multilingual skills/need of second language	4.22	0.64	Important
6. Research skills	3.95	0.64	Important
7. Professionalism	3.90	0.69	Important
2. Hands-on experience	3.89	0.51	Important
<hr/>			
D. Conceptual Skills			
1. Organizational structure and policies	4.52	0.57	Very important
2. Hospitality and tourism laws and regulations	4.38	0.53	Important
3. Principles of Marketing	4.19	0.53	Important
4. Finance and Accounting	4.0	0.46	Important
5. Human Resource Management	3.97	0.38	Important
6. Interrelationships	3.92	0.50	Important
7. Strategic Planning	3.89	0.39	Important
TOTAL	4.26	0.15	Important

Legend

Scale	Range	Description	Interpretation
5	4.51-5.00	Very important	Totally applicable
4	3.51-4.50	Important	Somewhat applicable
3	2.51-3.50	Moderately important	Moderately applicable
2	1.51-2.50	Slightly important	Mostly not applicable
1	1.00-1.50	Not Important	Totally not applicable

As reflected in Table 13, the overall mean of the graduate's actual employable skills was 4.26, described as important and interpreted as somewhat applicable. The table also showed that the highest mean was the marketing in the hospitality and tourism industry under the hospitality and tourism operations, communication skills under the human resource skills, and critical thinking ability under the personal skills.

The results of the table indicate that the graduates of hospitality and tourism courses can actually be assigned in any area of the business. There is no guarantee that once an individual is first assigned to the food and beverage department, then they will always be working in that department for the rest of their lives. Thus, it is necessary for

the employees to acquire the necessary skills in all areas of the industry. The hospitality industry is a vast business that is segmented into several separate sectors such as food and beverage, accommodation, travel and tourism, entertainment and recreation, and many other areas. Each sector requires certain skills that employees should master for them to be effective in their roles and for the business to thrive.

The idea was explained by Luka (2015) that the quality of hospitality and tourism products or services lies mostly in intangible elements, including the communication between employees and customers, teamwork, self-management, creativity, and other occupation-specific skills of the sector.

Additionally, Stewart and Knowles (2000) suggested that BS HRM graduates must provide two types of employability to potential employers, including the transferable abilities that are useful throughout one's working life, and soft skills that are appropriate to their chosen field. Therefore, the technical skills of each and every sector of the hospitality industry are really important to be mastered by a graduate.

On the other hand, Maravilla's (2019) study in the Philippine context revealed that employers in the country give an extremely high value to human resource skills such as leadership, communication, team building, and motivation in addition to analytical thinking and problem-solving skills as they believe that these are the skills that embody maturity and accountability in an organization. More than the facilities and the attractions, employers in the hospitality industry place a high premium on the crucial relationship between customers and the individuals providing the service.

Finally, Matriano (2018) emphasized the importance of tracer studies as they provide empirical data not only in assessing the results of education and training but also in providing enough evidence on the actual skills and competencies that become useful in the industry. Graduate surveys, such as this one, provide a systematic information intake through standardization and representative output determination, which in this case, are the actual skills that the respondents have used in their employment.

Correlation Analysis between the Graduates' Acquired Skills and Actual Employable Skills

Table 14 presents the Pearson correlation analysis done to determine if there was a significant relationship between the graduates' acquired skills and their employability. Correlation analysis is a quantitative tool done in this study as the researchers wanted to establish if there was a possible connection between the graduate's acquired skills (in terms of intercultural, management, and personal) and their employability.

Table 14 *Correlation Analysis between the Acquired Skills and Employability*

		Graduate skills	Employability
Graduate skills	Pearson Correlation	1	.687**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	84	84
Employability	Pearson Correlation	.687**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	84	84

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Legend:

	$\pm 0.81 - \pm 1.00$	Very High
$\pm 0.61 - \pm 0.80$	High	
$\pm 0.41 - \pm 0.60$	Moderate	
$\pm 0.21 - \pm 0.40$	Low	
$\pm 0.01 - \pm 0.20$	Very Low	

As reflected in Table 14 there is a high and significant relationship between the graduate's level of acquired skills and employability. It shows an r value of .687 and p value of .000 which means that an increase in one variable corresponds to an increase in another. Thus, based on the results, the null hypothesis of this study should be rejected. The result is in accordance with the findings of Succi and Canovi (2020) that graduates' technical and soft skills are both crucial for them to be highly competitive in the employment sector. Students who do well in both curricular and extra-curricular aspects are found to have a conceptual mind of understanding things from different perspectives that are applicable in a transitional workspace to ensure economic success.

In the same manner, the studies of Pinto and Ramalheira (2017) and Nusrat and Sultana (2019) reported that intercultural awareness and personal skills are among the predictors that affect overall employability across sectors of employment. The two essential skills enable a job seeker to succeed in any situation. For example, teamwork is a component of personal ability in which an individual can effectively communicate with a team and achieve assigned responsibilities and objectives, whereas respect for diversity allows one to tolerate other people's beliefs and practices.

Therefore, Ahmed et al. (2021) reminded educators and curriculum designers of the crucial role of a school's curriculum for graduates to acquire the necessary skills in their future workplace. A curriculum that lacks innovative and relevant aspects would not enable graduates to be at par with globally competitive employees. In the same way that graduates with greater skills and competencies are more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities and meet employers' productivity demands.

Graduate's Suggestions to Improve the Program

Most colleges and universities regard education as central to their academic mission. Few, however, have built systematic systems for improving and ensuring educational quality, particularly in terms of instruction, research, and extension. This part of the study presents the alumni's suggestions and recommendations for improving the curriculum of the Hotel and Restaurant Management program at Central Mindanao University. As the end user who have successfully completed the curriculum, the graduates have better perspectives on how to improve the course offering of the university. The suggestions are outlined in Table 15.

Table 15 Respondent's Suggestions to Improve the Curriculum

Suggestions	F	Percentage (%)
Instruction:		
Add more subjects about the managerial aspects of business	74	88%
More subjects that allow practical application	55	65%
Offer more foreign language subjects	52	62%
More facilities, tools, and equipment	47	56%
Additional competent faculty	43	51%
Offer IELTS training	32	38%
Revisit and improve the curriculum	30	36%
Research:		
More seminars for students to showcase their skills	65	77%
Create more research and innovation opportunities for the students	33	39%
More research on blending the vocational and theoretical subjects	28	33%
Extension:		
More linkages with different types of industries	75	89%
Provide more job placement programs	73	87%

Create more work experiences like volunteer work for students before they make career choices	65	77%
Invite industry representatives in the revision of the curriculum	60	71%
Benchmark in leading universities in this field	53	63%
<i>*Multiple responses</i>		

As reflected in Table 15 more than half of the respondents suggested that additional subjects about the managerial aspects of the hospitality and tourism businesses should be included in their course. It is followed by 55 (65%) suggestions for CMU to include more subjects that allow practical application, offer additional foreign language subjects (62%), add more facilities, tools, and equipment (56%) for the students to fully maximize hands-on activities, hire more competent faculty (51%), offer IELTS training (38%), and to revisit and further enhance the curriculum (36%) of BS HRM course.

In the area of research, Table 13 reflects the graduate respondents' suggestions for more seminars that allow students to showcase their skills (77%), more opportunities for research and innovation (39%), and research on blending the vocational and theoretical subjects (33%).

Finally, in terms of extensions, the graduates suggested the university to create more linkages with diverse types of industries (89%), provide more job placements for the graduates (87%), create more work experiences like volunteer works so students could have several career choices (77%), invite industry representatives in the revision of the curriculum (71%), and for the administration to benchmark in leading universities in the HRM field (63%).

From the results, it can be implied that although the graduates had the best experience in their college life as HRM students, they believe something could still be done to improve the university's curriculum in different areas. As products of Central Mindanao University who are now part of the different sectors in society, the graduates have gained a wider and clearer vantage point on the links and gaps between the university and the industry. Therefore, if the goal is to improve the outcome of the university, then the alumni should help in the curriculum revision and enhancement.

The argument supports the claim of Hagos and Dejarme (2008) that the tertiary institution's role of preparing individuals for their functional and proactive roles in society has remained unchanged over time. Thus, their goal should always be continuity and innovation anchored on a relevant curriculum. They also warned that changes in methods, innovations, and teaching approaches are widely acknowledged as delicate, difficult, and occasionally impossible, so much so that adoption is pervasive.

A similar explanation was expounded by the UNESCO International Bureau of Education (2016), explaining that the transition of the students from passive to active recipients of the curriculum may be challenging for educators and curriculum designers to manage. Yet, a good quality curriculum places students as contributor to the teaching, learning, and assessment processes.

CONCLUSION

Based on the important findings, these are the conclusions of the study:

1. The BSHRM course and the hospitality and tourism industry, in general, is comprised of a higher population of females from all over the country.
2. Most graduates preferred to work directly after graduation than to enroll in graduate or other courses. Contrary to common beliefs, the majority of BSHRM graduates work in different local industries, not abroad.
3. For graduates to be employable, they must have both technical and soft skills such as intercultural, management, and personal skills.
4. The graduate's acquired skills in college have a direct effect on their future industry employability.
5. The graduates are aware of the actual employable skills that are necessary for them to excel in their chosen profession.

6. The graduates' role in the enhancement of the curriculum is very crucial for it to be relevant and timely.

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Acknowledgement

The researchers wishes to express sincere gratitude to **Central Mindanao University** for providing a supportive environment for academic and personal development. The guidance and resources offered by the faculty and staff have been instrumental in the author's journey.