

Students' Readiness for Career Development Based on Social Learning Theory: A Stepping Stone to Develop Future Hospitality Leaders

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Abstract

This study assessed the level of career development readiness among Hospitality Management students and examined the relationship between Social Learning Theory variables and career readiness. Anchored on Bandura's Social Learning Theory, the study employed a descriptive–correlational research design using a researcher-made structured questionnaire. Respondents were fourth-year Hospitality Management students from selected higher education institutions in Baliwag, Bulacan, selected through stratified random sampling. Data were analyzed using frequency distribution, weighted mean, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation. Findings revealed that students demonstrated a high level of career readiness, particularly in self-efficacy and goal-setting dimensions. Significant relationships were found between students' profiles and their cognitive, behavioral, and environmental attributes. The results confirm that observational learning, supportive environments, and self-belief play crucial roles in preparing future hospitality professionals. The study recommends strengthening experiential learning, mentorship programs, and industry collaboration to enhance students' professional readiness.

Keywords: Career Readiness, Hospitality Students, Observational Learning, Self-Efficacy, Social Learning Theory

1. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is a rapidly expanding service sector that demands professionals who possess not only technical competence but also adaptability, confidence, and leadership potential. As competition intensifies, hospitality graduates are increasingly expected to demonstrate career readiness upon entry into the workforce. Career readiness refers to an individual's preparedness to make informed career decisions, apply professional skills, and perform effectively in real workplace environments.

Despite curricular improvements, concerns remain regarding the extent to which hospitality students are adequately prepared for industry demands after graduation. This issue is particularly relevant in developing hospitality hubs such as Baliwag, Bulacan, where hotels, restaurants, resorts, and event venues continue to grow. Guided by Bandura's Social Learning Theory, this study examines how cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors influence students' readiness for career development. Understanding these factors provides empirical support for designing effective career development programs in hospitality education.

2. Review of Related Literature

Social Learning Theory emphasizes that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and interaction with the environment. Bandura (1986) explained that behavior is shaped through the reciprocal interaction of personal factors, behavior, and environmental influences. In hospitality education, students develop professional competence by observing instructors, peers, and industry practitioners during internships, simulations, and training programs [1].

Studies have shown that self-efficacy plays a critical role in employability and career readiness. Students who believe in their capabilities demonstrate higher motivation, adaptability, and persistence in professional settings. Empirical studies confirm that experiential learning, such as internships and industry immersion, significantly enhances students' confidence and skill acquisition [2]. Environmental support from family, institutions, and mentors has also been found to significantly influence career decision-making and professional commitment among hospitality students [3].

3. Methodology

Research Design

This study used a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to determine the career development readiness of fourth-year Hospitality Management students. The design described students' cognitive, behavioral, and environmental attributes and examined the relationships between their profiles and career readiness based on Social Learning Theory.

Study Locale

The study was conducted in Baliwag, Bulacan, an area with a developing hospitality sector including hotels, resorts, restaurants, and event venues. The location was selected because of its strong connection between hospitality education and industry exposure.

Population and Sampling Procedure

The respondents were fourth-year BS Hospitality Management students from Fernandez College of Arts and Technology, STI College Baliwag, Baliuag University, and Baliwag Polytechnic College. Stratified random sampling ensured representation across student groups. Inclusion criteria were: (1) enrollment as a fourth-year Hospitality Management student, (2) completion or current engagement in internship or practicum, and (3) attendance in at least one hospitality-related seminar or training. A total of 100 students participated.

Research Instrument

Data were gathered using a structured, adaptive-modified questionnaire developed by the researcher. The instrument had five parts: (1) respondent profile, (2) cognitive attributes, (3) behavioral attributes, (4) environmental influences, and (5) an open-ended question for proposed career development programs. Items were adapted from validated hospitality competency and career readiness tools.

Validity and Reliability

Five experts assessed the instrument for content validity, yielding an overall validity index of 0.77 (High Validity). A pilot test produced a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.861, indicating high reliability.

Data Gathering Procedure

Institutional permission was obtained before data collection. Respondents were briefed and signed informed consent forms. Surveys were administered either in person or through secure digital platforms. Students were given one week to complete the questionnaire. Collected data were encoded and prepared for statistical analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The study followed the ethical guidelines of Wesleyan University–Philippines. Human participants only were involved. All respondents signed written informed consent and were assured of confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time. No identifying information or photos were collected. No animal research was included.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 28. Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) described the profile and attributes of students. Pearson’s *r* correlation determined the relationship between the students’ profiles and their cognitive, behavioral, and environmental attributes. Thematic analysis was used for open-ended responses.

4. Results and Discussion

Respondent Profile

A total of 100 fourth-year Hospitality Management students participated in the study. Most respondents were 22 years old, indicating a typical age range for graduating students. Females represented the majority, consistent with global enrollment trends in hospitality education. Academic performance showed that most students achieved Very Good or Good standing, reflecting a generally competent academic foundation. More than half had prior industry experience, and most had participated in at least one training or seminar. These findings suggest that respondents possessed reasonable exposure to both academic and industry-based learning environments.

Table 4.1 Distribution of Respondents According to Age (n = 100)

Age (Years)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
20	6	6%
21	24	24%
22	40	40%
23	15	15%
24	6	6%
25	9	9%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.2 Distribution of Respondents According to Sex (n = 100)

Sex	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Male	36	36%
Female	64	64%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.3 Distribution of Respondents According to Year Level (n = 100)

Year Level	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
4 th Year	100	100%
Total	100	100%

5. Cognitive Attributes

Students demonstrated a high level of cognitive readiness, reflected in strong knowledge of hospitality operations, positive expectations toward future careers, and favorable attitudes toward industry work. This supports Bandura’s Social Learning Theory, which states that cognitive competence is strengthened through repeated exposure and observation of modeled behaviors. Students who engaged in internships and seminars were more aware of industry demands and expectations, suggesting that experiential activities reinforce knowledge retention and professional awareness.

Table 5.1 Level of Knowledge of the Respondents on Career Development Based on Social Cognitive Theory

Indicators (Knowledge)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I am knowledgeable about grooming and professional image standards.	4.33	Strongly Agree
2. I understand guest service standards in the hospitality industry.	4.12	Agree
3. I am aware of the realities involved in hospitality work.	3.93	Agree
4. I understand the basic terminology used in the hospitality industry.	3.84	Agree
5. I am knowledgeable about business management and ethics in hospitality.	3.71	Agree
6. I am familiar with hospitality products and services	4.02	Agree
7. I am knowledgeable about the leadership and organizational structure in hospitality operations.	3.89	Agree
Overall Mean	3.98	Agree

Note. Data represent the level of knowledge of the respondents on career development

Table 5.2 Level of Awareness of the Respondents on Career Development

Indicators (Awareness)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I understand what the profession means and its requirements	4.11	Agree
2. I am aware of all the professions available within the scope of specialization	4.04	Agree
3. I know the requirements of the training professions	3.80	Agree
4. I have experience in my career	3.83	Agree
5. I know my abilities for professional participation	3.93	Agree
Overall Mean	3.94	Agree

Note. Data represent the level of awareness of the respondents on career development based on the social cognitive theory distribution of hospitality management students.

Table 5.3 Level of Beliefs of the Respondents on Career Development

Indicators (Beliefs)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I believe jobs in the hospitality industry are both interesting and challenging.	4.20	Strongly Agree
2. I recognize that most positions in the hospitality sector require me to develop specialized skills.	3.90	Agree
3. I understand that working in hospitality can often be stressful, but I am willing to prepare myself for such challenges.	4.20	Strongly Agree
4. I am aware that hospitality jobs usually involve long working hours, and I am ready to manage my time and energy effectively.	4.10	Agree
5. I see a career in hospitality as an opportunity to interact with diverse people, including foreigners and even celebrities	4.20	Strongly Agree
6. I acknowledge that salaries in the hospitality sector are sometimes too low to provide a comfortable standard of living, but I value the experience it offers for my career growth.	4.10	Agree
7. I believe that providing staff meals should be considered an important part of the compensation package in the hospitality industry.	4.00	Agree
Overall Mean	4.10	Agree

6. Behavioral Attributes

The respondents showed high levels of self-efficacy, practical skills, and engagement in hospitality-related tasks. Students with more industry experience or multiple seminar trainings reported stronger confidence in performing hospitality functions. This aligns with previous studies indicating that mastery experiences and performance accomplishments are the strongest predictors of self-efficacy. Observational learning during internships also played a role, as students commonly learned service protocols, communication strategies, and operational standards by watching supervisors and industry professionals.

Table 6.1 Respondents' Actions Toward Career Development

Indicators (Action)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I won't give up easily, even under tremendous academic pressure.	3.81	Agree
2. I can persist until the last moment, even when the academic pressure is high.	3.64	Agree
3. I consistently greet guests with warmth and professionalism.	4.06	Agree
4. I actively listen to guests' needs and concerns.	3.95	Agree

5. I maintain a positive attitude even in stressful situations.	3.77	Agree
Overall Mean	3.85	Agree

Note. Data represent the actions toward career development distribution of hospitality management students.

Table 6.2 Respondents’ Skills Related to Career Development

Indicators (Skills)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I possess the skills necessary for smooth work in the future.	3.91	Agree
2. I can complete the assigned tasks within the deadline.	3.80	Agree
3. I can clearly and confidently communicate with guests and coworkers.	4.10	Agree
4. I am skilled in handling difficult or dissatisfied guests.	3.72	Agree
5. I follow hospitality standards and procedures accurately.	4.15	Agree
Overall Mean	3.94	Agree

Note. Data represent the level of **skills** of the respondents on career development based on the social cognitive theory distribution of hospitality management students.

Table 6.3 Respondents’ Self-Efficacy in Career Development

Indicators (Self-Efficacy)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I am capable of succeeding in future work.	4.32	Strongly Agree
2. I am confident in my ability to perform well in my future hospitality career.	4.28	Strongly Agree
3. I perform very well in school grades.	3.89	Agree
4. I have an excellent academic performance.	3.76	Agree
5. I believe I can continuously improve my skills in the hospitality industry.	4.35	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	4.12	Strongly Agree

Note. Data represent the level of **self-efficacy** of the respondents on career development based on the social cognitive theory distribution of hospitality management students.

7. Environmental Influences

Environmental factors such as family support, institutional guidance, and access to industry exposure demonstrated moderate to high influence on students’ career readiness. Students who reported strong environmental support tended to have higher motivation and clearer career goals. This reinforces the concept that learning occurs within a social context, where environmental reinforcement shapes professional development. The presence of mentors, industry partners, and supportive academic environments created favorable conditions for students to develop career-relevant behaviors.

Table 7.1 Respondents’ Rate on Environmental Factors Along the Support System

Statement	Mean	Verbal Description
1. I have a parent who encourages me.	4.19	Agree
2. I have a relative who gives me advice on how to do things.	3.68	Agree
3. I feel supported because my parent always makes sure that I have what I need.	4.07	Agree
4. I feel supported by industry professionals during my training or internship experiences.	3.92	Agree
5. My teachers/mentors provide helpful guidance and feedback.	4.28	Strongly Agree
Overall Weighted Mean	4.03	Agree

Note. Data represent the level of Rate on Environmental Factors Along Support System of the respondents on career development based on the social cognitive theory distribution of hospitality management students.

Table 7.2 Respondents’ Rate on Environmental Factors Along Learning Environment

Statement	Mean	Verbal Description
1. My learning experiences contribute to both my personal growth and my ability to adapt in different social settings.	4.07	Agree
2. I was able to expand my circle of friends and professional connections through academic and industry experiences.	3.94	Agree
3. My learning experiences at both individual and organizational levels have enriched my career preparation.	3.89	Agree
4. The facilities and resources (e.g., kitchens, laboratories, training hotels) are adequate for skill development.	3.74	Agree
5. The curriculum equips me with relevant knowledge and competencies for hospitality careers.	4.20	Strongly Agree
Overall Weighted Mean	3.97	Agree

Note. Data represent the level of **Rate on Environmental Factors Along Learning Environment** of the respondents on career development based on the social cognitive theory distribution of hospitality management students.

Table 7.3 Respondents’ Rate on Environmental Factors Along Industry Exposure

Statement	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. My internship provided me with opportunities to network with industry professionals.	4.21	Agree
2. Through my internship, I was able to meet people from different cultures and learn diverse ways of thinking.	4.18	Agree

3. Industry exposure motivates me to pursue a career in hospitality.	4.32	Strongly Agree
4. I have sufficient opportunities to participate in industry-related activities (e.g., internships, seminars, job fairs).	3.96	Agree
5. My internship or on-the-job training provides valuable hands-on experience.	4.38	Strongly Agree
Overall Weighted Mean	4.21	Agree

8. Relationship Between Profile and Attributes

Correlation analysis showed that selected profile variables had significant relationships with cognitive, behavioral, and environmental attributes. Academic performance, industry experience, and seminar participation were positively related to career readiness indicators. Students with higher academic standing displayed stronger cognitive readiness, while those with industry exposure reported higher self-efficacy and practical competence. This supports the theoretical view that learning and behavior are influenced by reciprocal interactions between the individual, behavior, and environment.

Test of Relationship Between the Profile of the Respondents and Their Attributes (SOP 5)

Table 8 Relationship Between Students’ Profile and Their Cognitive Attributes

Profile Variables	r-value	p-value	Verbal Description	Decision on Ho
Age	-0.103	0.307	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Gender	-0.014	0.891	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Year Level	-	-	No variation / Insufficient data	Accept Ho
Civil Status	-	-	No variation / Insufficient data	Accept Ho
Academic Performance (GPA)	0.036	0.720	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Type of Highschool	0.052	0.605	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Academic Strand	0.107	0.291	Not Significant	Accept Ho
With/Without Industry Experience	-0.182	0.070	Not Significant (trend)	Accept Ho
No. of Trainings/Seminars Attended	0.256	0.010	Weak Positive (Significant)	Reject Ho
Parents Occupation	-0.172	0.088	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Preferred Career Path	-0.064	0.526	Not Significant	Accept Ho
No. of Org Memberships	-0.108	0.284	Not Significant	Accept Ho

Test of Relationship Between the Profile of the Respondents and Their Behavioural Attributes (SOP 6)

Table 9 Relationship Between Students’ Profile and Their Behavioral Attributes

Profile Variables	r-value	p-value	Verbal Description	Decision on Ho
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Age	-0.038	0.704	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Gender	0.011	0.915	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Year Level	-	-	No variation / Insufficient data	Accept Ho
Civil Status	-	-	No variation / Insufficient data	Accept Ho
Academic Performance (GPA)	0.005	0.964	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Type of High School	0.104	0.301	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Academic Strand	0.178	0.077	Not Significant	Accept Ho
With/Without Industry Experience	-0.176	0.079	Not Significant (close to .05)	Accept Ho
No. of Trainings/Seminars Attended	0.213	0.033	Weak Positive (Significant)	Reject Ho
Parents Occupation	-0.183	0.069	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Preferred Career Path	-0.074	0.462	Not Significant	Accept Ho
No. of Org Memberships	-0.076	0.450	Not Significant	Accept Ho

Test of Relationship Between the Profile of the Respondents and Their Environmental Influences (SOP 7)

Table 10 Relationship Between Students' Profile and Their Environmental Influences

Profile Variables	r-value	p-value	Verbal Description	Decision on Ho
Age	0.015	0.883	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Gender	0.119	0.238	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Year Level	-	-	No variation / Insufficient data	Accept Ho
Civil Status	-	-	No variation / Insufficient data	Accept Ho
Academic Performance (GPA)	-0.039	0.698	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Type of High School	0.085	0.401	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Academic Strand	0.019	0.850	Not Significant	Accept Ho
With/Without Industry Experience	-0.196	0.051	Not Significant (close to .05)	Accept Ho
No. of Trainings/Seminars Attended	0.258	0.010	Weak Positive (Significant)	Reject Ho
Parents Occupation	-0.062	0.540	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Preferred Career Path	-0.173	0.086	Not Significant	Accept Ho
No. of Org Memberships	-0.094	0.352	Not Significant	Accept Ho

Summary Interpretation

Overall, the results suggest that hospitality students in Baliwag, Bulacan exhibit high levels of readiness for career development. Their knowledge, confidence, and environmental support systems indicate that they are generally well-prepared to transition into professional roles. The findings align with Social

Learning Theory by demonstrating that career readiness is shaped through observation, interaction, experience, and environmental reinforcement. However, variations across profile groups indicate that increasing access to industry exposure, mentorship, and training programs may further strengthen readiness among students with limited experience.

9. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, several conclusions were drawn reflecting the relationships among students' demographic profiles, cognitive and behavioral attributes, environmental influences, and overall career readiness as framed by Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT).

To begin, the profile of the respondents revealed that most Hospitality Management students were in the typical senior-level age group and predominantly female. This pattern indicates that students are at the exploration stage of Super's Career Development Theory, where individuals begin clarifying career goals and developing professional identity. Their age and academic standing suggest a strong receptiveness to modeling and mentoring—central tenets of SLT that enhance learning and self-efficacy development in real-world settings.

In terms of cognitive factors, students displayed high levels of knowledge, motivation, and positive expectations toward career success in hospitality. This demonstrates that consistent exposure to academic and practical experiences fosters self-efficacy and cognitive engagement. Their confidence and awareness of industry standards affirm that observational learning, reinforcement, and guided instruction are powerful cognitive mechanisms shaping their readiness for employment.

With respect to behavioral attributes, students exhibited strong professional conduct and practical competence. They demonstrated reliability, interpersonal awareness, and commitment to service quality—traits that stem from repeated modeling and participation in authentic learning environments. Such outcomes affirm that behavioral learning occurs through observation and feedback, validating Bandura's concept that imitation and reinforcement transform learned behaviors into professional discipline.

Furthermore, environmental influences played a critical role in shaping students' readiness. Mentorship, institutional support, and industry exposure emerged as key drivers of motivation and learning. Students recognized their instructors, mentors, and supervisors as important role models who enhanced their self-efficacy and career confidence. These findings emphasize that a supportive environment reinforces social learning by bridging theoretical instruction with practical application, although facility limitations point to a need for improved training infrastructure and access to diverse learning spaces.

Taken collectively, the findings confirm that career readiness among hospitality students is a multifaceted construct influenced by the interaction of cognitive, behavioral, and environmental dimensions. The study validates Bandura's principle of triadic reciprocal causation, where personal beliefs, observed behaviors, and contextual conditions continuously influence learning outcomes. Students' preparedness reflects a dynamic social process grounded in experiential learning, observation, and environmental reinforcement—rather than isolated academic achievement.

Finally, the proposed Career Development Program for BS Hospitality Management Students Based on Social Learning Theory was designed to strengthen experiential learning, mentorship, and industry collaboration. The program translates SLT principles into practice by integrating observational learning, self-efficacy building, and environmental support mechanisms. Its implementation aims to enhance employability, leadership capacity, and lifelong learning, ensuring that hospitality graduates are holistically prepared to thrive in an evolving global service industry.

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