



**BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (BSIT)
GRADUATES' EXPERIENCES ON SOFT SKILLS TRAINING FOR
EMPLOYABILITY AT PHINMA UNIVERSITY OF ILOILO:
BASES FOR ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM**

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative-phenomenological study explored the graduates' experiences in soft skills training aimed at improving employability. Using a qualitative research design, data for this study were gathered through detailed and comprehensive interviews with a sample of graduates who had recently completed significant training. Thematic analysis was employed to uncover recurring themes in the graduates' experiences. The findings revealed that graduates faced common hindering factors including time of scheduling conflicts, and preference for in-person interaction. Despite these challenges, many graduates reported factors that facilitated the training, such as the provision of practical applications and skills development activities, which supported their needs. Based on these insights, the study proposed the development of an enhancement program that focuses on providing clear guidelines for the training. This enhancement program aims to assist future graduates in overcoming common challenges and maximizing the opportunities provided by the program.

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INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic and competitive job market of recent years, particularly within the Information Technology (IT) sector, relying solely on technical skills has proven increasingly insufficient for career success. Employers highlight the importance of soft skills like effective communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and flexibility in the workplace.

These soft skills are crucial for overcoming workplace challenges and achieving sustainable career growth. In IT, effective collaboration across various departments and user interface became essential for enhancing job performance and professional advancement.

In response to these industry demands, the Bachelor of Information Technology (BSIT) program at PHINMA University of Iloilo, was designed not only to provide technical expertise but also to foster the development of key soft skills. Recent studies have underscored the significance of soft skills in improving employability, demonstrating that they address the gap between rigorous academic training and real-world industry expectations (Smith & Robertson, 2021).

The Linkages Manager at PHINMA University of Iloilo witnessed firsthand the disconnect between the competencies that the graduates possessed and what employers expected. This perspective was instrumental in identifying the increasing relevance of soft skills in securing employment opportunities and excelling in technology-centric positions.

Empirical evidence supported the notion that training in soft skills enhanced employability outcomes significantly. Graduates who received comprehensive soft skills training secured employment more easily and performed better at their workplaces compared

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to those who did not. Such training was invaluable in environments that demanded frequent interaction and collaboration with diverse teams (Anderson & Liu, 2020).

In an effort to meet these demands, PHINMA University of Iloilo introduced the Wadhvani Employability Network for the 2024 BSIT graduates. Employers emphasize the importance of essential soft skills such as effective communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and the ability to adapt. This program includes self-paced, video-based modules aimed at enhancing students' interpersonal skills, preparing them to navigate workforce demands effectively.

This research analyzed the experiences of BSIT graduates at PHINMA University of Iloilo regarding the soft skills training they received. It focuses on its effectiveness in enhancing employability and job performance. By exploring graduate experiences and the real-world applicability of their training, this study shed revealed the program's strengths and areas for improvement.

The findings will contribute to refining curriculum design and training programs, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared not only with advanced technical skills but also with the essential soft skills required for thriving in the evolving IT industry.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology utilized in this study. It describes the research method, research design, participants, sampling design, research instrument, data-gathering procedures, and data analysis approach.

Research Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach through in-depth interviews. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2007), the descriptive method is used to thoroughly and accurately present a given situation.

During the interview, both the interviewer and the participant will be seated at a comfortable distance, providing the interviewee with sufficient time to consider and respond to a set of topic-related questions. This process aims to gather valuable insights and perspectives on a specific issue within a social context, based on the participant's responses.

Research Design

This study utilized a phenomenological research design, a qualitative approach grounded in philosophical principles. Phenomenology seeks to explore how individuals perceive and interpret their experiences, recognizing that these perceptions may differ from commonly accepted viewpoints. This method often involves conducting interviews to gain firsthand insights and is frequently applied in disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and social work.

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Smith (2013) explains that phenomenology examines the structures of consciousness from a first-person viewpoint. A fundamental element of experience in this approach is intentionality, signifying that every experience is directed toward something—be it an object, concept, or situation. The nature of an experience is shaped by both its meaning, which defines the focus, and the conditions that allow it to take place.

Participants of the Study

For this study, a purposive sampling method was used to select nine individuals from a group of 25 graduates who successfully completed the Bachelor of Science in Information Technology program in 2024 and gained employment. These participants, all alumni of PHINMA University of Iloilo, were intentionally chosen to ensure they could provide relevant insights into the impact of their education on their professional careers.

Sampling Design

The study employed a purposive sampling approach, a non-probability sampling method where participants are intentionally selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research. According to Nikolopoulou (2023), this technique ensures that individuals chosen for the study possess characteristics that align with its objectives.

Also known as judgmental sampling, this method relies on the researcher's expertise to identify participants, cases, or situations that can provide meaningful insights. It is commonly used in qualitative and mixed-methods research, especially when the goal is to focus on information-rich cases or when resources are limited. However, due to its subjective

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nature, purposive sampling carries a potential risk of bias, such as observer bias, which researchers must carefully manage.

Research Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-designed interview schedule as its primary data collection tool.

This schedule comprised four key questions aimed at exploring various issues and concerns related to soft skills training for employability.

For documentation and data collection purposes, a voice or video recorder was used, subject to the participants' consent.

Validity of the Research Instrument

Before assessing the validity of the researcher-developed interview schedule, it was first reviewed by the adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, and a panel of experts in research, testing and assessment, and English. These experts were asked to evaluate each question for necessary revisions and improvements.

Validity refers to the accuracy, relevance, and appropriateness of the inferences drawn from the research instrument. In terms of content-related validity, the content and format of the interview schedule were examined to ensure alignment with the defined variables and the study's objectives. This process also helped confirm that the questionnaire items were appropriate and effective in gathering relevant data.

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Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher obtained the necessary permissions from the adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, the PHINMA University of Iloilo management, and the individual participants before conducting the study.

To ensure participants' comfort, the researcher personally traveled to locations convenient for them to conduct the interviews. Prior to the interviews, participants were encouraged to sign a waiver or consent form granting permission for their involvement in the study.

Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, with a voice and video recorder used—when permitted—to accurately document participants' responses. After completing the interviews, the researcher compiled and organized all the gathered data for further analysis.

Data Analyses

The collected data was examined using thematic analysis, a method used to identify recurring patterns or themes within qualitative data. According to Maguire & Delahunt (2017), thematic analysis aims to uncover meaningful or noteworthy patterns in the data, which can then be used to answer research questions or offer insights into a particular issue. This approach involved organizing, analyzing, and interpreting the data to derive meaningful conclusions.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study explored the impact of the Wadhvani Soft Skills Network (WSN) program on the employability of Bachelor of Science in Information Technology graduates from PHINMA University of Iloilo, utilizing qualitative methods to assess job readiness and professional integration.

The following are the findings revealed of the study:

Graduates significantly experienced Soft skill training as provision in seeking a job and improvement of professional skills.

The conduct of soft skills training for employability was done in an online self-paced learning modality.

Despite the motive of the soft skill training, they were hindering factors in the conduct of soft skills training for employability of BSIT graduates and founded as time of schedules and conflict and preference of in-person interaction.

The training was furnished by the facilitating factors employed in the conduct of soft skill training for employability of BSIT graduates and was significantly founded as practical applications and Skills development activity.

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CONCLUSION

In light of the findings and insights arrived at in this study, the following recommendations are forwarded:

Students should actively participate in soft skills training programs like WSN to improve their job readiness. Effective time management is crucial in balancing academic responsibilities and skill development. Seeking opportunities for hands-on training or internships can further enhance their ability to apply these skills in real-world settings.

Educators should integrate soft skills training into their lessons through interactive and practical activities. Providing guidance on communication, resume writing, and problem-solving will help students become more prepared for the workforce. A combination of online learning and face-to-face engagement can create a more effective and engaging learning experience.

The university should consider offering a hybrid approach to soft skills training to address the challenges of online learning. Organizing workshops, industry discussions, and hands-on activities can give students practical experience. Strengthening industry partnerships can also help ensure that training aligns with the evolving needs of employers.

Companies should collaborate with universities to offer mentorship, internship programs, and real-world projects that improve students' workplace skills. Involvement in curriculum development and training sessions can help ensure graduates meet industry expectations and are better prepared for their careers.

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Further studies should investigate the long-term effects of soft skills training on graduates' career growth. Research on the effectiveness of hybrid learning approaches in skill development would also be beneficial. Expanding the scope to include different fields of study can provide a more comprehensive understanding of employability training.



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