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MODIFIED BASIC SAFETY TRAINING (MBST): POLICY MANDATE, IMPLEMENTATION, AND OUTCOMES

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the Modified Basic Safety Training (MBST) program for small vessel operators in Region VI using a descriptive survey of 120 purposively selected boat captains and motormen. Findings revealed high levels of policy compliance, effective training delivery, and strong participant satisfaction, with respondents reporting notable improvements in safety awareness and disaster preparedness. Despite these positive outcomes, challenges such as English-based language barriers, limited training duration, logistical constraints, and insufficient hands-on simulations were identified. Overall, the MBST program positively influenced operators' safety practices; however, enhancements in accessibility, training design, and instructional delivery are recommended to further strengthen maritime safety initiatives for vessels 35 gross tons and below in Western Visayas.

Keywords: *Modified Basic Safety Training (MBST), maritime safety, small vessel operators, training effectiveness, safety awareness, disaster preparedness, Western Visayas, policy compliance, maritime education*

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INTRODUCTION

Maritime transportation remains a vital component of economic and social connectivity in the Philippines, particularly in archipelagic regions such as Western Visayas (Region VI). The movement of people and goods across islands relies heavily on small vessels, commonly known as *motorbancas* or pump boats, which are widely used for both fishing and passenger transport. These vessels, typically classified as 35 gross tons (GT) and below, are essential due to their affordability, accessibility, and ability to operate in short-distance coastal routes. However, despite their widespread use, *motorbancas* have been consistently linked to maritime accidents, particularly capsizing incidents, raising concerns regarding safety practices and regulatory compliance in the sector.

In Region VI, small vessels remain highly vulnerable to maritime accidents. In Antique, a fishing *motorbanca* sank 19 nautical miles off Anini-y, putting nine fishermen at risk before rescue (Philippine News Agency [PNA], 2025). In Guimaras, four fishermen survived after their *banca* capsized due to water ingress (GMA News, 2017).

Iloilo has seen repeated incidents. In Estancia, six fishermen were rescued after their *motorbanca* capsized amid strong winds and waves (Philippine Coast Guard, 2018). During Typhoon "Quinta," multiple fishing motorbancas capsized near Bagongon Island, Carles (GMA News, 2020). A motorbanca traveling from Ajuy to Negros Occidental also capsized due to rough seas (SunStar Bacolod, 2023).

Passenger *motorbancas* are similarly at risk. In Concepcion, Iloilo, a pump boat capsized following a sudden gust of wind, causing fatalities (The Philippine Star, 2008). In

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2019, three passenger *motorbancas* capsized in the Iloilo–Guimaras Strait on the same day due to monsoon winds, high waves, and collisions, prompting government intervention and stricter safety enforcement (GMA News, 2019; The Philippine Star, 2019).

These recurring incidents in Western Visayas show a clear pattern of maritime accidents among small vessels, mainly due to adverse weather, vessel instability, and human or operational errors. Human error, including poor decision-making, non-compliance with safety protocols, and inadequate emergency preparedness, remains a major concern, highlighting the need for strengthened maritime safety training. In response, the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) mandates the Modified Basic Safety Training (MBST) for seafarers, including small vessel operators. The program equips them with skills in safety awareness, emergency response, survival, fire prevention, and personal responsibility, aiming to standardize training and enhance seafarer competency.

However, despite the existence of the MBST as a regulatory requirement, the continued occurrence of maritime accidents involving *motorbancas* in Region VI raises questions regarding its effectiveness. Specifically, it remains unclear whether the policy mandate is being fully implemented at the local level, whether training programs are delivered effectively, and whether the intended learning outcomes are translated into actual safety practices among vessel operators.

This highlights the need to examine the MBST beyond its policy mandate, focusing on implementation and outcomes. This study therefore evaluated the MBST in Region VI, focusing on *motorbanca* operators, a high-risk group, to assess the effectiveness of current

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safety training and identify areas for improvement. The findings are expected to inform maritime safety policies and training programs for small vessels (≤35 GT), reducing accidents and enhancing operational safety in Western Visayas.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter discusses the research design, research method, respondents of the study, sampling design, research instrument, data gathering procedure, data analysis, and statistical tools.

Research Method

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, specifically a sequential explanatory approach, to comprehensively evaluate the Modified Basic Safety Training (MBST) framework. In the first phase, a quantitative descriptive-correlational method was utilized to assess the alignment levels among maritime training institutions and seafarers. Data was gathered using survey to adhere the satisfaction and perceived the effectiveness of training components. This quantitative phase provided a statistical baseline of how strictly the mandates are being followed across the industry (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Following the quantitative analysis, a qualitative phenomenological phase was conducted to delve into the "Outcomes" aspect of the research. Through a structured interviews with the boat captains and motormen regarding to the practical challenges of MBST implementation. This qualitative layer is crucial for identifying the hidden barriers, such as

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equipment gaps or time constraints on board, which numerical data alone might fail to highlight. By integrating both datasets, the researcher can triangulate the findings to determine if the current mandates translate into genuine safety outcomes or merely on paper compliance (Tashakkori et al., 2021).

Research Design

A descriptive research design was used for this study that identifies, describe, and analyze a given situation, particularly in this study, the roles and responsibilities of boat captains, motormen, vessel crew, and boat owners in the implementation and conduct of Modified Basic Safety Training of the Maritime Industry Authority.

The researcher used qualitative research design. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is believed to be appropriate in achieving the objective of the study (Strauss and Corbin, 2008). This method particularly determined the level of effectiveness of Modified Basic Safety Training, its policy mandates, implementation and outcomes.

Participants of the Study

The study involved a total of one hundred twenty (120) seafarers who participated in the MBST training programs conducted across different provinces in Region VI. The researcher employed purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, which allows the deliberate selection of participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the study (Palinkas et al., 2015; Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

This selection process resulted in a balanced distribution of respondents, consisting of sixty (60) boat captains and sixty (60) motormen. These participants were chosen due to their

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direct involvement in vessel operations and their experience with mandated safety training components, ensuring that the findings are grounded in relevant professional practice.

Sampling Design

This study employed purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are selected based on specific characteristics relevant to the objectives of the research.

According to John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell (2022), purposive sampling allows researchers to intentionally choose respondents who can provide the most relevant information related to the research problem.

The respondents of the study consisted of one hundred twenty (120) seafarers in Region VI, composed of sixty (60) boat captains and sixty (60) motormen who have undergone the Modified Basic Safety Training (MBST) program mandated by the Maritime Industry Authority. The participants were distributed across six provinces in Western Visayas—Capiz, Guimaras, Iloilo, Antique, Aklan, and Negros Occidental—with twenty (20) respondents from each province. This sampling design ensured that the data gathered reflected the experiences of maritime workers directly involved in vessel operations and safety training.

Research Instrument

This study utilized a dual-layered approach of data collection, integrating both primary and secondary sources to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the Modified Basic Safety Training (MBST) framework. The primary research instrument is a structured interview that enumerates the problem they encountered during the Modified Basic Safety Training. Part I

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of the instrument gathers the personal profiles of the one hundred twenty (120) respondents, while Part II focuses on the implementation and outcomes of the MBST. The closed-ended premise questions utilize a binary scale (Yes or No) to establish clear quantitative trends. These are immediately followed by a "probe questions", which allow the researcher to extract a qualitative justification.

To triangulate these findings, the study incorporated secondary data derive from institutional reports and official documentation of MBST programs and activities. This involves a rigorous desk review of existing MARINA Memorandum Circulars and Advisories, alongside internal records of MBST program accomplishments and the results of prior scholarly research on maritime safety.

Validity of the Research Instrument

The researcher-made instrument underwent a comprehensive face and content validation process to ensure it accurately measures the intended variables of policy, implementation, and outcomes. The initial draft of the interview schedule was first submitted to the research adviser for structural editing and refinement. Subsequently, the instrument was presented to a panel of expert specialized in public administration and maritime research and safety training. These experts evaluated each item for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the MARINA standards. All corrections, suggestions, and technical recommendations provided by the experts were systematically incorporated into the final version of the instrument before it proceeds to the reliability phase.

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Data Gathering Procedures

The data collection process was initiated following the formal approval of the research plan by the supervising Adviser and the Dean of the PHINMA University of Iloilo Graduate School. To ensure administrative and ethical compliance, a formal letter was transmitted to the Regional Director of MARINA Region VI, which detailed the study's objectives and provided a rigorous assurance of data confidentiality; subsequently, official permission to conduct the study was secured.

Upon receiving the approval, the researcher personally administered the validated instrument to the target participants across various locations in Region VI. In instances where specific maritime areas were geographically inaccessible, trained personnel were delegated to conduct the surveys and interviews on the researcher's behalf to ensure a comprehensive sample. Once the participants had accomplished the instruments, the copies were immediately retrieved to maintain data integrity. Finally, the gathered information was systematically tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted using appropriate statistical tools to address the research objectives.

Data Analyses

The data collected form the one hundred twenty (120) respondents were subjected to a sequential explanatory mixed-methods analysis, integrating both quantitative and qualitative techniques to ensure a holistic interpretation of the MBST program. The analysis was structured according to the specific statement of the problem as follows:

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Content Analysis. Qualitative content analysis was employed. The researcher performed a systematic desk review of official documents, specifically MARINA Memorandum Circulars, advisories, and the institutional Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives of the Maritime Industry Authority. This allowed for the identification of regulatory themes and the alignment of the MBST mandate with international STCW standards.

Thematic Analysis. For the identification of problems encountered during training, the researcher used Thematic Analysis. The "Probe Questions" were transcribed and coded to identify recurring barriers, such as logistical constraints or language barriers in the modules. This qualitative data provided the "why" behind the quantitative trends, ensuring that the study captured the lived experiences of the boat captains and motormen.

Data Triangulation. Data triangulation was utilized by the researcher to synthesize the findings of the surveys. By cross-referencing the high compliance rates of a quantitative with the identified problems in the qualitative and the MARINA mandates as the secondary data, a set of evidence-based policy recommendations was developed to enhance the future implementation of MBST in the region.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study examined the implementation of the Modified Basic Safety Training (MBST) program conducted under the Maritime Industry Authority among seafarers operating vessels of 35 gross tons (GT) and below.

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The study aimed to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents, determine the problems encountered during the implementation of the program, and provide policy recommendations that may improve the conduct of the training.

In terms of demographic characteristics, the results revealed that most of the respondents belonged to the age group 36–45 years old, followed by those aged 46–55 years old. The majority of the participants were married and all respondents were males, which reflects the male-dominated nature of seafarers onboard 35GT and below vessels. In terms of license classification, the respondents were equally distributed between Boat Captains and Motormen, with each group comprising half of the participants. Regarding educational attainment, most respondents were high school graduates, followed by elementary graduates, indicating that a considerable number of trainees have limited formal education.

The findings also revealed several problems encountered during the implementation of the MBST program. One of the most commonly reported issues was the language barrier, as many respondents had difficulty understanding lectures conducted in English. Participants expressed that the discussions and materials presented during the training were difficult to comprehend due to unfamiliar technical terms. Another concern identified was the limited duration of the training, which resulted in some topics not being fully discussed and some drills being rushed or skipped. Participants also mentioned that the compressed schedule limited their opportunity to practice the required safety skills.

In addition, the respondents identified financial, logistical, and training-related concerns. Some participants reported that attending the training required additional expenses

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for transportation, food, and other fees, which posed financial challenges. The distance of the training venue and conflicts between training schedules and fishing activities were also cited as barriers to participation. Furthermore, respondents noted issues related to the conduct of the training itself, including limited hands-on simulations, lack of realistic sea-condition drills, insufficient training equipment, and varying levels of discipline and engagement among participants.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, several conclusions were drawn.

First, the demographic profile of the respondents indicates that the majority of participants in the Modified Basic Safety Training (MBST) program are middle-aged, married males working as Boat Captains and Motormen, most of whom have completed elementary or secondary education. This suggests that the training program primarily caters to small-vessel seafarers who may have limited formal education but play vital roles in coastal transportation and fishing operations.

Second, the statistical analysis revealed that the implementation level of the MBST program was generally high. The results for the training components showed a mean score of 1.98 with a standard deviation of 0.42, which is interpreted as High. This indicates that the respondents perceive the training modules to be effectively implemented. The high rating suggests that the essential topics included in the MBST program are delivered appropriately and are relevant to the safety needs of maritime workers.

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Furthermore, the results regarding seafarers' participation showed a mean score of 1.75 with a standard deviation of 0.11, also interpreted as High. This indicates that the respondents demonstrated a strong level of engagement and involvement in the MBST program. Active participation during training sessions is crucial, as it enhances the learning experience and helps participants better understand and apply the safety procedures being taught.

Third, the findings showed that the training program contributed significantly to improving the respondents' safety awareness and disaster preparedness. Both variables obtained a mean score of 2.00 with a standard deviation of 0.00, suggesting unanimous agreement among respondents that the training enhanced their understanding of maritime safety procedures and their readiness to respond to emergencies at sea. In addition, training satisfaction obtained a mean score of 1.98 with a standard deviation of 0.07, indicating that participants were generally satisfied with the relevance, content, and delivery of the program conducted by the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA).

However, despite the positive assessment of the program, the study identified several challenges encountered during implementation. Notable issues included language barriers, limited training duration, financial constraints, the distance of training venues, and insufficient hands-on simulations. Some respondents experienced difficulty understanding lectures conducted in English, while others reported that the short training period limited their ability to fully absorb the lessons and practice essential safety skills. These challenges suggest a

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need for improvements in training delivery, accessibility, and instructional approaches to maximize the program's effectiveness.

Overall, the study concludes that while the MBST program plays a significant role in strengthening maritime safety awareness and preparedness among small-vessel operators, addressing these identified operational challenges will further enhance its impact and efficacy.

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