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Capacitating the Resorts Personnel in the Performance of Recreational Water Safety in the Province of Cebu

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Abstract
Aim: This study aimed to assess the proficiency of resorts personnel in Cebu Province in performing recreational water safety, specifically in water rescue, water safety, and basic life support, in order to determine competency gaps and propose appropriate training interventions.
Methodology: A total of 207 resort employees directly involved in leisure and aquatic activities served as respondents, while eight representatives from different Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) units as expert participants. Data were gathered through expert interviews and scenario-based examinations.
Results: Findings revealed deficiencies in key components of recreational water safety, particularly in advanced water rescue techniques and standardized life-saving protocols. These gaps highlight the need for specialized and comprehensive training modules aligned with maritime and tourism safety standards.
Conclusion: Strengthening the skills of resort personnel through structured training programs will significantly reduce the risks of maritime and aquatic incidents in Cebu. Future studies are recommended to expand the scope nationwide to enhance the country's overall capacity in recreational water safety.
Keywords: *Recreational Water Safety, Lifesaving Competencies, Resorts Personnel Training, Maritime Safety, Philippine Coast Guard*

INTRODUCTION

The Philippines, being an archipelagic nation, relies heavily on its coastal and maritime resources for both economic and recreational purposes. As marine tourism continues to expand, recreational water safety emerges as a crucial concern, particularly in popular destinations such as Cebu Province. Risk-taking recreational activities—including diving, boating, and other aquatic sports—attract both domestic and foreign tourists but also heighten the risks of drowning, accidents, and maritime-related injuries. Ensuring safety in these contexts requires more than what the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) can provide, creating a demand for well-trained resorts personnel to act as frontliners in aquatic safety (Congress of the Philippines, 2009; Philippine Coast Guard, 2021).

Globally, countries like Australia have strengthened their recreational water safety frameworks through legislation such as the *Safety in Recreational Water Activities Act of 2011*. Likewise, scholars such as Moran and Wilcox (2013) highlight the importance of proactive safety training in reducing water-related accidents, while the International Life Saving Federation (2022) underscores the role of local lifesaving societies in raising standards through training and certification. Despite these global advances, the Philippines faces persistent challenges in aligning local practices with international standards. In particular, resorts personnel—composed of lifeguards, dive masters, boat crew, tour guides, and lookouts—often lack standardized training in lifesaving, water rescue, and emergency response (American Lifeguard Association, 2023).

Cebu Province, one of the country's leading tourist destinations, exemplifies this challenge. Studies note that while Cebu is highly competitive in terms of tourism, sustainability and safety remain recurring concerns that affect

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its long-term development (Abocejo, 2014; Basallo, 2019). The increasing influx of tourists and the province's reliance on coastal recreation heighten the need to strengthen the competence of personnel involved in water safety. However, current practices show wide disparities in preparedness, with many first responders lacking structured training in water safety protocols and life support measures. These gaps compromise not only individual safety but also the broader reputation of Cebu's tourism industry (Loperez-Abellana, 2017).

This study addresses the gap by assessing the proficiency of resorts personnel in Cebu in performing recreational water safety, water rescue, and basic life support. By comparing their existing skills with standards set by maritime and tourism authorities, the study identifies specific deficiencies that require targeted intervention. The research further incorporates the perspectives of PCG experts to validate competency requirements and ensure the alignment of proposed training with national safety frameworks (Philippine Red Cross, 2025).

The study is significant in both academic and practical terms. Academically, it contributes to the limited literature on competency-based assessments of resorts personnel in the Philippine context. Practically, it supports the creation of tailored training programs that will enhance the capacity of resorts personnel to serve as effective first responders, thereby complementing the efforts of the PCG. More broadly, the study advances the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life Below Water) by promoting safer recreational practices and sustainable maritime tourism.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Roger Kaufman's Training Needs Assessment (TNA) model, which defines training needs as gaps between current and desired outcomes. TNA provides a systematic process to identify skill deficiencies, design relevant training programs, and align them with organizational goals. In this research, the framework is applied to evaluate the competencies of resorts personnel in Cebu Province in relation to recreational water safety.

The model emphasizes five stages: (1) identifying existing problems and organizational needs, (2) determining essential information and designing the needs analysis, (3) collecting data through appropriate tools, (4) analyzing results to reveal competency gaps, and (5) providing feedback and recommendations for action. This framework is particularly relevant as it highlights not only the detection of skill deficiencies but also the formulation of strategic training interventions. By using TNA, the study situates recreational water safety within a structured model that integrates assessment, analysis, and program design.

Conceptual Framework

Guided by the TNA framework, this study conceptualizes the development of resorts personnel as a process of capacitation through structured training in recreational water safety. Resort owners and managers serve as enablers by ensuring their staff—lifeguards, dive masters, boat crew, tour guides and lookouts—are adequately trained to function as first responders during aquatic activities.

The conceptual framework follows the five TNA stages in the context of Cebu's tourism sector: identifying gaps in recreational water safety, gathering data on personnel competencies and resort practices, analyzing deficiencies through quantitative and qualitative approaches, and formulating training recommendations. This process is designed to bridge the gap between current practices and internationally recognized safety standards.

Ultimately, the framework illustrates how assessing present competencies and addressing gaps through targeted training will enhance the preparedness of resorts personnel, reduce the risks of maritime accidents, and promote safer and more sustainable coastal tourism in Cebu Province.

Statement of the Problem

Recreational water safety is a critical concern in Cebu Province, one of the country's top tourist destinations. Despite the growing demand for aquatic leisure activities, many resorts personnel lack adequate skills in water safety, water rescue, and basic life support. This competency gap poses risks not only to the safety of tourists but also to the sustainability of Cebu's marine tourism industry. While the Philippine Coast Guard has existing training

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standards, there remains limited evidence on how resort personnel's current competencies align with these requirements. Addressing this problem is urgent to ensure that frontliners in aquatic recreation are properly capacitated to prevent accidents and save lives.

Research Objectives

General Objective:

To assess the training needs of resorts personnel in Cebu Province in relation to recreational water safety.

Specific Objectives:

1. To identify the skills required of resorts personnel in water safety, water rescue, and basic life support.
2. To assess the current skills of resorts personnel in these areas.
3. To determine the gaps between required and existing skills.
4. To propose Philippine Coast Guard–aligned training course content that addresses the identified gaps.

Research Questions

1. What skills are required of resorts personnel involved in recreational water safety?
   1.1 Water Safety
   1.2 Water Rescue
   1.3 Basic Life Support
2. What are the current skills of resorts personnel in Cebu on recreational water safety?
3. What are the gaps in the skills of resorts personnel in Cebu on recreational water safety?
4. What Philippine Coast Guard training course content can be proposed to address these gaps?

Research Design

The study employed a mixed-methods research design**,** specifically the convergent parallel design, which combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This design allowed the researcher to collect quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, analyze them separately, and then merge the results for triangulation. Such an approach provided a more comprehensive understanding of how resorts personnel could be capacitated in the performance of recreational water safety in the Province of Cebu. The design was deemed appropriate because the study required not only statistical evidence of proficiency but also expert insights to contextualize and interpret the findings.

Population and Sampling

Two groups of participants were involved in the study. The first group consisted of 207 resorts personnel currently employed in various resorts across the Province of Cebu. They were directly engaged in recreational water activities such as lifeguarding, boat operations, diving assistance, and tour guiding. This group was selected using simple random sampling to ensure that each eligible staff member had an equal chance of being included, thereby improving representativeness of the results.

The second group comprised eight representatives from the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) who were considered subject matter experts in maritime and recreational water safety. These included the Station Commanders of Coast Guard Stations Northern Cebu, Central Cebu, Southern Cebu, and Camotes, as well as the Commanders of the Maritime Safety Service Unit–Central Visayas, Recreational Safety Unit–Central Visayas, and Civil Relations Service–Central Visayas. Additionally, one Auxiliary Officer from the Philippine Coast Guard Auxiliary (PCGA) with designation related to recreational safety was included. This group was selected through purposive expert sampling because of their direct experience and authority in implementing maritime safety measures in Cebu.

Instrument

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Two research instruments were used in the study. For the qualitative strand, a semi-structured interview guide was prepared for the PCG representatives. The guide consisted of five open-ended questions that sought their perspectives, experiences, and recommendations on capacitating resorts personnel in recreational water safety.

For the quantitative strand, a scenario-based examination with 30 questions was administered to resorts personnel. The instrument assessed their proficiency in three critical areas: Water Safety, Water Rescue, and Basic Life Support (BLS). It also collected demographic and background information, including age, gender, educational attainment, role in the resort, and workplace details.

Validation of Instruments

Both instruments underwent rigorous validation. The interview guide was reviewed by a panel of three validators: two PCG officers with expertise in maritime safety and one academic member of the PCGA. They ensured that the questions were free from ambiguity, bias, and leading tendencies.

The scenario-based examination was validated by the Dean of the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy (PMMA) Graduate School, three thesis panel members, and a statistician. A test–retest reliability procedure was also conducted, yielding a correlation coefficient of 0.52**,** which indicated moderate reliability. Feedback from the validators led to revisions in question phrasing, clarity, and alignment with the study objectives.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted in Cebu between resorts and Coast Guard stations. For the qualitative strand, the researcher scheduled interviews with PCG representatives at their respective offices or agreed venues. After securing informed consent, the interviews were conducted using the validated guide, and responses were recorded with permission.

For the quantitative strand, the scenario-based examinations were distributed in person to resorts personnel. The Coast Guard Sub-Stations assisted in identifying resorts offering recreational water activities and in coordinating with resort managers. Respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study before answering the examination. Completed forms were retrieved immediately to ensure accuracy and completeness.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data from expert interviews were transcribed, coded, and thematically analyzed. Key ideas were clustered into categories that highlighted gaps, challenges, and recommendations in recreational water safety practices.

The quantitative data from the scenario-based examination were encoded, tabulated, and statistically treated. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency counts and percentages, were used to measure the proficiency levels of resorts personnel in water safety, water rescue, and BLS. Graphical presentations were employed to illustrate the findings.

To address the convergent parallel design, the results of both qualitative and quantitative strands were merged and compared. The expert perspectives from PCG validated and explained the quantitative findings on personnel proficiency. For example, identified deficiencies in BLS were corroborated by PCG experts' observations on inadequate resort-level training. This integration strengthened the credibility and depth of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research standards. Prior to participation, respondents and interviewees were informed about the study's objectives, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any point. Written and verbal consent were obtained from all participants, and additional permission was secured from resort owners for their employees' participation.

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Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly observed. Data were reported in aggregate form, and no personally identifiable information was disclosed. Interviews were conducted at the convenience of the participants, ensuring voluntary participation. The study followed the ethical guidelines of the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy Graduate School.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings derived from data mining, expert interviews, and scenario-based examinations. Results are discussed alongside relevant literature to ensure coherence with the research objectives.

Profile of Respondents

Two sets of respondents participated in this study: (1) representatives of different Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) units in Cebu, and (2) resorts personnel engaged in recreational water activities in the Province of Cebu.

Eight representatives from various PCG units were selected based on their assignments and expertise in maritime safety and recreational water safety. The participants included four Coast Guard Station Commanders, two Maritime Safety Services Unit Commanders, one Civil Relations Service Officer, and one Philippine Coast Guard Auxiliary (PCGA) Officer. Their specialized functions allowed them to provide expert insights into the enforcement of recreational water safety, consistent with the mandates under Republic Act No. 9993 or the Philippine Coast Guard Law of 2009 (Congress of the Philippines, 2009; Philippine Coast Guard, 2021).

Meanwhile, 207 resorts personnel were randomly selected from several resorts across Cebu. They participated in a scenario-based examination designed to assess their knowledge and competencies in water safety. The distribution showed that 98 respondents (47%) were from Coast Guard Station Northern Cebu, 31 (15%) from Central Cebu, 55 (27%) from Southern Cebu, and 23 (11%) from Camotes.

Roles of PCG Representatives

The Maritime Safety Services Unit Commanders emphasized their responsibility for overseeing safety measures and ensuring personnel proficiency. The Civil Relations Service Officer highlighted community engagement and stakeholder training, while the PCGA Officer discussed auxiliary support in formulating and implementing recreational water safety policies. These expert views reinforced the need for structured collaboration between PCG and resorts personnel to strengthen preventive and emergency response mechanisms (Philippine Coast Guard Auxiliary, 2021; BSI, 2025).

Water Safety Assessment

The water safety assessment of resorts personnel revealed promising results. Table 5 presents the distribution of correct responses across ten core questions.

Most respondents demonstrated strong knowledge of water safety practices. For example, 93.75% correctly identified the use of life jackets for non-swimmers, indicating high awareness of preventive safety measures. Similarly, 87.02% correctly recognized cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) as an essential emergency skill, and 87.98% emphasized leaving the water during thunderstorms. These findings highlight the personnel's capacity to mitigate risks through preventive advisories. Comparable trends were also noted in lifeguard and lifesaving training studies, where preparedness is linked to structured instruction and certification (American Lifeguard Association, 2023; HSS Health and Safety Solutions, 2023).

Above 80% of respondents also provided correct answers related to marine life hazards (81.73%), fast-flowing rivers (82.69%), and avoiding areas near watercraft (82.21%). These results align with previous research noting the importance of environmental risk awareness among tourism-based staff (Aquino & Lim, 2023) and echo

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Moran and Wilcox's (2013) findings that proactive safety education significantly reduces risks in aquatic environments.

However, certain areas reflected weaker competencies. While 79.33% knew proper diving protocols, only 73.08% responded correctly regarding swimming in unclear water conditions, and 76.44% provided accurate advice for guests with children and non-swimmers. These suggest that enhanced training is needed for nuanced decision-making and guest supervision, echoing the findings of Santos and Rivera (2022), who stressed the need for continuous training in situational water safety.

The most critical concern emerged in question 7: "What should you advise swimmers if they find themselves in a water emergency?" Only 51.92% answered correctly, revealing deficiencies in emergency response readiness. This gap indicates that while preventive awareness is high, resorts personnel lack sufficient lifesaving and self-rescue competencies. Similar observations were made by Dela Cruz (2021), who argued that knowledge of emergency response protocols among recreation staff in the Philippines remains limited without structured training. The World Health Organization (2021) further emphasizes that effective lifesaving and emergency procedures are critical components of safe recreational water environments.

Overall, the average correct response rate was 79.61%. While favorable, this underscores the urgent need to address the identified gaps in water rescue and basic life support skills through targeted training programs (Philippine Red Cross, 2025).

Identified Skill Domains

Expert interviews with PCG representatives identified three key skill domains required for resorts personnel:

- Water Safety – lifeguarding, risk management, and knowledge of maritime laws and regulations.
- Water Rescue – lifesaving skills, use of equipment, and water search and rescue procedures.
- Basic Life Support – CPR, basic communication, crisis management, and emergency action planning.

The scenario-based assessment revealed that resorts personnel demonstrated strong knowledge of preventive water safety measures (average 79.61% correct), but lacked sufficient competence in water rescue and basic life support, with correct response rates falling below 60% in these areas.

The identified skills gaps closely aligned with the recommendations from PCG experts, confirming the need for structured training to ensure readiness for both prevention and emergency response (MSS Business Solutions, 2024).

Conclusions

The study concluded that resorts personnel in Cebu generally possess knowledge of preventive safety but lack sufficient lifesaving and first aid skills. This imbalance suggests that while they can advise guests on risk avoidance, they may be unprepared to handle emergencies effectively. The comparison between current skills and required competencies indicates a significant gap, particularly in water rescue and basic life support.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study offers the following recommendations:

Development of a Training Program**.** A comprehensive training program may be developed by the Philippine Coast Guard to strengthen resorts personnel's competencies across the three domains of water safety, water rescue, and basic life support.

Implementation of the Training Course**.** Once developed, the program may be conducted in collaboration with resorts to ensure staff acquire both preventive and emergency response competencies.

Expansion Beyond Cebu**.** Following its implementation in Cebu, the program may be replicated in other provinces and regions to standardize recreational water safety training nationwide.

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Use as Reference**.** This study may serve as a baseline for future research on recreational water safety, maritime safety training, and tourism-related risk management.

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