

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TOURISM STUDENTS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Tourism education in the Philippines had grown significantly with 418 institutions offering courses in tourism and hospitality management. However, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted traditional teaching methods, leading to the adoption of online, offline, and blended learning modalities. CHED mandated the resumption of in-person or hybrid learning models by 2022-2023. This study aimed to explore the experiences of tourism students and develop a comprehensive career program for Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management (BSTM) students, contributing valuable insights to the field of tourism education. The researchers used phenomenological research and a semi-structured questionnaire as their primary data-gathering tool, which was created and validated by experts in the field. This study offered insights into the BSTM program at Richwell Colleges, aiming to improve the program's strengths and areas for development, preparing students for successful tourism careers. The study suggested that the BSTM program could be improved by enhancing self-reflection skills, building a strong support network, and promoting industry exposure and career exploration. To support student well-being, the program could establish peer mentoring programs, provide personalized academic support, and promote resources like the library and tutoring services. Teachers should also consider periodic curriculum reviews to ensure the program remains aligned with the evolving needs of the tourism industry. Faculty development opportunities, such as workshops on self-reflection and training sessions on integrating technology and industry trends, could also enhance the program's effectiveness. Active learning and engagement such as case studies and project-based learning could further enhance student engagement. Teachers could provide regular feedback and encourage self-reflection as a coping mechanism, empowering students to take a more active role in their learning journey.

Keywords: *Tourism Education, Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management, Tourism Students, Guidance*
