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## Strategic talent development and its role in enhancing organizational competitiveness

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### Abstract

This study aims to design a comprehensive soft skills training framework to address competency gaps among administrative personnel in Cabanatuan City, Philippines. A descriptive quantitative research design was used, with data gathered from 98 purposively selected administrative staff. The survey focused on key soft skills, including communication, stress management, leadership, teamwork, and conflict resolution. Results revealed high training needs in communication and stress management, with demographic factors like age and tenure influencing skill gaps. Barriers such as limited time and weak institutional support were also identified. A five-module training program was developed to address these needs through scenario-based and practical learning. Targeted soft skills training can significantly enhance employee productivity, job satisfaction, and overall organizational performance when implemented with institutional support and flexibility. Organizations should integrate flexible, structured training programs into their strategic development plans to build a resilient and adaptive workforce, particularly in fast-paced urban administrative environments.

**Keywords:** Administrative personnel, Communication, Conflict resolution, Leadership, Soft skills, Stress management, Training needs, Workforce development.

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**Transparency:** The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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### 1. Introduction

Employee training and development are critical for enhancing organizational success, especially in fast-paced urban areas such as Cabanatuan City, where workforce capability, adaptability, and motivation are central to achieving institutional goals [1]. Investing in human capital not only improves operational efficiency but also cultivates a resilient workforce prepared to handle evolving workplace demands [1]. Although administrative personnel often work behind the scenes, they are instrumental in shaping organizational culture and ensuring operational efficiency. Training programs tailored to their

needs—focusing on practical applications like stress management, conflict resolution, and communication skills—equip these employees with essential tools to thrive in their roles [2]. Effective communication training, for example, reduces misunderstandings and fosters collaboration [3].

Flexible training modalities, such as online modules and modular formats, can also improve accessibility for busy administrative personnel [4]. This is particularly relevant in the context of remote work and changing job demands, as these formats help sustain employee engagement and satisfaction [5]. Continuous professional development does not only bridge skill gaps but also establishes an organization's reputation as a leader in workforce excellence, ensuring long-term sustainability [6]. Regular evaluations of training programs further refine their effectiveness and relevance, maximizing their impact on both individual and institutional performance [7].

Literature consistently highlights the positive impact of structured training programs on employee performance, satisfaction, and retention [8, 9]. Targeted training initiatives have been shown to enhance employees' ability to navigate workplace challenges, foster collaboration, and adapt to evolving organizational needs. For instance, Palikhe and Thapa [8] emphasize the alignment between structured training and improved performance outcomes, while Cahyati [9] underscores the importance of practical execution in driving productivity.

However, despite the well-documented benefits of training, gaps persist in addressing the specific needs of administrative personnel, particularly in localized urban settings like Cabanatuan City [10]. notes the contextual variability of training effectiveness, while Sinaga and Riyanto [11] explain that the success of training programs often depends on how well they align with employees' roles and institutional contexts. Handayani [12] and Aktar [13] further highlight that training must go beyond technical skills to consider motivational factors and organizational commitment, key elements in boosting employee engagement and retention.

Addressing these gaps requires customized programs that acknowledge the unique roles of administrative personnel. Mulyapradana et al. [14] and Nor [15] support the design of role-specific training to foster competency and satisfaction. The complexity of modern workplaces demands not only technical skills but also soft skills such as conflict resolution, stress management, and effective communication, amplifying the importance of targeted training [16, 17]. For instance, peer mediation training improves conflict resolution capabilities, while coaching behaviors foster boundary-spanning and elevate job satisfaction [16, 17].

Moreover, as Cahyati [9] reiterates, effective training implementation is key to optimizing productivity. In high-demand urban environments, these programs become indispensable, particularly for administrative personnel who serve as organizational backbones. Investing in such training contributes not only to short-term efficiency but also to long-term workforce retention and institutional excellence [8].

This study employs a descriptive quantitative methodology to explore the training needs of 98 administrative personnel in Cabanatuan City. It analyzes their experiences and challenges to propose a comprehensive training program tailored to enhance communication, stress management, leadership development, teamwork, and conflict resolution skills. These competencies are indispensable for administrative roles that demand multitasking, coordination, and interaction with diverse stakeholders.

The literature provides robust support for training programs that develop these areas. Ayudo [18] demonstrates the correlation between structured training and improved performance and retention, while Kajwang [19] emphasizes the importance of training needs assessments. Leadership training, as highlighted by Kumar et al. [20] and Park et al. [21], is also essential in building strong internal team dynamics.

Addressing these critical competencies, the proposed training initiative aims to bridge the knowledge gap in administrative personnel development, thereby enhancing organizational effectiveness. Stewart and Preiksaitis [22] affirm the value of soft skills training in improving workplace relationships and productivity. Santos [23] highlights the role of organizational commitment in mediating training outcomes. The combined insights from these studies support the formulation of a training framework that aligns with organizational goals and employee aspirations.

This study contributes to strategic human resource development by offering actionable recommendations to foster a skilled, adaptable, and engaged administrative workforce. By prioritizing soft skill development, organizations in Cabanatuan City and similar urban environments can navigate the complexities of modern business landscapes with resilience and excellence.

## **2. Research Methodology**

This study utilized a descriptive quantitative research design to systematically evaluate the training and development needs of administrative personnel. The approach enabled the structured collection and analysis of numerical data to identify patterns and insights related to employee training and its impact on organizational success. The respondents for this research were 98 administrative personnel within the city of Cabanatuan, selected through purposive sampling to ensure their relevance to the study objectives. Criteria for inclusion included active employment in administrative roles and involvement in organizational operations where training and development opportunities were applicable. Demographic data such as age, educational background, and years of experience were collected to contextualize the findings and provide a comprehensive profile of the workforce. Data collection was conducted using a validated structured questionnaire, which was designed to assess various aspects of employee training. The instrument included sections on current skill levels, perceived gaps in knowledge, and areas for improvement. Specific focus areas covered key competencies such as conflict resolution, stress management, leadership, teamwork, and communication. Responses were recorded on a Likert scale to measure the degree of need or agreement across these training topics. Prior to full implementation, the questionnaire was pilot-tested on a smaller sample to ensure its clarity, reliability, and validity. The primary variables examined in this study were the perceived training

needs of administrative personnel, identified as the independent variable, and organizational success metrics, including employee satisfaction, productivity, and operational efficiency, identified as the dependent variables. These variables were operationalized by examining the responses on the Likert scale and deriving specific indicators from participant feedback and relevant organizational data. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize and interpret the findings. Measures such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution were employed to provide a clear overview of the training needs and demographic characteristics of the respondents. This analysis offered valuable insights into the priority areas for training and the potential impact on organizational outcomes. Ethical considerations were a critical component of this research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were allowed to withdraw at any stage without any repercussions. Data were securely stored and used solely for research purposes, ensuring adherence to ethical standards throughout the study.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

#### *3.1. Demographic Variations in Training Needs*

The analysis of training needs across different demographic groups revealed distinct patterns, highlighting the varying priorities based on age and tenure. Personnel aged 25–35 years exhibited a pronounced need for leadership development, with a mean score of 3.85, reflecting their ambitions to assume more significant roles and responsibilities within the organization. Stress management also emerged as a critical area for this age group, scoring a mean of 3.80, likely due to the challenges they face in balancing career growth with workplace pressures. These findings suggest that younger administrative personnel are keen to develop skills that enhance their ability to lead effectively and manage stress in dynamic environments. Respondents aged 36–50 years placed greater emphasis on communication skills and teamwork, with mean scores of 3.90 and 3.78, respectively. This focus underscores the importance of effective collaboration and interpersonal relationships for individuals at this career stage, who may already occupy mid-level administrative roles requiring frequent interaction with colleagues, stakeholders, and subordinates. These results indicate that as employees advance in their careers, their priorities shift towards fostering stronger connections and maintaining a harmonious and productive work environment. An analysis of tenure further emphasized the disparities in training needs. Employees with less than five years of experience reported a higher overall training need, with a mean score of 3.85, compared to 3.65 for those with longer tenure. This variation reflects the challenges faced by newer personnel as they adapt to organizational structures, workflows, and expectations. Targeted training programs for this group can accelerate their integration and equip them with the necessary skills to perform confidently and efficiently in their roles. The variations in training needs across demographic groups necessitate tailored training programs that address the unique requirements of employees based on age and tenure. For younger employees, leadership development initiatives that integrate real-life scenarios and mentorship opportunities are essential for cultivating their potential as future leaders [24]. Additionally, stress management workshops focusing on practical resilience strategies can significantly enhance their capacity to navigate challenging work environments [25]. Mid-career personnel benefit from advanced communication and collaborative training, which strengthens their engagement with teams and stakeholders, thereby fostering a cohesive work environment aligned with organizational goals. However, the evidence regarding the effectiveness of tailored versus standardized training is nuanced, with some studies suggesting that standardized training may be equally effective in certain contexts [26]. For newer employees, especially those with less than five years of tenure, comprehensive onboarding programs are crucial. These programs should emphasize fundamental competencies such as teamwork, conflict resolution, and effective communication to promote a culture of continuous learning [27, 28]. By aligning training initiatives with the specific needs of each demographic group, organizations can cultivate a skilled, confident, and motivated workforce, ultimately driving organizational success [29, 30].

#### *3.2. Assessment of Training Needs*

The evaluation of training needs highlighted critical areas requiring development among administrative personnel, with an overall mean score of 3.75 out of 4 reflecting substantial gaps in key competencies. Communication skills emerged as the top priority, achieving a mean score of 3.88, signifying their importance in fostering effective collaboration, clear information dissemination, and productive workplace relationships. Stress management followed closely, with a mean score of 3.82, underscoring the necessity for personnel to navigate high-pressure situations with resilience and composure. Leadership development, teamwork, and conflict resolution ranked third, fourth, and fifth, with scores of 3.78, 3.74, and 3.62, respectively, indicating the need for skill-building in guiding teams, fostering synergy, and resolving disputes constructively. The disaggregated data revealed that 70% of respondents considered communication skills and stress management as essential for their roles. This highlights the urgency of addressing these gaps, particularly in urban organizational settings like Cabanatuan City, where the dynamic and diverse demands of administrative functions necessitate advanced competencies. Furthermore, the relatively lower scores for conflict resolution suggest a potential gap in perceiving its criticality, which could require additional awareness and emphasis in training program design. The evolving demands of administrative roles in urban environments, such as those in Cabanatuan City, necessitate a strong emphasis on communication skills and stress management. Enhanced communication skills are crucial for minimizing misunderstandings and improving interdepartmental coordination, thereby fostering a collaborative culture essential for operational excellence [31]. Concurrently, prioritizing stress management is vital in addressing the challenges posed by fast-paced work environments, which contributes to individual well-being and overall organizational efficiency [32]. Moreover, the aspiration among administrative personnel for leadership development and teamwork is evident, as indicated by their relatively high scores in these areas. This reflects a desire to take on more significant roles in driving team performance [33]. However, the comparatively lower score in

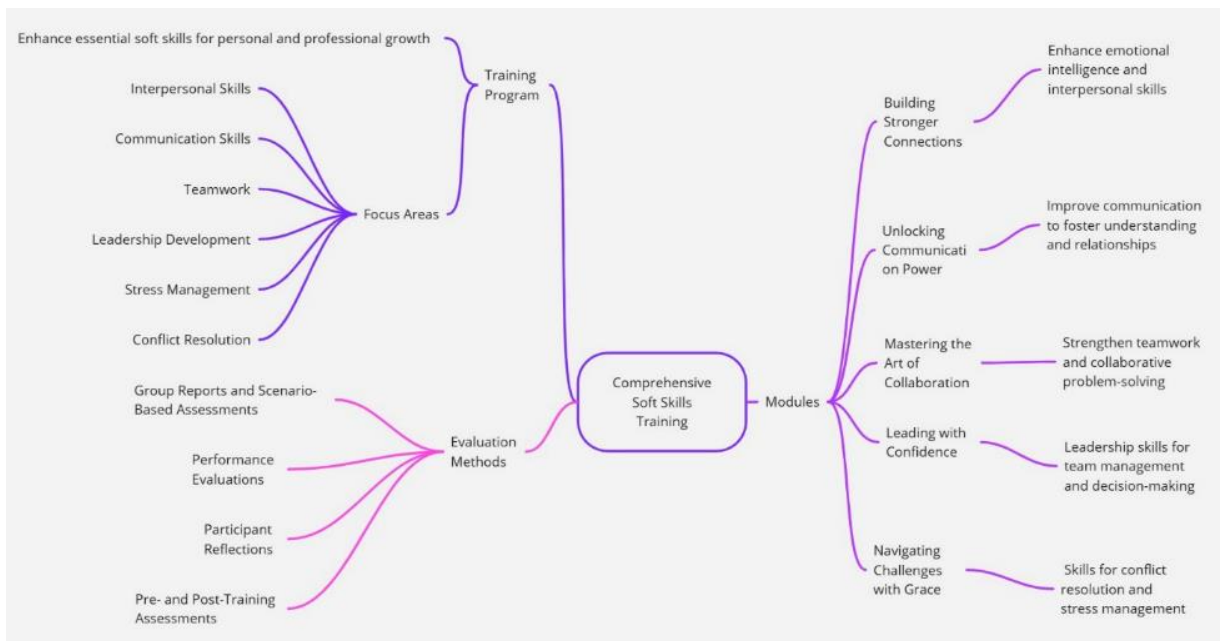
conflict resolution suggests a need for targeted training in this area. While conflict resolution may not be perceived as urgent, integrating it into professional development programs can prepare personnel to handle disputes effectively as they arise [34]. A structured, competency-focused training program that addresses these gaps can significantly enhance the productivity and adaptability of the administrative workforce, aligning with strategic goals and fostering a culture of continuous improvement [35].

### *3.3. Perceived Impact on Organizational Success*

The respondents provided clear quantitative insights into how addressing training needs could positively influence organizational performance and outcomes. A substantial 90% of respondents agreed that enhancing communication skills would significantly improve operational efficiency, highlighting the central role that clear and effective communication plays in minimizing errors, streamlining workflows, and fostering collaboration across departments. Similarly, 85% of participants emphasized that stress management training would boost productivity, reflecting the critical need to equip employees with strategies to handle workplace pressures and maintain focus on their tasks. Leadership development was identified by 78% of respondents as vital to fostering a more cohesive and motivated workforce. This demonstrates that administrative personnel recognize the importance of strong leadership in creating a positive organizational culture, inspiring teams, and ensuring alignment with strategic goals. Respondents also anticipated specific quantitative outcomes from implementing effective training programs. These included a projected 20% improvement in operational efficiency, a 25% increase in employee productivity, and a 30% boost in overall job satisfaction. These figures underscore the transformative potential of targeted skill enhancement initiatives, not only for individual performance but also for the broader organizational ecosystem. Addressing training needs is strategically vital for human capital development, particularly in enhancing communication skills, which serve as a foundation for operational efficiency. Improved communication ensures employees are aligned and informed, enabling them to execute their roles effectively [36]. Stress management training is equally crucial, as it directly contributes to maintaining productivity by reducing burnout and fostering a supportive work environment, empowering employees to navigate challenges [37, 38]. Leadership development emerges as a key factor in sustaining a motivated workforce, with strong leaders fostering trust and collaboration, thereby driving organizational growth [39]. The anticipated improvements in operational metrics, such as efficiency and job satisfaction, underscore the cascading benefits of comprehensive training programs on both individual and organizational levels [40]. To fully leverage these opportunities, organizations must integrate training initiatives into their strategic planning, aligning training objectives with organizational goals. This alignment is essential for building a resilient, adaptable, and high-performing workforce, ultimately positioning the organization as a leader in workforce excellence and innovation [41, 42].

### *3.4. Barriers to Implementing Training Programs*

While the benefits of training programs are widely acknowledged, the study revealed significant barriers that could hinder their effective implementation. Limited availability of time was the most commonly cited challenge, reported by 65% of respondents, reflecting the competing priorities and demanding workloads of administrative personnel. This constraint highlights the difficulty of dedicating uninterrupted periods for skill development amidst daily operational responsibilities. Additionally, 40% of respondents noted a lack of sufficient organizational support for professional development initiatives. This included limited resources allocated to training programs, insufficient encouragement from leadership, and a lack of structured systems to integrate learning opportunities into employees' schedules. These findings suggest that while there is an awareness of the value of training, there remains a gap in institutional commitment to fostering a culture of continuous learning. Addressing barriers to effective training requires a strategic and holistic approach that includes flexible training schedules and securing institutional commitment. Organizations can mitigate time constraints by adopting modular training programs, short online courses, or hybrid learning approaches, which allow employees to participate without disrupting their workflow [43]. Such flexibility not only accommodates varying schedules but also enhances employee engagement and retention in training programs [4]. Securing institutional commitment is equally critical. Organizations must prioritize professional development by integrating it into their strategic plans and allocating adequate resources for execution. Leadership involvement is essential to champion the importance of training and to foster an environment that values growth and development [44]. This can include clear policies on training leave, incentives for participation, and regular performance reviews linked to development goals [45, 46]. By proactively addressing these barriers, organizations can maximize the impact of their training initiatives, enhancing employee satisfaction and overall organizational success. This commitment to professional development not only addresses current skill gaps but also positions the organization as a leader in workforce excellence and innovation [47, 48].



**Figure 1.**  
Comprehensive Soft Skills Training.

### 3.5. Development of a Comprehensive Training Proposal

In response to identified training needs, a comprehensive training program was meticulously developed to address the competency gaps highlighted in the study. As illustrated in Fig. 1, the program emphasizes five core focus areas: interpersonal skills, communication skills, teamwork, leadership development, stress management, and conflict resolution. These focus areas are critical for enhancing the personal and professional growth of employees, equipping them with essential tools to navigate workplace challenges effectively. The program integrates structured modules, each providing four hours of targeted training, and employs a blend of lectures, interactive workshops, and reflective activities to ensure maximum learning outcomes. This structure ensures participants acquire not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills that can be directly applied to their roles. The training methodology was informed by respondent preferences, with 85% agreeing that practical, scenario-based approaches significantly enhance engagement and skill retention. These methods include role-playing exercises, real-world simulations, and group discussions, enabling participants to actively apply concepts in a controlled environment. This hands-on approach fosters a deeper understanding and builds confidence in utilizing newly acquired skills. The five core modules are specifically designed to address the key competency gaps. The first module, "Navigating Challenges with Grace," focuses on conflict resolution and stress management to help participants maintain composure and productivity under pressure. The second, "Leading with Confidence," empowers leaders by developing skills in team management, cohesion, and strategic decision-making. The third module, "Mastering the Art of Collaboration," strengthens teamwork and collaborative problem-solving, while the fourth, "Unlocking Communication Power," enhances communication skills to improve relationships and understanding. The final module, "Building Stronger Connections," develops emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills to foster better collaboration and professional relationships. Evaluation methods for the program include pre- and post-training assessments to measure knowledge and skill improvement, participant reflections for qualitative insights, and performance evaluations using scenario-based assessments to evaluate the practical application of skills in workplace settings. The program directly addresses the diverse and critical needs of administrative personnel. Modules on stress management and conflict resolution enable participants to maintain composure and effectiveness, while leadership and teamwork modules cultivate motivational and collaborative skills to foster a cohesive work environment. Emphasis on communication skills is vital for operational efficiency, minimizing misunderstandings, and fostering stronger interpersonal relationships, as highlighted in prior research [49, 50]. The training program aligns with organizational objectives to build a skilled and adaptable workforce while demonstrating a commitment to employee professional growth and well-being. By integrating these modules into organizational practices, institutions can establish a sustainable framework for continuous improvement, ultimately enhancing individual and collective performance [51]. Furthermore, the program's strategic implementation is expected to improve employee satisfaction, retention, and reduce workplace conflicts and stress-related issues, creating a more harmonious and productive environment [52]. This proactive approach reflects a deep understanding of workplace complexities and the necessity for continuous development [27]. As a comprehensive initiative, the program fosters a culture of learning and improvement, positioning organizations as leaders in workforce excellence and ensuring their sustainability and success in a dynamic business environment [53]. Future evaluations will refine and expand the program to ensure its relevance and effectiveness over time [54].

### 3.6. Limitations and future research

The study has several limitations that should be noted. Conducted within the urban context of Cabanatuan City, the findings may not fully apply to other geographic areas or organizational settings. The reliance on self-reported data introduces potential biases, and the exclusive focus on administrative personnel limits insights from other workforce segments.

Additionally, the study does not assess the long-term impact or real-world implementation of the proposed training programs. Future research should broaden the scope to include diverse contexts and sectors, employ longitudinal designs to evaluate long-term outcomes, and integrate qualitative methods for deeper insights into training effectiveness. Exploring the role of organizational culture and innovative training technologies could further enhance understanding and address gaps in professional development strategies.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study highlights the critical role of targeted training programs in enhancing the skills and productivity of administrative personnel, ultimately driving organizational success. The findings underscore the importance of addressing key competency gaps, particularly in communication skills, stress management, leadership development, teamwork, and conflict resolution. By implementing a structured and scenario-based training program, organizations can foster a more resilient, adaptable, and high-performing workforce. The quantitative data reveal that addressing these training needs has the potential to significantly improve operational efficiency, employee productivity, and job satisfaction, demonstrating the transformative impact of human capital investment. To maximize the effectiveness of these initiatives, organizations should adopt a strategic approach to training and development. This includes integrating flexible training schedules, incorporating practical and engaging methodologies, and securing institutional support to ensure sustainable implementation. Furthermore, continuous evaluation of training outcomes is essential to refine the program and align it with evolving organizational goals and employee needs. Expanding the scope of future research to include diverse employee groups and long-term impacts will provide deeper insights and enhance the overall relevance and effectiveness of professional development strategies. By prioritizing these efforts, organizations can position themselves as leaders in workforce excellence and innovation, ensuring sustained success in an increasingly competitive business environment.

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