

From Campus to Cruise: Filipino Hospitality Endures

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Hospitality has become one of the most popular courses in the Philippines, especially in public colleges and universities. Many students choose this path with hopes of working abroad or finding a steady job in hotels, restaurants, or cruise ships. The image of Filipinos as warm, hardworking, and respectful has made them in demand in the global hospitality industry. However, behind every smiling crew member or hotel staff is a long and often difficult story filled with struggles that are rarely talked about, and sacrifices that many silently carry.

One of the earliest challenges begins in school. In many state colleges offering hospitality and tourism-related courses, students are taught industry basics through lectures and limited hands-on activities. While some schools have mock hotel rooms or kitchens, many of these facilities are outdated or incomplete. Students often practice using improvised tools or observe instead of doing. In some cases, the only real exposure they get is during on-the-job training (OJT) and even that comes with problems. Instead of learning, students are often assigned repetitive or unrelated tasks like cleaning toilets, mopping floors, or serving water without any proper guidance (Baylen et al., 2024). Worse, some do this unpaid or with very little allowance, just to complete school requirements.

After graduation, reality becomes even tougher. The competition for jobs is high, especially in cities where tourism is seasonal or limited. Many hospitality graduates take on low-paying jobs in fast food chains, front desks, or sales, not because they want to, but because there are no better options (Borbon & Apritado, 2022). Others aim to work on cruise ships or overseas but face expensive requirements, including training certificates, uniforms, placement fees, and medical clearances. Families often borrow money just to help one member apply for an agency or training center. For those lucky enough to get hired abroad, the journey is far from easy. They work long hours, deal with different cultures, and are away from their families for months or even years. And yet, despite all these, many of them continue to endure because they carry the weight of both duty and hope.

This cycle continues because of several unaddressed issues. There is still a gap between what schools teach and what the industry truly needs. Some schools lack the budget, updated curriculum, or strong partnerships with credible hotels and cruise lines (Pulhin, 2020). Meanwhile, not all training centers or agencies follow ethical standards, some collect large payments without clear results. On top of that, many students receive little to no career guidance. They are trained to be efficient and obedient but are rarely taught how to advocate for themselves or plan for long-term growth in the industry.

To change this, several steps must be taken. Schools need proper investment in equipment, up-to-date materials, and strong industry linkages to give students real preparation (Gonzales et al., 2024). Government agencies must provide better regulation of training centers and recruitment agencies to protect aspiring workers from unfair fees and fake promises. Internship programs should be monitored to ensure that students are

actually learning, not being used as free labor. Career orientation should also strengthened students to guide not just toward employment, but toward a sustainable and dignified career path.

This situation matters because hospitality is not just about smiling and serving others, it's about the person behind the uniform. It's about the young Filipino who studied hard, trained with limited resources, and traveled far from home just to give their family a better future. Filipino hospitality endures not because it is always rewarded, but because many have learned to hold on even when things are unfair or uncertain. They work with care, even when tired. They carry pride in their service, even when they are overlooked (Blanza et al., 2023).

But endurance should not be the only measure of success. These workers deserve proper support, fair treatment, and recognition beyond just being “naturally hospitable.” If we want Filipino hospitality to grow and thrive, we must first take care of the people who carry it. With the right systems, training, and protection, our hospitality workers can rise, not only as employees but as respected contributors to both the global industry and their own families and communities (Tabbada et al., 2023).

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