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Original Article

BRIDGING LOCAL STANDARDS AND GLOBAL COMPETENCIES: ASSESSING CONTACT CENTER SKILLS BASED ON TESDA NC II FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the alignment of students' competencies with the TESDA Contact Center Services NC II standards, recognizing the growing demand for globally competitive communication and service skills in the business process outsourcing (BPO) industry. Using a descriptive-quantitative research design, 69 BSICC students from both the third and fourth years were assessed through a structured questionnaire based on TESDA's Training Regulations. The evaluation focused on three key domains: Basic, Common, and Core Competencies. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, and mean scores. Findings revealed that the majority of respondents were female and had prior experience in contact center training, with all respondents having completed contact center-related courses. Overall, students achieved a Satisfactory level of performance across all domains. They exhibited strong skills in teamwork, communication, and professionalism—competencies that are highly valued in international workplaces. However, there remains a need for further development in technical operations, confidence, and fluency, particularly to meet the standards expected by global employers in the outsourcing and customer service sectors. These findings underscore the importance of continuously enhancing the curriculum to better prepare students for international career opportunities. By aligning training outcomes not only with national but also global industry standards, higher education institutions can equip graduates with the competencies necessary to thrive in diverse and multicultural work environments.

Keywords: Contact Center Services, Training Regulations, Curriculum Alignment, TESDA NC II

INTRODUCTION

The Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry, particularly the contact center sector, has become one of the Philippines' primary engines of economic growth and employment. It is estimated to employ over one million Filipinos, contributing substantially to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and foreign exchange earnings Ramotowski (2025). In 2023, the industry generated approximately USD 29.5 to 32.16 billion in revenues, with contact centers representing the largest segment of the country's USD 35.5 billion Information Technology and Business Process Management (IT-BPM) sector Metrobank Wealth Insights (2024). This continued expansion proves the country's reputation as a global leader in customer service outsourcing, driven by a highly adaptable, English-proficient workforce and competitive operating costs Philippine Economic Zone Authority (2023).

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Transparency: The authors affirm that this manuscript presents an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study. All essential aspects have been included, and any deviations from the original study plan have been clearly explained. The writing process strictly adhered to established ethical standards.
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As the BPO landscape evolves, the skill set required from its workforce extends beyond basic communication. Employers now seek professionals who demonstrate interpersonal competence, technical literacy, problem-solving skills, and the ability to adapt to digital transformations and artificial intelligence integration Inquirer.net. (2024). Consequently, educational institutions offering Contact Center and related programs are instrumental in preparing graduates to meet the competency standards required by the industry. This effort supports Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Quality Education, which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities, as well as SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, which promotes productive employment and sustainable economic growth.

The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) has established the Contact Center Services NC II standards to guide training programs in developing industry-ready graduates. These competencies encompass communication in the workplace, teamwork, professionalism, handling customer inquiries, and performing computer-based contact center tasks. However, competency gaps often arise between what students learn in academic settings and what the industry expects Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2023). Thus, this study assessed students' competencies based on TESDA's three key domains: Basic, Common, and Core Competencies to identify areas for curriculum improvement and align instruction with industry demands. This alignment also contributes to SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, by ensuring that human capital development keeps pace with technological advancements and digital innovation in the workplace.

Despite these established standards, evidence suggests that a skills gap persists between what academic or TVET programs teach and what the BPO industry requires. According to the Philippine Institute for Development Studies Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2023), many graduates still experience skills mismatch, particularly in communication, decision-making, and technical proficiencies, which limits their employability and productivity. This indicates a need to reassess current training approaches and ensure closer alignment between curriculum design and real-world job demands. Addressing this gap not only strengthens graduate employability but also advances SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, as improved access to skills training enables more Filipinos, including those from disadvantaged regions to participate in the growing digital economy.

Although this study is grounded in the TESDA Contact Center Services NC II framework, the competencies it measures are globally relevant. TESDA's training regulations are developed through extensive industry consultations with multinational BPO companies and are benchmarked against international standards such as the International Customer Management Institute (ICMI) competencies, COPC Standards, and ISO 18295 for Customer Contact Centers. These frameworks emphasize communication, customer engagement, technology use, and professionalism—domains that align closely with the TESDA NC II standards, reflecting both local and global workforce requirements Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (2023), International Customer Management Institute (2022), COPC Inc. (2023), International Organization for Standardization (2017).

Hence, this study assessed students' competencies in Contact Center Services NC II based on TESDA's three key domains: Basic, Common, and Core Competencies to identify areas for curriculum enhancement. By addressing competency gaps, educational institutions can produce graduates who are better prepared for the contact center industry, contributing to both national workforce competitiveness and sustained economic growth, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed a descriptive-quantitative research design to systematically evaluate the competency levels of students enrolled in the Contact Center Services program. By using this approach, the research aimed to provide a clear and detailed picture of students' skills, knowledge, and performance in various aspects of contact center operations. The design allowed for the collection of measurable data that could be analyzed statistically, ensuring an objective assessment of the students' strengths and areas for improvement. Ultimately, this methodology helped in identifying trends and patterns in student competencies, which can inform program enhancements and targeted skill development.

RESPONDENTS OF THE STUDY

All 68 third- and fourth-year BS Industrial and Commercial Communication students from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Cagayan State University–Carig Campus were included in the study through total enumeration.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The respondents' skills and knowledge were evaluated in accordance with the TESDA Contact Center Services NC II competency standards. The assessment framework was carefully designed based on these standards to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the participants' capabilities. It encompassed three key competency domains: Basic Competencies, which focus on fundamental knowledge and essential workplace skills; Common Competencies, which cover skills and behaviors commonly required across various roles in the contact center industry; and Core Competencies, which address the specialized knowledge and abilities specific

to performing effectively in contact center operations. This structured approach allowed the researchers to systematically assess the respondents' overall competency levels and identify areas of strength and potential improvement.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The study used descriptive statistics for data analysis. To examine the respondents' profiles, frequency counts, and percentages were calculated. When assessing the respondents' Contact Center Skills, the weighted mean was used. A five-point Likert scale measured these skills, with the following ratings: Excellent, Proficient, Satisfactory, Developing, and Needs Improvement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile Variables

The profile of the third-year and fourth-year Bachelor of Science in Industrial and Commercial Communication (BSICC) students offers a clear picture of the respondents of the study. It highlights not just their numbers, but also the diversity and characteristics of the graduates who have finished or are currently enrolled in subjects related to contact center campaigns, processes, and operations. By looking into their demographic and academic backgrounds, the data provide a better understanding and identification of patterns or gaps in skill development across different groups of students, providing valuable insights into how educational preparation, gender composition, and exposure to industry-related activities contribute to their overall competency levels in Contact Center Services NC II.

Figure 1

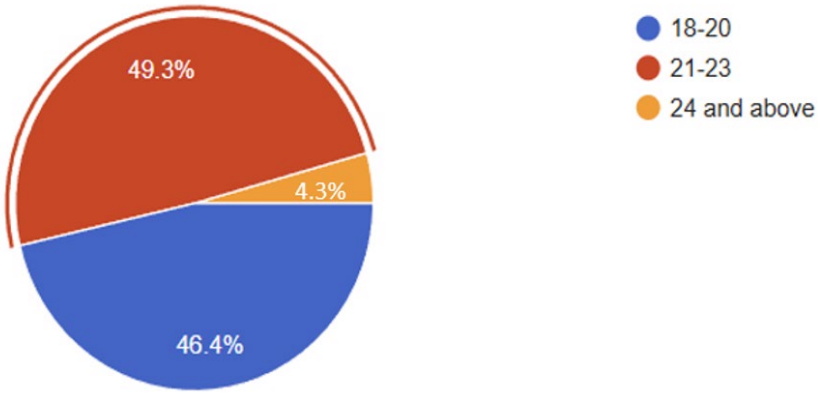

Figure 1 Distribution of Respondents by Age

The figure shows that the majority of the respondents were aged 21–23 years old (49.3%), followed closely by those aged 18–20 years old (46.4%), and a small portion aged 24 and above (4.3%). This indicates that most respondents belong to the typical undergraduate age range.

This suggests that the participants are in the developmental stage of acquiring essential workplace competencies and are preparing to transition from academic learning to practical application in the BPO environment.

Figure 2

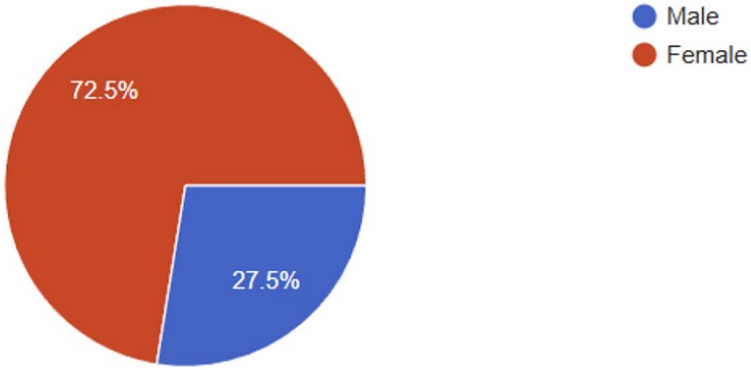

Figure 2 Distribution of Respondents by Sex

In terms of sex, the figure above reflects that female students (72.1%) outnumbered male students (27.9%), showing the higher representation of women in communication and service-oriented academic programs. This trend aligns with the gender composition of the BPO industry, where female employees constitute a significant portion of the workforce due to the sector's emphasis on interpersonal communication, multitasking, and customer relations Philippine Economic Zone Authority (2023).

Figure 3

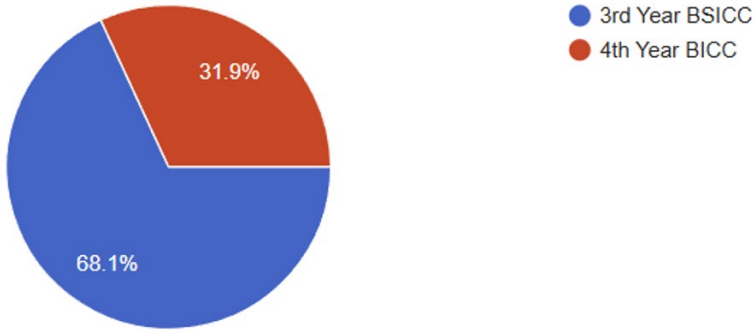

Figure 3 Distribution of Respondents by Year Level

Most respondents were 4th-year students (72.1%), while 27.9% were in their 3rd year, indicating that the majority have completed substantial coursework and are nearing graduation. This makes them ideal respondents for competency assessment, as they have undergone both theoretical instruction and practical exposure to contact center operations.

Figure 4

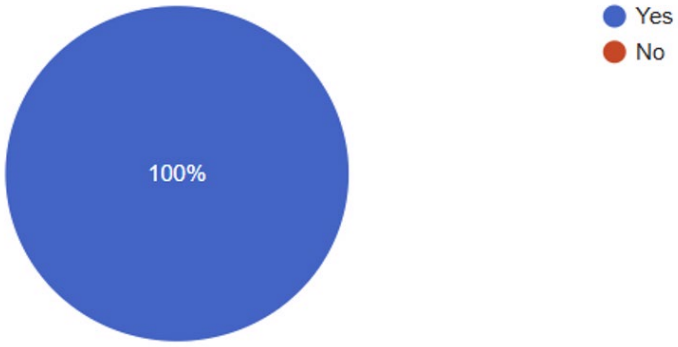

Figure 4 Respondents as to Completion of Contact Center-Related Subjects

The above figure shows that all respondents (100%) reported having completed a Contact Center–related subject. This confirms that the respondents have been exposed to the core curriculum and training components relevant to the competencies under assessment. Such exposure ensures that their performance in the study accurately reflects the learning outcomes of the Contact Center Services program.

Figure 5

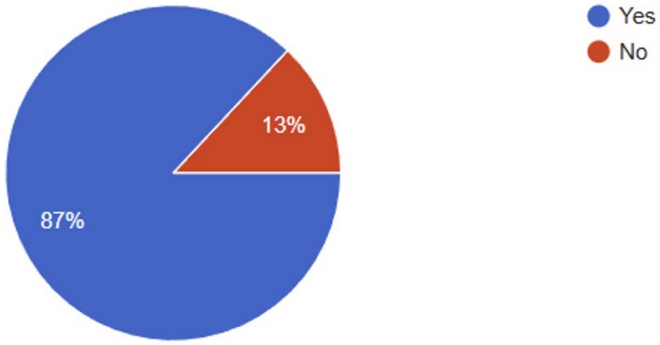

Figure 5 Respondents as to Attendance in Any Contact Center-Related Seminar-Training.

The results show that 86.8% of the respondents attended BPO or contact center–related seminars or training. This finding suggests proactive engagement in industry-linked learning activities that complement formal academic instruction. Such participation indicates the students' motivation to deepen their understanding of workplace dynamics, technological applications, and customer service practices in real-world settings.

Overall, the profile of the respondents indicates a predominantly young, female, and senior-level cohort with formal and supplementary exposure to contact center education. This background provides a solid foundation for assessing their competencies and identifying areas where curriculum alignment with industry standards can be strengthened.

Level of Competence

Table 1

Table 1 Basic Competency

BASIC COMPETENCY	Mean	DV
1. Participate in Workplace Communication	3.10	Satisfactory
2. Work in a Team Environment	3.33	Satisfactory
3. Practice Career Professionalism	3.17	Satisfactory
4. Practice Occupational Health and Safety Procedures	3.19	Satisfactory
OVERALL MEAN	3.20	Satisfactory

Table 1 presents the level of competence of the respondents under Basic Competencies. The overall mean score of 3.20, interpreted as "Satisfactory," indicates that students are generally capable of performing foundational workplace tasks adequately. However, this also implies that further development and consistency are necessary for them to fully meet industry standards. While their competencies are acceptable, the results reveal areas for improvement in skills essential to effective workplace performance and professional readiness. This finding aligns with a semi-systematic review by Tushar et al. (2023), which observed that although graduates typically possess foundational employability skills, employers continue to report gaps in consistency and advanced interpersonal competencies. Similarly, Siddique et al. (2022) found that students often demonstrate basic competencies but still exhibit persistent deficiencies in socio-technical and communication skills, highlighting the need for targeted skill development to enhance workplace readiness.

Table 2

Table 2 Common Competency

COMMON COMPETENCY	Mean	DV
1. Apply Quality Standards	3.33	Satisfactory
2. Perform Computer Operations	3.17	Satisfactory
OVERALL MEAN	3.25	Satisfactory

Table 2 shows results for Common Competencies with an overall mean of 3.25, which falls under the "Satisfactory" level. This suggests that students possess a fair understanding of basic work processes and the ICT tasks commonly required in the contact-center industry, but that their performance would benefit from additional practice to achieve higher accuracy, consistency, and alignment with professional quality standards. Employer-facing studies of digital skills and graduate employability report consistent skill-gaps between the digital/ICT competencies employers demand and the competencies of entry-level graduates, especially in communication, collaboration, and information/data literacy, which reduces on-the-job accuracy and consistency unless addressed through targeted upskilling and work-integrated learning Tee et al. (2024), World Economic Forum (2023).

Table 3

Table 3 Core Competency

CORE COMPETENCY	Mean	DV
1. Communication Skills	2.82	Satisfactory
2. Customer Service Skills	2.79	Satisfactory
3. Customer Engagement Skills	3.11	Satisfactory
4. Technical Operations Skills	2.6	Developing

5. Professionalism and Work Ethics	3.14	Satisfactory
OVERALL MEAN	2.89	Satisfactory

The results for Core Competencies reveal an overall mean of 2.89, which falls under the "Satisfactory" level. This indicates that students have acquired the foundational abilities essential for contact center operations but still need substantial improvement to attain a higher level of proficiency. While their performance demonstrates an understanding of basic customer service functions, notable deficiencies remain in confidence, technical fluency, and adaptability—competencies that are indispensable for success in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry. According to Murthy et al. (2008), traditional training methods such as lectures and role-plays yield only moderate skill development, whereas simulation-based instruction significantly enhances communication accuracy, responsiveness, and overall agent performance in call center environments. Similarly, Ammachchi (2023) highlighted that despite the Philippines' strong BPO presence, a widening skills gap persists, particularly in digital literacy and adaptability to technological changes driven by artificial intelligence. These findings align with the current study's results, underscoring the need to integrate simulation activities, mock calls, and scenario-based learning into the curriculum to reinforce students' practical competencies and elevate their proficiency to meet industry standards.

The overall findings reveal that students generally demonstrated a satisfactory level of competence across all domains: basic, common, and core competencies, indicating that while foundational skills are present, there is still room for improvement to meet industry standards. Abelha et al. (2020) noted that although graduates develop a reasonable level of academic and employability competencies, a persistent mismatch remains between the competencies acquired in school and those required by employers. Similarly, Awwad (2021) found that undergraduate students tend to exhibit moderate competence across communication, leadership, and critical-thinking domains, showing basic readiness but requiring additional development to perform consistently in professional environments.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that the respondents are predominantly young, with formal and supplementary exposure to contact center education. This demographic profile provides a strong foundation for competency development aligned with industry needs. Across all domains, students exhibited a "Satisfactory" level of performance. This indicates that while they possess foundational workplace skills, there remain significant areas for improvement to fully meet the standards of the contact center industry. Specifically, students demonstrated adequate teamwork, communication, and ICT-related skills; however, gaps were noted in technical fluency, confidence, and adaptability, especially in Core Competencies. These findings underscore the need to strengthen curriculum components that foster applied learning and industry-level proficiency.

To address the identified gaps in students' competencies, it is strongly recommended to enhance the existing curriculum by integrating more industry-relevant and experiential learning strategies. Specifically, the curriculum should incorporate role-playing activities, mock calls, simulation exercises, and system practice drills that mirror real workplace scenarios. Embedding industry-aligned modules and case studies will bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and actual practice, enabling students to develop stronger communication, technical, and problem-solving skills. Strengthening these curriculum components, in close collaboration with industry partners, will better prepare students to meet the evolving standards and demands of the contact center sector.

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