

Competency Readiness of Public Administration Students in a State University for Government Service: A Basis for an Enhancement Program

Jovelle A. Gauiran

Nueva Vizcaya State University, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Competency readiness is a crucial indicator of how well students are prepared to transition from the classroom to the professional demands of public service. This study assessed the competency readiness of second-year Bachelor of Science in Public Administration students at Nueva Vizcaya State University- Bambang Campus as basis for an enhancement program. Using a descriptive-quantitative research design, a sample of 95 students was selected through Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error. A structured survey instrument was employed to measure three domains of competencies: cognitive and technical, interpersonal and communication, and personal and ethical. Findings revealed that students exhibited moderate overall readiness. They scored highest in personal and ethical competencies, particularly in integrity and motivation for public service, but obtained the lowest scores in cognitive and technical competencies, especially in digital literacy and research skills. Statistical analysis indicated no significant differences in readiness by gender; however, academic performance and leadership involvement emerged as significant factors. The results underscore the need for structured interventions to strengthen students' technical and interpersonal skills while sustaining their ethical values. Consequently, an enhancement program was proposed to address the identified gaps, focusing on knowledge enrichment, skills development, digital literacy, and values integration. This study contributes to the growing discourse on competency-based education in public administration and offers practical insights for improving the preparedness of future public servants.

Keywords: competency readiness, public administration, government service

INTRODUCTION

Public service requires individuals who are not only knowledgeable in the principles of governance but also skilled communicators, critical thinkers, and ethical leaders. As future government employees, students enrolled in Public Administration programs are expected to embody these competencies, bridging theoretical learning with the practical realities of governance. Competency readiness, therefore, serves as a vital measure of how well students are prepared to perform the roles and responsibilities expected of them in the civil service upon graduation.

In the Philippines, Public Administration has long been recognized as both an academic discipline and a profession that significantly shapes governance and national development (Brillantes and Fernandez, 2008). The demands of public service, however, have become increasingly complex due to the rise of digital transformation, data-driven decision-making, and heightened public accountability. With these emerging challenges, the need for graduates who are competent, adaptable, and ethically grounded has become more pressing than ever (Limama, J., Lagura, R., & Galleto, P., 2025). Public sector institutions now require employees who can think critically, communicate effectively, and demonstrate integrity and leadership in policy implementation (Brillantes & Fernandez, 2008).

Despite the introduction of competency-based education frameworks by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the integration of outcomes-based teaching and learning in Public Administration curricula, concerns persist regarding whether these initiatives effectively translate into student readiness for government service. Recent studies have identified notable competency gaps among graduates of various disciplines,

particularly in areas such as digital literacy, research capability, and interpersonal communication (Esparcia and Fajardo, 2025; Labitad, 2025). Polinar et al. (2025) emphasized that inadequate institutional support, limited experiential learning, and a lack of applied research exposure continue to hinder students' preparedness for professional roles. These findings suggest that bridging academic learning with practical competence remains a continuing challenge in higher education, especially in programs designed to produce future public servants.

While several studies have examined employability and work readiness in fields such as business, education, and engineering, research specifically focusing on the competency readiness of Public Administration students in state universities remains limited. Few empirical investigations have assessed the multiple domains of competencies such as cognitive and technical, interpersonal and communication, and personal and ethical that collectively determine a student's preparedness for public service (Brillantes & Fernandez, 2008). This gap underscores the need for evidence-based evaluations of how Public Administration students develop essential skills and values before entering the civil service workforce.

This study focuses on second-year Bachelor of Science in Public Administration students at Nueva Vizcaya State University—Bambang Campus, who are midway through their program and are expected to have acquired foundational competencies. Assessing their competency readiness aims to provide a valuable midpoint evaluation that will determine areas of strength and aspects needing improvement across key domains such as cognitive and technical skills, interpersonal and communication abilities, and personal and ethical values.

The purpose of this study is to assess the competency readiness of second-year Bachelor of Science in Public Administration students in a state university for government service across three domains: cognitive and technical, interpersonal and communication, and personal and ethical competencies. The study also aims to design an enhancement program that will address the competency gaps to be identified and strengthen the students' preparation for government service.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the growing discourse on competency-based education in Public Administration within the Philippine context. The findings are expected to guide faculty members, program chairs, and administrators in developing targeted interventions to enhance instruction and experiential learning. Furthermore, by proposing a structured enhancement program grounded in empirical data, the study offers practical recommendations for improving the quality and readiness of future public servants in both local and national government institutions.

Research Design & Methods

This study employed a descriptive-quantitative research design to assess the competency readiness of second-year Bachelor of Science in Public Administration students. This design was chosen because it allowed systematic measurement of students' competencies across cognitive and technical, interpersonal and communication, and personal and ethical domains at a specific point in time and provided objective data that identified patterns, strengths, and gaps, which served as the basis for developing an enhancement program to improve students' readiness for government service.

The participants of the study were second-year Bachelor of Science in Public Administration students enrolled at Nueva Vizcaya State University—Bambang Campus during the Academic Year 2025–2026. A total of 127 students composed the population, from which a sample size of 95 was determined using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error. Simple random sampling was employed to give every student an equal chance of being selected and to minimize selection bias. The inclusion criteria required participants to be officially enrolled second-year BSPA students who voluntarily agreed to participate and signed the informed consent form. Students on leave of absence, irregular students not classified under the second-year level, and those who did not complete the survey were excluded from the study. This sampling approach ensured that the selected respondents accurately represented the characteristics of the target population for assessing their competency readiness for government service.

The study utilized a researcher-made survey questionnaire designed to assess the competency readiness of

second-year Bachelor of Science in Public Administration students across three domains: cognitive and technical, interpersonal and communication, and personal and ethical competencies. The items were developed based on competency frameworks and indicators from relevant literature in public administration education, including studies by Brillantes and Fernandez (2008), Reyes et al. (2022), and Santos et al. (2024), as well as Comission on Higher Education's outcomes-based education guidelines. To ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the objectives of the study, the instrument underwent content validation by three experts in public administration and educational research. Their suggestions were incorporated to improve wording, structure, and domain alignment. A pilot test was conducted among 20 Bachelor of Science in Public Administration students from a different year level to evaluate the reliability of the instrument, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89, indicating high internal consistency. The final questionnaire consisted of Likert-scale items measuring the extent to which students perceived themselves to possess the competencies essential for government service.

The data for this study were collected through a face-to-face administration of the validated survey questionnaire. Prior to data collection, the researcher sought approval from the program chair and secured informed consent from the student participants. The actual data gathering was conducted over one week during the first semester of A.Y. 2025–2026. The researcher personally distributed the questionnaires to the selected respondents during their scheduled classes to ensure a smooth and organized process. Participants were given sufficient time to complete the instrument, and the accomplished questionnaires were retrieved immediately to ensure completeness and accuracy of responses. No interventions, pre-tests, post-tests, or treatment groups were involved, as the study utilized a descriptive design. The collected data were then organized and prepared for statistical analysis.

The data gathered from the completed survey questionnaires were encoded, organized, and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, weighted mean) were used to determine the respondents' levels of competency readiness across the cognitive and technical, interpersonal and communication, and personal and ethical domains. Inferential statistics (t-test and ANOVA) were employed to examine significant differences in competency readiness based on selected profile variables, including gender, academic performance, and leadership involvement, in accordance with the assumptions required for each statistical test. Levels of readiness were interpreted as follows: 4.21–5.00= Very High, 3.41–4.20= High, 2.61–3.40= Moderate, 1.81–2.60= Low, and 1.00–1.80= Very Low. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed through the Cronbach's alpha coefficient obtained during pilot testing, indicating high internal consistency. To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed a validated research instrument, followed systematic data-gathering procedures, and maintained accurate data encoding and analysis protocols. This comprehensive analytical approach ensured that the results accurately reflected the respondents' competency readiness for government service.

RESULTS

Profile Of Students

Table 1 Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Students

Profile Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	40	42.1
	Female	55	57.9
Academic Standing	Average (GWA 2.25–3.00)	50	52.6
	Above Average (1.75–2.24)	30	31.6
Leadership Involvement	High (1.00–1.74)	15	15.8
	With Leadership Role	38	40.0
	Without Leadership Role	57	60.0

Competency Readiness of Students Across Domains

Table 2 Competency Readiness of Students Across Domains

Competency Domain	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Cognitive and Technical	3.21	0.62	Moderate
Interpersonal and Communication	3.47	0.55	High
Personal and Ethical	3.89	0.58	High
Overall Competency Readiness	3.52	0.58	High

Competency Readiness of Students By Gender

Table 3 Competency Readiness of Students by Gender

Domain	Male Mean	Female Mean	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Cognitive and Technical	3.18	3.23	-0.42	0.675	Not Significant
Interpersonal and Communication	3.44	3.49	-0.55	0.584	Not Significant
Personal and Ethical	3.86	3.91	-0.61	0.542	Not Significant

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

Competency Readiness Of Students By Academic Standing

Table 4 Competency Readiness of Students by Academic Standing

Domain	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Cognitive and Technical	4.15	0.019*	Significant
Interpersonal and Communication	2.32	0.104	Not Significant
Personal and Ethical	1.78	0.174	Not Significant

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

Competency Readiness Of Students By Leadership Roles

Table 5 Competency Readiness of Students by Leadership Roles

Domain	With Leadership	Without Leadership	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Cognitive and Technical	3.29	3.16	1.07	0.289	Not Significant
Interpersonal and Communication	3.62	3.37	2.41	0.018*	Significant
Personal and Ethical	3.95	3.84	1.02	0.310	Not Significant

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

DISCUSSION

Profile Of Students

Table 1 shows the profile of students. The study involved 95 second-year BSPA students. Most of the students were females (57.9%), while 42.1% were males. This shows that more females are enrolling in Public Administration programs, which is consistent with trends in Social Science courses (Brillantes & Fernandez, 2008).

Regarding academic standing, most students (52.6%) were in the Average category (GWA 2.25–3.00), 31.6% were Above Average (GWA 1.75–2.24), and 15.8% were High (GWA 1.00–1.74). This indicates that while students perform satisfactorily, there is room to improve their higher-level thinking, technical, and research

skills. Academic performance also affects readiness for public service, especially in cognitive and technical areas, as higher-achieving students generally have stronger problem-solving and analytical skills (Polinar et al., 2025).

In terms of leadership, only 40% of students had prior leadership experience, while 60% did not. Limited leadership exposure may explain why some students show moderate skills in teamwork and communication. Studies show that joining student organizations, governance activities, and community projects can help develop these skills, which are important for public service (Esparcia & Fajardo, 2025). Encouraging students to participate in such activities can improve their interpersonal and communication abilities.

The students' profile shows most females, mostly average academic performance, and limited leadership experience. This information helps identify areas where enhancement programs can focus, especially on technical skills and leadership development.

Competency Readiness of Students Across Domains

Table 2 shows the competency readiness of students across domains. The analysis of the competency domains reveals that students scored moderate in Cognitive and Technical competencies (Mean= 3.21, SD= 0.62). This suggests that while students have acquired foundational knowledge in public administration, there is a need to strengthen applied skills, such as research, data analysis, and digital literacy. These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that public administration students often face challenges in bridging theoretical knowledge with practical skills required for government service (Esparcia & Fajardo, 2025). Strengthening these competencies is crucial because cognitive and technical skills form the basis for effective decision-making and problem-solving in the public sector.

Interpersonal and Communication competencies were rated high (Mean= 3.47, SD= 0.55), indicating that students generally demonstrate good teamwork, collaboration, and oral communication skills. This aligns with research emphasizing the importance of experiential learning and leadership involvement in developing communication and interpersonal abilities among Public Administration students (Santos et al., 2024; Reyes et al., 2022). However, variability in written communication and conflict resolution suggests that structured interventions, such as workshops or project-based activities, could further enhance these skills, preparing students for professional interactions in government settings.

Personal and Ethical competencies received the highest rating, also high (Mean= 3.89, SD= 0.58). This reflects that students possess strong integrity, motivation for public service, and adherence to ethical principles. These results support findings by Brillantes and Fernandez (2008), who emphasized that ethical grounding is central to preparing future public servants. High ethical competence suggests that students are likely to uphold accountability, transparency, and professionalism, which are essential qualities in the civil service.

The students' overall competency readiness was rated high (Mean= 3.52, SD= 0.58). While ethical and interpersonal strengths provide a solid foundation, moderate cognitive and technical scores indicate areas for targeted enhancement. Integrating applied research projects, digital literacy training, experiential learning, and leadership opportunities can help bridge these gaps, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared, competent, and adaptable to the demands of modern government service (Polinar et al., 2025).

Competency Readiness of Students by Gender

Table 3 shows the competency readiness of students in terms of gender. The analysis of competency domains by gender shows that male and female students have comparable levels of readiness across all areas. In Cognitive and Technical competencies, males scored a mean of 3.18, while females scored slightly higher at 3.23. In Interpersonal and Communication competencies, males had a mean of 3.44 compared to 3.49 for females. Similarly, Personal and Ethical competencies were rated 3.86 for males and 3.91 for females. The differences in mean scores between male and female students were minimal, and the statistical results indicated no significant differences across all domains ($p > 0.05$).

These findings suggest that gender does not influence the competency readiness of BSPA students. Both male and female students demonstrate similar strengths and areas for improvement, particularly in cognitive and

technical competencies. This aligns with previous research showing that gender alone does not determine readiness for public service, as competency development is more strongly influenced by academic exposure, experiential learning, and engagement in practical activities (Polinar et al., 2025).

The results indicate that enhancement programs and interventions can be designed inclusively for all students, focusing on improving technical skills, applied research, and digital literacy, without needing gender-specific modifications. The high scores in personal and ethical competencies across genders further reinforce that ethical grounding is a shared strength among students, which is essential for effective public service (Brillantes & Fernandez, 2008).

Competency Readiness Of Students By Academic Standing

Table 4 shows the competency readiness of students in terms of academic standing. The analysis of competency readiness across academic standing shows that Cognitive and Technical competencies vary significantly among students with different academic performance levels ($F= 4.15$, $p= 0.019$). This indicates that students with higher academic achievement generally demonstrate stronger cognitive and technical skills, including problem-solving, research, and applied knowledge in public administration. These findings are consistent with studies highlighting that academic performance is closely linked to cognitive and technical readiness, as students with higher grades tend to exhibit better analytical and practical abilities (Polinar et al., 2025; Esparcia & Fajardo, 2025).

In contrast, Interpersonal and Communication ($F= 2.32$, $p= 0.104$) and Personal and Ethical competencies ($F= 1.78$, $p= 0.174$) did not differ significantly across academic standing. This suggests that students, regardless of their academic performance, possess similar levels of teamwork, communication, integrity, and motivation for public service. These findings imply that interpersonal and ethical competencies may be influenced more by personal values, experiences, and engagement in leadership or community activities rather than academic grades (Brillantes & Fernandez, 2008).

The results indicate that while academic standing is a key factor in enhancing cognitive and technical readiness, personal and ethical as well as interpersonal competencies are relatively consistent across students. This underscores the importance of offering targeted interventions in cognitive and technical skills for students with average performance, while continuing to support experiential learning and ethical development for all students.

Competency Readiness Of Students By Leadership Involvement

Table shows the competency readiness of students in terms of leadership involvement. The analysis of competency readiness based on leadership involvement shows that students with prior leadership experience scored higher in all competency domains compared to those without leadership roles. In Cognitive and Technical competencies, students with leadership experience had a mean of 3.29, slightly higher than 3.16 for students without leadership, but the difference was not statistically significant ($t= 1.07$, $p= 0.289$). Similarly, Personal and Ethical competencies showed a small difference (3.95 vs. 3.84), which was also not significant ($t= 1.02$, $p= 0.310$).

In contrast, Interpersonal and Communication competencies were significantly higher among students with leadership roles (3.62) compared to those without (3.37), $t= 2.41$, $p= 0.018$. This indicates that active engagement in leadership roles contributes positively to teamwork, communication, and collaborative skills, aligning with prior research emphasizing that leadership experiences enhance interpersonal abilities critical for public service (Brillantes & Fernandez, 2008).

The results suggest that while leadership involvement may not strongly affect cognitive or ethical competencies, it plays an important role in strengthening interpersonal and communication skills. This highlights the value of promoting student participation in leadership and governance activities as part of competency enhancement programs for future public servants.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the competency readiness of Public Administration students, identifying both strengths in ethical values and personal motivation and gaps in technical, digital, and research skills. The findings have practical implications for education, suggesting the integration of digital literacy, applied research, and experiential learning into curricula, and for policy and program development, supporting structured enhancement programs aligned with national competency standards. For research, the study provides a benchmark for evaluating readiness and encourages longitudinal and multi-institutional investigations to assess the impact of interventions. By emphasizing targeted strategies that develop competent, adaptable, and ethically grounded future public servants, the study offers a foundation for initiatives that effectively connect academic learning with professional practice.

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