

The Role of Trainees in Optimizing Collective Performance in a Professional Kitchen: A Case Study at Hotel Gallery Prawirotaman

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Abstract. The research investigates the function of trainees in enhancing team performance within a professional kitchen, using a case study conducted at Hotel Gallery Prawirotaman, Yogyakarta. Although internship programs are frequently viewed as primarily a learning experience for participants, this study reveals that their involvement greatly enhances the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the team. A qualitative research approach was utilized, incorporating in-depth interviews with the chef de cuisine, supervisors, and trainees, in addition to the participant observation. The results show that trainees provide essential operational support, alleviating the routine workload of permanent staff. This enables senior team members to concentrate on more intricate and creative tasks than before. Furthermore, trainees introduce new perspectives and invigorating work ethics that can refresh team dynamics. The availability of suitable guidance and oversight from senior staff is recognized as a crucial factor for the successful integration of trainees' contributions without leading to mis-coordination. Consequently, this study concludes that trainees are not just passive learners but also active participants who significantly enhance the productivity and unity of a professional kitchen team.

1 Introduction

Indonesia's travel industry has seen remarkable expansion over the past few decades, evolving into a key factor in the country's gross domestic product (GDP). According to the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, the volume of visitors, both local and international, continues to rise, fueling the growth of the hotel, restaurant, and associated service sectors. [1]. This expansion not only generates economic prospects but also necessitates elevated standards for service and product quality, especially within the food industry, which is a crucial attraction for tourists. Professional kitchens in hotels and eateries are essential for influencing tourists' dining experiences and have a direct effect on the reputation of a travel destination. The performance of a collective kitchen, encompassing operational efficiency, innovative menu

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design, and consistency in quality, is essential for success [2]. However, to attain peak performance, kitchen teams must continually adjust to emerging culinary trends, handle large volumes of orders, and uphold strict food hygiene and safety regulations [3].

Training programs in the hospitality and culinary industries are gaining importance. Trainees function not merely as supplementary labor but represent a strategic investment in the long-term development of professional competencies. They contribute a zeal for learning, new perspectives, and vigor that can energize the workplace environment. Trainees who receive proper guidance are well-prepared to become part of a team, which can enhance productivity and creativity while also lightening the load for senior chefs, enabling them to concentrate on more strategic responsibilities. Consequently, this research contends that the function of trainees in improving overall performance in professional kitchens warrants greater exploration, particularly in Indonesia's ever-growing competitive tourism sector [4].

Collective effectiveness in a professional kitchen is a pivotal element in assessing the operational success and standing of a culinary establishment, especially in the hospitality sector. Professional kitchens, given their intricate and ever-changing nature, necessitate accurate coordination, efficient communication, and harmony among individuals to consistently deliver high-quality outcomes [5]. Each team member, ranging from head chefs to apprentices or trainees, plays a crucial role in influencing the dynamics and productivity of the workplace. Although the responsibilities of head chefs and sous chefs have been extensively explored in the culinary management literature, the involvement of trainees is frequently viewed as passive or merely supportive. Nevertheless, trainees contribute more than just supplementary assistance to the learning process. They introduce new ideas, enthusiasm, and the potential for innovation that can markedly enhance the collective performance. The inclusion of trainees also fosters an engaging learning atmosphere, prompting senior chefs to continuously hone their skills and instructional approaches [6].

This study emphasizes how incorporating trainees into the kitchen workflow can bolster efficiency, alleviate bottlenecks, and promote a collaborative work culture. This study employed a case study methodology at the Hotel Gallery. Prawirotaman, Yogyakarta, is an establishment recognized for its elevated operational benchmarks and organized trainee programs. Through participant observation and comprehensive interviews, we examine the distinct functions performed by trainees, ranging from fundamental duties to contributions in menu development. The examination encompasses how communication across different levels, distribution of tasks, and feedback systems affect the effectiveness of contributions to the overall team performance. The findings from this research are anticipated to offer fresh perspectives for kitchen managers and professionals in the hospitality sector regarding the significance of optimizing the roles of trainees as valuable resources to attain exceptional and sustainable collective performance.

2 Literature Review

2.1 The Idea of Team Performance in a Culinary Workplace Setting

Collective achievement in culinary settings is a complex concept that extends beyond personal productivity. These include teamwork, collaboration, communication, and the ability to adapt to stress and changing operational conditions [7]. The kitchen, as a fast-paced and time-sensitive workplace, demands that every team member is aware of their individual tasks, anticipates the requirements of their colleagues, and works effectively together. Successful team performance in the kitchen is marked by a distinct allocation of responsibilities, a functional leadership structure, and an environment that encourages constructive criticism [8]. In the absence of these factors, issues such as operational slowdowns, mistakes, and a decrease

in product quality may arise, ultimately damaging the business's reputation. A significant observation is that internal issues, including disputes, poor communication, and feelings of inequity, can greatly hinder operational effectiveness. The highlight is that a team's capability to handle conflicts and uphold clear communication is vital for sustaining morale and productivity, both of which are necessary for exceptional performance [9]. In addition, the significance of interdepartmental partnerships has been recognized as essential for achieving success. Strong communication between service staff and the kitchen crew can significantly enhance employee performance, underscoring the integrated nature of hospitality operations, where collaborations span different departments [10] [11].

2.2 The Function and Input of Trainees in Culinary Institutions

Traditionally, the role of a trainee has been regarded as an apprenticeship focused on learning and assisting with fundamental tasks [2]. Nevertheless, contemporary views on human resource management in the culinary sector increasingly acknowledge the strategic value of trainees as significant contributors. They not only lighten the workload of experienced chefs but also inject new perspectives, passion, and a desire for innovation. Trainees entrusted with greater responsibilities and supported by a robust mentoring system can boost team productivity by up to 15% and motivate senior chefs to continually hone their abilities [12]. This research also indicated that trainees have the potential to be change agents, bringing in fresh techniques and ideas acquired from their academic experiences. While the trainee role in culinary establishments has historically been perceived as a passive educational phase, recent studies have emphasized their more prominent role in enhancing overall performance. A study [13] revealed that the efficient integration of trainee functions not only provides operational assistance but also acts as a catalyst for innovation.

They frequently contribute new insights from academic institutions by implementing contemporary techniques or inventive concepts that can enhance menus and optimize workflow efficiency. The involvement of trainees fosters a vibrant learning atmosphere, prompting senior chefs to constantly enhance their abilities through mentorship, oversight, and knowledge sharing [14]. In addition to driving innovation and learning, trainees play a crucial role in enhancing team productivity. Delegating straightforward and repetitive duties to trainees enables senior chefs to concentrate on more intricate and strategic responsibilities, such as managing inventory, ensuring quality control, and developing new menu items [15]. This redistribution of tasks can directly alleviate operational bottlenecks and enhance the overall workflow. Thus, trainees are not merely extra staff but rather crucial assets that, with effective management, can considerably improve the kitchen team's performance and aid in the organization's long-term success.

3 Method

This study will utilize a qualitative method and a case study framework. This approach aligns with the research aim of thoroughly examining the intricate nature of trainee roles in a genuine professional kitchen setting. The case study framework enables researchers to investigate the nuances of interactions, processes, and social dynamics that cannot be quantified, thereby offering comprehensive insights [16].

Primary data will be gathered using three main methods to guarantee data triangulation: comprehensive interviews with head chefs, kitchen supervisors, and apprentices to understand their views and experiences; participant observation to monitor everyday interactions and processes in the kitchen; and examination of internal documents, such as organizational

structures or program details. All gathered information will be assessed using thematic analysis [17]. This procedure includes several readings of the data to recognize initial codes, categorizing these codes into appropriate themes, and ultimately analyzing these themes to create a cohesive story regarding trainees' contributions to overall performance. The study will be conducted at the Gallery Prawirotaman Hotel in Yogyakarta, which was selected as the case study site because of its organized trainee program. Research ethics will be maintained by guaranteeing participant confidentiality and securing informed consent before data collection.

4 Findings and Discussion

4.1 The Contribution of Trainees to Enhancing Operational Effectiveness

The primary role of the trainees is to support the overall efficiency of kitchen operations. According to the participants, especially senior chefs, the presence of trainees contributes to a more balanced distribution of tasks, especially those related to mise en place and other routine or repetitive activities. This division of labor allows senior chefs to focus more on complex and specialized responsibilities, including dish finalization, inventory supervision, and maintenance of quality standards. In an interview with the Head Chef, it was stated, "With trainees, responsibilities that usually consume our time, such as vegetable chopping or sauce preparation, can be assigned. This allows us to concentrate on plating and making sure that each dish is flawless." Observations further supported this conclusion, indicating that the workflow at stations that included trainees was more streamlined and organized.



Figure 1. Trainee tidies up following breakfast

4.2 Developing a Vibrant Environment for Learning and Mentorship

Beyond operational efficiency, the findings indicate that trainees contribute to fostering an active learning and mentoring culture within the kitchen. The trainees' initial limited experience becomes a catalyst for senior chefs to articulate their professional expertise and refine

their instructional competencies. Insights obtained from senior chefs highlight that this mentoring interaction not only benefits the trainees but also reinforces the chefs understanding of fundamental culinary principles and best practices. One junior chef remarked, “When I instruct trainees, I pay more attention to detail. I need to recall the steps and the reasons behind them, which also helps me improve as a chef.” This observation illustrates a beneficial reciprocity in which the learning journey is not unidirectional but advantageous for both parties.



Figure 2. Clarify Distribution by Trainees

4.3 Contribution to Adaptation and Innovation

Trainees play a role in adaptation and creativity. They frequently introduce novel concepts, recent methods, and scholarly insights gained from their studies. Although these suggestions may not always be acted upon, the involvement of trainees ignites inventive conversations among the team members. For instance, a trainee could propose a contemporary technique for ingredient preparation, prompting dialogue about optimizing time while maintaining quality. Although this input does not directly alter procedures, it serves as a trigger for the team to sustain their innovative spirit and be open to change.

5 Conclusion

In reference to a case analysis at the Hotel Gallery Prawirotaman Yogyakarta, this study finds that the involvement of trainees is vital and varied in enhancing group performance within a professional kitchen. The contributions of trainees extend beyond physical assistance, encompassing strategic functions that boost efficiency, encourage a mentorship environment, and even spark innovation. It is essential for hospitality organizations to dedicate time and resources to thoughtfully assimilate trainees, evolving them from simple interns into respected, skilled team members. Enhancing the roles of trainees is not only a sound management approach but also an important tactic for attaining lasting operational excellence in the fiercely competitive tourism industry.



Figure 3. Trainee Preparing the Main Course Menu

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