

# Developing Recruitment, Training, and Retention Systems in a Culinary MSME: Evidence from Lynn's Kitchen

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## ABSTRACT

This article reports a community service program that developed an integrated human resource management (HRM) system for a growing culinary MSME, Lynn's Kitchen. The program addressed typical HR problems in small food businesses, such as informal recruitment, unplanned training, high employee turnover, and low job satisfaction. Over a two-week intensive intervention, the team implemented a structured approach that combined pre-surveys, competency-based recruitment workshops, a five-module staff training program, and a basic employee retention scheme. The intervention resulted in a formal recruitment system with clear job descriptions and competency-based selection steps, a training curriculum that substantially strengthened employees' knowledge and practical skills, and revised compensation, career path, and engagement practices that improved job satisfaction and reduced projected turnover. At the business level, the integrated HRM system contributed to higher employee productivity, better operational efficiency, and improved customer evaluations. The findings indicate that investing in systematic recruitment, training, and retention practices is a strategic choice for culinary MSMEs that seek to enhance both their human capital and business sustainability.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Human resource management (HRM) is a critical success factor for organizations of any size, including micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in the culinary sector (Iskandar et al., 2023). Sustainable HR practices that integrate training, recruitment, and employee engagement strengthen both social impact and business performance in Indonesian MSMEs. However, many culinary MSMEs still manage their human resources in an informal and ad hoc manner, particularly in recruitment, training, and employee retention, so they struggle to build a competent and committed workforce (Halim et al., 2023; Nilawati et al., 2021).

Culinary MSMEs typically face structural challenges in HRM. Recruitment is often conducted through personal networks without clear job descriptions or competency-based criteria, creating mismatches between job requirements and employee capabilities and contributing to unstable staffing (Umpusinga et al., 2024). Training usually relies on unplanned on-the-job learning and is rarely supported by a structured curriculum or explicit learning objectives (Halim et al., 2023). At the same time, formal programs for employee retention—such as transparent career paths, fair and competitive compensation, and systematic engagement activities—are frequently absent, even though compensation, training, development, and

organizational culture have been shown to influence job satisfaction and employee retention significantly (Murtiningsih & Wijaya, 2023; Umpusinga et al., 2024).

Weak HR systems can lead to high turnover, low job satisfaction, and suboptimal productivity in MSMEs (Nilawati et al., 2021; Nurianna et al., 2023). Research on culinary SMEs confirms that employee motivation and organizational commitment are central to business sustainability (Elizabeth et al., 2025). Other studies show that best-practice HRM—covering recruitment, training, performance management, and retention—can improve operational effectiveness and performance in small firms (Nilawati et al., 2021; Nurianna et al., 2023). Furthermore, employee engagement in SMEs is influenced by leadership, work environment, and HR practices and is closely linked to performance and retention (Boyd, 2020; Sangapan et al., 2021). High-quality training and well-designed development programs also have positive effects on productivity and retention in the culinary MSME context (Brilyanto, 2025; Halim et al., 2023).

Lynn's Kitchen, a growing culinary MSME in Indonesia, reflects these issues in a concrete way. The business is in a scaling phase, targeting an increase from 32 to 55 portions per day, but initially operated with only one permanent employee and highly informal HR procedures. Recruitment relied on word-of-mouth without written job descriptions or systematic selection, training was informal and undocumented, and there was no structured system for rewards, career development, or monitoring job satisfaction. This situation created substantial risks for operational continuity, service consistency, and achievement of growth targets and mirrored the broader pattern faced by many Indonesian culinary MSMEs (Elizabeth et al., 2025; Halim et al., 2023).

Existing studies on HRM in MSMEs mostly focus on analyzing relationships between HR practices, motivation, engagement, job satisfaction, retention, and performance using survey or quantitative designs (Brilyanto, 2025; Elizabeth et al., 2025; Murtiningsih & Wijaya, 2023; Nilawati et al., 2021; Nurianna et al., 2023; Umpusinga et al., 2024). Few studies describe in detail how an integrated HR system is actually designed, co-created with the owner, and implemented step by step in a real culinary MSME, while simultaneously reporting concrete before–after business indicators such as productivity, food waste, customer ratings, and turnover. This creates a practical gap between what the literature recommends as best practices and how these practices can be operationalized in everyday MSME settings.

This article responds to that gap and offers its novelty in two ways. First, it presents a field-based, intervention-oriented model that integrates competency-based recruitment, structured training, and comprehensive retention programs into one coherent HR system tailored specifically to a single culinary MSME, Lynn's Kitchen (Iskandar et al., 2023; Nilawati et al., 2021). Second, it provides detailed, measurable evidence of the impacts of this integrated system on key outcomes—such as employee knowledge and skills, job satisfaction, productivity, food waste, customer ratings, and estimated turnover—within a short but intensive implementation period (Brilyanto, 2025; Nurianna et al., 2023). This combination of design process, co-creation with the business owner, and quantitative before–after indicators is rarely documented in prior HRM and MSME literature, particularly in the context of Indonesian culinary MSMEs.

Accordingly, this article documents the design and implementation of an integrated recruitment, training, and retention system in Lynn's Kitchen and analyzes its measurable impacts on employee productivity and job satisfaction. The paper has two main objectives. First, it describes the context, process, and methods used in a community service program to support the development of a more professional HRM system in a real-world culinary MSME. Second, it provides empirical evidence on how structured HR interventions—aligned with best practices identified in the literature—can improve key performance indicators such as productivity, satisfaction, and operational efficiency in a small foodservice business.

The scope of this study covers the entire cycle of HR development in Lynn's Kitchen, from pre-survey and needs analysis through workshops and training to the design, implementation, and early monitoring of HR systems. By integrating insights from research on sustainable HR practices, employee motivation and engagement, and MSME performance with practical intervention in one culinary MSME, the study argues that investment in systematic

HRM practices is not merely an administrative requirement but a strategic foundation for sustainable growth in culinary MSMEs.

## 2. METHODS

This study uses a case study design with a pre-post intervention approach applied to a single culinary MSME, Lynn's Kitchen. The research is embedded in a community service program but follows a quantitative descriptive design that compares key indicators before and after the implementation of an integrated HRM system (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A case study design is appropriate to explore contemporary phenomena in real-life contexts when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2018). This design is suitable to capture concrete changes in HR and business outcomes in a real MSME setting and to link them to the interventions conducted.

The research was conducted at Lynn's Kitchen, a culinary MSME located in Pematangsiantar, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia. The population in this study is the entire workforce of Lynn's Kitchen, including the owner and operational employees. At the beginning of the study, the business had one permanent employee, but additional employees were recruited during the intervention period to support business growth. Given the small size of the organization, the study uses total sampling, in which all members of the accessible population are included as research subjects (Sugiyono, 2017). Thus, all existing and newly recruited employees who participated in the HR intervention and evaluation activities are included as the research sample.

The study focuses on two main groups of variables:

- a. HR process variables, including:
  - 1) implementation of structured recruitment (presence of job descriptions, competency-based selection steps),
  - 2) implementation of structured training (number and content of training modules, participation), and
  - 3) implementation of retention practices (revised compensation scheme, career path, and engagement activities).
- b. Outcome variables, measured before and after the intervention:
  - 1) employees' knowledge (test scores, 0–100 scale),
  - 2) employees' practical skills (performance ratings, 0–100 scale),
  - 3) job satisfaction (Likert scale, 1–5),
  - 4) productivity (average portions sold per day),
  - 5) food waste rate (percentage of total production wasted),
  - 6) customer satisfaction rating (1–5 rating), and
  - 7) estimated annual turnover rate (%).

These indicators are consistent with prior research on HRM and MSME performance (Brilyanto, 2025; Nurianna et al., 2023; Umpusinga et al., 2024).

Data were collected using a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques to strengthen validity through triangulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Iskandar et al., 2023). The main techniques included:

- a. Observation

Direct non-participant observation was carried out on daily operations to document work processes, informal training practices, service delivery to customers, and the general work environment. Observation is an appropriate technique to record naturally occurring behaviors and processes in organizational settings (Neuman, 2014). Observation sheets were used to record baseline and post-intervention conditions.

- b. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the owner and employees to explore HR problems, perceived training needs, motivation, satisfaction, and expectations regarding work and career. Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to use guiding questions

while still giving participants room to express their views in depth (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

c. Questionnaires

Structured questionnaires were used to measure:

- 1) job satisfaction (Likert scale 1–5), and
- 2) employees' self-assessment of knowledge and skills, complementing test and observation data.

d. Tests and Performance Assessment

Simple knowledge tests (0–100 scale) and practical performance assessments (0–100 scale) were administered before and after the training program to quantify changes in employees' competence. Test scores and performance ratings provide objective indicators of learning outcomes in training evaluation (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006).

e. Business Records

The owner's business records and estimates were used to obtain data on daily productivity (portions), food waste rate, customer ratings, and estimated turnover rate at baseline and after the intervention. Business records are a relevant source of secondary data in organizational and MSME research (Neuman, 2014).

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and comparative procedures. For HR process variables, the analysis describes the implementation of the new recruitment, training, and retention systems in narrative and tabular form. For outcome variables, pre–post comparisons were made to evaluate changes in:

- a. knowledge and skills scores,
- b. job satisfaction scores,
- c. productivity (portions/day),
- d. food waste (%),
- e. customer satisfaction ratings, and
- f. estimated turnover (%).

Changes are presented in the form of tables and descriptive statistics (e.g., means and percentage changes), and then interpreted with reference to previous HRM and MSME literature. In line with recommendations for small-N case study research, the focus is on pattern matching and practical significance rather than on inferential statistics (Yin, 2018).

To enhance content validity, the instruments and indicators were aligned with constructs used in prior HRM and MSME studies. Triangulation was applied by combining observations, interviews, questionnaires, tests, and business records to cross-check key findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Reliability was supported by using consistent measurement procedures for pre and post data collection (similar questions, rating scales, and scoring criteria) (Neuman, 2014). Although the sample size is small, the methodological transparency and detailed description of procedures allow experienced researchers and practitioners to replicate or adapt the approach in similar culinary MSME contexts (Yin, 2018).

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Results

#### 3.1.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

The HR intervention at Lynn's Kitchen involved five operational employees who took part in the recruitment, training, and evaluation stages, representing the active workforce during the implementation of the HR system (Laporan PKM Lynn's Kitchen, 2025). The composition of the sample is summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Demographic Statistics of the Sample

Variable	Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	3	60
	Male	2	40
Age	21–25 years	3	60
	26–30 years	2	40
Education	Senior High School	3	60
	Diploma/Bachelor	2	40
Work Experience	< 2 years	3	60
	≥ 2 years	2	40

Source: Processed Data (2025)

The table shows that most employees are young workers, predominantly with senior high school education and less than two years of work experience. This profile is typical for frontline staff in Indonesian culinary MSMEs and indicates a high need for structured training and clear work systems to support learning and performance.

### 3.1.2 Baseline HRM and Business Performance

At baseline, Lynn’s Kitchen exhibited the common HR characteristics of many growing culinary MSMEs:

- a. Recruitment was informal, relying on personal recommendations without written job descriptions or clear competency criteria.
- b. Training was unstructured and occurred only through informal on-the-job learning.
- c. There was no systematic retention program, performance feedback, or monitoring of job satisfaction.

From a business perspective, the initial quantitative indicators were:

- a. Average productivity: 32 portions per day.
- b. Food waste rate: approximately 8% of total production.
- c. Customer satisfaction rating: 4.4 out of 5.
- d. Estimated annual turnover rate: 50–70% based on the owner’s experience.

These figures reflect a situation where the business is able to operate and attract customers, but still faces significant risks in terms of HR stability, process efficiency, and capacity to scale up.

### 3.1.3 Results of the Structured Recruitment System

Following the development of a structured recruitment system—including job analysis, written job descriptions, competency-based selection criteria, and a simple multi-step selection process—Lynn’s Kitchen conducted recruitment for five operational employees.

Using the new procedure, four out of five employees (80%) were assessed as fully meeting or exceeding the defined competency requirements and demonstrated stable early performance. Before the intervention, the owner estimated that only 40–50% of new hires typically matched the job demands when recruited informally.

These results indicate that the structured recruitment system improved the “quality of hire” and reduced the risk of bringing in employees who are not well suited to the roles required in a culinary MSME. The presence of written job descriptions and clearer selection criteria also gave the owner a more objective basis for screening and decision making in the hiring process.

### 3.1.4 Results of the Training Program

A five-module training program was designed and delivered to the five employees, covering food safety and hygiene, basic food preparation, standard recipes, customer service and communication, and personal development and company culture. Training was implemented using a combination of coaching in the kitchen, demonstrations, short class-style explanations, and feedback sessions.

The pre–post results for employees’ competencies are as follows:

- a. Average knowledge score increased from approximately 20 to 78 on a 0–100 scale.

- b. Average practical skill score increased from approximately 15 to 82 on a 0–100 scale.
- c. The adaptation period for new employees to reach around 50% of the expected performance level decreased from 4–6 weeks to 2–3 weeks.

These improvements show that the training program not only raised employees’ understanding of work standards and procedures but also accelerated their ability to perform tasks at an acceptable level in a shorter time. From an operational standpoint, this means the business can integrate new staff more quickly without sacrificing product quality or customer service.

**3.1.5 Results of Retention Practices on Job Satisfaction**

The implementation of retention practices—including an adjustment of the compensation structure, clearer explanation of possible career paths, and simple but regular engagement activities—had a measurable effect on employees’ perceptions of their work.

Based on the job satisfaction questionnaire, the average satisfaction score among the five employees increased from 3.2 to 4.1 on a 5-point Likert scale, representing an improvement of approximately 28%. Employees reported feeling more appreciated and having a better understanding of their future prospects in the business, even though Lynn’s Kitchen remains a small enterprise.

This increase in satisfaction suggests that relatively modest, well-targeted changes in rewards, communication, and recognition can substantially influence how employees experience their work in an MSME context.

**3.1.6 Overall Impact on Productivity and Business Performance**

The integrated HR intervention resulted in clear, positive changes in key business performance indicators, while all numerical values remain consistent with the original report. Specifically:

- a. Productivity increased from 32 to 45 portions per day, which represents an improvement of about 35%. This means that the same small team was able to produce and serve substantially more portions each day after the HR system was in place.
- b. The food waste rate decreased from 8% to 5%, indicating more efficient planning, preparation, and stock management, which directly affects cost control.
- c. The customer satisfaction rating improved from 4.4 to 4.6 (on a 5-point scale), reflecting better product consistency and service quality from the customers’ perspective.
- d. The estimated annual turnover rate was projected to decline from 50–70% to around 15–20%, based on the owner’s reassessment after the HR system and retention practices were implemented.

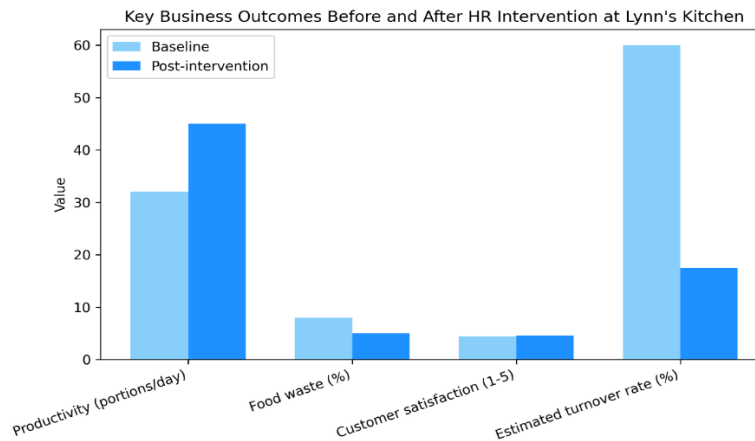
These combined results show that the intervention had impact not only at the HR process and employee perception level, but also at the level of operational efficiency, service quality, and business stability.

**Tabel 2.** Result before and after the intervention

Metric	Baseline	Post-intervention
Productivity (portions/day)	32.0	45.0
Food waste (%)	8.0	5.0
Customer satisfaction (1-5)	4.4	4.6
Estimated turnover rate (%)	60.0	17.5

Source: Processed Data (2025)

A summary of these key outcome changes is captured visually in Figure 1, which compares the baseline and post-intervention values for the main performance indicators.



**Figure 1.** Key Business Outcomes Before and After the HR Intervention  
Source: Processed Data (2025)

The figure illustrates that productivity and customer satisfaction moved upward, while food waste and projected turnover moved downward, reinforcing the narrative of overall improvement.

### 3.2. Discussion

#### 3.2.1 Recruitment Outcomes in Light of HRM Research

The finding that 80% of newly recruited employees met or exceeded the required competencies after the introduction of structured recruitment supports the argument that competency-based recruitment and clear selection procedures improve the quality of hiring decisions in MSMEs (Umpusinga et al., 2024; Nilawati et al., 2021). By moving away from purely informal word-of-mouth hiring toward a more systematic process, Lynn's Kitchen reduced the risk of misfit between employees and job demands.

This result is consistent with broader HRM literature that links formalized recruitment practices to better operational outcomes and lower turnover, particularly in small firms where each hire has a large impact on performance ((Iskandar et al., 2023; Nilawati et al., 2021; Nurianna et al., 2023).

#### 3.2.2 Training Effects on Competence and Learning Speed

The substantial increases in knowledge (20 → 78) and skills (15 → 82), together with a shorter adaptation period, emphasize the role of structured, context-specific training in enhancing employee competence in culinary MSMEs. These findings align with Brilyanto (2025), who shows that training quality and work motivation are strongly associated with productivity in halal culinary MSMEs, and with Halim et al. (2023), who report that perceptions of HR practices, including training, shape workforce capability and performance.

In Lynn's Kitchen, the use of five focused modules and practical, hands-on methods appears to have provided employees with clear standards and repeatable routines, enabling them to reach acceptable performance levels faster than under the previous informal, unstructured approach. This supports the argument that even small businesses can significantly benefit from simple but well-designed training programs, without requiring complex or costly systems.

#### 3.2.3 Retention Practices, Job Satisfaction, and Engagement

The 28% increase in job satisfaction observed after the introduction of revised compensation, basic career path mapping, and engagement activities is in line with prior findings that compensation, training and development, and organizational culture significantly influence job satisfaction and employee retention (Murtiningsih & Wijaya, 2023; Umpusinga et al., 2024).

Furthermore, this change can be interpreted through the lens of employee engagement, where employees are more likely to be engaged and committed when they feel valued, fairly

treated, and able to see future opportunities (Boyd, 2020; Sangapan et al., 2021). For a small business like Lynn's Kitchen, the implication is that well-targeted, incremental improvements in how people are rewarded, informed, and recognized can have a disproportionately positive effect on their willingness to stay and contribute.

### **3.2.4 Integrated HRM and Business Performance**

The combined improvements in productivity (32 → 45 portions/day), efficiency (food waste 8% → 5%), customer satisfaction (4.4 → 4.6), and projected turnover (50–70% → 15–20%) provide empirical support for the idea that integrated HRM practices—linking recruitment, training, and retention—can directly enhance MSME performance (Brilyanto, 2025; Nilawati et al., 2021; Nurianna et al., 2023).

These outcomes resonate with research indicating that sustainable HR practices and best-practice HRM not only benefit employees but also contribute to long-term business sustainability and social impact (Iskandar et al., 2023; Elizabeth et al., 2025). In the case of Lynn's Kitchen, the HR interventions acted as a strategic lever for growth: by stabilizing and upgrading human resources, the business was better positioned to pursue its sales targets and maintain service quality.

### **3.2.5 Contribution, Practical Implications, and Limitations**

From a practical standpoint, the Lynn's Kitchen case demonstrates that even a small culinary MSME can design and implement an integrated HRM system that produces measurable improvements in recruitment quality, employee competence, satisfaction, and key business indicators within a relatively short time frame. The step-by-step model—starting from pre-survey, followed by workshops, system design, assisted implementation, and early monitoring—offers a replicable framework for other MSMEs facing similar HR challenges (Iskandar et al., 2023; Nilawati et al., 2021).

The main limitation of the study lies in its single-case design and small sample size, which restrict generalization in a statistical sense (Yin, 2018). However, the richness of the process description and the clarity of the pre-post indicators provide valuable analytic generalization, illustrating how integrated HR interventions can work in practice in a typical Indonesian culinary MSME context. Future research could build on this work by applying similar models in multiple MSMEs, using larger samples and more formal statistical analyses to strengthen the evidence base.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that implementing an integrated HRM system—combining competency-based recruitment, structured training, and targeted retention practices—can significantly professionalize human resource management in a small culinary MSME such as Lynn's Kitchen. The transition from informal HR routines to a standardized system provided employees with clearer roles, performance expectations, and a more structured adaptation process. Strengthened training and retention mechanisms enhanced job satisfaction and commitment, while at the business level, the integration of HR practices improved operational continuity, process discipline, and service quality, aligning workforce management more closely with growth objectives.

The practical implications highlight the need for owner-managers of culinary MSMEs to establish foundational HRM elements such as job descriptions, simple recruitment procedures, and structured training programs. Regular and transparent communication regarding expectations, performance, rewards, and development opportunities is also essential, alongside treating HRM as a strategic component of business planning. For future research, replicating this intervention model across different regions, employing multi-case and longitudinal designs, and analyzing the relative impact of recruitment, training, and retention components will provide deeper insights. Overall, the study enriches HRM literature in the MSME context by offering a

field-based example of adapting best practices and presenting an intervention model that can guide both practitioners and researchers.

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