

TALENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES, JOB COMPETENCIES, TRAINING NEEDS IN A BOUTIQUE HOTEL

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Abstract:

This study assessed the levels of talent management practices, job competencies, and training needs among employees of a boutique hotel in the Philippines. It also examined significant differences in these constructs based on demographic factors such as age, sex, educational attainment, length of service, position, and location, as well as the relationships among them. Utilizing a quantitative, descriptive-comparative, and correlational research design, data were gathered from 91 employees across seven hotel branches using an adapted and validated questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, Mann-Whitney U tests, Kruskal-Wallis H tests, ANOVA, and Spearman's Rho correlation analyses were applied. Findings revealed high levels of talent management practices, job competencies, and training needs, with notable strengths in talent identification, leadership, and training impact. Significant differences were observed in perceptions of these constructs based on age and educational attainment. Additionally, the study confirmed moderate positive correlations among talent management practices, job competencies, and training needs, suggesting their interrelated nature. The results highlight the need for boutique hotels to strengthen career development, technical training, and personalized training programs to enhance workforce capabilities. The study recommends integrated human resource strategies that align recruitment, competency development, and training interventions to ensure organizational sustainability and service excellence.

Keywords: Talent Management Practices; Job Competencies; Training Needs; Human Resource Management; Boutique Hotels; Hospitality Industry; Workforce Development; Philippines; Quantitative Research; Employee Training

Introduction:

The global hotel industry operates in a highly competitive, fast-paced, and customer-centric environment that demands exceptional talent to ensure consistent service quality and business sustainability. Recent studies emphasize that the hospitality industry is undergoing rapid changes driven by globalization, digitalization, and shifting customer expectations (Papageorgiou et al., 2024; Santos et al., 2023). Boutique hotels, in particular, must differentiate themselves through personalized experiences and superior guest services, necessitating a workforce that is both competent and adaptable. However, hotels worldwide—including those in the Philippines—face increasing difficulty in attracting and retaining qualified employees due to high turnover rates, low wages, irregular hours, and demanding work conditions (Knap-Stefaniuk & Karna, 2022; Hyasat et al., 2022). These factors create persistent workforce challenges that compromise service quality and organizational performance.

Talent management has emerged as a strategic priority for hospitality businesses seeking to address these workforce challenges. Talent management refers to an organization's systematic efforts to attract, develop, engage, and retain employees whose competencies align with its strategic goals (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2019; Caligiuri et al., 2024). It goes beyond recruitment by focusing on long-term workforce planning and fostering employee growth. In the hotel industry, talent management is viewed as essential for achieving operational excellence, promoting organizational agility, and enhancing customer satisfaction (Jibril & Yeşiltaş, 2022). Despite its recognized importance, many hotel organizations—especially in developing countries—lack structured talent management frameworks, often relying on informal practices or traditional recruitment methods that do not fully address the evolving needs of the business.

Employee competencies are equally central to organizational success, particularly in service industries like hospitality, where guest interactions shape brand perceptions. Competency refers to an employee's combination of knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors required to perform specific job roles effectively (Chang et al., 2021; Stanisić & Čerović,

2020). In the hospitality context, competencies are not limited to technical abilities but also encompass soft skills such as communication, empathy, cultural sensitivity, and teamwork (Raras et al., 2024; Pranić et al., 2021). However, research suggests that many hospitality employees, particularly in developing regions, may lack the full spectrum of competencies needed to meet contemporary service standards (Castro, 2021; Chapman & Lovell, 2006). These competency gaps can result in substandard service delivery, operational inefficiencies, and diminished guest satisfaction.

Training is widely acknowledged as a primary intervention to address competency gaps and enhance employee performance. Training Needs Analysis (TNA), as conceptualized by McGehee and Thayer's (O-T-P model), is a systematic approach to identifying, assessing, and addressing skill gaps at the organizational, operational, and individual levels (Alzahmi & Alshamsi, 2024). Research consistently demonstrates that effective training leads to higher employee productivity, better service delivery, and improved customer satisfaction (Alhawaish, 2024; Kaumi et al., 2023). However, inadequate or misaligned training programs can yield limited results, with employees remaining under-skilled or disengaged (Mdhlalose, 2022). In the Philippine hotel industry, training programs often suffer from insufficient funding, inconsistent implementation, and limited alignment with both employee needs and evolving industry standards (Arowana Impact Capital Group, 2023; Barba, 2023).

A growing body of literature points to talent mismatches in the Philippine hotel sector, where employees frequently hold educational backgrounds unrelated to hospitality and tourism. This phenomenon is evident in many boutique hotels that hire graduates from nursing, business, or computer science programs to fill operational roles (Arowana Impact Capital Group, 2023; Castro, 2021). While these employees may develop job-specific skills over time, the absence of formal education in hospitality poses challenges to achieving service excellence and limits career growth opportunities. Additionally, informal hiring practices such as nepotism—especially prevalent in smaller hotels—further complicate efforts to professionalize the workforce and institutionalize merit-based systems (Charoenarpornwattana, 2022). These realities underline the need for rigorous studies that assess the current state of talent management, employee competencies, and training needs within the local hospitality industry.

Despite the expanding literature on human resource management in hospitality, significant gaps remain—particularly concerning boutique hotels in the Philippines. Boutique hotels, known for their personalized service and distinctive cultural identity, face unique workforce challenges compared to large hotel chains. They often operate with lean teams, requiring employees to multitask and adapt to diverse roles (Charoenboon & Chankaew, 2022; Garg & Kumar, 2021). However, academic inquiry into the human resource dynamics of boutique hotels in the Philippine context remains limited, especially regarding talent management practices, competency assessments, and targeted training interventions. This lack of empirical evidence limits both theoretical understanding and practical solutions for this segment of the industry.

Furthermore, existing studies tend to overlook the nuances of demographic factors—such as age, sex, education, tenure, position, and location—in shaping employee perceptions and outcomes in boutique hotels. While some research indicates that factors like age and experience may influence perceptions of talent management and training needs (Younas & Bari, 2020; Jibril & Yeşiltaş, 2022), there is insufficient evidence from Philippine boutique hotels to validate these claims. This knowledge gap prevents hotel managers from tailoring human resource strategies to specific employee profiles, resulting in generic interventions that may not effectively address localized workforce issues.

Moreover, the interconnectedness of talent management, job competencies, and training needs is often underexplored in hospitality studies. While separate strands of research emphasize the importance of each construct, few studies examine their interrelationships within a single empirical framework (Ekhsan et al., 2023; Bani-Hani, 2021). This limits the capacity of hotel managers to adopt integrated approaches that align recruitment, competency development, and training initiatives toward common performance goals. Investigating these relationships is particularly relevant for boutique hotels, where resource constraints necessitate efficient and synergistic human resource practices.

Notably, the Philippine government and tourism sector have recently amplified calls for workforce upskilling, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic's disruption of the hospitality industry. The Department of Tourism's training programs and technical-vocational initiatives under TESDA are examples of institutional efforts to address

these challenges (Barba, 2023). However, without localized research that maps the actual training needs of employees within boutique hotels, such efforts risk being misaligned with real-world demands. Boutique hotels, as key players in the Philippines' cultural and tourism landscape, require tailored studies that recognize their distinct organizational structures, guest profiles, and service delivery models.

Given these complex dynamics, there is a pressing need for empirical research that systematically assesses talent management practices, job competencies, and training needs within Philippine boutique hotels. Such research should not only document the current state of these constructs but also explore their interrelationships and examine variations across demographic factors. Findings from such a study could provide valuable insights for hotel managers, policymakers, and training providers seeking to strengthen human capital in the hospitality sector.

Therefore, this study aims to assess the levels of talent management practices, job competencies, and training needs among employees of a boutique hotel in the Philippines. It also investigates whether significant differences exist in these constructs when grouped according to key demographic variables, and whether relationships among the three variables can be established. By doing so, the study intends to fill a critical gap in the literature and offer evidence-based recommendations for improving workforce development in Philippine boutique hotels.

Methodology:

This study employed a quantitative, descriptive-comparative, and correlational research design to examine the levels of talent management practices, job competencies, and training needs among employees of a boutique hotel. A quantitative approach was deemed appropriate given the study's objective to measure variables numerically and statistically assess differences and relationships among them (McCombes, 2019). Descriptive research was utilized to systematically describe the current conditions of the identified variables, while comparative and correlational methods were applied to examine differences across demographic groups and to analyze the relationships among talent management practices, job competencies, and training needs.

The research was conducted at seven sub-business units (SBUs) of a boutique hotel located in key cities across the Philippines: Batangas, Manila, Bacolod, Dumaguete, Boracay, Siargao, and Naga. These boutique hotels are known for delivering highly personalized services that reflect local culture and heritage. As boutique hotels are generally smaller and independently operated, they face unique challenges compared to chain hotels, particularly in talent management and workforce development (Charoenboon & Chankaew, 2022).

The population of the study consisted of all active employees across the seven locations, totaling 122 individuals. To determine the appropriate sample size, the Raosoft online sample size calculator was used, applying a 99% confidence level and a 1% margin of error. The recommended sample size was 92; however, the final sample size was adjusted to 91 due to the researcher's exclusion from the survey and the voluntary nature of participation. The study employed a stratified random sampling technique, which involved dividing the population into strata based on their respective SBUs to ensure proportional representation (Stanisic & Čerović, 2020). Stratified random sampling was chosen to address potential variations across hotel locations, which may influence employees' perceptions of talent management, competencies, and training needs (Clark et al., 2020).

The primary instrument for data collection was an adapted and modified structured questionnaire, which comprised four parts. The first part gathered demographic information, including age, sex, educational attainment, length of service, position, and location. The second part assessed Talent Management Practices based on the dimensions developed by Jibril and Yeşiltaş (2022), covering Talent Identification, Talent Development, Talent Engagement, Performance Management, and Talent Retention. The third part evaluated Job Competencies using dimensions adapted from Bagon et al. (2023), including Conceptual/Creative, Leadership, Interpersonal, Administrative, and Technical domains. The fourth part measured Training Needs following the model of Alzahmi and Alshamsi (2024), focusing on Training Type, Training Goals, and Training Impact. Responses were collected using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree (1)" to "Strongly Agree (4)."

The instrument underwent content validation using Lawshe's (1975) Content Validity Ratio (CVR) approach, which involved expert evaluations to determine item essentiality. Fifteen subject matter experts assessed the instrument, resulting in a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.892, indicating high validity (Jadidi et al., 2024). To establish

reliability, the instrument was pilot-tested with 30 employees not included in the final sample. The resulting Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.909 for Talent Management Practices, 0.952 for Job Competencies, and 0.949 for Training Needs, all exceeding the 0.7 threshold recommended for high reliability (Cai et al., 2024).

Data collection was carried out through an online survey using Google Forms to ensure accessibility and efficiency across all hotel locations. Prior to distribution, formal approval was secured from the hotel's corporate Human Resources department. The HR managers at each property were responsible for disseminating the survey link to their respective employees. Participation in the survey was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the study's purpose and their right to withdraw at any time.

For statistical treatment, descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to determine the levels of talent management practices, job competencies, and training needs. To test for significant differences among demographic groups, inferential statistics were employed: Mann-Whitney U tests for binary variables and Kruskal-Wallis H tests for variables with more than two groups, with Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) used where appropriate. Finally, Spearman's Rho correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships among talent management practices, job competencies, and training needs.

Strict adherence to ethical considerations was observed throughout the research process, following the principles outlined by Bhandari (2021). Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and the voluntary nature of participation was emphasized. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing responses and restricting access to the raw data to the researcher only. No personal identifiers were collected to protect respondents' privacy, and data were stored securely in password-protected digital files. Additionally, there were no reported vulnerabilities among the participants, as all were legal adults and competent professionals. The study also complied with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 in the Philippines.

Results:

Talent Management Practices

The study assessed the level of talent management practices among boutique hotel employees. As shown in Table 1, the overall mean score for talent management practices was 2.98 (SD = 0.259), interpreted as high. Among the five dimensions, Talent Identification had the highest mean score (3.15), followed by Talent Engagement (3.06), Performance Management (2.97), Talent Retention (2.84), and Talent Development (2.83), all interpreted as high levels. This suggests that employees perceive talent management practices to be implemented effectively, particularly in identifying talents and engaging employees.

Table

1

Overall Level of Talent Management Practices (n = 91)

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Talent Identification	3.15	0.411	High
Talent Development	2.83	0.518	High
Talent Engagement	3.06	0.303	High
Performance Management	2.97	0.353	High
Talent Retention	2.84	0.358	High
Overall	2.98	0.259	High

Job Competencies

Table 2 shows the level of job competencies among the employees. The overall mean was 3.09 (SD = 0.255), indicating a high competency level. The Leadership Domain scored the highest (3.20), followed by Interpersonal (3.15), Administrative (3.04), Conceptual/Creative (3.04), and Technical (3.00) domains. These results reflect that employees generally possess high competencies, particularly in leadership and interpersonal interactions.

Table

2

Overall Level of Job Competencies (n = 91)

Domain	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Conceptual/Creative	3.04	0.35	High
Leadership	3.2	0.363	High
Interpersonal	3.15	0.303	High
Administrative	3.04	0.243	High
Technical	3	0.272	High
Overall	3.09	0.255	High

Training Needs

The study also evaluated the training needs of employees. As indicated in Table 3, the overall mean was 2.93 (SD = 0.273), also interpreted as high. The Training Impact dimension had the highest mean (2.99), followed by Training Type (2.92) and Training Goals (2.84). This suggests that employees recognize the importance of training, particularly its impact on their performance.

Table

3

Overall Level of Training Needs (n = 91)

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Training Type	2.92	0.326	High
Training Goals	2.84	0.348	High
Training Impact	2.99	0.287	High
Overall	2.93	0.273	High

Significant Differences

Inferential analysis revealed significant differences in talent management practices, job competencies, and training needs based on selected demographic variables.

For talent management practices, a significant difference was observed based on age ($p = 0.008$), with older employees reporting higher perceptions. No significant differences were noted by sex, educational attainment, length of service, position, or location.

Similarly, job competencies significantly differed by age ($p < 0.001$), with older employees rating themselves higher in competencies.

In terms of training needs, significant differences were observed in age ($p = 0.016$) and educational attainment ($p = 0.019$), suggesting that older employees and those with differing education levels perceive training needs differently.

Significant Relationships

Correlation analysis using Spearman's Rho demonstrated significant relationships among the study variables ($p < 0.001$). There was a moderate positive correlation between:

- Talent management practices and job competencies ($p = 0.514$),
- Talent management practices and training needs ($p = 0.569$),
- Job competencies and training needs ($p = 0.469$).

These results indicate that improvements in talent management practices are associated with higher job competencies and greater training needs.

Discussion:

The present study examined the levels of talent management practices, job competencies, and training needs among employees of a boutique hotel in the Philippines, alongside the significant differences and relationships among these constructs. Overall, the findings indicate that employees perceive high levels of talent management practices, job competencies, and training needs, suggesting that while systems and competencies are in place, there remains substantial room for improvement.

The high overall rating for talent management practices suggests that the boutique hotel has established mechanisms for identifying, engaging, and retaining talent. Among the five dimensions assessed, Talent Identification and Talent Engagement received the highest scores, indicating that recruitment and employee engagement efforts are relatively strong. This finding aligns with Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2019) and Jibril and Yeşiltaş (2022), who emphasize the strategic importance of identifying high-potential employees and fostering their commitment. However, Talent Development and Talent Retention were comparatively lower, revealing potential gaps in career progression opportunities and long-term employee retention strategies. This is consistent with challenges reported by Knap-Stefaniuk and Karna (2022), who noted that boutique hotels often struggle to offer clear career advancement pathways due to their smaller organizational structures.

Regarding job competencies, employees reported high competency levels across all domains, with Leadership and Interpersonal competencies rated highest. This reflects the service-oriented nature of the hospitality industry, where effective communication and leadership are critical to guest satisfaction (Pranić et al., 2021; Chang et al., 2021). However, slightly lower scores in the Technical domain suggest that some employees may require further upskilling in specialized hotel systems, technology, or operational procedures—particularly those who did not graduate from hospitality-related fields (Castro, 2021). This competency gap mirrors previous findings by Chapman and Lovell (2006), who emphasized the importance of aligning technical training with operational demands in hospitality settings.

The high rating for training needs reinforces the importance of continuous learning in the hospitality industry. Employees recognized the value of training programs, especially in terms of improving job performance and productivity (Training Impact). This result underscores the significance of well-designed training programs as highlighted by McGehee and Thayer's model (Alzahmi & Alshamsi, 2024) and by Kaumi et al. (2023), who emphasize that effective training directly enhances service delivery. Nevertheless, the lower score in Training Goals suggests that employees may feel that training opportunities are not sufficiently aligned with their personal career development plans, highlighting a gap between organizational offerings and individual aspirations (Mdhlalose, 2022).

The study further revealed that age significantly influences perceptions of talent management practices, job competencies, and training needs. Older employees generally reported higher scores across these areas. This finding supports earlier studies by Younas and Bari (2020) and Jibril and Yeşiltaş (2022), who observed that more experienced employees tend to value organizational structures and are more receptive to training initiatives. Older

employees may also have greater exposure to internal systems, leading to higher self-assessed competencies and better alignment with talent management strategies. Conversely, younger employees may have higher expectations for rapid development and personalized career pathways, which could explain their relatively lower ratings in some areas.

A notable finding of this study is the significant difference in training needs based on educational attainment. Employees with technical-vocational backgrounds perceived greater training needs compared to those with bachelor's degrees. This is consistent with previous research indicating that non-degree holders may feel less equipped to handle specialized tasks in service industries, particularly in technical or administrative roles (Barba, 2023; Arowana Impact Capital Group, 2023). However, it also suggests that training programs should be tailored not just by position but also by employees' educational backgrounds to ensure equitable learning opportunities.

Importantly, this study demonstrated moderate positive correlations among talent management practices, job competencies, and training needs. These relationships highlight the interconnected nature of human resource functions within boutique hotels. Effective talent management can enhance employee competencies and simultaneously create awareness of training needs, reinforcing the cycle of continuous development. This finding is in line with Ekhsan et al. (2023) and Bani-Hani (2021), who advocate for integrated HR strategies that align recruitment, competency development, and training to maximize organizational performance. It suggests that improvements in one area can yield positive spillover effects in others.

From a practical perspective, these findings present clear implications for boutique hotel managers. First, there is a need to strengthen career development and succession planning mechanisms to improve talent development and retention. Second, targeted technical training programs should be prioritized, particularly for employees without formal hospitality backgrounds. Finally, aligning training goals with both organizational objectives and individual employee aspirations is essential to foster employee engagement and job satisfaction.

In conclusion, the study reinforces the necessity of a holistic approach to talent management, competency development, and training in boutique hotels. The interconnectedness of these factors suggests that isolated interventions may be insufficient. Instead, boutique hotels should adopt integrated, data-driven human resource strategies that recognize demographic differences, address existing competency gaps, and enhance both employee development and organizational performance.

Conclusion:

This study examined the levels of talent management practices, job competencies, and training needs among employees of a boutique hotel in the Philippines. The findings reveal that employees perceive these areas to be at a high level, suggesting that the organization has established effective systems for talent management and that employees generally possess the competencies required for their roles. However, the study also highlights specific areas for improvement, particularly in talent development, technical competencies, and aligning training programs with employees' individual career goals.

Significant differences were identified based on demographic factors, specifically age and educational attainment. Older employees tend to have more favorable perceptions of talent management practices, job competencies, and training needs, likely due to their extended work experience and greater familiarity with organizational systems. Additionally, employees with technical-vocational backgrounds reported higher training needs than their counterparts with bachelor's degrees, indicating the need for differentiated training approaches based on educational backgrounds.

Importantly, the study confirmed that talent management practices, job competencies, and training needs are significantly interrelated. This suggests that a well-executed talent management strategy positively influences employee competencies and increases employees' awareness of their training needs. These findings emphasize the importance of integrated human resource strategies in boutique hotels, where resource constraints and a lean workforce require synergized approaches to talent management and workforce development.

Overall, the study underscores the need for boutique hotels to continuously refine their human resource practices, ensuring they are responsive to the diverse backgrounds and evolving needs of their employees. By doing so, these

organizations can strengthen service quality, improve employee satisfaction, and sustain their competitive advantage in the dynamic hospitality industry.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that the boutique hotel strengthen its talent development and retention strategies. While talent identification and engagement were rated highly, there remains a gap in opportunities for career advancement and long-term retention. The hotel should consider designing structured career development programs, including mentorship initiatives, internal promotion pathways, and performance-based incentives. These strategies may enhance employee motivation and reduce turnover, particularly among younger employees seeking clear professional growth trajectories.

Given the relatively lower scores in technical competencies, the hotel management should prioritize technical training that is specifically aligned with operational demands. This includes providing hands-on training in hotel management systems, digital tools, and service delivery technologies. Special attention should be given to employees whose educational backgrounds are not related to hospitality or tourism. Tailored programs such as job shadowing, cross-training, or certification courses can help bridge competency gaps and ensure that all employees are equally equipped to deliver high-quality service.

It is also recommended that the hotel regularly conduct training needs assessments to ensure that training programs remain relevant and responsive to both organizational goals and individual employee aspirations. The hotel should implement mechanisms for employees to provide feedback on their training experiences and suggest areas for improvement. Furthermore, it is advisable to integrate personalized development plans into performance appraisals, allowing employees to set learning objectives that align with their career ambitions.

Lastly, the hotel management should adopt an integrated human resource strategy that links talent management, competency development, and training programs. The observed interrelationship among these variables suggests that coordinated efforts across these areas will yield the best outcomes. Management should consider establishing an HR task force to oversee the alignment of recruitment, training, and competency-building initiatives. Through such integrated approaches, the boutique hotel can not only address current gaps but also build a resilient and high-performing workforce that meets the evolving demands of the hospitality industry.

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