

Competency Level of Service Crew in Rinconada, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

The level of competencies of the service crew in fast food restaurants plays a crucial role in delivering quality service, ensuring customer satisfaction, and maintaining operational efficiency. The study aimed to determine the level of competencies of the service crew in Rinconada. Specifically, it focuses on competencies desired by the fast-food industry along communication, team environment, professionalism, and effective customer relations and the level of competencies along with basic competencies, common competencies, and core competencies in cookery and food and beverage service. A descriptive research method was used. The study's respondents are 147 service crew in Rinconada who have been in the service for at least 2 years and are of legal age. A self-made questionnaire was utilized. Findings. Fast food restaurants need a service crew that is highly competent in communication, team environment, and professionalism and in providing effective customer service. The service crew in fast food restaurants in Rinconada is very competent in common competencies and core competencies in cookery and food and beverage service while competent in the common competencies. Recommendations. Fast food restaurants implement regular skills training programs, provide mentorship opportunities, and conduct performance assessments to enhance the competencies of service crew members while aligning with the desired standards of the establishment and being globally competitive.

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Introduction

The food service sector is essential to the economic growth of every nation of the globe. The food service industry is the sector that deals with meal preparation. Restaurants, fast food chains, schools, hospitals, cafeterias, catering businesses, food carts and food trucks, and other businesses that offer food and services are some of the various varieties of this industry [1]. The fast-food business has been expanding quickly and has effectively entered most markets worldwide. At the same time, it has brought about several important changes in work practices and employment relations. Fast food is defined by its low-cost, uniformly prepared meal items that are served promptly and effectively for dine-in or takeout and frequently come packaged without utensils [2].

Fast food service crews in the Philippines are required to have the required skills and competence. It entails being able to welcome and take orders from customers, as well as providing information, responding to inquiries, upselling, and helping in the kitchen. It is necessary to have general math skills and comprehension abilities. Regulations about food safety, cleanliness, and health must be taught to employees. Occasionally, a food handler card or permission is also required. However, although formal education is not necessary, the level of competencies is important [3]. In the fast-food industry, it is difficult to retain skilled and competent employees. The services offered by fast food restaurants are greatly impacted by the fact that, despite their stance that education is not necessary, it is now almost hard to seek out, hire, and retain qualified employees [4].

Since skills are currently the primary criteria that the hospitality industry looks for, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) offers skill training and assessments to various service crews or employees based on their field of specialization. This can improve and develop their knowledge and skills. While the Cooking NC II qualification consists of basic, common, and core competencies that involve cleaning kitchen areas and cooking/preparing hot, and cold meals and desserts for customers, the Food and Beverage Service (FBS) NC IV qualification consists of basic, common, and core competencies in providing food and beverage service to guests in various food and beverage service facilities. These competencies are applicable and must be possessed by the service crew in fast-food restaurants.

Considering all the viewpoints mentioned, the researchers would like to know what skills the service crew has what the fast-food sector desires, and the level of competencies of the service crew in terms of food and beverage service and cookery. Given that some students have already graduated but are having a difficult time finding employment because they lack the necessary knowledge and skills. Meanwhile, researchers who are also hospitality management educators wanted to ensure that the competencies offered to hospitality management students align with the competencies that the fast-food industry desires. This way, when students graduate and leave

the portal of their beloved institutions, they will be well-equipped with the competencies that the fast-food industry desires. In addition, provides insight into the competencies of the service crew that need to be developed or enriched for their self-improvement. This will help the educators of hospitality management determine which competencies should be emphasized and provided to students. This is the basis for the researchers' encouragement to investigate the level of competency of the service crew in Rinconada. Nevertheless, the study's findings are intended to enhance the Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management (BSHM) program's curriculum, particularly because several Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) now provide or plan to offer BSHM courses.

Material and Methods

A. Research Design

This study employs the descriptive research method. The responses of the respondents are ascertained, examined, and interpreted using the descriptive research method. It is used to determine, analyze, and interpret the competencies that the fast food industry desires, including communication, team environment, professionalism, and effective customer relations. Furthermore, the descriptive method is used to analyze and interpret the level of competencies of the service crew on basic competencies, common competencies, and core competencies in cookery and food and beverage service. Voxco [5] stated that descriptive research design is a systematic approach used to methodically gather information to depict a phenomenon, situation, or population. Its main objective is to address questions about what, when, where, and how about the research problem, rather than delving into the reasons why.

B. Respondents

Respondents are essential to successful research since they were the study's main source of success. The list of fast-food restaurants for CY 2024 was given to the researchers by the permission and licensing offices of various cities and municipality in Rinconada. The study's respondents are 147 members of the service crew who have been employed at fast-food restaurants for at least two years and are of legal age.

C. Research Instrument

The instrument used to collect data is a questionnaire aligned with the competencies identified by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). To guarantee the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, a reliability test and validation were conducted before its distribution. There are two parts to the research questionnaire. The first part is the competencies desired by the fast-food industry in Rinconada, and the second part is the level of competencies of the service crew along with the basic competencies, common competencies, and core competencies in food and beverage service and cookery.

D. Statistical Treatment of Data

Various statistical methods were used to organize and examine the gathered data. Based on the numerous factors considered in the study, responses were methodically categorized and collated.

- Weighted Mean: Is an average determined by assigning various weights to certain individual variables. It indicates the average values of a set of data. This technique was used to determine the competencies desired by the fast-food industry along with communication, team environment, professionalism, and effective customer relations and also used on the ratings on the level of competencies of service crews in Rinconada along with the basic competencies, common competencies, and core competencies in cookery and food and beverage service activities.
- Likert Scale: Commonly used to assess the competencies desired by the fast-food industry and the level of competencies of the respondents.
- Order Ranking Method: Was used to determine the order of the given indicators, which are based on the desired competencies and the level of competencies

Results and Discussion

A. Competencies desired by the Fast-Food Industry in Rinconada

Table 1 shows the competencies desired by the food industry in Rinconada with an average weighted mean of 3.83 and interpreted as very competent. Communication, team environment, and professionalism have a weighted mean of 4 with a verbal interpretation of very competent while effective customer relation has a weighted mean of 3.32 with an interpretation of competent.

Table 1. Competencies Desired by the Fast-Food Industry

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Communication	4.00	Very Competent	2
Team Environment	4.00	Very Competent	2
Professionalism	4.00	Very Competent	2
Effective Customer Relation	3.32	Competent	4
Average Weighted Mean	3.83	Very Competent	

It implies that fast-food restaurants intend to have clear, effective interactions with both customers and team members since they are necessary for providing timely service, managing orders, and successfully addressing issues. This indicates as well that fast food restaurants want a service crew that is highly skilled in both customer service and operational efficiency, given that both factors can influence customer loyalty and happiness, both of which can significantly affect the company's success.

According to Iksan & Sanjaya [6], excellent communication between fast food service staff and customers is critical to increasing customer satisfaction. The study concluded that training programs focused on enhancing communication skills could end in more pleasant customer experiences. Meanwhile, fast food restaurants seek highly skilled service staff in terms of team environment, which implies that efficient cooperation, coordination, and support among employees are critical to sustaining quick, effective service, particularly during busy times. Additionally, it implies that the restaurant appreciates a pleasant work environment, which may lower conflict, raise morale, and increase productivity in general. Gomez & Quintos [7] state that in fast-food restaurants, there is a strong correlation between hostile work environment experiences and worse productivity, teamwork performance, and sales and revenue contributions. This emphasizes how important a supportive team atmosphere is to improve performance.

Additionally, a fast-food restaurant requires a highly skilled service crew in terms of professionalism, which implies that upholding high standards of behavior, timeliness, and customer service is essential to the establishment's performance and reputation. Additionally, it implies an emphasis on establishing a courteous, effective, and customer-focused atmosphere, which can boost repeat business and client loyalty. Russ-Eft [8] mentioned that well-trained employees with exceptional interpersonal skills can deliver an effective, individualized service, which raises customer satisfaction, and claims.

On the other hand, fast-food restaurants need a competent service crew to maintain good customer relations. This implies establishing a solid connection with customers, attending to their preferences quickly, and making sure they have a satisfying eating experience are all crucial to their loyalty and happiness. Additionally, it implies that the restaurant prioritizes repeat business through exceptional service, cherishes customer input, and works to handle issues quickly. According to Hasbullah [9], a fast-food restaurant's service quality has a significant impact on patron satisfaction, which encourages business return.

B. Level of Competencies of the Service Crew in the Fast-Food Restaurant

Table 2 shows the level of competencies of the service crews in the fast-food restaurant in Rinconada with an average weighted mean of 3.29 and interpreted as very competent.

Table 2. Level of Competencies of the Service Crew in the Fast-Food Restaurant

Competencies	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Basic Competencies	3.20	Competent	4
Common Competencies	3.27	Very Competent	3
Core Competencies in Cookery	3.34	Very Competent	1.5
Core Competencies in Food and Beverage Service	3.34	Very Competent	1.5
Average Weighted Mean	3.29	Very Competent	

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The competencies in food and beverage service and cookery had an average weighted mean of 3.34 and were interpreted as very competent. Rank 3rd as the basic competencies with a weighted mean of 3.27 and interpreted as very competent. Lastly, rank 4th is the basic competencies, and it is interpreted as competent.

This implies that the respondents have exceptional abilities in various culinary and food and beverage service functions. The staff's excellent cooking and service proficiency allows them to manage busy times effectively, reduce waiting time, and streamline operations. Client throughput and overall productivity rise as a result. However, service crews have competent abilities in basic competencies, especially interpersonal and intra-employee interactions, they may find it difficult to manage disagreements, whether they happen with customers or among team members. This has the potential to escalate minor issues into major ones that disrupt operations.

Heikkilä [10] mentioned that employees with high levels of expertise increase operational effectiveness, which speeds up service delivery and improves customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is closely correlated with the quality of service, which includes promptness, courtesy, cleanliness, and consistency of cuisine. The reputation of the restaurant is improved by knowledgeable service staff who make sure these requirements are regularly fulfilled.

Team-based reward plans play a crucial role in enhancing employee motivation and performance within organizations. According to Brown [11], implementing team-based reward structures fosters collaboration and creates a shared sense of responsibility among employees. When individuals work towards a common goal with the incentive of collective rewards, their engagement and productivity increase. This approach aligns with the findings of Sanyal & Abad Hisam [12], who emphasize that teamwork significantly impacts employee performance, particularly in academic settings. The synergy created by effective teamwork not only boosts productivity but also enhances the overall work environment, leading to better organizational outcomes.

Effective communication skills among employees are another critical factor that influences workplace performance. Kotamena et al. [13] highlight that strong communication abilities enable employees to express their ideas clearly, work collaboratively, and resolve conflicts efficiently. In service industries, professionalism also plays a vital role in ensuring high-quality customer interactions. Gabuyo [14] underscores the importance of maintaining professionalism in providing excellent service, which can positively influence customer satisfaction and retention. When employees possess both strong communication and professionalism, they contribute to a cohesive and efficient work environment that enhances overall service quality.

Continuous learning and industry knowledge updates are essential for maintaining high standards in various sectors. However, Sabularse [15] identifies several factors that hinder employees from staying updated with industry advancements, such as limited access to training and resistance to change. The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority [16] emphasizes the need for integrating 21st-century skills into workforce training programs to bridge this gap. In the fast-food service industry, for example, improving service quality requires continuous skill development and adaptation to customer expectations [17]. By addressing these challenges, organizations can ensure that their workforce remains competent and responsive to evolving industry demands.

Conclusion

In conclusion, fast food restaurants in Rinconada desire to have a highly skilled service crew in communication, team environment, and professionalism with a weighted mean of 4 that aligns with the “Very Competent” while effective customer relations are considered "Competent" with a weighted mean of 3.32. On the other hand, the level of competencies of service crew in the common competencies and core competencies in food and beverage service has a weighted mean of 3.34, 3.34, and 3.27, respectively, aligns with the “Very Competent” category, while basic competencies have a weighted mean of 3.2 and are considered “Competent.”

Recommendation

Educators in hospitality management who teach purposeful communication, food and beverage service, front office operations, and professional development should incorporate nonverbal communication subjects. Create an activity that addresses body language, facial expressions, gestures, posture, and eye contact in hospitality experiences, emphasizing nonverbal communication as a critical component of service excellence and customer satisfaction.

Instructors and professors may use various instructional techniques to help students better comprehend verbal communication, such as role-playing Activities like creating scenarios of interactions with customers so that students may practice utilizing positive facial expressions and body language video Demonstrations that showcase both successful and unsuccessful nonverbal communication in hospitality contexts via educational movies, interactive Workshop that Leads classes in which students focus on eye contact, hand gestures, and posture while performing hospitality-related duties and observation exercises which give students the task of observing actual hospitality settings and recognizing the nonverbal clues that service personnel utilize.

Cross-cultural communication may be incorporated into courses taught by hospitality management educators who oversee the multicultural variety of the hospitality industry,

including front office operations, food and beverage service, customer service, and hospitality leadership. Whereby it highlights how crucial it is to comprehend cultural differences to prevent miscommunications and offer inclusive products and services.

The instructional techniques may be taken into consideration by professors and instructors educating hospitality management students to better comprehend the multicultural diversity of the workplace like role-playing scenarios which allow students to practice politely resolving situations where cultural differences might cause miscommunications with guests, case study analysis that talk about actual instances of intercultural disputes in the hospitality sector and how they were settled, peer Learning which invites students from other backgrounds to talk about their experiences and cultural viewpoints, interactive workshops that hold seminars on gestures, personal space, nonverbal communication, and cultural expectations for service. Lastly, language awareness to overcome communication gaps, and provide simple expressions in widely spoken languages.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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