DECODING THE ATTITUDE COMPETENCIES PROFILE OF CHEFS: INSIGHTS FROM EMPLOYERS' ONLINE RECRUITMENT POSTS

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(Received 08th September 2026; revised 28th October 2026; accepted 02nd November 2026)

Abstract. Hotel kitchen environments are demanding, high-pressure, and involve teamwork, which is why attitude has become an increasingly important factor when recruiting chefs. Even though non-technical qualities are gaining more attention, very few studies have examined the kinds of attitudes that Malaysian hotels request in their job advertisements. This study examines the attitude competency profile required of chefs by analysing online recruitment posts through the Skills-Knowledge-Abilities (SKA) perspective. A qualitative content analysis completed by descriptive frequency analysis was conducted on 300 hotel chef advertisements posted on JobStreet.com.my between April and October 2025. The advertisements covered Commis Chef, Demi Chef, Chef de Partie, Sous Chef, and Head Chef positions. Attitude requirements were coded into intellectual and physical ability dimensions, and intercoder reliability was assessed using Cohen's Kappa, producing a coefficient of $\kappa = 0.87$. The findings identified 72 attitude mentions across 13 competency codes. Intellectual attributes accounted for 91.7% of all mentions, while physical attributes represented 8.3%. Attention to detail and the ability to work under pressure were the most frequently identified competencies, followed by discipline, adaptability, and stress management. Physical stamina, safety compliance, and flexibility in work scheduling appeared less frequently. These findings indicate that hotel employers place particular emphasis on cognitive control, behavioural discipline, and resilience when recruiting chefs. The study contributes evidence to culinary competency research by demonstrating how employer expectations are expressed in real recruitment contexts rather than through perception-based measures alone. The findings also suggest that culinary education should strengthen authentic, practice-based learning experiences that develop professional attitudes alongside technical culinary competence.
Keywords: *attitude competencies, culinary employability, online job advertisements, hotel industry*

Introduction

The hospitality industry is fundamentally dependent on the quality of its human resources because service performance is shaped not only by employees' technical competence but also by the way they behave, interact, respond to pressure, and adapt to changing operational conditions. This is particularly relevant to professional kitchen environments, where chefs are expected to combine culinary expertise with discipline, consistency, teamwork, adaptability, and the ability to perform under considerable time and workload pressures. Although technical skills and occupational knowledge remain fundamental requirements for culinary employment, employers increasingly recognise that possessing technical competence alone does not necessarily guarantee effective workplace performance. Personal attributes and work attitudes have therefore become important components of employability and sustainable career development in hospitality and culinary occupations (Kenayathulla et al., 2019; Suhairom et al., 2019; Tesone and Ricci, 2005). The competency requirements of hospitality employees have

traditionally been conceptualised through combinations of skills, knowledge, and abilities. Tesone and Ricci (2005) demonstrated that employers assess hospitality employees according to competencies that extend beyond specific technical tasks and include behavioural qualities associated with workplace effectiveness. Within the Skills-Knowledge-Abilities (SKA) perspective, skills describe what an employee can perform, knowledge represents the information and understanding required to undertake a job, while abilities reflect the underlying capacities that enable effective performance. In culinary occupations, these competencies are interdependent because chefs must possess technical knowledge and culinary skills while simultaneously demonstrating personal qualities that enable them to apply such expertise effectively in real operational settings. Suhairom et al. (2019), for example, identified personal qualities, self-concept, motives, and both technical and non-technical competencies as important elements in developing a quality culinary workforce and sustaining professional careers.

Among these competency dimensions, attitude deserves particular attention. Attitude reflects employees' behavioural orientation towards their work, colleagues, responsibilities, and workplace challenges. It can be manifested through attributes such as discipline, resilience, flexibility, willingness to learn, attention to detail, responsibility, adaptability, and the ability to remain effective under pressure. Tesone and Ricci (2006) reported that hospitality managers attach considerable importance to behavioural and personal competencies when evaluating entry-level employees, while Kenayathulla et al. (2019) highlighted potential gaps between the competencies expected by employers and those demonstrated by graduates. Such observations are particularly significant for the culinary profession because kitchen environments involve demanding work schedules, operational pressure, coordination among employees, strict production standards, and limited tolerance for errors. Consequently, employers may consider the way prospective chefs respond to workplace demands to be as important as their ability to perform specific culinary tasks. The significance of attitude is further reinforced by the challenging employment conditions associated with hospitality careers. Hotel employees frequently encounter high job demands, irregular working hours, intense workloads, and work-related pressure, conditions that may contribute to dissatisfaction and employee turnover (Abo-Murad and Al-Khrabsheh, 2019). Robinson et al. (2016) similarly demonstrated the importance of attitudinal considerations across hotel frontline occupations, illustrating that employee attitudes are closely connected with the characteristics and demands of hospitality work. Within the Malaysian culinary context, attracting and retaining individuals in the profession remains an important concern. Norman Naim et al. (2025), for instance, reported declining interest among culinary students in entering the culinary industry, drawing attention to employment conditions and expectations that may influence career decisions. These challenges suggest that prospective chefs require more than occupational knowledge: they also need behavioural and psychological attributes that enable them to manage demanding working conditions and maintain effective performance.

The importance of attitude can also be understood through the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). According to Ajzen (1991), behaviour is preceded by behavioural intention, which is influenced by attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Attitude represents an individual's favourable or unfavourable evaluation of performing a particular behaviour and can therefore shape willingness and intention to act. Applied to culinary employment, an individual's

orientation towards discipline, responsibility, teamwork, pressure, learning, and workplace standards may influence how effectively occupational expectations are translated into actual behaviour. Although TPB was originally formulated as a general model of behavioural intention, its emphasis on the relationship between attitudes, intentions, and behaviour provides a useful theoretical rationale for recognising attitudinal competencies as an important component of chef employability. From an employer's perspective, recruiting individuals who demonstrate desirable work attitudes may consequently reduce the discrepancy between possessing technical culinary competence and applying that competence consistently within the demanding realities of hotel kitchens. Despite recognition of the importance of attitudinal and non-technical competencies, much of the existing hospitality competency literature relies on perception-based evidence generated through questionnaires, interviews, expert assessments, or surveys involving employers, educators, graduates, or industry professionals (Suhairom et al., 2019; Tesone and Ricci, 2005, 2006). Such approaches provide valuable insights into what stakeholders believe employees should possess. However, perceived competency importance may not always correspond directly with the attributes that employers explicitly request when filling actual vacancies. This distinction is important because recruitment advertisements constitute market-generated evidence of contemporary employer demand. Rather than asking employers retrospectively what they consider important, job advertisements capture the competencies organisations choose to communicate when attempting to attract suitable candidates.

Content analysis of job advertisements therefore provides a complementary approach for investigating employability requirements. Bennett (2002) demonstrated the value of analysing vacancy advertisements to identify employers' expectations regarding transferable competencies, while more recent large-scale analyses have shown that employers frequently communicate both technical and soft-skill requirements through recruitment advertisements. Calanca et al. (2019), for example, found substantial demand for interpersonal and personal competencies in online job advertisements, indicating that characteristics such as responsibility, teamwork, and other behavioural attributes constitute identifiable components of labour-market demand. Online employment platforms consequently provide researchers with naturally occurring labour-market data that can reveal which attributes employers explicitly prioritise, without relying exclusively on retrospective perceptions. This approach is especially relevant in Malaysia, where questions surrounding graduate employability and competency mismatch remain important. Jeffri and Abdul Rahim (2023) identified mismatches between graduate attributes, skills, and labour-market expectations as contributing factors to graduate unemployment. Within hospitality, such discrepancies may be particularly consequential because graduates enter occupations in which technical preparation must be integrated with demanding behavioural and interpersonal requirements. Online recruitment platforms such as JobStreet offer an opportunity to examine these expectations directly. Ong and Fong (2025) further illustrate the relevance of online employment resources to contemporary graduate career exploration, reinforcing the usefulness of such platforms as sources of information about labour-market requirements.

Nevertheless, empirical research specifically examining attitudinal competencies in advertisements for hotel chef positions in Malaysia remains limited. Previous studies have generally examined broad employability competencies, combined technical and

soft skills, or stakeholder perceptions of desirable culinary competencies. Attitude is frequently embedded within broader categories such as soft skills, personal qualities, or abilities rather than examined as a distinct component of chef competency. Consequently, there remains insufficient understanding of which attitudinal characteristics Malaysian hotel employers explicitly communicate when recruiting chefs and the relative prominence of different intellectual and physical attributes. Addressing this gap is important both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it clarifies the position of attitude within the broader SKA competency framework. Practically, it provides culinary educators, students, career planners, and hospitality employers with evidence regarding the behavioural expectations communicated through the contemporary labour market. Accordingly, this study aims to identify and analyse the attitude competencies demanded by Malaysian hotel employers when recruiting chefs through online job advertisements. Drawing on the SKA perspective and informed by the behavioural logic of TPB, the study examines recruitment advertisements for operational chef positions published on JobStreet.com.my.

Literature review

The SKA approach

The SKA approach groups job requirements into skills, knowledge, and abilities (Tesone and Ricci, 2005). For this study, the focus is limited to attitude competencies expressed through ability-related qualities. These qualities describe how chefs behave and respond at work. Intellectual attitude competencies include attention to detail, working under pressure, discipline, adaptability, stress management, independence, following standard procedures, consistency, customer focus, and teamwork. Physical attitude competencies include stamina, safety compliance, and flexibility in work scheduling.

Attitude demanded by the culinary industry

Attitude is important in culinary work because hotel kitchens involve long hours, tight deadlines, and high pressure (Abo-Murad and Al-Khrabsheh, 2019). These conditions require chefs to remain disciplined, adaptable, responsible, and able to work under pressure. Hospitality employers also value behavioural and personal qualities when recruiting employees (Tesone and Ricci, 2006). In demanding kitchen settings, positive work attitudes can support consistent performance and help chefs respond to workplace challenges (Robinson et al., 2016).

Attitude and the Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) provides a useful explanation of how attitude relates to behaviour. Ajzen (1991) explains that intention is influenced by attitude towards a behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In culinary work, this means that a chef's attitude towards responsibility, discipline, learning, and work standards may influence how these behaviours are carried out in the kitchen. This supports the study's focus on attitude as an important part of chef competency.

Online job advertisements and the research gap

Previous studies on culinary and hospitality competencies commonly use surveys, interviews, and expert opinions (Suhairom et al., 2019; Tesone and Ricci, 2006). These methods explain what stakeholders consider important, while job advertisements show the attitude requirements employers state during actual recruitment. Content analysis of job advertisements can therefore provide direct evidence of employer demand (Bennett, 2002). Calanca et al. (2019) also found that personal and behavioural qualities are visible in online recruitment advertisements. However, attitude is often combined with broader soft-skill categories, and research focusing specifically on attitude competencies required of hotel chefs in Malaysia remains limited.

JobStreet as a platform

JobStreet.com.my was used as the source of recruitment advertisements in this study. The advertisements list job requirements, work conditions, and personal qualities, allowing attitude competencies to be identified from employer statements. For this study, the focus is on attitude-related requirements such as attention to detail, working under pressure, discipline, adaptability, stress management, stamina, safety compliance, and work-schedule flexibility. Job advertisements represent stated recruitment requirements and may not fully describe actual workplace behaviour.

Materials and Methods

Research design and data source

This study used qualitative analysis complemented by descriptive frequency analysis to examine the attitudinal and behavioural dimension of competency, that Malaysian hotel employers state when recruiting chefs. The surveys have recorded what respondents believe employers want; advertisements record what employers themselves have published, and are treated here as an unremarkable, market-generated record of employer expectation. The design addresses to analyse the abilities expected of chefs by employers. Data were drawn from JobStreet.com.my, which recent Malaysian evidence identifies as among the platforms graduates most commonly consult when measuring labour market requirements (Ong and Fong, 2025). Purposive, non-random sampling relevant to chef's roles and a total of 300 advertisements posted between April and October 2025 were collected, covering Commis Chef, Demi Chef, Chef de Partie, Sous Chef and Head Chef. Retained advertisements had to concern a Malaysian hotel kitchen, describe operational duties, and state requirements in identifiable sections.

The attitude variable and coding frame

This study uses attitude in line with the SKA coding system, while being aware that the traits uncovered are attitudinal rather than technical. Two sub-dimensions were used in this study, namely, intellectual ability, referring to the cognitive and behavioral traits involved in paying attention, regulating reactions and behaving in certain ways and physical ability which is referring to the physical and sequential traits of performing kitchen work. Since attitude is not usually stated as a formal qualification, it was treated as a dormant rather than a stated variable, and recovered from requirement statements, in the last lines of the personal attribute and work condition sections. Open coding produced candidate statements which were condensed into a closed set of thirteen

codes, defined operationally beforehand. The coding frame and its results are shown in *Table 1*.

***Table 1**. Coding frame and distribution of attitude requirements in 300 hotel chef advertisements.*

Code	Attitude and operational definition	Sub-dimension	f	% of mentions	% of ads
A8	Attention to details	Intellectual	20	27.8	6.7
A1	Work under pressure	Intellectual	17	23.6	5.7
A6	Discipline	Intellectual	8	11.1	2.7
A4	Adaptability	Intellectual	6	8.3	2.0
A7	Stress management	Intellectual	4	5.6	1.3
A14	Physical stamina	Physical	4	5.6	1.3
A2	Work independently	Intellectual	3	4.2	1.0
A5	Follow Standard Operating Procedure	Intellectual	3	4.2	1.0
A11	Consistency	Intellectual	2	2.8	0.7
A12	Customer focus	Intellectual	2	2.8	0.7
A3	Work in a team	Intellectual	1	1.4	0.3
A13	Safety compliance	Physical	1	1.4	0.3
A15	Flexible schedule	Physical	1	1.4	0.3
	Total		72	100.0	-

Coding procedure, reliability and analysis

The unit of analysis was the advertisement, not the sentence. Every code was counted once in every advertisement regardless of internal repetition, since counting it in every sentence would reward repetitive phrasing and ignore true priority. Every advertisement could contribute to several codes, but no more than one to any single code. Two researchers independently coded a random subsample of 20 % of the advertisements to test the stability of the coding frame before carrying out full coding. Reliability was measured with Cohen's Kappa statistic (Cohen, 1960), which adjusts for chance and works well with categorical data. The obtained result was $\kappa = 0.87$, which falls in the almost perfect range (Landis and Koch, 1977). Reliability test is especially important in the present case, since attitudinal attributes are stated in less standardized language than technical requirements. The analysis was descriptive. Frequencies of each code were calculated, both in relation to all mentions of ability requirements and in relation to all advertisements and aggregated up to sub-dimension level. Both denominators are reported throughout, because a within-dimension percentage is conditional upon the size of the sub-dimension, and would let a code from a small base appear more important than a code from a large base.

Results and Discussion

Distribution of attitude requirements

The analysis identified 72 attitude mentions across 13 competency codes. Attention to detail (A8, f = 20) and working under pressure (A1, f = 17) were the most common, together accounting for 51.4% of all attitudes mentions. Discipline (A6, f = 8) and adaptability (A4, f = 6) followed, while the remaining competencies appeared five times or fewer. At the advertisement level, attention to detail appeared in 6.7% of the 300 advertisements and working under pressure in 5.7%. These results show which attitude competencies were explicitly stated in the recruitment advertisements.

Intellectual abilities

The intellectual dimension contained 10 competency codes and accounted for 66 of the 72 attitudes mentions. Attention to detail was the most common intellectual competency (30.3%), followed by working under pressure (25.8%) and discipline (12.1%). Adaptability (9.1%) and stress management (6.1%) were also identified. Work independence, following standard operating procedures, consistency, customer focus, and teamwork appeared less frequently. Overall, the intellectual dimension reflects attitudes related to focus, self-control, discipline, and adjustment to changing work demands.

Physical abilities

The physical dimension contained three competency codes and accounted for 6 of the 72 attitudes mentions. Physical stamina was identified four times, representing 66.7% of physical mentions and 1.3% of all advertisements. Safety compliance and flexible scheduling were each identified once. Although the within-dimension percentage for stamina is high, the physical dimension has a small number of mentions. The results should therefore be interpreted using both frequencies and sample-level percentages.

Comparison and achievement of the research objective

Intellectual attitude competencies accounted for 91.7% of all attitudes mentions, while physical competencies accounted for 8.3%. This shows that the advertisements placed greater emphasis on cognitive and behavioural attitudes than on physical requirements. The most visible competencies were attention to detail, working under pressure, discipline, adaptability, and stress management. The findings therefore meet the research objective by identifying the attitude competencies explicitly requested by Malaysian hotel employers.

The findings show that attitude competencies in hotel chef advertisements are mainly related to intellectual abilities. Attention to detail and the ability to work under pressure were the two most common attributes and together represented more than half of all attitudes mentions. Discipline, adaptability, and stress management were also important within this dimension. These findings show that employers commonly express attitude through qualities related to focus, self-control, discipline, and adjustment to demanding work situations. This is consistent with hospitality research that highlights the importance of behavioural and personal qualities in employment (Suhairom et al., 2019; Tesone and Ricci, 2006).

Physical attitude competencies were mentioned much less often. Physical stamina appeared four times, while safety compliance and flexible scheduling appeared once each. Compared with the intellectual dimension, physical attitude requirements formed only a small part of the stated recruitment criteria. The difference between the two dimensions indicates that employers communicate chef attitude mainly through intellectual and behavioural qualities rather than physical attributes.

Overall, the results identify a clear attitude competency profile for hotel chefs. Attention to detail, working under pressure, discipline, adaptability, and stress management were the main intellectual attitudes, while stamina, safety compliance, and schedule flexibility formed the physical dimension. The findings suggest that culinary education should develop these attitudes through practical learning situations that

require students to follow standards, manage pressure, adapt to problems, and take responsibility for their work.

Conclusion

The study provides empirical insight into the attitude competencies that Malaysian hotel employers explicitly communicate when recruiting chefs. By analysing 300 online recruitment advertisements, the study identified 13 attitude-related competencies across intellectual and physical ability dimensions. The findings reveal a clear predominance of intellectual and behavioural attributes. Attention to detail and the ability to work under pressure emerged as the most frequently stated competencies, followed by discipline, adaptability, and stress management. Physical attributes, including stamina, safety compliance, and flexibility in work scheduling, were considerably less visible in recruitment advertisements. These findings reinforce the importance of treating attitude as an integral component of culinary competency rather than as a peripheral employability characteristic. From the Skills–Knowledge–Abilities perspective, the findings demonstrate that ability-related behavioural qualities constitute a visible component of employer demand.

Several limitations should nevertheless be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study was restricted to advertisements obtained from JobStreet.com.my and therefore may not represent recruitment practices across other employment platforms, hotel corporate websites, professional networks, or informal recruitment channels. Second, the data were limited to Malaysian hotel chef vacancies advertised between April and October 2025, which restricts the temporal and geographical generalisability of the findings. These limitations provide several avenues for future research. Subsequent studies could extend the analysis across multiple recruitment platforms and conduct longitudinal analyses to determine whether attitude requirements change as kitchen technologies, labour shortages, service models, and employment conditions evolve. Cross-country comparisons would also help establish whether the competency profile identified in Malaysia is context-specific or reflects broader expectations within the international hotel and culinary labour market.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to UiTM Cawangan Pulau Pinang for its continuous support throughout the completion of this study.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest involved with any parties in this research study.

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