

The Moderating Effect of Socio-Demographic Characteristics on the Relationship between Hospitality Skill Preparedness and Job Performance among Graduate Employees in 3 - 5-Star Rated Hotels in Greater Accra, Ghana

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Abstract

Objective: This study examines the relationship between hospitality skill preparedness and job performance among graduate employees in 3 - 5-star rated hotels in Greater Accra, Ghana, and determines whether socio-demographic characteristics moderate this relationship. **Methods:** A descriptive survey design was employed using a quantitative approach. Data were collected from **384 graduate employees across 15 selected star-rated hotels** using structured questionnaires. **Results:** The findings reveal that hospitality skill preparedness significantly influences job performance ($\beta = 0.624, p < 0.001$). Furthermore, socio-demographic characteristics including age ($\beta = 0.165, p < 0.001$), gender ($\beta = 0.128, p = 0.003$), education level ($\beta = 0.142, p = 0.001$), and tenure ($\beta = 0.158, p < 0.001$) were found to moderate the relationship between skill preparedness and job performance. **Conclusion:** The study concludes that while skill preparedness is a critical determinant of job performance, its effects are contingent upon the socio-demographic profiles of employees. **Recommendations:** Hotel managers and human resource practitioners should adopt differentiated approaches to training and development that account for the socio-demographic diversity of their workforce.

Keywords

Hospitality Skill Preparedness, Job Performance, Socio-Demographic Characteristics, Moderation Effect, Graduate Employees, Ghana

1. Introduction

The hospitality industry constitutes a significant pillar of Ghana's economy, con-

tributing substantially to employment generation and national development (Ghana Statistical Service, 2020). The sector's performance is fundamentally dependent on the quality of its human resources, as service delivery in hospitality is intrinsically linked to employee competence and preparedness (Marques et al., 2024). In recent years, concerns have been raised regarding the alignment between hospitality education and industry requirements, with evidence suggesting persistent skill deficiencies among graduate employees in Ghana's hospitality sector (Yakubu & Bayong, 2025; Sekyere et al., 2024).

Skill preparedness, encompassing practical competencies, experiential learning, and curriculum effectiveness, has been identified as a critical determinant of job performance in hospitality settings (Lee, 2026; Toncar et al., 2006). However, the relationship between skill preparedness and job performance may not be uniform across all employees. Socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education level, and tenure have been shown to influence how individuals acquire, apply, and benefit from skills in the workplace (Shirom et al., 2008; Met & Ali, 2014).

Previous research has established that socio-demographic variables can moderate the relationship between various workplace factors and job performance. For instance, Shirom, Shechter Gilboa, Fried, and Cooper (2008) found that age moderated the relationship between role ambiguity and job performance, with negative correlations decreasing with increasing age. Similarly, Met and Ali (2014) demonstrated that tenure and job level moderated the relationship between monetary motivation and employee performance, while gender showed no significant moderating effect. In the context of job satisfaction, age, gender, and education level were found to moderate the relationship between job satisfaction facets and employee performance in the Malaysian media industry (Valaei & Jiroudi, 2016).

In the hospitality sector, research has highlighted the importance of understanding how employee characteristics influence performance outcomes. Esuman and Fraikue (2024) emphasised that a balanced curriculum incorporating both theoretical and practical elements is key to producing well-rounded graduates who can meet industry demands. However, the extent to which socio-demographic factors moderate the effectiveness of skill preparedness in enhancing job performance remains underexplored in the Ghanaian context.

The Greater Accra region, being the commercial and tourism hub of Ghana, hosts a significant concentration of star-rated hotels. Understanding the dynamics of skill preparedness and job performance among graduate employees in this context is essential for informing human resource practices and educational policy. This study contributes to the literature by examining the moderating role of socio-demographic characteristics in the relationship between hospitality skill preparedness and job performance.

The following research questions guide this investigation:

1) What is the relationship between hospitality skill preparedness and job performance among graduate employees in 3 - 5-star rated hotels in Greater Accra,

Ghana?

2) Do socio-demographic characteristics moderate the relationship between hospitality skill preparedness and job performance?

Based on the research questions, the following hypotheses are formulated:

- **H₀₁:** Hospitality skill preparedness has no significant influence on job performance among graduate employees in 3 - 5-star rated hotels.
- **H₀₂:** Socio-demographic characteristics do not significantly moderate the relationship between hospitality skill preparedness and job performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Hospitality Skill Preparedness and Job Performance

Hospitality skill preparedness refers to the extent to which graduate employees possess the competencies, knowledge, and abilities required to perform effectively in hospitality operations. Research has identified several dimensions of skill preparedness, including practical skills, experiential learning, and curriculum effectiveness (Yakubu & Bayong, 2025; Lee, 2026). These competencies encompass technical proficiency, interpersonal communication, customer relations, problem-solving, and digital literacy (Marques et al., 2024).

In the Ghanaian context, studies have revealed significant skill deficiencies in the hospitality sector, particularly in customer service, leadership, information technology, and health and safety (Yakubu & Bayong, 2025). Sekyere, Jamgade, and Owusu Sarpong (2024) found substantial disparities in stakeholder perspectives regarding multiple facets of the hospitality industry, including inventory and cost control, organisational behaviour, and hospitality marketing. These disparities highlight the diverse perspectives across industry categories, with graduates often having different opinions from faculty members and industry professionals.

The relationship between skill preparedness and job performance is well-established in the literature. Employees who possess relevant competencies are better positioned to perform effectively, adapt to dynamic work environments, and contribute to organisational success (Marques et al., 2024). Essuman and Fraikue (2024) emphasised that a balanced curriculum incorporating both theoretical and practical elements is key to producing well-rounded graduates who can meet industry demands.

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system in Ghana has been identified as a critical vehicle for developing practical skills in the hospitality sector. However, challenges persist regarding the adequacy and relevance of training provided (Yakubu & Bayong, 2025). The TVET curriculum requires revision to include ongoing competencies and skills assessment across various industries (Yakubu & Bayong, 2025). Proposed reforms aim to address skill deficiencies in Ghana's hospitality sector, enhancing service quality and generating employment opportunities.

2.2. Socio-Demographic Characteristics as Moderators

Socio-demographic characteristics refer to the personal attributes of individuals that may influence their work-related attitudes, behaviours, and performance. Common socio-demographic variables examined in organisational research include age, gender, education level, tenure, and job position (Shirom et al., 2008; Met & Ali, 2014; Valaei & Jiroudi, 2016). These characteristics have been shown to moderate the relationship between various workplace factors and job performance.

Theoretical frameworks for understanding the moderating role of socio-demographic characteristics draw upon Human Capital Theory and Social Identity Theory. Human Capital Theory suggests that individuals possess knowledge, skills, and abilities that constitute a form of capital valuable to organisations (Becker, 1964). Socio-demographic characteristics may influence the acquisition, application, and returns to human capital. Social Identity Theory posits that individuals derive part of their identity from group memberships, which may influence their work attitudes and behaviours (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Research has demonstrated that socio-demographic characteristics can moderate the relationship between organizational factors and job performance. Shirom, Shechter Gilboa, Fried, and Cooper (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of 30 studies (total N = 7700) and found that employee mean age had a moderating effect on the role ambiguity-performance correlation, with negative correlations tending to decrease with increasing age. They also identified significant two-way interactions between moderators, including gender and age, and tenure and age.

Met and Ali (2014) investigated the moderating effect of demographic factors on the relationship between monetary motivation and employee performance at oil and gas offshore production facilities in Malaysia. Their findings revealed that tenure and job level had significant moderating effects, while age and education level showed weak moderating effects, and gender showed no significant moderating effect. Employees with longer tenure reported significantly higher job performance levels compared to their younger counterparts.

In the context of job satisfaction, a study of the Malaysian media industry found that age, gender, and level of education moderated the relationship between facets of job satisfaction and employee performance (Valaei & Jiroudi, 2016). The study examined payment, promotion, supervision, operating conditions, co-workers, and nature of the work as job satisfaction facets, and found that co-workers generated the highest path coefficient followed by operating conditions, payment, and promotion.

In the hospitality context, research has examined the moderating role of socio-demographic factors on work-related outcomes. Haji (2025) investigated the effects of organisational culture on employee performance in Zanzibar's public hospitals, with a specific focus on the moderating role of socio-demographic characteristics. The findings revealed that all three cultural dimensions (involvement, consistency, and adaptability) significantly contributed to employee performance,

with involvement emerging as the strongest predictor. Moderation analysis highlighted gender as a significant socio-demographic moderator in the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance.

These findings suggest that socio-demographic characteristics are important considerations when examining workplace relationships and should be integrated into research on skill preparedness and job performance in the hospitality sector.

2.3. Empirical Evidence from the Hospitality Sector

Research in the hospitality sector has increasingly recognized the importance of skill preparedness and its relationship with job performance. In Ghana, the current hospitality and catering curriculum at academic institutions is under scrutiny due to concerns about skill deficiencies in the industry (Sekyere et al., 2024). Stakeholders have emphasized the need for a well-coordinated curriculum that gives priority to hands-on experiences and real-life case studies.

Studies have examined the competencies expected of hospitality graduates from the industry perspective. Findings indicate that key competencies required include good interpersonal skills, innovation and ability to think of new ways of doing things, ability to maintain professional standards, customer orientation, critical thinking ability, self-motivation, friendliness, approachability, and good communication skills (Commey, 2020). However, gaps exist between the competencies expected by the industry and the perceived competencies of hospitality graduates (Commey, 2020).

Essuman and Fraikue (2024) analysed the balance between theoretical knowledge and practical skills for TVET graduates in hospitality management in the Western Region of Ghana. Their research explored how theoretical knowledge provided the foundation for understanding industry standards, management principles, and regulatory frameworks. TVET institutions faced challenges in achieving a balance in theory and practice, which often resulted in a mismatch between industry expectations and graduate competencies. Overemphasized theory resulted in graduates who possessed solid foundational knowledge but lacked hands-on experiences needed for operational roles.

The Ghanaian government has recognized the importance of workforce development in the hospitality sector. The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts has called on hoteliers to prioritize continuous training and capacity building for their staff, emphasizing that a well-equipped workforce is key to enhancing service quality (Ghana News Agency, 2025). The establishment of hospitality training institutions and partnerships between industry and academia have been identified as strategies for upskilling Ghana's hospitality workforce.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey research design with a quantitative ap-

proach. This design was deemed appropriate for examining the relationships between variables and testing hypothesized relationships (Stockemer, 2019). The descriptive survey allows for the collection of data from a large sample, enabling statistical analysis and generalization of findings.

3.2. Study Population and Sampling

The target population comprised graduate employees working in 3 - 5-star rated hotels in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Greater Accra was selected due to its concentration of star-rated hotels and its status as the commercial and tourism hub of Ghana. According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2020), over 2000 hotels operate in Ghana, with a significant proportion located in the Greater Accra Region.

A multistage sampling approach was employed. First, hotels were stratified by rating (3-star, 4-star, and 5-star) to ensure representation across categories. The sampling frame consisted of all 52 registered 3 - 5-star rated hotels in the Greater Accra Region, as listed in the Ghana Tourism Authority's 2023 directory. Second, a purposive sampling technique was used to select hotels based on accessibility and willingness to participate in the study. Fifteen hotels agreed to participate, comprising five 3-star hotels, six 4-star hotels, and four 5-star hotels. Third, simple random sampling was used to select graduate employees within each participating hotel.

The sample size was determined using the Yamane formula, with a margin of error of 5% and a confidence level of 95%. The formula $n = N/(1 + Ne^2)$ was applied, where $N = 1248$ (estimated number of graduate employees in the target hotels), $e = 0.05$, yielding a minimum sample size of 300. To account for potential non-response, 420 questionnaires were distributed. A total of 384 valid questionnaires were returned and analysed, representing a response rate of 91.4%. Previous studies on hospitality workforce development in Ghana have used similar sample sizes to achieve reliable results (Yakubu & Bayong, 2025).

The eligibility criterion for "graduate employees" was defined as individuals who had successfully completed a tertiary education programme (minimum of a Higher National Diploma or Bachelor's degree) from a recognised institution and were employed in an operational or supervisory role within the selected hotels. Graduates from hospitality-related disciplines (e.g., Hospitality Management, Tourism Management, Hotel and Catering Management) as well as non-hospitality disciplines (e.g., Business Administration, Accounting, Human Resource Management) were included in the study to capture the full spectrum of graduate employees in the sector.

3.3. Data Collection Instrument

A self-administered structured questionnaire was the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire was divided into five sections:

1) **Section A: Demographic Information**—Collected data on age, gender, ed-

educational background, job role, years of experience (tenure), and hotel rating.

2) Section B: Hospitality Skill Preparedness—Measured respondents' perceptions of their skill preparedness across three dimensions: practical skills, experiential learning, and curriculum effectiveness. Items were adapted from established scales in the hospitality education literature (Toncar et al., 2006; Lee, 2026).

3) Section C: Job Performance—Measured self-reported job performance using items adapted from established performance scales. Items assessed task performance, contextual performance, and adaptive performance.

The questionnaire items for each dimension are presented below:

Hospitality Skill Preparedness Items (Measured on a 5-point Likert Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)

Practical Skills Dimension (adapted from Toncar et al., 2006):

- 1) I possess the practical skills required to perform my job effectively.
- 2) My training equipped me with hands-on skills relevant to hospitality operations.
- 3) I can confidently apply technical procedures in my daily work.
- 4) I have the operational competencies needed for my role.
- 5) My practical abilities enable me to handle job-related challenges.

Experiential Learning Dimension (adapted from Lee, 2026):

- 1) My educational programme included internships or work placements.
- 2) Experiential learning opportunities enhanced my workplace readiness.
- 3) I was able to apply theoretical knowledge through practical experiences.
- 4) My internships provided valuable exposure to hospitality operations.
- 5) Experiential learning developed my problem-solving abilities.

Curriculum Effectiveness Dimension (adapted from Yakubu & Bayong, 2025):

- 1) My hospitality curriculum was relevant to industry needs.
- 2) The programme content prepared me adequately for my job.
- 3) The curriculum incorporated current industry trends and practices.
- 4) Theoretical and practical components were well-balanced in my programme.
- 5) My education provided a strong foundation for career development.

Job Performance Items (Measured on a 5-point Likert Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)

Task Performance Dimension:

- 1) I complete my assigned tasks within required timeframes.
- 2) I maintain high standards of work quality.
- 3) I accomplish my job responsibilities effectively.
- 4) I meet the performance expectations of my role.
- 5) I contribute to achieving departmental goals.

Contextual Performance Dimension:

- 1) I cooperate with colleagues to achieve team objectives.
- 2) I support my co-workers when needed.
- 3) I maintain positive working relationships.

- 4) I contribute to a harmonious work environment.
- 5) I demonstrate commitment to the organisation's success.

Adaptive Performance Dimension:

- 1) I adapt effectively to changes in work procedures.
- 2) I handle unexpected situations at work competently.
- 3) I learn new skills quickly when required.
- 4) I respond positively to feedback and suggestions.
- 5) I remain flexible when work demands shift.

Composite scores for each dimension were calculated by summing the responses to the items within each dimension and dividing by the number of items to obtain mean scores. The overall hospitality skill preparedness score was computed as the average of the three dimension scores. The overall job performance score was computed as the average of the three performance dimension scores.

Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was pilot-tested with a sample of 30 graduate employees from hotels not included in the main study to assess clarity, reliability, and validity.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to determine internal consistency, with values exceeding 0.70 considered acceptable (Creswell, 2017). The pilot test results yielded the following reliability coefficients: Practical Skills ($\alpha = 0.842$), Experiential Learning ($\alpha = 0.813$), Curriculum Effectiveness ($\alpha = 0.856$), Task Performance ($\alpha = 0.878$), Contextual Performance ($\alpha = 0.845$), and Adaptive Performance ($\alpha = 0.821$). The overall Hospitality Skill Preparedness scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.902, and the overall Job Performance scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.913, indicating excellent internal consistency.

Validity checks conducted after adapting items from prior studies included: 1) Content validity was assessed through review by three experts in hospitality education and research methodology who evaluated the relevance and representativeness of items; 2) Face validity was established through the pilot test where respondents confirmed the clarity and comprehensibility of items; and 3) Construct validity was assessed using exploratory factor analysis, which confirmed the factor structure with all items loading above 0.50 on their respective factors.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

Permission was obtained from hotel management and participating graduate employees. Questionnaires were distributed to participants during off-peak hours to minimize disruption to operations. Participants were provided with information about the study's purpose, assured of confidentiality, and required to provide informed consent (Creswell, 2017). Completed questionnaires were collected within one to two weeks of distribution.

3.5. Data Analysis

Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version

28 and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize respondent characteristics and responses to questionnaire items.

To test Hypothesis 1, multiple linear regression analysis was employed to examine the influence of hospitality skill preparedness on job performance. To test Hypothesis 2, moderation analysis was conducted using hierarchical multiple regression with interaction terms. Socio-demographic variables (age, gender, education level, tenure, and job position) were entered as moderators. The level of significance was set at $p < 0.05$ (Stockemer, 2019).

For categorical variables, the following coding was applied: Gender was coded as 0 = Male, 1 = Female. Education level was coded as 1 = Higher National Diploma, 2 = Bachelor's Degree, 3 = Master's Degree or higher. Job position was coded as 0 = Non-managerial, 1 = Managerial/Supervisory. Age and tenure were treated as continuous variables. Before creating interaction terms, all continuous predictors (age, tenure) were mean-centred to reduce multicollinearity and facilitate interpretation of interaction effects, consistent with Aiken and West's (1991) recommendations for moderation analysis.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Data were stored securely and used only for research purposes (Creswell, 2017).

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1 to provide context for the study findings.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents (n = 384).

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	176	45.8%
	Female	208	54.2%
Age Group	20 - 25 years	98	25.5%
	26 - 30 years	134	34.9%
	31 - 35 years	84	21.9%
	36 - 40 years	42	10.9%
	41 years and above	26	6.8%
Education Level	Higher National Diploma	148	38.5%
	Bachelor's Degree	196	51.0%
	Master's Degree or higher	40	10.4%

Continued

Tenure (Years)	Less than 1 year	62	16.1%
	1 - 3 years	136	35.4%
	4 - 6 years	98	25.5%
	7 - 10 years	54	14.1%
	More than 10 years	34	8.9%
Job Position	Non-managerial	256	66.7%
	Managerial/Supervisory	128	33.3%
Hotel Rating	3-Star	96	25.0%
	4-Star	162	42.2%
	5-Star	126	32.8%
Discipline	Hospitality-related	268	69.8%
	Non-hospitality	116	30.2%

This profile is consistent with previous studies on hospitality workforce characteristics in Ghana (Yakubu & Bayong, 2025; Sekyere et al., 2024). The predominance of female respondents (54.2%) reflects the gender distribution typical of the hospitality sector in Ghana. The majority of respondents (56.4%) were aged 26 - 35 years, indicating a relatively young workforce. Most respondents held Bachelor's degrees (51.0%), with a smaller proportion holding Higher National Diplomas (38.5%) or Master's degrees (10.4%). Approximately one-third of respondents (33.3%) occupied managerial or supervisory positions.

4.2. Research Question 1: Relationship between Hospitality Skill Preparedness and Job Performance

The first research question assessed the relationship between hospitality skill preparedness and job performance. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Regression analysis of hospitality skill preparedness on job performance.

Model	Unstandardized β	Standardized β	t	p-value	95% CI
Constant	0.845	-	5.234	<0.001	[0.524, 1.166]
Hospitality Skill Preparedness	0.624	0.587	12.847	<0.001	[0.528, 0.720]

$R^2 = 0.345$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.343$, $F(1, 382) = 165.042$, $p < 0.001$.

The results of the regression analysis revealed that hospitality skill preparedness had a statistically significant positive influence on job performance ($\beta = 0.624$, $t = 12.847$, $p < 0.001$). The model explained 34.5% of the variance in job performance ($R^2 = 0.345$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 (H_{01}) is rejected, indicating that hospitality skill preparedness does significantly influence job performance.

This finding is consistent with previous research demonstrating the critical role

of skill preparedness in hospitality performance (Marques et al., 2024). Studies in the Ghanaian context have similarly found that skill deficiencies in customer service, leadership, information technology, and health and safety negatively affect workforce performance (Yakubu & Bayong, 2025). The positive relationship between skill preparedness and job performance underscores the importance of investing in skill development to enhance employee effectiveness.

The finding also supports research by Essuman and Fraikue (2024), who emphasized that a balanced curriculum incorporating both theoretical and practical elements is key to producing well-rounded graduates who can meet industry demands. The results suggest that graduate employees who possess relevant competencies are better positioned to perform effectively in star-rated hotels, where service standards are higher and guest expectations are more demanding.

The practical implications of this finding are significant. Hotel managers and human resource practitioners should prioritize the recruitment of graduates with strong skill preparedness and provide ongoing training and development opportunities to enhance employee competencies. Educational institutions should ensure that curricula are aligned with industry needs and incorporate practical experiences that prepare graduates for workplace demands (Sekyere et al., 2024).

4.3. Research Question 2: Moderating Effect of Socio-Demographic Characteristics

The second research question examined whether socio-demographic characteristics moderate the relationship between hospitality skill preparedness and job performance. The results of the moderation analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Hierarchical regression results for moderation analysis.

Predictor	β	t	p-value	95% CI	ΔR^2	ΔF
Step 1: Main Effects					0.345	165.042***
Skill Preparedness (SP)	0.587	12.847	<0.001	[0.528, 0.720]		
Step 2: Moderator Variables					0.042	4.867***
SP $\times$ Age	0.165	3.842	<0.001	[0.081, 0.249]		
SP $\times$ Gender	0.128	2.974	0.003	[0.043, 0.213]		
SP $\times$ Education Level	0.142	3.305	0.001	[0.058, 0.226]		
SP $\times$ Tenure	0.158	3.678	<0.001	[0.074, 0.242]		
SP $\times$ Job Position	0.135	3.141	0.002	[0.051, 0.219]		

*** $p < 0.001$; Model $R^2 = 0.387$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.378$; $F(6, 377) = 39.746$, $p < 0.001$.

The results of the moderation analysis revealed that socio-demographic characteristics significantly moderate the relationship between skill preparedness and job performance, with the interaction terms contributing an additional 4.2% to the explained variance ($\Delta R^2 = 0.042$, $\Delta F = 4.867$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 (H_{02}) is rejected.

4.3.1. Moderating Effect of Age

The results indicated that age had a significant moderating effect on the relationship between skill preparedness and job performance ($\beta = 0.165$, $t = 3.842$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.081, 0.249]). The interaction effect showed that the positive relationship between skill preparedness and job performance was stronger for older employees compared to younger employees.

This finding is consistent with Shirom, Shechter Gilboa, Fried, and Cooper (2008), who found that age moderated the relationship between role ambiguity and job performance, with negative correlations decreasing with increasing age. The results suggest that older employees may derive different benefits from skill preparedness compared to younger employees, possibly due to accumulated experience, different learning preferences, or varying career stages.

This finding aligns with research by Met and Ali (2014), who found that employees with longer tenure reported significantly higher job performance levels compared to their younger counterparts. In the hospitality context, older employees may possess greater industry experience and contextual knowledge that complement formal skill preparedness, enhancing the translation of skills into effective job performance.

The conditional relationship indicates that for every unit increase in skill preparedness, job performance increases by 0.624 for the average-age employee, but this effect is amplified for older employees ($\beta = 0.165$, $p < 0.001$). The positive interaction suggests that age strengthens the positive relationship between skill preparedness and job performance.

4.3.2. Moderating Effect of Gender

The results revealed that gender had a significant moderating effect on the relationship between skill preparedness and job performance ($\beta = 0.128$, $t = 2.974$, $p = 0.003$, 95% CI [0.043, 0.213]). The interaction effect indicated that the relationship between skill preparedness and job performance was stronger for female employees compared to male employees.

This finding is consistent with Haji (2025), who found that gender was a significant socio-demographic moderator in the relationship between organisational culture and employee performance in Zanzibar's public hospitals.

The finding is also supported by research on gender differences in workplace outcomes. Studies have shown that gender may influence how individuals acquire, apply, and benefit from skills in the workplace (Valaei & Jiroudi, 2016). In the hospitality context, gender may affect access to training opportunities, career advancement, and the application of skills in operational roles. The stronger effect for female employees may reflect the greater importance of formal skill preparedness for women who may face additional barriers in the workplace.

The conditional relationship indicates that the positive relationship between skill preparedness and job performance is stronger for female employees ($\beta = 0.752$, $p < 0.001$) compared to male employees ($\beta = 0.496$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that female employees derive greater performance benefits from skill prepared-

ness than their male counterparts.

4.3.3. Moderating Effect of Education Level

The results showed that education level had a significant moderating effect on the relationship between skill preparedness and job performance ($\beta = 0.142$, $t = 3.305$, $p = 0.001$, 95% CI [0.058, 0.226]). The interaction effect indicated that the relationship between skill preparedness and job performance was stronger for employees with higher education levels.

This finding is consistent with research by Met and Ali (2014), who found that education level showed a significant moderating effect on the relationship between monetary motivation and employee performance. The results suggest that employees with higher education levels may benefit more from skill preparedness, as they may possess stronger foundational knowledge and learning capabilities.

This finding aligns with research on graduate employability in Ghana. Commey (2020) found that key competencies expected of hospitality graduates included leadership skills, teamwork, communication skills, human relations and interpersonal skills, operational skills, problem-solving skills, and innovative abilities. However, gaps exist between the competencies expected by the industry and the perceived competencies of hospitality graduates. Higher education levels may enhance the application of these competencies in the workplace.

The conditional relationship indicates that the positive relationship between skill preparedness and job performance is strongest for employees with Master's degrees or higher ($\beta = 0.766$, $p < 0.001$), followed by Bachelor's degree holders ($\beta = 0.624$, $p < 0.001$), and weakest for Higher National Diploma holders ($\beta = 0.482$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that higher education enhances the translation of skills into job performance.

4.3.4. Moderating Effect of Tenure

The results indicated that tenure had a significant moderating effect on the relationship between skill preparedness and job performance ($\beta = 0.158$, $t = 3.678$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.074, 0.242]). The interaction effect showed that the positive relationship between skill preparedness and job performance was stronger for employees with longer tenure.

This finding is consistent with Met and Ali (2014), who found that tenure had a significant moderating effect on the relationship between monetary motivation and employee performance. The results suggest that employees with longer tenure may derive different benefits from skill preparedness compared to those with shorter tenure.

This finding aligns with research by Shirom, Shechter Gilboa, Fried, and Cooper (2008), who found that employee tenure had a moderating effect on the relationship between workplace stressors and job performance. In the hospitality context, tenure may be associated with greater industry experience, institutional knowledge, and professional networks that complement formal skill preparedness and enhance job performance.

The conditional relationship indicates that for every unit increase in tenure, the positive effect of skill preparedness on job performance increases by 0.158 ($p < 0.001$). This suggests that longer-serving employees derive greater performance benefits from skill preparedness, likely due to accumulated experience and contextual knowledge that complement formal skills.

4.3.5. Moderating Effect of Job Position

The results revealed that job position had a significant moderating effect on the relationship between skill preparedness and job performance ($\beta = 0.135$, $t = 3.141$, $p = 0.002$, 95% CI [0.051, 0.219]). The interaction effect indicated that the relationship between skill preparedness and job performance was stronger for employees in managerial/supervisory positions compared to non-managerial employees.

This finding is consistent with research by Burak (2025), who found that job position was a determining factor in the relationship between presenteeism and employee performance, with managers being less affected by the negative effects of presenteeism.

In the hospitality context, managers and supervisors may have greater opportunities to apply and benefit from skill preparedness compared to non-managerial employees. This may be due to the complexity of managerial roles, which require broader competencies in leadership, decision-making, and strategic planning. The finding suggests that the relationship between skill preparedness and job performance may be stronger for employees in higher-level positions.

The conditional relationship indicates that the positive relationship between skill preparedness and job performance is stronger for managerial/supervisory employees ($\beta = 0.759$, $p < 0.001$) compared to non-managerial employees ($\beta = 0.489$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that managers derive greater performance benefits from skill preparedness, likely due to the broader scope and complexity of their roles.

4.4. Summary of Findings

The results of the study collectively demonstrate that:

- 1) Hospitality skill preparedness significantly influences job performance among graduate employees in 3 - 5-star rated hotels in Greater Accra, Ghana ($\beta = 0.624$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.345$).
- 2) Socio-demographic characteristics—including age ($\beta = 0.165$, $p < 0.001$), gender ($\beta = 0.128$, $p = 0.003$), education level ($\beta = 0.142$, $p = 0.001$), tenure ($\beta = 0.158$, $p < 0.001$), and job position ($\beta = 0.135$, $p = 0.002$)—significantly moderate the relationship between hospitality skill preparedness and job performance, contributing an additional 4.2% to the explained variance.

These findings underscore the importance of considering socio-demographic diversity when examining skill preparedness and performance relationships in the hospitality sector. The results contribute to the literature on human capital development and provide empirical evidence for the differentiated effects of skill pre-

paredness across employee groups.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between hospitality skill preparedness and job performance among graduate employees in 3 - 5-star rated hotels in Greater Accra, Ghana, and determined whether socio-demographic characteristics moderate this relationship. The findings reveal that hospitality skill preparedness significantly influences job performance, supporting the importance of competence-based education and training in developing a skilled hospitality workforce.

Furthermore, the study found that socio-demographic characteristics—including age, gender, education level, tenure, and job position—significantly moderate the relationship between skill preparedness and job performance. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of skill preparedness in enhancing job performance is contingent upon the socio-demographic profiles of employees.

The study contributes to the body of knowledge on human capital development in the hospitality sector and provides empirical evidence for the differentiated effects of skill preparedness across employee groups. The findings highlight the need for differentiated approaches to training and development that account for the socio-demographic diversity of the workforce.

The study concludes that addressing skill gaps in Ghana's hospitality sector requires not only investment in skill development but also attention to the characteristics of employees who benefit most from such investments. A one-size-fits-all approach to training and development may be insufficient to maximize the returns to skill preparedness.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1) Hospitality educational institutions and employers should invest in developing the practical skills, experiential learning opportunities, and curriculum effectiveness that constitute hospitality skill preparedness. The revision of the TVET curriculum to include ongoing competencies and skills assessment across various industries is essential (Yakubu & Bayong, 2025).

2) Hotel managers and human resource practitioners should adopt differentiated approaches to training and development that account for the socio-demographic diversity of their workforce. Different employee groups may require different types of training and support to maximize the benefits of skill preparedness.

3) Age-specific, gender-sensitive, and education-level-appropriate training programmes should be developed to enhance the effectiveness of skill preparedness across diverse employee groups. For example, older employees may benefit from training that leverages their experience, while younger employees may benefit from more foundational skill development. Female employees may benefit from mentoring and career development programmes that support the translation of

skills into performance.

4) Collaboration between educational institutions and hospitality enterprises should be strengthened to ensure curricula are aligned with industry needs and graduate competencies meet employer expectations (Sekyere et al., 2024; Commey, 2020).

5) Hotels should provide career development opportunities that recognise and reward skill acquisition and performance enhancement. Mentoring and coaching programmes can support the application of skills in workplace contexts.

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AI Declaration

In our work, we used AI for language corrections, grammar checks, and to improve design.

Author Contributions

All authors have made substantial contributions to the conception, design, execution, and interpretation of this study. **Georgina Dadson** contributed to conceptualisation, research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, drafting of the manuscript, critical revision of the manuscript, and final approval of the version to be published. **Beatrice Kamau** contributed to conceptualisation, research design, supervision, interpretation of findings, critical revision of the manuscript, and final approval of the version to be published. **Robert Irungu** contributed to conceptualisation, research design, supervision, interpretation of findings, critical revision of the manuscript, and final approval of the version to be published. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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