



The Role of Job Recruitment in Improving Employee Performance at Bandrek Jahe Merah Ilham Medan

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ABSTRACT:

This study aims to analyze the role of job recruitment in improving employee performance at Bandrek Jahe Merah Ilham Medan, an MSME. The study is motivated by the fact that many MSMEs in Indonesia, including traditional culinary businesses, face difficulties in obtaining workers who match business needs due to limited resources and unstructured recruitment systems. A qualitative approach with a case study method was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of recruitment practices and their influence on employee performance. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving the owner and employees directly engaged in the recruitment process. The findings indicate that recruitment at Bandrek Jahe Merah Ilham is simple yet effective, emphasizing the suitability of candidates' technical skills, personal traits, and work attitudes. Appropriate recruitment contributes to improved performance, as reflected in higher work efficiency, consistent product quality, and increased customer satisfaction. The main recruitment challenges include a limited supply of skilled labor and candidates' insufficient understanding of traditional production processes. Overall, this study confirms that effective recruitment is a key factor in strengthening MSME performance and productivity sustainably.

Keywords: Job Recruitment, Employee Performance, MSMEs, Product Quality, Customer Satisfaction.

ABSTRAK:

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis peran rekrutmen kerja dalam meningkatkan kinerja karyawan pada UMKM Bandrek Jahe Merah Ilham Medan. Latar belakang penelitian ini didasari oleh kenyataan bahwa banyak UMKM di Indonesia, termasuk sektor kuliner tradisional, menghadapi kesulitan memperoleh tenaga kerja yang sesuai dengan kebutuhan usaha akibat keterbatasan sumber daya dan sistem rekrutmen yang belum terstruktur. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus untuk memperoleh pemahaman mendalam mengenai praktik rekrutmen serta pengaruhnya terhadap kinerja karyawan. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan pemilik serta karyawan yang terlibat langsung dalam proses rekrutmen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa proses rekrutmen di UMKM Bandrek Jahe Merah Ilham bersifat sederhana namun efektif, dengan menekankan kesesuaian keterampilan teknis, karakter personal, dan sikap kerja calon karyawan. Rekrutmen yang tepat berkontribusi pada peningkatan kinerja, terlihat dari efisiensi kerja, konsistensi kualitas produk, serta meningkatnya kepuasan pelanggan. Kendala utama dalam rekrutmen meliputi keterbatasan tenaga kerja terampil dan minimnya pemahaman calon karyawan terhadap proses produksi tradisional. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa rekrutmen efektif merupakan faktor kunci untuk membangun kinerja dan produktivitas UMKM secara berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Rekrutmen Kerja, Kinerja Karyawan, UMKM, Kualitas Produk, Kepuasan Pelanggan

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, MSMEs contribute substantially to the national economy and employment (Arifa et al., 2025). Data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs in 2023 indicate that the MSME sector contributes approximately 60.5% to national GDP and employs over 97% of the workforce (KEMENDAGRI, 2023). However, the challenges faced by MSMEs are not only related to marketing and capital, but also to human resources (HR), particularly the recruitment process, which plays a central role in shaping business quality and productivity. This issue becomes highly salient in traditional culinary businesses where operational outcomes such as taste consistency, service speed, and hygiene, depend heavily on the practical competence and work discipline of frontline employees.

Recruitment in smaller firms is widely recognized as distinct from recruitment in large organizations. Prior evidence suggests that small firms often do not follow the ideal systematic procedures described in prescriptive HR literature and instead rely heavily on informal methods such as word-of-mouth and hiring known quantities (Biea et al., 2024). This pattern is commonly associated with limited resources, time pressure, and the absence of dedicated HR personnel, which collectively encourage owners to prioritize speed and trust over formal credentials (Cardon & Stevens, 2004). In the Indonesian context, informal hiring can even function as a strategic practice for MSMEs, shaped by local labor-market realities and trust-based relationships (Rudin & Azizurrohman, 2025). While such practices may reduce search costs and uncertainty, they may also constrain the talent pool and lead to mismatch if selection criteria are not articulated clearly.

The phenomenon observed in the field aligns with these broader patterns. Many MSMEs experience difficulties in finding workers who match their needs and business characteristics. Limited resources, simple recruitment systems, and a lack of awareness of the importance of proper employee selection often result in low operational performance (Nolan & Harney, 2023; Singh & Ramdeo, 2023). At Bandrek Jahe Merah Ilham, the recruitment process is carried out directly by the business owner without formal procedures, yet it still emphasizes technical abilities and work attitude in prospective employees. This phenomenon is important because it reflects an MSME-specific recruitment adaptation that prioritizes efficiency and value compatibility over formal certification. In practice, this adaptation can be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to balance the constraints of a micro business with the operational requirement for reliable performance.

From an HR management perspective, recruitment is not only a mechanism to fill vacancies but also a process that determines the quality of person-job matching. The concept of *person-job fit* is relevant here because it emphasizes alignment between individual capabilities and job demands. Evidence from a well-cited meta-analysis shows that fit at work (including person-job fit) is meaningfully related to a range of post-entry outcomes, including performance-related criteria (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). When recruitment fails to screen for fit, organizations may face lower productivity, higher error rates, and increased costs for supervision and training. Conversely, when selection criteria focus on the competencies that truly matter for day-to-day operations, even a simple recruitment process can support stable performance.

Previous studies in the Indonesian context, Mellani et al. (2024) report that recruitment effectiveness can influence employee performance, motivation, and loyalty. Yet, the majority of recruitment-performance studies still emphasize large companies or formal-sector settings, while MSME-level evidence remains less visible and often context dependent. More broadly, scholarship

on managing HR in small and emerging firms highlights that owners frequently handle HR decisions themselves, HR systems are less formalized, and best practices may not transfer neatly to small-business realities (Cardon & Stevens, 2004). This reinforces the need for research that examines recruitment practices as they are actually enacted within micro businesses, rather than how they are ideally prescribed.

Recruitment challenges in MSMEs are also shaped by the lack of professional HR management systems and limited organizational structures. According to Ablaza et al. (2023) many MSMEs in Indonesia rely on family-based and informal work practices; therefore, recruitment is often conducted without clear standards. This condition can produce high variability in workforce quality and frequent mismatch with operational needs. Supporting this view, research on recruitment and selection in smaller and growth organizations argues that these contexts are shaped by acquaintance-based hiring, limited formalization, and complex local constraints—making context-sensitive analysis essential (Ali et al., 2024; Abid & Alsarhan, 2025). In addition, contemporary evidence indicates that managerial practices and the adoption of technology can influence recruitment approaches in SMEs, although uptake differs by capability and resource availability (Biea et al., 2024). These insights are relevant for predominantly informal MSMEs because they point to practical improvement pathways such as clearer criteria, broader outreach, and simple screening tools without requiring fully formal HR departments.

In traditional culinary businesses, recruitment complexity increases because employees are expected to master tacit and local skills that are not always taught in formal education. According to Nair et al. (2023), workforce quality in the traditional food sector is largely determined by technical skills and understanding of manual production processes, making recruitment crucial. If recruitment fails to identify candidates who match job characteristics, operational performance may be affected in concrete ways, including taste quality, production-time efficiency, and customer satisfaction. Therefore, examining *Bandrek Jahe Merah Ilham* is important to understand how “simple but selective” recruitment contributes to employee performance and business sustainability in a context where skills are largely practical and experience based.

The research gap is evident in the limited number of studies discussing the relationship between recruitment processes and improved employee performance in the MSME sector (Siraj & Hågen, 2023; Aguilera et al., 2024; Tavares et al., 2025), especially in traditional-based businesses such as *Bandrek Jahe Merah Ilham*. Much existing MSME research focuses more heavily on marketing, product innovation, or financial management, while the role of recruitment in maintaining HR quality is less frequently explored (Sabando-Vera et al., 2025). Yet HR is strategic in sustaining consistency in taste, service, and customer experience—key determinants of business sustainability in culinary MSMEs. In addition, while informal hiring is common, recent Indonesia-focused evidence suggests it can be strategic but still requires careful criteria and safeguards to avoid persistent mismatch and skills shortages.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on a simple yet strategic recruitment process at the traditional MSME level and on how these practices affect employee performance and productivity. *Bandrek Jahe Merah Ilham* represents a local business that maintains product quality standards through recruitment that emphasizes trust and skill suitability. This research contributes empirically

to the HR management literature at the micro level by highlighting recruitment as a foundational mechanism for sustainable small-business performance, particularly where operations depend on hands-on technical skills and disciplined work routines.

Accordingly, this study aims to: (1) describe the recruitment process implemented, (2) identify the employee selection criteria used, (3) analyze the effect of recruitment on work performance and productivity, and (4) reveal obstacles and improvement strategies in the recruitment process. The results are expected to provide practical insights for MSME owners in developing recruitment systems that are effective, efficient, and performance oriented. Academically, this study expands HR management discussions in the context of local Indonesian MSMEs, particularly in traditional and locally based labor recruitment, while practically it can serve as a reference for MSME actors seeking recruitment approaches aligned with their business characteristics and constraints.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine how recruitment practices influence employee performance at Bandrek Jahe Merah Ilham, a traditional culinary MSME in Medan, Indonesia. The case study design was chosen to capture the recruitment process in its real operational context and to understand the practical considerations that shape hiring decisions in a small business setting (Creswell & Poth, 2023).

Participants included the business owner and employees who were involved in, or directly affected by, recruitment and selection activities. Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on their relevance to the study objectives, including their role in hiring decisions, experience in production or service tasks, and familiarity with daily performance expectations. Data collection continued until the information became repetitive and no meaningful new insights emerged.

Data were collected through semi structured interviews, on site observation, and documentation. Interviews explored recruitment steps, selection criteria related to technical skills and work attitude, onboarding practices, perceived performance outcomes, and obstacles in hiring. Observation focused on daily work activities to identify performance indicators linked to recruitment outcomes, including work accuracy, speed, discipline, teamwork, and responsiveness in service. Documentation was used to support and cross check interview and observation data, including basic work arrangements, informal rules, schedules, and any available records related to staffing and operations.

Data analysis was conducted iteratively using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts and field notes were organized, coded, and grouped into themes such as recruitment practices, suitability between worker and job, performance impacts, constraints, and improvement strategies. Trustworthiness was strengthened through triangulation across methods and sources, and key interpretations were confirmed with participants when needed. Ethical procedures included voluntary participation, informed consent, and anonymization of identities in reporting.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the key findings of the study based on interview, observation, and documentation data gathered at Bandrek Jahe Merah Ilham. The results are organized thematically

to describe the recruitment process, the selection criteria applied, and the perceived effects on employee performance and productivity. It also highlights the main challenges encountered during recruitment and the practical strategies used to address them. The discussion in the following section then connects these findings to relevant concepts and prior studies to strengthen the interpretation.

Work Recruitment Practices at Bandrek Jahe Merah Ilham MSME

The recruitment process at Bandrek Jahe Merah Ilham MSME follows a simple yet structured approach with clear selection stages. Prospective employees typically come directly to the business location, submit their personal information, and describe their prior work experience. The owner then conducts a brief interview to assess the candidate's suitability for operational needs—particularly technical skills in preparing ginger bandrek—as well as personal attributes such as responsibility, honesty, and work ethic. Although the process does not involve formal procedures such as written tests or panel interviews, this direct method can be effective in small businesses because it enables a quick assessment of character and work readiness. This approach reflects the flexibility commonly found in MSMEs, which often adapt recruitment practices to limited resources and conditions (Biea et al., 2024).

In the recruitment process, several criteria are considered. First are personal characteristics, including honesty, discipline, and a strong work ethic, since the job requires precision and physical endurance. Second is technical competence, namely an understanding of the traditional bandrek-making process and the ability to measure ingredients accurately to ensure consistent taste. Third are interpersonal skills, especially friendliness and the ability to serve customers well. This combination of criteria indicates a balanced approach that considers character, technical capability, and soft skills. In an MSME setting where supervision is limited, honesty and discipline provide a foundation for reliability; technical competence supports consistent product quality; and interpersonal skills contribute to positive customer experiences.

Business owners select new employees based on needs that match the business's characteristics and operational demands. Each candidate is assessed on their ability to understand the bandrek-making workflow—from selecting ingredients and mixing them properly to presenting the final product. This reflects the person-job fit principle, meaning the compatibility between an individual and the requirements of a particular job or task (Hongyu, 2024). This is especially important for resource-limited businesses that cannot afford lengthy training periods. Employees who already possess the required skills tend to adapt faster and become productive sooner, helping operations run smoothly without disrupting established work routines.

The Impact of Recruitment on Performance Proper

Effective recruitment has a meaningful impact on employee performance at Bandrek Jahe Merah Ilham MSME. Interview data indicate that selecting employees according to the stated criteria helps work run more efficiently, improves output consistency, and supports higher productivity. Employees who fit the role well also tend to show stronger motivation, higher responsibility, and greater loyalty to the business. These findings align with broader evidence that staffing decisions and recruitment-related practices are linked to organizational performance outcomes, often through improvements

in HRM outcomes and work quality (Ahmed, 2024; Stor, 2024). More generally, empirical research on SMEs also shows that HRM practices including recruitment and selection that can be associated with performance indicators such as labor productivity and innovation outcomes (Aslam et al., 2023).

Recruitment quality also influences overall business productivity and service outcomes. Employees who already possess the relevant production skills can work faster and maintain consistent product quality, reducing the need for lengthy adaptation. In service interactions, employees with a customer-oriented mindset contribute to better service quality—an effect supported by hospitality research showing that customer-oriented perspective taking improves employee service quality (Dong & Hon, 2025). In the service context, better service performance is associated with higher customer satisfaction (Zhang & Yim, 2025) and customer-related empowering interactions can also enhance service performance and customer-oriented behaviors (Chen et al., 2024). For Bandrek Jahe Merah Ilham, these mechanisms help explain why better recruitment supports more stable operations, more consistent product and service delivery, and stronger potential for repeat purchases and business development.

Evaluation of Recruitment Effectiveness

The effectiveness of recruitment at Bandrek Jahe Merah Ilham MSME is evaluated through employees' post-hire performance and adaptability. Recruitment is considered effective when new employees can consistently maintain the standard taste of bandrek, deliver friendly and professional customer service, and comply with established operational routines. Additional indicators include work discipline, attendance consistency, and customer satisfaction, which can be captured through direct feedback and repeat purchase patterns. This evaluation approach is practical for a small business because it focuses on observable outcomes in daily operations, allowing the owner to assess whether hiring decisions have produced the expected contribution to product and service quality.

Recruitment also plays a critical role in maintaining human resource quality at Bandrek Jahe Merah Ilham. Through a clear and needs-based selection process, the business owner can prioritize candidates with adequate skills, responsibility, and a strong work ethic—factors that support consistent product quality, reliable service delivery, and a positive work climate. In this sense, recruitment is not merely a process of filling vacancies, but a strategic mechanism for building a stable and capable workforce that supports business continuity and long-term growth. Evidence from broader HR and SME literature also indicates that recruitment and selection are linked to employee performance outcomes and that retention/early turnover can materially affect organizational performance, making post-hire monitoring (performance, attendance, and retention) a relevant way to judge recruitment success (Stahl & King, 2020).

Challenges and Obstacles in Recruitment

The main obstacle in the recruitment process is finding candidates who genuinely understand and can perform the traditional bandrek-making process. Based on the owner's experience, many applicants are unfamiliar with handling natural ingredients and may lack the patience required for a time-consuming and detail-oriented production method. Another challenge is identifying individuals who are willing to work diligently while also delivering good customer service, especially because

the business operates in a busy roadside setting with high customer flow and operational pressure. These constraints reflect broader MSME recruitment issues, where employers often face difficulties in finding workers with the right skills and experience, particularly in tight labor markets and under persistent skill shortages (OECD, 2023).

The limited number of candidates who meet these criteria requires the owner to adopt a more flexible recruitment approach and strengthen internal skill development. Practical strategies include providing more intensive on-the-job training for promising candidates even if they lack direct experience, using referrals and local community networks to reach more suitable applicants, and prioritizing attitude-based qualities such as discipline, reliability, willingness to learn for roles where technical skills can be developed gradually. This adaptive approach is consistent with recommendations that SMEs strengthen efforts to close skills gaps and develop talent internally when external supply is limited (OECD, 2024).

Overall, recruitment at Bandrek Jahe Merah Ilham Medan can be considered adequate, as reflected in the business's ability to achieve operational objectives and maintain product consistency. The process is also measurable because it uses specific criteria aligned with job demands and evaluates outcomes through daily performance. Effective recruitment is therefore an important factor in sustaining business stability over time—supporting employee dedication, protecting product taste standards, maintaining brand reputation, and ultimately strengthening long-term business continuity.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this research, the recruitment process plays a critical role in determining employee performance at Bandrek Jahe Merah Ilham MSME. Recruitment conducted directly by the business owner—emphasizing technical skills, work attitude, and values such as honesty and responsibility—has proven effective in producing productive, disciplined, and quality-oriented employees. Even though the process is simple and does not rely on complex formal procedures, it works well because it prioritizes person–job fit, which improves operational efficiency, maintains consistent product quality, and supports harmonious working relationships between the owner and employees.

The findings also indicate that recruitment quality is directly proportional to employee performance and overall business success. When employees are selected according to clear criteria, they tend to adapt faster, demonstrate stronger loyalty, and consistently maintain both service and product standards. Therefore, recruitment should not be viewed merely as an administrative activity; rather, it functions as a managerial strategy that directly influences business productivity and competitiveness, particularly in the MSME context where resources and training capacity are limited.

However, this study also identifies several challenges that can hinder long-term workforce stability, including a shortage of skilled workers, declining interest among younger generations in traditional jobs, and the absence of a formal training system for new employees. To strengthen sustainability, the MSME should maintain its value- and skill-based recruitment approach while adding light standardization, such as clearer selection checklists and a short onboarding plan.

In addition, continuous training and mentoring—supported by simple production and service guidelines—are recommended to ensure skills transfer, improve retention, and maintain consistent performance as the business develops.

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