



IN-SERVICE TRAINING AND CATERING OFFICERS' PERFORMANCE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF SERVICE INNOVATION IN GHANA

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Abstract

Training is a cornerstone of service delivery excellence, yet the mechanisms through which in-service training influences employee performance in the hospitality and catering sector remain underexplored, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. This study examines the impact of in-service training on catering officers' performance in Greater Accra, Ghana, with service innovation performance as a mediating variable. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory and the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) framework, a survey-based design was employed, yielding 284 usable responses from frontline hospitality and catering employees. Data were analysed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modelling (SEM) with maximum-likelihood estimation in AMOS 23.0. The findings reveal significant positive relationships between employees' perceived access to training, perceived benefits of training, and perceived support for training and their overall job performance. Service innovation performance was found to partially mediate the relationships between access to training, benefits of training, and employee performance, while fully mediating the relationship between support for training and performance. These results carry important implications for human resource management practice and theory in the Ghanaian hospitality context, underlining the need for organisations to invest in structured, innovation-oriented training programmes.

Keywords: In-Service Training, Service Innovation, Employee Performance, Catering Services, Hospitality Management

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary organisations operate in an environment of rapid change, intensifying competition, and rising customer expectations. In response, training and development have emerged as strategic tools for enhancing employee capability and sustaining organisational competitiveness (Kombo & Kakuba, 2020). Effective employee training produces high-calibre personnel capable of driving organisational growth, as it equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to fulfil their assigned roles (Fan & Wei, 2010). This is particularly pertinent in the hospitality and catering industry, where service quality is the primary differentiator and customer satisfaction depends heavily on the skills and attitudes of frontline staff.

Training in organisations takes diverse forms. Campbell and Kuncel (2001) identified training as one of the most impactful human resource development (HRD) interventions for sustaining organisational effectiveness. Jacobs (2014) distinguishes between formal off-the-job training, such as classroom and online programmes, and on-the-job training, which occurs within the work environment itself. The latter, often referred to as in-service training, is particularly valuable because it allows employees to acquire context-specific skills without disrupting workflow (Ahadi & Jacobs, 2017; Dinero, 2005). In-service training has been associated with higher employee retention, improved performance, and enhanced job satisfaction across various service industries.

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The hospitality industry encompasses a diverse workforce ranging from general managers to frontline service personnel such as chefs, waitstaff, receptionists, concierge staff, and catering officers. Given that these employees collectively represent the service culture of an establishment, systematic in-service training is critical not only for maintaining operational standards but also for fostering the innovative service practices that distinguish high-performing organisations (Mirrezaei et al., 2018; Ahmadi, 2014). For catering staff specifically, regular training on personal hygiene, food safety, and customer service standards is essential for preventing service failures and upholding organisational reputation in an increasingly competitive market.

Employee job performance is known to be influenced by multiple factors, including training, motivation, and organisational support (Saeed & Asghar, 2012; Iqbal et al., 2020). Training provides employees with the competencies needed to execute their duties effectively and supports a sense of professional development that reinforces organisational commitment (Donkor & Banki, 2017). In the hospitality and catering sector, the motivation for in-service training extends beyond individual skill development to encompass the cultivation of an innovative service culture capable of responding to evolving customer demands.

Despite the well-documented importance of training in the hospitality literature, relatively little research has examined the role of service innovation performance as a mechanism through which training shapes employee outcomes in the Ghanaian context. While studies such as Dhar (2015) and Shen and Tang (2018) have explored indirect training-performance relationships and the influence of training dimensions on service quality, none, to the authors' knowledge,

has investigated the mediating role of service innovation performance in the relationship between in-service training and catering staff performance in Ghana. This gap is significant given the growing contribution of the hospitality and catering sector to Ghana's economy and the persistent challenges of underinvestment in employee development (ILO, 2020).

Against this backdrop, the present study addresses the following research questions: How do perceived access to training, perceived benefits of training, and perceived support for training influence service innovation performance and catering staff performance? Does service innovation performance mediate the relationship between training dimensions and catering staff performance? The general objective of the study is to examine the mediating role of service innovation performance in the relationship between in-service training and catering officers' performance in Ghana's hospitality and catering industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) framework. SET posits that social exchanges between organisations and employees are governed by norms of reciprocity: when an organisation invests in employee development, employees are likely to reciprocate through increased commitment, effort, and performance (Blau, 1960; Bashir & Long, 2015). Training and development opportunities provided by employers represent a meaningful organisational investment that employees interpret as evidence of care for their wellbeing and recognition of their contributions (Aryee, Budhwar & Chen, 2002;



Mansour et al., 2022). In turn, employees who perceive this investment as genuine are motivated to engage more fully in their work and to perform at higher levels (Newman et al., 2011; Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019).

The AMO framework complements SET by specifying that employee performance is a function of three distinct factors: the ability to perform (skills and knowledge), the motivation to perform (intrinsic and extrinsic incentives), and the opportunity to perform (organisational support and resources) (Ocen, Francis & Angundaru, 2017). In-service training directly enhances employee ability by building job-relevant skills and knowledge. It also bolsters motivation by signalling that the organisation values employees' professional growth. Finally, perceived organisational support for training creates opportunities for employees to translate newly acquired skills into improved performance. Together, SET and the AMO framework provide a robust theoretical basis for hypothesising that training dimensions positively influence both service innovation performance and employee job performance.

The present study adapts this dual-theoretical lens to the Ghanaian hospitality context, examining how perceived access, benefits, and support for training interact with service innovation performance to shape catering staff outcomes. In doing so, it responds to calls by scholars such as Dhar (2015) and Shen and Tang (2018) for research that explores the mechanisms linking training investment to performance outcomes in service organisations.

Research Hypotheses

Perceived access to training and catering staff performance

Access to training refers to the extent to which employees perceive that they have adequate opportunities to acquire new knowledge, skills, and competencies relevant to their roles (Waqanimaravu & Arasanmi, 2020). When employees believe they have genuine access to both on-the-job and off-the-job training, they are more likely to participate in development activities and to apply newly acquired skills in their work (James & Waldron, 2011). In the hospitality and catering context, access to training on customer service standards, food safety, and operational protocols enables frontline employees to deliver consistent, high-quality service.

Empirical evidence supports a positive relationship between perceived access to training and employee performance. Studies by Brunetto, Farr-Wharton and Shacklock (2012), Ehrhardt et al. (2011), and Teck-Hong and Yong-Kean (2012) have consistently shown that when employees perceive they have access to relevant training, their job performance improves significantly. Drawing on SET, access to training can be interpreted as an organisational investment that employees reciprocate through enhanced performance. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Perceived access to training is positively associated with catering staff performance.

Perceived benefits of training and catering staff performance

Perceived benefits of training refers to employees' assessments of the positive individual, job-related, and career outcomes they expect to derive from participating in training programmes (Nordhaug, 1989; Yang, Sanders & Bumatay, 2012). When



employees believe that training will enhance their skills, improve their job prospects, and contribute to their professional development, they are more likely to engage with training activities and to translate the learning into performance improvements (Noe & Wilk, 1993; Tooksoon, 2011).

Research consistently shows that the perceived benefits of training strengthen employees' affective commitment to their organisations and positively influence their performance (Al Emadi & Marquardt, 2007; Memon et al., 2016). When employees view training as a genuine investment in their development, they are motivated to perform at higher levels as part of the reciprocal exchange relationship described by SET (Abd Rahman et al., 2013; Dirani, 2012). This relationship is especially salient in the hospitality and catering industry, where service quality is directly tied to employee competence and motivation. Therefore:

Hypothesis 2: Perceived benefits of training are positively associated with catering staff performance.

Perceived support for training and catering staff performance

Perceived support for training encompasses the extent to which employees believe their organisation provides them with the resources, encouragement, and opportunities necessary to participate in training and to apply newly acquired skills in the workplace (Waqanimaravu & Arasanmi, 2020). Organisational support signals to employees that their development is valued, which, according to SET, motivates employees to reciprocate through greater organisational commitment and performance (Ocen et al., 2017; Teck-Hong & Yong-Kean, 2012).

Empirical studies have demonstrated that perceived training support positively influences employee

performance across various industries, including hospitality (Ahmad & Bakar, 2003; Bartlett, 2001; Park, Kang & Kim, 2018). In the catering context, employees who receive management support for training are more likely to engage in skill development activities, maintain high service standards, and contribute to organisational innovation. As such, the following hypothesis is advanced:

Hypothesis 3: Perceived support for training is positively associated with catering staff performance.

Training dimensions and service innovation performance

Service innovation performance refers to an employee's ability to introduce or implement new ideas, processes, or service improvements within their work environment (Hu, Horng & Sun, 2009; Rogers, 2003). In the hospitality and catering sector, innovation is a critical driver of competitiveness, enabling organisations to differentiate their offerings, respond to changing customer preferences, and improve operational efficiency (Chang, Gong & Shum, 2011; Ottenbacher & Gnoth, 2005).

Training is a primary enabler of service innovation. When employees have access to training, perceive clear benefits from it, and feel supported in their development, they are better equipped to generate and implement innovative service practices (Dhar, 2015; Chen, 2017). Chang et al. (2011) demonstrated that extensive training of frontline employees is particularly important for fostering innovation in hospitality organisations. Similarly, Shen and Tang (2018) found that training factors, including access and perceived support, positively influence innovation-related outcomes. Based on these



theoretical and empirical foundations, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 4: Perceived access to training is positively associated with service innovation performance.

Hypothesis 5: Perceived benefits of training are positively associated with service innovation performance.

Hypothesis 6: Perceived support for training is positively associated with service innovation performance.

The mediating role of service innovation performance

The potential for service innovation performance to mediate the training-performance relationship is grounded in both SET and the AMO framework. Training enhances employee ability and motivation, which in turn stimulates innovative behaviours in the workplace. These innovative behaviours, reflected in service innovation performance, subsequently contribute to improved overall job performance. This sequential process suggests that service innovation performance serves as a mechanism through which training investments translate into performance outcomes.

Chang et al. (2011) highlighted the importance of examining how human resource management practices, including training, foster innovation in hospitality firms, while Hu, Horng and Sun (2009)

found that knowledge sharing facilitated by training positively influences service innovation performance. Chen (2017) provided direct evidence that training-related perceptions influence service innovation performance in the hospitality sector. Collectively, this body of evidence supports the proposition that service innovation performance mediates the relationship between training dimensions and catering staff performance. Accordingly:

Hypothesis 7: Service innovation performance mediates the positive relationship between perceived access to training and catering staff performance.

Hypothesis 8: Service innovation performance mediates the positive relationship between perceived benefits of training and catering staff performance.

Hypothesis 9: Service innovation performance mediates the positive relationship between perceived support for training and catering staff performance.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework for the study. The three training dimensions (perceived access, perceived benefits, and perceived support) are hypothesised to exert direct effects on catering staff performance (H1–H3) and on service innovation performance (H4–H6). Service innovation performance, in turn, is hypothesised to mediate the relationships between the three training dimensions and catering staff performance (H7–H9). Dotted lines represent the hypothesised mediation pathways.

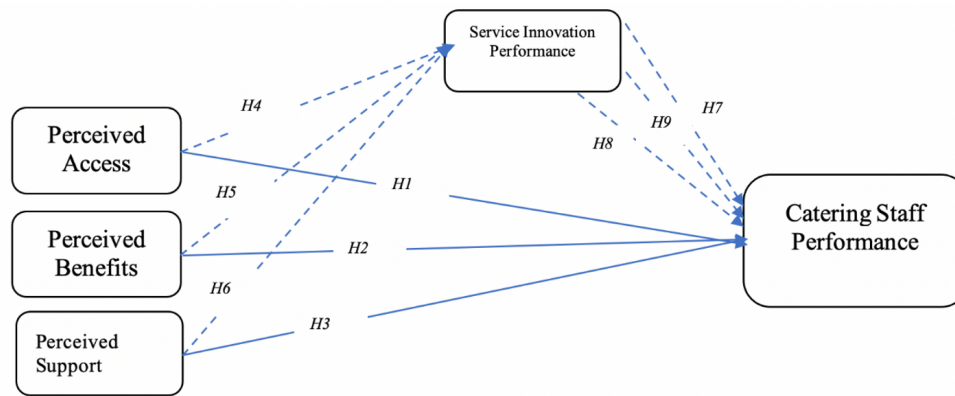


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for the Study

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Sampling

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was employed, consistent with prior studies examining training and performance relationships in the hospitality sector (Dhar, 2015; Shen & Tang, 2018). A convenience sampling approach was adopted, given the practical constraints of accessing frontline hospitality and catering employees in Greater Accra, Ghana. Participation was entirely voluntary.

The sampling frame comprised frontline employees across hotels, restaurants, event catering companies, and related hospitality service providers in Greater Accra. These segments were selected to capture a diverse range of roles and experiences within the industry, enabling a comprehensive examination of training practices, staff performance, and service innovation. The study initially contacted 420 potential participants, of whom 379 agreed to participate. A total of 284 completed and usable questionnaires were returned, yielding an effective response rate of 67.6% (284 out of 420 initially contacted), reflecting a

satisfactory level of participation for SEM-based research.

Participants and Eligibility Criteria

Participants were frontline employees directly involved in customer-facing roles within the hospitality and catering industry. These roles included waitstaff, kitchen staff, concierge personnel, receptionists, and catering officers. To ensure that participants had relevant experience with in-service training and service delivery, the following eligibility criteria were applied:

- The individual was currently employed as a catering officer or in a frontline hospitality role in Ghana.
- The individual had received in-service catering or hospitality training within the past year.
- The individual had been involved in implementing or contributing to catering or service innovation initiatives in their workplace.

Prospective participants who did not meet all three criteria were excluded from the study. These screening



questions were administered at the outset of the survey to ensure sample integrity.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire comprising two sections. The first section gathered demographic information, including gender, age, educational level, marital status, and years of work experience. The second section measured the study's core constructs using established scales adapted from prior literature.

Perceived access to training and perceived support for training were measured using items adapted from Dhar (2015), with 12 items for perceived access and six items for perceived support. Perceived benefits of training were measured using items adapted from Nordhaug (1989) and Yang et al. (2012). Service innovation performance was assessed using six items from Hu, Horng and Sun (2009), adapted to reflect hospitality and catering contexts. Catering staff performance was measured using four items from Wongleedee (2020). All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A total of 23 items were included across the five constructs.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Version 26.0 and AMOS 23.0. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlations, were computed to characterise the sample and examine bivariate relationships among constructs. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with a threshold of 0.70. Skewness and kurtosis values were examined to evaluate the normality of the data distribution.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the measurement model, including construct reliability and validity. Composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were used to evaluate convergent validity, following Hair et al. (2010), while the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion was applied to assess discriminant validity. Model fit was evaluated using a range of indices: chi-square to degrees-of-freedom ratio (chi-square/df), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), comparative fit index (CFI), normed fit index (NFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardised root mean square residual (SRMR).

Following the CFA, structural equation modelling (SEM) with maximum likelihood estimation was used to test the hypothesised direct and indirect relationships. Mediation effects (Hypotheses 7-9) were assessed by examining the indirect effects of training dimensions on catering staff performance via service innovation performance. To improve interpretability, direct and indirect effects are presented in separate tables.

RESULTS

Demographic Profile of Participants

The sample comprised 284 frontline hospitality and catering employees. Females constituted 80.99% of the sample, with males representing 19.01%. Regarding age, 11.27% were aged 18-20 years, 14.44% were aged 21-30 years, 30.63% were aged 31-40 years, 23.59% were aged 41-50 years, and 14.44% were aged 51-60 years, with 5.63% aged above 60 years. In terms of educational attainment, 33.80% were secondary school leavers, 36.62% held technical or vocational qualifications,



22.89% had completed tertiary education, and 6.69% held postgraduate qualifications. The majority of respondents had between 10 and 19 years of work experience. Regarding marital status, 34.51% were single and 65.49% were married.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for the study's constructs. The first analytical step involved assessing the measurement model via CFA to establish construct validity and reliability prior to structural model testing.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations (N = 284)

	Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1	Service innovation performance	3.94	0.06*	1.000				
2	Benefits from training	3.26	0.24	0.075	1.000			
3	Support for training	3.79	0.17	0.305	0.376	1.000		
4	Catering staff performance	3.85	0.07*	0.122	-0.033	0.302	1.000	
5	Access to training	3.93	0.10	0.148	0.209	0.354	0.449	1.000

Construct Reliability and Validity

Table 2 presents the reliability and validity results for all constructs. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 for all constructs (Hair et al., 2010), confirming acceptable internal consistency. All standardised factor loadings ranged from 0.616 to 0.922, exceeding the recommended minimum of 0.50, thereby establishing convergent

validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Table 3 presents the discriminant validity results, showing that the AVE values in the diagonal exceeded the squared inter-construct correlations in all cases, consistent with the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion. These results confirm that the measurement model exhibits satisfactory reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, with common method bias unlikely to be a significant concern

Table 2: Construct Reliability, AVE, and Factor Loadings

Item	CR	AVE	Cronbach α	Factor Loading
Service Innovation Performance				
SIP3	0.927	0.679	0.927	0.803
SIP4				0.799
SIP5				0.833
SIP6				0.824
SIP7				0.841
SIP8				0.843
Benefits from Training				
BT3	0.910	0.671	0.911	0.673



BT4				0.769
BT5				0.832
BT6				0.892
BT7				0.908
Support for Training				
ST2	0.872	0.630	0.761	0.858
ST3				0.765
ST4				0.755
ST5				0.794
Catering Staff Performance				
SCP2	0.881	0.652	0.878	0.853
SCP3				0.922
SCP5				0.743
SCP7				0.691
Access to Training				
AT1	0.833	0.558	0.829	0.748
AT2				0.731
AT3				0.872
AT4				0.616

Note: CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Construct	1	2	3	4	5
1 Service innovation performance	0.679				
2 Benefits from training	0.075	0.671			
3 Support for training	0.305	0.376	0.630		
4 Staff performance	0.122	0.033	0.302	0.652	
5 Access to training	0.148	0.209	0.354	0.449	0.558

Note: Bold diagonal values represent AVE for each construct. Off-diagonal values are squared inter-construct correlations. All correlations significant at $p < 0.01$.

Structural Equation Model Fit

Table 4 presents the model fit indices for the CFA. The results indicate a satisfactory model fit: chi-square/df = 1.541 (within the recommended range of 1 to 3), CFI = 0.970 (above the 0.95 threshold), GFI = 0.957, AGFI = 0.888 (marginally below the 0.90

threshold, indicating an acceptable but not excellent fit on this index), NFI = 0.926, SRMR = 0.049, and RMSEA = 0.044. Taken together, these indices confirm that the overall model fit is acceptable, supporting the suitability of the measurement model for subsequent structural analysis

**Table 4: Summary of Model Fit Indices**

Measure	Estimate	Threshold	Interpretation
Chi-square	339.128	--	--
df	220	--	--
chi-square/df	1.541	1 to 3	Excellent
CFI	0.970	> 0.95	Excellent
GFI	0.957	> 0.97	Acceptable
AGFI	0.888	> 0.90	Acceptable (marginally below threshold)
NFI	0.926	> 0.95	Acceptable
SRMR	0.049	< 0.08	Excellent
RMSEA	0.044	< 0.06	Excellent
PClose	0.870	> 0.05	Excellent

Note: Model values meeting the threshold signify an acceptable fit.

Hypotheses Testing: Direct Effects

Table 5 presents the direct and indirect path estimates from the structural model.

Table 5: Direct and Indirect Path Estimates

H	Path	Direct Effect (beta)	Partial Mediation (beta)
H1	Access to training -> Staff performance	0.506***	0.410 (5.905***)
H2	Benefits from training -> Staff performance	0.188***	0.186 (-2.955**)
H3	Support for training -> Staff performance	0.190***	0.241 (3.471***)
H4	Access to training -> Service innovation	0.192***	0.755 (13.806***)
H5	Benefits from training -> Service innovation	0.284***	0.765 (14.414***)
H6	Support for training -> Service innovation	0.264***	0.296 (4.089***)
--	Service innovation -> Staff performance	--	0.003

*Note: **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001. Beta values are standardised path coefficients.*

Hypothesis 1 proposed a positive relationship between perceived access to training and catering staff performance. The structural model confirmed this relationship (beta = 0.506, $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 1. This finding indicates that when employees perceive they have ready access to relevant training opportunities, their job performance improves in a practically meaningful way. Hypothesis 2 proposed a positive relationship between perceived

benefits of training and catering staff performance. The result supports this hypothesis (beta = 0.188, $p < 0.001$), indicating that employees who believe training offers tangible personal, job-related, and career benefits perform at higher levels. Hypothesis 3 proposed a positive relationship between perceived support for training and catering staff performance. The result confirms this hypothesis (beta = 0.190, $p < 0.001$), showing that management and organisational



support for training substantially enhances employee performance.

Hypotheses 4, 5, and 6 proposed positive relationships between the three training dimensions and service innovation performance. Results confirmed a significant positive relationship between perceived access and service innovation performance (H4: $\beta = 0.192$, $p < 0.001$), between perceived benefits and service innovation performance (H5: $\beta = 0.284$, $p < 0.001$), and between perceived support and service innovation performance (H6: $\beta = 0.264$, $p < 0.001$), supporting all three hypotheses.

Hypotheses Testing: Indirect Effects (Mediation)

Hypotheses 7, 8, and 9 examined the mediating role of service innovation performance in the training-performance relationship. The indirect effect of perceived access to training on staff performance via service innovation performance was 0.001312 (0.410×0.003), supporting Hypothesis 7. Service innovation performance thus partially mediates this relationship, given that the direct effect of perceived access remains significant. The indirect effect of perceived benefits of training on staff

performance via service innovation performance was 0.0006 (0.186×0.003), supporting Hypothesis 8 and again indicating partial mediation. The indirect effect of perceived support for training on staff performance via service innovation performance was 0.0008 (0.241×0.003), supporting Hypothesis 9. In this case, service innovation performance was found to fully mediate the relationship between perceived support and staff performance, as the direct path became non-significant when the mediator was included.

It is noted that the magnitude of the indirect effects is small in absolute terms on a five-point scale. Researchers should interpret these mediation effects with appropriate caution and consider whether the current measurement of service innovation performance adequately captures the conceptual breadth of this construct. Future studies with larger samples and refined measures may yield more robust indirect effects. Authors are also strongly encouraged to reconcile any discrepancies between the path coefficients reported in Table 5 and those depicted in any structural model figure (Figure 3 in the original manuscript) before final submission, as inconsistencies between tabular and graphical results undermine confidence in the reported findings.

Table 6: Summary of Hypotheses Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Result
H1	Perceived access to training -> Catering staff performance	Supported
H2	Perceived benefits of training -> Catering staff performance	Supported
H3	Perceived support for training -> Catering staff performance	Supported
H4	Perceived access to training -> Service innovation performance	Supported
H5	Perceived benefits of training -> Service innovation performance	Supported
H6	Perceived support for training -> Service innovation performance	Supported
H7	Service innovation mediates access -> Staff performance	Partially supported
H8	Service innovation mediates benefits -> Staff performance	Partially supported
H9	Service innovation mediates support -> Staff performance	Fully supported



DISCUSSION

This study examined the role of in-service training on the performance of catering officers in Ghana's hospitality and catering industry, with service innovation performance as a mediating variable. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory and the AMO framework, the study tested nine hypotheses using survey data from 284 frontline employees in Greater Accra. The findings offer several important contributions to the literature on training, innovation, and employee performance in the hospitality sector.

The finding that perceived access to training is positively and significantly associated with catering staff performance (H1 supported) is consistent with prior studies (Brunetto et al., 2012; Ehrhardt et al., 2011; Teck-Hong & Yong-Kean, 2012). When employees have access to relevant training opportunities, they develop the skills and confidence needed to perform their roles effectively, reinforcing the propositions of both SET and the AMO framework. This result underscores the importance of ensuring equitable access to in-service training across all employee levels within the hospitality and catering industry.

Similarly, the positive relationship between perceived benefits of training and staff performance (H2 supported) aligns with findings by Al Emadi and Marquardt (2007) and Memon et al. (2016). Employees who perceive clear individual, job-related, and career benefits from training are more motivated to engage in development activities and to channel their learning into improved performance. The result for perceived support for training (H3 supported) echoes findings by Ahmad and Bakar (2003), Park, Kang and Kim (2018), and Bartlett (2001), confirming that managerial and organisational support for training

is a key driver of employee performance in hospitality settings.

The significant positive relationships between all three training dimensions and service innovation performance (H4-H6 supported) are consistent with Chang et al. (2011) and Chen (2017), who demonstrated that training practices stimulate innovative behaviour among frontline employees. These findings suggest that training does not merely reinforce existing skills but actively cultivates employees' capacity to think creatively and introduce service improvements, a capability that is increasingly important in Ghana's competitive hospitality market.

The mediation findings (H7-H9 supported) are theoretically significant, demonstrating that service innovation performance serves as a mechanism through which training investments are translated into performance outcomes. Partial mediation for access and benefits dimensions indicates that training influences performance both directly and indirectly, through the stimulation of innovative behaviours. Full mediation for the support dimension suggests that the performance-enhancing effects of training support are primarily channelled through employees' engagement in service innovation, rather than through direct skill application alone.

These findings make a distinctive contribution to the hospitality and human resource management literatures by establishing a training-innovation-performance chain in the Ghanaian context, a setting that has received limited empirical attention despite its growing economic significance. The study also extends SET and the AMO framework to the specific context of catering officer performance in sub-Saharan Africa, validating their applicability in a developing economy setting.



CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the impact of in-service training on catering officers' performance in Greater Accra, Ghana, with service innovation performance as a mediating variable. Using SEM with data from 284 frontline hospitality and catering employees, all nine hypothesised relationships received empirical support. The three dimensions of in-service training, namely perceived access, perceived benefits, and perceived support, were each positively associated with catering staff performance and with service innovation performance. Service innovation performance was found to partially mediate the relationships between perceived access and benefits of training and staff performance, while fully mediating the relationship between perceived support for training and staff performance.

These findings make a distinctive contribution to knowledge by establishing the mediating role of service innovation performance in the training-performance relationship within a sub-Saharan African hospitality context. This study extends previous research by examining this pathway in the under-researched Ghanaian hospitality context.

Practical Implications

The findings carry several important practical implications for managers and policymakers in Ghana's hospitality and catering sector. First, the positive relationship between training access, benefits, and support and employee performance underscores the need for systematic investment in structured in-service training programmes. Organisations should allocate dedicated budgets for training and ensure that all frontline employees, regardless of role or seniority, have equitable access to development opportunities.

Second, the mediating role of service innovation performance highlights the value of designing training programmes that explicitly incorporate innovation competencies, such as creative problem-solving, customer-centric thinking, and process improvement techniques. Rather than focusing exclusively on technical skills, training initiatives should cultivate employees' ability to generate and implement new service ideas.

Third, managers at all levels should actively signal their support for training and development through visible endorsement of training activities, provision of resources, and recognition of employees' learning achievements. As SET suggests, employees who perceive genuine organisational investment in their development are more likely to reciprocate through enhanced performance and innovation.

Finally, the performance of frontline employees should be regularly assessed through multiple methods, including customer surveys, peer evaluations, and supervisor appraisals, to provide the data needed for evidence-based training decisions.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences about the relationships between training, service innovation, and performance. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to establish causal order and examine how training effects evolve over time.

Second, the convenience sampling approach and the restriction of the sample to Greater Accra limit the generalisability of the findings to other regions of Ghana and to other sub-Saharan African contexts. Future studies should use probability sampling



methods and larger, more geographically diverse samples to enhance external validity.

Third, the study's reliance on self-reported data introduces potential common method bias, despite the discriminant validity results suggesting this is not a major concern in the current study. Future research could use multi-source data, incorporating supervisor or customer assessments of employee performance and innovation, to mitigate this limitation.

Fourth, the small magnitude of the indirect effects warrants attention. Future studies should explore whether alternative mediating mechanisms, such as organisational commitment, job satisfaction, or knowledge sharing, may provide stronger explanatory power in the training-performance relationship. The inclusion of additional boundary conditions, such as leadership style, organisational culture, or employee readiness for change, could also enrich theoretical understanding.

Finally, future research could adopt qualitative or mixed-methods approaches to provide deeper insights into the mechanisms through which training shapes service innovation and performance in the Ghanaian hospitality context.

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