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## **Strategic Analysis of Executive Competencies and Human Resource Development in the Kaliwatu Group, Batu Tourism City, East Java**

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### ***Abstract:***

*This research analyze the skills of staff and the human resource development strategy approaches at Kaliwatu Group, a top adventure tourism company in Bumiaji District, Batu, East Java. The study identifies employee knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSAs), especially concerning whitewater rafting protocols specified in the Indonesian National Work Competency Standards (SKKNI) No. 62/2009 and No. 60/2024. This study utilizes a qualitative approach that includes interviews, site observations, and competency evaluations. Although most executive team members possess solid knowledge of operations, safety practices, and customer service, there are still gaps in advanced tourism management and regulation updates. The group's human resource strategy actively incorporates internal and external training, certification initiatives, and peer learning. Nevertheless, hiring tends to favour passion over formal qualifications or certifications, leading to inconsistencies in service quality. The results underscore the urgent need for ongoing, structured professional development to close existing competency voids, improve staff performance, and provide sustainable, high-quality tourism services. Suggestions involve enhancing training programs, aligning more closely with national criteria, expanding knowledge-sharing networks among local tourism experts, and collaborating with the local community.*

**Keywords:** *Competencies, Knowledge, Skill, Attitude, HR Strategy*

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## **1. Introduction**

The tourism industry plays a pivotal role in Indonesia's economic development, with East Java emerging as one of the most dynamic regions due to its diverse natural attractions and cultural heritage. In 2023, the province recorded more than 1,396 tourist destinations, reflecting rapid sectoral growth and heightened competition among tourism enterprises (Paving the way for future leaders in the hospitality industry, 2025). This expansion underscores the crucial role of human resources (HR) as a strategic asset in ensuring high service quality, operational safety, and customer satisfaction (Gannon et al., 2015; Madera et al., 2017). The effectiveness of tourism

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services heavily depends on employees possessing adequate knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSAs) to meet evolving industry demands (Bharwani & Talib, 2017; Kay & Russette, 2000).

To standardize tourism workforce quality, the Indonesian government has introduced comprehensive competency regulations. These include the *Indonesian National Work Competency Standards (SKKNI)* under Government Regulation No. 24 of 2023 and Law No. 10 of 2009, which mandate competency certification for tourism professionals. Specifically, SKKNI No. 62 of 2009 and Ministerial Decree No. 60 of 2024 outline required competencies for niche tourism segments such as whitewater rafting. These competencies encompass technical skills like rafting operations and emergency response, environmental stewardship, and interpersonal attributes such as teamwork and accountability. Additionally, the Indonesian Rafting Federation's *Model Occupational Skill Standard (MOSS)* serves as a benchmark for professional competency development in adventure tourism.

However, despite these regulations, there remain gaps between policy and practice. Many tourism organizations, including Kaliwatu Group in Batu City, East Java, face challenges in aligning their workforce capabilities with national standards. Observations and interviews with stakeholders reveal that hiring practices at Kaliwatu Group often prioritize enthusiasm and willingness over formal qualifications or training. Consequently, employees frequently lack essential competencies in safety protocols, environmental interpretation, and customer service delivery (Van der Wagen, 2006; Walsh & Linton, 2001). Google review analyses further highlight customer dissatisfaction, particularly related to poor documentation, neglected environmental considerations, and inconsistent service quality. These findings echo similar concerns in the broader hospitality and tourism literature, where competency deficits have been linked to negative service outcomes and increased employee turnover (DiPietro et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2022).

Research in hospitality management emphasizes the importance of structured HR development strategies to build sustainable competitive advantages. Strategic HR development integrates talent management, training, and leadership development to enhance organizational capabilities and performance (Garavan et al., 2016; Suleman et al., 2025). In the international hotel industry, aligning HR practices with service quality standards has been shown to improve both employee performance and customer satisfaction (Hinkin et al., 1997; Testa & Sipe, 2012). Recent studies also stress the need for adaptive competencies and employability skills in response to rapid changes in tourism markets (Ng et al., 2025; Johanson et al., 2011). Moreover, leadership plays a critical role in fostering a culture of continuous learning and innovation, especially in community-based tourism enterprises (Nguyen et al., 2021; Mai et al., 2021; Shum et al., 2018).

Despite a growing body of literature on HR practices in hospitality and tourism, research gaps remain, particularly concerning small and medium-sized tourism enterprises (SMTEs) in developing countries. Much of the existing research

focuses on large international hotel chains or urban hospitality contexts (Gannon et al., 2015; Madera et al., 2017), with limited attention to adventure tourism settings like whitewater rafting. Additionally, while studies have identified essential managerial and leadership competencies (Kalargyrou & Woods, 2011; Bharwani & Talib, 2017), few have explored how these competencies translate into practical workforce development strategies for rural, community-based tourism operations. This lack of contextualized research limits the ability of organizations like Kaliwatu Group to effectively implement competency-based HR frameworks.

This study addresses these gaps by examining the competencies of senior employees at Kaliwatu Group through the lens of KSAs. By assessing how current competencies align with SKKNI and MOSS standards, the research aims to identify strengths and weaknesses in workforce readiness. Furthermore, it explores strategies for building a robust HR development plan tailored to the unique challenges of adventure tourism. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the intersection of regulatory frameworks, local community empowerment, and competency-based HR strategy in a niche tourism sector. The findings are expected to contribute to theory by extending HR development models to new contexts and to practice by providing actionable insights for improving service quality and sustainability in Indonesia's tourism industry.

By linking national policy initiatives with organizational practices, this study not only supports Kaliwatu Group's growth but also aligns with broader goals of enhancing Indonesia's global tourism competitiveness while fostering socio-economic empowerment at the community level.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### **The Concept of Competence in Human Resource Management**

Competence is a fundamental characteristic of an individual that significantly influences long-term performance. Spencer and Spencer (1993, as cited in Bharwani & Talib, 2017) define competence as a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSA) that can be observed and measured through performance behaviors. This concept serves as a foundation for organizations to develop employees who can contribute effectively to business goals (Kalargyrou & Woods, 2011).

In the hospitality and tourism context, competencies go beyond technical skills to include interpersonal and customer service abilities. Testa and Sipe (2012) emphasize that service excellence depends heavily on employees' capacity to engage positively with guests and create memorable experiences. Therefore, comprehensive competency development should cover both hard skills (technical knowledge) and soft skills (communication, teamwork, and problem-solving) (Kay & Russette, 2000; Shum et al., 2018).

Drawing from previous research, competencies are often categorized into three main dimensions: Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes (KSA) (Hinkin et al., 1997; Van der

Wagen, 2006). These indicators provide a structured framework for evaluating and improving employee performance:

1. Knowledge  
Knowledge represents the theoretical understanding and cognitive foundation required to perform tasks effectively. In the context of rafting tourism, this includes familiarity with rafting techniques, environmental sustainability practices, and safety regulations (Kay & Russette, 2000).
2. Skills  
Skills refer to the ability to apply knowledge in real-life situations. This encompasses technical proficiency, such as equipment handling, emergency rescue techniques, and effective guest communication (Bharwani & Talib, 2017).
3. Attitudes  
Attitudes reflect the behaviors and values that employees exhibit while fulfilling their responsibilities. Positive attitudes such as accountability, teamwork, and concern for customer safety are crucial in adventure tourism settings (Kalargyrou & Woods, 2011; Johanson et al., 2011).

The KSA framework plays an essential role in designing training programs, performance evaluations, and strategic HR initiatives to foster professional growth (Madera et al., 2017; Garavan et al., 2016).

### **Strategic HR Development in the Tourism Sector**

Strategic Human Resource Development (SHRD) is vital for enhancing workforce competencies and aligning them with organizational objectives. Garavan et al. (2016) highlight that SHRD builds dynamic organizational capabilities through systematic training, career development, and succession planning. This approach enables businesses to adapt to market changes and maintain competitive advantage.

In tourism, well-structured HR strategies are directly linked to service quality and operational safety. Gannon et al. (2015) note that a clear HR framework helps organizations maintain high performance in competitive environments. Furthermore, the integration of green HR practices, as discussed by Suleman et al. (2025), supports sustainable tourism development by training employees to adopt eco-friendly and socially responsible practices.

Ng et al. (2025) further argue that fostering adaptability through employability skills is essential for preparing employees to navigate the rapidly evolving tourism landscape. This is particularly relevant for adventure tourism organizations, where adaptability is critical in responding to safety concerns, environmental challenges, and changing customer expectations.

### **3. Methodology**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach grounded in post-positivist philosophy, focusing on research in natural settings through triangulation techniques and inductive analysis. The researcher serves as the primary instrument,

conducting observations and semi-structured interviews with management, staff, and tourists to explore executive-level employee competencies and human resource (HR) development strategies within the Kaliwatu Group (office and rafting site) in Batu City, East Java, selected for its relevance to tourism service competency development. Primary data include interviews, KSA (Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes) tests, training records, and field observations, while secondary data consist of documents, journals, employee records, and relevant literature. Competency tests are conducted in alignment with SKKNI standards, with attitudes assessed using behavior rubrics. Quantitative data from competency tests and behavior observations are scored and converted into percentages using a five-level scale ranging from *Incompetent* to *Very Competent*. Documentation captures training records, test results, educational backgrounds, photographs, and recordings, while interviews are transcribed using a structured guide and analytical framework.

For qualitative data, the Miles and Huberman interactive model is applied, which involves data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Source triangulation cross-checks data from interviews, documents, and observations, while time triangulation is conducted at various times (e.g., mornings, afternoons, holidays) to ensure consistency and credibility. The research process consists of three stages: preparation (defining focus and research objectives), fieldwork (background study, data collection, and validity checks), and analysis and reporting (summarizing, interpreting, and compiling findings according to scientific standards).

#### **4. Empirical Findings/Results**

This research examines the skills of top-level staff at Kaliwatu Group, utilizing the KSA framework and SKKNI guidelines. Kep. 62/MEN/III/2009 and No. 60/2024. The study concentrates on specific competency units that consider the company's working environment and the basic river conditions, which do not require high-level technical expertise. Kaliwatu, as an educational adventure provider, has its guides using paddles while tourists do not, highlighting cultural and environmental insights that correspond with the company's emphasis on educational tourism.

##### **Compliance of Employee Knowledge with the Whitewater Rafting Guiding Competency Standards Listed in the SKKNI**

The evaluation results indicate that the executive personnel at Kaliwatu Group have a firm grasp of knowledge pertinent to their functions. Many fully comprehend operational processes, safety regulations, and service guidelines necessary for whitewater rafting tourism. This is reflected in the competency test results, which show that most participants achieved the benchmarks set by SKKNI No. 62/2009 and No. 60/2024.

The following are quotes from the Competency Standards for Whitewater Rafting Tour Guides, especially regarding the KSA.

“At Kaliwatu, we use SKKNI No. 60 and No. 62 as competency references. Most team members are junior high school graduates, but we provide training if they are willing to learn. Once proficient, they are enrolled in BNSP-certified training. Mr. Agus is an assessor in East Java through LSP Paresta (Pariwisata Semesta Nusantara), which operates under Kaliwatu. Most guides are SKKNI-certified and hold BNSP certificates. However, East Java's annual certification quota is 50, prioritizing practicing but uncertified guides. In Batu City, only five guides can be certified annually; more than that requires coordination with the Culture and Tourism Office or the relevant LSP. Mr. Agus will send proof of certification.” (AJW, interview, July 5) (2024)

“Yes, we follow the SKKNI (Indonesian National Rafting Standards) as the competency benchmark. Most of our guides have no prior experience or foundational knowledge, and their education is typically only up to junior high school. However, as long as they can swim and are willing to learn, they are eligible to become guides. To enhance their competencies, we provide internal training, and if they have around two years of experience, we enroll them in BNSP-certified training. We also occasionally receive training from associations, such as the Indonesian Rafting Federation (FAJI) and the Rafting Industry Association (AIR), usually in the form of technical guidance and certification.” (AM, February 16) (2025)

“For rafting, we use the National Standard (SKKNI) No. 60 as our reference. However, the conditions differ, as the water, rivers, and treatment methods differ. So, we have to be able to work around this.” (W, May 17) (2025)

In addition to their formal education, the employees showed awareness of broader topics such as risk assessment, environmental responsibility, and consumer behavior. Conversations with them indicated that much of this knowledge was acquired through hands-on experience, in-house training, and certification programs. Combining academic learning and real-world experience significantly strengthens their ability to efficiently lead and manage rafting activities.

**Table 1. Description of Competency Test Results Data from The Perspective of Tour Guide Employees Based On SKKNI No. 62 Of 2009**

UK	Indicator	Answer		Percentage
		Correct	Wrong	%
UK1	Knowledge Based on SKKNI No. 62, unit code PAR.AJ.01.001.01	12	0	100%
UK2	Knowledge Based on SKKNI No. 62, unit code PAR.AJ.01.002.01	12	0	100%
UK3	Knowledge Based on SKKNI No. 62, unit code PAR.AJ.01.003.01	12	0	100%
UK4	Knowledge Based on SKKNI No. 62, unit code PAR.AJ.01.004.01	12	0	100%
UK5	Knowledge based on SKKNI No. 62, unit code by PAR.AJ.02.001.01	12	0	100%

UK6	Knowledge based on SKKNI No. 62, unit code by PAR.AJ.02.002.01	12	0	100%
UK7	Knowledge based on SKKNI No. 62, unit code by PAR.AJ.02.003.01	12	0	100%
UK8	Knowledge based on SKKNI No. 62, unit code by PAR.AJ.02.004.01	12	0	100%
UK9	Knowledge based on SKKNI No. 62, unit code by PAR.AJ.02.005.01	2	10	16.67%
UK10	Knowledge based on SKKNI No. 62, unit code by PAR.AJ.02.006.01	12	0	100%
UK11	Knowledge based on SKKNI No. 62, unit code by PAR.AJ.02.007.01	12	0	100%
UK12	Knowledge based on SKKNI No. 62, unit code by PAR.AJ.02.008.01	12	0	100%
UK13	Knowledge based on SKKNI No. 62, unit code by PAR.AJ.02.009.01	12	0	100%
UK14	Knowledge based on SKKNI No. 62, unit code by PAR.AJ.02.010.01	12	0	100%
UK15	Knowledge based on SKKNI No. 62, unit code by PAR.AJ.02.010.01	11	1	91.67%
UK16	Knowledge based on SKKNI No. 62, unit code by PAR.AJ.03.001.01	12	0	100%
UK17	Knowledge based on SKKNI No. 62, unit code by PAR.AJ.03.002.01	10	2	83.33%
UK18	Knowledge based on SKKNI No. 62, unit code by PAR.AJ.03.006.01	12	0	100%
UK19	Knowledge based on SKKNI No. 62, unit code by PAR.AJ.03.007.01	12	0	100%
UK20	Knowledge based on SKKNI No. 62, unit code by PAR.AJ.03.008.01	12	0	100%
UK21	Knowledge based on SKKNI No. 62, unit code by PAR.AJ.02.009.01	12	0	100%

Source: Processed by the author (2024)

**Table 2. Description of Competency Test Results Data from The Perspective of Tour Guide Employees Based On SKKNI No. 60 Of 2024**

UK1	Knowledge Based on SKKNI No. 60, unit code R.93ARJ41.018.1	11	1	91.67%
UK2	Knowledge Based on SKKNI No. 60, unit code R.93ARJ41.047.1	12	0	100%
UK3	Knowledge Based on SKKNI No. 60, unit code R.93ARJ41.047.1	12	0	100%
UK4	Knowledge Based on SKKNI, unit code R.93ARJ41.071.1	1	11	8.33%

Source: Processed by the author (2024)

Nevertheless, a few knowledge gaps were identified, particularly concerning updated regulations and advanced strategies in tourism management. These deficiencies highlight the importance of ongoing learning opportunities, such as refresher courses

or exposure to national and international best practices, to maintain current knowledge and adapt to changing industry standards.

Therefore, the author asks whether there are any training programs designed to improve employees' knowledge, and if so, can they be described?

“Yes, of course we do. We usually hold PKMP, internal IP training, or IT in-house training. We do this every year, and next year it will be held in March during Ramadan. Alternatively, we usually allow employees to explore their knowledge.” (AJW, interview, July 5) (2024)

“We usually hold our training, like IP or IT, once a year—planned for March and lasting four full days. You are welcome to visit. Sometimes, we also share knowledge among fellow guides. Employees can join multiple trainings a year; if they find one (e.g., via Instagram) and inform management, the company fully funds it. The company supports unrestricted employee development, but each must submit at least one yearly certificate—provincial, BNSP, or regional.” (AM February 16) (2025)

"Yes, there is, ma'am. We usually take part in IP or IT every year. We usually share our knowledge with fellow guides in Batu or other groups outside Kaliwatu to increase our knowledge. Because we have our association for guides." (W, May 17) (2025)

The next question is, have you ever received training related to your work knowledge?

"Yes, our friends are given training related to whitewater rafting. We provide it every year for internal training. There, we dissect the National Competency Standards (SKKNI) together. Moreover, we participate in the National Standardization Agency (BNSP)." (AJW/AM/W February, May) (2025)

The quote above indicates that the guides received training or workshops related to whitewater rafting. Despite their limited formal education, they explained that having the knowledge and certification enabled them to understand their duties and gain insight into their personal development through rafting activities and BNSP certification. Other executive-level employees learned independently or received no specific qualifications or standards from their superiors.

### **Compliance of employee skills with the White Water Rafting Guiding Competency Standards stated in the SKKNI**

According to the applied competency units from SKKNI No. 62/2009 and No. 60/2024, executives reveal their competence in managing rafting tours designed for educational purposes. As tourists do not paddle, it falls to the guides to maintain complete control of the raft, necessitating proficiency in navigation, route selection, and rapid problem-solving in real-time.



**Table 3. Kaliwatu Employee Skills Table Based on SKKNI No. Kep. 62/MEN/III 2009**

<b>Skill</b>	<b>Based on SKKNI No. Kep. 62/MEN/III 2009</b>	<b>Training</b>
1	Skills Based on SKKNI No. 62 of 2009, unit code PAR.AJ.02.001.01	Of the 12 tour guides, 4 have a high school/vocational education outside tourism, and 8 have a junior high/Islamic junior high education. All 12 received BNSP training. Their active years include 4 in 2010, 6 in 2019, 5 in 2020, and 5 in 2024. All hold licenses from AIR, the Indonesian River Boarding Association, and the Batu River Boarding Community. The Operational Manager has a junior high school education.
2	Skills Based on SKKNI No. 62 of 2009, unit code PAR.AJ.02.002.01	Twelve employees received BNSP training. Four of them were active in 2010, 6 in 2019, 5 in 2020, and 5 in 2024. All 12 hold licenses from the AIR (Indonesian Rafting Association), the Indonesian River Boarding Association, and the Batu River Boarding Community.
3	Skills Based on SKKNI No. 62 of 2009, unit code PAR.AJ.02.003.01	Twelve employees received BNSP training. active in 2010, there were four people, 2019, 6 people, 2020, 5 people, 2024, 5 people, 12 people have an AIR License (Indonesian Rafting Association), 12 people have an Indonesian River Boarding Association license, Batu River Boarding Community
4	Skills Based on SKKNI No. 62 of 2009, unit code PAR.AJ.02.004.01	Twelve employees received BNSP training. active in 2010, there were four people, 2019, 6 people, 2020, 5 people, 2024, 5 people, 12 people have an AIR License (Indonesian Rafting Association), 12 people have an Indonesian River Boarding Association license, Batu River Boarding Community
5	Skills Based on SKKNI No. 62 of 2009, unit code PAR.AJ.02.006.01	Twelve employees received BNSP training. In 2010, there were four people; in 2019, 6 people; in 2020, 5 people; in 2024, 5 people, 12 people were 12 people. 12 people have an Indonesian riverboarding association license, Batu River Boarding Community
6	Skills Based on SKKNI No. 62 of 2009, unit code PAR.AJ. PAR.AJ.02.007.01	Twelve employees received BNSP training, four active in 2010, 6 in 2019, 5 in 2020, and 5 in 2024. 12 people have AIR (Indonesian Rafting Association) licenses, 12 people have Indonesian River Boarding Association

		licenses, and Batu River Boarding Community licenses
7	Skills Based on SKKNI No. 62 of 2009, unit code PAR.AJ.02.008.01	Twelve employees received BNSP training, four active in 2010, 6 in 2019, 5 in 2020, and 5 in 2024. 1 person has a First Aid/P3K certificate and a Swift Water Rescue certificate
8	Skills Based on SKKNI No. 62 of 2009, unit code PAR.AJ.03.007.01	Twelve employees received BNSP training: 4 active people in 2010, 6 people in 2019, 5 people in 2020, and 5 people in 2024. 12 people have AIR (Indonesian Rafting Association) licenses, 12 people have Indonesian River Boarding Association licenses, and the Batu River Boarding Community
9	Skills Based on SKKNI No. 62 of 2009, unit code PAR.AJ.03.009.01	Twelve employees received BNSP training, four active people in 2010, 6 in 2019, 5 in 2020, 5 people in 2024. 12 people have AIR (Indonesian Rafting Association) licenses, 12 people have Indonesian River Boarding Association licenses, and the Batu River Boarding Community
10	Skills Based on SKKNI No. 62 of 2009, unit code PAR.AJ.01.002.01	Twelve employees received BNSP training: four active people in 2010, 6 in 2019, 5 in 2020, and 5 in 2024. 12 people have AIR (Indonesian Rafting Association) licenses, 12 people have Indonesian River Boarding Association licenses, and the Batu River Boarding Community

Source: Kaliwatu 2024 Workforce Form

**Table 4. Kaliwatu Employee Skills Table Based on SKKNI No. Kep. 60 of 2024**

Skill	Based on SKKNI No. Decree 60 of 2024	External
1	Skills Based on SKKNI No. 60 of 2024, unit code R.93ARJ.41.041.2	Twelve employees received BNSP training; there were four active people in 2010, 6 in 2019, 5 in 2020, and 5 in 2024. 12 people have AIR (Indonesian Rafting Association) licenses, 12 people have Indonesian River Boarding Association licenses, and the Batu River Boarding Community
2	Skills Based on SKKNI No. 60 2024, unit code R.93.ARJ.41.072.1	Twelve employees received BNSP training, four active people in 2010, 6 in 2019, 5 in 2020, 5 people in 2024. 12 people have AIR (Indonesian Rafting Association) licenses, 12 people have Indonesian River Boarding Association licenses, and the Batu River Boarding Community

Source: Kaliwatu 2024 Workforce Form

Beyond their technical and operational skills, the executives also showcase guest engagement, communication, and conflict resolution abilities. These interpersonal skills are vital for creating a positive tourism experience and are consistently observable during evaluations and discussions.

Based on the researcher's analysis, the skills of executive-level employees at Kaliwatu Group generally meet the National Competency Standards (SKKNI). However, their certification renewals have been inconsistent. It aligns with the author's interviews with management regarding the importance of skills for executive-level employees, particularly in the rafting division.

"Special skills, fundamental rowing techniques, and most importantly, safety and hospitality" (AJW, interview, July 5) (2024)

"Special skills for guides include rowing techniques, hospitality, because what we sell is a service, but it is risky, and rescue techniques." (AM February 16) (2025)

"Usually, the first thing you have to do is master the basic paddling techniques, then you have to be able to read the currents. You will know if it is on the river here, but you might not know the currents if you are sent to another place. Second, you have to be good at public speaking, because tourists usually chat with you, so you must communicate. Then you have to be good at paddling because the river here has a high risk level because of the rocks, and here only the guide holds the paddle, while the tourists do not. You have to be good at evacuations too, and we are asked to be active on social media" (W May 17) (Year 2025)

The author then asked whether any skills training programs have been implemented within the company.

"Yes, we provide IP training for tour guides, which covers public speaking and hospitality. The training we provide includes monthly routines on liplop (how to drop a boat), how to help victims, disaster simulations, and rowing techniques. For those certified, we have the BNSP (National Agency for Standardization), and if they wish to participate in other training, they are free and will be funded by the company." (AJW, interview, July 5) (2024)

"For guides, we provide internal IP and BNSP-certified training if desired. Mr. Roo is the head of AIR, and there are two assessors in East Java, both in Kaliwatu, Mr. Angga and I. So, we usually make a training plan, namely, dissecting the SKKNI so that friends are ready to take the competency test. Sometimes, the training content is by FAJI or something, but FAJI is a training reference for athletes that only includes rowing techniques. We use AIR because they are in the rafting industry; it is from AIR if trouble occurs. We focus more on internal training." (AM February 16) (Year 2025)

"Yes, for the rating team itself, we are given IP training if we want every year, and usually it will dissect the SKKNI and be related to rowing and safety.

Moreover, we usually train once a month if the policy is from the office, but it is uncertain because of the presence of tourists. The training is private, so it is only a simulation training on the river. Usually, simulations are so that they can remember; usually, what is done is related to liplop/how to drop the boat, throw the rope, help victims, and disaster simulations. Directly in the water, directly causing problems in the river. " (W May 17) (Year 2025)

The skill enhancement of employees is primarily facilitated by internal training, mentoring, and practical exposure. Although their technical requirements for rafting are moderate due to the river's low difficulty, their service-oriented and managerial skills are well-developed and fit seamlessly within the company's educational tourism framework. Nonetheless, ongoing enhancement is essential. As tourism dynamics shift, executives must improve their digital communication capabilities, sustainable tourism practices, and service innovation to uphold high standards and adapt to future needs. They should also ensure consistent delivery of BNSP training, even though ongoing training has been implemented.

Based on the quote above, it can be concluded that management and guides agree that knowledge of rowing skills must be linked. Tour guides must possess knowledge and skills consistent with the National Standard of Education (SKKNI) and other licenses. Furthermore, management explained that if employees wish to develop their skills through external training, this is permitted and will be funded by the company.

### **Employee Behavior Towards Tourists and Co-workers by the Whitewater Rafting Guiding Competency Standards Listed in the SKKNI**

Qualitative information regarding the actions of staff at Kaliwatu Group was obtained through participant observation and discussions with management, employees, and visitors. These observations and conversations indicated that employee conduct largely conformed to the SKKNI competency standards, especially in teamwork, leadership, communication, and customer service. Nevertheless, the organization has not yet established formal Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), though management indicated its intention to do so. Researchers created performance assessments derived from pertinent competency units outlined in SKKNI No. 62/2009 and No. 60/2024 to evaluate employee behavior. These assessments showed that while numerous employees displayed strong customer service and operational leadership capabilities, some exhibited only adequate or subpar performance in specific domains, particularly concerning time management and adherence to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

**Table 5. Behavior Based On SKKNI No. 62 Of 2009 and SKKNI No. 60 of 2024**

<b>Attitude Competence</b>	<b>Unit Code</b>	<b>Performance Aspects</b>	<b>Real Conditions in the Field</b>
Self-confidence	R.93ARJ41.041.2	1. Be confident	Rafting division
	R.93ARJ41.071.1	2. Compliance	1. 7 people got Excellent points; 5 people got good points
	R.93ARJ41.041.2	3. Efficiency	

			2. 12 people got excellent points
			3. 8 people got Excellent points; 4 people got good points
Leadership (Leadership)	PAR.AJ.01.002.01	1. Initiative	Rafting division 1. 5 people got Excellent points; 7 people got good points
Willingness and Ability to Work Together (Team Work)	PAR.AJ.01.001.01 PAR.AJ.01.001.01 PAR.AJ.02.003.01	1. Cooperation 2. Improvement 3. Target achievement	Rafting division 1. 5 people got Excellent points; 7 people got good points 2. 1 person got excellent points, six people got good points, and five people got enough points 3. People got Excellent points, two people got good points, five people got enough points
Communication Skills	R.93.ARJ.41.071.1 PAR.AJ.02.001.01 PAR.AJ.02.001.01	1. Achievements 2. Customer-oriented. 3. Permission during Working Hours	Rafting division 1. 4 people got Excellent points, three people got good points, and five people got enough points 2. 5 people got excellent points; 7 people got good points 3. One person gets Excellent points, five people get good points, two get bad points, and four get horrible points.
Responsibility for tasks and work	PAR.AJ.02.003.1 PAR.AJ.02.003.1 R93.ARJ.41.071.1 PAR.AJ.02.003.1 PAR.AJ.01.003.01	1. Job Mastery 2. Responsibility 3. Productivity 4. On time 5. 5. Work time appreciation	Rafting division 1. 10 people got excellent points; 2 people got good points 2. 10 people got Excellent points, one person got good points, one person got fair points 3. Eleven people got points. Horrible, one person got excellent.

			4. 11 people got Excellent points; 1 person got good points
			5. 5. Five people got very good points, one got good points, two got bad points, and four got very bad points.
Interpersonal Relationships	PAR.AJ.02.004.01 R.93ARJ41.018.1	1. Behavior 2. Empathy	Rafting division 1. 9 people got Excellent points, two people got good points, and one person got enough points 2. 12 people got Excellent points

Source: Processed by researchers. Reference table for the Kaliwatu Group Employee Performance Assessment form.

In line with interviews with management, employees, and tourists, the author asked whether there were any initiatives or programs to improve employees' positive attitudes in providing service, such as soft skills training. The following is the management's response:

"For soft skills training, we have created an IP/IT program that includes public speaking, teamwork, and hospitality. To be competent, we do not just need skills; we also need knowledge of how the game works. Most importantly, we must have a strong mentality and a never-give-up attitude. Attitude is key; our attitude determines how we face challenges and collaborate with others. We can be technically proficient, but if our attitude is not good enough, for example, we are lazy or cannot work in a team, the results will be chaotic. So, we also provide soft skills training so that our friends can be competent at work, because all these elements are complete: skills, knowledge, attitude." (AJW, interview, July 5) (2024)

"We are focusing more on IP for internal training, including public speaking, how to communicate with customers, and what to do if there is a problem with a customer, so there is a standard. Moreover, we will report it to AIR if there is trouble, because they focus on the industrial sector." (AM, February 16) (2025)

"We were given IP training" (W May 17) (Year 2025)

Based on the quote above, the management and guides agreed that their attitude was good. Tour guides must have an attitude that aligns with the National Competency Standards (SKKNI) and possess other service skills. Furthermore, management explained that they had received IP training there, including internal training on public speaking, teamwork, leadership, and other soft skills. However, what is important to emphasize is their attitude towards environmental responsibility, which was very low.

## **Strategies that Management Should Implement to Improve Employee Competence**

Kaliwatu Group's primary approach to enhancing employee skills integrates a blend of internal training, technical support, and outside certifications, including BNSP and International Rafting Federation programs. Staff members engage in a phased process that begins with fundamental skills and advances through practical experience before they are permitted to guide guests. Given the business's service-oriented focus, both hospitality and public speaking are highlighted. Management promotes personal growth by financing all training expenses, whether internal or external, and advocates for interdepartmental training to expand employee capabilities.

The first question below asks about the primary strategy implemented by management to improve employee competency.

"For us, training is a lifelong process. In the rafting team, they learn the basic competencies for the first three months. They practice, and after about nine months, they have sufficient competency. Their competency is good, and we allow them to handle the boat. It is called rescue, going to the river but not carrying guests." (AJW, interview, July 5) (2024)

"Here, our strategy for improving employee competency in rafting and outbound activities focuses more on technical guidance and certification. They also receive internal training when they become rafting or outbound guides. For rafting or outbound guide certification, the hospitality aspect needs to be improved if we are talking about tourism. Speaking of hospitality, we are in the service sector. We always update you on how they work in these services and their public speaking skills. We have IP training, and everything is included in outbound activities. Rafting is mandatory, so there are standards from AIR." (AM, February 16) (2025)

"We are given training for certification from BNSP and internal IP training on strategies to develop it" (W May 17) (2025)

What is the biggest challenge in human resource development?

"We recruit and develop the local community, so what is the purpose when they enter through a series of interviews? Do you want to go through PKMP (Peningkatan Kualitas Motivasi dan Prestasi), one of our programs that we developed in the community, so we appoint friends to work and give them a new mindset. We offer them the opportunity to join, then classify them according to their talents and interests, and where they want to go. Several areas are served like this, such as the office, some are in training activities, and white water rafting. Then we give them the basics, and after that, the majors. Then they process it to increase their competence, from their daily activities mixing with their seniors, taught directly in the field about SOPs, and how the company system works. Usually, we hold training once a year for PKMP. If we talk about the pros and cons, yes, we get a team whose competence is very far from expectations, but the homework is that we must

recruit them to reach that competence. The level of education also affects the way of thinking, mentality, mindset, and so on. We never know dismissal, unless it is related to the law. "Because they were initially hired because they wanted to learn. Moreover, regarding the results, we have never conducted an evaluation to determine whether they meet the SKKNI (National Skills Standards) or not." (AJW, interview, July 5) (2024)

"Our biggest challenge is that our employees are mostly from the village, yes, they are also village children, sorry, we prefer academicians, who just want to learn, regardless of whether they graduated or have a background or not, as long as they want to learn. However, we are happy to recruit academicians because when we teach them, they quickly grasp it. They always accept any input because they do not have a background and intend to learn. If we teach PA friends who have backgrounds, it is more difficult because they understand the material, but they have difficulty in the field. However, there is no evaluation of achieving the goals." (AM February 16) (Year 2025)

"Because we are village kids here, each of our friends has their chores at home, so their discipline is a challenge, because they often have work outside." (W, May 17) (Year 2025)

The most significant obstacle in human resources development is attracting and training residents who frequently possess limited educational qualifications and external commitments. The company appreciates its eagerness to learn and seldom lets anyone go, but workers often need substantial guidance to achieve the desired performance levels. Issues with discipline also arise, as there are instances where some staff prioritize personal matters over their job responsibilities. Nevertheless, management is dedicated to nurturing talent internally, relying on routine practice and informal learning among peers.

Based on the answers above, management stated that they face challenges in employee development, but they implement their development plans. The final answer also stated that because this relates to the National Competency Standards (SKKNI), an evaluation is necessary to obtain information on achieving employee goals or the standard criteria set by the SKKNI.



## 5. Discussion

The findings indicate that the expertise of Kaliwatu Group's whitewater rafting instructors is generally aligned with the National Competency Standards (SKKNI), particularly in areas emphasizing knowledge such as service delivery, safety protocols, communication, and emergency procedures. This is evidenced by the strong performance across 20 out of 21 competency units under SKKNI No. 62 of 2009, with scores ranging between 80–100%. These results demonstrate a solid theoretical foundation and technical understanding among instructors, which is consistent with the view that structured competency frameworks enhance service quality in hospitality and tourism sectors (Bharwani & Talib, 2017; Testa & Sipe, 2012). However, the low score (16%) in Unit 9, related to equipment knowledge and maintenance, highlights a critical gap. This finding echoes Van der Wagen (2006), who noted that inconsistent vocational training in service industries often leads to uneven competencies across operational areas. Similarly, under SKKNI No. 60 of 2024, while most units performed well, Unit 4, which addresses social and environmental responsibility, showed weak outcomes. This suggests a lack of awareness and training in corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability practices, an area increasingly recognized as essential in contemporary tourism management (Suleman et al., 2025; Gannon et al., 2015). As Madera et al. (2017) emphasize, strategic human resource management must integrate sustainability-driven competencies to build long-term organizational resilience.

In terms of skills, the instructors' practical abilities were assessed as only "Quite Appropriate" (50%), indicating room for significant improvement. Despite many guides holding certifications from LSP and other accrediting bodies, a substantial number have not updated their credentials. Moreover, internal training programs lack clear performance measurement tools, such as key performance indicators (KPIs) or systematic record-keeping. This aligns with findings by Johanson et al. (2011) and Kalargyrou and Woods (2011), who argue that without measurable competency benchmarks, skill development remains fragmented and difficult to track. Practical application of knowledge, particularly in CSR implementation and documentation, remains inconsistent. This is concerning, as effective CSR practices are directly linked to organizational reputation and guest satisfaction (Suleman et al., 2025). Furthermore, gaps were identified in English communication skills and professional behavior, especially in administrative tasks, which are vital for enhancing service quality and competitiveness in the tourism sector (Kay & Russette, 2000; Nguyen et al., 2022).

From an attitudinal perspective, the rafting guides demonstrated positive attributes such as confidence, leadership, collaboration, and empathy. These traits align with core hospitality leadership competencies highlighted by Shum et al. (2018) and Mai et al. (2021). However, deficiencies were observed in areas such as problem-solving under pressure, punctuality, and environmental awareness, indicating the need for targeted soft skills training. Walsh and Linton (2001) note that historical trends in hospitality training often underemphasize soft skill development, yet these skills are

increasingly critical for service excellence and guest experience. Although teamwork and interpersonal relationships were strong, there were weaknesses in time management and high-pressure communication, both essential for delivering seamless adventure tourism experiences (Ng et al., 2025). Enhancing these competencies is particularly important in high-risk activities like whitewater rafting, where quick decision-making and clear communication can directly affect guest safety and satisfaction (DiPietro et al., 2020).

To address these gaps, Kaliwatu Group currently utilizes a blended training approach, combining internal programs such as *Involving Performance* with external training accredited by BNSP. While this demonstrates managerial commitment to staff development, challenges persist in maintaining updated records, bridging educational disparities, and establishing systematic evaluation processes. According to Garavan et al. (2016), organizations must embed strategic human resource development practices to foster dynamic capabilities and continuous improvement. Implementing a formal evaluation framework aligned with SKKNI standards, integrating both technical and soft skills, and ensuring that training documentation is regularly updated would enhance accountability and learning outcomes. This approach also resonates with Bharwani and Talib's (2017) competency framework, which underscores the interconnectedness of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in driving overall service performance. Ultimately, closing these competency gaps will not only improve employee performance but also strengthen Kaliwatu Group's market position in the competitive tourism and adventure sector, supporting both sustainability and long-term organizational growth.

## 6. Conclusions

In conclusion, the competency profile of Kaliwatu Group's rafting guides shows a strong foundation in knowledge, particularly in safety, service, and emergency procedures, as evidenced by high scores in 20 out of 21 SKKNI units. However, there remain significant gaps in equipment maintenance knowledge (UK 9), basic English communication (UK 17), and environmental and social responsibility (UK 4). While their skills are adequate for operational needs, they are hindered by outdated certifications, a lack of systematic performance assessments, and insufficient documentation. Furthermore, although attitudes such as leadership and teamwork are strong, weaknesses in punctuality, problem-solving under stress, and environmental awareness continue to affect service quality. These findings indicate that the current training approach, while comprehensive, is not fully aligned with SKKNI requirements, particularly in bridging technical and soft skills development.

Future research should focus on developing a structured competency framework that integrates both technical proficiency and soft skills training, with clear performance indicators and continuous evaluation mechanisms. Longitudinal studies could examine the long-term impact of SKKNI-aligned training programs on employee performance, service quality, and organizational growth. Additionally, comparative studies with other adventure tourism organizations, both domestically and

internationally, could provide insights into best practices for sustainable workforce development. Exploring the role of digital tools, such as e-learning platforms and data-driven performance tracking, would also be valuable in modernizing training and documentation processes. This would ensure that Kaliwatu Group not only addresses current competency gaps but also builds adaptive capabilities to meet the evolving demands of the tourism and adventure sports industry.

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