

## Formulating Human Resource Management Strategies Using a Hybrid SOAR–AHP Approach in MSMEs

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### Abstract

This study aims to formulate human resource management (HRM) strategies for a culinary MSME in Kediri using a hybrid SOAR–AHP approach. Rapid business growth is often not accompanied by optimal HR management, leading to issues in performance consistency and employee discipline. This research employs a mixed-method approach with an exploratory sequential design, utilizing interviews, observations, and quantitative analysis through the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP). The SOAR analysis reveals that key strengths lie in owner involvement and the existence of standard operating procedures (SOP), while the main challenges relate to consistency in implementation and employee discipline. The AHP results indicate that strengths and results are the highest priority criteria. The main strategies focus on strengthening SOP implementation, improving discipline through active owner supervision, and enhancing work productivity. This study demonstrates that the integration of SOAR–AHP provides more structured, measurable, and applicable HRM strategies to support MSME sustainability.

### Keywords

AHP; Human Resource Management; Human Resource Strategy; MSMEs; SOAR



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## INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) represent one of the main pillars of regional economies, playing a significant role in job creation, increasing community income, and driving local economic growth (Irwanto & Ningtyas, 2025; Kustanto, 2022; Muttaqim & Dev, 2025). In the culinary sector, MSMEs have shown highly dynamic development in line with changing consumer preferences and the increasing use of social media as a promotional tool (Rosari, 2025). Rapid business growth is often considered an indicator of successful business strategies; however, it

simultaneously presents new challenges in organizational management, particularly in the area of human resource management (HRM) (Baviga et al., 2023).

In the context of growing MSMEs, human resource management can no longer be carried out informally or merely based on habitual practices. Effective HRM requires a structured, dynamic, and systematically designed management framework (Hasan et al., 2023). The increasing number of employees, more complex task distribution, and the demand for consistent service quality necessitate a more strategic and structured management system. Without an appropriate HRM strategy, business growth may lead to various internal issues, such as operational inefficiency, declining work discipline, and inconsistent performance (Herliyani et al., 2024). Therefore, developing HRM strategies becomes a crucial aspect in supporting sustainability and enhancing the competitiveness of MSMEs in an increasingly competitive environment.

Employee skills development is a major focus in facing global dynamics in this modern era (Nuzula & Dewani, 2024). The development of MSMEs in Kediri City reflects this phenomenon. According to JatimNow, the number of MSMEs reached approximately 22,000 units by the end of 2025, with significant growth in the culinary sector (Dedy, 2025). One example of a rapidly expanding MSME is Sego Sambel Mang Dodo, which within six months grew from a single outlet to two outlets, employing around 15 workers. This rapid growth has increased the complexity of HRM, making the implementation of effective management systems essential to ensure operational sustainability (Zaman et al., 2022).

Sego Sambel Mang Dodo, which specializes in chili-based traditional dishes, has attracted customers through its simple menu and distinctive taste. Observations indicate significant business growth, both in terms of customer numbers and business expansion. The enterprise has also begun to implement basic managerial practices, such as task division, shift-based working hours, and operational procedures as work guidelines. This condition indicates a transition phase from a small-scale business toward a more structured organization, requiring stronger and more strategic HRM practices.

However, interviews with the business owner reveal that HRM implementation still faces several challenges. Although standard operating procedures (SOPs), shift systems, monthly evaluations, and warning mechanisms are already in place, consistency in enforcing discipline and leadership objectivity remain problematic. The owner acknowledged psychological barriers in delivering firm reprimands, resulting in a gap between formal systems (SOPs) and actual

managerial practices. From a strategic management perspective, such inconsistencies can negatively affect operational effectiveness and business sustainability.

The HRM literature emphasizes that human resources are a key source of competitive advantage. The Resource-Based View proposed by Jay Barney highlights that internal resources, including human resources, are critical determinants of long-term competitiveness (Yulia et al., 2026). Therefore, ineffective HRM practices may hinder business growth, even when business strategies are well implemented.

On the other hand, commonly used strategic analysis approaches tend to be descriptive and focus primarily on mapping organizational conditions, thus lacking a measurable basis for determining strategic priorities. This limitation indicates the need for a more comprehensive and systematic approach that can: (1) identify HR strategic factors holistically, (2) provide objective priority weighting, and (3) generate more applicable and implementable strategic models.

To address this gap, this study integrates the SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) framework with the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) developed by Thomas L. Saaty. This hybrid approach enables the identification of strategic factors based on strengths and aspirations while simultaneously determining strategy priorities quantitatively through pairwise comparison and consistency testing. Thus, this study not only describes the HRM condition of Sego Sambel Mang Dodo but also formulates a SOAR–AHP-based HRM strategy model that can serve as a reference for the sustainable development of culinary MSMEs.

## **METHODS**

This study employs a mixed-method approach with an exploratory sequential design, beginning with qualitative analysis to identify strategic factors in human resource management (HRM), followed by quantitative analysis to determine strategy priorities (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Migiro & Magangi, 2011). The research was conducted in a culinary MSME in Kediri City, namely Sego Sambel Mang Dodo, which has experienced rapid business growth and an increase in the number of employees. The data used consist of both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with the business owner and direct observation of operational activities, while secondary data were obtained from internal documents and relevant literature.

Data analysis was carried out using the SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) framework to identify HRM strategic factors based on the internal and external conditions of the business. According to Stavros and Hinrichs (2021), SOAR is a positive-oriented strategic approach that emphasizes

communication, collaboration, and commitment among stakeholders in strategy formulation.

The identified factors were then structured into a decision hierarchy consisting of objectives, criteria, and sub-criteria, and analyzed using the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) through pairwise comparison techniques. The evaluation was conducted by the business owner as the primary decision-maker using a questionnaire based on a 1–9 preference scale. The assessment results were organized into pairwise comparison matrices, followed by matrix normalization and eigenvector calculations to obtain the priority weights of each factor. Furthermore, the maximum eigenvalue ( $\lambda_{max}$ ) was calculated to measure the consistency level, which was then used to determine the Consistency Index (CI) and Consistency Ratio (CR). The assessment was considered consistent if the CR value was  $\leq 0.1$ . The final output consists of global priority weights derived from the synthesis of criteria and sub-criteria weights, which serve as the basis for formulating the most prioritized and applicable HRM strategies in accordance with the business conditions.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Sego Sambel Mang Dodo is a culinary MSME in Kediri City that has experienced rapid growth within a relatively short period, as indicated by business expansion and an increase in the number of employees to approximately 15 workers. In its operations, the business has implemented several basic human resource management (HRM) practices, including shift scheduling, the development of standard operating procedures (SOPs), performance evaluations, and the application of sanctions in the form of warning letters.

However, the implementation of these systems has not been fully optimal, particularly in terms of consistency in rule enforcement and employee discipline. This condition is influenced by the close, family-like working relationships, which create a gap between the formal systems that have been designed and the actual practices in the field. This situation indicates that the business is in a growth phase accompanied by increasing complexity in HRM. Based on these conditions, a more in-depth analysis is required to identify strategic factors and formulate prioritized HRM strategies. Therefore, this study employs the SOAR approach integrated with AHP to generate strategies that are not only comprehensive but also measurable in terms of priority.

### **Identification of HRM Strategic Factors through SOAR Analysis**

Based on observations and in-depth interviews with the business owner, several strategic factors in HRM were identified using the SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities,

Aspirations, Results) framework. This approach facilitates a constructive analysis of both internal and external conditions while also guiding the formulation of future development directions. From the strengths perspective, the business possesses several internal advantages that support its operations, including the direct involvement of the owner in supervision, a family-oriented working relationship, and the existence of basic management systems such as shift arrangements and SOPs. The owner's involvement enables closer supervision and more responsive handling of emerging issues. Meanwhile, harmonious working relationships contribute to a comfortable work environment, although they may, in certain situations, reduce decisiveness in managerial actions.

From the opportunities perspective, Sego Sambel Mang Dodo has significant growth potential, driven by increasing customer demand and opportunities for business expansion. The use of social media as a promotional tool also provides opportunities to expand market reach. In addition, there is potential to enhance employee capacity through on-the-job learning and simple training programs, which can improve service quality. From the aspirations perspective, the business owner demonstrates a strong intention to improve HRM quality, particularly in strengthening employee discipline, developing more systematic SOPs, and enhancing employee professionalism. Furthermore, there is a need to establish a more structured performance evaluation system to ensure objective and sustainable performance monitoring.

From the results perspective, the expected outcomes of HRM development include increased employee productivity, consistent service quality, reduced operational errors, and improved team stability. These outcomes serve as key indicators of successful HRM strategy implementation. Overall, the SOAR analysis indicates that Sego Sambel Mang Dodo has strong internal potential and external opportunities for development; however, improvements in HRM implementation are necessary to achieve optimal results.

### **Priority Strategy Analysis Using the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP)**

Further analysis was conducted using the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) to determine priority HRM strategies based on the strategic factors identified through SOAR analysis. The assessment was carried out by the business owner as the primary decision-maker using pairwise comparisons based on a 1–9 preference scale.

#### **AHP Level 1 (Criteria Comparison)**

At the first stage, strategy priorities were analyzed through pairwise comparisons among the SOAR criteria: strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and

results. The evaluation was conducted by the business owner using a 1–9 preference scale. Based on the questionnaire results, a comparison matrix was obtained as follows:

**Table 1.** Criteria Comparison Matrix

Criteria	Strength	Opportunity	Aspirations	Results
Strength	1	5	7	1
Opportunity	1/5	1	1/4	1/5
Aspirations	1/7	4	1	1/7
Results	1	5	7	1

Source: Processed Data, 2026

**Matrix Normalization**

The next step involves normalizing the matrix by dividing each element by the total value of its respective column.

**Table 2.** Column Totals

Column	Strength	Opportunity	Aspirations	Results
<b>Total</b>	2.343	15	15.25	2.343

Source: Processed Data, 2026

**Table 3.** Normalized Matrix

Criteria	Strength	Opportunity	Aspirations	Results
Strength	0.427	0.333	0.459	0.427
Opportunity	0.085	0.067	0.016	0.085
Aspirations	0.061	0.267	0.066	0.061
Results	0.427	0.333	0.459	0.427

Source: Processed Data, 2026

The priority weights were obtained by calculating the average value of each row in the normalized matrix.

**Table 4.** Priority Weights

Column	Strength	Opportunity	Aspirations	Results
<b>Total</b>	0.420	0.057	0.103	0.420

Source: Processed Data, 2026

**Consistency Test**

To evaluate the consistency of the pairwise comparison, the following calculations were performed:

$$\lambda_{\max} = 4.392$$

$$CI = (\lambda_{\max} - n) / (n - 1) = (4.392 - 4) / 3 = 0.131$$

$$RI (n = 4) = 0.90$$

$$CR = CI / RI = 0.131 / 0.90 = 0.145$$

The Consistency Ratio (CR) value of **0.145** indicates that the consistency level is slightly above the acceptable threshold of 0.10. However, it is still considered acceptable within the context of decision-making involving a single respondent.

### Interpretation of AHP Level 1 Results

The analysis results indicate that the *strengths* and *results* criteria have the highest priority weights, each with a value of 0.420. This finding suggests that the primary focus in formulating HRM strategies at Sego Sambel Mang Dodo lies in strengthening internal factors and achieving optimal outcomes. Meanwhile, the *aspirations* criterion has a weight of 0.103, indicating attention to future development goals, particularly in improving the quality of HRM practices. On the other hand, *opportunities* has the lowest weight (0.057), implying that external factors are not yet the main priority in strategic decision-making. Overall, these results demonstrate that the HRM strategy in this business is more oriented toward internal improvement and the achievement of tangible results, rather than the exploration of external opportunities.

### AHP Level 2 (Sub-Criteria Comparison)

The sub-criteria level analysis was conducted to identify the most influential factors within each SOAR dimension: *strengths*, *opportunities*, *aspirations*, and *results*. The process involved constructing pairwise comparison matrices, normalizing the matrices, and calculating priority weights. The results provide a more detailed understanding of the internal and external factors that should be prioritized in formulating HRM strategies. Within the *strengths* dimension, the analysis shows that the direct involvement of the business owner is the most dominant factor with the highest weight, followed by the existence of SOPs, shift work systems, and family-oriented working relationships. This indicates that the active role of the owner in operational supervision, along with clearly defined work systems, constitutes the primary strength in HRM practices.

**Table 5.** Priority Weights of Strengths Sub-Criteria

Sub-Criteria	Weight	Rank
S1 (Direct owner involvement)	0.543	1
S3 (Existence of SOPs)	0.234	2
S4 (Shift work system)	0.139	3
S2 (Family-oriented work relationships)	0.085	4

Source: Processed Data, 2026

Furthermore, within the *opportunities* dimension, the increase in the number of customers represents the most significant opportunity, followed by the use of social media, employee competency development, and business expansion. These findings indicate that market growth and digital marketing strategies are the most potential external factors supporting business development.

**Table 6.** Priority Weights of Opportunities Sub-Criteria

Sub-Criteria	Weight	Rank
O1 (Increase in number of customers)	0.460	1
O3 (Utilization of social media)	0.250	2
O4 (Employee competency development)	0.180	3
O2 (Business expansion)	0.110	4

Source: Processed Data, 2026

Within the *aspirations* dimension, improving employee discipline is identified as the primary priority expected by the business owner, followed by the development of more systematic SOPs, performance evaluation implementation, and enhancement of work professionalism. This indicates that improving work behavior and operational systems is the main focus of future HRM development.

**Table 7.** Priority Weights of Aspirations Sub-Criteria

Sub-Criteria	Weight	Rank
A1 (Improvement of employee discipline)	0.480	1
A2 (Development of more systematic SOPs)	0.270	2
A4 (Performance evaluation implementation)	0.150	3
A3 (Improvement of work professionalism)	0.100	4

Source: Processed Data, 2026

Meanwhile, within the *results* dimension, increasing work productivity is the primary expected outcome, followed by improving service quality, reducing operational errors, and enhancing team stability. These findings indicate that optimal work output serves as the main indicator of successful HRM implementation.

**Table 8.** Priority Weights of Results Sub-Criteria

Sub-Criteria	Weight	Rank
R1 (Increase in work productivity)	0.420	1
R2 (Improvement of service quality)	0.300	2
R3 (Reduction of operational errors)	0.170	3
R4 (Team stability)	0.110	4

Source: Processed Data, 2026

Overall, the sub-criteria analysis indicates that the most dominant factors in HRM include direct owner involvement, the existence and strengthening of SOPs, improvement of employee discipline, and work productivity. These factors form the primary basis for formulating HRM strategies oriented toward strengthening internal systems and enhancing employee performance.

### **HRM Strategy Formulation**

Based on the results of the SOAR analysis and AHP weighting, priority factors were identified as the foundation for formulating HRM strategies. The integration of these two approaches enables the development of strategies that are not only descriptive but also based on measurable priorities.

**Table 9.** SOAR–AHP Strategy Matrix

	<b>Aspirations</b>	<b>Results</b>
<b>Strengths</b>	SA Strategy	SR Strategy
<b>Opportunities</b>	OA Strategy	OR Strategy

Source: Strategic Matriculation, 2026

The Strength–Aspirations (SA) strategy focuses on leveraging internal strengths to achieve desired aspirations, including: (1) optimizing the direct involvement of the business owner to improve employee discipline through regular supervision and coaching, (2) utilizing existing SOPs to develop more structured and consistently implemented work systems, and (3) integrating shift work systems with disciplinary rules to enhance employee compliance with working hours. The Strength–Results (SR) strategy aims to utilize internal strengths to achieve optimal outcomes, including: (1) strengthening SOP implementation as a foundation for improving employee productivity, (2) enhancing the role of the business owner in operational supervision to maintain service quality, and (3) optimizing existing work systems to minimize operational errors.

The Opportunity–Aspirations (OA) strategy leverages external opportunities to support organizational aspirations, including: (1) utilizing the increase in customers to encourage employee discipline and professionalism, (2) optimizing social media as a tool for education and fostering a more professional work culture, and (3) developing employee competencies through experiential learning in response to increased customer demand. The Opportunity–Results (OR) strategy focuses on utilizing opportunities to achieve desired outcomes, including: (1) leveraging customer growth to improve employee productivity, (2) optimizing social media as a promotional tool to enhance service quality and customer satisfaction, and (3) utilizing business growth momentum to strengthen team stability.

### Determination of Priority Strategies

The determination of priority strategies in this study was conducted by integrating the results of the SOAR analysis with the weighting obtained from the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP). This process aims to ensure that the formulated strategies are not only conceptually relevant but also possess measurable priority levels based on their relative importance. The process began by identifying the weights of the main criteria derived from the AHP results, where *strengths* and *results* had the highest weights (0.420 each), followed by *aspirations* (0.103) and *opportunities* (0.057). These findings indicate that, in the context of human resource management, internal factors and desired outcomes are the primary considerations in strategic decision-making.

At the sub-criteria level, dominant factors were identified within each dimension. Under *strengths*, direct owner involvement and the existence of SOPs emerged as the key internal advantages. Under *aspirations*, improving employee discipline was identified as the main priority. Meanwhile, under *results*, increasing work productivity was the most expected outcome. Based on the combination of criteria and sub-criteria weights, an integration process was conducted to determine the most prioritized strategies. Strategies that combine high-weight criteria with dominant sub-criteria naturally achieve higher priority levels. In this case, the Strength–Results (SR) and Strength–Aspirations (SA) strategies emerged as the primary strategies, as they leverage strong internal capabilities while targeting both performance outcomes and future HRM improvements. More specifically, the main priority strategies focus on strengthening the implementation of SOPs as a foundation for improving employee productivity, as well as enhancing discipline through the active involvement of the business owner in operational supervision. These strategies are considered highly relevant, as they directly address the core issues faced by the business, namely inconsistency in rule enforcement and suboptimal employee performance.

In addition, supporting strategies were also identified through other combinations, such as Opportunity–Results (OR) and Opportunity–Aspirations (OA), which emphasize the utilization of external opportunities to improve outcomes and HR development. However, these strategies have lower priority compared to those focused on internal strengthening. Overall, the findings suggest that priority HRM strategies in this business should emphasize strengthening internal systems and improving employee discipline as the foundation for enhancing productivity

and service quality. This approach is expected to generate a more significant impact on operational effectiveness and business sustainability.

## **Discussion**

More broadly, the findings of this study are in line with recent research showing that SMEs in a growth phase often struggle to shift from informal HR practices toward more formal and structured systems. Ayoko (2021) highlights that human resource management plays a crucial role in fostering both innovation and organizational performance in SMEs. Similarly, Pratama & Soetjipto (2023), through a systematic literature review, found that HRM practices such as training, leadership, and employee involvement have a direct impact on various dimensions of SME performance. This is further supported by Wang et al. (2024), who demonstrate that high-involvement HRM practices can improve employee performance by shaping attitudes and enhancing dynamic capabilities. More recently, Setyawati et al. (2026) confirm that HRM practices significantly influence SME performance, both directly and indirectly through innovation. In this context, the condition observed at Sego Sambel Mang Dodo reflects a common pattern discussed in the literature, where a family-like work environment needs to be balanced with formal systems to maintain optimal performance.

On the other hand, the strong emphasis on internal factors (strengths) and results orientation in this study is also supported by recent research stressing the importance of internal system development as a key driver of SME success. Yamali et al. (2024) show that well-structured HRM systems have a direct impact on improving SMEs' financial performance through better organizational management. In addition, Roy PS & Nasution (2025) find that integrating HRM with digital transformation and market adaptation significantly enhances SME growth. Hooi (2021) further explains that HRM practices contribute to strengthening organizational learning capabilities, which in turn improve overall performance. Taken together, these findings reinforce the relevance of combining SOAR and AHP approaches in this study, as they align with current empirical evidence highlighting that strengthening internal systems—particularly SOP implementation, employee discipline, and the active role of the owner—serves as a critical foundation for improving productivity, service quality, and long-term business sustainability.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that human resource management at Sego Sambel Mang Dodo faces key challenges related to the consistency of system implementation and employee discipline. Although the

business has established standard operating procedures (SOPs) and basic work systems, their implementation has not yet been fully optimized.

The SOAR analysis indicates that the business possesses strengths in direct owner involvement and the existence of SOPs, as well as opportunities arising from increasing customer demand and the use of social media. On the other hand, the main aspirations include improving employee discipline and refining work systems, with expected results in the form of enhanced productivity and service quality.

Through the AHP approach, it was found that *strengths* and *results* are the most prioritized criteria in strategy formulation, followed by *aspirations* and *opportunities*. At the sub-criteria level, the most dominant factors include owner involvement, the existence of SOPs, employee discipline, and work productivity. These findings indicate that HRM development should primarily focus on strengthening internal factors and achieving optimal outcomes.

The integration of SOAR and AHP analyses resulted in priority strategies centered on strengthening SOP implementation, improving employee discipline through active owner supervision, and enhancing work productivity as a key performance indicator. These strategies are considered the most relevant in addressing existing challenges and supporting business sustainability.

In conclusion, the SOAR–AHP approach has proven to provide a more structured, measurable, and applicable framework for formulating HRM strategies, particularly in the context of growing MSMEs.

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