

# Leadership Styles of Executive Chefs and Their Effects on Kitchen Staff Performance and Retention

Norberto R. Paranga Jr.<sup>1\*</sup>, Reyna E. Gloria<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Master's Theological Seminary International

\*[norbiepar@gmail.com](mailto:norbiepar@gmail.com)

Date Submitted:  
**January 21, 2026**

Date Accepted:  
**February 25, 2026**

Date Published:  
**March 29, 2026**

DOI:  
**10.5281/zenodo.19302887**

## ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of executive chefs' leadership styles on the performance and retention of kitchen staff in professional restaurants. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, data were gathered from fifty (50) kitchen staff members. Findings reveal that transformational leadership is the most practiced style ( $M = 4.32$ ), followed by autocratic ( $M = 4.12$ ). Performance levels were high (Grand Mean = 4.32), and retention levels were positive (Grand Mean = 3.93). Statistical analysis showed a strong positive correlation between leadership styles and staff performance ( $\rho = 0.782, p < 0.001$ ) and a significant relationship with staff retention ( $\rho = 0.615, p = 0.002$ ). The study concludes that adaptive, situational leadership is essential for maintaining operational excellence and workforce stability in high-pressure culinary environments.

**Keywords:** *Leadership Styles, Kitchen Staff Performance, Employee Retention, Executive Chefs, Culinary Management.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the high-pressure environment of professional kitchens, executive chefs function as both culinary experts and operational leaders. This study addresses the critical role of leadership in shaping employee performance and retention. While hospitality leadership is well-documented, there is limited focus on the unique, hierarchical, and high-stress structure of the restaurant kitchen "brigade" system.

The study is anchored on *Transformational Leadership Theory*, *Lewin's Leadership Styles Theory*, and *Social Exchange Theory*. It aims to determine how transformational, autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire styles influence task efficiency, quality of work, teamwork, and organizational commitment.



Figure 1. Leadership styles

## METHODS

### Research Design

A quantitative descriptive-correlational design.

### Participants

Total population sampling of 50 kitchen staff members (sous chefs, line cooks, and prep cooks).

### Instrumentation

A researcher-made survey questionnaire validated via Content Validity Index (CVI 0.80–1.00) and Cronbach's Alpha for reliability.

### Data Analysis

Weighted Mean & Standard Deviation: For descriptive profiling.

### Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation ( $\rho$ )

To test the relationship between leadership, performance, and retention at a 0.05 significance level.

### Ethics

Informed consent, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly maintained.

## RESULTS

### 1. Leadership Styles of Executive Chefs

Transformational leadership received the highest rating, indicating a strong focus on vision and support, though autocratic methods remain a secondary necessity for discipline.

Transformational:  $M = 4.32$

Autocratic:  $M = 4.12$

Laissez-faire:  $M = 3.82$

Democratic:  $M = 3.64$

### 2. Performance and Retention Levels

Staff Performance (Grand Mean = 4.32): The highest evaluation was found in *Quality of Work* ( $M = 4.55$ ).

Staff Retention (Grand Mean = 3.93): The highest factor was *Organizational Commitment* ( $M = 4.17$ ), while *Intention to Stay* was lower ( $M = 3.60$ ).

### 3. Correlational Analysis

Relationship	Spearman's $\rho$	P-value	Result
Leadership vs. Performance	0.782	< 0.001	Significant
Leadership vs. Retention	0.615	0.002	Significant

## DISCUSSION

The dominance of transformational leadership suggests that inspiration and support are vital for motivating kitchen staff. However, the high rating of autocratic leadership ( $M = 4.12$ ) underscores the industry's need for directive control during peak service periods. This confirms that a *Situational Leadership* approach is the most effective model for culinary management.

The strong correlation with performance ( $\rho = 0.782$ ) proves that leadership directly drives efficiency and quality. While retention levels are positive, the lower "Intention to Stay" score ( $M = 3.60$ ) suggests that even with good leadership, the physical and mental demands of the kitchen require continuous engagement strategies to prevent burnout and turnover.

## **CONCLUSION**

Leadership is the primary determinant of success in professional kitchens. A balance between transformational inspiration and autocratic precision allows executive chefs to maintain high standards while fostering a committed workforce.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Situational Leadership Training:** Train chefs to pivot between coaching and directing roles.

**Mentorship Programs:** Implement formal systems to integrate and support new hires.

**Structured Feedback:** Establish clear communication channels to improve democratic participation.

**Recognition & Cross-Training:** Use performance recognition and cross-training to improve "Intention to Stay" and reduce industry fatigue.