

OPERATIONAL TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR LAUNDRY SERVICES: BALANCING LINEN VOLUME WITH EMPLOYEE DEPARTURE TIMES

Naysiatul Aisyah¹, Shaqinah Assegaf², Ola Zafira³,
Muhammad Rainaldi Iskandar P⁴, Kasmin⁵

Hospitality Program, Faculty of Economics and Business,
Bina Sarana Informatika University, North Bekasi, Indonesia
Email: 51240014@bsi.ac.id, 51240010@bsi.ac.id, 51240051@bsi.ac.id,
51240046@bsi.ad.id, kasmin.ksm@bsi.ac.id

Abstrak

Keywords:

Time management,
Laundry operations,
Linen volume,
Work efficiency

This study aims to analyze operational time management strategies in laundry services to balance linen volume with employees' scheduled working hours. The laundry service industry is currently experiencing rapid growth in line with the high demand from both the public and the business sector for efficient textile care. However, the main challenge in daily operations often lies in the unpredictable fluctuations in linen volume. The method used in this research is a descriptive qualitative approach with a literature review design. Data were collected from scientific journals, research articles, and various relevant literature sources. The findings indicate that laundry operational efficiency can be improved through effective work scheduling, clear task distribution, regular employee training, and the implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). These strategies help reduce linen backlogs, minimize overtime, and maintain employee productivity. Therefore, effective time management plays a vital role in creating efficient laundry operations and supporting employee well-being.

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INTRODUCTION

The laundry service industry is currently experiencing rapid growth in line with the high demand from both the public and the business sector for efficient textile care. However, the main challenge in daily operations often lies in the unpredictable fluctuations in linen volume. The uncertainty regarding the daily volume of laundry creates significant pressure on the workflow in the production area, from sorting and washing to drying and ironing. Sudden spikes in linen volume often force management to extend operating hours to meet turnaround targets. This directly impacts employees' work schedules, making them irregular. Unplanned overtime has become a common

short-term solution, but if done continuously, it can lower motivation, increase physical fatigue, and reduce employee productivity the following day.

On the other hand, employees' ability to leave work on time is an indicator of sound operational management and good employee well-being. An imbalance between workload and available working hours not only harms employees personally but also increases the company's operational costs through overtime pay and skyrocketing electricity consumption. Therefore, a more precise workflow management system is needed to mitigate the risk of workload accumulation at the end of a shift. This study focuses on identifying adaptive time management strategies that allow high volumes of laundry to be handled without sacrificing employees' right to leave work on time. By optimizing scheduling, task allocation, and standardizing the processing time per unit of laundry, it is expected that laundry operations will run more effectively. Harmonizing production targets with work time management is key to maintaining a laundry business that is both strategic and people-centered.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Definition of Housekeeping

The term "housekeeping" consists of two words: "house," meaning home, and "keeping," meaning to maintain. Generally speaking, housekeeping refers to the management responsible for handling household needs—such as cooking, cleaning every corner of a room, managing bills, and grocery shopping. Housekeeping can also refer to an operational department within a hotel or apartment complex that manages all hotel needs related to maintenance and cleanliness. A housekeeper working in the housekeeping department. (Tiyo, 2023) In the context of hotel operations, the responsibility for maintaining cleanliness and managing these household needs is specifically handled by the Linen & Laundry Section, a crucial sub-department that serves as the primary support for the availability of linens throughout the hotel.

The primary tasks of this laundry section are to process, wash, care for, and distribute all types of hotel linens—ranging from room linens (such as bed sheets, pillowcases, and towels) to restaurant linens (F&B linens such as tablecloths and napkins)—as well as manage the laundering of employee uniforms and provide laundry services for guests' personal clothing (guest laundry). Operations within this department follow a highly systematic and hygienic workflow, encompassing sorting by fabric type and soiling level, washing using the appropriate chemical formulas, drying, pressing, and folding. Therefore, the efficiency and timeliness of the laundry team's work significantly impact the turnaround time—or the speed at which room attendants can prepare rooms—making it an integral part of ensuring the smooth operation of the business and maintaining the hotel's overall service standards.

Definition of Laundry

Laundry is a division of housekeeping responsible for washing—including guest clothing (laundry, dry cleaning, and pressing), employee uniforms, hotel linens (house laundry), and clothing or linens from outside the hotel (outside laundry) (Hakim & Lapotulo, 2022). The Linen & Laundry Section functions not only as a cosmetic washing unit but also as a textile asset management center that directly impacts the hotel's operational efficiency and revenue. In the modern hospitality industry, the operations of this section are carried out through a highly systematic and hygienic workflow to maintain

the linen life cycle. The process begins with collection, sorting by color and fabric type, stain removal (spotting), washing using precise chemical formulations, drying, and finally ironing using specialized machines such as flatwork ironers for large-sized bed sheets.

Laundry Attendants' Efforts in Handling Mixed-Up Linens

One division of the Housekeeping department—the laundry section—is responsible for all hotel linens, including those used in guest rooms, tablecloths, napkins, chair covers, and other items used by the food and beverage department. The laundry section is also responsible for washing, ironing, sorting, and inventorying linens, as well as determining their storage locations and methods (Hakim & Lapotulo, 2022).

The laundry section's significant responsibility in managing the hotel's textile assets demands a very high level of precision at every operational stage, especially when laundry volume increases during periods of high occupancy—which automatically heightens the risk of operational issues such as guest clothing being mixed up or misplaced. This issue poses a direct threat to the hotel's reputation; therefore, if a case of mixed-up clothing occurs, laundry attendants must immediately take tactical problem-solving actions, starting with handling guest complaints empathetically, recording the physical details of the items based on the laundry voucher, and conducting a thorough internal search of the work area, tumble dryers, and checking whether the clothing might have been taken to another room.

If the garments are successfully located, the team must immediately rewash them hygienically and deliver them directly to the guest's room along with a formal letter of apology; however, if they are truly lost, hotel management is required to provide compensation in accordance with applicable SOP policies. To prevent this error from recurring in the future, strict preventive measures must be implemented, such as tightening the tagging system by using waterproof room-number labels before washing, separating garments from different rooms using distinct laundry nets, and conducting a double-check of the physical count of items against the receipt details before the clothes are finally packed and ready for redistribution by the laundry valet.

Time Management

Time management is an essential skill in the hospitality industry that has a direct impact on employee productivity and work efficiency; research has found that employees with good time management skills are better able to handle work pressure and provide more effective service (Iskandar, 2026). The importance of time management becomes far more crucial when applied within the laundry department, given that this section operates as the hub for the circulation of the hotel's primary commodities, which are subject to extremely tight deadlines and have a direct impact on the smooth operation of other departments. Within the laundry department, time management is manifested through the precise coordination of work rhythms and prioritization between processing hotel linens (house laundry) and guest clothing (guest laundry), both of which have strict return deadlines (delivery deadlines).

Laundry staff are required to accurately calculate the turnaround time or the duration of the wash cycle to prevent a backlog of dirty laundry, especially during peak occupancy periods, where failure to manage time effectively in this area will trigger a domino effect—causing room attendants to be delayed in receiving clean linens to prepare rooms, thereby holding up guests during the check-in process. As a form of tactical problem-solving when a laundry backlog begins to occur due to time constraints or machine malfunctions, time management must be optimized through the implementation of an

emergency priority system (prioritizing linens for rooms with an “expected arrival” status), targeted overtime arrangements, and the allocation of washing machine schedules based on fabric type to ensure maximum machine capacity utilization without wasted waiting time. Therefore, through good time management skills and quick problem-solving, laundry staff can not only reduce individual work-related stress but also optimize machine energy efficiency and ensure that all aspects of hotel service run effectively, productively, and harmoniously.

Employee Training

Generally, to improve service quality by enhancing employee competence, regular skill and knowledge training is conducted every four months, from the Trainee level up to the Supervisor level. Each individual receives training focused on their respective fields, aimed at improving service quality and understanding the standards established for each job role. (Putri et al., 2023) The implementation of this periodic training program every four months serves as a key pillar in maintaining consistent service quality in the laundry department—an operational section that heavily relies on technical expertise (hard skills) and procedural accuracy (procedural knowledge).

At the trainee and operational staff levels, training focuses on mastering daily operational tactics, such as identifying fabric fiber types, stain-removal techniques (spotting), precise chemical formula measurements to prevent linen damage, and ironing techniques using high-speed flatwork ironers. Meanwhile, for supervisors, training focuses on enhancing managerial competencies, strict monitoring of laundry turnaround time efficiency, cost control of machine energy usage, and professional complaint handling in the event of operational issues. Through this targeted and continuous training program, employees at every level in the laundry department are not only able to work in accordance with the latest Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), but also possess greater mental preparedness to minimize work errors, increase daily productivity, and ultimately contribute directly to maximizing guest satisfaction throughout the hotel.

Establishing SOPs

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are a set of standard rules that every employee, regardless of position or role, must follow to achieve uniform and consistent results in service delivery. The primary goal is to ensure customer or guest satisfaction by starting with personal presentation—such as maintaining a professional appearance through grooming—and extending to service quality, which must be prioritized and maintained. (Subandi & Inayati, 2024) In the context of the Linen & Laundry department, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) serve as an operational blueprint that must be strictly adhered to in order to guarantee that every piece of hotel linens and guest clothing is processed to the same standard of cleanliness, safety, and hygiene. The implementation of these SOPs begins with strict personal grooming standards, under which a laundry attendant must maintain a neat appearance and wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as masks and gloves, when sorting dirty laundry to prevent bacterial cross-contamination.

Furthermore, these standard operating procedures strictly regulate the entire workflow within the laundry room, from collection procedures, sorting by fabric type, precise dosing of chemical formulas, setting the ideal temperature for washing machines and dryers, to folding and pressing techniques. Strict adherence to every detail of these SOPs is crucial, as even minor oversights in the washing process not only risk damaging the fabric’s structure (linen life cycle)—which results in financial losses for the hotel—but

can also hinder the distribution of clean linens to the housekeeping department. This, in turn, disrupts operational efficiency and compromises the consistency of service quality, ultimately affecting guest satisfaction.

Excellent Service

Services provided with a focus on user satisfaction are often referred to as excellent service or exceptional service (service excellence). The essence of excellent service lies in the effort to provide the best possible service to customers, with a focus on their interests and needs, thereby enabling us to deliver optimal satisfaction. This effort to provide the best service can be realized if we can demonstrate good and coordinated skills, attitudes, appearance, attention, actions, and responsibility (Feti Fatimah, Devi Yuniati, Ria Yuli, 2022).

Laundry Turnaround Time (TAT)

Laundry Turnaround Time (TAT) is the time required from when linens or clothing are received by the laundry department until they are returned in a clean, neat, and ready-to-use condition or redistributed. TAT is a key indicator for measuring laundry operational efficiency because it is directly related to the availability of linens to support hotel operations. The faster and more accurate the TAT achieved, the lower the risk of linen shortages and delays in service to guests. Effective TAT management can be achieved through good work scheduling, machine capacity management, and the consistent implementation of SOPs at every stage of the laundry process (Sari et al., 2023).

Guest Satisfaction

Work productivity is an employee's ability to produce goods or services effectively and efficiently by utilizing available resources to achieve organizational goals. Productivity is influenced by various factors, including motivation, work discipline, education, skills, management, income level, health, social security, the work environment, and production facilities. Among these factors, motivation and work discipline play a crucial role because they foster employee morale, responsibility, and performance, thereby optimizing productivity (Wibowo, 2018).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using the literature review method. A literature review is a research method conducted by tracing, collecting, and analyzing various sources relevant to the research topic, such as books, scientific journals, laws and regulations, and other academic sources. This method was chosen because this study focuses on examining existing concepts, theories, and regulations, thus requiring neither field data collection nor surveys. Through the analysis of these various literature sources, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues under examination. The fundamental difference between qualitative and quantitative research is clearly evident in the data collection instruments and techniques used. Quantitative research tends to use structured and standardized instruments such as questionnaires and tests, while qualitative research relies more on flexible and adaptive instruments, such as open-ended interviews, observations, and document analysis. This approach allows qualitative researchers to capture various dimensions of complex and dynamic phenomena, but at the same time requires specialized expertise in selecting and applying the appropriate data collection techniques (Nur et al., 2026).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the literature review, it was found that operational time management in the laundry has not been effective due to several factors. The main influencing factor is the unpredictable daily volume of linens, which often leads to a backlog of linens. In addition, the suboptimal implementation of standard operating procedures (SOPs), a lack of employee training, and ineffective task allocation also affect the operational efficiency of the laundry. These factors have the potential to cause delays in completing tasks and impact the timeliness of employees' departure from work.

The high volume of linens is one of the main causes of suboptimal operational time management in the hotel's laundry department. When occupancy rates rise, the amount of linens automatically increases significantly, and the processes of washing, drying, ironing, and folding take slightly longer. This situation can lead to a backlog of work, forcing employees to work beyond their normal hours. Additionally, suboptimal implementation of standard operating procedures (SOPs) can hinder the smooth flow of work because each operational step is not carried out consistently. Employee training also plays a crucial role in boosting work productivity. Employees who possess strong skills and a solid understanding of work procedures tend to complete tasks more effectively. Therefore, an effective time management strategy is essential—achieved through the implementation of SOPs, regular training, and a clear division of tasks—to ensure that the volume of linens can be handled optimally without disrupting employees' scheduled departure times. The implementation of operational workflows in the Laundry Division is essentially not merely a technical routine for processing linens, but a primary mitigation tool within the guest complaint handling system (Pariwisata & Mataram, 2026).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion regarding operational time management strategies in the laundry division to balance linen volume with employees' on-time departure, it can be concluded that time management plays a crucial role in improving the operational efficiency of a hotel's laundry division. Unpredictable linen volume is the primary factor causing a backlog of work, which leads to delays in task completion and employees' failure to leave on time.

Furthermore, the suboptimal implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), a lack of employee training, and ineffective task allocation also affect work productivity. Employees who have a good understanding of work procedures and time management tend to be able to complete their work more effectively and efficiently.

Therefore, consistent implementation of SOPs, regular employee training, and clear task allocation can serve as effective strategies to reduce linen backlogs, improve work productivity, and ensure employees leave on time without compromising the quality of hotel service.

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