

QUALITATIVE STUDY ON EMPLOYEE COOPERATION AND ITS IMPACT ON THE WORK ENVIRONMENT AT COFFEE KOHI

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the forms of cooperation among employees and its impact on the work environment at Coffee Kohi Medan. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation involving five employees from various divisions (waiters, barista, kitchen). The findings indicate that while employee cooperation is present, it faces challenges such as ineffective cross-divisional communication, uneven task distribution, and imbalanced workloads. Nevertheless, the existing cooperation contributes to a sense of responsibility and workplace comfort. This study highlights the importance of managerial roles in building a structured workflow system, providing team training, and encouraging open communication to create a healthy and productive work environment.

Keywords: Cooperation, Work Environment, Employees, Communication, Management.

INTRODUCTION

The culinary industry in Medan has shown rapid development in recent years. This growth is marked by the emergence of modern cafés offering unique and innovative concepts, one of which is Coffee Kohi. Adopting a minimalist urban style with a touch of Japanese culture, Coffee Kohi offers a high-quality specialty coffee experience in a comfortable and serene setting. Targeting young people and professionals, the café emphasizes quality ingredients, collaborates with local farmers, and applies digital management systems as part of the local culinary transformation toward global standards.

An interesting innovation in Medan's coffee scene is the presence of Kohi 91 Exotic Café, located on Jalan Taruma No. 9B, Medan Petisah. Since its opening in late 2020, this café has captured public attention with its unique concept of blending coffee enjoyment with the presence of tame exotic animals, especially reptiles such as iguanas, geckos, lizards, and snakes. Managed by a coffee- and animal-loving couple, Kohi 91 not only serves as a relaxing spot but also offers an unusual experience amid the city's bustle. The interior is attractively designed with two floors: a modern-style coffee bar on the ground floor and a casual sitting area upstairs. The menu ranges from brown sugar iced coffee, premium ice blends, to Japanese style dishes such as gyudon and salmon mentai.

Behind these attractive and innovative concepts, the success of café operations heavily relies on the role of employees. Employees are valuable assets to any company because they perform tasks and carry out responsibilities to achieve organizational goals. According to the Indonesian Labor Law No. 13 of 2003, employees are individuals who work in return for wages based on written or verbal employment agreements. Experts such as Edwin B. Flippo

and Mamat Raharja emphasize the crucial role of employees as the driving force of an organization through their contributions.

One of the main factors influencing employee performance is the work environment. Barry Render and Jay Heizer (2011) define the work environment as the physical and social conditions in the workplace that affect performance, safety, and quality of work life. A conducive work environment fosters a sense of security and supports employee productivity. However, observations and interviews at Coffee Kohi Medan Petisah reveal issues such as ineffective communication among employees, unequal task distribution, and lack of managerial support in resolving internal conflicts. These problems negatively affect employee morale and overall performance.

Aside from physical and structural factors, social relationships among employees play a key role in creating a healthy work atmosphere. The human relations theory emphasizes that good communication and teamwork among employees increase job satisfaction. Douglas McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y also highlight the importance of employee involvement in decision-making as a form of appreciation and motivation. Unfortunately, observations at Coffee Kohi Medan Petisah show obstacles in teamwork that lead to internal conflicts and low work motivation.

This condition signals the need for more attention to inter-employee relationships and the overall work environment. Building a harmonious, open, and supportive work environment is essential to enhance productivity and create a professional workplace in the face of an increasingly dynamic culinary industry.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the forms of cooperation among employees and their impact on the work environment at Coffee Kohi Medan. The research location was Coffee Kohi Medan, and the subjects consisted of permanent employees and management staff, selected purposively based on their involvement in operations and team collaboration. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews with five employees from various positions (waiter, barista, kitchen), participatory observation of daily work interactions, and document studies of internal records such as organizational structures and training records. Data were analyzed thematically through interview transcriptions, identification of main themes, and categorization of findings based on emerging patterns. Data validity was tested using source and technique triangulation as well as member checking to ensure that interpretations aligned with the informants' experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research involved five employees of Coffee Kohi Medan, consisting of two waiters, one barista, and two kitchen staff. Based on interviews and observations, varying cooperation dynamics were found across divisions, reflecting different perspectives and experiences in daily operations.

Interview Results – Waiters

Waiters perceived cooperation among themselves as quite solid, especially during busy operational hours. They often helped each other, such as retrieving drinks from the bar or delivering food to customers. However, some obstacles still occurred, particularly delays in communication from the kitchen regarding menu availability or order changes. These often led to miscommunication that impacted customer service. One waiter noted, “Our team is quite solid, but sometimes kitchen updates come late, so customer orders don't match expectations.”

Interview Results – Barista

The barista reported fairly good cooperation, especially through direct communication with waiters and kitchen staff. Open interaction was considered helpful in streamlining workflows and minimizing errors. However, during peak hours, the workload increased significantly. The barista hoped for clearer task distribution to prevent overload. They also emphasized the importance of regular team briefings to share updates on menus, stock, or promotions. “During peak hours, everyone works together, but task division needs to be clearer so nobody gets overwhelmed,” said the barista.

Interview Results – Kitchen Staff

Kitchen staff revealed that cooperation largely depended on individual initiative. They felt the most burdened during busy hours, having to handle food preparation, plating, and maintaining food quality within limited timeframes. A lack of cross-divisional communication and absence of teamwork training were also identified as major challenges. One kitchen staff member stated, “The kitchen often struggles alone—it doesn't feel balanced with the other divisions.”

Impact On The Work Environment

Employee cooperation had several positive impacts on the work environment, such as increasing comfort and solidarity, streamlining service processes, and strengthening a sense of shared responsibility. However, without supportive work structures and consistent, effective communication, issues such as job fatigue and miscommunication could hinder overall team performance. Therefore, management must pay more attention to organizing work systems and reinforcing inter-divisional communication.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study shows that employee cooperation at Coffee Kohi Medan plays a crucial role in fostering a productive and harmonious work environment. Although mutual support exists among waiters, baristas, and kitchen staff, teamwork dynamics still face challenges, particularly in cross-divisional communication, uneven task distribution, and workload imbalance. Good cooperation has proven to enhance comfort, service efficiency, and shared responsibility. However, without strong managerial support—such as team training, regular briefings, and clear work structures—potential conflicts and job fatigue may continue to disrupt employee performance. Therefore, management should be more proactive in developing structured work systems and encouraging open communication among employees to create a healthy, effective, and professional work environment.

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