

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN IMPLEMENTING WORK -LIFE-BALANCE IN MSMEs: A QUALITATIVE STUDY AT RUMANGSA KOPI PONTIANAK

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Received : 29 June 2025

Revised : 10 July 2025

Accepted : 25 July 2025

Published : 09 August 2025

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.54443/morfai.v5i2.3795>

Link Publish : <https://radjapublika.com/index.php/MORFAI/article/view/3795>

Abstract

This study explores the opportunities and challenges of implementing Work-Life Balance (WLB) in the MSME sector, using a case study at Rumangsa Kopi Pontianak. Adopting a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews and participatory observation of part-time employees, mostly university students. Findings reveal that flexible scheduling, a familial work culture, and open communication are key enablers of WLB. Nevertheless, challenges remain, such as the absence of written SOPs, uneven workload during peak hours, and limited rest facilities. This study affirms that WLB can be adaptively implemented in MSMEs through a humanistic approach and contributes to the development of more inclusive and contextual HRM practices.

Keywords: *Work-Life Balance, MSMEs, work flexibility, HR management*

INTRODUCTION

In this era of globalization, the issue of balance between work and personal life, or what is known as Work-Life-Balance (WLB), has become an important topic in human resource management (HRM) practices, both in the corporate sector and in small-scale businesses such as Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). This concept refers to where individuals are able to manage their time and energy proportionally between work demands and personal needs, so that there is no prolonged conflict between the two. In the context of MSMEs in Indonesia, this issue becomes increasingly relevant considering that this sector absorbs more than 97% of the national workforce and contributes more than 60% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as reported by the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs of the Republic of Indonesia (COORDINATING MINISTRY FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA, 2025).

However, the high contribution of MSMEs to the national economy is not directly proportional to the quality of work and employee welfare within them. Many workers in this sector must face the challenges of high workloads, irregular working hours, unclear organizational structures, and a lack of written policies supporting work-life balance. Furthermore, the generally familial and informal nature of small businesses often results in work arrangements being implemented without systematic guidance. In the long term, however, an imbalance between work and personal life can have negative impacts such as chronic fatigue (burnout), decreased productivity, job stress, and low employee loyalty. This indicates the need for serious attention to the implementation of WLB principles in human resource management in MSMEs.

Protection of workers' rights to rest, family time, and personal development is regulated in Law No. 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower. Articles 77 to 85 explicitly stipulate provisions regarding working hours, rest periods, and holidays. However, in practice, the implementation of these regulations in MSMEs remains suboptimal, primarily due to weak oversight systems and business owners' limited understanding of labor regulations. Under these conditions, many business managers rely more on informal agreements and ad hoc flexibility among workers, which, while helpful in the short term, have the potential to create inequality and uncertainty in the long term. Fieldwork shows that the need for WLB in the MSME sector is increasingly pressing. A study by Wahyu Wibowo and Kusdiyanto (2024) found that workload and work flexibility significantly influence WLB for employees at MSMEs in Surakarta, where the flexibility provided actually increases loyalty and job satisfaction. A similar finding was found in a study by Harefa et al. (2024), which stated that employees who have control over their work schedules

tend to have lower stress levels and higher work morale. Furthermore, in the youth-based coffee and F&B business sectors, WLB is crucial because many employees are students or part-time workers who must balance their time between study, work, and social life. Rumangsa Kopi Pontianak is an interesting example to study. As a growing F&B MSME in West Kalimantan, Rumangsa Kopi has unique characteristics: a majority of its employees are part-time students, a loose management structure, and a family-based work culture. This creates a unique dynamic in managing employees' work time and personal lives. Most work arrangements are made through informal agreements between teams, with shift rotations tailored to employees' class schedules or personal needs. While flexible, this approach certainly presents challenges in terms of consistency, operational efficiency, and the protection of basic worker rights.

From the results of observations and initial interviews conducted, it was found that employees reported feeling comfortable with a flexible and tolerant work system. However, on the other hand, some also experienced difficulty managing their time due to a lack of schedule certainty, especially when their academic schedules were busy. Several workers also expressed the hope for a more structured work system that still accommodates flexibility, such as the development of written SOPs and a more equitable distribution of managerial responsibilities. Based on this background, this research is crucial to understand how work-life balance practices are implemented in MSMEs like Rumahngsa Kopi Pontianak. This research aims to explore in-depth the challenges and opportunities in implementing WLB in the informal sector, while also providing recommendations based on field data that can be used by similar businesses in designing healthier, fairer, and more productive work systems. Therefore, the results of this study are expected to provide scientific and practical contributions to the development of contextual human resource management policies in the MSME sector, as well as encourage the growth of more sustainable work practices amidst structural and resource constraints.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of work-life balance (WLB) is rooted in major theories in organizational psychology and human resource management. One relevant fundamental theory is Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, which states that individuals strive to maintain, protect, and acquire resources they deem valuable, including time, energy, and social support. When these three resources are depleted by excessive work pressure without adequate compensation, psychological stress and burnout can arise, which can disrupt a person's work-life balance (Hobfoll & Ford, 2007). On the other hand, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model developed by Demerouti and Bakker categorizes work conditions into two main categories: job demands and job resources. When job demands are not commensurate with the availability of resources such as managerial support or time flexibility, WLB will be difficult to achieve. Similarly, Karasek's Job Demands-Control Theory emphasizes the importance of job autonomy and individual control in reducing stress caused by high workloads (Rahayu, 2019). Theories that contribute to enriching understanding of the dynamics of work and personal roles include Boundary Theory and Border Theory, which describe the extent to which individuals can separate or integrate their roles as workers and as individuals. Research shows that flexible boundary setting can prevent conflict and support positive spillover between life domains (Bulger et al., 2007). Another study also found that boundary control strengthens individuals' ability to balance work and non-work roles and reduces role conflict (Mellner et al., 2021). This is crucial for MSMEs, which frequently employ informal practices in scheduling and time management.

From an applied perspective, Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Theory identifies that job characteristics such as autonomy, task variety, and feedback are positively correlated with job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation, which in turn can improve the achievement of work-life balance. If individuals have control over their work and receive positive feedback, they are more likely to be able to manage their personal and work time effectively (Oldham & Hackman, 2010). Furthermore, Affective Events Theory emphasizes that emotional events in the workplace, both positive and negative, directly influence employee behavior and attitudes. Positive emotions gained through social support and flexibility can increase job satisfaction and productivity, while negative emotions resulting from role conflict can significantly decrease performance (Weiss & Beal, 2005). Various empirical studies in Indonesia have reinforced the urgency of implementing WLB in the MSME sector. Herianda and Salim's research on MSMEs in the Cipulir market in Jakarta identified that time management strategies, stress management, and technology utilization are crucial to helping MSMEs balance work and personal life (Herianda & Salim, 2024). Meanwhile, Athariq's thesis showed that WLB significantly influenced job satisfaction and turnover intentions among MSME bank employees in East Java, although job satisfaction did not fully mediate the relationship (Athariq, 2023). Research by Rihhadatul 'Aisy on MSMEs in Purwanegara confirmed that WLB has an influence on performance engagement, albeit indirectly ('Aisy, 2024). Another study by Komariyah and Pahrijal in the West Java

creative industry also revealed that flexible working hours, an inclusive work culture, and management support are key factors in building employee loyalty and retention through WLB practices (Komariyah & Pahrijal, 2024). In the banking context, Susilawati found that WLB and job satisfaction had a positive influence on employee retention, while job stress had a significant negative influence (Susilawati, 2024). Furthermore, Putri and Muafi's study showed that supervisor support for family life strengthened the influence of WLB on job satisfaction and performance among MSME employees (Putri & Muafi, 2025). Based on these theories and findings, it can be concluded that achieving Work-Life Balance in MSMEs is not solely a matter of individual time management, but rather the result of a complex interaction between organizational structural factors, managerial support, and awareness of the boundaries between work roles and personal life.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to gain a deeper understanding of Work-Life Balance (WLB) practices in the workplace at MSMEs, specifically at Rumangsa Kopi Pontianak. This approach was chosen because the researchers wanted to explore the perceptions, experiences, and dynamics directly experienced by workers regarding the division of time between work and personal life. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with six key informants working in various positions, such as baristas, cashiers, and head bartenders, using a semi-structured interview guide. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents deemed capable of providing relevant information based on their work experience. Data analysis was conducted qualitatively using thematic methods, including data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and techniques, as well as reconfirmation with informants. This method is expected to answer research questions related to the challenges and opportunities for implementing WLB in the MSME sector, as well as generate contextual and applicable recommendations for developing more balanced work management practices in similar business environments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on interviews with six employees and one business owner, as well as direct observations at Rumangsa Kopi Pontianak, it was found that the implementation of Work-Life Balance (WLB) in this MSME took place in a relatively relaxed, flexible, and family-based work environment. Most employees stated that the work atmosphere felt comfortable and not too rigid, especially because working relationships between colleagues and with superiors ran well without significant pressure. Observations also showed that interactions between employees were positive without signs of conflict, while management was friendly and supportive of employees' personal needs. In terms of work schedules, Rumangsa Kopi implements a flexible shift system, especially for part-time employees, most of whom are students. Scheduling is arranged by the head bar based on individual agreements and needs. Part-time employees have the freedom to swap shifts or take time off to accommodate their class schedules and personal activities. Interviews indicate that most employees find this system helpful, although some admit to still feeling a lack of time to rest and complete assignments, especially when work and class schedules overlap. Field observations also support this, noting that there is no dedicated break room, and breaks are limited to approximately 10 minutes spent in empty customer seats.

Regarding the workload, the shift pattern is quite intensive, especially at night and on weekends. However, no signs of excessive fatigue were observed. Employees continue to display enthusiasm and vigor in serving customers, as evidenced by friendly facial expressions, active body gestures, and quick responses to customer requests. This is reinforced by employee testimonials, who state that their morale remains high because they enjoy their work, feel appreciated, and are not pressured by an overly formal work system. Management also provides one day off per week and provides space for employees to express their aspirations and personal needs. Interviews with business owners revealed an informal approach, involving open communication, such as sharing personal experiences and light discussions about employees' academic performance and personal lives. This approach reflects the principles of supportive management-based HRM, which is considered effective in creating a healthy work environment, high loyalty, and stable productivity. Business owners also recognized the importance of WLB for the sustainability of small businesses, stating that a comfortable work environment can boost morale and impact the quality of customer service. On the other hand, several structural challenges emerged in implementing WLB. One of these was the lack of written SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) for part-time employees, resulting in verbal work arrangements relying on informal agreements. Several employees suggested a more structured shift system and the establishment of SOPs as a shared reference, especially as the business continues to grow. Furthermore, the lack

of supporting facilities, such as personal lockers or break rooms, was considered a shortcoming that could reduce work comfort in the long term.

DISCUSSION

A. Context and Significance of Implementing Work–Life Balance in MSMEs

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are a key pillar of the Indonesian economy. According to data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs (2023), MSMEs contribute approximately 60% to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employ over 97% of Indonesia's workforce. However, this dominance is not always accompanied by professional organizational management. One of the main challenges that often arises is optimal human resource (HR) management, including the implementation of Work-Life Balance (WLB) policies. WLB issues are beginning to receive attention, along with increasing awareness of the importance of employee well-being and its impact on work productivity. At Rumangsa Kopi Pontianak, WLB practices are increasingly relevant given the workforce, which is dominated by part-time students. Employees here must balance their time between study, work, and personal life, making balance crucial. A loose, family-oriented work system and flexible scheduling are hallmarks of Rumangsa's work management. This demonstrates that, despite being in the informal sector and lacking a complex managerial structure, WLB practices can still be implemented effectively.

The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model developed by Demerouti and Bakker (2001) provides a suitable theoretical framework for analyzing this phenomenon. In this model, the balance between job demands and job resources determines the level of burnout and employee motivation. At Rumangsa Kopi, despite work demands such as busy hours or rotating shifts, employees still have resources in the form of flexible hours, a supportive work environment, and strong social relationships. This supports employee psychological well-being and minimizes the potential for work stress. Furthermore, the Boundary Management theory by Kossek et al. (2012) explains that individuals who can flexibly manage the boundaries between work and personal life tend to have higher well-being. This study found that Rumangsa Kopi employees can easily adjust their work schedules to suit personal needs such as class schedules, family matters, and health conditions. This negotiative and relational work system demonstrates adaptive boundary management practices, which are rarely found in other MSME sectors.

B. Opportunities for Implementing Work–Life Balance at Rumangsa Kopi Pontianak

Field research results indicate that WLB practices at Rumangsa Kopi have developed organically through an open work culture and flexible scheduling. The family-like culture implemented by management serves as a key foundation for building trust and a comfortable workplace. The majority of respondents stated that they felt valued and listened to, even regarding work schedules or personal needs. This indicates the business owner's social sensitivity to balancing the roles of employees as workers and students. According to Job Characteristics Theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), when employees have autonomy in determining their schedules and receive direct feedback from their superiors, work motivation increases. At Rumangsa Kopi, scheduling is flexible based on mutual agreement between employees. This type of autonomy fosters personal responsibility and team solidarity, two crucial aspects in the context of MSMEs. Furthermore, the training subsidy indicates that management is not only focused on operational sustainability but also on developing human resource capacity. This aligns with the employee experience approach proposed by Morgan (2017), which states that positive employee experiences, including opportunities for learning and development, will increase employee engagement and loyalty. In other words, Rumangsa Kopi not only provides work flexibility but also provides growth opportunities for young employees.

C. Challenges in Implementing Work–Life Balance

However, it cannot be denied that the implementation of WLB in MSMEs like Rumangsa Kopi still faces structural challenges. First, the absence of written Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) makes work arrangements informal. While flexibility is an advantage, without clear work guidelines, shift arrangements and job responsibilities can become biased or unfair, especially as the number of employees increases. In this context, Organizational Justice Theory can be used as a basis, stating that procedural justice in organizations is crucial for building employee trust and commitment. Second, the increased workload during peak hours has not been matched by effective shift management. According to the Job Demand–Control Model (Karasek, 1979), high work pressure and low job control can trigger work stress. Several respondents complained of being unprepared to handle the surge in customers, especially new employees who are not yet accustomed to a fast-paced work pace. This suggests that flexibility must be balanced with technical training and fair shift planning. Third, limited work facilities are an

additional issue that requires attention. The lack of break rooms and the absence of personal lockers reduce work comfort. According to Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), negative work experiences, even small ones, can have a cumulative impact on employee satisfaction and motivation. Adequate work facilities serve not only as a physical necessity but also as a symbol of management's concern for employee well-being.

D. Implications for the Development of HR Practices in MSMEs

The findings of this study demonstrate that WLB practices can be effectively implemented in a simple yet responsive MSME environment. A humanistic work system based on flexibility and empathy offers significant opportunities to create a healthy and productive work environment. This aligns with the high involvement work system approach in international HRM literature, where employees are involved in day-to-day operational decision-making. This study also provides practical contributions to the development of MSMEs in Indonesia. By balancing work flexibility and organizational structure, MSMEs can create a competitive advantage in retaining their workforce, especially the younger generation. Implementing work SOPs, evaluating workloads, and providing basic facilities can be concrete steps to improve the quality of human resource management. The practice at Rumangsa Kopi can serve as an initial model for developing WLB policies in the informal sector, particularly in urban contexts outside Java. In the long term, the sustainable implementation of WLB in MSMEs will not only improve employee welfare but also support business stability and microeconomic sustainability. Therefore, synergy between business owners, employees, and government policies is crucial to strengthening the foundation of human resources (HRM) in Indonesia's MSME sector.

CONCLUSION

Based on the previous description, it can be concluded that the implementation of Work-Life Balance (WLB) in the MSME environment, particularly at Rumangsa Kopi Pontianak, can be effective even though it is not supported by a formal managerial system. Flexible working hours, a family culture, and open communication are key factors in supporting the balance between work and personal life, especially for part-time employees who are also students. However, challenges such as the lack of written SOPs, workload imbalances during peak hours, and limited supporting facilities remain obstacles that need to be overcome to maintain the sustainability of this practice. These findings confirm that WLB practices in the MSME context can be implemented adaptively through a humanistic and participatory approach, and contribute to the development of inclusive and contextual human resource management. Thus, this study successfully answers the problem formulation related to the opportunities and challenges of implementing WLB in MSMEs and provides practical and theoretical implications for the development of employment policies in the informal sector.

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