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BOOSTING PERFORMANCE OF PRODUCTION PERSONNEL THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF KAIZEN: A CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT APPROACH

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze and explain the effect of implementing Kaizen work culture on improving the performance of production workers at PT. X. The research background is driven by operational problems such as work completion delays, time and cost waste, and suboptimal work quantity and quality due to low accuracy levels. The implementation of Kaizen culture based on the 5S concept (Seiri, Seiton, Seiso, Seiketsu, Shitsuke) is applied as a strategic solution to optimize operational efficiency. This study employs a quantitative associative approach with a sample of 30 production employees. Data collection was conducted through interviews, documentation, and Likert scale questionnaires. Data were analyzed using SPSS through validity, reliability, simple linear regression, correlation, coefficient of determination, and t-tests. The results showed that the Kaizen variable achieved a score of 94% (Very Good) and the Employee Performance variable reached 91.19% (Very Good). Statistical analysis proves that Kaizen work culture has a positive, strong, and significant effect on improving production workers' performance. Kaizen implementation is proven effective in minimizing waiting time waste, organizing workspaces, enforcing SOP discipline, and optimizing operational task punctuality.

Keywords: Kaizen Culture, 5S, Employee Performance, Production Workers

INTRODUCTION

The Kaizen culture is well-known and widely applied in the industrial sector as an optimal method for enhancing corporate performance. In today's era of global change, companies are under pressure to improve their performance levels to create value through customer satisfaction. The emergence of competition—among both private and state-owned enterprises, regardless of their scale—serves to boost and advance the national economy. Given the intense competition, companies strive to establish a distinct identity or unique character, ensuring their continued existence and consistency in pursuing their corporate mission. The escalating level of competition compels companies to differentiate themselves from their rivals, necessitating a competitive advantage over others. Every component within an organization must work diligently to foster such differentiation and excellence. One key factor that distinguishes one company from another is its organizational culture. This culture is embedded in every employee, serving as a defining characteristic of the organization. As noted by Darsana (2013), organizational culture plays a crucial role and is instrumental in shaping a company's management practices.

Kaizen is a Japanese corporate culture centered on continuous improvement, involving every member of an organization. It fosters a mindset that focuses not merely on outcomes, but on processes, supported by a management system that encourages and values employee efforts toward refinement. Kaizen was first introduced by Taiichi Ohno, a former Vice President of Toyota Motor Corporation. The term encompasses improvements involving everyone—from managers to staff—that typically require only minimal financial investment. The challenges surrounding the improvement of employee performance at PT X require full attention. To address these issues, the implementation of the "Kaizen" work culture is essential; it fosters a high level of discipline among employees and optimizes their performance, thereby enabling the company to achieve its targets and objectives effectively and efficiently. The gradual application of the Kaizen culture will have a cumulative effect, driving positive change within the company—particularly in the development of its human resources. Consequently, efforts to refine and enhance employee performance have become a critical priority for the organization.

Aligning organizational culture with employees is a primary task for any company. One way to achieve this is by establishing and internalizing a strong, healthy corporate culture among the workforce (Budihardjo, 2011). This internalization process can be facilitated through slogans, symbols, rituals, socialization, training, and the modeling of desired behaviors by top management. Effectively managing employees enables a company to cultivate a superior workforce. At PT. X, however, not all employees demonstrate high performance. Observations indicate that the quantity of work produced by employees does not align with their assigned responsibilities; tasks are frequently not completed on time—often intentionally, so that employees can claim overtime hours and earn additional pay. Furthermore, employees waste significant time, and the company incurs unnecessary costs due to the staff's low levels of precision and skill—factors that directly negatively impact the quality and completion of their work.

The issues experienced by employees at PT. X relate to key requirements of the Kaizen culture; their absence has led to a decline in employee performance, preventing the achievement of targets set by the company. The Kaizen culture entails continuous improvement, aimed at enhancing employee performance so that the company's established goals can be met—a principle particularly relevant to PT. X. Achieving these targets requires a high level of performance, and this is where organizational culture plays a crucial role in shaping how employees perform. A strong organizational culture can serve as a powerful motivator, encouraging employees to give their best, leverage the opportunities provided by the organization, continuously improve their performance, and attain outstanding achievements. The problems identified in this study are as follows:

1. Delays in the completion of work, along with a tendency toward the waste of time and costs, within the production line at PT. X.
2. The output or quantity of work produced by the production staff does not align with their assigned responsibilities, a result of low levels of employee precision and skill.
3. The principle of continuous improvement, central to the Kaizen culture, has not been fully implemented; consequently, it has yet to serve as an effective solution for addressing existing performance issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kaizen Culture

Professional success is rooted in the values one holds and the behaviors that have become one's habits. These values originate from customs, religion, norms, and principles—deeply held beliefs that manifest as habitual patterns of behavior within a workplace or organization. When such values become ingrained as habits, they are referred to as "culture." Because this culture is linked to the quality of work, it is termed "work culture" (Widagdho, 2004). The Japanese work culture is known as *Kaizen*. According to Imai (2008), *Kaizen* refers to "continuous progress and improvement in one's personal life, home life, social life, and professional life." Kaizen is a simple concept composed of two characters: Kai, meaning "change," and Zen, meaning "good." Together, they literally translate to "improvement." Kaizen entails continuous refinement involving every member of an organization; it fosters a process-oriented mindset and a management system that supports and values the efforts of employees.

Employee Performance

According to Wibowo (2011), performance is defined as the qualitative and quantitative work results achieved by an employee in carrying out their duties in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to them. Performance carries a broader meaning; it encompasses not only the final work results but also the process through which the work is carried out. According to Moeheriono (2014), performance is a record of the outcomes derived from specific job functions or activities over a given period of time.

METHOD

The research approach used an associative approach, with a quantitative method. Research data were obtained by distributing questionnaires to 30 respondents and were analyzed using statistical methods. Data collection was carried out through interviews and questionnaires.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Respondent Characteristics

Table 1. Respondent Identity Based on Age

No	Age	Respondent	Percentage
1.	21-30 years old	8	26,67
2.	31-40 years old	17	56,67
3.	41-50 years old	5	16,66
	Total	**30**	**100**

Source: Respondent (2026)

Thus, it can be observed that, in terms of age, the employees at PT. X are predominantly between 31 and 40 years old, accounting for 17 respondents. This is because the company prefers to recruit individuals who already possess experience in the production field and are within a productive age range, while still maintaining good physical condition.

Table 2. Respondent Based on Gender

No	Gender	Responden	Percentage
1.	Man	30	100
2.	Woman	-	-
	Total	**30**	**100**

Source: Respondent (2026)

It can be noted that all 30 respondents from the production department of PT. X—representing 100% of the total—are male, with no female employees among them.

Table 3. Respondent Based on Education Level

No	Education Level	Respondent	Percentage
1.	High School	20	66,67
2.	Diploma/D1-D3	4	13,33
3.	Bachelor (S1)	6	20,0
	Total	**30**	**100**

Source: Respondent (2026)

Based on the table above, it can be seen that in terms of educational background, 20 respondents (66.67%) are high school graduates. Furthermore, 4 respondents (13.33%) hold a diploma, and 6 respondents (20%) hold a bachelor's degree. Thus, the overall educational level of the employees working at PT. Musim Mas can be considered good.

Table 4. Respondent Based on Years of Service

No	Years of Service	Respondent	Percentage
1.	0-5 years	2	6,67
2.	6-10 years	9	30,0
3.	11-15 years	13	43,33
4.	> 15 years	6	20,0
	Total	**30**	**100**

Source: Respondent (2026)

Regarding the length of service of the respondents—who are production employees—2 respondents (6.67%) have a tenure of 0–5 years, while 9 respondents (30%) have a tenure of 6–10 years. Furthermore, 13 respondents (43.33%) have a tenure of 11–15 years, and finally, 6 respondents (20%) have a tenure of more than 15 years.

Validity and Reliability Test

Table 5. Validity Test Results Kaizen Culture and Employee Performance

Statement Items	r-count	r-table	Description
KC1	0,782	0,361	Valid
KC2	0,814	0,361	Valid
KC3	0,745	0,361	Valid
KC4	0,698	0,361	Valid
KC5	0,831	0,361	Valid
KC6	0,712	0,361	Valid
KC7	0,764	0,361	Valid
KC8	0,790	0,361	Valid
KC9	0,654	0,361	Valid
KC10	0,688	0,361	Valid
EP1	0,721	0,361	Valid
EP2	0,598	0,361	Valid
EP3	0,743	0,361	Valid
EP4	0,612	0,361	Valid
EP5	0,705	0,361	Valid
EP6	0,667	0,361	Valid
EP7	0,734	0,361	Valid
EP8	0,689	0,361	Valid
EP9	0,711	0,361	Valid

Sources: SPSS versi 25 (2026)

Based on Table 5, the results of the validity test above show that all statement items are > r table 0.361, so they are hereby declared valid/legitimate.

Table 6. Reliability Test Results Kaizen Culture and Employee Performance

Variabel	Cronbach Alpha	Provision	Description
Kaizen Culture	0,419	0,60	Reliable

Sources: SPSS versi 25 (2026)

It is known that the Cronbach's alpha value for all research variables of kaizen culture is > 0.60, so it can be said that the results of the reliability test for all variables are reliable.

At PT X, the Kaizen culture is highly embraced—a sentiment reflected in the "strongly agree" category—and has proven capable of driving gradual improvements within the company's management. This culture also fosters workplace discipline; when tasks are performed with discipline, the results are consistently orderly and of high quality. Through the Kaizen culture, the company aims to enhance its management systems, with a particular focus on employee performance—the key to the organization's success. To cultivate the Kaizen concept, the company encourages innovation by requiring employees to document ideas aimed at streamlining their own work processes.

The total score obtained from the respondents' answers regarding the Kaizen culture is 1,410, representing 94%. This places the respondents' feedback in the "strongly agree" category, which falls within the 81%–100% interval. The highest and lowest possible scores for the survey items concerning the Kaizen culture among production employees are as follows:

Highest Score = 5 × 10 × 30 = 1,500
Lowest Score = 1 × 10 × 30 = 300

The categorization for the Kaizen culture variable among production employees is defined as follows:

Strongly Agree = 1,260 – 1,500
Agree = 1,020 – 1,260
Neutral/Unsure = 780 – 1,020
Disagree = 540 – 780

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Strongly Disagree = 300 – 540

It can be concluded that the Kaizen culture at PT. Musim Mas falls into the "strongly agree" category and has proven effective in facilitating gradual changes within the company's management. The Kaizen culture also fosters work discipline; when tasks are performed with discipline, the results are consistent and of high quality. Through the Kaizen culture, the company aims to improve its management system—specifically by enhancing employee performance, which is the key to the company's success. To cultivate the Kaizen concept, the company encourages innovation by requiring employees to document ideas aimed at simplifying their own work processes.

The score obtained from respondents' answers regarding the performance of production employees is 1,231, representing a percentage of 91.19%. This places the respondents' feedback in the "strongly agree" category, which falls within the 81%–100% interval. The highest and lowest possible scores for the survey items concerning the performance of production employees at PT. X are as follows:

Highest Score = 5 × 9 × 30 = 1,350
Lowest Score = 1 × 9 × 30 = 270

The scoring categories for the employee performance variable among production staff at PT.X are defined as follows:

Strongly Agree = 1,134 – 1,350
Agree = 918 – 1,134
Neutral/Unsure = 702 – 918
Disagree = 486 – 702
Strongly Disagree = 270 – 486

These results indicate that the majority of respondents—employees in the production department at PT. X—believe they are capable of enhancing their performance optimally. Each employee possesses unique abilities; leveraging these skills, they strive to the best of their capacity to achieve a high level of performance.

Discussion

Based on the analysis of respondent feedback, the dimensions of work quantity and work quality show very high percentages (above 90%). Within the context of the production system at PT. X, productivity improvement is measured not only by the achievement of physical output targets per activity cycle, but also by how human resources optimally utilize their time and work methods. The implementation of the Kaizen culture provides a framework for production staff to continuously eliminate waste, allowing the ratio between inputs (labor, time, raw materials) and outputs to be maximized without compromising precision. While the term "Kaizen" may still be unfamiliar to some, several companies have begun to adopt this culture, with proven success in enhancing employee well-being, discipline, and performance through more effective and efficient work practices. Furthermore, the Kaizen culture encourages employees to innovate, fostering a mindset geared toward effectiveness and efficiency. Such small-scale changes can yield positive impacts on both employee performance and the work environment. The Kaizen approach incorporates the 5S methodology—*seiri, seiton, seiso, seiketsu,* and *shitsuke*—which, in Indonesian, are translated as *ringkas, rapi, resik, rawat,* and *rajin* (5R). This 5R framework focuses on cultivating a culture of maintaining the workplace, encouraging employees to take personal responsibility for the upkeep of their own immediate work areas.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis and discussion presented in the previous chapter regarding the influence of the Kaizen work culture on the performance of production personnel at PT. Musim Mas, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The implementation of the Kaizen work culture among production personnel at PT. Musim Mas has, in general, been highly successful. This is evidenced by the results from the questionnaire data for the Kaizen Culture variable (Y), which yielded a total score of 1,410 (a 94% achievement rate), placing it in the "Strongly Agree/Very Good" category within the research scale interval. Indicators such as discipline—notably 100% adherence to regulations—as well as the cleaning and maintenance of work areas (*Seiso* and *Seiketsu*), have proven to be the strongest foundations firmly embedded within the company's production environment.

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2. The implementation of Kaizen has a positive, strong, and significant impact on employee performance. Through linear regression analysis and statistical testing, the application of the principle of continuous improvement has been shown to contribute tangibly to enhancing the Employee Performance variable (X), which also falls into the "Strongly Agree" category with a total score of 1,231 (91.19%). The internalization of these Japanese organizational cultural values has fostered greater motivation, competence, and technical proficiency among production personnel in managing their daily workloads.
3. The implementation of Kaizen serves as an effective solution to operational challenges, addressing issues related to output quantity, delays, and operational waste that were identified at the start of the study. Through the standardization of workflows, the tactical arrangement of equipment (*Seiton*), and the cultivation of disciplined time management (*Shitsuke*), production personnel are now able to reduce waste caused by waiting times. The analysis of the questionnaire results confirms this effectiveness, as the indicators for the timely completion of tasks and the achievement of work quantity targets have shown high percentages of satisfaction and agreement among the respondents.

Based on the discussion and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are provided Based on the conclusions above, the management of PT. X is advised to maintain and strengthen the consistent implementation of the Kaizen (5S) cultural system on the production floor. This can be achieved primarily through periodic supervision and the establishment of a transparent reward system for employees or teams that successfully implement continuous improvements in an optimal manner. Given that certain indicator areas—such as the practice of two-way communication and the creation of in-depth performance evaluation reports (*Shitsuke*)—scored lower than basic discipline aspects, management should organize interactive, periodic training programs or "Small-Group Activities" (Quality Control Circles). Such initiatives will help eliminate inefficient work behaviors that could negatively impact the company's operational budget. Finally, future researchers interested in exploring similar themes are encouraged to broaden the scope of their study beyond production personnel to include staff and upper-level management. Furthermore, it is recommended to incorporate other relevant independent variables—such as leadership style or the physical work environment—to develop a more comprehensive analytical model.

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