

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Soft skills, which include interpersonal skills, effective communication, leadership, and teamwork, play a crucial role in improving individual and organizational performance as a whole. Soft skills, which include interpersonal skills, effective communication, leadership, and teamwork, play a crucial role in improving individual and organizational performance as a whole. This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. The research results show that soft skills, such as communication skills, teamwork, creativity, adaptability and work ethic, have a crucial role in the world of work. Soft skills are not only an individual's innate character, but can also be learned through social interaction and self-awareness. The importance of developing soft skills is increasingly felt in human resource management in the era of workplace transformation. The direct impact of developing soft skills includes increased productivity, customer satisfaction, and constructive conflict management. The soft skills development strategy in HRM involves a holistic approach, from redesigning job descriptions to implementing psychometric tests. Behavioral interviews, skill development programs, and a culture of continuous learning are key in creating an environment where individuals continue to thrive. Overall, the integration of soft skills in HRM strategy is an important step to ensure a balance between technical skills and human skills in dealing with the complexity and dynamics of the modern workplace.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In a business landscape that continues to develop at an increasingly rapid pace, the role of Human Resources (HR) has become more crucial than ever. Modern organizations are faced with the challenge of remaining competitive amidst dynamic changes in industry and global markets (Lestari, 2019). Along with this evolution, the focus of the HR department has experienced a significant shift, no longer limited to fulfilling positions based solely on academic qualifications, but has developed into a more comprehensive approach (Bairizki, 2020).

The era where a college degree automatically guaranteed career success is over. The traditional approach of only evaluating academic qualifications is no longer sufficient to measure a person's potential in today's world of work (Darmawan et al, 2023). Technological developments and automation have brought about major changes in the structure of work, resulting in the emergence of new roles that demand different skills. Academic achievement, although still important, must now be accompanied by an assessment of adaptability, creativity and interpersonal skills (Sabrina, 2023).

The importance of understanding the changing dynamics of the job market has driven organizations to look beyond degrees and grades. Now, the ability to innovate, adapt to change, and communicate effectively are no less important assessment criteria (Utaminingsih, 2014). Thus, current challenges in the world of work demand a holistic approach in recruiting and developing individuals, ensuring that employees not only have a strong knowledge base, but also skills that are relevant to today's job demands (Kusumaryoko, 2021).

The importance of soft skills and talent is the main focus in HR management strategies. Interpersonal abilities, effective communication skills, inclusive leadership, and the ability to collaborate are critical values sought in employee recruitment and development (Lubis, 2022). Organizations realize that having a team that has strong soft skills can provide a significant competitive advantage (Kasmawati, 2017).

In an era where technological changes and market dynamics can occur rapidly, the need to have human resources who not only have academic knowledge but also adaptability and innovation skills is becoming increasingly urgent (Idris, 2016). The HR department plays a role as the front guard in identifying, developing and nurturing talents who can lead the organization to long-term success (Andriani et al, 2022). Investing in the development of soft skills and adaptability is an inevitable strategy to achieve and maintain competitiveness in this ever-changing business world (Setiani & Rasto, 2016).

In the modern workplace landscape, soft skills have gained immense importance. Far from being just an added bonus, these skills are now considered core elements that determine an individual's success in the world of work (Kyllonen, 2013). Soft skills cover a number of aspects, ranging from emotional intelligence which enables wise management of self and relationships with others, to effective communication skills in various contexts (Connell, 1998). Problem solving, adaptability, and the ability to work in a team are also crucial components of soft skills. These skills not only change the dynamics of relationships between coworkers, but are also key in responding to increasingly complex and diverse job demands (Meeks, 2017).

In contrast to hard skills which can be obtained through certain training and experience, soft skills tend to be attached to a person's personality. Although difficult to measure concretely, its significant impact is felt in productivity, innovation and overall organizational well-being (Kantrowitz, 2005). Therefore, successful workplaces not only recognize the value of task-specific hard skills, but also place a strong emphasis on the development of soft skills to ensure that employees can adapt and thrive amidst ever-changing dynamics (Seetha, 2014).

A number of recent studies have highlighted the significance of soft skills in the workplace, underscoring their major contribution to a leader's success. Vasanthakumari (2019), in his research, emphasized that compared to technical skills, soft skills have a very influential role in the performance of a leader in the work environment. Soft skills are key in dealing with a variety of situations, from complex contract negotiations to the ability to effectively convey new business concepts and form strong interpersonal connections and relationships.

Chavan & Carter (2018), in their research related to the impact of soft skills, highlight several key benefits of developing these skills. Apart from influencing a leader's performance, soft skills also play a crucial role in other aspects of the world of work. According to Chavan soft skills facilitate career advancement and promotional opportunities, help individuals navigate complex interpersonal relationships, and improve communication skills with clients and customers. Success in these aspects depends not only on technical skills, but also on the individual's ability to self-manage, collaborate with others, and face challenges with emotional intelligence. Along with these findings, it becomes increasingly clear that the development of soft skills has significant positive implications for career development and individual effectiveness in the world of work.

Not only do they have an impact on leader performance, soft skills are also key in encouraging discovery and creativity in a workplace that is not yet automated. The intrinsic properties of soft skills, such as emotional intelligence, adaptability, and creativity, provide space for individuals to innovate and find new solutions amidst uncertainty (Deterding, 2015). Soft skills act as a catalyst that encourages human interaction and deep understanding, resulting in productive collaboration and ideas that are not limited by routine boundaries (Dixon et al., 2010).

This research aims to understand the importance of developing soft skills in human resource management, with a focus on their positive impact on productivity, job satisfaction and interpersonal relationships in the work environment. The benefits include contributions to academic literature, practical insights for companies in designing human resource development programs, increased employee productivity and job satisfaction, and increased organizational competitiveness through strengthening human skills in teams.

2. METHOD

The research method applied in this study is qualitative, chosen as an approach to answer the problem formulation that was previously proposed. With a qualitative approach, researchers have the ability to explore the meaning contained in problem phenomena, with the hope of being able to explain, describe and understand the problem phenomena that are currently occurring (Creswell, 2002). Specifically, this research adopts a qualitative method with a descriptive research strategy. The reason for choosing the descriptive method is that descriptive methods can communicate data through concepts illustrated by the data, provide detail and depth in understanding phenomena, and are not limited to

numerical representations. The data analysis process was carried out using a model developed by Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2014), which describes an iterative interactive cycle between four models: data collection, data reduction, data display, and retrieval/verification. Data reduction requires the process of simplifying data to enable verifiable presentation. It is hoped that the reduced data can provide conclusions that support the formation of appropriate arguments, and can even serve as a guide for producing innovation and contributing new knowledge, such as concepts or theories.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Soft Skills

Soft skills are abilities possessed by individuals naturally which include intelligence, both emotional and social, communication or interacting with other individuals, and the like. In this case, soft skills are an individual's innate character. Soft skills can be learned, but not through formal learning like at school or college. This can be learned by communicating more or interacting with other individuals, as well as by practicing social sensitivity. That way, the individual can apply it to behavior that will later influence soft skill abilities.

According to Elfindri, et al. (2011) expresses soft skills as a form of life skills in society, whether for individuals themselves, in groups, or with the Creator. In this case, the skills in question are communication or interaction, language, emotional management, teamwork, morals and ethics, polite and courteous attitudes, as well as skills in spiritual aspects. Meanwhile, Yuliani (2012) said that soft skills are a form of behavioral competency, so they are also known as interpersonal skills which include communication or interaction skills, negotiation and conflict resolution, creative problem solving, strategic views, personal effectiveness, team building, influencing skills and idea skills. Heckman & Kautz, (2012) stated that soft skills are social intelligence in interacting with other individuals. This ability is developed, both in terms of values and principles, the implementation of which takes the form of special or certain skills. These abilities include negotiating, communicating things, serving other individuals, problem solving, selling, and the like.

The existence of soft skills is crucial in the world of work and everyday life. Soft skills are important because, essentially, they form the basis of how a person interacts and communicates with others. Organizations value individuals who have strong soft skills because they have the ability to work in teams, lead, solve problems, and better adapt to environmental changes. Apart from that, good soft skills can also influence productivity, innovation and job satisfaction (Tribble, 2009).

Improving soft skills requires self-awareness and a commitment to personal development. The first step in improving soft skills is developing better self-awareness. With good self-awareness it will be easy to develop other abilities. Here's how to develop other soft skills:

- Practice active communication. Effective communication skills are one of the main elements in soft skills. Practice active listening by giving the speaker your full attention, asking relevant questions, and providing appropriate responses.
- Develop teamwork skills. Participating in team projects or group activities is a great way to develop teamwork skills. Learn how to collaborate, share responsibilities, value each team member's contributions, and resolve conflicts in a constructive way. Also, learn how to provide support to teammates and become a reliable contributor.

Attend training and workshops. Many organizations and communities offer training on soft skills development. Attending these trainings can provide new perspectives, new skills, and the opportunity to practice in a supportive environment

Soft skills include innate personality traits and abilities that can be learned. The broad types of soft skills include communication, problem solving, creativity, adaptability and work ethic:

a. Communication

Effective communication skills will help you through the interview process and your career as a whole. The ability to communicate well involves knowing how you should talk to other people in different situations or settings.

b. Problem solving

Employers highly value people who can solve problems quickly and effectively. This may require industry knowledge to quickly fix problems as they occur, or taking the time to research and consult with colleagues to find a scalable, long-term solution.

c. Creativity

Creativity is a broad ability incorporating many different skill sets, including other soft skills and technical skills. Employees with creativity can find new ways to perform tasks, improve processes or even develop new and exciting avenues for the business to explore. Creativity can be used in any role at any level.

d. Adaptability

How easily do you adapt to change? If you work in a technology-driven or startup field, adaptability is essential. Changes in the processes, tools and/or clients you work with can happen quickly. Employees who are able to adapt to new situations and ways of working are invaluable in many jobs and industries.

e. Work ethic

Work ethic is the ability to follow through on tasks and obligations in a timely and quality manner. A strong work ethic will help ensure you develop positive relationships with your boss and colleagues, even while you're still developing your technical skills in a new job. Many employers prefer to work with someone who has a strong work ethic and is eager to learn versus a skilled worker who seems unmotivated.

The Importance of Soft Skill Development in Human Resource Management

In recent years, the modern workplace has undergone significant changes due to technological advances, globalization, and changing workforce demographics. Some experts, such as Grunberg et al. (2008) and Mičić et al. (2022), concluded that this transformation includes technological, operational and social aspects. Previously, businesses focused primarily on hard or technical skills to handle repetitive tasks. However, the need for these hard skills is starting to decline along with increasing automation (Chavan, 2018).

Digitalization, especially after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic which forced many businesses to shift to remote working models, has made collaboration and communication in the workplace easier. This provides an opportunity for the workforce to improve the balance between work and personal life, manage work more efficiently, increase productivity and stimulate innovation. The complexity and uncertainty characterized by the modern workplace make human resources a key asset that plays a role in organizational performance and success. Therefore, investing in employee training not only focusing on hard skills, but also on developing soft skills is a must (Bhati & Khan, 2022).

The following will explain why developing soft skills in Human Resource Management is very important.

a. Improved Communication

Effective communication is a key element that determines successful collaboration in diverse work environments. In this context, employees who hold solid communication skills have a central role in conveying ideas and information clearly to colleagues. The ability to articulate thoughts and ideas effectively can reduce the risk of misunderstandings between team members, avoiding potential conflicts that can arise due to different interpretations.

The importance of communication skills is not only limited to conveying information but also includes listening skills. Employees who can actively listen and understand other people's points of view have the potential to build better working relationships. This creates an environment where ideas can be exchanged productively, enriching teamwork with multiple perspectives, and generating innovative solutions. Effective communication also plays a role in building an inclusive work culture, ensuring that every individual feels heard and valued, regardless of background or other differences.

In addition, solid communication skills also create a foundation for sustainable, long-term collaboration. Employees who can convey messages clearly and build positive working relationships tend to create a work climate that supports the open and constructive exchange of ideas. In an era of increasingly diverse workplaces, investing in developing communication capabilities is strategic to ensure team effectiveness, high productivity and overall organizational success.

b. Improved Teamwork

Soft skills have a crucial role in forming harmonious teamwork dynamics in the work environment. Interpersonal skills, effective communication, and teamwork are key elements of soft skills that support successful collaboration. Employees who have strong soft skills are able to adapt to the work styles and personalities of fellow team members, creating positive synergy in achieving common goals. When individuals are able to resolve differences of opinion with understanding and respect for the contributions of each team member, the team works more harmoniously and efficiently.

A positive work culture often emerges from a combination of strong soft skills among team members. When employees have the ability to communicate openly, provide constructive feedback, and show empathy, it creates a work atmosphere that supports growth and development. Soft skills create the foundation for mutual trust and cooperation that arises from appreciation of each other's role in achieving common goals. In this way, soft skills play a role in forming a positive work culture, where employees feel valued and motivated to give their best.

The direct impact of developing soft skills is increased productivity in the workplace. Skills such as time management, conflict resolution, and the ability to manage stress effectively, which fall under soft skills, contribute significantly to individual and team productivity. Employees who have good soft skills can work more efficiently, overcome obstacles better, and maintain high motivation in facing challenging tasks. Thus, soft skills development is not just about increasing social interactions, but also about improving performance and productivity throughout the organization.

c. Adaptability and innovation

In a business era marked by continuous change and disruption, the presence of employees with solid soft skills is the key to facing new challenges and encouraging innovation within the organization. Soft skills, such as adaptability, mental toughness, and creativity, provide a solid foundation for employees in facing uncertainty. Employees who have the ability to adapt quickly to changes in the business environment can help organizations maintain their resilience amidst changes in markets, technology, or regulations.

Soft skills also play a critical role in supporting innovation in the workplace. Employees who have the ability to think creatively, collaborate effectively, and are willing to take risks tend to be agents of positive change. They can generate new ideas, promote a culture of innovation, and bridge collaboration across teams or departments. With these capabilities, employees can help organizations anticipate change, identify new opportunities, and create innovative solutions to address changing market or customer needs.

Apart from that, strong soft skills also play a role in building a work environment that supports innovation. Good interpersonal skills, communication and collaboration skills create an atmosphere where ideas can develop and be exchanged freely. Employees who feel comfortable sharing ideas and discussing potential solutions are more likely to actively participate in the innovation process. Thus, developing soft skills is not only an individual benefit, but also a key factor in creating an organizational culture that facilitates sustainable innovation.

d. Customer satisfaction

In a business context that is directly related to customers, the role of soft skills becomes increasingly crucial. Employees equipped with strong interpersonal skills are able to build positive and strong relationships with customers. The ability to communicate with empathy and clarity, listen well, and understand customer needs forms the basis of positive interactions. These skills create a more enjoyable customer experience, increasing the opportunity to build meaningful, long-term relationships.

Success in building strong relationships with customers greatly influences the level of customer satisfaction and loyalty. Employees who are able to read and respond to non-verbal signals, and can handle difficult situations with good interpersonal skills, can provide satisfying responses and effective solutions. Customers who feel valued and understood tend to be more loyal and may provide positive feedback, which, in turn, can improve a company's reputation and support long-term business growth.

Apart from that, soft skills also play a role in forming a positive brand image. Employees who are able to convey information well and have positive interactions with customers can improve customer perceptions of brands and products. This creates a positive impression that can influence purchasing decisions and regenerate returning customers. By focusing on developing soft skills in sales and customer service teams, companies can build a solid foundation for retaining and attracting customers, which ultimately impacts overall business success and growth.

e. Conflict resolution

The ability to navigate conflict constructively is an important aspect of soft skills that can establish more positive workplace dynamics and increase employee retention. Employees who have this ability tend to be able to manage differences of opinion or tension within teams in a way that leads to fair and sustainable solutions. Soft skills such as effective communication, empathy, and negotiation help create an environment where conflict is viewed as an opportunity for growth and learning, rather than an obstacle.

Effective conflict management has a positive impact on overall workplace dynamics. Employees who can resolve conflict with maturity and leadership can help maintain a harmonious work atmosphere.

They may serve as mediators who encourage open dialogue, help disputing parties reach mutually beneficial agreements, and minimize negative impacts on team productivity and motivation. As a result, team dynamics can become more balanced, and employees feel more valued and supported in their work environment.

In addition, the ability to navigate conflict well is also closely related to employee retention. Employees who feel cared for and heard in handling conflict tend to have a stronger sense of attachment to the organization. They may feel more motivated to keep contributing because they recognize efforts are being made to understand and resolve disagreements or problems that arise. Therefore, investing in the development of soft skills related to conflict management can be an important strategy in increasing employee retention rates, which in turn supports long-term stability and success in the organization.

Furthermore, in order to prioritize soft skills and talents in the recruitment process, the HR department can adopt several strategies:

a. Redesign Job Descriptions

This position seeks individuals who excel in interpersonal skills, effective communication, and the ability to adapt to dynamic situations. The ideal candidate must be able to establish positive working relationships, collaborate with diverse teams, and respond to challenges with emotional intelligence. Sensitivity to customer needs, the ability to resolve conflicts constructively, and mental toughness are important aspects. We are looking for someone who can make a positive contribution to a work culture that is inclusive and focused on developing people skills. A talent for innovating, providing constructive feedback, and adapting quickly to change will be a plus for this role, beyond academic background and professional experience.

b. Conducting Behavioral Interviews

In the interview stage, we will integrate behavioral questions to gain an in-depth understanding of the candidate's past experiences and their ability to deal with certain situations. Some questions might include how they handled conflict in previous teams, how they adapted to sudden changes, or how they built effective working relationships. This approach allows us to evaluate interpersonal abilities, emotional intelligence, and other skills relevant to success in this role. In addition to looking at academic background and work experience, behavioral interviews provide more holistic insight into a candidate's potential positive contributions to the team and overall work environment.

c. Carrying out Psychometric Tests

The application of psychometric tests becomes a standardized and objective approach in evaluating a candidate's personality traits, work style and cognitive abilities. These tests provide an additional dimension that complements traditional academic evaluations, allowing recruiting teams to gain deeper insight into a candidate's suitability for a particular role. By measuring personality characteristics and other psychological aspects, psychometric tests can help predict how a candidate will perform and adapt in the work environment. This approach provides an objective basis for recruitment decision making, ensuring that employee selection is not only based on academic qualifications and experience, but also on potential and holistic fit with the company's culture and role demands.

d. Offers Skills Development Programs

This company provides skills development opportunities through training programs that focus on improving soft skills and developing talent for the existing workforce. By investing directly in employee growth, we aim to create an environment where individuals can continue to develop, both professionally and personally. Our training programs are designed to improve interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence and adaptability, thereby strengthening employees' foundations in facing ever-changing workplace dynamics. We believe that providing these opportunities will not only increase employee retention, but also increase overall satisfaction levels, creating a team that is more skilled, competitive and ready to face the challenges of the future.

e. Fostering a Culture of Continuous Learning

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4. CONCLUSION

Soft skills, such as communication skills, teamwork, creativity, adaptability and work ethic, have a crucial role in the world of work and everyday life. They are not only innate characteristics of the individual, but can also be learned through social interaction and self-awareness. Soft skills include the ability to live in society, communication, interpersonal skills, and adapting to dynamic situations. Organizations value individuals who have strong soft skills because they are able to contribute to a team, lead, and adapt to environmental changes. Improving soft skills requires self-awareness and a commitment to personal development, with steps such as practicing active communication, developing teamwork skills, and attending training or workshops. The importance of developing soft skills is increasingly felt in human resource management (HRM) in the era of workplace transformation. Technology, globalization and changing demographics have shifted the focus from technical skills to human skills. Soft skills are the key to improving communication, teamwork, adaptation to change, and innovation in the workplace. The direct impact of developing soft skills includes increased productivity, customer satisfaction, and constructive conflict management. The soft skills development strategy in HRM involves a holistic approach, from redesigning job descriptions to implementing psychometric tests. Behavioral interviews are one way to gain an in-depth understanding of a candidate's experience and abilities. Skills development programs and a culture of continuous learning are also necessary to create an environment where individuals continue to develop, both professionally and personally. Overall, the integration of soft skills in HRM strategy is an important step to ensure a balance between technical skills and human skills in dealing with the complexity and dynamics of the modern workplace.

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