

Quality of Work Life at Airport Management Unit (UPBU) Merauke

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the indicators of work life quality among employees at the Airport Management Unit (UPBU) Class 1 Mopah Merauke. A qualitative approach was adopted by collecting data from semi-structured in-depth interviews with 12 civil servants representing the administration sub-section, the technical operations section, the flight security section, as well as the service and cooperation section. The research findings indicate that the first determinant of work life quality is the opportunity to use and develop expertise. Skill development is an essential factor to ensure the safety and efficiency of employee work. Without the proper skills, operations could be hindered. The second indicator is the condition of a safe and comfortable work environment. Safety and health are the top priorities at the airport. The third indicator is constitutionalism within the work organization. Legal protection and employees' rights are crucial, especially in a highly structured and high-risk environment like the airport. The other four indicators, although not primary, can influence employee job satisfaction at the airport, especially if the other factors are already satisfied. The results of this study provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by employees at UPBU and offer recommendations for further improvement.

Keywords: Airport Management Unit; Merauke; UPBU; Work Life Quality

INTRODUCTION

Airports play a crucial role in the air transportation network, equipped with necessary infrastructure such as runways, taxiways, apron areas, terminals for passengers and cargo, as well as ground transportation hubs. In addition, airports provide a variety of services that support their operations, including air traffic management, security, and rescue and firefighting services. Airports also offer a growing range of commercial facilities, such as shops, restaurants, hotels, welfare facilities, conference rooms, and business zones, to meet the needs of the public (Graham, 2023).

Airport Management Unit or *Unit Penyelenggara Bandar Udara* (UPBU) Class 1 Mopah Merauke is one of the technical implementation units in the Ministry of Transportation's environment, under and responsible to the Director General of Civil Aviation. UPBU is tasked with providing airport services and related airport activities, security, safety, and order of flights at airports that have not been commercially operated (Indonesia. The Audit Board, 2019)

Airport security is an important aspect of maintaining the safety of passengers and personnel. Sometimes there is a lack of supervision or failure of the security system that allows prohibited or dangerous items to pass through the inspection (Greco, 2017; Kirschenbaum et al., 2012). Such issues can endanger flight safety. In an industry that demands speed and punctuality of service, there are several problems that often occur in the airport environment, such as security issues ranging from potential threats to minor issues like lost items (Greco, 2017; Kirschenbaum et al., 2012). Facility limitations can also impact public services, including a shortage of staff, medical services, or entertainment for passengers (Rositasari & Martanti, 2023). Moreover, poorly maintained facilities can decrease public satisfaction. Previous studies have indicated that the service performance of UPBU Merauke is not yet optimal (Hamzah et al., 2020), with several issues occurring in the field.

The performance of services at UPBU depends on the performance of the human resources within it. Airport staff play an important role, such as being responsible for monitoring operational conditions, from navigation systems to security checks (Greco, 2017; Kirschenbaum et al., 2012). Employees must be adept at identifying and addressing potential problems as quickly as possible (Kirwelakubun & Suprapti, 2023). They must also be able to communicate well, both within sections and with passengers. Good communication can minimize errors and streamline the process. Technical staff must be responsive in resolving issues such as equipment or information system malfunctions, to ensure that airport operations continue smoothly. Focusing on passenger needs and comfort is key to improving the airport's reputation (Maisarah et al., 2020; Rositasari & Martanti, 2023). Employees must be responsive in handling inquiries, complaints, or problems experienced by passengers.

With these job demands, UPBU plays an important role in maintaining and improving the quality of work life (QWL) for its employees. QWL is an important aspect of the aviation industry because, in addition to reducing employee stress (Akinlade & Nwaodike, 2021; Sarabia-López et al., 2017), it can also increase motivation (Gautama et al., 2023; Setyowati & Syaputra, 2023), and support them in providing the best service to airport users (Hamzah et al., 2020). Research on the QWL in the airport environment is important because it can provide insights into ways to improve performance and operational efficiency and ensure public safety and satisfaction (Akinlade & Nwaodike, 2021; Allameh et al., 2013; Dhamodharan & Thiruvarangadas, 2022; Sarabia-López et al., 2017). Based on initial observations, there are several complaints regarding the working life conditions of employees at UPBU Merauke. These issues include stress

caused by a work environment that is often fast-paced and requires precision, a decline in physical and mental health influenced by an imbalance between personal life and work and dissatisfaction with non-competitive wages.

Simply put, the QWL is the perception of the quality of someone's experience at their workplace involving at least eight factors, namely fair and adequate compensation, healthy and safe working environment conditions, opportunities for growth and sustainable security, social integration within the work organization, constitutionalism within the work organization, the job and total life, and the social relevance of work life (Walton, 1973). High QWL is important for organizations because it shows that organizations can offer an appropriate work environment to workers (Gautama et al., 2023; Irdina et al., 2020; Noor & Abdullah, 2012). Along with job satisfaction, several QWL concepts also include general well-being, home-work interaction, stress experienced at work, the physical environment, and the level of control over work. Some studies have reported that employees who participate in teams experience greater satisfaction from their work (Basa et al., 2022; Batt & Purchase, 2004).

There have been many previous studies focused on safe and healthy working environment conditions at airports. Dhamodharan and Thiruvarangadas' study (2022) found that employees tend to want clean and comfortable working environment conditions at the airport. There are indications of a significant relationship between employee attitudes toward the work environment and employee attitudes toward inter-employee relations. Tuchen et al.'s (2023) study highlights the conditions of a healthy working environment at the airport. In addition, the choice of safe and comfortable transportation modes can also increase job satisfaction for airport employees (Pasha & Hickman, 2017). Allameh et al. (2013) showed that ensuring opportunities for growth and sustainable security is a priority factor in the QWL, followed by the development of employee capabilities, and fairness of payment.

The study by Sarabia-López et al. (2017) on air traffic controllers at an airport showed that the well-being achieved through work is the most dominant dimension followed by institutional support for work. The presence of compensation and rewards motivates the work of airport employees (Kasmawati et al., 2021; Setyowati & Syaputra, 2023). According to Kirschenbaum et al. (2012), security decisions at airports often fail to follow established rules and procedures. This phenomenon reveals that employees have different perceptions of their work environment. Airport employees can experience an imbalance between work and personal life due to differences in workload and long working hours that affect activities outside of work. Low QWL has been associated with work stress and low employee performance at airports (Akinlade & Nwaodike, 2021).

This study aims to investigate and analyze the indicators of QWL among employees at the UPBU Merauke. Although many studies discuss important aspects of the QWL for airport employees, previous approaches still regard job satisfaction as a measure of QWL. Based on previous literature searches, there has not yet been a research consensus that can definitively determine the measure of employee job satisfaction. Therefore, this study only takes an approach to perceived organizational conditions rather than an attempt to measure the level of employee job satisfaction. The results of this study provide recommendations for improvements and the development of more effective and efficient human resource management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Airports are key elements of the air transportation system that provide infrastructure that allows passengers and cargo to switch to air transportation modes, as well as allowing airlines to take off and land (Graham, 2023). Airport facilities and services are provided by airlines (Hassan et al., 2019; Teoh et al., 2023), while airport employees usually only provide a small portion of airport facilities and services. However, the way employees provide airport facilities can have a major impact on economic and operational performance as well as customer comfort and safety (Allameh et al., 2013; Greco, 2017; Rositasari & Martanti, 2023).

Each employee assumes overall control and responsibility at the airport. Each of them will be faced with the challenging task of coordinating all services so that the air transportation system works efficiently (Hamzah et al., 2020; Kirwelakubun & Suprapti, 2023). Therefore, improving the quality of work life of airport employees is very important (Akinlade & Nwaodike, 2021; Allameh et al., 2013; Dhamodharan & Thiruvarangadas, 2022; Sarabia-López et al., 2017), because in the end, this will be very important. determine the air services offered at the airport.

The concept of QWL was originally introduced to address the issue of poor quality of life in the workplace (Davis & Cherns, 1975). Concern for QWL began to gain attention from a series of study findings that laid the foundation for various efforts to reform the work organization (Huse & Cummings, 1985). The meaning attributed to this term has undergone significant changes and developments (Huse & Cummings, 1985), and various concepts have been used to map the condition of QWL. The approach taken in this research is to view QWL from the perspective of perceived organizational conditions. Nevertheless, the basic philosophy of QWL that considers employees as individuals capable of learning (Camman, 1984) and the organization as a learning environment (Cherns & Davis, 1975) is also considered.

In this research, the conceptual categories proposed by Walton (1973) are adopted as a basis for designing QWL measures. Walton provides eight aspects where employees' perceptions of their work organization can determine their QWL: (1) fair and adequate compensation; (2) healthy and safe work environment conditions; (3) the opportunity to use and develop capabilities; (4) the opportunity for growth and sustained security; (5) social integration within the work organization; (6) constitutionalism in the work organization; (7) the total life space for work; and (8) the social relevance of work life.

Fair and adequate compensation refers to the concept where employees receive rewards commensurate with their level of expertise, education, and contribution within the organization. Healthy and safe work environment conditions emphasize the importance of a work environment that is not only free from physical risks or dangers but also supports the psychological well-being of employees. The opportunity to use and develop capabilities means providing employees with the chance to employ their skills and talents in their work (Kasmawati et al., 2021; Kirwelakubun & Suprapti, 2023). Participation has been considered a key element in the definition of work (Nadler & Lawler, 1983) because it can make people work better: employees who are allowed to be involved in decisions related to their work will develop some interpersonal and analytical skills, thereby enhancing their sense of significance. The opportunity for growth and sustained security refers to the chances and mechanisms provided by the organization to aid employees in their professional and personal development. Social integration in the workplace emphasizes the formation of positive and inclusive social relationships among employees in the work environment. Constitutionalism in the work organization refers to the fundamental principles that govern the relationship between

management and employees within the organization. The total life space for work emphasizes the importance of creating a balance between the personal and professional lives of employees. The social relevance of work life refers to how work helps employees to feel connected to the broader community.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative approach, utilizing in-depth interview techniques to collect data. Participants were selected through a purposive sampling technique, which included 12 employees from various departments in UPBU Class 1 Mopah Merauke (administration sub-section, technical and operations section, flight security and emergency services section, and service and cooperation section). The inclusion criteria for participants were employees who had been working for at least one year. The research instrument was a pre-constructed interview guide, containing semi-structured questions designed to explore employees' experiences and perceptions of the QWL.

This guide covers eight QWL indicators (Walton, 1973): (1) fair and adequate rewards, (2) safe and comfortable working environment conditions, (3) the opportunity to use and develop abilities, (4) opportunities for growth and sustained security, (5) social integration within the work organization, (6) constitutionalism in the work organization, (7) work and social life space, (8) the social relevance of work life. Interviews were conducted in the participants' work environment to facilitate access and comfort, with each interview lasting about 30-45 minutes. Responses were transcribed afterward.

Data analysis was performed using an interactive approach according to the framework proposed by Miles et al. (2014). This process began with data reduction, where interview transcripts were reviewed and coded to identify key themes. Next, in the data display step, these themes were organized in matrices to facilitate comparison and contrast among participants. Lastly, for drawing conclusions, these themes were integrated with existing theories to infer how and why certain conditions affect the QWL at UPBU Merauke. Each step was performed with repeated iterations to ensure that interpretations were accurate and reliable.

RESULTS

UPBU Class 1 Mopah Merauke consists of four main fields and 20 units, namely the Administration Sub-section (7 units), Technical Operations Section (7 units), Flight Security Section (3 units), and Service and Cooperation Section (3 units). The total number of civil servant employees amounts to 122. For the purposes of this study, interviews were conducted with 12 informants representing each field.

Interview results indicated that there were differences in perception, especially regarding the compensation provided by UPBU Merauke. Some employees feel that their workload and job risks are higher compared to other employees, such as those experienced by security officers. Several employees expressed dissatisfaction regarding recognition of their contribution, stating that their skills and experience in their current job do not significantly affect salary changes, or in other words, their extra efforts seem futile (AFO, Interview, September 20, 2023). This reflects a condition where employees feel that the rewards, they receive are not commensurate with their contributions, indicating a gap between expectations and reality. However, not all employees feel the same disparity. One employee mentioned that the compensation structure is designed with fairness in mind across various levels, from top management to lower-line staff (RS, Interview, September 18, 2023). This indicates that perceptions about compensation fairness can vary significantly depending on individual experience.

UPBU has a complex system with many operational units, from air traffic control to customer service. Each area has employees with different expertise to operate the work efficiently and effectively (OS, Interview September 20, 2023). All informants agreed that security, both physical and cyber, is one of the top priorities in the airport environment, hence the need for opportunities for employees to develop their abilities and skills. Yet, the demands for security priority have not been fully met by the current human resource expertise (BB, Interview September 21, 2023). According to one informant, airport employees need to understand various types of regulations and standards, both set by national and international authorities. Employees must be skilled in applying these rules in practice (OS, Interview September 20, 2023).

Given the importance of security and efficiency at the airport, there is pressure to always act professionally, which sometimes limits the opportunity to express oneself (IG, Interview September 21, 2023). In a busy and demanding work environment, time pressure and workload make employees feel they sometimes lack the time or opportunity to interact with coworkers (AFO, Interview September 20, 2023). Moreover, high workloads can make it difficult for employees to upgrade or refresh their skills. Balancing work and personal life is a challenge expressed by many employees. One employee stated that work at UPBU Merauke is very demanding, and they often feel like they do not have enough time for themselves or personal growth due to long working hours (AFO, Interview, September 20, 2023). This confirms that the intensity of work at the airport often limits employees' opportunities for personal and professional development. The organization supports open communication and expression, making employees feel more comfortable interacting with coworkers and expressing themselves. This is demonstrated by how supervisors foster dialogue, giving employees the confidence to speak and contribute (FR, Interview September 18, 2023). Open management also encourages employee participation in the decision-making process.

Facilities have been well provided, such as break rooms, cafe areas, or informal meeting spaces that facilitate interaction among employees (RS, Interview September 18, 2023). Facilities are also adequate in supporting public services, such as lounges, shops, and restaurants, which enhance passenger comfort while at the airport (BB, Interview September 21, 2023). Supporting factors such as adequate lighting, appropriate room temperature, and generally good facilities (RS, Interview September 18, 2023) are present. The use of advanced technology in airport operations, such as air traffic management systems or digital information services, all demonstrate a commitment to innovation that ultimately positively impacts the passenger experience.

On the other hand, often a hindering factor in career development is the rigid hierarchical structure in some sections. Some employees feel that the rigid structure limits their career mobility, making it difficult to explore various roles or advance to higher positions (IG, Interview September 21, 2023). In some cases, employees feel they lack the expertise or knowledge to contribute to decision-making. Moreover, due to the nature of airport work involving many security issues, sometimes only certain employees are allowed to participate in the decision-making process (HM, Interview September 19, 2023). Employees look out for each other's safety to create a calm and comfortable workplace atmosphere (BB, Interview September 21, 2023). However, other factors related to public service, there are often still issues of safety and comfort that emerge among the community. Sometimes employees at UPBU interact more with technical or administrative aspects than directly with the community (HM, Interview September 19, 2023). High costs for using airport facilities or services can be considered a burden by the community, especially if the quality of service provided is not commensurate.

The work environment at the airport has the potential for high risk, from heavy equipment to potential security incidents. The inability to effectively manage critical situations, such as flight delays, accidents, or other security issues negatively impacts UPBU's reputation. However, it cannot be denied that media and public opinion can influence public perception, regardless of the actual performance of UPBU employees (BB, Interview September 21, 2023).

Some employees have regular working hours that allow them to plan their personal lives better (BB, Interview September 21, 2023). While others struggle to balance their work life with their personal life. Airport operational hours often require employees to work at unusual times, including nights, weekends, and holidays (MTR, Interview September 19, 2023). Employees feel a high responsibility, especially related to the safety and security of many people. The duties and responsibilities also often demand speed and punctuality that limit the possibility for flexibility (MTR, Interview September 19, 2023).

Work at the airport typically requires a physical presence that limits the possibility of working from other locations. Through the implementation of strict security protocols, employees ensure that passengers and goods can travel safely (IG, Interview September 21, 2023). Employees do their best to provide quick and accurate responses, ensuring that processes like check-in, security screenings, and boarding run smoothly, saving passengers time (BB, Interview September 21, 2023). However, it is also acknowledged that the response to public inquiries or complaints could be improved.

DISCUSSION

Current Conditions of Quality of Work Life

The current condition of the QWL at UPBU Merauke is quite complex. The eight indicators of Walton (1973) are ordered based on the frequency of statements by informants. All informants agree that a crucial indicator of QWL is when the organization provides opportunities for employees to use and develop their abilities and skills at UPBU Merauke. This result differs from the study by Allameh et al. (2013), which placed the opportunity to use and develop abilities as a second priority. Nevertheless, this indicator is very important for determining the QWL in the airport administration unit.

Previous studies have shown that workplace skills have a positive impact on employee work discipline at UPBU Merauke (Kasmawati et al., 2021; Kirwelakubun & Suprapti, 2023). Similarly, other studies show a relationship between work professionalism and employee work commitment at the airport (Gautama et al., 2023). Airport employees can have different characteristics, and this condition affects how they comply with the rules in the organization (Kirschenbaum et al., 2012).

According to interview results, opportunities for employees to use and develop their skills at UPBU Merauke are quite limited. One factor is the differing perceptions of compensation and workload, which can affect employee motivation to grow (Kasmawati et al., 2021). Moreover, there is pressure to always act professionally and the busy work conditions that limit the space for interaction between employees. This indicates that the work environment at UPBU Merauke tends to emphasize efficiency and security over individual development.

Meanwhile, in terms of facilities and technology, UPBU Merauke has provided various support tools that allow employees to work more efficiently. However, the still rigid and hierarchical organizational structure limits career mobility and role exploration, so employees feel hindered in developing their expertise. There are also issues that only

certain employees are allowed to be involved in the decision-making process, limiting participation and contribution from other employees.

Overall data indicate that although there are some positive aspects, such as a commitment to innovation and adequate facilities, there are still some significant barriers that need to be overcome to enable employees to use and develop their skills optimally. A more comprehensive human resource management strategy is needed, including revision of the organizational structure and compensation system, as well as more inclusive career development programs (Basa et al., 2022; Kasmawati et al., 2021), to create a work environment that supports employee skill growth.

The second indicator is a healthy and safe work environment. This relates to work conditions that support the physical and mental health of employees (Gautama et al., 2023; Irdina et al., 2020; Tuchen et al., 2023). UPBU, besides functioning to manage and operate the airport in its area, providing comfort to passengers (Rositasari & Martanti, 2023), it is also a must to protect employees in terms of security and health (Tuchen et al., 2023). The workplace condition is one of the main psychosocial factors affecting employees (Sarabia-López et al., 2017). Previous studies have shown that airport facilities affect passenger comfort at Mopah Merauke Airport (Rositasari & Martanti, 2023). However, safe and comfortable conditions also affect employee work commitment at the airport (Gautama et al., 2023).

The results of this study not only show a few positive aspects but also accompanied by some weaknesses. Positive aspects include management's commitment to security and adequate facilities to support interaction among employees (Dhamodharan & Thiruvarangadas, 2022) and service to passengers (Maisarah et al., 2020; Rositasari & Martanti, 2023). Nevertheless, there are still shortcomings in human resource development and balance between work and personal life.

A compensation structure perceived as unfair by some employees can create problems in retention and job satisfaction (Akinlade & Nwaodike, 2021; Kasmawati et al., 2021). This can be exacerbated by an organizational structure perceived as rigid by some employees, limiting career mobility and participation in decision-making (Kasmawati et al., 2021). This condition can impact the mental well-being of employees and ultimately the quality of their work.

Additionally, the issue of balancing work and personal life is a significant concern. The high workload and time pressure often leave employees feeling they lack the opportunity for interaction with coworkers or for self-development. Unusual operational hours, including working at night, on weekends, and on holidays, also add to the burden on employees. This condition can negatively affect employee well-being and ultimately impact the quality of service provided to passengers.

The third indicator is constitutionalism within the work organization. This refers to the opportunities given to employees to participate in decision-making processes that affect their work. Based on interview results, it appears there is a complex dynamic related to the opportunities for employees to be involved in decision-making processes at UPBU Merauke. Although there is an open communication system and facilities that support interaction among employees, there are also several factors that limit employee participation in decision-making. The rigid hierarchical structure in some organizational sections and the high workload tend to hinder employee career mobility, as well as limit their time and opportunities to be involved in strategic discussions or decision-making (Kasmawati et al., 2021).

The work environment at UPBU typically has high work demands (Sarabia-López et al., 2017). This can sometimes affect the opportunities for employees to participate in decision-making. Some informants mentioned that only certain employees are allowed to participate in the decision-making process, especially those related to security issues (Kirschenbaum et al., 2012). This indicates selectivity in providing opportunities for employees to contribute to decision-making, likely also influenced by the expertise and competence they possess. Therefore, although there are efforts to open dialogue and participation, not all employees may feel they have access or the capability to participate in the process.

However, there are also positive indications from some aspects. For example, the organization encourages open communication and provides facilities that facilitate interaction among employees. This potentially gives employees the opportunity to contribute to dialogue or discussions that ultimately can influence decision-making. Thus, despite the limitations and challenges, there still seem to be opportunities for employees to participate in the decision-making process, depending on the internal policies and organizational culture in place.

The fourth indicator is the opportunity for growth and sustained security. Based on the research, there is potential for growth and sustained security although there are also several challenges that need to be overcome. Previous studies have indicated that training, career development, and reinforcement have a positive impact on job satisfaction and employee performance at UPBU Merauke (Basa et al., 2022; Kurniawan et al., 2023). The open and supportive management style and employee participation in decision-making processes are positive steps, but the rigid organizational structure in some sections can be an obstacle to career mobility (Kasmawati et al., 2021). In addition, the high workload and time pressure also become barriers for employees to grow.

Security is generally a top priority in the airport environment for both passenger and employee safety (Greco, 2017; Kirschenbaum et al., 2012; Tuchen et al., 2023). However, it appears at UPBU Merauke, there is still a lack of human resource expertise to meet these demands (Kasmawati et al., 2021; Kirwelakubun & Suprapti, 2023). This indicates that there is still room for improvement through training or more specific career development programs (Basa et al., 2022; Kurniawan et al., 2023).

Regarding public service and interaction with the community, there are often security and comfort issues that arise. This is an area that could become a focus for improving the quality of service, which will ultimately have a positive impact on reputation and sustained security. Some employees feel that they interact more with technical or administrative aspects than directly with the community. This indicates a need to strengthen community relations to improve perception and mitigate potential risks. Overall, these factors indicate that although there are opportunities for growth and sustained security, there are several areas that require attention and improvement for this potential to be fully realized.

The fifth indicator is fair and adequate compensation. Fair and adequate rewards are based on the principle that employees should be compensated in proportion to the contribution and value they provide to the organization (Kasmawati et al., 2021). It emphasizes the importance of balance between what is given by the employees (skills, knowledge, and effort) and what they receive in return (salary, benefits, and recognition). Fair and adequate rewards are not limited to financial aspects but also include non-financial aspects such as recognition, career development, learning opportunities, and work-life balance (Basa et al., 2022; Kasmawati et al., 2021). Previous studies have shown that compensation and rewards positively impact employee work motivation at

UPBU Merauke (Kasmawati et al., 2021). Based on research findings, there seems to be a disparity in perceptions among employees about whether the compensation they receive is fair and adequate. On one hand, some employees feel that the compensation received does not match the workload and job risks they handle, as well as the skills and experience they bring to their roles. However, there are also employees who believe that the compensation structure is fair enough between upper and lower management levels. This conclusion indicates that perceptions of compensation fairness are relative and subjective, depending on the extent to which personal expectations and other factors influence each employee's view.

In the context of airport operations, the complexity of the job, high-security needs, and demanding workloads make considerations about compensation more complex (Kasmawati et al., 2021). Various aspects such as security, technical expertise, and understanding of regulations are some of the many factors that must be considered in determining compensation. However, there are indications that job demands at UPBU Merauke have not yet been fully matched by human resource expertise, work-life balance, and opportunities for self-development. This indicates that there are aspects that can be improved to make compensation fairer and more adequate.

Other factors such as work facilities, openness of communication, and participation in decision-making also play a role in influencing perceptions of compensation fairness. Although facilities are adequate and there is openness in communication, the rigid hierarchical structure and difficulties in career mobility are obstacles to employee development (Kasmawati et al., 2021). Therefore, to achieve a perception of fairer and more adequate compensation, a comprehensive and holistic review is needed that covers various aspects, from workload and skills to employee welfare. The sixth indicator is social integration within the work organization. This shows the extent to which employees have the freedom to express themselves and interact with other coworkers.

Based on interview results, it seems that employees at UPBU Merauke have limited opportunities to express themselves and interact with coworkers. The work environment that demands efficiency and security makes employees more focused on their tasks and responsibilities rather than social interaction. Time pressure and workload often limit employees' chances to communicate and interact with coworkers. Additionally, there are indications that the rigid organizational structure in some sections can affect career mobility, thus limiting opportunities to express oneself and grow.

Nonetheless, there are some aspects that support freedom of expression and interaction among employees. Management is said to support open communication, and there are facilities that facilitate interaction, such as break rooms and cafe areas. However, it should be noted that this is not always enough to cover the pressures and demands of the job, especially in the context of security and efficiency which are top priorities at the airport.

So, while there are efforts from management to create an environment that supports freedom of expression and interaction, there seem to be many barriers experienced by employees. To improve the quality of interaction and freedom of expression at the workplace, a more comprehensive strategy might be needed, starting from a more flexible organizational structure revision to training programs that can enhance employees' competencies in facing their work challenges (Basa et al., 2022; Kasmawati et al., 2021; Kurniawan et al., 2023).

The seventh indicator is work and total life space. This emphasizes the importance of balance between work life, personal life, and flexibility in terms of working hours. Based

on information from interview results, it appears that the balance between work and personal life for UPBU Merauke employees tends to be lacking. Work demands are generally a major psychosocial factor affecting the QWL at the airport (Sarabia-López et al., 2017). Some indicators that emerged at UPBU Merauke include high workload, professionalism demands, and operational hours that can be very irregular, including working at night, on weekends, and on holidays.

Previous studies have indicated that work-life imbalance has a significant impact on employees' personal lives, limiting quality time that can be spent with family or for self-development (Akinlade & Nwaodike, 2021). In addition, time pressures and workload make employees feel they lack the opportunity to interact with coworkers, let alone express themselves.

Worktime flexibility also appears to be an issue. Most jobs at the airport require the physical presence of employees, from security officers to air traffic controllers to customer service. This means there are little to no opportunities to work from other locations, which further pressures the balance between personal and work life. Strict security protocols and the need to respond quickly and accurately add to this burden. Although some employees feel they have regular working hours, in reality, many struggle to find a balance due to the various demands and responsibilities at the workplace.

However, there are also some positive aspects that could support balance and flexibility at UPBU Merauke, though not optimally. For instance, the presence of break rooms, cafe areas, and informal meeting spaces that facilitate interaction among employees can provide an opportunity for a brief respite from work routines. Open management and encouraging employee participation in decision-making can also give a sense of ownership and influence work morale. Nevertheless, so far it seems that there are more challenges than opportunities in achieving a balance between work and personal life and flexibility in working hours in the airport environment.

The last indicator is the social relevance of work life. This shows the extent to which the work done by employees has a positive impact on society. Based on information from interview results, it seems that the work performed by employees at UPBU Merauke has a significant impact on society, although the level of impact can vary. Security is one crucial aspect where employees play a key role in maintaining it. Employees' performance in this regard directly affects the public's sense of safety and comfort when using airport facilities. However, the less-than-optimal quality of human resources in maintaining this security is a weakness that must be overcome to increase public trust.

Furthermore, adequate, and innovative airport facilities provide a positive impact on passengers' experiences (Rositasari & Martanti, 2023). These facilities are not just support for airport operational activities but also part of the public service directly felt by society. However, there are still obstacles in employee interaction with the community. There are still security and comfort issues that arise, and it is often the employees' responsibility to resolve them. The high cost of services not matching quality becomes a separate burden for society.

Another important issue is irregular working hours and high demands for speed and punctuality, which often make it difficult for employees to balance their personal and professional lives. This can affect employee well-being and ultimately impact the quality of service provided to society. Although the organization has supported open communication and facilitated interaction among employees, the still rigid organizational structure often becomes an impediment in employee career development (Basa et al.,

2022; Kasmawati et al., 2021). As a result, this can affect employee morale and ultimately the level of service received by society.

Factors Affecting Quality of Work Life

Based on the research findings, the QWL at UPBU Merauke is influenced by various factors. From an internal perspective, the first determinant factor is compensation and wages. Differing perceptions about fair compensation and wages become a significant factor. This impacts job satisfaction and employee motivation (Akinlade & Nwaodike, 2021; Basa et al., 2022; Kasmawati et al., 2021). Second, expertise and human resource capabilities. The lack of employee skills to meet work demands, especially in terms of security, is a determining factor in the QWL (Kasmawati et al., 2021; Kirwelakubun & Suprpti, 2023). Third, organizational structure. A rigid structure often becomes an obstacle to career mobility and participation in decision-making processes (Kasmawati et al., 2021). Fourth, workload. High workload and time pressure affect the balance of work and personal life, causing stress and fatigue (Akinlade & Nwaodike, 2021; Sarabia-López et al., 2017). Fifth, communication and expression. Openness in communication and expression is a supporting factor, but an overly formal environment can limit this.

As for external factors, the first determinant is facilities. The availability of adequate facilities, such as break rooms and cafe areas, affects the QWL. Second, technology. The use of advanced technology in airport operations can positively impact efficiency and service quality. Third, regulations and standards. The various types of regulations and standards that employees must understand and implement. Fourth, public opinion and reputation. Media and public opinion can influence society's perception of the quality of service, impacting employee morale and satisfaction (Akinlade & Nwaodike, 2021; Basa et al., 2022). Fifth, working hours and flexibility. Unusual operational hours can disrupt the balance between work and personal life. Sixth, security risks. The high potential for risk, whether from heavy equipment or security incidents, is a factor that must be well managed (Kirschenbaum et al., 2012). Seventh, interaction with the community. High service costs and a lack of direct interaction with the community are also factors that affect the QWL.

Challenges and Opportunities

Efforts to improve the QWL at UPBU Merauke need to address several challenges. One of the main challenges is the differing perceptions regarding compensation. Some employees feel that the workload and risks they face are not commensurate with the salary they receive. Second, the complexity of tasks and employee expertise. Airports are complex environments that require various kinds of expertise, but not all employees have adequate skills. Third, the pressure for professionalism. The demand to always act professionally limits expression and informal interaction among employees. Fourth, the balance between work and personal life. High workloads and irregular working hours make it difficult for employees to balance their personal and professional lives. Fifth, an organizational structure that restricts career mobility and participation in decision-making. Sixth, suboptimal security and less than adequate responses to community complaints.

However, there are also opportunities to improve the QWL. First, open communication. Management that supports open dialogue can increase satisfaction and engagement among employees (Akinlade & Nwaodike, 2021; Basa et al., 2022). Second, adequate facilities. Sufficient break rooms, cafe areas, and other facilities can be a factor that improves the QWL. Third, the implementation of advanced technology. This can help employees work more efficiently and effectively, in addition to enhancing the passengers' experience. Fourth, skill development programs. With ongoing training and education, employees can improve their skills (Basa et al., 2022; Kasmawati et al., 2021;

Kirwelakubun & Suprapti, 2023; Kurniawan et al., 2023) and receive fairer compensation (Kasmawati et al., 2021). Fifth, flexibility in working hours. For positions that allow it, the implementation of flexible work schedules could be a solution for work-life balance issues (Akinlade & Nwaodike, 2021). Sixth, career development. Mentoring programs and clearer career paths can help employees feel more involved and valued (Basa et al., 2022). Seventh, employee involvement in decision-making. Allowing more employees to be involved in the decision-making process can enrich perspectives and increase job satisfaction (Akinlade & Nwaodike, 2021; Basa et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

The research findings revealed various issues and dynamics in the work environment at UPBU Merauke, especially regarding employee perceptions of compensation, work demands, security, and the balance between work and personal life. Although the organizational structure and facilities are adequate, there is still a disparity in perceptions about compensation fairness and career development opportunities. Another concern is the high-security demands that have not been met with an increase in human resource expertise. Moreover, the high workload and irregular working hours pose a unique challenge for employees in maintaining a balance between work and personal life.

Based on these findings, several recommendations and practical implications are provided to improve the QWL for employees at UPBU Merauke. First, revising the compensation structure considering the workload, risks, and skills of employees in various operational units. This can be achieved through the development of a more transparent and performance-based pay system, which directly links individual contributions to the compensation received. Second, conducting more focused training and human resource development on the required skills, particularly in terms of security. Management might consider partnerships with educational institutions or professional training agencies to design training modules tailored to the security needs of the airport. Third, to improve the balance of work and personal life, a review of work schedules is needed that provides more flexibility for employees, such as the introduction of more varied work shifts.

Although these findings provide important insights, this study has several limitations that should be considered. First, because this study used a qualitative method with a relatively small sample of UPBU Merauke employees, the results may not be generalizable to all employees in other airport sectors. Second, in-depth interviews might be subjective and depend on individual perceptions that could be influenced by personal biases or the current context. Third, this study did not measure quantitative factors that may affect the QWL, such as actual wages, working hours, and statistics of accidents or incidents. Future research development might include a larger mixed-method approach to address these limitations.

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The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest.

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