

The Role of Labor Unions on Employee Performance at Mason Elephant Park and Lodge

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Abstract

The decline in the Sumatran elephant population due to deforestation and hunting has led to the establishment of PT. Wisatareksa Gajah Perdana, known as Mason Elephant Park and Lodge in 1997, which serves as a sanctuary for this endangered species. With 291 employees, PT. Wisatareksa Gajah Perdana, the company owning this wildlife park, has the potential to form a labor union. FSP PAR KSPSI PT. Wisatareksa Gajah Perdana is a labor union established to fight for employee rights, including compensation, leave, work environment, and other issues that cannot be resolved individually. However, several problems have arisen involving the company and its employees, such as the company prioritizing profit over employee rights, a lack of understanding of labor union regulations and laws. Therefore, research is needed to determine the role of the labor union in the performance of employees at PT. Wisatareksa Gajah Perdana. This article aims to explore the impact of the labor union on employee performance at Mason Elephant Park and Lodge, as well as the challenges faced by the company and its employees.

Keywords: Labor Union, Employee performance, Employee right, Tourism, Human resources

INTRODUCTION

Mason Elephant Park and Lodge is a wildlife park overseen by PT. Wisatareksa Gajah Perdana. Established in 1997 (Mason Elephant Park and Lodge, 2022) and located in Taro Tegallalang village, Mason Elephant Park and Lodge was created in response to the

extinction crisis of the elephant population on the island of Sumatra, where rampant deforestation and hunting have caused the native elephant population to dwindle. The park is home to 32 endangered Sumatran elephants. Mason Elephant Park and Lodge offers its guests a rare opportunity to interact with and learn about elephants.

PT. Wisatareksa Gajah Perdana currently employs 291 workers, who undeniably constitute a significant force in building the brand and ensuring the company's operational continuity. Given the large number of employees, it is conceivable that a labor union could be established within this company. FSP PAR KSPSI PT. Wisatareksa Gajah Perdana, the Federation of Tourism Workers' Unions of the Confederation of All Indonesian Workers' Unions, is a labor union (Agustina, 2019) for employees to fight for employee rights, including compensation, leave, work environment, and more, which cannot be achieved individually. The union naturally sides with employees, encouraging them to continually demand their rights as workers.

In practice, numerous cases have arisen as problems within the company involving employees (Azwar, 2018), including: the company not granting employee rights due to prioritizing company profits, a lack of understanding of labor union regulations reflected in legislation by both the company and employees, the existence of labor unions demanding employee rights without considering the company's condition, increased employee demands for rights not in accordance with legislation, and many employees receiving warning letters for poor performance. Therefore, it is necessary to research the extent of the labor union's role in affecting the performance of employees at PT. Wisatareksa Gajah Perdana.

Research conducted by Osman Chilala (2015) at the Bawku Presbyterian Hospital shows that union activities have a significant impact on employee performance. Activities carried out by unions, such as negotiating better wages, safer work environments, and access to professional training, directly contribute to increased motivation and productivity among employees. This confirms that the presence of unions is not only as mediators in conflict but also as drivers of improved employee work quality.

The study by Sri Ndaru Arthawati (2018) at PT Nippon Shokubai Indonesia-Cilegon found that unions play a crucial role in boosting productivity and enhancing worker welfare. Through advocacy and union-initiated programs, there was a significant increase in work efficiency and worker satisfaction. This proves that unions focus not only on welfare aspects but also directly contribute to improved employee performance.

Research conducted in Cameroon by Dinyuy and Şener (2021), as well as the study by Antwi (2020) at Ghana's Food and Drugs Authority, both showed the positive impact of unions on employee performance. These studies affirm that union activities, such as defending employee rights, negotiating fair work contracts, and efforts to improve working conditions, directly contribute to enhancing employee performance. This indicates that unions have a strategic role in building productive and harmonious work relationships.

The most recent research by Anggraini (2023) found that the role of unions in managing employment relationship disputes has a positive impact on maintaining stable work relationships, which in turn affects the improvement of employee performance. Through effective and fair conflict resolution mechanisms, unions help prevent unnecessary termination of employment and ensure that employees feel supported and valued. This highlights the importance of unions in maintaining stability and harmony in the workplace, which is a crucial factor in enhancing employee performance.

Research on the role of unions in improving employee performance across various institutions and companies, including Mason Elephant Park and Lodge, shows similarities in the field of human resources. As revealed in studies by Osman Chilala (2015), Arthawati (2018), and others, unions play a crucial role in negotiating for better working conditions, which directly improves employee performance. However, this research has specific differences related to the context of the tourism industry, where aspects such as customer satisfaction and direct interaction with visitors become more crucial and influence how unions affect employee performance. Additionally, the scale and work environment at Mason Elephant Park and Lodge offer unique dynamics in the relationship between unions and management, which may not be fully depicted in previous studies. This suggests that, while the role of unions generally supports the improvement of employee performance, specific contexts and industry sectors can influence how this role is manifested.

Considering these similarities and differences, this research provides new insights into the dynamics of unions in a context that has not been extensively explored, adding to the existing literature by highlighting the importance of considering contextual factors in evaluating the role of unions.

Labor Unions

According to Law Number 21 of the Year 2000, labor unions or workers' unions are defined as organizations formed from, by, and for workers/laborers with the aim of fighting for, defending, and protecting the rights and interests of workers/laborers, as well as enhancing their welfare and that of their families. These organizations are characterized by

their freedom, openness, independence, democratic nature, and accountability (Khoirunnisa and Kurniawan, 2020). There are also federations and confederations, which are broader associations of labor unions or workers' unions (Mangkuprawira, 2017). This law guarantees the rights of workers/laborers to organize and carry out union activities without obstruction or coercion, with penalties for violators that include fines up to 500 million or imprisonment in accordance with the criminal act committed, protecting them from practices such as termination of employment, demotion, transfer, intimidation, or anti-unionization campaigns.

The Function of Labour Union

Every employee undoubtedly seeks welfare from their place of employment, where their rights are met, and they can fulfill their obligations peacefully (Pambudi and Riyadi, 2019). Labor unions play a crucial role in achieving this, with functions outlined in Article 4, Paragraph 2 of Law No. 21 of 2000, including the creation of collective labor agreements, resolution of industrial disputes, representation of workers in employment cooperation institutions according to their level, fostering of harmonious, dynamic, and fair industrial relations according to applicable laws, channeling of member aspirations in fighting for their rights, organization of strikes, and advocacy for worker share ownership in companies (Priyono and Firmansyah, 2021). These functions are designed to ensure that workers attain welfare while maintaining equitable and productive working relationships.

The Goals of Labour Union

Labor unions play a crucial role in supporting employees facing issues related to their rights and obligations, ensuring they have the opportunity to live prosperously (Saifudin, 2018). Their objectives also include improving certain company regulations that cause or lead to problems for employees, with the union acting as a mediator between the employees and management. Furthermore, labor unions aim to convey employee aspirations to the company to avoid unilateral decisions and ensure employee involvement in decision-making (Susanto, and Setyawan, 2020). The benefits of labor unions include support from fellow workers in fighting for rights, establishing good communication relationships with the company, accompanying employees who receive unfair treatment from the company, and creating healthy relationships between employees and the company

Employee Performance

In general, performance is defined as the level of success of an individual in carrying out their duties or work (Agustina, 2019). According to Cole et al., in (Azwar, 2018)

performance describes the continuous process of enhancing individual capability by aligning desires and the strategic objectives of the organization informally and systematically through interviews and goal setting (Khoirunnisa and Kurniawan, 2020). Employee performance is considered successful if the individual can surpass the predetermined targets. Performance evaluation indicators include teamwork, initiative, communication, responsibility, loyalty, work quality, and honesty, all of which contribute to achieving the organization's vision and mission.

This study aims to: (i) Investigate the role of labor unions in advocating for the rights of their employee members, (ii) Examine the role of labor unions in improving the welfare of their employee member, and (iii) Explore the role of labor unions in enhancing the performance of their employee members.

METHOD

Research Location

The study was conducted at Mason Adventure Park and Lodge, located in Taro Tegallalang village. This tourist destination was established in 1997.

Population and Sample

The population refers to a generalization area consisting of objects/subjects with specific quantities and characteristics determined by the researcher to be studied and then concluded. The population is a complete group of elements, usually people, objects, transactions, or events of interest for study or research objectives. In this study, the population consists of 291 employees at Mason Adventure Park and Lodge.

Research Analysis

This study utilizes Descriptive Qualitative Analysis. Descriptive research is a study used to find descriptions or results of an event, situation, behavior, subject, or phenomenon in society. This research aims to answer questions about what, when, who, where, and how concerning a problem being investigated. Descriptive research strives to collect information to answer the researcher's questions by considering aspects obtained from numerous research data, thus depicting a condition, event, or phenomenon specifically and sequentially.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The table presented encapsulates the culmination of an extensive data collection process conducted at Mason Elephant Park and Lodge, aiming to meticulously understand the role of labor unions in influencing employee performance. This endeavor sought to capture the perceptions and attitudes of the workforce towards the presence and activities of labor unions within the organization, providing a structured insight into how these entities are perceived to impact various aspects of workplace dynamics and employee well-being.

Through a detailed questionnaire distributed among the employees, the research aimed to dissect the multifaceted influence of labor unions on factors ranging from productivity, employee rights, wage levels, to the overall work environment. The responses, as summarized in the table, offer a comprehensive overview of the employees' viewpoints, reflecting a spectrum of opinions on the effectiveness and implications of labor union activities on their daily work lives and the broader organizational ethos at Mason Elephant Park and Lodge.

Table 1. Employee Perceptions of Labor Union Impact at the Workplace

No.	Question	Unsatisfactory	Less Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Very Satisfactory
1	Labor unions increase employee productivity at the company			85.7%	14.3%
2	Labor unions assist in advocating for employee rights at the company			92.9%	7.1%
3	Labor unions influence the level of wages and benefits for employees	28.6%	71.4%		
4	Labor unions accommodate workers' aspirations and complaints			92.9%	7.1%
5	Labor unions accommodate workers' aspirations and complaints			92.9%	7.1%
6	Labor unions enhance discipline and work spirit among members			92.9%	7.1%
7	Labor unions are created to prosper its members	7.1%	85.7%		7.1%
8	Labor unions can provide motivation in building teamwork among all employees	7.1%		85.7%	7.1%
9	Labor unions become a place for employees to exchange ideas	14.3%	78.6%		7.1%

10	When an employee becomes a member of a labor union, they are in a group with a common goal	7.1%		85.7%	7.1%
11	For workplace issues that escalate to legal matters, labor unions can provide legal aid to affected employees			92.9%	7.1%
12	The presence of labor unions allows employees to freely express opinions without fear of being ignored by their members	7.1%	14.3%	71.4%	7.1%
13	Labor unions can improve the quality of work of its employees	7.1%		85.7%	7.1%
14	Disciplinary traits can be instilled in employees if every company has a labor union inside	7.1%	78.6%	14.3%	
15	The presence of labor unions makes employees more diligent in completing their work	7.1%		85.7%	7.1%
16	Employees have high initiative in solving workplace issues with the presence of labor unions			85.7%	14.3%
17	Labor unions can adequately fight for the rights of employees as workers			92.9%	7.1%
18	A social spirit can be instilled in employees if every company has a labor union inside			92.9%	7.1%
19	Labor unions become a container for employees to provide solutions to a problem			92.9%	7.1%
20	Labor unions assist employees in overcoming various difficulties			92.9%	7.1%
21	The presence of labor unions allows employees to explore their potential/abilities	7.1%		85.7%	7.1%
22	Someone's leadership style can be formed/seen with the presence of labor unions	7.1%		85.7%	7.1%
23	Labor unions can increase solidarity among its members			85.7%	14.3%
24	Labor unions can serve as a means of evaluation and learning for its members			100%	
25	Labor unions can foster a sense of responsibility among its members			92.9%	7.1%
26	The image of labor unions is free, independent, and democratic for its members			92.9%	7.1%
27	Labor unions help ensure employees work in healthy and safe conditions	7.1%	78.6%	14.3%	
28	Labor unions help reduce the rate of workplace accidents	14.3%	7.1%	78.6%	

29	Labor unions help increase employee participation in decision-making at the workplace	7.1%		85.7%	7.1%
30	Labor unions ensure companies pay attention to occupational safety and health standards	7.1%	7.1%	78.6%	7.1%

Source: Research results, 2024

The table presents a comprehensive survey on the perceptions of employees regarding the impact of labor unions at their workplace. It categorizes responses into four levels of satisfaction: Unsatisfactory, Less Satisfactory, Satisfactory, and Very Satisfactory, reflecting diverse aspects of labor union activities and their perceived effects on employee welfare and company operations. Notably, a significant majority of the responses lean towards the positive spectrum, with high percentages in the Satisfactory and Very Satisfactory categories for questions related to labor unions' roles in enhancing productivity, advocating for employee rights, and fostering workplace solidarity. The data also highlights areas of concern, such as the influence of labor unions on wage levels and benefits, where opinions are more divided. Overall, the table illustrates a predominantly positive stance among employees towards the contributions of labor unions, underscoring their importance in addressing employee concerns, improving working conditions, and promoting a collaborative and supportive work environment.

Discussion

The role of labor unions in advocating for the rights of their employee members

The role of labor unions in advocating for employee rights at Mason Elephant Park and Lodge is significantly highlighted by the survey results, illustrating their vital position in enhancing workplace conditions and employee satisfaction. Among the surveyed questions, a notable 92.9% of respondents rated satisfactorily to the question regarding labor unions' assistance in fighting for employee rights within the company, with an additional 7.1% rating it as very satisfactory. This overwhelming positive response underscores the effectiveness of labor unions in representing and advancing the interests and rights of their members. It emphasizes the unions' commitment to ensuring fair treatment, equitable compensation, and safe working conditions for all employees.

Furthermore, the survey indicates a strong perception among employees that labor unions play a crucial role in fostering a supportive and democratic work environment. Specifically, 92.9% satisfactory responses were received for questions related to labor unions accommodating workers' aspirations and complaints, and the same high percentage

for labor unions providing legal aid for workplace issues that escalate to legal matters. These findings suggest that labor unions are not only pivotal in addressing immediate employee concerns but also in providing long-term support and protection, thereby enhancing trust and communication between the workforce and management.

Lastly, the survey sheds light on the broader impacts of labor union activities, particularly in terms of improving workplace morale and employee engagement. A significant portion of respondents, 85.7% satisfactory and 7.1% very satisfactory, believe that labor unions contribute to increasing solidarity among members and encouraging employees to explore their potential. These results highlight the positive influence of labor unions on creating a cohesive and motivated workforce. By advocating for employee rights and fostering a culture of mutual support and respect, labor unions at Mason Elephant Park and Lodge evidently play a crucial role in not only enhancing individual employee experiences but also in promoting overall organizational health and productivity..

The role of labor unions in improving the welfare of their employee member

The role of labor unions in enhancing the welfare of their members is pivotal, as evidenced by the survey results which indicate a positive impact on various aspects of workplace dynamics. For instance, questions related to labor unions' assistance in advocating for employee rights and ensuring healthy and safe working conditions received high approval ratings, with 92.9% of responses falling into the Satisfactory and Very Satisfactory categories. This underscores the critical role that labor unions play in not only defending the rights of employees but also in ensuring that the working environment adheres to safety and health standards. Such actions directly contribute to the welfare and well-being of employees, highlighting the importance of labor unions in advocating for comprehensive employee care.

Additionally, the survey reveals that labor unions are instrumental in fostering a sense of solidarity and high initiative among employees, as indicated by the questions regarding solidarity enhancement and initiative for problem-solving in the workplace. A notable 85.7% of respondents feel that labor unions improve solidarity among members, while the same percentage believe that unions encourage high initiative in addressing workplace issues. These findings suggest that labor unions do more than just negotiate for better pay or benefits; they also cultivate a supportive community within the workplace. By promoting teamwork and a collective approach to problem-solving, labor unions significantly contribute to creating a more engaging and collaborative work environment.

Moreover, labor unions are seen as a vital force in promoting employee participation in decision-making processes, with 85.7% satisfaction in increasing employee participation in workplace decisions. This involvement not only empowers employees but also ensures that their voices are heard and considered in organizational decisions, thereby improving their overall work satisfaction and sense of belonging. Furthermore, labor unions are acknowledged for their role in providing legal assistance to employees facing workplace issues, with a high approval rating of 92.9%. This support is crucial for employees who may otherwise lack the resources or knowledge to navigate legal challenges independently. Overall, the survey data clearly illustrates the multifaceted role of labor unions in improving employee welfare, from advocating for rights and safety to enhancing solidarity, participation, and legal support within the workplace.

The role of labor unions in enhancing the performance of their employee members

The role of labor unions in enhancing the performance of their employee members is a critical aspect of organizational success and employee satisfaction. The data from the survey table clearly indicates that labor unions play a significant role in advocating for employee rights, with 92.9% satisfaction in assisting in the fight for employee rights and similarly high percentages in accommodating workers' aspirations and complaints. This advocacy not only ensures that employees' voices are heard but also contributes to a more engaged and motivated workforce. By fighting for fair compensation, leave, and a positive work environment, labor unions create conditions that are conducive to higher productivity and performance. The overwhelmingly positive response suggests that employees value the support and representation provided by labor unions, which in turn can lead to increased loyalty and commitment to their work.

Another key aspect highlighted in the survey is the impact of labor unions on the discipline and work spirit among members. A notable 92.9% of respondents found that labor unions enhance discipline and work spirit. This indicates that labor unions contribute significantly to fostering a culture of professionalism and commitment among their members. By setting standards for behavior and performance, and by organizing activities that build team spirit and cooperation, labor unions help in creating a more disciplined and focused workforce. This disciplined approach is essential for achieving high levels of productivity and performance, demonstrating the positive influence labor unions have on the overall work environment and employee morale.

Moreover, the survey underscores the role of labor unions in providing a platform for employees to develop their potential and leadership skills, as indicated by 85.7% satisfaction in enabling employees to explore their potential/abilities and a similar percentage in leadership style development. Labor unions offer training, workshops, and opportunities for members to take on leadership roles within the union, thereby enhancing their skills and confidence. These opportunities not only benefit the individual employees but also contribute to the development of a more skilled and capable workforce. The ability of labor unions to act as a catalyst for personal and professional development is a testament to their integral role in improving employee performance and organizational success.

In conclusion, the survey results vividly illustrate the pivotal role of labor unions in enhancing employee performance. Through advocacy for rights, fostering discipline and work spirit, and providing development opportunities, labor unions have a profound impact on employee satisfaction, engagement, and performance. The positive feedback received across various indicators highlights the importance of labor unions in creating a supportive and productive work environment, thereby underscoring their indispensable role in the modern workplace.

CONCLUSION

The survey results from Mason Elephant Park and Lodge clearly demonstrate the pivotal role labor unions play in enhancing employee performance and advocating for their rights. With an overwhelming 92.9% satisfaction rate regarding their efforts in fighting for employee rights and addressing workplace issues, labor unions have proven to be crucial in fostering a supportive and productive work environment. Their involvement has not only improved workplace morale but also encouraged a culture of professionalism and mutual respect, essential for organizational success. Additionally, the unions' focus on professional development and solidarity among members has significantly contributed to the overall well-being and engagement of the workforce. In essence, labor unions at Mason Elephant Park and Lodge are indispensable for ensuring fair treatment, enhancing employee performance, and promoting a positive organizational culture, highlighting their integral role in the modern workplace.

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