

THE IMPACT OF THE MODEREN WORK SYSTEM ON THE SOCIAL LIFE OF RISTA BAN WORKSHOP WORKERS IN GORONTALO

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the impact of modern work systems on the social, economic, and emotional lives of workers at the Rista Ban Workshop in Gorontalo City. Using a descriptive qualitative approach and case studies, data were collected through in-depth interviews with the workshop owner and three employees with varying lengths of service. The results show that a rational, standardized, and efficiency-oriented work structure provides economic benefits for workers through basic salaries, meal facilities, and additional income from overtime. However, this system also gives rise to complex social dynamics, such as imbalances in work contributions, potential conflicts between workers, and increased psychological burdens on senior workers. These conditions align with Max Weber's concept of the "iron cage," in which workers are bound by a rational work system that limits flexibility and personal freedom. These findings confirm that modern work systems in small, informal sector businesses have a dualistic impact: strengthening workers' economic stability while simultaneously creating social and emotional stress that requires attention in workforce management.

Keywords: Modern Work, Rista Workshop, Gorontalo City

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, transformations in the world of work have introduced increasingly rational, structured, and efficient work models, often referred to as "modern work systems." Modern work systems refer to employment schemes with fixed or flexible working hours, structured task allocation, strict supervision, and wage mechanisms based on productivity or hours worked (Ridzuwan et al., 2024). This transformation has occurred not only in the formal sector and large industries but has also spread to the informal sector and small businesses, such as automotive repair shops.

These changes in work systems have social consequences for workers, particularly in the informal sector. Recent research shows that workers in the informal sector tend to face long working hours, wage uncertainty, and a lack of social protection—factors that can negatively impact their physical and psychological well-being. For example, a study by Zhou et al. (2024) found that workers in informal employment exhibited decreased psychological well-being, particularly among those with low education, limited resources, and long working hours. Furthermore, a literature review on informal sector workers indicates that wage instability and irregular working hours are the main causes of work-life balance disruption and social stress for workers and their families (Afiani, 2024).

However, much research on the conditions of informal workers focuses more on economic aspects (wages, productivity) or mental health quantitatively, while social aspects such as social relations, community stability, family interactions, and workers' subjective perceptions of the work system have received less attention. This constitutes a research gap: little in-depth empirical research examines how the implementation of modern work systems in small businesses (e.g., workshops) impacts the social dimensions and daily lives of workers from a qualitative perspective. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap through a case study of a workshop in Gorontalo City (Simatupang et al., 2023).

Based on this background, the research questions are formulated as follows: (1) How is the modern work system implemented in small business workshops such as Bengkel Rista Ban in Gorontalo City?; (2) How do work hour arrangements, wage mechanisms, and work controls affect the social lives of workshop workers?; (3) What are the social and psychological consequences experienced by workers as a result of this modern work system?

The purpose of this study is to describe the implementation of a modern work system at the Rista Ban Workshop and to analyze its impact on workers' social lives, including social relations outside of work, work-life balance, and workers' perceptions of the work system. Furthermore, this study aims to provide an empirical overview that modernizing work systems is not only about efficiency and productivity but also has social implications for workers, especially in the small business and informal sectors.

The urgency of this research lies in its relevance to labor dynamics in Indonesia, where the informal sector still dominates the national employment structure. Recent data shows that although the informal sector faces challenges such as low wages and job insecurity, its existence is critical for many working families. Thus, paying attention to the social aspects of modern work systems in the small business sector can help enrich the discourse on labor policy, worker protection, and academic understanding of the consequences of work modernization in the local context (Afiani, 2024).

By studying the Rista Ban Workshop, a small business implementing a modern work system, this research is expected to concretely demonstrate how social theories such as Max Weber's "iron cage" concept can be relevant to understanding the realities of informal sector workers in the modern era. The results will contribute to the sociology of work literature and provide input for business actors and policymakers on the importance of considering social aspects when implementing a modern work system (Simatupang et al., 2023).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design to understand the social experiences of workers at the Rista Ban Workshop in Gorontalo City. The descriptive qualitative method was chosen because it allows for exploration of phenomena in their original context and generates data in the form of narratives and meanings (not numerical) that align with the research objectives (Kartini, Rahman, & Sulaiman, 2024). The research informants consisted of the workshop owner and three workers (employees), for a total of four informants. The research location was Rista Ban Workshop, an automotive repair shop in Gorontalo City. Data collection techniques included semi-structured in-depth interviews to elicit narratives of workers' experiences, perceptions, and social dynamics in navigating the modern work system.

After data collection, analysis was conducted using data reduction procedures, theme categorization, and narrative interpretation to uncover emerging patterns and meanings from aspects of work structure, social relations, and workers' psychological burdens. To maintain the reliability of the findings, a rigor approach to descriptive qualitative research was applied as outlined in the methodological guide: the researcher as the primary instrument, the use of data coding/categorization, and the preparation of reports in the form of systematic descriptions (Quilliam et al., 2023). Research ethics were observed by obtaining informant consent, maintaining anonymity and confidentiality of identity, and using data only for academic purposes in accordance with research commitments.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Work System Structure and Rules

Work system structure and rules refer to the overall form of work organization implemented within a business unit, from setting working hours, disciplinary mechanisms, wage systems, task allocation, to monitoring work execution. This system is established to ensure operations run efficiently, orderly, and meet specific standards set by the owner or management. In the context of small businesses such as automotive repair shops, work structures are often straightforward and strict, as they relate to the need to maintain production rhythms, customer service, and revenue continuity. Informant Interview (Boss)

"I've established work rules that apply to all employees. They start at 9 a.m. and finish at 6 p.m. If there's extra work from 7 to 10 p.m., the pay is split between me and the employee. To enforce discipline, if they're even one minute late after 10 a.m., I count them as half a day and deduct Rp 30,000 from their pay. If they don't show up at all, I deduct Rp 60,000. New employees earn around Rp 1,800,000, while existing employees earn around the Gorontalo minimum wage, around Rp 2 million or more."

Furthermore, the above interview is supported by the results of interviews with employees:

"Regarding work, I'm actually quite comfortable. But working hours are strict. As a new employee, I sometimes find it a bit difficult to adjust, especially if I have outside business. The boss can give permission, but not often. Furthermore, if we work overtime at night, we get extra pay, but it's still split with the boss. Long-time employees like Baim usually have more responsibilities because they already know the workshop's workflow."

Based on the interviews, it's clear that the work structure at the Rista Ban Workshop is strictly structured and standardized. Working hours are consistently set, with a 9:00 AM start time and a 6:00 PM finish time. There are also conditional additional working hours. This system demonstrates the workshop's need to maintain continuity of service to customers while ensuring that each employee adheres to the established work schedule.

Discipline regulations, particularly regarding tardiness and absenteeism, demonstrate strong managerial control. Salary deductions based on tardiness serve as a monitoring mechanism that reinforces the workshop owner's authority in maintaining work commitments. This reflects the hierarchical dynamics between owners and employees, where time control is a key instrument in regulating daily productivity.

Meanwhile, employees perceive economic benefits from the existing work system, particularly through additional income from overtime. However, they also face challenges in adjusting to strict work hour regulations. This situation highlights the tension between the need for workshop efficiency and the personal needs of workers. New employees tend to experience a more difficult adaptation period, while senior employees face a greater burden of responsibility.

These field findings align with research by Kartono and Pratama (2020), which explains that small businesses tend to implement rational work structures based on time control to maintain smooth operations. Similarly, a study by Ridzuwan et al. (2024) shows that modern work systems in the informal sector often combine efficiency, supervisory mechanisms, and strict disciplinary rules to ensure productivity, but can create adaptation stress for new workers. Both studies support the fact that strict work structures and regulations are characteristic of small businesses adapting to modern, efficiency-based work patterns. The structure and rules of work at the Rista Ban Workshop align with Max Weber's concept of the "iron cage," in which workers are bound to a rational system built through rules, time discipline, and managerial control. Weber emphasized that modern rationalization creates structures that prioritize efficiency and order, forcing individuals to adapt to impersonal and rigid rules. In the context of this workshop, discipline based on salary deductions, tardiness rules, structured work hours, and overtime profit sharing are concrete forms of rationalization that place workers in a system that limits their personal flexibility. Thus, the experiences of workers in this workshop demonstrate how modern work structures create social conditions that align with Weber's depiction of the iron cage.

Impact on New Workers

The economic impact on workers refers to the direct influence of the work system on their financial condition, well-being, and ability to meet their living expenses. This impact can be seen in the amount of income, salary stability, opportunities to earn additional income, and other economic benefits gained during employment. In the context of small businesses such as automotive repair shops, the economic impact is often the primary motivation for workers to stay, especially when the work system offers competitive wages or additional income opportunities. Informant Interview (Boss)

"Regarding salary, I adjust it based on the workshop's capabilities and employee experience. For new employees, the salary is around one million eight hundred, but for those with more experience and skills, the salary can be two million or more, and it can be even higher if they diligently take on additional work. Furthermore, if there's night work from seven to ten, we split the income in half. I want employees to receive extra money to motivate them."

Furthermore, the above interview is supported by the results of interviews with employees:

"I personally feel that this workshop has helped me with my income. Compared to my previous workplace, the salary here is higher. Furthermore, if we work late into the night, we get extra daily allowance from the two-way split. This significantly helps with my daily needs. Even food is covered by the workshop, so I can use my monthly salary for other needs. That's why I feel at home working here, even though my responsibilities are greater now, having worked here for over two years."

The interviews revealed that the work system at the Rista Ban Workshop has a significant economic impact on its workers. The different base salaries for new and senior employees demonstrates an experience-based reward structure. Furthermore, additional income through a profit-sharing system for overtime provides workers with the opportunity to increase their daily income. For some workers, especially those with families, this provides greater economic stability.

Employees also receive additional benefits, such as meals covered by the workshop, freeing up their base salary for other needs. Non-wage benefits like these are crucial for improving worker well-being, particularly in the informal sector, which often lacks formal benefits. This situation demonstrates that even small-scale workshops can have a positive impact on workers' economic well-being.

However, the additional income earned from night shifts still relies on customers coming in outside of regular business hours. This means that this additional income is not yet stable. Furthermore, increased responsibility with length of service, as experienced by senior employees, also results in workers experiencing a greater workload. This suggests that positive economic impacts can also be accompanied by work stress, ultimately impacting workers' socio-psychological well-being.

These findings align with research by Zhou et al. (2024), which explains that informal sector workers benefit economically from flexibility and additional income opportunities, although this is not yet fully stable. Furthermore, research by Afiani (2024) indicates that additional income and non-wage support, such as meals or basic necessities provided by the workplace, can improve workers' daily economic balance, but this is still accompanied by potential work stress due to long working hours and the burden of increasing responsibilities. These two studies reinforce field findings that the economic impact on workshop workers is dual: beneficial but accompanied by certain consequences.

From Max Weber's "iron cage" perspective, the economic impact experienced by workers is part of a rational system that demands efficiency and productivity. The wage structure, determined based on experience, and the distribution of overtime benefits, reflect a rational and measurable economic mechanism. However, Weber emphasized that this rationalization can create a situation where individuals feel bound by a system that limits their freedom. This is evident in workers who, despite receiving economic benefits, continue to feel the pressure of increasing responsibilities and work demands over time. Thus, the economic impact in this workshop illustrates the duality of the iron cage: providing financial benefits but creating structural constraints that limit workers' flexibility.

Economic Satisfaction and Feelings of Trapping

Worker social and emotional dynamics refer to interactions and relationships between workers, emotional states that arise in the work environment, and psychological experiences influenced by the prevailing work system. These dynamics include work harmony, conflict, sense of responsibility, emotional stress, and workers' ability to manage social relationships in demanding work conditions. In the context of an automotive workshop, social dynamics are often influenced by work intensity, division of roles, differences in experience, and feelings of being burdened or trapped in a work routine. Interview with Informant (Boss)

"So far, I've seen that relations between workers are quite good, but there are times when they have disagreements over work issues. Usually, it's about the division of tasks or someone feels their colleague isn't performing optimally. I always remind them to support each other, because if they don't work together, the work can be hampered. I also notice that employees with longer tenures have greater responsibilities, so they may experience greater pressure."

Furthermore, the above interview is supported by the results of interviews with employees:

"Regarding relationships with coworkers, there are sometimes problems. Some don't contribute enough, so the work becomes lopsided. This usually leads to arguments. I once felt trapped in this work system because I've been working here for over two years, so my responsibilities are greater. But what can I do? I have to keep working because I'm the breadwinner for the family."

The interviews indicate that the social dynamics at the Rista Ban Workshop are characterized by generally good working relationships, but also have the potential for conflict. Conflict arises when the division of labor is unequal or when some workers are perceived as contributing less. This situation is common in busy work environments, especially when work rules are strict and operational loads are high. The workshop owner plays a role in maintaining social balance, ensuring that relationships between workers remain conducive to maintaining work effectiveness. On the other hand, the emotional dynamics of workers are also influenced by varying work experiences. New workers tend to be more flexible and still in the adaptation phase, while senior workers face greater emotional stress due to increased responsibilities. Workers who have worked longer, like Baim, experience this pressure as a form of emotional attachment that can lead to boredom or feeling "trapped" in a work routine. This demonstrates that the work system impacts not only the economic aspect but also the psychological well-being of workers.

Furthermore, intense work demands and repeated social interactions create complex emotional dynamics. Workers must balance feelings of frustration, loyalty, the burden of responsibility, and the need to maintain harmony with coworkers. This situation demonstrates that social dynamics cannot be separated from emotional dynamics, as both influence each other in shaping a stable work environment, whether it is prone to conflict.

This finding aligns with research by Simatupang, Simatupang, & Karokaro (2023), which shows that the social and emotional dynamics of informal sector workers are often influenced by imbalances in work contributions, task pressure, and economic dependence on employment. Furthermore, research by Zhou et al. (2024) found that increasing responsibilities can lead to psychological stress and feelings of being trapped in a fixed work pattern. Both findings reinforce field findings that the social and emotional dynamics at the Rista Ban Workshop are a direct consequence of rational and productivity-oriented work patterns.

From Weber's perspective, the social and emotional dynamics of workers are the result of a rationalization process that creates an "iron cage" system that strictly regulates individual behavior through rules, hierarchy, and demands for efficiency. At the Rista Ban Workshop, senior workers feel the pressure of greater responsibility, while new workers must adapt to rational and structured operating rules. The conflict that arises from the imbalance in work contributions reflects how a rational system can limit social spontaneity and create tense emotional relationships. Thus, the social and emotional dynamics of the workshop workers clearly illustrate the position of workers who move within Weber's "iron cage," bound by a system that emphasizes efficiency but limits interpersonal and emotional freedom.

Social Dynamics and Work Coordination

Employee psychological well-being and stress refer to the extent to which working conditions support a worker's sense of security, peace, and mental well-being, as well as the psychological pressures arising from work routines, task demands, and social dynamics within the workplace. Psychological stress can manifest in the form of work stress, mental fatigue, anxiety, feelings of being under pressure, or boredom, especially when work demands are high or the work system is rigorous. Comfort, on the other hand, reflects the conditions in which workers feel valued, supported, and have room to emotionally adapt within their daily work. Interview with Informant (Boss)

"Regarding work comfort, I always try to ensure that employees don't feel overburdened. I provide meals, arrange work according to their abilities, and if there are personal problems, I give them permission. But I also understand that the longer they work, the more responsibilities they will have. And that can put pressure on them, even if I try to manage things as best as possible."

Furthermore, the above interview is supported by the results of interviews with employees:

"I'm actually comfortable working here, especially since I'm new, so there's not too much pressure. But I also see my friends who have been working here for a while, who often seem more stressed because they have more responsibilities. I don't know what will happen yet; maybe it will be a few months before I can feel the challenges. But so far, I'm still relaxed and adapting."

From the interviews, it appears that comfort at work in a workshop depends on the employee's tenure and role: new employees tend to feel comfortable because the workload is relatively light, while senior workers face increasing responsibilities, a situation that can potentially cause psychological stress. Although workshop owners strive to create a supportive work environment (for example, by providing meals and being tolerant of personal needs), this comfort doesn't automatically eliminate the potential for mental stress, especially for those with longer tenure.

The reality on the ground shows that psychological stress arises gradually: as work demands increase, expectations for performance increase, and pressures for productivity and discipline remain high. At some point, senior workers may experience emotional exhaustion, stress, or a feeling of being "trapped" in a work routine that is difficult to escape. Thus, despite the comfort factor, the work system still carries psychological consequences, a duality between job stability and emotional stress.

This situation reflects that comfort and psychological stress are not mutually exclusive but interact dynamically: comfort may be present when workers first join, but over time, pressures increase from work demands, responsibilities, and the hierarchical structure within the workshop, potentially threatening workers' psychological well-being.

These results are consistent with research findings on informal workers in the MSME creative sector in Semarang City, where working conditions, inter-worker relationships, and workload influence workers' psychological well-being (Wibowo & Djastuti, 2019). Furthermore, a study on informal MSME workers in Malang found that mental workload and the non-physical work environment can cause work stress in informal workers (Aprilia, Yunus & Sulistyorini, 2024). These findings support field findings that job comfort does not necessarily guarantee mental well-being; psychological stress can still arise due to work demands and work structures in the informal sector.

Within Weber's "iron cage" theory, modern rational structures and bureaucratic controls in work organizations enable efficiency and order but simultaneously limit flexibility, spontaneity, and individual freedom. At the Rista Ban Workshop, efforts to create comfort through amenities and tolerance demonstrate human effort, but the rational work structure, productivity demands, and managerial control still bind workers to the logic of efficiency. As a result, despite initial comfort, workers, especially senior workers, can experience psychological burdens as part of their attachment to the rational system much like Weber's depiction of the iron cage restricting individual emotional and social freedom.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the work structure and rules at the Rista Ban Workshop implement a rational and standardized modern work system through strict work

hour regulations, a disciplinary mechanism based on salary deductions, and the opportunity for additional income through overtime profit sharing. This system ensures efficient operations, but at the same time creates a highly binding work pattern for workers. Economically, this system provides tangible benefits for workers, such as a stable base salary, additional income from overtime hours, and daily meal allowances that help meet basic needs. However, this additional income is not entirely stable because it depends on customer demand, so workers remain in a volatile economic situation.

In terms of social dynamics, relations between workers are quite good but remain prone to conflict, especially when there is an imbalance in work contributions or an increase in the burden of responsibility for senior workers. This indicates that the modern work structure affects not only productivity but also the work atmosphere between individuals. Emotionally, new workers tend to feel comfortable because they are not yet facing significant demands, while senior workers feel psychological burdens due to routine, increased responsibility, and high productivity pressure. This situation demonstrates the complex relationship between work comfort and long-term psychological stress.

When linked to Max Weber's "Iron Cage" theory, the working conditions at the Rista Ban Workshop demonstrate how modern rationalization creates a structure that binds workers through impersonal rules, strict supervision, and demands for efficiency. Workers, especially senior workers, experience a form of entrapment in routines that are difficult to escape due to economic needs, work hierarchy, and demands for stable productivity. Overall, the impact of the modern work system in this workshop is dualistic: it provides economic benefits and a regular work structure, but also creates social and psychological stress that requires attention in workforce management, particularly in the small and informal business sectors.

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