

Gender Dynamics, Workload, and Job Satisfaction: Understanding Employee Motivation and Operational Failures at PT BRT

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Abstract: *The institutional catering industry depends heavily on human resources to maintain service quality and operational reliability. PT Boga Rasa Tama (PT BRT) has experienced recurring client complaints, employee turnover, and stagnant business performance, indicating underlying organizational challenges related to employee management. A qualitative single-case study design was employed using semi-structured interviews with seven purposively selected informants representing management, HRGA, supervisors, and operational employees, complemented by analysis of internal company documents. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis and validated through methodological triangulation. The findings identified seven interconnected themes: gender dynamics, psychological safety, structural workforce insufficiency, recognition gap, family culture, kitchen-service communication breakdown, and the absence of formal human capital systems. Cross-theme analysis revealed that the lack of structured training, performance measurement, and recognition systems constituted the fundamental organizational condition underlying operational failures. Informal gender-based task allocation, excessive workload, weak psychological safety, and communication problems collectively reduced employee motivation and service reliability, while the family culture helped retain employees without resolving structural deficiencies. Strengthening formal human capital management systems is therefore essential for improving employee motivation, operational consistency, and long-term organizational performance in institutional catering companies.*

Keywords: *gender dynamics; workload; job satisfaction; employee motivation; institutional catering*

Abstrak: Industri katering institusi sangat bergantung pada sumber daya manusia untuk mempertahankan kualitas layanan dan keandalan operasional. PT Boga Rasa Tama (PT BRT) mengalami keluhan pelanggan yang berulang, pergantian karyawan, dan kinerja bisnis yang stagnan, yang mengindikasikan adanya tantangan organisasi terkait pengelolaan karyawan. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain studi kasus tunggal kualitatif melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur terhadap tujuh informan yang dipilih secara *purposive*, yang mewakili manajemen, HRGA, supervisor, dan karyawan operasional, serta dilengkapi dengan analisis dokumen internal perusahaan. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik enam fase Braun dan Clarke serta divalidasi melalui triangulasi metodologis. Hasil penelitian mengidentifikasi tujuh tema yang saling berkaitan, yaitu dinamika gender, keamanan psikologis, kekurangan tenaga kerja secara struktural, kesenjangan pengakuan, budaya kekeluargaan, hambatan komunikasi antara bagian dapur dan pelayanan, serta belum adanya sistem pengelolaan sumber daya manusia yang formal. Analisis lintas tema menunjukkan bahwa kurangnya sistem pelatihan, pengukuran kinerja, dan penghargaan yang terstruktur merupakan kondisi organisasi mendasar yang melatarbelakangi berbagai permasalahan operasional. Pembagian tugas berdasarkan gender secara informal, beban kerja yang berlebihan, lemahnya keamanan psikologis, dan permasalahan komunikasi secara bersama-sama menurunkan motivasi karyawan dan keandalan layanan, sementara budaya kekeluargaan membantu mempertahankan karyawan tanpa menyelesaikan kekurangan struktural yang ada. Oleh karena itu, penguatan sistem manajemen sumber daya manusia yang formal sangat penting untuk meningkatkan motivasi karyawan, konsistensi operasional, dan kinerja organisasi jangka panjang pada perusahaan katering institusi.

Kata kunci: *dinamika gender; beban kerja; kepuasan kerja; motivasi karyawan; katering institusi.*

Introduction

The success of service organizations largely depends on the quality of their human resources, as interactions between employees and customers constitute a fundamental component of service value creation. The institutional catering industry has experienced rapid growth in response to

increasing demand for ready-to-eat meals across industrial, educational, and government sectors. Intensifying competition requires catering companies not only to comply with food safety standards and maintain operational reliability but also to foster a work environment capable of sustaining employee motivation and performance. Previous studies have demonstrated that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices contribute positively to employee motivation, organizational commitment, and work quality (Shore et al., 2011). Likewise, low job satisfaction in the hospitality and food service industry has been associated with higher employee turnover and declining service quality (Heimerl et al., 2020).

The nature of institutional catering makes human resources a critical determinant of operational success because service quality depends on cross-functional coordination, adherence to standard operating procedures, and effective communication throughout food production and distribution. These challenges become more complex in family-owned catering businesses, where close interpersonal relationships often coexist with undocumented management practices and subjective performance evaluations (Peters et al., 2019). Such conditions may lead to inconsistencies in performance management when formal human resource systems fail to develop alongside organizational growth.

Within the DEI literature, gender equality has been identified as a key organizational issue because task allocation, participation opportunities, and recognition of employee contributions continue to be influenced by gender stereotypes. Inclusive workplaces have been shown to reduce interpersonal conflict while improving job satisfaction among diverse workforces (Nishii, 2013). Unequal treatment based on gender may reduce employee motivation, weaken teamwork, and diminish service quality (ILO, 2020). Studies conducted in Indonesia similarly indicate that higher job satisfaction contributes to better service quality, as satisfied employees tend to demonstrate greater dedication and responsiveness (Siscawati et al., 2020). In addition, factors such as recognition, job security, organizational policies, and working conditions play important roles in determining job satisfaction and employee turnover intentions (Shinde, 2025).

These organizational challenges are reflected at PT Boga Rasa Tama (PT BRT), an institutional catering company in Indonesia that has experienced declining operational consistency. Between 2024 and 2025, the company received three formal client complaint letters concerning delayed service, declining food quality, violations of standard operating procedures, and failure to meet contractual commitments. These problems were accompanied by high employee turnover within the service division between February and April 2026 and stagnant revenue growth throughout 2025. Internal company documents also identified competency gaps in SOP compliance, customer communication, food hygiene practices, and occupational safety. Furthermore, the service division was overwhelmingly dominated by male employees, indicating gender homogeneity that may reinforce workplace norms less adaptable to organizational change, as suggested by Nishii (2013).

and Shore et al. (2011).

A preliminary root cause analysis using the Five Whys approach indicated that PT BRT's operational problems were not primarily caused by inadequate technical competence or insufficient procedural knowledge. Instead, low job satisfaction, excessive workload, the absence of a formal performance measurement system, and the lack of mechanisms for monitoring employee experience emerged as more fundamental organizational issues. Organizational behavior literature suggests that work demands exceeding available resources reduce employee motivation through a resource depletion process, as described by the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker & Vries, 2021). Similarly, Self-Determination Theory argues that competence, autonomy, and relatedness are essential psychological needs for fostering intrinsic motivation and encouraging discretionary work effort (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020).

Although numerous studies have examined the relationships among gender dynamics, workload, job satisfaction, and employee motivation in the hospitality and service sectors, relatively limited research has integrated these dimensions within the context of family-owned institutional catering companies. This limitation is particularly evident in organizations experiencing recurring customer complaints, high employee turnover, and the absence of formal performance management systems. Consequently, a research gap remains regarding how gender dynamics, perceived workload, and job satisfaction collectively influence employee motivation and operational accuracy in rapidly growing institutional catering organizations.

Accordingly, this research aims to explore employees' experiences of gender-based task allocation at PT BRT, examine how workload and job satisfaction influence employee motivation and operational accuracy in daily catering activities, and formulate evidence-based organizational interventions to improve both employee satisfaction and operational performance. The findings are expected to contribute to the organizational behavior literature within the institutional catering industry while providing practical guidance for developing more inclusive, structured, and sustainable human resource management systems.

Method

This study employed a qualitative single-case study design to examine organizational conditions underlying operational performance at PT Boga Rasa Tama (PT BRT). A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because it enables an in-depth investigation of contemporary organizational phenomena within their real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its organizational setting are not clearly defined. The research process began with identifying the business issues presented in Chapter I, including recurring operational failures, employee turnover, and stagnant revenue, followed by the development of research questions and objectives grounded in relevant organizational behavior literature. Data were collected using two

complementary sources: secondary data comprising internal company documents including client complaint letters, Training Needs Analysis (TNA) reports, resignation records, workforce composition, and financial performance data and primary data obtained through semi-structured interviews with purposively selected informants representing senior management, HRGA, the Head of Service, and operational employees. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, lasted approximately 30–45 minutes, and were audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure accuracy while maintaining confidentiality.

Interview data were analyzed using the six-phase thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), consisting of data familiarization, initial coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition and naming, and report writing. This analytical approach was selected because of its flexibility in identifying both explicit and latent patterns within organizational experiences. Documentary evidence was analyzed alongside interview findings to strengthen interpretation through methodological triangulation, allowing recurring organizational patterns identified in one source to be confirmed, clarified, or contrasted by evidence from another. Convergent findings formed the basis for diagnosing organizational issues related to gender dynamics, workload, job satisfaction, motivation, and operational performance, while divergent findings were explored to provide additional analytical insights rather than being disregarded.

The trustworthiness of the study was established by applying the four quality criteria proposed by Ahmed (2024), namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was strengthened through triangulation across multiple data sources and informants from different organizational levels, enabling cross-validation of emerging themes. Transferability was supported through rich contextual descriptions of PT BRT's organizational setting, operational characteristics, and participant profiles, allowing readers to assess the applicability of the findings to similar contexts. Dependability was ensured by systematically documenting each stage of data collection and analysis to provide a transparent audit trail. Confirmability was maintained through researcher reflexivity and regular peer debriefing with the academic supervisor, ensuring that interpretations and conclusions remained grounded in the empirical data rather than researcher assumptions. Together, these procedures enhanced the rigor and trustworthiness of the qualitative findings.

Result and Discussion

Theme 1: Gender Dynamics

Informant Perspective

Informants consistently described task allocation at PT BRT as being guided by informal gender norms rather than documented competency criteria. AS explained that physically demanding tasks were generally assigned to male employees, whereas female employees were allocated to lighter operational duties. TB confirmed that driving and heavy lifting were routinely performed by men,

while buffet service was predominantly assigned to women. One kitchen employee (IY) admitted preferring to work in an all-male team because correcting mistakes was perceived to be easier. In contrast, ML argued that female employees tended to be more proactive than some of their male colleagues. These contrasting perceptions indicate that employee capability is frequently interpreted through gender stereotypes rather than objective performance. ML also described following several verification steps before reporting operational issues to her supervisor, reflecting a cautious communication pattern.

Theoretical and Literature Perspective

The findings are consistent with Social Role Theory, which explains that gender expectations become embedded as unwritten organizational norms when they remain unquestioned (Feinstein, 2012). Meuris and Elias (2023) argue that organizations lacking objective performance measures tend to rely on gender stereotypes when evaluating employee contributions. Heilman et al. (2024) further explain that gender bias often emerges through cognitive shortcuts instead of deliberate discrimination, particularly when competency-based evaluation systems are absent.

Gap Analysis

A clear discrepancy exists between PT BRT's current practices and the organizational conditions recommended in the literature. Competency-based task allocation has not been formally implemented, and no KPI system exists to provide objective evidence of employee performance. Consequently, gender assumptions continue to determine role assignment and influence perceptions of capability. This condition is particularly visible in the kitchen division, where the only female employee was assigned exclusively to the morning shift and initially perceived as underperforming despite the absence of objective performance data. Documentary evidence also supports this pattern, with 19 of 21 participants in food safety training being male, indicating that gender homogeneity has become institutionalized rather than occurring by chance.

Key Finding

Gender dynamics at PT BRT are shaped by informal organizational norms that influence both task allocation and performance evaluation. The absence of competency-based human resource practices allows gender stereotypes to persist, limiting equitable utilization of employee capabilities and addressing Research Question 1 concerning employees' experiences of gender-based task allocation.

Theme 2: Psychological Safety

Informant Perspective

Psychological safety emerged as a contextual condition influencing employee behaviour across divisions. DE described a culture in which employees tended to shift blame and waited for instructions instead of taking initiative because mistakes were often attributed to the service team regardless of responsibility. ML reported following a cautious process before raising concerns to

supervisors, while EK observed that some kitchen employees accepted instructions only from their immediate supervisor. These accounts suggest that employees were selective in sharing information and reluctant to communicate concerns openly across teams.

Theoretical and Literature Perspective

Edmondson (2023) defines psychological safety as a shared belief that team members can express concerns, admit mistakes, and challenge existing practices without fear of negative consequences. Jin and Peng (2024) demonstrate that psychological safety enhances communication quality and team performance, whereas Mohase et al. (2025) argue that employees often remain silent because interpersonal risks outweigh the perceived benefits of speaking up.

Gap Analysis

The findings indicate that PT BRT has not developed the psychologically safe climate described in the literature. Employees frequently avoid reporting problems directly, blame shifting remains common, and communication relies heavily on hierarchical relationships. Such conditions are particularly problematic in institutional catering, where rapid information sharing is essential for preventing service failures. Rather than functioning as an isolated issue, psychological safety influences communication, teamwork, and corrective behaviour across multiple organizational processes.

Key Finding

Low psychological safety reduces employees' willingness to communicate operational problems proactively, thereby increasing the likelihood that coordination failures remain unresolved before reaching clients. This finding further explains Research Question 1 by demonstrating how gender dynamics influence interpersonal communication and operational behaviour.

Theme 3: Structural Workforce Insufficiency

Informant Perspective

All informants consistently reported insufficient staffing and limited operational resources. AS highlighted shortages of experienced personnel, while TB explained that permanent staff shortages were compensated through overtime and daily workers. IY described simultaneous shortages of manpower and equipment in the kitchen, whereas EK emphasized workload concentration within the finance function. AD acknowledged that staffing ratios existed only on paper because recruitment depended on current organizational capacity rather than operational requirements.

Theoretical and Literature Perspective

The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model proposes that employees experience declining motivation and increasing errors when job demands continuously exceed available resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Sustained resource shortages create a loss spiral in which excessive workload further reduces organizational performance (Bakker & De Vries, 2021).

Gap Analysis

Although management recognizes staffing shortages, the organization continues relying on temporary workers rather than structurally increasing permanent staffing. Daily workers assist basic operational activities but cannot replace experienced employees responsible for service quality. Consequently, workload remains concentrated among permanent employees, reinforcing fatigue, declining motivation, and inconsistent operational performance.

Key Finding

Workforce shortages represent a chronic structural condition that continually weakens employee motivation and operational reliability. This finding directly addresses Research Question 2 regarding the influence of workload on employee motivation and operational accuracy.

Theme 5: Family Culture as Motivational Anchor

Informant Perspective

All informants consistently identified the family-like culture as the primary reason they remain at PT BRT despite experiencing operational pressures. The family atmosphere was perceived to create emotional attachment, supportive relationships, and a sense of belonging across divisions. Several participants acknowledged that although conflicts and workload existed, positive interpersonal relationships and supportive leadership encouraged them to stay with the organization.

Theoretical and Literature Perspective

According to Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, interpersonal relationships and supportive supervision function as hygiene factors that prevent dissatisfaction but are insufficient to generate sustained motivation. Similarly, Self-Determination Theory emphasizes relatedness as one of the three fundamental psychological needs required to maintain intrinsic motivation. However, relatedness alone cannot compensate for the absence of competence development and autonomy, both of which require formal organizational systems.

Gap Analysis

PT BRT demonstrates strong relational culture but lacks complementary formal HR practices such as structured training, objective performance evaluation, and systematic recognition. Consequently, the family culture successfully retains employees but does not substantially improve motivation or operational performance. Informal relationships therefore compensate for organizational weaknesses without eliminating their underlying causes.

Key Finding

Family culture represents a valuable organizational strength that supports employee retention; however, without formal human capital systems it cannot independently sustain employee motivation or service quality, addressing RQ2.

Theme 6: Kitchen–Service Communication Breakdown

Informant Perspective

Communication failures between the kitchen and service divisions emerged as one of the most consistently reported operational problems. Informants described delays in food preparation, incomplete communication regarding client requests, and poor coordination before service delivery. These communication failures frequently resulted in service delays and operational disruption.

Theoretical and Literature Perspective

The SERVQUAL model identifies reliability as the primary determinant of service quality, requiring consistent and timely service delivery. The Swiss Cheese Model further explains that organizational failures result from multiple small communication breakdowns rather than isolated individual mistakes (Arli et al., 2024). Effective interdepartmental coordination therefore represents a critical organizational defense against service failure.

Gap Analysis

PT BRT currently relies on informal communication without standardized coordination procedures or documented communication protocols. Consequently, important client information is often not transmitted between divisions, allowing operational errors to accumulate and ultimately contribute to the formal client complaints documented in Chapter I.

Key Finding

Kitchen–service communication breakdown constitutes a systemic coordination failure directly associated with recurring operational errors and formal customer complaints, addressing RQ2.

Theme 7: Absence of Formal Human Capital Systems

Informant Perspective

The absence of structured human capital management systems was consistently confirmed across all organizational levels. Informants reported that formal onboarding, structured training, objective performance measurement, and systematic recognition had not yet been implemented. Employee performance was evaluated primarily through informal supervisory observations rather than standardized criteria.

Theoretical and Literature Perspective

The JD-R Model identifies training, supervisory support, role clarity, and performance feedback as essential job resources that enable sustainable performance. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory similarly identifies achievement and recognition as motivators that require objective performance measurement, while Self-Determination Theory emphasizes competence development through continuous learning and feedback (Mcanally & Hagger, 2024).

Gap Analysis

Although PT BRT has experienced rapid organizational growth, its human resource management systems have not developed accordingly. Employees continue to rely on informal learning, subjective performance evaluation, and occasional recognition practices. The absence of structured human capital systems allows other organizational problems including gender bias,

workforce shortages, recognition gaps, and communication failures to persist without systematic intervention.

Key Finding

The absence of formal human capital systems at PT BRT is the structural root from which all other organizational problems grow. Without building this foundation, any interventions aimed at specific issues such as gender dynamics, workload, or communication breakdown will only produce short-term relief rather than lasting organizational change.

Cross-Theme Analysis

The seven themes collectively demonstrate that PT BRT's operational problems are interconnected rather than independent. Theme 7, the absence of formal human capital systems, emerged as the central condition underlying the remaining themes. Without formal training, performance measurement, and recognition systems, gender-based task allocation, workforce shortages, declining motivation, and communication failures remained unresolved.

Workforce shortages and recognition gaps formed a self-reinforcing loss spiral. Chronic understaffing increased workload, while insufficient recognition reduced employee motivation, contributing to turnover and further worsening staffing shortages. At the same time, gender-based assumptions and the absence of objective performance criteria weakened psychological safety, discouraging employees from communicating concerns openly and contributing to communication failures between operational divisions.

Family culture functioned as the only stabilizing factor within this system. Although it strengthened employee commitment and reduced turnover, it also reduced management's awareness of underlying structural problems because positive interpersonal relationships masked organizational weaknesses. Consequently, operational failures were not caused by isolated employee behavior but by an interconnected organizational system rooted in inadequate human capital management.

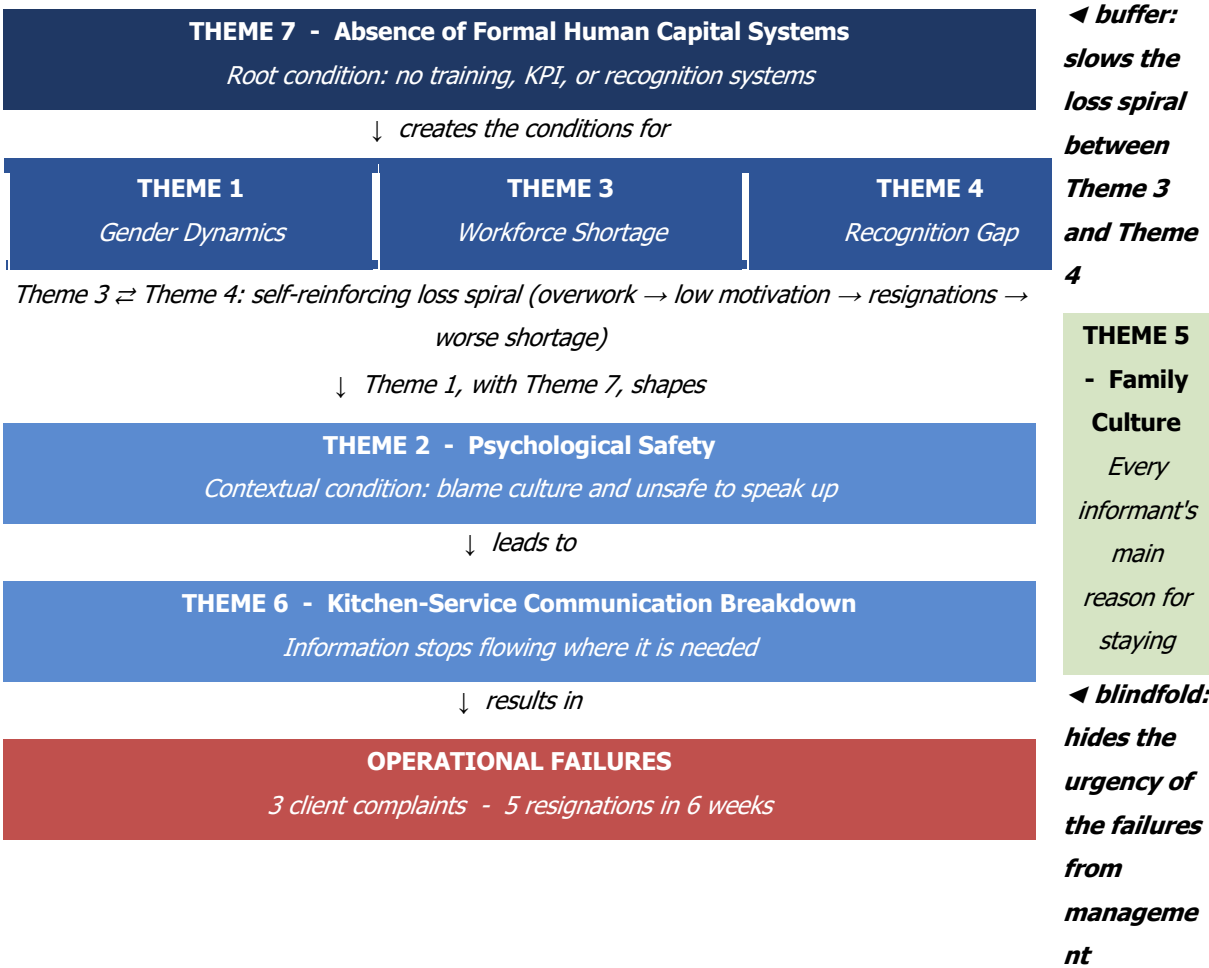


Figure 1. Cross-Theme Connection Map

Refined Root Cause Analysis

The thematic analysis refined the preliminary root cause analysis developed in Chapter I by demonstrating that repeated operational failures originated from a single structural condition: the absence of formal human capital systems. The Five Whys analysis showed that service failures resulted from inconsistent SOP implementation, which reflected declining employee motivation rather than inadequate technical knowledge. Motivation deteriorated because chronic workload pressures and insufficient recognition reduced employee engagement, while these conditions remained unresolved due to the absence of objective performance measurement and employee monitoring systems.

Table 1. Refined Five Whys Root Cause Analysis

	Question	Answer (supported by themes and evidence)
Why 1	Why did PT BRT repeatedly fail service and food quality standards despite having SOPs?	Employees did not consistently follow quality checks or SOPs, evidenced by three formal client complaints and TNA findings. The analysis confirmed this through Theme 5, where DE noted that special client requests often failed to reach the kitchen in

Why 2	Why did employees not consistently apply the SOPs they were trained on?	time and EK noted that some kitchen staff only listened to their own chef. The TNA results indicate the issue relates more to motivation and engagement than to technical knowledge, as employees were observed to be unresponsive and showed limited initiative in maintaining standards. This reflects the motivational erosion in Theme 4 rather than a gap in ability.
Why 3	Why did employees show low motivation and weak ownership of quality outcomes?	Job satisfaction was low and declining, reflected in five resignations within six weeks. Workload pressure from understaffing in Theme 3 and the absence of recognition in Theme 4 weakened motivation and ownership. All seven informants confirmed understaffing, and ML, TB, IY, and EK noted that their effort often went unrecognized.
Why 4	Why were job satisfaction low, workload pressures high, and these problems left unresolved?	PT BRT had no formal KPI system for operations and no mechanism to monitor employee satisfaction or workload, as described in Theme 7, so these problems were neither measured nor addressed. AD confirmed that staffing ratios existed only on paper, and AS assumed conditions were acceptable.
Why 5	Why was there no formal system to monitor performance or employee experience?	The company grew quickly from a small family business into a larger organization, but its human capital systems did not develop at the same pace, leaving the structural gap identified in Theme 7. This is the confirmed root cause from which the other conditions derive.

The analysis further distinguished organizational conditions already recognized by PT BRT from deeper structural mechanisms identified through this study. Although management acknowledged understaffing, client complaints, and SOP non-compliance, the research demonstrated that these visible problems originated from interconnected human capital deficiencies rather than isolated operational errors.

Table 2. Seen and Unseen Organizational Conditions

Aspect	Seen by the Company	Unseen by the Company (Revealed by This Study)
Understaffing	Recognized as a problem and managed by relying on daily workers	That it forms a self-reinforcing loss spiral in which turnover worsens the very shortage that caused it
Client complaints	Aware of the three formal complaints	That their root is the absence of formal systems, not the carelessness of individual employees
SOP non-compliance	Identified through TNA that SOPs were not applied	That this stems from low motivation driven by the recognition gap, not from a lack of knowledge
Recognition	Not clearly recognized as a problem	That irregular and informal recognition steadily erodes motivation and contributes to turnover
Gender-based task allocation	Treated as a normal way of organizing work	That it shapes perceptions of fairness and persists unexamined because no objective criteria exist
Family culture	Valued positively as the main reason employees stay	That it also masks the urgency of the problems, delaying management's response
Overall condition	Described by AS as still good and conducive	That the resignations and complaints reveal deeper structural problems beneath the positive mood

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that PT BRT's operational failures are driven by interconnected organizational conditions rather than isolated employee performance issues. The findings show that informal gender-based task allocation, chronic workforce shortages, low psychological safety, inadequate recognition, family culture dependency, and communication breakdown collectively reduce employee motivation and operational reliability. Cross-theme analysis identifies the absence of formal human capital systems including structured training, objective performance measurement, and systematic recognition as the fundamental organizational condition underlying these challenges.

The study contributes to organizational behavior research by integrating gender dynamics, workload, job satisfaction, and employee motivation within the context of an institutional catering company. Practically, the findings suggest that sustainable operational improvement requires strengthening formal human capital management systems alongside competency-based task allocation, structured performance evaluation, recognition programs, and improved cross-divisional coordination. These interventions provide a foundation for enhancing both employee well-being and long-term service quality.

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