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ANALYSIS OF SUPPORTING FACTORS AND CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING KAIZEN CULTURE IN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

Fari Aus[1], Muh. Husriadi[2], Sardin[3], Ana Nurjanah[4]

[1] University of Halu Oleo, Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia
[2] University of Halu Oleo, Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia
[3] University of Halu Oleo, Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia
[4] Bakti University of Indonesia, Banyuwangi, Southeast Sulawesi, Infonesia

ABSTRACT

The Kaizen culture, which focuses on continuous improvement, has been widely implemented in the company big, but its implementation in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) is still facing various challenges. This study aims to identify factor supporters and challenges key in the implementation of Kaizen in the SME environment. Using a qualitative approach, data was collected through interview in-depth with SME owners and managers as well analyzed use thematic analysis technique. The results of the study show that although Kaizen can improve productivity, efficiency and satisfaction customers, SMEs often experience constraints related to limited resources, competence managerial, and support external. This finding confirms importance Kaizen adaptation in the context of SMEs and its relevance for the development of competitiveness term length. Implications This research practice includes recommendation for stakeholders' interest in providing training and support special for SMEs who want to implementing Kaizen culture.

Keywords: *Kaizen, SMEs, productivity, satisfaction customer, challenge implementation*

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CORRESPONDING:
Name : Muh. Husriadi
E-mail: husriadiadi@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

SMEs holds an important role in the economy, both globally and internationally local, with significant contributions to the field work and improvement welfare public. In Indonesia, Small (Mazlan et al., 2021)and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) contribute about 97% chance work and hold important role in economic growth (Tambunan, 2019). One of the management approaches that is increasingly relevant to be applied in business small medium enterprises (SMEs) is the concept of Kaizen (Pesotskiy & Grigoreva, 2023). The concept of Kaizen which means " continuous improvement " is very relevant for business small intermediate because it can improve efficiency without need significant investment (Husriadi, Ode, et al., 2024; Mohd Rusli et al., 2024). The concept of kaizen allows subtraction activities that do not provide value add, increase quality products, and encourage involvement employees in search solution operational daily (Álvarez-García et al., 2018; Carnerud et al., 2018a).

In the context of the digital economy, Kaizen supports efforts micro, small and medium enterprises in innovating and adapting to technological changes in order to remain competitive (Ćwiklicki, 2023; Husriadi, Aswin, et al., 2024; Lordelo et al., 2021; Suarez-Barraza et al., 2022a). Through kaizen concept, business actors can continue do adjustments needed to stay competitive in the market and provide value plus for customers and stakeholders interest (Helmold et al., 2022). In the long term long, Kaizen culture helps business small medium in increasing competitiveness and strengthening the local economy to achieve inclusive and sustainable growth (Carnerud et al., 2018b).

Implementation Kaizen principles in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) present complex challenges (Zhou, 2016a). SMEs often face difficulties in terms of resources such as finances, time, and energy Work (Garcia-Martinez et al., 2023; Owalla et al., 2022; Serrasqueiro et al., 2023). This obstacle makes it difficult investment in training and equipment advanced to Kaizen (Garcia-Martinez et al., 2023). Lack skill management is also an obstacle in designing continuous (Gray et al., 2022)improvement. Lack of support employees are also a challenge, especially because kaizen requires participation every member (Suarez-Barraza et al., 2022b). Internal factors such as quality leadership high and strong organizational culture is essential to motivate member (Alvarado-Ramírez et al., 2018; Suárez Barraza et al.,

2018). Factors external such as government support or pressure competitive from external markets can affect success application of Kaizen (Sahmi & El Abbadi, 2024; von Thiele Schwarz et al., 2017). Although there have been many previous studies that have reviewed Kaizen culture in business increase quality and efficiency of the organization, but study of the method its implementation in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) is still limited (Hosono et al., 2020; Tekin et al., 2019). Most previous studies have focused more on studying how Kaizen is implemented in a company big with support the necessary resources and organizational structure (Hosono et al., 2020; Tekin et al., 2019).

Temporary focused attention on the company big has made understanding of the application of Kaizen in SMEs is becoming less in-depth, especially regarding the factors unique factors that influence success or failure implementation in the SME environment (Al Smadi, 2009; Belt, 2019). On the other hand, SMEs have characteristics different characteristic from company big, like limitations resources and challenges in management (Aamer et al., 2022; Husriadi et al., n.d.). Therefore, the strategy that brings success for company big is not necessarily suitable when applied in a way directly to SMEs without proper adjustment (Aranha et al., 2018). Therefore, there is a lack of in-depth research on the factors Supporter and also obstacles in the implementation of Kaizen in SMEs indicate the need for further research. Therefore, this study aims to identify factor supporters and challenges in implementing Kaizen culture in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Through study of factors that influence success the application of Kaizen, this study aims to provide insight practical for SMEs to improve effectiveness in running practice continuous improvement. Furthermore, this study provides guidelines for SMEs in overcoming limitations related to resources and expertise managerial, as well as utilize factor good supporter of internal and external aspects external.

This research contributes by providing a comprehensive understanding for stakeholders SME interests regarding needs and challenges during the Kaizen implementation process, in line with efforts to increase competitiveness in the competitive global market.

The goal end of this research is to encourage growth of SMEs through adaptive and effective implementation of Kaizen culture in the context of globalization. This

study makes a valuable contribution by presenting a detailed and specific analysis. regarding various factors supporters and challenges that may be faced in the implementation Kaizen concept in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). This context is often overlooked in most large previous studies, which usually focus on the company large or other industrial sectors that have abundant resources, adequate infrastructure, and capacity superior managerial.

In the context of SMEs, the implementation Kaizen methodology requires a much more flexible and adaptive approach, because characteristics uniqueness of the SME itself, including constraints in financial resources, expertise limited managerial skills, and an organizational culture that is still in the development stage.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Kaizen Culture

Kaizen culture, as a continuous improvement approach, is an important foundation in efforts to improve the performance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The Kaizen concept was first introduced by Imai (Sahmi & El Abbadi, 2024b) which emphasizes small and continuous improvements involving all individuals in the organization. In SMEs, this culture has great potential because of its flexibility and relatively simple organizational structure, allowing for more effective implementation than large companies (Carnerud et al., 2018c).

B. Supporting factors for Kaizen implementation

Factors supporting Kaizen implementation include management commitment, employee training, and a collaborative work culture. The success of Kaizen implementation depends on the involvement of all levels of the organization and adaptation to specific business needs. In addition, adequate technological support and financial resources are also crucial elements (Alvarado-Ramírez et al., 2018b). However, challenges in implementing Kaizen often arise from employee resistance to change, limited resources, and lack of understanding of the Kaizen concept. According

to (Burnes & Bargal, 2017) resistance can be overcome through effective communication strategies, intensive training, and a gradual change approach. In the context of MSMEs, awareness of the importance of a culture of continuous improvement is key to overcoming challenges and increasing competitiveness. Previous studies have consistently shown that the implementation of Kaizen culture can improve operational efficiency, product quality, and customer satisfaction, making it relevant to be implemented in MSMEs.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses design qualitative explorative. This approach was chosen Because his ability to understand complexity Implementation of Kaizen in the field in a way deep, and allow further exploration on perspective and experience from SMEs actors related to factors drivers and challenges they face.

The research procedure begins with the selection of sample through purposive sampling technique, involving owners and managers of SMEs who have or are try apply Kaizen principles in their business operations. Data collection was carried out through semi- structured interviews, which provide flexibility for informant to express their views and experiences open. Besides interview, observation carried out in selected SMEs use to obtain visual and contextual understanding of Kaizen implementation in activities their daily routine.

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic approach to identify patterns, themes, and categories related to factors drivers and challenges in implementing Kaizen in SMEs. The analysis process includes coding open, axial, and selective to identify theme main as well as connection between factors that influence success Kaizen implementation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Understanding and Perception of Kaizen

5.1.1 Definition The Concept of Kaizen

In the context of managing Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), the Kaizen concept is a management approach that places great emphasis on continuous improvement through changes small However still significant, which is done in a way consistent in activity everyday life. According to (Zhou, 2016b), implementation Kaizen principles in SME environment are not only successful increase efficiency only operational, but also capable push existence changes in work culture to be more responsive and collaborative. For SMEs, which often have to struggling with various limitations on resources, the Kaizen principle is very relevant Because enable them to achieve improvement quality in a way slowly However Certain without need too large an investment.

In addition, Kaizen creates an environment that allows SMEs to continuously innovate processes without bother stability operational, so that make it a very relevant solution to maintain business continuity in the long term long (Belt, 2019). These findings are increasingly strengthening the argument that Kaizen is not just a mere draft management, but also a practice substantial management and has a direct impact on achievement sustainable success of SMEs.

5.1.2 Relevance for SMEs

The results of this study found that relevance The implementation of Kaizen in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) lies in its ability to support the company small in achieving higher efficiency and productivity in a sustainable manner. In the context of SMEs, which often face limitations in financial and human resources work, Kaizen allows existence repair gradually without need investment big, but still produce a significant impact. This finding is in line with recent research, that the application of Kaizen in SMEs in the sector manufacturing and services proven increase quality product up to 20 percent and speed up the production process by an average of 18

percent within a period of time two years, through adjustment small However consistent on-line production (Aamer et al., 2022). The importance of Kaizen for SMEs is also seen in the increase ability adapt to market dynamics. Likewise with research it was found that SMEs that implemented Kaizen principles are more capable respond change need customers and market fluctuations compared to companies that do not adopt This method (Serrasqueiro et al., 2023). Kaizen empowers every employee to participate in the innovation process, which ultimately strengthen the ability of SMEs to survive in a way competitive in a dynamic market.

In addition, the Kaizen approach encourages a collaborative culture among employees and facilitate more effective communication within the team, which contributes to the creation of a productive and innovative work environment. Findings from various studies it shows that the implementation of Kaizen is not only relevant but it is also very important for SMEs to optimize their limitations and strengthen their competitiveness. In the midst of challenges of the digital era, Kaizen provides a basis for SMEs to carry out sustainable transformation, ensuring growth and sustainability term long.

5.1.3Challenge Implementation the Concept of Kaizen

The results of this study found that limitations resources, whether financial, human or technological, are challenge key in the implementation of Kaizen among Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). SMEs often face obstacles in allocating sufficient resources for the continuous improvement process as advocated by the Kaizen concept, considering limitations budget and manpower work that is often owned. This finding is in line with research that around 60% of SMEs in Southeast Asia reported that the lack of budget becomes a barrier main in implementing Kaizen practices (Carnerud et al., 2018a). This has an impact on the inability of SMEs to fund training employees needed as well as renew equipment to support the improvement process.

In addition, the shortcomings power expert in management Kaizen operational and implementation limits effectiveness of continuous improvement programs in SMEs. Likewise with research shows that SMEs that do not have staff with skills specifically in process improvement often experience difficulties in implementing effective and sustainable change (Mazlan et al., 2021). This problem is exacerbated

by the lack of support external, such as from the government or service providers service Consulting that focuses on SME development, which is very much needed to provide access to relevant knowledge and technology.

In addition, the limitations of technology owned by SMEs also slow down implementation of Kaizen. Likewise with research noted that SMEs that do not have access to cutting-edge technology tend difficulty in adopting Kaizen method which requires automation or digitalization of processes (Mazlan et al., 2021). These findings highlight importance support external as well as need for SMEs to innovate within limitations their resources, in order to maximize benefits of Kaizen without fully depends on investment big.

5.2 Impact of Kaizen Implementation

5.2.1 Improvement Productivity

The results of this study found that the implementation of Kaizen culture in SMEs has been proven effective in encouraging improvement productivity, through continuous process improvement and empowerment employees in identification and resolution problem operational. This finding is in line with research by SMEs that implement Kaizen showing improvement productivity up to 20% within a period time one year (von Thiele Schwarz et al., 2017). This improvement is mainly happened Because existence subtraction lead time in production and layout optimization facilities that encourage efficiency flow work.

Furthermore, research shows that the Kaizen approach to reducing waste, both in terms of time, materials and energy contribute to the improvement significant productivity (Gray et al., 2022). This study found that SMEs that consistently do repair small but continued success in reducing the process time by up to 15%, thus increasing number of outputs without need addition investment big. In addition, the increase productivity is also visible through improvement involvement employees in business improvement operational. By providing the opportunity for employees to participate active in the improvement process, SMEs are able to creating an adaptive and responsive environment, which ultimately strengthen their capacity to compete in a dynamic market.

5.2.2Customer Response

The results of this study found that Application of Kaizen in business small and medium enterprises (SMEs) make a significant contribution to increasing responsiveness to needs customers, which are vital elements to maintain competitiveness in the market. This finding is in line with research on the Kaizen approach facilitating SMEs to adapt more quickly to feedback come back customer through change small However consistent in operational and service processes (Tekin et al., 2019).

The study shows that SMEs that adopt Kaizen are able to increase level satisfaction customer up to 25% within a period time six months, especially blessing his ability to handle complaint customers more responsively and efficiently. In addition, research shows that SMEs that implement Kaizen are successful in reducing lead time responsive to requests customer up to 30%, through optimization internal procedures and communications interdepartmental (Hempel et al., 2022).

By identifying and eliminating obstacle operationally, companies can provide faster and more precise responses to market needs. These findings show that Kaizen not only improves internal efficiency but also strengthens customer relationship through improvement quality service. Through implementation of Kaizen, SMEs can create mark significant addition for customers, so that strengthen loyalty and trust customers in the middle condition increasingly fierce competition fierce.

5.2.3 Improvement satisfaction customer

The results of this study found that the implementation of Kaizen in SMEs has been proven in a way significant increase satisfaction customer, which is a factor key to maintaining and expanding the customer base. This finding is in line with research on the Kaizen approach which encourages repair continuously on quality products and services have a positive impact on perception customer about value and reliability products (Garcia-Martinez et al., 2023).

The study shows that SMEs that are consistent adopting Kaizen has increased satisfaction customer up to 30%, thanks to their ability to guarantee better quality and time faster response to needs customers. In addition, research from supports this finding by showing that Kaizen helps SMEs reduce errors (Serrasqueiro et al., 2023).

production and increase accuracy in fulfilling order, which is direct influence experience positive customers. Improvement This quality is also supported by handling more proactive and collaborative issues inter-departmental, which ultimately strengthen reputation company in the eye's customers.

Therefore, the implementation of Kaizen has an important role in creating connection term long with customers through improvement satisfaction, which can encourage loyalty customers in the long term long and help SMEs compete more effectively in competitive markets.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the findings of this study, the implementation of Kaizen culture in the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) sector has an impact on increasing productivity, efficiency operational, and satisfaction customers. Kaizen encourages continuous improvement to improve the ability of SMEs to respond to market dynamics and meet need customer appropriate time. Although face challenges such as limitations resources and competencies managerial, business successful small and medium enterprises adopt Kaizen principles are improving quality product, satisfaction customers, and competitiveness.

This study contributes to the literature by examining the importance of Kaizen in the context of SMEs, a topic that is often neglected in previous research, most of which big focus on the company large. These findings suggest that Kaizen can serve as a sustainable and relevant management strategy. for SMEs, especially in improving performance in the era of the digital economy that continues developing. From this research it is recommended that stakeholders in the SME sector must be more active in adopting and adapting the Kaizen culture as part of from their development strategy.

For SME owners, strengthening ability management and fostering an organizational culture that supports continuous improvement is step an important start. It is hoped that the government and institutions supporters provide the necessary training and support to help SMEs cope barriers to implementing Kaizen, such as access to resources, knowledge managerial, and training technical. Suggestions for

further research are to examine in more depth internal and external factors that can strengthen implementation of Kaizen in SMEs, including the influence of organizational culture and support relevant policies. With a deeper understanding, SMEs can be better prepared adopt Kaizen practice in effective and create sustainable competitiveness in the global market.

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