

Strategic Soft Skills Development as a Driver of Employee Performance: A Study in the Manufacturing Sector

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ABSTRACT

In improving employee performance, one way that can be done by the company is by holding training and development of soft skills. Training is a learning process designed to improve the knowledge, skills, and competence of individuals in a particular field, the training itself has the aim of improving and developing employee attitudes, behavior, and skills. While soft skills are non-technical abilities related to how a person interacts and collaborates with others. Soft skills include various interpersonal, communication, and emotional abilities that aim to improve individual effectiveness in working, build good relationships with teamwork, and create a productive and harmonious work environment. This study aims to determine the effect of training and development of soft skills on the performance of CV Dwi Pelita Mas employees. The method in this study uses a quantitative method by distributing questionnaires with a sample or research respondents totaling 35 employees of CV Dwi Pelita Mas. The results of this study indicate that training and development of soft skills have a significant positive effect on the performance of CV Dwi Pelita Mas employees.

Keywords: *Training, Soft Skill Development, Employee Performance*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, business competition has become increasingly intense, requiring companies to continuously improve their performance in order to survive and remain competitive. One of the main objectives of organizations is to achieve high employee performance, as employees play a crucial role in determining organizational success. Well-trained and well-developed human resources contribute directly to organizational growth through improved work performance. Training and soft skill development programs are designed to enhance employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities in carrying out their duties effectively.

However, employee training and development practices in Indonesia remain relatively limited. According to data reported by CNN Indonesia (2020), based on the World Bank Enterprise Survey, fewer than 10% of companies in Indonesia provide formal training programs for their employees. This figure is considerably lower compared to neighboring countries such as Vietnam (20%), the Philippines (60%), and China (80%). These findings indicate that Indonesian companies still lack adequate training and development initiatives, even though human resource development through

training and soft skills is a key component in achieving superior and competitive human capital (CNN Indonesia, 2020).

CV Dwi Pelita Mas is a manufacturing company located in Mojokerto, East Java, specializing in candle production and operating for more than ten years. Despite its established presence in the local and regional markets, the company has recently experienced a decline in employee performance, reflected in decreasing production output and increasing defective products. Internal company data show that production defects are mainly caused by employee errors and insufficient knowledge during the production process, such as mixing different types of candle materials, which results in cracked products. These conditions have negatively affected company sales performance over the past three years (CV Dwi Pelita Mas, 2025).

Human resources are strategic assets that must be continuously maintained and developed to support long-term organizational performance (Siregar, 2018, as cited in Suryani et al., 2023). The quality of human resources is a critical factor influencing organizational success, as it reflects employees' physical and non-physical abilities. High-quality human resources can be developed through education, training, and work experience, which enable employees to carry out their responsibilities effectively (Widodo, as cited in Atika & Mafra, 2020).

Training and development programs play a vital role in improving employee performance, particularly in response to technological advancements and increasing work demands. Training helps employees enhance their technical competencies, while development programs support continuous skill improvement (Triasmoko et al., 2014, as cited in Andayani & Hirawati, 2021). Employees who participate in training and development programs tend to demonstrate better performance compared to those who do not receive such programs (Rahinnaya & Surya Perdhana, 2016, as cited in Andayani & Hirawati, 2021).

In addition to technical skills, soft skills have become increasingly important in determining employee performance. Soft skills include non-technical abilities such as communication, teamwork, time management, leadership, adaptability, and emotional intelligence (Lan, 2023; Sokolova et al., 2022; Acharya, 2023, as cited in Telaumbanua, 2024). Strong soft skills enable employees to perform their tasks more efficiently, reduce workplace conflicts, and create a harmonious working environment (Pradana & Buniarto, 2024). Consequently, soft skill development programs are expected to have a direct impact on improving employee performance.

Employee performance reflects the extent to which employees are able to complete tasks in accordance with organizational standards and responsibilities. Performance can be defined as a series of activities related to managing human resources in order to achieve organizational goals (Nawawi, 2013, as cited in Juniarti & Indahingwati, 2020). High or low employee performance is influenced by employees' skills, experience, and learning processes, which are shaped through training and development initiatives.

Previous studies have shown that training has a positive and significant effect on employee performance (Lukman et al., 2024), while soft skills also have a significant influence on employee performance (Khairunnisa & Hijriyantomi, 2020). However, studies that integrate training and soft skill development into a single analytical model, particularly in small manufacturing companies, remain limited. Therefore, this study aims to examine the effect of training and soft skill development on employee performance at CV Dwi Pelita Mas. This research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically by providing insights into integrated human resource development strategies that enhance employee performance and organizational effectiveness.

2. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research design, which emphasizes numerical data analysis to examine relationships among variables through statistical procedures (Musianto, 2002, as cited in Waruwu et al., 2023; Mulyadi, 2013, as cited in Waruwu et al., 2023). The research was conducted at CV Dwi Pelita Mas, Mojokerto Regency, East Java, from October 2024 to February 2025. Data were collected through the distribution of structured questionnaires as the primary data source, supported by interviews and company documents as secondary data.

The research population consisted of 35 active employees. Due to the relatively small population size, all employees were included as research respondents using a saturated sampling technique (Garaika & Darmanah, 2019, as cited in Waruwu et al., 2023; Sugiyono, 2014, as cited in Sari & Ratmono, 2021). The questionnaire used closed-ended questions measured on a five-point Likert scale to assess training, soft skill development, and employee performance (Sugiyono, 2016; Wirawan, 2012, as cited in Giantara & Astuti, 2020). Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression with the assistance of SPSS.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Remark
Training	0.952	Reliable
Soft Skill Development	0.939	Reliable
Employee Performance	0.751	Reliable

The reliability test results indicate that all research variables have Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.60, meaning that all instruments are reliable. The Cronbach's Alpha values for training (0.952), soft skill development (0.939), and employee performance (0.751) demonstrate high internal consistency. Therefore, the research instruments are considered appropriate for collecting accurate and consistent data.

Table 2. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.929	0.697	0.491
Training	0.452	6.222	0.000
Soft Skill Development	0.290	3.220	0.003

Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

Based on the multiple linear regression analysis, the regression equation is formulated as follows: $Y = 1.929 + 0.452X_1 + 0.290X_2 + e$. This equation indicates that:

1. The constant value of 1.929 suggests that employee performance remains at this level when training and soft skill development are held constant.
2. The regression coefficient for training (0.452) indicates that an increase in training leads to an improvement in employee performance by 0.452 units.
3. The regression coefficient for soft skill development (0.290) indicates that an increase in soft skill development improves employee performance by 0.290 units.

Table 3. t-Test (Partial) Results

Variable	t-value	t-table	Sig.
Training	6.222	1.694	0.000
Soft Skill Development	3.220	1.694	0.003

The partial t-test results show that training has a positive and significant effect on employee performance ($p < 0.05$). Similarly, soft skill development also has a positive and significant effect on employee performance ($p < 0.05$).

Table 4. F-Test (Simultaneous) Results

Model	F	Sig.
Regression	26.541	0.000

The F-test results indicate an F-value of 26.541 with a significance level of 0.000, which is lower than 0.05. This result confirms that training and soft skill development simultaneously have a significant effect on employee performance.

Table 5. Coefficient of Determination (R Square)

R	R Square
0.790	0.624

The R Square value of 0.624 indicates that training and soft skill development explain 62.4% of the variation in employee performance, while the remaining 37.6% is influenced by other factors not included in this research model.

The Effect of Training on Employee Performance

The t-test results indicate that training has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at CV Dwi Pelita Mas. This finding is consistent with previous studies by Dagne Gebrehiwot and Elantheraiyan (2023) and Al-Rawahi (2022), which concluded that training enhances employee knowledge, skills, and productivity. From the human capital theory perspective, training represents an organizational investment that strengthens employee competencies and improves performance outcomes.

The Effect of Soft Skill Development on Employee Performance

The results demonstrate that soft skill development has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. This finding supports previous research by Tringgani et al. (2024) and Wijayanti and Wibowo (2020), emphasizing the importance of soft skills such as communication, initiative, teamwork, and time management in improving work effectiveness. According to individual competence theory, soft skills complement technical skills and play a crucial role in achieving optimal performance.

The Effect of Training and Soft Skill Development on Employee Performance

The simultaneous test results indicate that training and soft skill development jointly have a positive and significant effect on employee performance at CV Dwi Pelita Mas. This finding is consistent with previous studies by Dagne Gebrehiwot and Elantheraiyan (2023), which emphasized that training significantly improves employee performance, and Tringgani et al. (2024), who found that soft skill development has a significant influence on employee performance. These results suggest that training and soft skill development work synergistically in enhancing employee performance, where training strengthens employees' technical knowledge and job-related skills, while soft skill

development improves interpersonal abilities such as communication, teamwork, initiative, and time management. This finding supports human capital theory, which views training as an investment that increases productivity, and individual competence theory, which emphasizes that a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes including soft skills determines individual effectiveness in the workplace (Spencer & Spencer, 1993).

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that training and soft skill development have a positive and significant effect on employee performance at CV Dwi Pelita Mas, both partially and simultaneously. The findings indicate that effective training programs enhance employees' technical competencies, while soft skill development strengthens interpersonal abilities that support productivity and work effectiveness. These results emphasize that employee performance improvement is not only determined by technical expertise but also by the development of behavioral and social competencies. Therefore, organizations are encouraged to implement continuous and job-relevant training programs complemented by structured soft skill development activities. For future research, it is recommended to incorporate additional variables and broader research settings to improve generalizability and provide deeper insights into employee performance determinants.

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