Workplace Culture and Environmental Factors in Indonesian Construction: a Qualitative Study of PT Alam Sutera Realty Project Officers

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigates the interplay between workplace culture and environmental factors within the Indonesian construction industry. Through interviews and observations with Project Officers, focusing on PT Alam Sutera Realty, the research explores how these factors influence project outcomes. Findings reveal a strong familial culture fostering collaboration in the company, gives comfort to the employees but also hinder decision-making. Environmental challenges, particularly unpredictable weather, significantly impact project timelines, especially heavy rainfall and hot sunny heat. The study highlights the need for more structured approaches to project management that address both cultural factors to be resolved within the company and approaches that address environmental factors to enhance project efficiency and mitigate risks, so that project can be done within the schedule approved.

Keywords: construction project management, workplace culture, environmental factors

1. Introduction

The construction industry is a complex sector that plays a vital role in economic development, urbanization, and infrastructure growth. It includes a wide range of activities, from residential housing projects to large-scale commercial developments and public infrastructure works. Success in this industry is based on the effective coordination of various elements, including technical expertise, design and planning, resource management, regulatory compliance, and, importantly, human dynamics within the workplace. The integration of these factors is essential for ensuring that projects are completed on time, within budget, and to the required quality standards.

At the heart of construction project management is the role of the Project Officer, a key figure responsible for overseeing the execution and completion of projects. Project Officers are tasked with coordinating between different teams and stakeholders within the industry, managing resources, ensuring compliance with safety and quality standards, and addressing any issues that arise during the construction process. They are the key factor that holds the project together, ensuring that all aspects align with the project's specifications, objectives and timelines. The effectiveness of a Project Officer is often influenced by the workplace culture and environmental conditions under which they operate.

PT Alam Sutera Realty, a prominent real estate developer in Indonesia, provides an illustrative case study of how these factors interplay in the construction industry. The company is known for its urban

development in Tangerang Area, Indonesia, developing a new city called "Alam Sutera" that focuses on lush and green landscapes that makes residents feel comfortable living in the city. For its employees, the company is always associated with its strong familial workplace culture, which fosters great mutual support among employees across divisions. This culture is characterized by close relationships, open communication, and a collaborative approach to problem-solving. However, while such a culture can enhance teamwork and morale, it can also present challenges in decision-making processes. The strong emphasis on maintaining harmonious relationships can sometimes lead to hesitation in addressing conflicts or making difficult decisions, especially in the project division where there are various stakeholders and problems may arise anytime and anywhere, these may lead to delaying project timelines and affecting overall efficiency.

In addition to workplace culture, environmental factors such as weather conditions play a crucial role in the construction industry. Indonesia, with its tropical climate, experiences significant variations in weather, including heavy rainfall, high humidity, and hot sunny weather. These environmental conditions can severely disrupt construction activities, particularly those that are sensitive to weather, such as concrete pouring, excavation, and material transportation. The unpredictability of weather patterns necessitates constant adjustments to project schedules, leading extended timelines and increasing pressure on project management teams, especially Project Officers that work within a schedule that does not factor in weather.

Despite the critical impact of workplace culture and environmental factors on construction project management, there is a noticeable gap in the existing research on how these elements interact within the context of the Indonesian construction industry. Much of the existing literature tends to focus on technical solutions to project delays or explores workplace culture in isolation from other influencing factors. For instance, studies have examined the role of leadership, communication, and team dynamics in workplace culture, while others have focused on the effects of environmental conditions on construction timelines [10, 7]. However, there is a lack of comprehensive studies that consider the combined impact of these factors on real-world projects.

This research seeks to address this gap by exploring the experiences of construction professionals at PT Alam Sutera Realty. By examining how workplace culture and environmental challenges converge to influence project outcomes, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the practical challenges faced by Project Officers and other key stakeholders in the construction industry. The findings of this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamic interplay between human and environmental factors in construction project management, and offer strategies that can be employed to mitigate the associated risks and improve project efficiency. Hence, there are three research questions that will be discussed in this paper:

1. How does the strong familial workplace culture at PT Alam Sutera Realty influence project management and decision-making?
2. What are the key environmental challenges faced in construction projects, and how do they affect project timelines and outcomes?

3. What strategies can be implemented to improve project management practices in light of these cultural and environmental factors?

The purpose of this research is to provide an examination of the combined impact of workplace culture and environmental factors on construction project management, with a particular focus on practical solutions that can enhance efficiency and project outcomes. By addressing the identified gaps in current practices, this study aims to contribute to the development of more effective project management strategies that can be adapted to the unique challenges of the Indonesian construction industry.

2. Literature Review
This study examines the interplay between workplace culture and environmental factors within the Indonesian construction industry, focusing on PT Alam Sutera Realty. While previous research has explored these elements separately, few studies have investigated their combined impact on project management.

2.1 Workplace Culture
Organizational culture has been recognized as a significant influence on project outcomes (Liu et al., 2020). A supportive culture can foster collaboration and enhance team performance [12]. However, a strong emphasis on harmony can also hinder decision-making [8, 13]. (Denison, 1996) suggests that a cohesive culture with values of agility and adaptability can lead to more efficient decision-making [5].

2.2 Environmental Factors
Weather conditions are a major challenge in the construction industry [2]. Unpredictable weather can lead to delays, increased costs, and disruptions in project activities. To mitigate these impacts, construction projects require adaptable management practices [3].

2.3 Intersection of Workplace Culture and Environmental Factors
While studies have explored workplace culture and environmental factors separately, their combined impact on construction projects is less understood. (Chan, Cooper, and Tzortzopoulos, 2021) highlight the need for further research in this area [4].

3. Methods
This research employs a qualitative approach to examine the interplay between workplace culture and environmental challenges within the context of construction project management at PT Alam Sutera Realty. Through direct observations and interviews with key stakeholders at the project management role, this study aims to gain an understanding of the factors influencing project outcomes. Participants in this research included six construction professionals from PT Alam Sutera Realty, representing roles within the company's project management hierarchy. These individuals were selected based on their direct involvement in project execution and their experiences navigating the company's unique workplace culture and environmental challenges. The participants include six construction professionals from PT Alam Sutera Realty: four Project Construction Officers (Housing), one Project Construction Officer (Infrastructure), and one Project Management Section Head. These individuals were chosen for their direct

involvement in project management and their varied experiences in dealing with the company's workplace culture and environmental challenges.

Data collection involved a combination of direct observations and semi-structured interviews. Observations, written by two of the Project Construction Officers (Housing), focused on the day-to-day operations of the company, team dynamics, and the influence of environmental factors on project activities. Interviews were held to gain understanding of participants' perspectives on workplace culture, decision-making processes, and the challenges posed by environmental conditions. Specific interview questions explored participants' experiences with the company's familial workplace culture, its impact on project management and decision-making, and the environmental challenges faced in construction projects. Participants were asked to describe their current work environment, how environmental factors influence their work, their strategies for adapting to changing conditions, and specific examples of how environmental situations impacted project plans or schedules. Additionally, participants were asked about their experiences in recurring situations in projects, and their overall perception of the work environment.

Table 1 : List of Interview's Question 1

	Question
Introduction	Can you please provide your name, position, and how long you have been working at PT Alam Sutera Realty?
Work Environment	How would you describe your current work environment?
	Are there any environmental factors (e.g., weather, project location, work culture) that significantly impact your work as a Project Construction Officer?
	How do you adapt to changes in the work environment throughout a project?
	Can you share a specific example where environmental conditions led to changes in project plans or schedules?
	What keeps you motivated to continue working at Alam Sutera for (duration of your employment)?
Project Documentation	How often do you record or document project progress in the field? How do you conduct your field notes?
	Can you share an example when field notes helped resolve a problem in the project?
	Have you ever encountered difficulties in recording information in the field? How do you overcome them?

Recurring Situations	Are there any recurring situations or problems that frequently arise in each project you handle?
	How do you typically handle these recurring situations?
	Do you consider your work to be repetitive or dynamic? What is your opinion?

The data analysis for this research was conducted using a qualitative thematic analysis approach. This method is particularly effective for exploring complex and context-dependent phenomena, such as the interaction between workplace culture and environmental challenges in construction project management. The process began with the transcription of the semi-structured interviews, along with the compilation and review of observations and field notes. Following transcription, open coding was applied to the data, where key concepts related to workplace culture, environmental challenges, and their impact on project management were identified and labeled. The themes were reviewed and cross-referenced with the raw data to ensure they were both distinct and supported by sufficient evidence. By employing thematic analysis, the research was able to systematically identify and report on the patterns within the data, providing a nuanced understanding of how workplace culture and environmental factors influence project management at PT Alam Sutera Realty.

4. Results and Discussion

The analysis of data collected from the six construction professionals at PT Alam Sutera Realty, including four Project Construction Officers (Housing), one Project Construction Officer (Infrastructure), and one Project Management Section Head, revealed several key insights into how workplace culture and environmental challenges impact project management. These findings were based on both direct observations and semi-structured interviews, focusing on the day-to-day operations, team dynamics, decision-making processes, and the influence of environmental factors on project activities.

4.1 Influence of Familial Workplace Culture on Project Management and Decision-Making

The strong familial culture at PT Alam Sutera Realty fosters a supportive and collaborative environment, where team members often go out of their way to help each other. The observation that a strong familial culture fosters team cohesion is supported by the work of (O'Reilly et al., 1991), who found that organizational cultures emphasizing collaboration and support tend to enhance team unity and satisfaction. This sense of cohesion can lead to improved communication and a more supportive work environment, which is beneficial for overall team performance. However, this same culture can sometimes lead to delays in decision-making, as the emphasis on maintaining harmony and avoiding conflict may result in hesitancy to address issues directly [12]. Cultures with a strong focus on collectivism, which often aligns with familial cultures, may struggle with swift decision-making due to the desire to maintain group harmony[8]. This can lead to delays as individuals hesitate to make decisions that might disrupt the collective peace. The observations revealed that while this culture strengthens team cohesion, it can also create challenges in situations requiring swift decision-making and clear direction.

However, the same culture can introduce challenges, particularly in decision-making, when there is an overemphasis on harmony and conflict avoidance. Additionally, (Schein, 2010) supports this finding by suggesting that in organizations with a strong cultural emphasis on harmony, there is often a reluctance to confront issues directly [13]. This reluctance can result in delays as decisions are postponed to avoid conflict. The findings from PT Alam Sutera Realty are in line with Schein's observations, as the need to avoid conflict was identified as a contributing factor to delayed decision-making in the company. On the other hand, some studies, such as those by (Denison, 1996), argue that a strong and cohesive culture can lead to more efficient decision-making if the values of agility and adaptability are also embedded within the culture [5]. In these cases, the emphasis on collective decision-making does not necessarily result in delays, but rather in well-considered decisions that reflect the input of the entire team.

4.2 Environmental Challenges and Their Impact on Project Timelines

The environmental challenges encountered by PT Alam Sutera Realty, particularly those associated with unpredictable weather, are significant factors affecting project timelines. Unpredictable weather conditions, such as rain, often hinder construction processes, particularly concrete pouring and material delivery. Especially in infrastructure projects where projects are held mainly to build roads, without roofing, weather can play a significant role in the construction schedule. Weather also impacts project schedules, requiring the team to make constant adjustments.

The influence of weather on construction projects is well-documented. Research by (Boussabaine and Elhag ,1999) highlights how adverse weather conditions can lead to significant delays, increased costs, and disruptions in construction activities [2]. Similarly, (Koushki et al. ,2005) found that weather-related issues are among the most common causes of project delays in the construction industry, particularly in regions where weather patterns are erratic [9]. The need for flexibility in project management is also emphasized by (Chan and Kumaraswamy ,1997), who argue that construction projects, particularly in volatile environments, require adaptable project management practices. This includes the ability to quickly revise project schedules and resources in response to environmental conditions [3]. The findings from PT Alam Sutera Realty suggest that while there is some degree of flexibility, there is still a need for more robust strategies to minimize the impact of environmental disruptions.

4.3 Strategies for Managing Workplace and Environmental Challenges

The strategies employed by the Project Construction Officers at PT Alam Sutera Realty demonstrate a pragmatic approach to managing the dual challenges of workplace culture and environmental factors. These strategies include maintaining open communication, adjusting project timelines in response to environmental conditions, and fostering a flexible decision-making process. While effective to some extent, the findings suggest that formalizing and enhancing these strategies could further improve project management outcomes. Despite the use of regular documentation and monitoring practices, the persistence of recurring issues such as design errors and community protests indicates a need for more robust project management strategies. The interviews suggest that while documentation is thorough, there is room for improvement in how this information is used to prevent issues from recurring.

The importance of open communication in managing complex projects is well-supported in the literature. Clear and consistent communication is critical in ensuring that all team members are aware of project

goals, challenges, and changes, thereby facilitating better decision-making [11]. The findings from PT Alam Sutera Realty reflect this, as open communication was identified as a key factor in navigating the complexities of the workplace culture. The strategies used by the Project Construction Officers at PT Alam Sutera Realty, such as adjusting project timelines and maintaining a flexible approach to decision-making, particularly in construction, is emphasized by (Geraldi, Lee-Kelley, and Kutsch, 2010), who argue that adaptability is essential for dealing with the uncertainties inherent in construction projects [6].

However, the need for formalization of these strategies is also highlighted in the literature. (Turner ,2006) suggests that while flexibility is important, it should be accompanied by structured processes that guide decision-making and timeline adjustments [14]. The findings indicate that while the Project Construction Officers at PT Alam Sutera Realty are adept at managing challenges, the formalization of these practices could lead to more consistent and efficient project outcomes.

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