

The Influence of Work Environment and Workload on Employee Performance with Work Stress as an Intervening Variable at SOS Children's Village Indonesia

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Abstract — This study analyzes the influence of work environment and workload on employee performance, with work stress as an intervening variable, at SOS Children's Village Indonesia in Bali and Semarang. A mixed method was used, combining quantitative data from 56 respondents (saturated sample) with qualitative data from interviews and documentation, accompanied by methodological triangulation. Path analysis with the help of SPSS 25.0 showed that the work environment had no significant direct effect on performance ($\beta = 0.059$; $p = 0.657$), while the workload had a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.664$; $p = 0.008$). Work stress had a significant negative effect on performance ($\beta = -1.094$; $p = 0.000$). The work environment had a significant negative effect on work stress ($\beta = -0.232$; $p = 0.000$), while workload had a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.798$; $p = 0.000$). The Sobel test proves that work stress significantly mediates the influence of the work environment (indirect effect = 0.3966; $p = 0.006$) and workload (indirect effect = -1.2091; $p = 0.000$) on performance. The regression model explains 83.0% of the variance of work stress and 39.4% of the variance of employee performance. This study contributes to HR management in non-profit social service organizations by showing that work stress fully mediates the effect of the work environment on performance and partially mediates the effect of workload on performance. However, the two-branch, cross-sectional design and relatively small sample limit generalizability, highlighting the need for longitudinal, multi-site research that incorporates broader psychosocial factors.

Keywords: Work Environment, Workload, Work Stress, Employee Performance, Social Organization

1. INTRODUCTION

SOS Children's Village Indonesia is a non-profit organization that provides family-based care for children who have lost parental care, operating in Indonesia since 1972 and now spread across nine regions, including Bali and Semarang, which are the locus of this research due to the similarity of environmental dynamics and workloads faced by employees. 2024 will be a challenging year for the organization due to post-pandemic financial pressures and global geopolitical conditions, which have forced operational efficiency, assets, and human resources.

A healthy work environment—including physical conditions such as lighting and facilities, as well as psychosocial conditions such as employee relationships and management support—is an important factor for performance [1]. However, the

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organization's financial condition causes the maintenance of facilities to be less than optimal, which has the potential to reduce work comfort. On the other hand, excessive workload can increase employee pressure and stress, especially when a decrease in the number of staff shifts the workload to the remaining employees [2]. Previous research has shown that workload has a positive effect on work stress as well as a negative effect on job satisfaction, with work stress mediating this relationship partially [3].

Work stress is a physical and emotional reaction that arises when job demands exceed the employee's ability to cope with them, and can be triggered not only by the workload but also by an uncomfortable work environment or interpersonal conflict [4]. Initial observations at SOS Children's Village Indonesia in Bali and Semarang found indications of work burnout, decreased physical condition, and employee turnover (5 in Bali and 13 in Semarang), indicating that unhandled work stress can degrade performance through cognitive impairment, increased fatigue, and decreased motivation [5].

This research is particularly relevant for the context of non-profit organizations in the field of social welfare, where employees face high emotional work demands with relatively limited rewards compared to other sectors. Employee performance is understood as the result of quality and quantity of work achieved according to the responsibilities given, measured through a comparison between actual performance and organizational standards [6], [7], and can also be compared between employees to assess performance more comprehensively [8].

Previous research has examined the relationship between workload, work environment, work stress, and employee performance in various profit organization contexts, with mixed results regarding the role of occupational stress mediation: some found work stress to mediate significantly [9], [10], while other studies found work stress was unable to mediate the relationship significantly [11]. This gap, coupled with the lack of research on non-profit/social service organizations with high emotional work characteristics, prompted this study to examine the relationship specifically in childcare organizations such as SOS Children's Village Indonesia.

This study aims to analyze the direct influence of work environment and workload on employee performance, the influence of both on work stress, the effect of work stress on performance, and the role of work stress mediation in the relationship between the work environment and workload with employee performance. Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on human resource management and organizational behavior in the context of social service organizations that are still rarely empirically studied. In practical terms, these findings provide strategic guidance for management in formulating policies to manage workload, work environment, and work stress to improve employee performance and well-being.

2. THEORITICAL REVIEW

2.1 Empirical Study

Previous research with similar themes has shown mixed results. [9] It was found that workload negatively affects performance through work stress, while the work environment has a positive effect on performance through reduced work stress, in hotel employees. [11] PT Batanghari Barisan Padang found that work stress was unable to mediate the influence of workload and work environment on performance, even though all three variables had a significant effect simultaneously. [10] at UD Duta Palet Kutowinangun proved that work stress mediated significantly the influence of workload and physical work environment on performance. [5] found a negative correlation between workload and work stress and hotel employee performance. [12] Finding the indirect influence of workload and work environment on performance through work stress in the creative industry. Qualitatively, [13] identified unrealistic demands, lack of support, and poor communication as common triggers of cross-sector work stress. The similarities between the study and this study lie in the variables studied and the use of the Sobel Test to assess mediation; The difference is that previous research generally loci on profit

organizations, while this study focused on social service non-profit organizations with typical characteristics of emotional workload in childcare.

2.2 Theoretical Studies

Human resource management (HRD) is a strategic approach to skill management, motivation, and organization of human resources to achieve common goals between organizations, employees, and society [14]. The work environment is defined as everything around an employee that affects his or her performance, including physical factors (lighting, noise, spatial layout) and psychic factors (social relationships, overload, supervision systems) [1]. An uncondusive work environment can increase work stress, which in turn lowers performance as employees feel stressed and uncomfortable [4]; The importance of the work environment for productivity is also emphasized by [15]. Indicators of the work environment in this study include work atmosphere, relationships with colleagues, and the availability of work facilities [16].

Workload is the volume of work—physical or mental—that is imposed on employees and is their responsibility over a given period of time [2]. Workloads that exceed an individual's capacity increase the pressure and stress of carrying out daily tasks [4]. Workload indicators include physical load, mental load, and time load [17]. Work stress is a dynamic condition when individuals are faced with demands, obstacles, or opportunities related to desired outcomes but are considered uncertain and important, and serve as an intervening variable that connects the work environment and workload to employee performance [4]. Sources of stress include environmental factors, organizational factors (task demands, roles, and interpersonal), and personal factors [4]; Indicators of work stress in this study include workload, leader attitude, work time, conflict, communication, and work authority [18].

Employee performance is the result of work in terms of quality and quantity achieved by an employee according to the responsibilities given [6]. Employee performance indicators include work quality, quantity, punctuality, effectiveness, supervision, and relationships between employees [16].

2.3 Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis

The conceptual framework of this study places work environment (X1) and workload (X2) as exogenous variables, work stress (Y1) as intervening variables, and employee performance (Y2) as endogenous variables, with X1 and X2 thought to influence Y2 either directly or indirectly through Y1. A conducive work environment has been shown to improve employee performance in various organizational contexts [19], [20], while a poor work environment increases work stress [21]. A well-managed workload can be a motivation and boost performance [22], [23], but excessive workload is also a major determinant of work stress [24], [25]. Unmanaged work stress decreases the stability of cognitive and physical functions, negatively impacting performance and career [26]. Based on this framework, seven hypotheses are formulated as follows:

- H1: The work environment has a positive effect on employee performance.
- H2: Workload has a positive effect on employee performance.
- H3: Work stress has a negative effect on employee performance.
- H4: The work environment has a negative effect on work stress.
- H5: Workload has a positive effect on work stress.
- H6: Work stress mediates the influence of the work environment on employee performance.
- H7: Work stress mediates the influence of workload on employee performance.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a mixed method that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches [27]. The quantitative approach is based on the philosophy of positivism and is used to test hypotheses through numerical data, while the qualitative approach is based

on phenomenology and is used to understand the employee experience in depth through semi-structured interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis. In order to increase the validity of the findings, this study applied methodological triangulation in the form of data triangulation (questionnaires and interviews), source triangulation (cross-division employees, managers, and support staff), and theoretical triangulation (work stress theory, motivation, and non-profit organizations). The research was carried out at SOS Children's Village Indonesia in Bali and Semarang during the period of August 2024 to May 2025.

The research population includes all employees of SOS Children's Village Indonesia in Bali and Semarang, totaling 63 people. The sample extraction technique uses saturated samples, namely all members of the population are used as research samples; Of these, 56 questionnaires were obtained that were completely filled out and valid for analysis.

This study involved four variables: work environment (X1) and workload (X2) as exogenous variables, work stress (Y1) as intervening variables, and employee performance (Y2) as endogenous variables. The operational definition and indicators of each variable are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Operational Definitions and Variable Indicators

Variabel	Definition	Indicator
Work Environment (X1)	Everything around the employee at work that can affect him and his work.	Work atmosphere; relationships with colleagues; availability of work facilities.
Workload (x2)	A number of physical and psychological activities that require mental abilities and must be completed within a certain period of time.	Physical load; mental overload; time burden.
Work Stress (Y1)	The conditions experienced by employees when work conditions are not in accordance with their abilities, causing pressure due to job demands.	Workload; the attitude of the leader; working hours; conflict; communication; Work Authority.
Employee Performance (Y2)	Employee achievement in an organization that aims to achieve organizational goals.	Quality of work; quantity; punctuality; effectiveness; supervision; relationships between employees.

Source: adapted from [1], [16], [17], [18].

Primary data was obtained from respondents' answers to questionnaires and interview results, while secondary data was in the form of documents, memos, policies, and data on the number of employees of the organization. Data collection was carried out through observation, interviews, questionnaires on a Likert scale of 1–5 (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree), and document recording. The validity test of the instrument used the Pearson product-moment correlation, with the item being declared valid if the r-calculated value exceeds the r-table value for $n = 56$ at a significance level of 5% ($r\text{-table} = 0.2586$). The reliability of the instrument was tested with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with a threshold of ≥ 0.60 declared reliable [27].

Data analysis included descriptive statistics to describe respondents' characteristics and responses, classical assumption tests (Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality, multicollinearity based on VIF values, Durbin-Watson autocorrelation, and heteroscedasticity with Glejser tests), and path analysis to test the following two regression equations:

$$\text{Stress Kerja (Y1)} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X1 + \beta_2 X2 + \varepsilon_1$$

$$\text{Kinerja Karyawan (Y2)} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X1 + \beta_2 X2 + \beta_3 Y1 + \varepsilon_2$$

The direct influence between variables (H1–H5) was tested by multiple linear regression and partial t-test, while the mediating effect of work stress (H6 and H7) was tested using the Sobel Test. All tests were assisted by SPSS 25.0 for Windows software, with a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ [28], [29].

4.1 Characteristics of Respondents

This study involved 56 respondents of SOS Children's Village Indonesia employees in Bali and Semarang. The characteristics of the respondents based on gender, age, education, and working period are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics

Features	Category	n	%
Gender	Women	30	54%
	Male	26	46%
Age	21–30 years old	5	9%
	31–40 years	7	13%
	41–50 years	13	23%
	> 50 years	31	55%
Education	High School/Vocational School	38	68%
	Diploma	3	5%
	Bachelor (S1)	12	21%
	Magister (S2)	3	5%
Tenure	< 3 years	5	9%
	3–5 years	7	13%
	6–10 years	7	13%
	> 10 years	37	66%

Source: Primary data processed (2025).

The majority of respondents were female (54%) and over 50 years old (55%), with a high school/vocational education background (68%) and a working period of more than 10 years (66%). This profile indicates a relatively senior workforce with long experience in the organization, a typical characteristic of caregivers in family-based childcare organizations.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variabel	N	Mean	Category
Work Environment (X1)	56	3,83	Good
Workload (x2)	56	3,17	Pretty Good
Work Stress (Y1)	56	2,83	Pretty Good
Employee Performance (Y2)	56	3,47	Good

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 25.0 (2025).

The average score of the work environment (3.83) and employee performance (3.47) were in the good category, while the workload (3.17) and work stress (2.83) were in the good category. A fairly good (not completely low) work stress score indicates that work pressure is still felt by some employees, in line with qualitative findings that show complaints of emotional fatigue in a number of caregivers, especially related to the increased workload after staff efficiency.

4.3 Validity and Reliability Tests

The validity test with the Pearson product-moment correlation showed that all items in the four variables had r-calculated values exceeding the r-table (0.2586 for $n = 56$, $\alpha = 0.05$), so that all instrument items were declared valid. The results of the reliability test with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Reliability Test Results

Variabel	Cronbach's Alpha	Status
Work Environment (X1)	0,899	Reliabel
Workload (x2)	0,873	Reliabel
Work Stress (Y1)	0,939	Reliabel
Employee Performance (Y2)	0,906	Reliabel

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 25.0 (2025).

All variables show Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.60 and even above 0.85, indicating an excellent level of internal consistency of the instrument.

4.4 Classical Assumption Test

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test showed the residual of both models of normal distribution (work stress model: $p = 0.063$; employee performance model: $p = 0.200$; both ≥ 0.05). The multicollinearity test showed that there was no high correlation between independent variables in the work stress model (Tolerance = 0.859; VIF = 1.164 for both predictors) as well as on employee performance models (VIF ranges from 1.482–5.884, all below 10). The Durbin-Watson autocorrelation test yielded scores of 1,460 (work stress model) and 1,795 (employee performance model), both of which are within acceptable ranges so autocorrelation does not occur. The heteroscedasticity test using the Glejser method showed that there were no independent variables that had a significant effect on the absolute residual value (the overall significance value > 0.05). Thus, both regression models have met classical assumptions and are feasible to use for hypothesis testing.

4.5 Model Fit Test

Table 5. F Test (Simultaneous) and Coefficient of Determination

Model	F	Say.	R	R ²	Adj. R ²
Work Stress (Y1)	129,423	0,000	0,911	0,830	0,824
Employee Performance (Y2)	11,261	0,000	0,628	0,394	0,359

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 25.0 (2025).

The F test showed both regression models were significant ($p = 0.000$), making them suitable for use to explain the relationship between the variables studied. The work environment and workload simultaneously explained 83.0% of the variance in work stress, indicating a very strong explainability of the model, with the remaining 17.0% explained by factors other than the model. Work environment, workload, and work stress simultaneously account for 39.4% of employee performance variances, with 60.6% explained by factors outside the model—a reasonable proportion given that individual performance in the context of social service organizations is influenced by many contextual factors such as intrinsic motivation and commitment to social mission.

4.6 Results of the Path Analysis

The results of the direct effects test between variables are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Path Analysis Results (Direct Effects)

Intervariable Relationships	Beta	Say.	Remarks
Working Environment (X1) → Performance (Y2)	0,059	0,657	Insignifikan
Workload (X2) → Performance (Y2)	0,664	0,008	Signifikan
Work Stress (Y1) → Performance (Y2)	-1,094	0,000	Signifikan
Work environment (X1) → Work stress (Y1)	-0,232	0,000	Signifikan
Workload (X2) → Work stress (Y1)	0,798	0,000	Signifikan

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 25.0 (2025).

The work environment had no significant direct effect on performance ($\beta = 0.059$; $p = 0.657$), so H1 was rejected. The workload had a significant positive effect on performance ($\beta = 0.664$; $p = 0.008$), so H2 was accepted. Work stress had a significant negative effect on performance ($\beta = -1.094$; $p = 0.000$), so H3 was accepted. The work environment had a significant negative effect on work stress ($\beta = -0.232$; $p = 0.000$), so H4 was accepted. Workload had a significant positive effect on work stress ($\beta = 0.798$; $p = 0.000$), so H5 was accepted.

4.7 Mediation Test (Sobel Test)

Table 7. Results of the Work Stress Mediation Test (Sobel Test)

Mediation Pathway	Indirect Effects	Z	Sig.	Remarks
Work environment → Work stress → Performance	0,3966	2,732	0,006	Significant (positive mediation)
Workload → Work stress → Performance	-1,2091	-4,694	0,000	Significant (negative mediation)

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 25.0, Model 4 PROCESS Hayes (2025).

The Sobel Test's z value for both mediated pathways exceeded the critical limit ± 1.96 , proving that work stress significantly mediated both the influence of the work environment (indirect effect = 0.3966; $z = 2.732$; $p = 0.006$) and workload (indirect effect = -1.2091; $z = -4.694$; $p = 0.000$) on employee performance. Thus, H6 and H7 are accepted. A good work environment lowers work stress which in turn improves performance (positive mediation), while a high workload increases work stress which in turn decreases performance (negative mediation). The significance of these two mediation pathways—combined with the direct influence of the work environment on insignificant performance (H1 rejected)—indicates that work stress acts as a full mediator in the work-performance environment, while in the work-workload-performance relationship, work stress acts as a partial mediator because the direct influence of workload on performance remains significant.

4.8 Discussion

Influence of the Work Environment (H1, H4, H6). The work environment was not shown to have a direct effect on performance (H1 was rejected), a finding that appears to contradict research that found a direct influence of the work environment on performance in the context of profit organizations [19], [20]. Nevertheless, the work environment was shown to have a significant negative effect on work stress (H4 accepted), in line with [21] who also found that a poor work environment increased employee stress, and work stress was shown to fully mediate the influence of the work environment on performance (H6 accepted). This pattern is in line with [9] and [10] who found work stress mediation to be significant on a similar pathway, but in contrast to [11] who found work stress to be

insignificant in mediating the relationship. This difference indicates that the role of occupational stress mediation is contextual: in social service organizations such as SOS Children's Village Indonesia, where work involves high emotional involvement, the influence of the work environment on work outcomes seems to be entirely channeled through psychological pathways (stress), rather than directly affecting work output. Qualitative findings also reinforce this pattern: informants tend to describe a family work atmosphere, but highlight the limitations of post-budget facilities as a source of psychosocial pressure.

Influence of workload (H2, H5, H7). Workload shows a significant positive direct influence on performance (H2 accepted), consistent with [22], [23] who found workloads that are still within reasonable limits can drive productivity and be a challenge that motivates employees based on social missions. On the other hand, workload was also the strongest determinant of work stress among all the pathways tested ($\beta = 0.798$; H5 was accepted), in line with [3] and [24], [25], and was shown to negatively and significantly mediate (partial mediation) its effect on performance through work stress (H7 was accepted). This combination of positive direct influence but negative indirect influence suggests that workload works like a double-edged sword: to some degree it drives performance directly, but simultaneously increases stress which in turn erodes that performance achievement. The implication is that management needs to keep the workload at an optimal level—challenging enough to motivate, but not so much that it triggers detrimental stress.

Effect of Work Stress (H3). Work stress was shown to have a negative and significant effect on performance with the largest coefficient among all the pathways tested ($\beta = -1.094$; H3 was accepted), confirming work stress as the most dominant determinant of performance in this study. These findings are consistent with theoretical studies [26] that state that work stress interferes with the cognitive and physical stability of workers, as well as with empirical findings [5], [30] in the context of service organization. Qualitatively, this pattern is in line with [13] which identifies excessive work demands and minimal support as triggers of cross-organizational stressors; The informants in this study also described emotional fatigue related to deep attachment to foster children as a typical source of stress in parenting organizations, beyond just the volume of administrative tasks.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that the performance of SOS Children's Village Indonesia employees in Bali and Semarang is most strongly determined by work stress ($\beta = -1.094$), followed by workload that has a direct positive effect ($\beta = 0.664$) but negatively indirectly through work stress (indirect effect = -1.2091). The work environment does not have a direct effect on performance, but plays a significant role in reducing work stress ($\beta = -0.232$) and affecting performance entirely through the mediation pathway (indirect effect = 0.3966). Both regression models—the work stress model ($R^2 = 0.830$) and the employee performance model ($R^2 = 0.394$)—were shown to be statistically fit ($p = 0.000$), and all seven research hypotheses (H1–H7) received empirical support, with H1 rejected as a direct but indirectly confirmed influence hypothesis through H6. These findings confirm that work stress is a key pathway that bridges work conditions with work outcomes in social service organizations.

Practically, the management of SOS Children's Village Indonesia is advised to: (1) develop a stress management program and psychosocial support for employees, considering the large influence of work stress on performance; (2) maintain the workload at an optimal level through adequate staff planning, given its dual role as a driver as well as a performance inhibitor; (3) maintain and strengthen aspects of the psychosocial work environment—relationships between employees and family atmospheres—as a buffer against work stress even though budget limitations for physical facilities still exist; and (4) build an early detection mechanism for work stress symptoms, for example through periodic surveys and consultation channels for employees. Theoretically, this study

enriched the human resource management literature by demonstrating the role of strong work stress mediation in the context of nurture-based non-profit organizations, a setting that differs in emotional characteristics from the more commonly studied profit organizations.

The study has a number of limitations: the scope of the location is limited to two branches (Bali and Semarang) so generalizations to other SOS Children's Village branches or similar non-profit organizations need to be done carefully; cross-sectional design limits the drawing of long-term causal conclusions; and the sample size (56 respondents) was relatively small for pathway analysis with mediators. Further research is suggested to expand coverage to all branches of SOS Children's Village Indonesia or similar social service organizations, using longitudinal designs to capture stress dynamics and performance over time, as well as considering additional variables such as social support, organizational commitment, or job satisfaction as a mediator or moderator in a more comprehensive model.

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