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## The Role Of Work Stress In Mediating The Influence Of Workload And Work Balance On Employee Performance of The Regional Development Planning Agency Of Aceh Province During The Covid-19 Pandemic

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### Abstract

This study examines the work stress role in mediating the effect of workload and work balance on employee performance of the Regional Development Planning Agency of Aceh Province (Bappeda Aceh) during the covid-19 pandemic. The population was all employees at Bappeda Aceh, totaling 209 people. The sampling technique uses the census method. The model was tested using Structural Model by AMOS application. The survey was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was still hitting the end of 2021 to early 2022. The results shows that when covid 19 occurred, workload positively affects the work stress of Bappeda Aceh employees, work balance negatively affects the work stress of Bappeda Aceh employees, workload negatively affects the Bappeda Aceh employee performance, work balance positively affects the Bappeda Aceh employee performance, work stress negatively affects the Bappeda Aceh employee performance, work stress partially mediates the workload effect on the Bappeda Aceh employee performance, and work stress partially mediates the work balance effect on the Bappeda Aceh employee performance. From these findings, it is explained that the model for improving the Bappeda Aceh employee performance during the COVID-19 pandemic is a function of reducing workloads and increasing work balance so that they can reduce employee work stress. In other words, a decrease in workload during the COVID-19 period can play a role in reducing work stress so that it can improve performance, and improving work balance during the COVID-19 period, it can also reduce work stress and will have an impact on improving performance.

**Keywords:** Workload, Work Balance, Work Stress, Employee Performance.

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### 1. Introduction

Employee development is a must that must be carried out by an organization in a planned manner. This needs to be continued because the better developments experienced by employees, especially in government institutions, will have an impact on improving their performance. Especially in the COVID-19 pandemic situation, several management issues during the pandemic, such as workload issues, work stress, and work balance have also become hot topics in organizations/companies. This also applies to the Regional

Development Planning Agency of Aceh Province (Bappeda Aceh), a government institution located in the Aceh Province, Indonesia. The Bappeda Aceh employee performance as a whole is still not good during the covid 19 pandemic. This is reflected in the performance achievements of Bappeda as reported in the 2020 (Lakip Report) where almost all work agreements for the Bappeda Aceh have not had satisfactory results. Apart from the main performance indicators, the performance of the Aceh Provincial Bappeda is also assessed from the Aceh Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBA) where the Bappeda Aceh is only able to realize its budget of 81.83% of the total budget of 59.649 billion rupiahs. The non-optimal performance of the Aceh Provincial Bappeda cannot be separated from the inadequate performance produced by its employees.

Many factors cause not optimal performance produced by employees, one of which is work stress. Work stress is caused due to uncontrollable emotional traits such as anger, frustration, hostility, and annoyance. In general, one of the causes of work stress is the workload. Employees who experience mental and physical distress due to long working hours can be caused by a high workload that is beyond the employee's ability to complete within a relatively short deadline. Excessive workload will result in health problems and can cause depression and anxiety in the workplace.

Another cause of the formation of work stress apart from the workload is the work-life balance factor. Work-life balance is a crucial issue because it causes a decrease in employee productivity and performance in an organization. In fact, today's workforce places more emphasis on balancing work-life. However, this desire was not fully implemented, so the problem of work balance remains an issue that has an impact on decreasing organizational performance.

This research is important to do considering the central role that Bappeda plays in determining the success of Aceh's development, which all depends on how good the quality of the plans made is. This research is even more important in the context of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The cause of work stress does not only come from the workload or work balance but also concerns about being affected by Covid-19, which always creates a sense of alertness all the time. Therefore, in measuring work stress, the author includes elements of the Covid-19 pandemic as an indicator of this work stress variable.

## **2. Literature**

### **Employee Performance**

In this article, employee performance will often be referred to simply as performance. Employee performance according to this understanding is an action or behavior that is relevant or supportive in achieving organizational goals which are measured according to the expertise of each individual (Landy & Conte, 2019). (Jannah, 2016) and (Bernardin & Russell, 2013) defines performance as a result achieved by employees in their work according to certain criteria that apply to a job.

(Kasmir, 2016) states that employee performance is the result of work behavior that has been achieved in completing the tasks and responsibilities given within a certain period. Employee performance is how well a person performs a job, (Williams, 2016). (Djatola,

2019), (Keban, 2008) and (Steers, 2013) mention Employee Performance is a level that shows how far the actual implementation of tasks can be carried out and the organization's mission is achieved. In this study, measuring employee performance uses indicators as stated in Government Regulation (PP) No. 46 of 2011 namely (1) quantity of work, (2) quality of work, (3) time used to complete work, (4) costs spent on completing work, and (5) cooperation.

### **Work stress**

(DeCenzo, Robbins, & Verhulst, 2020) explaining the manifestations of work stress having an external or internal influence on human performance which can be seen from the quality of the information received by the sensory receptors or the accuracy of the responses. Previously studied factors that influence stress levels include ambient temperature, noise, lack of sleep, fatigue, arousal, job demands, personality factors, job satisfaction, workload, job roles, job characteristics, bureaucracy, job satisfaction, job tension, and pressure time. (Luthans, 2013), (Slocum & Hellriegel, 2010) and (Daft, 2010) said that work stress is like difficulty, discomfort, exhausting, and even scary. Work stress is also a loss of efficiency and a general tendency towards work. Employees may suffer from mental fatigue in addition to the physical exhaustion they may experience from being forced to perform the strenuous requirements of certain tasks. Stress is defined in terms of the interaction between a person and their (work) environment and is the awareness of not being able to cope with the demands of one's environment, when this realization occurs attention to the person, as both are associated with negative emotional responses. (Meidilisa & Lukito, 2020)

Stress is a very complex process and can affect humans both physically and mentally. Stress can have a positive or negative effect on a person's behavior. Stress trigger factors can benefit a person or harm depending on how the individual responds to stress itself. Lee *et al.* (2011) and (Hariandja, 2007) describe a situation of tension or emotional stress experienced by a person. In this study the measurement of work stress using indicators as expressed by (Luthans, 2013) namely (1) task demands, (2) role demands, (3) interpersonal demands, (4) organizational structure, and (5) organizational leadership.

### **Workload**

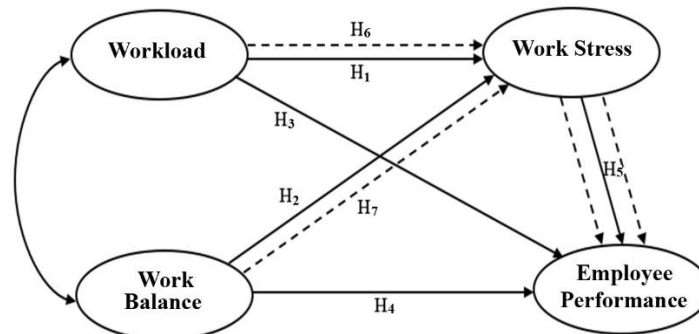
Minister of Home Affairs Regulation (Permendagri) No. 12/2008 states that workload is the amount of work that must be carried out by a position/organizational unit and is the product of the work volume and the time norm. (Putra & Prihatsanti, 2016) said that workload is a state when workers are faced with tasks that must be completed on time. According to (Meidilisa & Lukito, 2020), (Tjiabrata, Lumanauw, & Dotulong, 2017), and (Utomo, 2008) Workload is a set or number of activities that must be completed by an organizational unit or position holder within a certain period. According to (Haryanto, 2014), the workload is defined as a workload that triggers psychological fatigue (psychological stressor). (Prihatini, 2007) and (Ratnasari & Purba, 2019) Workload is associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs. (Haryanto, 2014) also stated that to measure the workload, indicators can be used in the form of (1) difficulty level, (2) overtime time, (3) work completion time, (4) responsibilities, and (5) working conditions.

## Work Balance

(DeCenzo et al., 2020) defines work balance as a state of balance between the work-life and personal life of an employee, and minimizes conflict between the two. (Kim, 2014) explain that work-life balance experiences result in feelings of loyalty to the organization and increased affective commitment. (Maxwell, 2005), (Saleem & Abbasi, 2005), and (Hoffer, 2008), Work of balance is a concept where there is a balance involving a career with happiness, leisure, family, and spiritual development. According to (Lockwood, 2003), Work-life balance is a state of balance between two demands in which the work and life of an individual are equal. Now many employees are starting to consider the balance of work in their lives causing them to finally want a job that is flexible and does not take up much time so that they can carry out their personal activities. (Greenhaus & Callanan, 2006), (Kim, 2014), (Rathnaweera & Jayathilaka, 2021) and (DeCenzo et al., 2020) explaining work balance can be measured using indicators in the form of: (1) Personal life can influence individuals in making decisions at the office, (2) Can balance time between work in the office and family at home, (3) The responsibilities towards family affect performance at work, (4) All workers are involved in work in the Office, and (5) Always complete the tasks assigned from the Office on time.

## Research Model and Hypothesis

The authors figure the research model and hypothesis as follows.



**Figure 1. Research Model**

H1: Workload affects work stress in Bappeda Aceh.

H2: Work balance affects work stress in Bappeda Aceh.

H3: workload affects Bappeda Aceh employee performance.

H4: Work balance affects Bappeda Aceh employee performance.

H5: Work stress affects Bappeda Aceh employee performance.

H6: Workload affects Bappeda Aceh employee performance through work stress.

H7: Work balance affects Bappeda Aceh employee performance through work stress.

## 3. Method

This study was conducted at the Bappeda Aceh, Indonesia. The subject was all employees of Bappeda Aceh, while the object was the work stress, workload, work balance, and employee performance. The population was all employees of the Bappeda Aceh, totaling 209 people. The sampling technique used the census. Data was collected using a questionnaire. In addition, data collection techniques were also carried out by collecting information related to the research objectives (documentation) on the achievement of performance that had been achieved by respondents. The data were analyzed using the Structural Model by AMOS application. The survey was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was from the end of 2021 to the beginning of 2022.

#### 4. Result

The result of the model analysis is shown below.

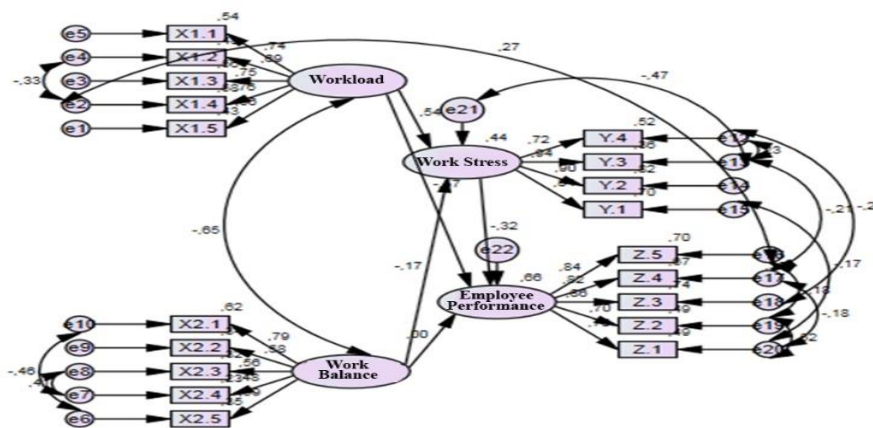


Figure 2. Structural Test

The direct effect testing result is shown below.

Table 2. Regression Weight

Direct Effect	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Workload on Work Stress	0.562	0.117	5.152	0.001
Work Balance on Work Stress	-0.481	0.111	-4.868	0.006
Workload on Performance	-0.559	0.124	-5.154	0.001
Work Balance on Performance	0.118	0.099	3.103	0.018
Work stress on Performance	-0.329	0.092	-3.813	0.001

Based on these results, the mathematical equation is be formulated as follows:

$$\text{Work Stress} = 0.562 \text{ Workload} - 0.481 \text{ Work balance}$$

$$\text{Employee Performance} = -0.559 \text{ Workload} + 0.118 \text{ Work balance} - 0.329 \text{ Work Stress}$$

#### Workload Role in Affecting Work Stress

Parameters of the workload effect on work stress were tested and showed the results of the estimated standard value of 0.562 or 56.2%, where if the workload variable increased by

1% on a Likert scale unit, then the work stress variable would increase 56.2% on a Likert scale unit with  $P 0.000 < 0.05$ . The value obtained shows that H1 is accepted as evidenced by  $CR 5.152 > 1.96$  and also  $P < 0.05$ . This reveals that the higher the workload, the higher work stress felt by Bappeda Aceh employees.

As for the forms of workload experienced by Bappeda Aceh employees during the pandemic, namely the difficulty they felt when they had to interact virtually to continue work activities, the targets set did not decrease even though during the pandemic it showed an increasing trend, and assignments that did not match the qualifications education and work experience, making it difficult for employees, especially during a pandemic where communication access is completely limited.

A high workload will have an impact on the level of employee productivity. Even if the perceived workload is considered too excessive, it will have an impact on work stress. Research by (Ratnasari & Purba, 2019) analyzes and proves the workload effect on work stress and the results are significant. (Maharani & Budianto, 2019) conducted research showing that workload affects work stress and nurse performance. Work stress positively affects the nurse performance. Work stress partially mediates the workload effect on nurse performance.

### **Work Balance Role in Affecting Work Stress**

Parameters of the work balance effect on work stress were tested and showed the result of the estimated standard value of -0.481 or 48.1%, where if the work balance variable increased by 1% on a Likert scale unit, the work stress variable would increase 48.1% on a Likert scale unit with  $P 0.006 < 0.05$ . The value obtained shows that H2 is accepted as evidenced by  $CR 4.868 > 1.96$  and also  $P < 0.05$ . This figures that the higher the work balance, the lower the work stress felt by Bappeda Aceh employees. This explains that the higher the work balance, the lower the work stress felt by Bappeda Aceh employees. When work balance is achieved, the ideal conditions felt by employees will also be felt. On the other hand, if there is a work imbalance, it will have an impact on work stress.

Work balance negatively affects work stress, this is proven by research (Siahaan, 2020). (Prasetyo, Hermawan, & Guspul, 2020) in his research found that the ambiguity role and work environment positively affect work stress. Work-life balance negatively affects work stress. Work stress negatively affects organizational commitment. Work-life balance, role ambiguity, and work environment negatively affect organizational commitment mediated by work stress.

### **Workload Role in Affecting Performance**

Parameters of the workload effect on performance were tested and shows the standard estimated value of -0.559 or 55.9%, where if the work balance variable increases by 1% on a Likert scale unit, the performance variable will increase by 55.9% on a Likert scale unit with  $P 0.001 < 0.05$ . The value obtained shows that H3 is accepted as evidenced by  $CR 5.154 > 1.96$  and also  $P < 0.05$ . This shows that the higher the workload, the lower the level of performance that can be given by employees to Bappeda Aceh.



This result is in line with the research by (Inegbedion, Inegbedion, Peter, & Harry, 2020), who found that the comparison of workload with co-workers and the alliance of employee roles with their competencies affect perceptions of workload balance and employee performance, organizational staff strength affects perceptions of workload balance and employee perceptions of workload balance affect job satisfaction. Next, (Shinta & Laily, 2020) conducted research showing that workload positively affects employee performance through burnout. (Pricelda & Pramono, 2021) shows that workload and turnover intention negatively affect performance. (Ratnasari & Purba, 2019) in his research proves that workload does not affect performance.

### **Work Balance Role in Affecting Performance**

Parameters of the work balance effect on performance were tested and showed the results of the estimated standard value of 0.118 or 11.8%, where if the work balance variable increased by 1% on a Likert scale unit, the performance variable would increase 11.8% on a Likert scale unit with  $P 0.018 < 0.05$ . The value obtained shows that H4 is accepted as evidenced by  $CR 3.103 > 1.96$  and also  $P < 0.05$ . This means that the higher the work balance, the higher the level of performance that can be given by employees to Bappeda Aceh.

According to Bataineh (2019) work-life balance positively affects performance. the impact of employee comfort (both physically and mentally) affects the success of the organization. Employees who feel there is a disruption in work roles with family roles are less likely to feel that they have a work-life balance. Khotimah & Yusuf (2021) said work-life balance positively affects performance. A high work balance will improve performance. From an employer's point of view, it ascertains the relationship between work-life balance and employee well-being, and their impact on employee commitment, absenteeism, turnover, productivity, and overall performance.

Mendis & Weerakkody (2018) revealed that there is a strong relationship of work-life balance and employee performance. All of these relationships are positive and have a significant degree. That when employees' personal and work lives are balanced, employees will tend to be more focused, have positive feelings, and experience less stress so that the dedication given to work will be better. (Wolor, Solikhah, Susita, & Martono, 2020) proves that there is a statistically significant positive effect between workload and role conflict on employee performance, while an insignificant relationship is indicated by role ambiguity.

### **Work Stress Role in Affecting Performance**

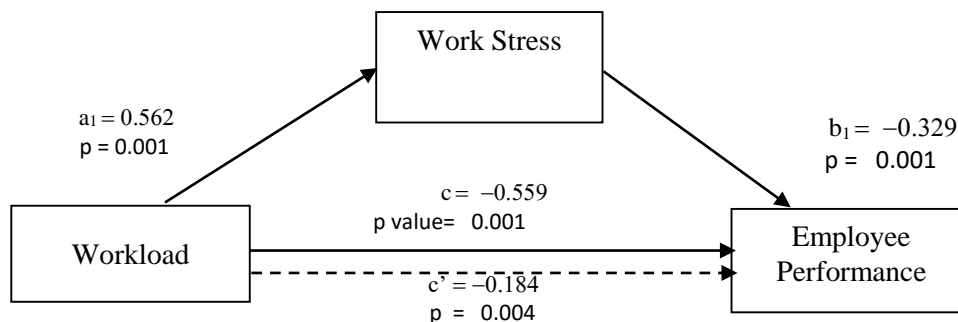
Parameters of the work stress effect on performance were tested and shows the result of the standard estimated value of 0.329 or 32.9%, where if the work stress variable increases by 1% on the Likert scale unit, the performance variable will decrease by 32.9% on the Likert scale unit with  $P 0.001 < 0.05$ . The value obtained shows that H5 is accepted as evidenced by  $CR 3.813 > 1.96$  and also  $P < 0.05$ . This means that the higher the work stress, the lower the performance that can be given by the employees to the Bappeda Aceh.

Excessive work stress will impact performance. Stressed employees will tend to be unproductive and will have an impact on decreasing performance. The relationship between these two variables has been investigated by (Ali & Abid, 2015) which proves that there is a

significant effect of work stress on employee performance. (Ahmad, Tewal, & Taroreh, 2019) his research shows that simultaneously work stress, workload, and work environment positively affect employee performance.

### Work Stress Role in Mediating the Workload Effect on Performance

According to (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), the mediating variable is an intermediary variable. The mediation test is used to prove the role of work stress as an intervening variable that functions to mediate the relationship between workload and work balance on performance. The following is a test of the workload effect mediated by work stress on performance, which can be explained as follows;



**Figure 3. Testing the H4**

Figure 3 is a model of work stress as a mediator. The results of the z-value of the Sobel test are:

$$Z = \frac{a_1 b_1}{\sqrt{(b_1^2 SE a_1^2) + (a_1^2 SE b_1^2)}}$$

$$Z = \frac{(0,562)(-0,329)}{\sqrt{((-0,329)^2(0,117)^2) + ((0,562)^2(0,092)^2)}}$$

$$Z = \frac{-0,1848}{\sqrt{(0,1082)(0,0137) + (0,3158)(0,0085)}}$$

$$Z = \frac{-0,1848}{\sqrt{0,0015+0,0027}}$$

$$Z = \frac{-0,1848}{\sqrt{0,0042}}$$

$$Z = \frac{-0,1848}{0,0648}$$

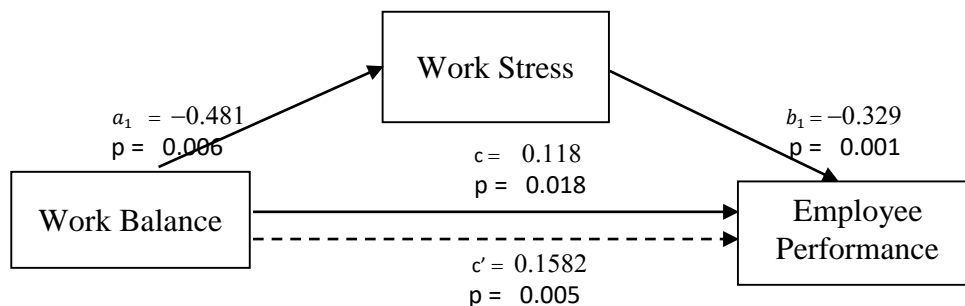
$$Z = -2.86$$

From the calculation results obtained z value  $2.86 > 1.96$ . These results indicate that there is a workload effect on performance which is partially mediated by work stress (partially mediation). This conclusion is obtained from the results of the significance test in Figure 3, where workload affects work stress and the performance of employees to Bappeda Aceh. Likewise with work stress affects the Bappeda Aceh employee performance, so it concludes that work stress partially mediates the workload effect on the Bappeda Aceh employee performance.



### Work Stress Role in Mediating the Work Balance Effect on Performance

The next hypothesis testing can be seen in Figure 4. The following testing of the mediating effect of work balance variables mediated by work stress on performance is carried out using the Sobel Test procedure, which can be explained as follows:



**Figure 4. Testing the H5**

Figure 4 is a model with work stress as a mediator. The results of the calculation of the z value are:

$$Z = \frac{a_1 b_1}{\sqrt{(b_1^2 SEa_1^2) + (a_1^2 SEb_1^2)}}$$

$$Z = \frac{(-0,481)(-0,329)}{\sqrt{((-0,329)^2(0,111)^2) + ((-0,481)^2(0,092)^2)}}$$

$$Z = \frac{0,1582}{\sqrt{(0,1082)(0,0123) + (0,2314)(0,0085)}}$$

$$Z = \frac{0,1582}{\sqrt{0,0013+0,002}}$$

$$Z = \frac{0,1582}{\sqrt{0,0033}}$$

$$Z = 2.75$$

From the calculation results obtained z value  $2.75 > 1.96$ . These results indicate that there is a work balance effect on performance which is partially mediated by work stress (partially mediation). This conclusion is obtained from the results of the significance test in Figure 4, where work balance affects work stress and the performance of employees to Bappeda Aceh. Likewise with work stress affects the Bappeda Aceh employee performance, so it reveals that work stress partially mediates the work balance effect on the Bappeda Aceh employee performance.

### 5. Conclusion

The results prove that during the covid 19 pandemic, workload positively affects the Work Stress of Bappeda Aceh employees, this indicates that the increased workload felt at Bappeda Aceh will increase work stress. Work balance negatively affects Work Stress of Bappeda Aceh employees, this indicates that an increase in work balance that can be realized in Bappeda Aceh will reduce perceived work stress. Workload negatively affects the Bappeda Aceh employee performance, this indicates that the increased workload felt at Bappeda Aceh

will reduce the performance that Bappeda Aceh employees can provide. Work balance positively affects the Bappeda Aceh employee performance, this indicates that an increase in work balance that can be realized in Bappeda Aceh will increase the performance that can be provided by employees. Work stress negatively affects the Bappeda Aceh employee performance, this indicates that increased perceived work stress will reduce the performance that can be given to Bappeda Aceh. Work stress partially mediates the workload effect on the Bappeda Aceh employee performance. Partially mediating here contains the definition that workload can directly affect employee performance and can also influence through work stress. Work stress partially mediates the work balance effect on the Bappeda Aceh employee performance. Partially mediating here contains the definition that work balance can directly affect employee performance variable and can also affect through work stress.

From these findings, it is explained that the model for improving the Bappeda Aceh employee performance during the COVID-19 pandemic is a function of reducing workloads and increasing balance so that they can reduce employee work stress. In other words, a decrease in workload during the COVID-19 period can play a role in reducing work stress so that it can improve performance, and increasing work balance during the COVID-19 period, can also reduce work stress and will have an impact on improving performance. These results prove that the alleged model has been tested, and can then be used for further theory development, by testing it with other variables. This model can also be used as a basis for developing policies related to practical ways to improve employee performance, especially on research subjects. The limitation of the research is the number of variables.

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