



WORKLOAD, WORK INTENSITY, AND EMPLOYEE STRESS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY AT A COSMETICS FACTORY IN SIDOARJO

Moh. Juhri^{1*}, Ahmad Dzulfikri Budi Kusworo²

^{1,2} Management, Faculty Of Economi and Bisnis NSC Surabaya, Polytechnic University, Surabaya, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 10 April 2026

Revised 17 April 2026

Accepted 28 May 2026

Available online 13 June 2026

Keywords:

Workload, Work Intensity, Employees.



This is an open access article under the

[CC BY-SA](#) license.

Copyright © 2022 by Author. Published by CV Putra Publisher

ABSTRACT

Competition in Indonesia's cosmetics industry is becoming increasingly fierce, requiring every company to operate effectively and efficiently to remain competitive. On the other hand, limited human resources and suboptimal work systems often force employees to handle heavy workloads and high work intensity. This study aims to understand and describe how workload and work intensity affect the stress levels experienced by employees at a cosmetics factory in Sidoarjo. The research method used is qualitative with a phenomenological approach to deeply uncover individuals' subjective experiences. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews. Research findings indicate that employees' workloads tend to increase due to limited human resources, operational constraints (such as delays in raw material delivery and machine breakdowns), and the accumulation of dual responsibilities (double job roles). The high intensity of work is reflected in a hectic work pace and the demand to complete tasks within tight deadlines. These conditions trigger varying levels of work-related stress, leading to physical exhaustion, disrupted rest periods, and emotional strain. Although employees have made independent efforts to adapt such as setting work priorities and discussing issues with colleagues this pressure cannot be fully resolved without a commitment to improving work systems and organizational support from company management.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's era, competition in the cosmetics industry is intensifying, and the level of competition is extremely high. The public's purchasing power, coupled with the intense competition among companies in Indonesia, is driving every company to improve product quality, accelerate production processes, and maximize their market impact (Ferdinand & Ciptono, 2022). This directly requires companies to operate effectively and efficiently to maintain their competitiveness amid the industry's continuously accelerating development (Prakoso, 2021). Within a company, employee quality must be prioritized, as employees serve as the primary human resource driving the organization toward achieving all its intended goals.

Human Resources (HR) is a key determinant of a company's success in achieving its strategic goals. This is because the existence and effectiveness of an organization depend heavily on the employees' ability to fulfill their responsibilities. These operational capabilities are directly reflected in their performance, making this aspect a crucial indicator of the company's progress. Essentially, employee performance is the tangible output or result defined by the functions and dimensions of the work carried out by each individual within a corporate organization.

Good performance is performance that consistently adheres to all rules and procedures established by the company. However, performance must meet reasonable standards in order to achieve the desired increase in workforce productivity. Performance success is measured by evaluating employee behavior, so employee performance has a very significant impact on the company's success. If employee performance is strong, it will yield positive results for the company. A company's productivity itself depends on its human resources; the more motivated employees feel, the better they are able to perform their work (Wirawan, 2009: 732).

*Corresponding author.

E-mail: juhri2909@gmail.com (First Author)

Advances in technology and knowledge require adaptation in work systems. In this increasingly modern and complex era, individuals who are unable to adapt to these realities tend to be prone to burnout. In this context, excessive workloads can degrade employee performance by triggering both physical and mental fatigue, which often manifests in clinical symptoms such as headaches, digestive issues, and emotional instability. Conversely, workloads that are either too high or too low also have a detrimental impact on each individual.

According to Munandar (2001), workload refers to a situation in which employees are assigned mandatory tasks to be completed within a specific timeframe. Meanwhile, according to Wagih (2022), workload represents the interaction between task demands and the cognitive resources available to workers. When task demands exceed the limitations of available resources, there will be a decline in work performance and an increase in psychological stress. In practice, the allocation and distribution of workloads among employees should ideally be done proportionally and in line with the individual's actual level of competence, expertise, and capacity. If management ignores this principle of balance, both in the short and long term, various systemic obstacles will emerge that have the potential to cause a decline in productivity and undermine the stability of employee performance in the future. Workload can also be interpreted as a trigger in the form of an activity volume exceeding normal limits, which can directly lead to physical and psychological strain (stress) in workers. A decline in performance generally occurs due to a significant gap between excessively high professional demands and inadequate human resources (Zulfi, 2022).

In this context, employee stress is closely linked to company productivity. According to Kreitner (2005), work-related stress is an adaptive response influenced by an individual's characteristics and psychological processes, resulting from any external action, situation, or event that places psychological and physical demands on a person. Meanwhile, (Sukadiyanto, 2010) explains that stress is a pressure or oppressive feeling within a person caused by an imbalance between expectations and reality. Excessive stress can threaten a person's ability to adapt to their work environment. This condition can lead to various stress symptoms in employees, which ultimately disrupt work performance. Fundamentally, stress does not always have a negative impact because, at certain levels, stress can be functional and drive performance improvement. However, if the stress experienced is too high, it can become a destructive factor that hinders employee performance. Thus, the impact of stress on work performance depends heavily on the level of stress employees experience while performing their duties. Dimensions or indices of work-related stress can be measured using eight indicators: anxiety about new changes in the company's systems; dissatisfaction with intergroup conflicts within the company; dissatisfaction with performance disparities; feeling that one is working for the wrong company; confusion when juggling two different roles at work; boredom due to poor supervision; the feeling of being overburdened with work; and being forced to work for hours on end. To achieve high performance levels, employees must be motivated to do their jobs well, be able to perform their duties effectively, and have access to appropriate materials, resources, and equipment.

For many companies in Indonesia, the work systems they implement are a key factor in determining production processes. Work distribution, working hours, coordination between departments or divisions, and the availability of human resources (HR) are the main factors influencing an employee's work effectiveness. Such conditions result in some employees having to handle a greater volume of work, thereby increasing their workload (Darise et al., 2023).

One of the manufacturing companies in Sidoarjo that has been used as a research subject, specializing in cosmetic contract manufacturing and having launched hundreds of customer brands to date. This company was established by experts with extensive experience in their field and is supported by the enthusiasm of innovative young employees. The company's vision is to become a trusted provider of high-quality cosmetic products and to play a significant role in enhancing the health and well-being of the nation. Its mission is to utilize and develop resources in the beauty and health sectors, produce high-quality cosmetic products, and continuously improve product development and quality. In a large-scale company like this, there are only 9 employees, including the company director. This indicates that human resources in this already large company are very limited, resulting in the company's operational systems not functioning at their full potential.

Based on the researcher's initial observations and preliminary interviews, it was found that the cosmetics company serving as the research site has a relatively limited number of human resources compared to the complexity of the tasks that must be completed each day. This contract manufacturing company serves various production requests from a number of client brands, resulting in intensive operational activities across nearly all divisions. In practice, some employees not only perform their primary duties according to their job titles but must also handle additional tasks (double job responsibilities) due to the limited available workforce. This situation results in an unbalanced distribution of work and increases the workload demands placed on each employee.

In addition to labor shortages, tight deadlines also pose a significant challenge for employees. During certain periods, particularly when there is a surge in customer orders, employees are required to complete tasks within a relatively short timeframe to meet the company's production targets and delivery schedules. This situation is often exacerbated by operational constraints, such as delays in the arrival of raw materials, discrepancies in inventory data, or disruptions to production machinery that hinder the workflow. As a result, backlogged work accumulates and must be completed within an even tighter timeframe.

These conditions also affect the intensity of work experienced by employees. Several divisions, particularly production, warehousing, and live streaming, face a demanding work schedule with the need to complete tasks quickly and continuously. In certain situations, employees must also work beyond normal working hours to ensure that work targets are met. This high work intensity not only impacts employees' physical condition but also has the potential to affect their psychological well-being. Given these conditions, research on workload, work intensity, and employee stress levels is essential to gain a deeper understanding of employees' work experiences and the factors contributing to work-related stress within the cosmetics industry.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research method, which seeks to uncover specific social situations by describing reality naturally through words based on data collection and analysis techniques relevant to this study (Soegijono, 1993). Using a phenomenological approach, this study aims to understand individuals' subjective experiences regarding the workload and work intensity they have experienced and performed. The phenomenological approach was chosen because this study aims to understand employees' subjective experiences regarding workload, work intensity, and the level of stress they experience in the work environment. According to Satori and Komariah (2011), qualitative research is an approach used to deeply understand social phenomena through the collection of descriptive and interpretive data.

Research participants were selected using purposive sampling, which involves intentionally selecting informants based on criteria relevant to the research objectives. This study involved seven participants from various operational divisions of the company, including production, warehousing, packing, and live hosting. Participant criteria included: (1) being an active employee of the company, (2) having a minimum of one year of service so as to understand the company's work systems and operational dynamics, and (3) being directly involved in work activities related to daily workload and work intensity.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth face-to-face interviews. The interviews were semi-structured, using an interview guide developed based on the research focus. Each interview session lasted approximately 15–30 minutes, depending on the completeness of the information provided by the participant.

Data analysis utilized the Miles and Huberman interactive model (Miles & Huberman, 1994), which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the data reduction stage, the researcher conducted the process of selecting, simplifying, and grouping interview data in accordance with the research focus. Subsequently, the reduced data was presented in the form of thematic narratives to facilitate interpretation. The final stage involves drawing conclusions and conducting ongoing verification to ensure consistency between the findings and the empirical data obtained. To ensure data credibility, this study employs source triangulation, which involves comparing information obtained from participants from different work divisions. Additionally, the researcher cross-checks the interview results and field notes to ensure the accuracy of data interpretation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study aims to understand how workload and work intensity can affect stress among employees at a cosmetics factory in Sidoarjo, using qualitative research methods. The data collected in this study consists of face-to-face interviews to gain a holistic and multi-perspective understanding of the dynamics of work pressure. This study involved seven active informants representing various functional lines within the company's operational structure; this was done to avoid being limited to a single line-of-work bias.

The researchers identified various statements that shared similar meanings and were relevant to the focus of the study. The results of the data reduction indicated that most participants experienced a heavy workload due to limited human resources, overlapping job responsibilities, and various operational obstacles such as delays in the delivery of raw materials and breakdowns of production machinery.

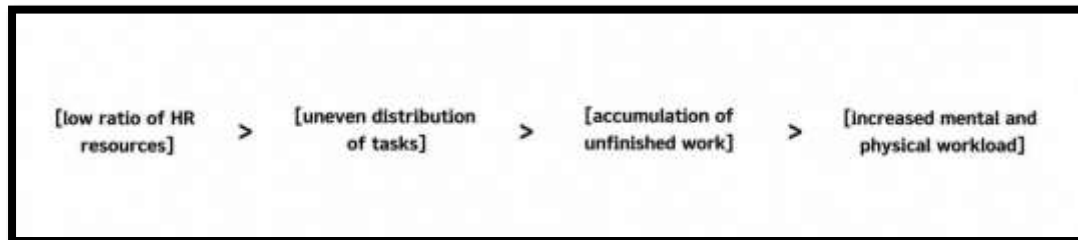


Figure 1. Cause-and-Effect Diagram of Human Resource Shortages in Companies

This simple diagram illustrates the cause-and-effect relationship resulting from the company's inadequate human resource ratio. This finding indicates that the workload experienced by employees is influenced not only by the volume of work that must be completed but also by organizational conditions that have not yet been able to provide adequate resources. This situation aligns with the view expressed by Munandar (Munandar, 2001), who states that workload refers to a situation where an individual must complete a certain number of tasks within a specific timeframe. When job demands exceed a worker's capacity, pressure arises that has the potential to disrupt work effectiveness.

During the data presentation phase, it was found that human resource constraints were the most dominant factor in increasing employees' workloads. Several participants noted that the available workforce was insufficient to handle the volume of work that needed to be completed. As a result, employees had to juggle multiple tasks simultaneously and take on responsibilities beyond their primary duties. This situation became even more challenging when the company experienced an increase in orders or faced operational constraints that caused work to pile up. These findings support the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory, which explains that work stress arises when job demands exceed the resources available to the organization or the individual (Bakker, Demerouti, & Sanz-Vergel, 2023). In the context of this study, labor shortages and suboptimal operational systems indicate a lack of available organizational resources to support work performance.

In addition to workload, the research findings also indicate the high work intensity experienced by employees. This work intensity is evident in the fast-paced work rhythm, the demand to complete tasks within tight deadlines, and the daily work targets that must be met. Several informants explained that they must work with a high level of concentration and face significant time pressure, especially during periods of increased production activity. In certain departments, such as live hosting and production, work activities occur continuously, thereby increasing both physical and mental fatigue. This demonstrates that work pressure stems not only from the volume of work but also from the speed and complexity of tasks that must be completed within a short timeframe. According to Bakker and Demerouti (2023), consistently high job demands can deplete workers' energy and increase the risk of job strain if not balanced with adequate resources.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, high workloads and work intensity contribute to the emergence of various symptoms of work-related stress. Most participants reported experiencing physical fatigue, frequent muscle aches, difficulty resting, and reduced concentration while working. Furthermore, some participants noted that they continued to think about work after their shifts ended, which affected the quality of their rest and their personal lives. These conditions indicate that the work pressure experienced

affects not only the physical but also the psychological aspects of employees. This finding aligns with the views of Kreitner (Kreitner and Kinicki 2005), who explain that work-related stress is an individual's adaptive response to various external demands perceived as exceeding one's capabilities. Furthermore, Prawira (Prawira, 2023) states that stress arises due to an imbalance between expectations and the reality faced by an individual. In this study, this imbalance is evident in the high demands of the job, which are not fully supported by the availability of human resources and an adequate work system.

Despite facing various work-related pressures, the participants demonstrated various forms of coping mechanisms to mitigate the impact of the stress they experienced. The strategies employed included setting work priorities, discussing issues with coworkers, taking breaks, listening to music, and creating a more relaxed work environment. These strategies indicate individual efforts to maintain a balance between work demands and their psychological well-being. However, most participants felt that individual efforts were insufficient to address the sources of stress stemming from the organization's work system.

Another finding from this study is the importance of organizational support in reducing the work-related stress experienced by employees. Some participants noted that a lack of appreciation from supervisors, limited staff, and suboptimal coordination between departments make work-related stress increasingly difficult to manage. Consequently, employees expect improvements to the work system, an increase in staff numbers, and enhanced support from management. These findings align with the Perceived Organizational Support theory, which states that employees' perceptions of organizational support influence psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and their ability to cope with work-related stress (Eisenberger et al., 1986). The greater the support provided by the organization, the greater the employees' ability to manage the job demands they face.

Some employees admitted to still thinking about work even after their work hours had ended, which affected the quality of their rest. Although some informants stated that this situation was still manageable, work-related stress occurs repeatedly and has the potential to affect productivity. To cope with this, employees employ several coping strategies; some choose to prioritize tasks, discuss issues with colleagues, utilize break time, listen to music, or create a more relaxed work environment to maintain their stability. These approaches demonstrate individual efforts to maintain a balance between work demands and personal well-being.

As a form of adaptation, employees have been adjusting on their own. This strategy is called a coping mechanism a series of mental and behavioral tactics and efforts that a person uses to deal with anxiety, stress, or threatening changes. However, the effectiveness of these coping strategies depends heavily on the level of job control employees have over their work. One approach taken by an informant, Diana Sari, was to establish a work priority list and action plan; this is an example of problem-focused coping because the source of the problem lies within their own sphere of control. In addition, there is emotion-focused coping, such as when, under stress, they choose to listen to music, joke around, or sit quietly daydreaming; this merely serves to temporarily reduce psychological tension. However, this strategy has been largely unsuccessful in addressing the root cause of structural stress within the company, namely the scarcity of human resources. Research by (Suharso, 2023) confirms that in industrial work environments with low employee control, emotion-focused coping strategies particularly those involving withdrawal or daydreaming will not be able to sustain the pace of work-related stress in the long term. This can only be resolved through interventions by corporate management, not through workers' individual adaptation.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the process of drawing conclusions and verification, it can be concluded that high workloads and work intensity are the main factors influencing the onset of work-related stress among employees at a cosmetics factory in Sidoarjo. The high demands of the job are influenced by limited human resources, the practice of double job roles, high work targets, and various operational challenges within the company. These conditions give rise to various symptoms of stress, both physical and psychological. Although employees have implemented various coping strategies, their effectiveness remains limited without the support of organizational policies that can create a more effective work system, a more proportional distribution of workload, and adequate managerial support.

Therefore, the company needs to implement several improvement measures to reduce workplace stress levels while enhancing employee productivity. First, the company must assess its workforce needs and consider adding staff to divisions with heavy workloads to eliminate the practice of employees handling multiple roles and ensure a more balanced distribution of tasks. Second, companies need to improve operational systems by enhancing interdepartmental coordination, implementing more planned management of raw material inventory, and performing regular maintenance on production machinery to minimize operational bottlenecks that lead to work backlogs. Third, management needs to conduct periodic workload evaluations to ensure that assigned work targets align with employees' capacity and available resources. Through these measures, it is hoped that a healthier work environment can be created, employees' psychological well-being improved, the risk of work-related stress reduced, and productivity and the company's long-term sustainability supported.

5. REFERENCES

- Antoni, W., & Asri, D. H. (2022). Faktor-Faktor yang Mempengaruhi Kinerja Karyawan pada Perusahaan Garmen di Batam. *Jesya (Jurnal Ekonomi dan Ekonomi Syariah)*, 5(2), 1997-2007.
- Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Verbeke, W. (2004). Using the job demands-resources model to predict burnout and performance. *Human resource management: Published in Cooperation with the School of Business Administration, The University of Michigan and in alliance with the Society of Human Resources Management*, 43(1), 83-104.
- Danarsih, N., et al., (2021). Analisis Kinerja Berbasis Beban Kerja dan Konflik Kerja dengan Mediator Stres Kerja. *Jurnal Efisiensi Kajian Ilmu Administrasi*. <https://doi.org/10.21831/efisiensi.v18i2.41527>
- Darise, A. S., Rossanty & Palawa, M.R. (2023), Pembagian Kerja Dalam Rangka Meningkatkan Efektivitas Kerja Karyawan CV. Akai Jaya Motor. *Jurnal Ilmu Akuntansi*. <https://doi.org/10.55606/jumia.v1i2.1222>
- Eisenberger, R., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S., & Sowa, D. (1986). Perceived organizational support. *Journal of Applied psychology*, 71(3), 500.
- Ferdinand, M., & Ciptono, W.S. (2022). Indonesia's Cosmetic Industry Attractiveness, Competitiveness and Critical Success Factor Analysis. *Journal of Theoretical & Applied Management*. <https://doi.org/10.20473/jmtt.v15i2.37451>
- Kreitner, R., & Kinicki, A. (2005). *Perilaku Organisasi (Buku 1, Ed.5)*. (Suandy, E., Penerjemah). Salemba Empat.mo
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook (2nd ed.)*. Sage Publications.
- Prakoso, A. B., & Negoro, N. (2017). Analisa strategi pemasaran produk kosmetik wardah dengan pendekan SWOT-AHP (Analytic Hierarchy Process). *Jurnal sains dan seni ITS*, 6(1), 62-67.
- Prawira, I. G. A., dkk (2023). Pengaruh Job Insecurity dan Beban Kerja terhadap Stres Kerja Karyawan di Liberta Hotel Seminyak. *Jurnal Bisnis Hospitaliti* Vol.12 No.1 <https://doi.org/10.52352/jbh.v12i1.898>
- Purba, Candra, et al., (2021). Analisis Pengaruh Kepuasan Kerja, Motivasi Kerja dan Disiplin Kerja terhadap Kinerja Karyawan pada Perusahaan Umum Percetakan Negara Republik Indonesia Cabang Manado. *Jurnal EMBA: Jurnal Riset Ekonomi, Manajemen, Bisnis dan Akuntansi*. Vol. 7 No.1.
- Rahardjo, S., & Nurdianti, D. (2022). Pengaruh Lingkungan Kerja, Beban Kerja dan Konflik Kerja terhadap Stres Kerja Karyawan PT. Inti Manunggal Sejahtera Abadi. *Jurnal Manajemen USNI*, Vol.2 No.2
- Riznanda, W.M., & Kusumadewi, D. (2023). Hubungan Beban kerja dengan Stres Kerja pada Karyawan Divisi Produksi PT.X. *Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi*, <https://doi.org/10.26740/cjpp.v10i03.54695>
- Satori, D., & Komariah, A. (2011). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Soegijono. (1993). *Metode penelitian sosial*. Jakarta:Rajawali Press.
- Sukadiyanto, S. (2010). Stress dan Cara Mengatasinya. *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendidikan*, 29 (1), 55-56. <https://doi.org/10.21831/cp.v1i1.218>

- Wagih salama. 2022. Impact of Work Stress and Job Burnout on Turnover Intentions among Hotel Employees. *Jurnal National Library Medicine*. 7 (15). doi: 10.3390/ijerph19159724
- Wirawan. 2009. *Evaluasi Kinerja Sumber Daya Manusia Teori Aplikasi dan Penelitian*. Jakarta : Penerbit Salemba
- Zulfi Rohmatus Sholikhah, et.al. Pengaruh Beban Kerja, Komunikasi, dan Lingkungan Kerja terhadap Kinerja. *Jurnal Akuntansi Merdeka*. <https://doi.org/10.33319/jamer.v3i1.74>