

The Influence of Work Stress on Employee Performance with Coping Strategy as a Moderator

Yaning Sustiyani

Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Islam Sultan Agung (UNISSULA) Semarang, Indonesia, E-mail: yaning.sustiyani01@gmail.com

Abstract. *This study aims to analyze the effect of work stress on employee performance and the role of coping strategy as a moderating variable among employees of the General Election Commission (KPU) of Central Java Province. Employee performance is a crucial factor in ensuring the successful implementation of transparent, accountable, and high-quality elections. However, high work pressure, particularly during election and regional election stages, has the potential to create work stress that may reduce employee performance. Work stress experienced by employees does not only stem from heavy workloads, but also from time pressure, task complexity, and limited human resources. In this context, coping strategy becomes an important factor that helps employees manage work pressure so that it does not excessively affect their performance. This study employs a quantitative approach using a survey method by distributing questionnaires to all employees of KPU Central Java Province, totaling 84 respondents, using a census sampling technique. Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that work stress has a negative significant effect on employee performance. Furthermore, coping strategies are proven to moderate the effect of work stress on employee performance, thereby weakening the negative impact of work stress.*

Keywords: *Coping Strategies; Employee Performance; Work Stress.*

1. Introduction

Employee performance is one of the most important factors in achieving the goals and success of an organization. High-performing employees will be able to make maximum contributions to achieving organizational targets, both in terms of productivity, product or service quality, and operational efficiency (Alefari et al., 2020). Good performance also demonstrates employee commitment and dedication to the organization, reflecting a positive work culture. Therefore, ensuring that employees perform optimally is crucial in supporting the overall growth and development of the organization (Udin et al., 2023). The positive impact of good employee performance can be seen in increased operational efficiency and the quality of service provided to customers. Employees with high competence and motivation can complete their tasks more quickly and accurately, reducing the possibility of errors, and increasing customer satisfaction. This not only provides short-term benefits in terms of increased sales or service but also builds the organization's reputation as a provider of quality products or services, which in turn can strengthen customer loyalty and expand market share (Harahap et al., 2023).

Conversely, poor employee performance can cause various problems for an organization. Unproductive or uncommitted employees will lead to decreased work quality, delays in task completion, and potentially increased operational costs (Udin et al., 2023). Dissatisfaction among unmotivated employees can also create a negative work atmosphere, impacting team morale and reducing overall morale. Therefore, organizations need to focus on human resource development, providing appropriate training, and creating a supportive work environment to maintain optimal employee performance, which will ultimately have a positive impact on the organization's sustainability and success (Mishra et al., 2023).

The General Elections Commission (KPU) of Central Java Province is the election management body at the provincial level tasked with implementing all stages of general elections and regional elections directly, publicly, freely, secretly, honestly, and fairly. With a vision of realizing transparent, accountable, and participatory election administration, the KPU of Central Java Province is committed to improving the quality of democracy through voter data management, the establishment of ad hoc bodies, and public education. Headed by Handi Tri Ujiono as Chair for the 2023–2028 period, this institution is supported by seven commissioners and a secretariat that handles technical, legal, planning, data and information, human resources and public relations participation as well as finance, general affairs, and logistics. The KPU of Central Java Province is also active in building public trust through open information services and a presence on various digital platforms as well as direct service at the office.

The performance of employees at the Central Java Provincial General Elections Commission (KPU) is a crucial pillar in ensuring the success of credible and transparent elections. Based on the 2023–2024 Agency Performance Report (LAKIP), all employees, both civil servants and PPPK (Regional Elections Supervisory Agency), have actively implemented the SAKIP and SPIP, accompanied by regular training to improve discipline and the quality of public services. They also regularly participate in performance measurement technical guidance (SKP) and work indicator development simulations to maintain accountability and efficiency. This increase in human resource capacity not only strengthens the KPU internally but also increases its responsiveness to the public, including in voter education, data updates, and public information management, thereby ensuring fairness and public trust in the democratic process.

2. Research Methods

This study employed a causal design to demonstrate the cause-and-effect relationship between the variables studied (Sekaran & Bougie, 2021). In this case, the effect of work stress on employee performance was examined, with coping strategies acting as a moderator.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Influence of Work Stress on Employee Performance

The results of the study show that work stress has a negative effect on the performance of KPU employees. Central Java Province. The results of this study align with those of Altarengel et al. (2021) and Khuong and Yen (2020), which stated that work stress negatively impacts employee performance. These findings indicate that increasing levels of work stress will be followed by a decline in employee performance. This condition aligns with the theory of Robbins and Judge (2020), which states that excessive work stress can disrupt concentration, emotional stability, and individual effectiveness in completing tasks. In the context of the General Elections Commission (KPU), high work pressure, especially during election stages, can lead to physical and mental fatigue. This fatigue ultimately impacts productivity and the quality of work results. An unbalanced workload can also make it difficult for employees to maintain timely task completion. This indicates that work stress is a significant factor affecting organizational performance. Therefore, managing work stress is a crucial aspect in maintaining sustainable employee performance.

Empirically, the results of this study support the findings of Saleem, Malik, and Qureshi (2021) and Le et al. (2024), who stated that work stress negatively impacts employee performance. High work pressure can reduce an individual's capacity to make optimal decisions. When employees experience persistent psychological stress, work focus is disrupted. This condition can trigger work errors and reduce the quality of public services. In an organization like the General Elections Commission (KPU), which has significant responsibility for the democratic

process, even small errors can have far-reaching consequences. Therefore, it is crucial for management to understand that work stress is not just an individual issue but also impacts the organization's overall performance. These research findings reinforce the argument that work stress needs to be managed systematically. Thus, organizations must pay attention to the balance between workload and employee capacity.

In this study, work stress was measured using several indicators: physical and mental fatigue, difficulty concentrating on work, emotional tension, and decreased work motivation. These four indicators are closely related in influencing employee performance. When employees experience physical and mental fatigue due to high work demands, this condition can reduce their ability to maintain work focus. This decreased concentration subsequently impacts the quality of work produced. As a result, employees are less than optimal in completing tasks according to organizational standards. This explains why work stress has a negative relationship with employee performance.

Physical and mental fatigue, as indicators of work stress, can directly impact the quality of employee work. Employees experiencing fatigue tend to have limited energy to complete tasks optimally. This condition can increase the likelihood of errors and decrease accuracy in completing work. Furthermore, fatigue can also reduce an employee's ability to handle multiple tasks simultaneously. This is related to the work quantity indicator in employee performance variables. When employees are unable to manage their workload effectively, the work targets set by the organization become more difficult to achieve. Thus, work fatigue can contribute to a decline in both the quality and quantity of employee work. This condition strengthens the negative relationship between work stress and performance.

Other indicators of work stress, such as difficulty concentrating and emotional tension, also impact employee performance. Difficulty concentrating can hinder employees from understanding tasks and making sound decisions. When work focus is disrupted, employees tend to take longer to complete tasks. This can impact punctuality indicators in employee performance. Meanwhile, emotional tension, such as irritability or anxiety, can reduce employee psychological stability. Emotional instability can disrupt working relationships between employees and team coordination. If this condition persists, work productivity will decline. Therefore, difficulty concentrating and emotional tension are important factors linking work stress to decreased employee performance.

Furthermore, decreased work motivation, an indicator of job stress, also has direct implications for employee performance. Employees experiencing high levels of work pressure tend to lose enthusiasm for their duties. This can lead to reduced initiative and engagement in completing work. When work motivation declines, employees become less motivated to achieve established work targets. This can impact their ability to fulfill responsibilities as outlined in their job descriptions. Therefore, the relationship between job stress indicators

and employee performance indicators suggests that poorly managed work pressure can reduce overall work effectiveness.

3.2. Coping Strategies Moderate the Effect of Job Stress on Employee Performance

The study found that coping strategies moderate the effect of work stress on the performance of employees at the Central Java Provincial General Elections Commission (KPU). This finding aligns with Herminingsih's (2023) study, which found that coping strategies moderate the effect of work stress on employee performance. This finding indicates that coping strategies act as a buffering variable in the relationship between work stress and employee performance. This means that although work stress negatively impacts performance, this impact can be minimized if employees possess good coping skills. Coping strategies help individuals manage work pressure through rational and emotional approaches. Employees who are able to regulate their responses to stress tend to maintain productivity and work quality. This suggests that the effects of work stress are not absolute but depend on an individual's ability to cope. Therefore, the role of coping strategies is crucial in the context of organizations with high workloads such as the KPU. This finding furthers our understanding that internal psychological factors can influence the relationship between work pressure and performance.

Theoretically, the results of this study align with the concept of Lazarus and Folkman, which states that coping is a cognitive and behavioral process for managing demands perceived to exceed an individual's capacity. When employees use problem-focused coping, they tend to seek concrete solutions to work problems. This approach allows individuals to directly reduce sources of stress. Meanwhile, emotion-focused coping helps employees maintain emotional stability so that it does not interfere with performance. In the context of this study, the positive interaction between coping strategies and work stress indicates that the better the coping strategies, the weaker the negative impact of stress on performance. This emphasizes that coping is not only a defense mechanism but also a protective factor in maintaining work effectiveness. Therefore, organizations need to pay attention to developing coping skills as part of human resource management.

In this study, work stress was measured using indicators of physical and mental fatigue, difficulty concentrating, emotional tension, and decreased work motivation. Meanwhile, coping strategies were measured using indicators focusing on problem-solving, emotional management, positive religious coping, and negative religious coping. The relationship between these indicators indicates that an individual's ability to manage work pressure can determine the extent to which stress affects performance. Employees with good coping strategies tend to be better able to deal with work pressure without experiencing a significant decline in performance. Thus, coping strategies act as a buffering factor in the relationship between work stress and employee performance.

Coping strategies focused on problem-solving indicate that employees seek concrete solutions and create work plans when facing work pressure. This strategy helps employees address stressors directly, minimizing the impact of physical and mental fatigue. When employees are able to plan their work effectively, they find it easier to maintain work quality and complete tasks according to set targets. This is related to employee performance indicators such as work quality and quantity. With an effective problem-solving approach, work pressure does not always lead to decreased performance. Therefore, problem-solving-oriented coping strategies can strengthen employees' ability to maintain performance despite work stress.

Furthermore, coping strategies focused on emotional management also play a significant role in moderating the relationship between work stress and employee performance. Employees who are able to calm themselves and maintain emotional stability tend to be better able to maintain concentration at work. This is related to indicators of work stress such as difficulty concentrating and emotional tension. When emotions are well managed, employees can remain focused and complete tasks on time. Emotional stability also helps maintain harmonious working relationships among employees. This ultimately supports optimal performance within the organizational work environment.

In addition to problem-solving and emotional management strategies, religious coping is also a mechanism used by employees to deal with work stress. Positive religious coping, such as prayer and viewing work problems as spiritual tests, can provide psychological peace for employees. When employees believe that work stress is part of the learning process, they tend to be better able to accept and manage it. Conversely, negative religious coping, such as feeling that God is unfair, can exacerbate the emotional stress an individual feels. Therefore, the role of coping strategies is crucial in determining whether work stress will have a negative impact or can be managed constructively. Thus, the relationship between work stress indicators, coping strategies, and employee performance indicates that adaptive coping strategies can mitigate the negative impact of work stress and help employees maintain optimal performance.

4. Conclusion

Work stress has a significant negative effect on the performance of employees at the Central Java Provincial General Elections Commission (KPU). The results show that the higher the level of work stress experienced by employees, the lower the resulting level of performance. Work pressure that exceeds individual capacity impacts decreased concentration, motivation, and effectiveness in completing tasks. Thus, managing work stress is a crucial factor in maintaining and improving employee performance, particularly in the context of a public organization with a high workload such as the KPU. Coping strategies have been shown to moderate the effect of work stress on employee performance. Adaptive coping strategies can weaken the negative impact of work stress on performance. Employees who have the ability to manage

stress through problem-solving approaches, emotional management, and spiritual support tend to be better able to maintain performance even under stressful work conditions. Therefore, strengthening coping strategies is a strategic element in increasing employee psychological resilience and maintaining organizational performance stability.

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