

Under workload but not alone: The power of organizational support in employee performance

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Abstract

This paper investigates the effect of workload on employee performance and the moderating role of perceived organizational support (POS) in a high-pressure public sector setting, specifically within a regional police department in Indonesia. A quantitative approach was adopted using a census survey of 106 police personnel, employing validated questionnaires to measure workload, POS, and performance. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4.1. Results show that workload had a negative but statistically insignificant effect on employee performance, and POS did not significantly moderate this relationship. However, POS had a strong positive direct effect on performance, indicating its value as an independent factor in enhancing outcomes. These findings highlight the importance of genuine organizational support in maintaining performance, especially in the public sector. This study adds to the literature by demonstrating the limited moderating effect of POS under high-pressure conditions, while emphasizing the strategic role of direct support mechanisms to sustain employee performance in public institutions.

Keywords:

Workload, Perceived Organizational Support, Employee Performance

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INTRODUCTION

In today's performance-driven institutions, employee performance is a critical factor in determining organizational effectiveness. It refers to the degree to which employees fulfill their responsibilities in alignment with established standards and objectives (Vermeeren, 2017). Among the internal stressors that can hinder performance, workload is one of the most influential. A high workload, defined by excessive tasks, limited time, and increased intensity, has been consistently linked to reduced productivity and psychological strain (Didik Arif Raihan et al., 2023; Raditya & Supartha, 2023).

Previous studies on the relationship between workload and employee performance have produced inconsistent findings. Some have concluded that excessive workload leads to fatigue, stress, and decreased performance (Suparman & Irawati, 2024; Wulandari et al., 2024), while others suggest that under certain conditions, an appropriate level of workload may serve as a motivator that enhances employee effort and focus (Maida & Lukiyana, 2024). These contradictory results indicate the presence of other influencing factors, possibly acting as moderators, which require further investigation.

One of the most recognized moderating variables is perceived organizational support (POS), which refers to an employee's belief that the organization values their contributions and is concerned for their well-being (Maida & Lukiyana, 2024; Prysmakova & Lallatin, 2023). POS can serve as a psychological resource that enhances employees' coping mechanisms, enabling them to manage stress and maintain performance even in high-pressure conditions (Mikic et al., 2016; Pimenta, 2024). A growing body of research suggests that POS mitigates the adverse effects of workload by increasing employee resilience, emotional security, and motivation.

Despite these promising insights, most of the existing literature has focused on private-sector contexts or general employee samples. There is limited empirical evidence exploring how POS functions within high-demand public institutions, such as law enforcement, where employees often face prolonged stress and limited structural support. As a result, it remains unclear whether POS can buffer the effects of workload on performance in public service settings that are typically rigid and resource-constrained.

To address this gap, this study investigates the moderating role of POS in the relationship between workload and employee performance. By integrating POS into this relationship, the study aims to provide both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it enriches our understanding of psychological support mechanisms in public sector performance management. Practically, it offers guidance for designing organizational support strategies that enhance productivity in high-stress working environments.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the effect of workload on employee performance and to analyze the moderating role of perceived organizational support in this relationship.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with the objective of testing hypotheses regarding the relationship between workload and employee performance, and the moderating role of perceived organisational support. The research was conducted within the Cilegon Police Resort, specifically targeting the Bhabinkamtibmas officers. The total population comprised 106 personnel, all of whom were included in the study using a saturated sampling technique. This method was selected due to the manageable size of the population and the accessibility of all respondents, ensuring a comprehensive representation of the target group (Etikan, 2017; Ferdinand, 2019).

Primary data were obtained through a structured questionnaire distributed directly to all members of the population. The questionnaire items measured perceptions of workload,

perceived organisational support, and employee performance using a ten-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Prior to distribution, the instrument underwent validation and reliability testing. The reliability of each construct was confirmed by Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.70, which indicated internal consistency and the suitability of the items for further analysis (Ghozali & Latan, 2015; Sekaran, 2014). In addition to primary data, secondary data were collected from institutional records to provide contextual insights and support interpretation of the findings.

Data analysis was carried out using PLS-SEM, implemented through SmartPLS 4. This technique was chosen due to its flexibility in handling complex models and its ability to process small to moderate sample sizes without requiring normality assumptions (Haryono, 2016; Sholiha & Salamah, 2016). Descriptive statistics were also employed to present the characteristics of the respondents and summarise the overall distribution of variable responses. Furthermore, to interpret the index values of each variable, the Three Box Method was applied, which categorises scores into low, moderate, or high classifications based on specific interval thresholds. This integrated methodological approach enabled the researchers to rigorously test the hypothesised relationships and provide empirical insights into the influence of workload and the buffering role of perceived organisational support within a public sector context.

Table 1. Operational Variables

Variables	Indicator	Scale
Workload (X)	BK1 Work Intensity	Interval 1-10
	BK2 Excessive Workload	
	BK3 Busyness Level	
	BK4 Dependence on Other People/Parts	
	(Mansour & Tremblay, 2016)	
Perceived Organizational Satisfaction (M)	POS1 Pride in Achievement	Interval 1-10
	POS2 Attention to Welfare	
	POS3 Recognition of Contribution	
	POS4 Consideration of Goals and Values	
	POS5 Concern for the Individual	
	POS6 Willingness to Provide Help (Awwad et al., 2023)	
Employee Performance (Y)	KP1 Maximum Performance Level	Interval 1-10
	KP2 Workplace Attendance	
	KP3 Best Performance	
	KP4 High Standards for Performance	
	KP5 High Quality of Work	
	KP6 Pride in Performance	
	KP7 Knowledge of Work (Damoah & Ntsiful, 2016)	

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Instrument Test

In the initial phase of this study, a pilot test was conducted by distributing the questionnaire to 30 respondents outside the main sample, with the objective of assessing the instrument's validity and reliability. According to (Hair et al., 2022), in reflective measurement models within quantitative research, there are four primary criteria that need to be evaluated

before an instrument is considered fit for use. These include indicator reliability (as measured by outer loadings), internal consistency reliability (reflected by Cronbach's alpha), convergent validity (based on the AVE value), and discriminant validity (assessed using cross loadings).

Based on the analysis, all indicators showed outer loading values above the threshold of 0.7, except for one item (BK4), which scored 0.778 but was retained because the AVE for the 'Workload' construct still exceeded the recommended minimum of 0.5. The Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values for all constructs were also well above the acceptable cut-off values of 0.7, indicating high internal consistency. In the discriminant validity test using cross loading, all indicators demonstrated stronger correlations with their respective constructs than with others, thus confirming adequate discriminant validity. Consequently, none of the indicators were removed during this phase.

Table 2. Consistency Reliability and Convergent Validity Analysis Results

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	AVE
Workload (X)	0,892	0,756
Perceived Organizational Satisfaction (M)	0,948	0,795
Employee Performance (Y)	0,971	0,853

Source: Output SmartPLS 4.1, processed

Following the completion of the instrument testing phase, it was found that all indicators, except one (BK4), met the established validity and reliability standards. Although BK4 had a slightly lower outer loading value (0.778), it was retained because the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for the Workload construct remained above the acceptable threshold (0.756). Consequently, all indicators were considered valid, and the final instrument comprised a total of 24 indicators: 7 items for the Employee Performance construct, 6 items for Perceived Organizational Support, and 4 items for Workload. No indicators were eliminated, as the discriminant validity test using cross loading showed that each indicator loaded more strongly on its own construct than on others.

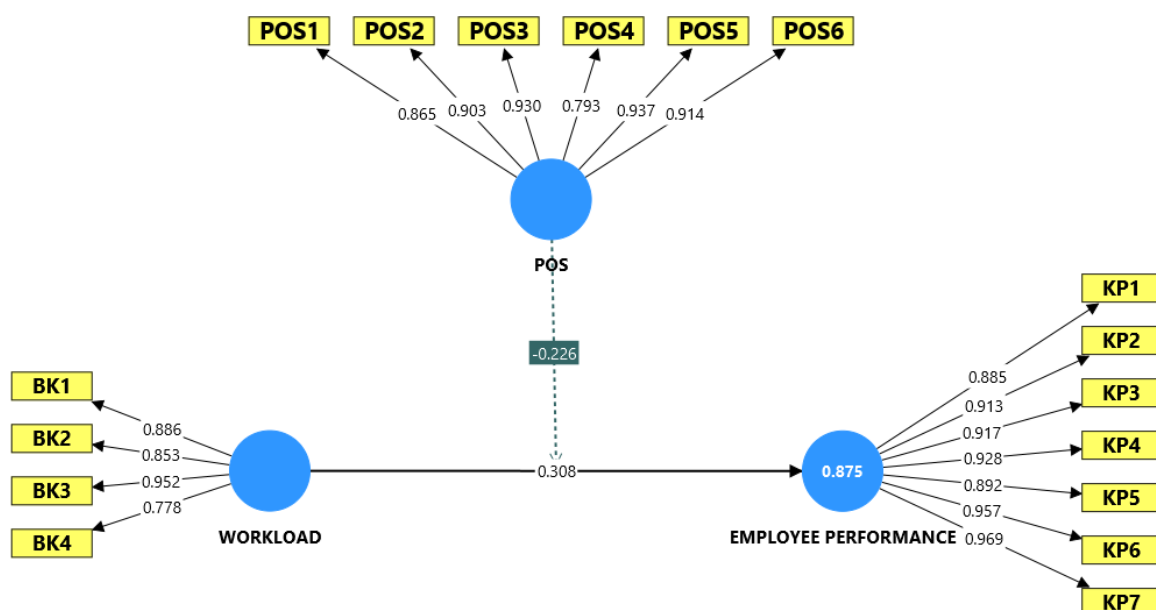


Figure 1. Research Model

Descriptive Analysis of Respondents

The demographic profile of the respondents in this study reveals that all participants were male, totaling 106 individuals or 100% of the sample. This complete gender homogeneity reflects

the specific characteristics of the public sector organization being studied, namely the police force, where the workforce is predominantly male. According to (Denend et al., 2020), gender diversity can influence perceptions of role demands and organizational stress. Although such a homogeneous composition may foster cohesion, it also necessitates attention to inclusive management approaches that minimize potential gender-based biases.

Most respondents were within the 29–44 years age group (66 respondents or 62.26%), representing the millennial generation (Gen Y). Employees from this generation are generally characterized by their desire for meaningful work, flexibility, and strong expectations of organizational support. (Bhanumathi et al., 2024) highlight that millennials are particularly sensitive to workload stress when not accompanied by adequate organizational backing. Thus, perceived organizational support (POS) becomes essential in buffering the psychological impact of high work demands and potential role conflict.

Regarding tenure, a majority of respondents (69 individuals or 65.09%) had served in the organization for more than 16 years. This indicates a workforce with long-standing institutional experience and a deep understanding of operational procedures. While extended tenure can enhance expertise, it may also lead to stagnation if not accompanied by career development or role enrichment opportunities (Bartłomiejczuk & Jin, 2015) assert that long-tenured employees perform at a high level when supported by strong organizational systems.

In terms of educational background, the largest portion of respondents (76 individuals or 71.70%) had completed senior high school or equivalent, while 28 respondents (26.42%) held a bachelor's degree and only 2 respondents (1.89%) had attained a master's degree. Educational attainment can shape perceptions of work complexity and role clarity. According to Sokolov (2023), employees with lower education levels tend to respond better to hands-on learning, structured guidance, and direct supervision. Hence, managerial strategies should accommodate this by providing clear instructions, job support, and capacity-building opportunities.

Outer Model Test

The reflective outer model, analyzed with data from 106 respondents, demonstrates full compliance with all specified Outer Model test criteria. Regarding indicator reliability, while seven indicators initially presented values between 0.4 and 0.7, their retention is justified by the satisfactory Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all associated variables. This indicates that the constructs collectively account for over half of their indicators' variance, aligning with guidelines from Hair et al. (2022) for retaining such indicators, as all AVE values were well above the 0.5 threshold. Furthermore, the internal consistency reliability is robust, with Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values for each construct comfortably exceeding the 0.70 benchmark, confirming strong internal consistency. The assessment of discriminant validity, specifically through cross-loadings, further validates the model. Each indicator loads highest on its intended construct, with substantially lower loadings on other constructs. This pattern, where cross-loadings are notably lower than the direct loadings, confirms that the constructs within this model are conceptually distinct and exhibit sufficient discriminant validity. In conclusion, all prerequisites for evaluating the reflective outer model have been successfully met.

Inner Model Test

This study evaluates the inner model by examining the R-square (R^2) values as a key parameter to assess the model's explanatory power. In PLS-SEM, the inner model represents the structural relationships among latent variables, and its quality is primarily judged by the ability of exogenous constructs to explain variance in endogenous constructs (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2021). The R^2 value obtained for Employee Performance is 0.890, while the adjusted R^2 is 0.887. These results indicate that the inner model explains 89% of the variance in Employee

Performance, which represents a substantial explanatory power according to thresholds suggested in the literature (R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 are described as substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively) (Hair et al., 2021). The minimal difference between R^2 and adjusted R^2 further suggests that the model maintains a good balance between explanatory power and model parsimony. Such a high R^2 value is remarkable in human resource management research, where endogenous constructs like Employee Performance are typically influenced by complex, multifactorial relationships.

Test the significance of path coefficients

Moreover, the evaluation of path coefficient significance was conducted through a bootstrapping approach, which generated t-statistics, p-values, and confidence intervals to verify the reliability of the parameter estimates. The significance testing of path coefficients focused on the PLS-SEM model, where Workload served as the independent variable, Employee Performance as the dependent variable, and Perceived Organizational Support (POS) acted as the moderating variable. A path coefficient is considered statistically significant when its p-value is below the chosen threshold, typically 0.05 for a 5% level of significance. Additionally, the confidence intervals produced through bootstrapping provide further insights into the consistency and robustness of the path estimates.

In this research model, there are several hypotheses including:

H1: Workload has a significant negative effect on Employee Performance.

H2: POS moderates the relationship between Workload and Employee Performance, such that the negative effect of Workload on Employee Performance is weakened when POS is high.

H3: Perceived Organizational Support (POS) has a significant positive direct effect on Employee Performance

Table 3. Significance Test Results Path Coefficients

Relationship	Path Coefficient	T statistics (t > 1,96)	P values (< 0,05)
Workload → Employee Performance	-0,118	1,758	0,079
POSxWorkload → Employee Performance	0,052	1,243	0,214
POS → Employee Performance	0,818	12,509	0,000

Workload and Employee Performance

The results of hypothesis testing in this study indicate that workload has a negative but insignificant effect on employee performance. This suggests that although an increased workload may be perceived as a burden by employees, it does not directly and significantly reduce their performance within the organizational context studied. This outcome contrasts with several prior studies which reported a significant negative relationship, where excessive workload was shown to reduce employee productivity due to heightened stress levels, fatigue, and diminished concentration (Ayusari et al., 2023; Raditya & Supartha, 2023; Suparman & Irawati, 2024). However, this study aligns with findings by Kabdiyono et al. (2024) who observed that workload did not exert a direct significant influence on employee performance, emphasizing that other factors such as organizational support or individual coping mechanisms might mediate or moderate this relationship.

From a managerial perspective, this insignificant result may reflect the specific conditions of the organization where employees, despite facing heavy workloads, are driven by strong intrinsic motivation, professional duty, or organizational commitment, particularly in a public service institution such as the police force. In such settings, personnel may internalize their responsibilities as part of their professional identity, making them resilient to the negative

consequences of workload that would typically impair performance. Moreover, the existence of informal support systems, teamwork, or leadership practices within the organization could mitigate the adverse impact of workload, allowing employees to maintain their performance even under pressure. This condition is consistent with observations in the field that, despite high demands, employees may strive to uphold work quality out of a sense of duty and public accountability.

The finding can also be examined through Role Theory, performance may deteriorate when role demands and expectations become conflicting or excessive, leading to role overload and stress (Kessler, 2013). However, when employees possess clear role expectations and organizational norms emphasize collective responsibility as may be the case in the police force, the negative consequences of high workload on performance may be mitigated. This theoretical framework supports the notion that role clarity and organizational culture can buffer employees from the strain typically caused by excessive workload, thereby explaining the insignificant statistical relationship observed in this study.

In light of prior studies and theory, the insignificant relationship between workload and employee performance uncovered in this research underscores the importance of contextual and organizational factors in shaping how workload influences outcomes. It highlights the need for future research to explore mediating and moderating variables such as Perceived Organizational Support, motivation, or coping strategies which could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how workload affects performance. Furthermore, these findings suggest that management should not only focus on balancing workload levels but also on strengthening organizational support mechanisms and fostering a resilient work culture to sustain employee performance under high-pressure conditions (Zhang et al., 2022).

Perceived Organizational Satisfaction as Moderator

The hypothesis testing revealed that Perceived Organizational Support (POS) does not significantly moderate the relationship between workload and employee performance. This finding indicates that, in this study, POS was not effective in weakening or altering the impact of workload on employee performance. Although POS is theoretically expected to buffer the adverse effects of excessive workload by providing employees with emotional and instrumental resources, the data suggest that such support did not play a decisive role in influencing the connection between workload and performance in this organizational context. This result contrasts with prior studies, such as those by Zhang et al. (2022) and Olaimat (2017), where POS was found to significantly moderate the negative impact of workload on performance by enhancing resilience and motivation among employees facing demanding tasks.

From a managerial perspective, the insignificant moderating effect of POS may be attributed to the nature and perception of organizational support provided within the studied institution. Descriptive analysis of the respondents revealed that while a majority of employees acknowledged the presence of organizational support, the level of that support was perceived as moderate rather than strong. This perception may have limited the potential of POS to function as an effective buffer against workload pressures. Furthermore, in environments with high workload intensity, such as the police force, support mechanisms might need to be more visible, tangible, and consistent to meaningfully impact performance. If employees view organizational support as formalistic or insufficiently responsive to their day-to-day operational challenges, its moderating influence could be minimal despite its conceptual importance.

This finding can also be discussed through the lens of Role Theory. This Theory suggests that organizational support should help clarify expectations and reduce the stress arising from excessive role demands, thus protecting performance outcomes (Kessler, 2013). However, when support is perceived as inadequate or fails to address the specific stressors associated with

workload, its expected protective function may not materialize. This highlights the importance of not only providing support but ensuring that such support is meaningful, targeted, and perceived as genuine by employees. In this case, POS may not have effectively addressed the role ambiguity or task overload faced by employees, thereby failing to moderate the workload-performance link.

These results emphasize that future research and managerial practices should focus on strengthening the quality, visibility, and responsiveness of organizational support systems. It is not merely the existence of POS that matters, but how employees experience and interpret this support in relation to their work challenges. Management may need to adopt more proactive strategies, such as individualized support initiatives, improved communication, and participative leadership, to ensure that POS serves its intended function in mitigating the negative effects of workload on performance. Additionally, further exploration of other potential moderators, such as work engagement or resilience, could provide deeper insight into how workload impacts performance within high-demand environments.

Workload and Employee Performance

The results of hypothesis testing demonstrate that Perceived Organizational Support (POS) has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. This finding confirms that when employees perceive that their organization values their contributions and cares for their well-being, their performance tends to improve. The significant positive relationship observed in this study is consistent with prior research, such as that by Maida and Lukiyana (2024) and Zhang et al. (2022), which emphasized that POS fosters a sense of belonging, motivation, and psychological safety, all of which contribute to enhanced work outcomes. This result supports the notion that POS is a critical resource that encourages employees to exert greater effort, show more commitment, and achieve higher levels of task accomplishment.

From a managerial perspective, the significant impact of POS highlights the importance of organizational initiatives that actively demonstrate support, appreciation, and concern for employee welfare. The descriptive analysis of the respondents in this study reinforces this conclusion, as many employees reported moderate to high levels of perceived organizational support. This perception likely played a crucial role in strengthening their dedication and performance despite challenges such as heavy workloads and complex role demands. In the context of the police force, where employees face demanding and high-pressure environments, the presence of strong POS may provide emotional resilience and a sense of security that enables employees to maintain or even enhance their performance.

Theoretically, this finding aligns with the principles of Role Theory. According to Role Theory, clear expectations and organizational reinforcement can reduce the strain caused by complex or excessive role demands, thereby supporting optimal performance (Kessler, 2013). Similarly, organizational support theory posits that when employees believe their organization genuinely cares for them, they are more likely to reciprocate with higher levels of performance and discretionary effort (Kurtessis et al., 2017). The results of this study provide empirical support for these theoretical frameworks by confirming the beneficial impact of POS on employee performance in the public service sector.

In light of these findings, it is essential for management to continue strengthening organizational support initiatives, ensuring that support is not only present but also perceived as authentic and impactful by employees. Concrete measures such as fair workload distribution, recognition programs, access to resources, and open communication channels could further enhance POS and, in turn, employee performance. Furthermore, future research could explore how POS interacts with other organizational factors, such as leadership style or team dynamics, to sustain high performance in demanding work environments.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that although workload has a negative effect on employee performance, the relationship is statistically insignificant, suggesting that employees, especially those in high-demand public service environments like the police force, are able to maintain their performance despite workload pressures. This resilience may be driven by intrinsic motivation, organizational culture, and role clarity that buffer the adverse effects of heavy demands. Moreover, perceived organizational support (POS), while conceptually positioned as a moderator, did not significantly alter the relationship between workload and performance, indicating that the presence of organizational support alone is not sufficient unless it is perceived as meaningful and responsive to actual employee needs. However, POS was found to have a strong and significant direct impact on employee performance, reinforcing the importance of support mechanisms in enhancing motivation, psychological safety, and commitment. These results highlight the need for organizations to strengthen the quality and authenticity of their support systems, not only by offering resources but also by ensuring these are effectively communicated and genuinely perceived by employees. Therefore, future research is encouraged to explore other moderating or mediating factors such as work engagement or resilience, and organizations are advised to develop targeted support strategies that are contextually appropriate and inclusive, especially in high-pressure institutional settings.

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