



WORK STRESS AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AT THE LAMPUNG PROVINCIAL LEGISLATIVE SECRETARIAT

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Abstract:

Public-sector employees face increasing performance demands alongside bureaucratic reform, digitalization, and the dynamic political agendas of legislative institutions. This study analyzes the formation of work stress, its implications for employee performance, and the organizational factors that inhibit or support stress management at the Lampung Provincial DPRD Secretariat. A qualitative descriptive-analytical design was employed. Data were collected from April to June 2026 through in-depth interviews, passive participant observation, and analysis of performance, attendance, meeting-agenda, and accountability documents. Informants were selected purposively and expanded through snowball sampling until data saturation. The findings show that work stress develops through the interaction of environmental stressors, organizational demands, and individual pressures. Work overload, role conflict, rigid procedures, work-family conflict, and technostress move employees beyond the optimal eustress zone toward distress. The resulting physiological, psychological, and behavioral symptoms reduce concentration, motivation, document accuracy, coordination, and decision quality. Peer support and individual resilience function as protective resources, while the absence of mental-health policies, unsupportive leadership, and stigma constrain effective management. Workload redistribution, adaptive procedures, supportive leadership, and formal employee-assistance services are therefore recommended.

Keywords: work stress; employee performance; civil servants; legislative secretariat; qualitative research

INTRODUCTION

Human resources are the central pillar in achieving an organization's vision, mission, and strategic programs. In the public sector, the performance quality of civil servants determines the capacity of government institutions to provide services that are responsive, transparent, accountable, and oriented toward the public interest. Bureaucratic reform has intensified these expectations through the digitalization of work processes and output-based performance measurement. Increasing demands without adequate resource support can generate psychosocial pressure and undermine the sustainability of employee performance.

Work stress is a condition of strain that arises when job demands are not balanced by the abilities, time, support, or resources available to employees. Moderate stress can improve alertness and motivation; however, insufficient pressure may lead to boredom, while excessive pressure disrupts cognitive processes, emotions, and behavior. This pattern is consistent with the Yerkes-



Dodson Law, which describes an inverted U-shaped curvilinear relationship between activation levels and performance (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908). Therefore, stress management should not aim to eliminate all pressure, but rather to maintain job demands within manageable limits.

The Secretariat of the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) of Lampung Province has distinctive characteristics because it brings together two different systems. On the one hand, the organization operates through formal and hierarchical executive-bureaucratic procedures that are bound by administrative regulations. On the other hand, employees must support dynamic legislative activities, including commission meetings, plenary sessions, official visits, the drafting of regional regulations, and deliberations on the General Budget Policy and Provisional Budget Priorities and Ceilings (KUA-PPAS) and the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD). Sudden agenda changes, tight document-preparation deadlines, and service demands from political actors across party factions create workloads that are not always predictable.

This hybrid organizational position creates dual demands for employees. Administratively, civil servants are accountable to the regional government structure and must comply with personnel rules and budget-management accountability requirements. Operationally, they must respond quickly to the needs of DPRD leaders and members. When procedural compliance conflicts with pressure to accelerate political agendas, employees may experience role conflict, ambiguous instructions, and time pressure. Working hours that extend beyond regular schedules may also reduce family time and intensify work-family conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

The Job Demands-Resources model explains that every occupation consists of job demands and job resources. Demands such as heavy workloads, time pressure, role conflict, and emotionally demanding interactions require sustained effort, whereas resources such as supervisory support, role clarity, autonomy, competence, and peer support help employees achieve their goals and reduce the effects of those demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001). Distress tends to emerge when demands become chronic and exceed the resources available.

The Person-Environment Fit perspective complements this analysis by emphasizing compatibility between individual characteristics and the work environment. A mismatch between employees' competencies, values, needs, or time capacity and organizational demands can trigger psychological strain (Edwards et al., 1998). In the context of bureaucratic digitalization, difficulty adapting to changes in applications and electronic procedures can also generate technostress, which increases role pressure and reduces productivity (Tarafdar et al., 2007).

Work stress may manifest through physiological, psychological, and behavioral symptoms. Physiological symptoms include fatigue, sleep disturbances, headaches, muscle tension, and digestive problems. Psychological symptoms may include anxiety, irritability, dissatisfaction, exhaustion, and burnout. Burnout is characterized by exhaustion, cynicism, and a reduced sense

of professional efficacy (Maslach et al., 2001). Behavioral symptoms can be observed in absenteeism, withdrawal, interpersonal conflict, task procrastination, and declining productivity (Robbins & Judge, 2017).

Public-sector employee performance is assessed not only by the quantity of outputs, but also by quality, timeliness, regulatory compliance, accountability, and service effectiveness. Blumberg and Pringle (1982) explain that performance results from the interaction of ability, motivation, and opportunity to perform. Distress can reduce ability by weakening focus and accuracy, reduce motivation through emotional exhaustion, and constrain opportunities to perform when organizational structures and support are inadequate.

Studies of work stress in public organizations generally examine workload, burnout, or performance separately. Research that specifically investigates the intersection of bureaucratic pressure and political agendas within regional legislative secretariats remains limited. This study offers novelty through an integrated analysis of stress sources across environmental, organizational, and individual dimensions; the manifestations of stress; its implications for performance; and the inhibiting and enabling factors of stress governance. The study aims to analyze the formation of work stress and the mechanisms through which it affects employee performance, while identifying the factors that hinder and support stress management at the Lampung Provincial DPRD Secretariat.

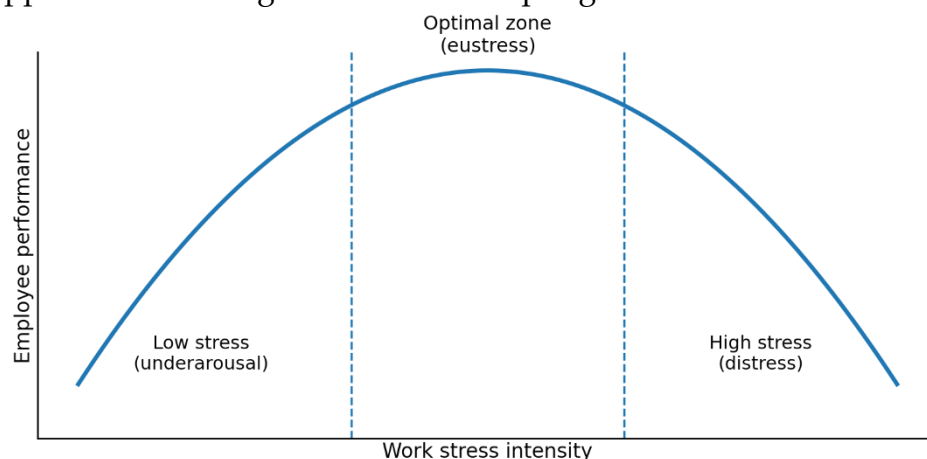


Figure 1: Conceptual Curve of the Relationship between Work Stress and Performance

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive-analytical method. This approach was selected because work stress is a psychosocial experience shaped by meaning, relationships, and organizational context. The researcher served as the primary instrument in interpreting informants' experiences, nonverbal expressions, workplace interaction patterns, and the political-bureaucratic dynamics underlying the phenomenon.

The study was conducted at the Office of the Lampung Provincial DPRD Secretariat in Bandar Lampung. The location was purposively selected because employees perform administrative services, legislative-session support, budgeting, oversight, public relations, and legislative facilitation within a

dynamic agenda. Data collection took place over three months, from April to June 2026.

The data consisted of primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through semi-structured in-depth interviews with key informants and passive participant observation of work behavior and interactions in offices, commission meeting rooms, and legislative-session areas. Secondary data included Employee Performance Targets, attendance records, agendas for plenary meetings and special committees, and institutional performance accountability reports.

Informants were selected through purposive sampling and expanded through snowball sampling. The criteria included civil servants who had worked for at least two years, were assigned to units that interacted directly with legislative services, and experienced high workload dynamics. Informants represented the Session and Legislation Division, functional officials responsible for legislative drafting, the Budgeting and Oversight Facilitation Division, public relations and protocol officers, and general administrative staff. The recruitment of informants ended when the information reached data saturation.

Interviews were conducted using a flexible guide that allowed informants to describe their experiences openly. With their consent, interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Observations focused on communication patterns under tight deadlines, task distribution, responses to agenda changes, signs of fatigue, and strategies for coping with pressure. Field notes and documents were used to examine the consistency of information obtained from interviews.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Transcripts and field notes were coded, grouped into themes, compared across units and informants, and presented in matrices and analytical narratives. Data trustworthiness was maintained through source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking in accordance with the principles of qualitative trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Informants' identities were anonymized to protect confidentiality.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Anatomy of Workplace Stressors

The findings indicate that work stress among civil servants at the Lampung Provincial DPRD Secretariat is multidimensional, structural, and cumulative. Strain does not arise from a single event; rather, it develops through interactions among environmental pressure, organizational demands, and individual conditions. These three dimensions reinforce one another and determine whether pressure remains within the limits of eustress or develops into distress.

Environmental Dimension

Environmental stressors primarily arise from the volatility of regional political agendas and the high degree of public exposure surrounding the secretariat's performance. Administrative errors, delays in facilitation, and

perceptions of civil-service partiality can quickly attract the attention of the media, civil-society organizations, and the public. This situation creates heightened vigilance and concern about social and career consequences. Shifting relationships among political factions also require employees to maintain political sensitivity so that they can remain professional without becoming involved in partisan interests.

These environmental pressures differ from the demands faced by ordinary administrative units because work schedules and priorities may change according to leadership decisions and legislative-session dynamics. Employees must revise meeting materials, regulatory drafts, official-travel arrangements, and protocol support within a short period. Recurrent uncertainty increases anticipatory strain, meaning pressure that emerges even before an agenda is implemented.

Organizational Dimension

The organizational dimension is the most dominant source of pressure. First, employees experience both quantitative and qualitative work overload. The volume of draft regional regulations, session minutes, budgeting documents, financial reports, and oversight materials is not always proportional to the number of employees with specialized competencies. Consequently, some employees must handle several tasks simultaneously under severe time pressure.

Second, employees experience role conflict and role ambiguity. Structurally, civil servants must comply with the instructions of bureaucratic leaders and administrative regulations. Operationally, they are expected to respond rapidly to the needs of DPRD leaders and members. When pressure for acceleration is inconsistent with formal procedures, employees face a dilemma: delays may be interpreted as poor service, whereas acceleration that bypasses administrative stages increases the risk of audits and accountability problems.

Third, a multilayered bureaucratic structure does not always align with the flexibility required by legislative agendas. Lengthy disposition and decision-making processes can obstruct rapid responses, while schedule changes frequently require immediate adjustment. This misalignment between structure and demands reflects an imbalance between job demands and job resources, as explained by the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

"We must maintain legal accuracy and follow administrative stages that require in-depth analysis. At the same time, drafts are often expected to be completed more quickly because of special committee agendas. Documents accumulate, the number of personnel who understand the substance is limited, and overtime becomes difficult to avoid. This situation drains our mental energy." (Informant A, functional official)

Individual Dimension

Organizational pressure extends into employees' personal lives. Overtime schedules, evening meetings, and weekend work reduce time with family and generate guilt when domestic responsibilities cannot be fulfilled. This finding is consistent with the concept of work-family conflict, particularly time-based and strain-based conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). When such conflict occurs repeatedly, psychological recovery after work becomes suboptimal.

Another individual stressor is technostress. The digitalization of e-office systems, performance reporting, procurement, and administrative applications improves efficiency, but also requires adaptive capacity. Employees who have not mastered the applications need more time, fear making mistakes, and depend on particular colleagues. This condition reflects a temporary mismatch between individual capacity and work-environment demands, as described by Person-Environment Fit theory (Edwards et al., 1998).

Manifestations of Work Stress

The accumulation of stressors manifests in three groups of symptoms. In the physiological dimension, informants reported prolonged fatigue, headaches, tension in the neck and shoulder muscles, fluctuations in blood pressure, sleep disturbances, and recurring digestive complaints during periods of intensive legislative activity. Observations also indicated that employees frequently relied on pain relievers, supplements, or aromatherapy during demanding work periods.

In the psychological dimension, employees experienced exhaustion, anxiety when entering budget deliberations, irritability, declining job satisfaction, and feelings of helplessness. Some employees began to view their duties cynically and felt that intensive effort did not always produce recognition or certainty. These patterns of exhaustion and cynicism overlap with the characteristics of burnout described by Maslach et al. (2001).

In the behavioral dimension, pressure was reflected in delays in completing complex files, withdrawal from interaction, extended rest periods, reduced participation in routine activities, and a tendency to be physically present without making an optimal contribution. These behaviors should be interpreted as indicators of organizational problems rather than merely as weaknesses in individual discipline, because they occur alongside heavy workloads and limited support.

Effects on Employee and Institutional Performance

Distress affects employees' ability, motivation, and opportunity to produce high-quality performance. Reduced focus and working memory increase the risk of typographical errors, incorrect legal references, and substantive inaccuracies in documents. Emotional exhaustion weakens initiative and increases the tendency to work defensively. At the organizational level, miscommunication across divisions disrupts the preparation of minutes, financial notes, KUA-PPAS documents, and materials for legislative sessions.

Table 1: Effects of Work Stress on Employee and Institutional Performance

Impact Dimension	Manifestations among Employees	Implications for Institutional Performance
Cognitive focus and intellectual capacity	Concentration, short-term memory, and accuracy in reviewing drafts decline; mental fatigue increases.	The risk of substantive legal errors, typographical errors in critical provisions, and inaccurate regulatory references increases.

Impact Dimension	Manifestations among Employees	Implications for Institutional Performance
Motivation and discipline	Demotivation, apathy, cynicism, and psychological withdrawal from organizational goals emerge.	Participation in routine activities declines; employees are physically present, but meaningful contributions and work initiative weaken.
Service and coordination	Emotional tension causes miscommunication and a tendency to overlook directives because of work overload.	The preparation of minutes, financial notes, KUA-PPAS materials, and support for legislative sessions is delayed.
Accountability and decision-making	Fear of administrative errors reduces self-confidence and encourages defensive behavior.	Operational decisions become slower and more bureaucratic, potentially disrupting budget absorption and accountability performance.

These findings indicate a pattern consistent with the inverted U-shaped curve. Moderate pressure can still improve employees' readiness to address important agendas; however, prolonged pressure that is not balanced by adequate resources has shifted some employees toward distress. Therefore, declining performance cannot be explained solely by individual competence. Working conditions and organizational governance also determine employees' ability to maintain service quality.

Factors Inhibiting Stress Management

Stress management faces three principal barriers. First, the organization has not established internal policies or program allocations specifically addressing employees' psychological well-being. Human resource management remains focused primarily on attendance and formal performance assessment, while early detection of exhaustion, consultation, and referral to professional assistance have not been institutionalized. Second, some informants described leadership styles that emphasized compliance and task completion without sufficiently considering subordinates' capacity. Limited appreciation, one-way communication, and a blame culture increase the risk of burnout. Third, mental health is still viewed as a private matter, and psychological complaints may be interpreted as signs of incompetence or insufficient loyalty. This stigma encourages employees to suppress their problems until they adversely affect health and performance.

Factors Supporting Stress Management

Despite formal limitations, peer social support is an important resource. Employees help one another complete tasks, share information, take turns managing agendas, and provide space for discussion when pressure increases. Such support functions as a buffer that reduces isolation and accelerates recovery. In addition, most employees demonstrate resilience, optimism, and adaptive capacity because they understand the consequences of working in a legislative environment. This psychological capital will be more effective when

supported by equitable workload distribution, supportive leadership, and access to professional assistance.

Managerial Implications

Stress management should focus on organizational interventions rather than solely on individual coping training. The DPRD Secretariat should update its workload analysis and distribute tasks according to volume, complexity, and competence. Adaptive standard operating procedures are needed to anticipate agenda changes, establish emergency coordination channels, document changes in instructions, and regulate overtime limits and recovery compensation. Leaders should develop two-way communication, provide fair recognition, communicate priorities clearly, and conduct periodic workload evaluations.

At the regional-government level, an Employee Assistance Program or an equivalent employee-support mechanism can be developed to provide confidential counseling, mental-health education, early detection of burnout, and professional referral services. This recommendation is consistent with the emphasis on organizational interventions in the guidelines on mental health at work (World Health Organization, 2022). Stress-management and resilience training should complement, rather than replace, improvements in work structures and leadership support.

CONCLUSION

Work stress at the Lampung Provincial DPRD Secretariat develops through interactions among environmental, organizational, and individual stressors. Uncertainty in political agendas, public exposure, excessive workloads, role conflict and ambiguity, rigid bureaucratic procedures, work-family conflict, and technostress create cumulative pressure. Moderate pressure may function as eustress that improves readiness, but prolonged pressure that is not balanced by sufficient resources develops into distress.

Distress manifests in fatigue and physical complaints, exhaustion and anxiety, reduced motivation, task procrastination, and withdrawal. Its effects extend beyond the individual by influencing document accuracy, interdivisional coordination, discipline, service speed, accountability, and the quality of decision-making. These findings show that employee performance depends not only on ability and motivation, but also on the opportunities created by organizational structure, support, and the work climate.

Stress management should integrate workload restructuring, procedures that adapt to agenda changes, supportive leadership, stronger peer support, resilience training, and confidential, stigma-free employee-assistance services. Future research may quantitatively measure stress and performance levels, compare DPRD secretariats across regions, and evaluate the long-term effectiveness of organizational interventions.

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