
Performance Optimization in Public Health Services: A Human Resource Economics Approach through Workload, Motivation, and Work Environment

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Abstract:

This study explores key human resource factors—workload, work motivation, and work environment—and their impact on the performance of health workers, with a focus on organizational efficiency in public health services. The research examines 64 midwives and nurses across 20 public health centers (Puskesmas) in Buleleng Regency, who were assigned additional tasks beyond their formal competencies and educational backgrounds. Data were gathered using an online questionnaire and analyzed using multiple linear regression. The findings reveal that workload negatively and significantly affects performance, while work motivation and work environment have significant positive effects. When considered simultaneously, these three variables contribute positively to performance outcomes. These results highlight the importance of managing human capital effectively to enhance service delivery in public health institutions. The study offers valuable insights for health sector managers and policy makers seeking to improve performance through strategic human resource interventions.

Keywords: *Workload; Work Motivation; Work Environment; Performance*

Submitted: March 10, 2025, Accepted: April 19, 2025, Published: May 20, 2025

1. Introduction

Public health is a fundamental pillar in the development and sustainability of a nation. In Indonesia, the degree of public health serves as a benchmark for the government's success in ensuring the welfare of its people. Since 2024, Indonesia has ranked as the fourth most populous country among G20 member states, presenting both an opportunity and a challenge in the provision of health services. To accommodate this large population, health services must be carried out in a structured and tiered manner. The Health Law No. 17 of 2023 outlines a comprehensive approach to achieving optimal public health, emphasizing promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative, and palliative services grounded in principles of equity, non-discrimination, and sustainability.

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Aligned with the fourth pillar of Indonesia's Asta Cita development agenda—strengthening human resources, science, education, and health—the health sector emphasizes the importance of reinforcing health service systems. This includes infrastructure, human resources, medical supplies, technology, and financing. At the core of the primary care system is the Puskesmas (Community Health Center), which serves as the main provider of healthcare services at the grassroots level. Nurses and midwives, as the largest group of health workers in Puskesmas, play a crucial role in delivering both in-facility care (such as maternal and emergency services) and community-based services (such as Posyandu, home visits, and health promotion activities) (Oktaviana & Wahyono, 2020).

In Buleleng Regency, Puskesmas remain the most utilized health facilities. Based on the 2023 data from the Buleleng Health Office, 78.15% of total outpatient visits at the primary healthcare level were to Puskesmas, while only 21.85% visited private clinics. This high utilization rate demonstrates the community's dependence on Puskesmas. However, service quality remains a concern. According to the Community Satisfaction Survey conducted in the first semester of 2024, indicators such as service provider behavior, service time, and availability of facilities were rated the lowest. Most complaints centered on nurses and midwives, citing unprofessional behavior, long wait times, and absenteeism during working hours (Apridani, Mantikei, & Syamsudin, 2021).

Field observations suggest that the suboptimal service is not solely due to personal shortcomings but also structural issues. Nurses and midwives often face a dual burden: delivering health services while simultaneously handling extensive administrative duties. For example, a single health worker may be responsible for planning, executing, and reporting program budgets, including coordination with multiple sectors. When staffing levels are insufficient, this administrative load can hinder their ability to provide quality care. This situation reflects an urgent need to reevaluate the workload distribution among frontline health workers (Coryka & Wibawa, 2023).

Previous research regarding workload and performance has shown mixed results. Some studies confirm that heavy workloads have a significant negative impact on health worker performance, while others suggest no significant correlation. In the context of Puskesmas in Buleleng, workforce planning data indicates a clear gap between existing staff and optimal staffing requirements, particularly for nurses and midwives. This suggests that the current workload may exceed their capacity, which could impair their ability to maintain high standards of care (Martahadi, Suwena, & Heryanda, 2024; Farida, Widjanarko, & Dwiantoro, 2024).

Motivation is another factor that plays a crucial role in influencing performance. Studies in various regions have shown that motivated health workers tend to perform better and are more committed to their duties. Motivation can stem from internal factors such as personal ambition or external factors such as financial incentives, recognition, and career opportunities. Despite this, not all studies agree on the extent of motivation's influence on performance (Dewi & Suwandana, 2024; Kamirullah et al., 2024). This inconsistency highlights the need to explore the unique interplay

between motivation and other variables, such as workload and work environment, particularly in settings like Buleleng.

The work environment also significantly affects employee performance. A positive and supportive environment can enhance job satisfaction and productivity, while a toxic or poorly managed environment may lead to burnout and decreased morale. Previous findings on this subject are also inconclusive; while some studies show a strong relationship between the work environment and performance, others find little to no impact (Murharyati et al., 2023; Ningrat & Suarmanayasa, 2023). In Buleleng's context, this creates a gap in understanding how environmental factors shape the performance of nurses and midwives at the Puskesmas level.

This study aims to fill these research gaps by examining the simultaneous effects of workload, motivation, and work environment on the performance of nurses and midwives at Puskesmas in Buleleng Regency. Unlike previous studies that focus on individual variables (Juana, Ali, & Rosadi, 2023; Parashakti & Putriawati, 2020), this research seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the three factors in combination. The novelty of this research lies in its holistic approach and its focus on a region that relies heavily on Puskesmas as the primary health service provider. The results of this study are expected to offer evidence-based recommendations for improving human resource management and enhancing health service delivery at the frontline level.

2. Theoretical Foundations

Workload and Performance

Workload has a direct impact on employee performance, especially in high-pressure sectors such as healthcare. Excessive workload can lead to fatigue, stress, and decreased concentration, which in turn reduce service quality. Coryka and Wibawa (2023) highlight that a high workload is significantly and negatively related to employee performance, as it exceeds individual capacity and lowers productivity. Similarly, Priyanggono et al. (2023) found that high workload in hospital settings negatively affects nurses' quality of life, indirectly reducing their performance. In the context of Puskesmas in Buleleng, insufficient staffing combined with administrative overload further amplifies this burden.

Motivation and Performance

Motivation—both intrinsic (e.g., personal achievement, self-growth) and extrinsic (e.g., incentives, recognition)—plays a critical role in influencing the commitment and performance of health workers. Dewi and Suwandana (2024) revealed that strong work motivation significantly enhances the performance of Puskesmas staff. In the same vein, Kamirullah et al. (2024) emphasized that motivated nurses are more engaged, resilient, and focused on patient-centered care. The presence of a clear reward system, opportunities for career advancement, and supportive leadership were key motivational drivers.

Work Environment and Performance

The work environment encompasses physical infrastructure, interpersonal relations, and psychological safety. A conducive environment promotes comfort and efficiency, while a poor environment contributes to burnout and dissatisfaction. Murharyati et al. (2023) indicated that work environment is a determining factor in the level of burnout experienced by nurses, particularly in high-stress units such as ICU and ER. Meanwhile, Ningrat and Suarmanayasa (2023) showed that a good work environment positively correlates with employee performance in service-oriented fields. For nurses and midwives in Puskesmas, factors such as availability of facilities, leadership style, and peer support influence how effectively they deliver services.

Interaction Between Variables

Although workload, motivation, and work environment can each independently influence performance, their effects may be interrelated. For example, a high workload might be mitigated by strong motivation or a supportive environment. Conversely, even a motivated worker may experience performance decline if faced with an unsupportive work environment or extreme workload. Martahadi et al. (2024) identified motivation as a mediating factor between workload and performance, indicating that workers with high intrinsic drive could still perform well despite heavy demands—provided other conditions support them. Therefore, examining these variables simultaneously offers a more comprehensive understanding of performance outcomes.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework and prior empirical findings, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Workload has a significant negative effect on the performance of nurses and midwives at Puskesmas in Buleleng Regency.

H2: Work motivation has a significant positive effect on the performance of nurses and midwives at Puskesmas in Buleleng Regency.

H3: Work environment has a significant positive effect on the performance of nurses and midwives at Puskesmas in Buleleng Regency.

H4: Workload, motivation, and work environment simultaneously have a significant effect on the performance of nurses and midwives at Puskesmas in Buleleng Regency.

3. Methodology

This research uses a causal quantitative approach, which aims to explore the relationships between different variables and their cause-and-effect connections. The study tests hypotheses to examine how independent variables, such as workload, work motivation, and work environment, affect the performance of midwives and nurses in Puskesmas (health centers) in Buleleng Regency. This type of research is considered causal because it focuses on understanding the extent to which independent variables influence the dependent variable, which in this case is the performance of healthcare workers. The study includes the entire population of midwives and nurses at the Puskesmas, who also have additional responsibilities as treasurers, technical officers, and goods managers, totaling 64 individuals across 20 health centers in Buleleng

Regency. Data for the study were collected through a survey method. The performance of healthcare workers is assessed based on several factors such as work quality, quantity, timeliness, effectiveness, and independence. Workload refers to the tasks assigned to employees that must be completed within a specific time frame, utilizing their skills and potential. Work motivation is defined as the intensity, direction, and persistence of individuals' efforts to achieve their goals, while the work environment encompasses the tools, materials, surroundings, and methods that employees encounter during their work. The hypotheses of the study propose that workload, work motivation, and work environment all have a significant impact on the performance of midwives and nurses. Additionally, the research uses descriptive statistics to analyze data, including measures of maximum and minimum values, averages, and standard deviations, with a multiple linear regression model used to assess the relationships between the variables.

4. Empirical Findings/Results

Validity Test

Based on the testing of the statements regarding performance, workload, work motivation, and work environment, the results indicate that all items are valid because the Pearson correlation values are above 0.3, and the significance values are smaller than 0.05, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Validity Test Results

Variable	Instrument	Pearson Correlation	Alpha	Remarks
Y	Y1	0.669	0.05	Valid
	Y2	0.792	0.05	Valid
	Y3	0.786	0.05	Valid
	Y4	0.737	0.05	Valid
	Y5	0.806	0.05	Valid
X1	X1.1	0.712	0.05	Valid
	X1.2	0.885	0.05	Valid
	X1.3	0.818	0.05	Valid
	X1.4	0.696	0.05	Valid
X2	X2.1	0.684	0.05	Valid
	X2.2	0.639	0.05	Valid
	X2.3	0.707	0.05	Valid
	X2.4	0.647	0.05	Valid
	X2.5	0.497	0.05	Valid
	X2.6	0.424	0.05	Valid
	X2.7	0.477	0.05	Valid
	X2.8	0.470	0.05	Valid
X3	X3.1	0.823	0.05	Valid
	X3.2	0.780	0.05	Valid
	X3.3	0.825	0.05	Valid
	X3.4	0.809	0.05	Valid

Source: Processed Data, SPSS, 2025

Reliability Test

According to Ghozali (2016), a questionnaire is considered reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha value is greater than 0.60, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Remarks
Workload (X1)	0.783	Reliable
Work Motivation (X2)	0.703	Reliable
Work Environment (X3)	0.824	Reliable
Performance (Y)	0.810	Reliable

Source: Processed Data, SPSS, 2025

Classical Assumption Test

The results of the classical assumption tests, including Normality Test, Multicollinearity Test, and Heteroscedasticity Test, are as follows:

Normality Test

The data were tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z test, yielding a value of 0.611 with a significance value (Asymp. Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.85, which is greater than 0.05. Thus, the data is normally distributed, as presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Normality Test Results

Analysis Statistic	Value	Decision
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	0.61	Valid
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.85	

Source: Processed Data, SPSS, 2025

Multicollinearity Test

Testing using the Tolerance and VIF methods revealed no multicollinearity issues because the tolerance values are greater than 0.1, and the VIF values are below 10, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Multicollinearity Test Results

Variable	Tolerance	VIF	Decision
Workload (X1)	0.58	1.73	Valid
Work Motivation (X2)	0.47	2.12	
Work Environment (X3)	0.34	2.98	

Source: Processed Data, SPSS, 2025

Heteroscedasticity Test

Based on testing using the Glejser method, all independent variables showed no heteroscedasticity because the significance values between independent variables are greater than 0.05, as displayed in Table 7.

Table 7. Heteroscedasticity Test Results

Variable	Sig.	Criterion	Decision
Workload (X1)	0.528	> 0.05	Valid
Work Motivation (X2)	0.585	> 0.05	
Work Environment (X3)	0.539	> 0.05	

Source: Processed Data, SPSS, 2025

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Based on the analysis of the multiple linear regression equation, it can be concluded that there is a relationship and influence between the variables of workload, work motivation, and work environment on performance, with the equation as follows:

$$Y = 6.630 - 0.570X_1 + 0.615X_2 + 0.218X_3 + 0.088\epsilon$$

The constant value of 6.630 means that if the values of workload (X1), work motivation (X2), and work environment (X3) are zero, then the performance (Y) will be 6.630. The coefficient of workload (β_1) is 0.570, which negatively influences performance (Y). This means that for every unit increase in workload (X1), the performance (Y) will decrease by 0.570, assuming other independent variables remain constant. The coefficient of work motivation (β_2) is 0.615, which positively influences performance (Y). This means that for every unit increase in work motivation (X2), the performance (Y) will increase by 0.615, assuming other independent variables remain constant. The coefficient of work environment (β_3) is 0.218, which positively influences performance (Y). This means that for every unit increase in the work environment (X3), the performance (Y) will increase by 0.218, assuming other independent variables remain constant. The error value (ϵ) is 0.088, assuming there are other variables affecting performance besides workload (X1), work motivation (X2), and work environment (X3).

Partial Test (T-Test)

Based on the calculation of the t-statistic values for the independent variables, which are then compared to the t-table, with the t-table value having degrees of freedom (df) = $n - k$, where n represents the sample size and k represents the number of independent variables, which is $64 - 3 = 61$, resulting in a t-table value of 1.99962. The calculated t-values are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Partial Test (T-Test) Results

No	Variable	t	Sig.
1	Workload (X1)	-6.469	0.000
2	Work Motivation (X2)	11.205	0.000
3	Work Environment (X3)	2.446	0.017

Source: Data processed by SPSS, 2025

The t-value for the workload variable is -6.469, which is greater than the t-table value ($-6.469 > 1.99962$) and the significance value is less than 0.05 ($0.000 < 0.05$), so the first hypothesis is accepted, meaning that workload has a significant negative effect on performance. The t-value for the work motivation variable is 11.205, which is greater than the t-table value ($11.205 > 1.99962$) and the significance value is less than 0.05 ($0.000 < 0.05$), so the second hypothesis is accepted, meaning that work

motivation has a significant positive effect on performance. The t-value for the work environment variable is 2.446, which is greater than the t-table value ($2.446 > 1.99962$) and the significance value is less than 0.05 ($0.017 < 0.05$), so the third hypothesis is accepted, meaning that work environment has a significant positive effect on performance.

Simultaneous Test (F-Test)

Based on the calculation of the F-statistic value for the independent variables, which is then compared to the F-table, where the F-table value has degrees of freedom ($df = n - k$, where n represents the sample size and k represents the number of variables used, which is $4 - 1 = 3$, so $64 - 3 = 61$, the F-table value is 2.755, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Simultaneous Test (F-Test) Results

Description	F	Sig.
Simultaneous Test / F-Test	206.981	0.000

Source: Data processed by SPSS, 2025

The calculated F-value for workload, work motivation, and work environment is 206.981, which is greater than the F-table value ($206.981 > 2.755$) and the significance value is less than 0.05 ($0.000 < 0.05$), so the fourth hypothesis is accepted, meaning that workload, work motivation, and work environment have a significant positive effect on the performance of midwives and nurses at the Buleleng District Health Center.

Coefficient of Determination (R²)

In this study, the coefficient of determination is calculated to measure how much workload, work motivation, and work environment affect performance. The result of the coefficient of determination test is shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Coefficient of Determination (R²) Test

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.955	0.912	0.907	0.86541

Source: Data processed by SPSS, 2025

Based on the result of the coefficient of determination, the R Square value is 0.912, which means that the dependent variable, performance, is influenced by the independent variables—workload, work motivation, and work environment—by 91.2%, and the remaining 8.8% is influenced by other variables outside the study variables.

5. Discussion

Workload has been found to have a significant negative effect on healthcare professionals' performance. This aligns with previous research, such as Coryka & Wibawa (2023), who identified a negative relationship between workload and employee performance, particularly with high work commitments, which may increase stress levels and lead to burnout. Moreover, Farida et al. (2024) conducted a

scoping review showing that critical care nurses, often burdened with mental workload, experience a decline in their job satisfaction and performance. This trend is evident at Puskesmas, where midwives and nurses face substantial administrative duties that detract from their core healthcare tasks, leading to exhaustion and a decrease in service quality (Apridani et al., 2021).

Work motivation plays a pivotal role in improving performance. High levels of motivation can significantly enhance the quality of service provided by midwives and nurses. Dewi & Suwandana (2024) emphasize that job satisfaction, both intrinsic and extrinsic, positively affects employee motivation and, in turn, improves performance. Motivated healthcare workers, who receive positive feedback and recognition, demonstrate a greater willingness to meet community health needs. This is consistent with the findings of Kamirullah et al. (2024), which highlight how motivation can improve job satisfaction and foster a higher level of performance, even when the workload is heavy.

Work environment is another crucial determinant. A supportive work environment contributes significantly to better performance by facilitating task completion and reducing stress levels. As demonstrated by Priyanggono et al. (2023), a favorable work environment positively influences healthcare workers' quality of life, which in turn enhances their performance. Furthermore, a well-equipped and stress-reducing environment helps mitigate burnout and improves efficiency (Setiawan et al., 2023). This notion is further supported by research from Ningrat & Suarmanayasa (2023), which showed that a positive work environment fosters better employee performance, particularly in service-oriented sectors like healthcare.

When these factors—workload, motivation, and work environment—are well-managed, they act synergistically to improve the performance of healthcare professionals. A balanced workload combined with high motivation and a positive work environment ensures that midwives and nurses at Puskesmas can perform optimally. However, when the workload becomes overwhelming, and the work environment lacks adequate support, these factors can have an adverse effect on performance, leading to burnout, job dissatisfaction, and reduced service quality (Mastiasih et al., 2023).

In conclusion, optimizing the performance of midwives and nurses at Puskesmas requires a holistic approach that balances workload, enhances motivation, and fosters a supportive work environment. By aligning these elements, healthcare organizations can ensure that their employees are not only motivated but also equipped to provide high-quality care to the community. Ensuring that these factors are addressed will ultimately lead to better healthcare outcomes, benefiting both employees and the patients they serve.

6. Conclusions

This study highlights the importance of workload, motivation, and work environment factors in influencing the performance of midwives and nurses at Puskesmas

Buleleng. A high workload has been shown to have a negative impact on their performance, leading to decreased productivity and quality of service. On the other hand, high motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, enhances performance by encouraging healthcare workers to perform their tasks more effectively and efficiently. A conducive work environment, in both physical aspects and interpersonal relationships, also plays a key role in reducing work stress and supporting improved performance. These three factors interact with one another and need to be managed well to achieve optimal performance from healthcare workers.

Future research could build upon this study by focusing on specific interventions to mitigate the negative impacts of workload, such as the use of technology or more efficient task allocation. Additionally, the study could expand its scope to include other healthcare facilities, such as hospitals or clinics, to determine whether these findings are consistent across different settings. Research could also explore the relationship between external factors, such as public health policies or government support, and the motivation and performance of healthcare workers.

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