
Workload and Work Environment as Determinants of Labor Productivity

Hamsal¹, Iyoyo Dianto², Desy Mardianti³, Hidayat⁴, Marina Nuraini⁵,
Anggun Asminati Ningrum⁶

Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the influence of workload and work environment on labor productivity at the Setia Kawan Cooperative Village Unit Office, Indragiri Hulu. The approach used is quantitative with purposive sampling techniques. Data was obtained through questionnaires to 80 respondents, then analyzed using SmartPLS 4 software to test the relationship between variables. The results of the study show that workload and work environment have a positive and significant effect on worker productivity. These findings affirm the importance of proportionate workload management and the creation of a conducive work environment in improving workforce performance. The limitation of this study lies in the scope that only covers one cooperative with a relatively small number of respondents, so the generalization of results is still limited. Further research is suggested to involve a broader sample as well as consider additional variables, such as motivation and leadership. This research makes an empirical contribution to the literature on the determinants of labor productivity, especially in the context of cooperatives in rural areas of Indonesia that are still rarely studied.

Keywords: Workload, Work Environment, Productivity, Labor, Cooperatives

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1. Introduction

Village Unit Cooperatives (KUD) play a vital role in the rural economic system as collective business institutions that empower communities to manage resources for improving members' welfare. This model not only facilitates access to production factors but also promotes job creation and inclusive local development. The

¹Faculty of Economy, Universitas Islam Riau, Indonesia, hamsal@eco.uir.ac.id

²Faculty of Economy, Universitas Islam Riau, Indonesia, iyoyo@eco.uir.ac.id

³Faculty of Economy, Universitas Islam Riau, Indonesia, desyamardianti@eco.uir.ac.id

⁴Faculty of Economy, Universitas Islam Riau, Indonesia, hidayat@eco.uir.ac.id

⁵Faculty of Economy, Universitas Islam Riau, Indonesia,

⁶Faculty of Economy, Universitas Islam Riau, Indonesia,

sustainability of KUD operations, particularly in labor-intensive sectors such as palm oil processing, depends heavily on workforce productivity as a key driver of economic efficiency and competitiveness. As Martin (2025) emphasizes, productivity is a fundamental indicator of economic resilience in the digital and industrial transformation era. Similarly, Singh et al. (2022) argue that productivity directly influences an organization's competitiveness and long-term growth.

Labor productivity is influenced by numerous internal and external factors, among which workload and work environment are consistently identified as critical determinants (Manopo, Londa, & Luntungan, 2021; Mardi & Retno, 2019). Workload represents the balance between job demands and employee capacity—both physical and psychological. Awan and Tahir (2015) found that excessive workload leads to stress, fatigue, and declining performance, whereas insufficient workload can create monotony and disengagement. Sugianto, Prasetyo, and Wijayanti (2023a, 2023b) further confirmed that unbalanced workload increases work stress and reduces performance, highlighting the importance of proportional task management to sustain motivation and productivity.

The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory provides a strong theoretical lens to understand this relationship (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The model suggests that productivity declines when job demands exceed available resources, leading to burnout and disengagement. Conversely, when employees have sufficient resources—such as skills, autonomy, and support—they experience higher motivation and work engagement (Van der Doef & Maes, 1999). In this context, managing workload effectively becomes a strategic necessity for maintaining employee well-being and performance, as supported by Longo (2022) who emphasizes the importance of balancing mental workload to enhance human performance.

In addition to workload, the work environment also exerts a strong influence on productivity. A conducive work environment encompasses both physical aspects—such as lighting, temperature, cleanliness, and spatial layout—and non-physical aspects like interpersonal relationships, managerial support, and organizational culture (Jayaweera, 2015; Zohurul & Siengthai, 2013). Studies by Douglas and Walker (2022) and Indergård (2025) demonstrate that a positive work environment enhances employee satisfaction, motivation, and retention, ultimately improving productivity. Conversely, poor environmental conditions—such as noise, excessive heat, or lack of communication—can result in stress and absenteeism (Budiyanto, Prasetyo, & Widodo, 2025).

Empirical evidence also highlights how physical and non-physical work environments affect motivation and performance. Aisyah, Rahmawati, and Hidayat (2020) found that both dimensions significantly influence employee productivity when mediated by motivation. Bortoluzzi et al. (2018) similarly emphasize that measuring productivity

must consider environmental and psychological dimensions. Furthermore, research by Zhenjing, Yuhong, and Chang (2022) reveals that a positive workplace environment fosters better emotional well-being, thereby reinforcing performance outcomes. These findings underline that improving productivity requires simultaneous management of workload balance and workplace quality.

Within this theoretical and empirical landscape, the phenomenon observed at the Setia Kawan Indragiri Hulu Village Unit Cooperative illustrates a critical issue. Internal records show an alarming increase in labor turnover from 6.62% in 2022 to 12.66% in 2024, accompanied by declining production outcomes—achieving only 76% to 96% of monthly targets. Such data suggest potential misalignment between job demands and available resources, as well as inadequate work environment management. Field observations reinforce this view: employees frequently face overlapping responsibilities, tight deadlines, and stressful working conditions exacerbated by poor infrastructure, unpredictable weather, and weak supervisory communication.

These local findings resonate with international research. Shah et al. (2021) identify workload, stress, and work environment as joint predictors of performance decline, while Putra and Setyawan (2022) confirm that balanced workload and workplace safety improve retention. Likewise, studies by Hart and Staveland (1988a, 1988b) on the NASA-TLX framework demonstrate that subjective workload assessment is essential for optimizing performance under demanding conditions. Collectively, these studies underscore that maintaining equilibrium between workload and environment is not merely operational—it is strategic for sustaining productivity in cooperative-based industries.

Despite the extensive literature, a research gap remains concerning how workload and work environment jointly influence labor productivity within rural cooperative contexts, particularly in Indonesia. Existing studies have largely focused on industrial or corporate settings (Awan & Tahir, 2015; Douglas & Walker, 2022), with limited attention to cooperative labor structures that combine social and economic objectives. This study therefore seeks to address that gap by examining the effect of workload and work environment on labor productivity at the Setia Kawan Indragiri Hulu Cooperative. The novelty lies in contextualizing the JD-R model within a rural cooperative setting, offering empirical and managerial insights for enhancing employee well-being and organizational sustainability.

2. Literature Review

Labor productivity is a fundamental indicator of organizational effectiveness and economic competitiveness. It represents the efficiency of human resources in generating output relative to input, and it reflects how well employees utilize time,

skills, and energy in achieving organizational objectives (Martin, 2025). Productivity is not merely a quantitative measure but also includes qualitative dimensions such as innovation, service quality, and adaptability (Singh et al., 2022). In cooperative institutions, productivity determines the sustainability of collective enterprises by directly influencing profitability and member welfare. According to Aisyah, Rahmawati, and Hidayat (2020), productivity is strongly linked to the physical and non-physical work environment, which shapes employee motivation and engagement. Therefore, understanding the determinants of productivity—particularly workload and work environment—is crucial for achieving organizational sustainability.

Workload

Workload refers to the physical, cognitive, and emotional demands imposed on workers in performing their tasks (Hart & Staveland, 1988a). The *NASA Task Load Index (NASA-TLX)* developed by Hart and Staveland (1988b) provides a multidimensional framework for assessing perceived workload based on mental demand, physical demand, time pressure, effort, and frustration level. Excessive workload, or *work overload*, has been consistently associated with stress, burnout, and declining performance (Awan & Tahir, 2015; Sugianto, Prasetyo, & Wijayanti, 2023a). Conversely, insufficient workload can lead to under-stimulation, boredom, and disengagement.

The *Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model* proposed by Bakker and Demerouti (2017) provides a theoretical explanation of this phenomenon. The model posits that when job demands (e.g., workload, time pressure) exceed available resources (e.g., skills, autonomy, support), employees experience strain and burnout, leading to lower productivity. However, when resources are adequate or abundant, they buffer the negative effects of job demands and enhance motivation, engagement, and performance (Van der Doef & Maes, 1999). Thus, maintaining a balanced workload is essential for optimizing productivity and well-being.

Empirical studies further support this argument. Sugianto et al. (2023b) found that workload significantly affects employee performance, mediated by work stress in manufacturing firms. Shah et al. (2021) also identified workload as a key predictor of performance, mediated by stress and role conflict. Similarly, Putra and Setyawan (2022) showed that workload balance contributes to employee retention, indicating its long-term impact on organizational stability.

Work Environment

The work environment encompasses all physical and psychological conditions that influence employees' performance, comfort, and satisfaction (Jayaweera, 2015). The physical environment includes aspects such as lighting, temperature, ventilation, spatial design, and safety, while the non-physical environment involves social interactions, leadership support, and organizational culture (Zohurul & Siengthai,

2013). Research by Douglas and Walker (2022) emphasizes that an ergonomic and supportive work environment enhances employee well-being and productivity. Likewise, Indergård (2025) found that a conducive physical environment directly contributes to satisfaction and performance in Scandinavian workplaces.

In developing economies, environmental conditions such as noise, heat, and limited facilities are often significant constraints. Budiyanto, Prasetyo, and Widodo (2025) demonstrated that temperature, lighting, and noise significantly affect productivity at PT XYZ. Similarly, Manopo, Londa, and Luntungan (2021) confirmed that both work environment and integrity contribute to productivity in manufacturing settings. These findings indicate that the work environment not only determines performance outcomes but also interacts with workload to shape psychological well-being.

Furthermore, Longo (2022) highlights that environmental stressors can amplify mental workload, emphasizing the interplay between physical settings and cognitive performance. Zhenjing, Yuhong, and Chang (2022) also found that a positive environment enhances emotional stability, which in turn improves engagement and output quality. Therefore, work environment management should be seen not as a peripheral issue but as a strategic determinant of productivity.

Theoretical Framework

The relationship between workload, work environment, and productivity can be explained through the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model. This model explains that high workloads (job demands) without the support of job resources will cause fatigue, stress, and decreased performance. Conversely, the availability of adequate resources such as a supportive work environment can increase workforce engagement, motivation, and productivity. Thus, the JD-R model provides a robust conceptual framework for understanding workload dynamics, the work environment, and productivity.

3. Methodology

This study employs a quantitative approach with a descriptive–causal design aimed at examining the influence of workload and work environment on labor productivity. The research was conducted at the Setia Kawan Cooperative Village Unit Office, located in Bukit Indah Village, Rakit Kulim District, Indragiri Hulu Regency. Data collection took place between February and March 2025.

The population in this study consisted of 80 workers employed at the cooperative, all of whom were included as respondents through a total sampling technique. Primary data were obtained using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale, designed according to the dimensions of each variable. Secondary data were sourced

from the cooperative's internal documents, including performance and administrative reports.

The workload variable (X_1) was measured through three dimensions: mental load, time load, and physical load. The work environment variable (X_2) covered physical and non-physical aspects, while the labor productivity variable (Y) was assessed based on quantity of output, quality of work, and timeliness.

Data analysis was performed using SmartPLS 4 software. The analytical procedures included descriptive statistical analysis, evaluation of the outer model to assess the validity and reliability of constructs, and the inner model to test causal relationships among variables. The strength of the model was evaluated using the R-square and F-square values, while hypothesis testing was conducted using path coefficients, t -statistics, and p -values. A relationship between variables was considered significant when $t > 1.96$ and $p < 0.05$.

4. Empirical Findings/Result

Statistics Descriptive

A total of 80 questionnaires were collected and filled out completely by plantation workers at KUD Setia Kawan, Indragiri Hulu. The demographic profile shows that the majority of respondents are male (75%), are in the age range of 36–50 years, and have more than five years of work experience. In terms of education, most of the respondents are high school graduates. This characteristic indicates that the workforce has enough experience, although limited in higher formal education, to influence their perception of workload and working environment conditions.

Descriptive Analysis of Variables

The results of the descriptive analysis show that workers generally assess workload and work environment as the main factors that affect productivity. The workload is characterized by high mental and physical demands, especially during the harvest period, with time pressure and overtime that often occur. These findings are in line with (Sugianto et al. 2023b) who prove that excessive workload increases work stress thereby lowering employee performance. The work environment, although in some aspects of the facility is considered adequate, there are still shortcomings in physical conditions such as road access and availability of equipment, as well as non-physical aspects such as communication between superiors and subordinates. These results support a study (Zhenjing et al. 2022) that emphasizes that a supportive work environment is able to improve the motivation and performance of the workforce.

Measurement Model (Outer Model) and Structural Model (Inner Model)

The model image of this study illustrates three latent variables (constructs) visualized in a blue circle. **Workload (X_1)** is measured through three indicators, namely *Mental*

Load, Time Load, and Physical Load. Work Environment (X2) is measured through two indicators, namely *Physical Environment* and *Non-Physical Environment*. Meanwhile, **Productivity (Y)** as a dependent variable is operationalized through three indicators, yaitu *Quantity, Quality, dan Timeliness*. In the outer part of **the model**, the arrow that connects the construct with its indicators shows that the indicator functions as a measurement dimension of latent variables. For example, *Mental Load, Time Load, and Physical Load* are indicators that make up the *Workload construct*.

Furthermore, the **inner model** shows the relationship between latent variables, where *Workload (X1)* has a positive and significant effect on *Productivity (Y)* with a path coefficient (β) = 0.398, $t = 5.321$, $p < 0.001$. Similarly, *the Work Environment (X2)* had a positive and significant effect on *Productivity (Y)* with a path coefficient (β) = 0.456, $t = 6.273$, $p < 0.001$. The R^2 value on the *Productivity variable (Y)* is 0.701, indicating that 70.1% of productivity variability can be explained by workload and work environment, while the remaining 29.9% is influenced by other factors outside the model.

Evaluation of the **measurement model (outer model)** shows that all indicators meet the criteria of validity and reliability. The *loading factor value* of all indicators is above 0.70, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of each construct is greater than 0.50, and Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values exceed the threshold of 0.70. Thus, the construct of this research can be declared valid and reliable. These results are in line with the PLS-SEM methodological guidelines that emphasize the importance of these criteria in assessing the validity of constructs (Hair et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, the results of the **analysis of the structural model (inner model)** confirm that workload and work environment have a significant influence on labor productivity. An R^2 value of 0.701 indicates that both predictor variables explain most of the variation in productivity. The path coefficient confirms a significant positive influence, namely workload ($\beta = 0.398$, $t = 5.321$, $p < 0.001$) and work environment ($\beta = 0.456$, $t = 6.273$, $p < 0.001$). In addition, the effect size (f^2) results showed that workload (0.164) and work environment (0.217) both had a moderate effect on productivity.

Overall, the results of this study provide empirical evidence that both workload and work environment are important predictors in increasing labor productivity. Thus, balanced workload management and the creation of a conducive work environment are key factors to improve workforce performance, especially in the agribusiness cooperative sector.

5. Discussion

The results of this study confirm that workload and work environment are central determinants of labor productivity in agribusiness cooperatives. The positive and significant relationship between workload and productivity suggests that when job demands are maintained within an optimal range, they can stimulate employee focus, enhance efficiency, and encourage the completion of tasks with higher performance outcomes. This finding aligns with the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model proposed by Bakker and Demerouti (2017), which posits that balanced job demands can increase work engagement and motivation, while excessive demands without sufficient job resources lead to stress and performance decline.

In the context of agribusiness cooperatives, particularly during the harvest season, workers often face time pressure and physical intensity that can either enhance or hinder productivity depending on management practices. When workloads are effectively managed and supported with appropriate resources—such as adequate tools, fair task distribution, and supportive supervision—employees tend to respond positively, demonstrating higher concentration and resilience. However, when workloads exceed workers’ physical or cognitive capacities, fatigue and errors become more prevalent, ultimately diminishing productivity (Hart & Staveland, 1988a, 1988b; Longo, 2022). Similar patterns were reported by Sugianto, Prasetyo, and Wijayanti (2023a, 2023b), who found that excessive workloads increase work stress, which in turn reduces performance in manufacturing industries.

The findings further support the assertion of Shah et al. (2021) and Putra and Setyawan (2022) that workload and role stressors significantly shape employee performance outcomes. Within the JD–R framework, these factors represent “job demands” that require an adaptive balance through the presence of sufficient “job resources,” such as supportive management and adequate work conditions. The positive link between moderate workload and productivity observed in this study implies that the Setia Kawan Cooperative has maintained a relatively balanced distribution of work intensity, although temporary surges in demand during harvest periods remain a challenge.

The second major finding of this study highlights the significant effect of the work environment on labor productivity. The results show that both physical and psychosocial aspects of the work environment substantially contribute to improved worker outcomes. A well-maintained physical environment—including proper lighting, temperature, and equipment—creates comfort and safety that enable employees to perform tasks efficiently. These findings are consistent with Awan and Tahir (2015) and Zohurul and Siengthai (2013), who demonstrated that environmental quality in workplaces enhances concentration and reduces absenteeism, leading to improved productivity levels.

The psychosocial dimension of the work environment—comprising interpersonal relationships, communication, and organizational culture—also plays an essential role in fostering motivation and satisfaction. This aligns with Aisyah, Rahmawati, and Hidayat (2020) and Mardi and Retno (2019), who revealed that non-physical work environments, such as collegial support and management attention to well-being, have a direct and indirect influence on productivity through motivational mechanisms. Similarly, Manopo, Londa, and Luntungan (2021) found that integrity and supportive work environments significantly improve employee performance in Indonesian organizations.

Furthermore, the importance of physical work environment factors such as temperature, lighting, and noise control was reinforced by Budiyanto, Prasetyo, and Widodo (2025) and Indergård (2025), who emphasized that workplace ergonomics and safety are closely linked to employee satisfaction and productivity. Supporting this view, Douglas and Walker (2022) and Bortoluzzi et al. (2018) underlined that optimal office design and environmental quality positively affect employee well-being and organizational performance. In agribusiness settings—where tasks often involve outdoor and physically demanding conditions—these elements become even more critical for maintaining consistent output levels.

This study's findings also correspond with the Job Demand–Control(-Support) Model developed by Van der Doef and Maes (1999), which highlights that the interaction between job demands, control, and social support determines psychological well-being and productivity. The cooperative's supportive supervision and clear task delegation appear to serve as job resources that buffer the negative impact of work pressure.

The evidence presented here demonstrates that labor productivity in cooperative-based agribusiness operations is not solely determined by individual capability but is strongly shaped by organizational systems that regulate workload and ensure conducive work environments. These findings are in line with Singh et al. (2022) and Martin (2025), who emphasized that organizational competitiveness and productivity in the digital and industrial economy depend heavily on effective human resource management strategies.

In theoretical terms, the present study contributes to the extension of the JD–R theory into the agribusiness cooperative context—a domain that has received limited attention in prior research. The integration of workload and environmental factors in explaining productivity highlights the dual importance of managing both job demands and job resources to sustain optimal worker performance. Practically, the findings provide actionable insights for cooperative managers to design workload distribution systems, improve workplace safety, and foster positive social relations among employees to ensure continuous productivity improvement.

6. Conclusion

This study aims to analyze the influence of workload and work environment on labor productivity in the Setia Kawan Village Unit Cooperative (KUD) in Indragiri Hulu. Using a quantitative approach and the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique, the results of the study confirm that both workload and work environment have a positive and statistically significant influence on labor productivity. In more detail, workload has been shown to have a positive effect on productivity. Although excessive mental, physical, and time demands have the potential to reduce performance if not managed properly. The work environment, which includes both physical and non-physical aspects, also contributes significantly to increased productivity, where infrastructure support, harmonious interpersonal relationships, and comfortable working conditions have been shown to increase workers' motivation and work outcomes. Simultaneously, these two factors are able to explain more than 70% variation in productivity, which emphasizes its crucial role in determining labor performance in the agribusiness and cooperative sectors. These findings not only reinforce the existing empirical evidence, but also highlight the importance of managing work systems and environmental conditions in the institutional context of rural cooperatives. The practical implications that can be drawn are that balancing the workload and creating a work environment that is conducive is the key to increasing labor productivity while strengthening the competitiveness of cooperatives in the agricultural sector.

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations can be proposed to increase labor productivity in agribusiness cooperatives. First, management needs to optimize the distribution of workloads through regular evaluations so that the tasks assigned are proportionate and realistic. Overwork practices, especially in older workers, should be avoided as they have the potential to degrade performance and increase health risks. Second, improving the work environment is a priority through investment in work equipment, road infrastructure, and work safety systems. In addition, it is important to improve communication channels between superiors and workers to overcome operational obstacles more effectively. Third, the implementation of the rest and work rotation system needs to be strengthened to minimize physical fatigue and mental load, so that the quality of work results can be maintained. Fourth, human resource planning must be considered by recruiting additional workers during the peak harvest period so that the workload is more balanced and productivity targets can be achieved. In addition to practical contributions, this study also provides empirical evidence in the field of labor management in agricultural cooperatives. For further research, it is suggested that the scope of the analysis be expanded to include other variables such as motivation, leadership style, and compensation system, so as to provide a more comprehensive perspective on the determinants of labor productivity in the agribusiness sector.

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