The Occupational Stress Level of Employees in the Penitentiary Class II A, Magelang

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The Occupational Stress Level of Employees in the Penitentiary Class II A, Magelang

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Abstract: The life of an employee entails demands and work conditions that are part of an individual's existence alongside occupational or work-related stress. Work-related stress arises from an individual's response to high workloads and job demands. This study aims to delve deeper into work-related stress among Penitentiary Class II A employees in Magelang City. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach with three participants as informants using snowball sampling. The criteria for this research include prison officers of Penitentiary Class II A in Magelang, aged between 18 to 65 years old, and experienced in working at the institution. The findings of this study indicate that all three informants experience work-related stress in their work environments. Work stress varies and is driven by factors such as cognitive appraisal, experience, demands, interpersonal influence, and the stress condition viewed from individual experiences (work conditions, personality, emotions, gratitude, and hobbies).

Keywords: Work stress; Employee; Correctional Institutions

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A. Introduction

The study concluded that occupational stress on employees of Penitentiary Class IIA in Magelang is heavily affected by their work environment. All three participants face different demands, situational factors, and varied interactions with their work environment. Work-related stress is induced by cognitive judging, experience, demand, interpersonal effect, stress level in each individual, work environment, personality, emotions, gratefulness, and hobbies. Each participant's coping strategies for handling work stress were different. Regardless of their efforts to adapt to intense work situations and environments, occupational pressures are inevitable, mainly due to heavy workloads and pressures. Therefore, penitentiary employees must overcome work stress to avoid compromising their productivity and preserve their mental well-being.

The Indonesian Law No. 13 of 2003 on Manpower (Undang-Undang Nomor 13 Tahun 2003 tentang Ketenagakerjaan) is a regulation based on the foundational philosophy of Indonesia, Pancasila, and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. The labor law was established to generate a fair, prosperous, and impartial society in a materialistic and spiritual manner. The law acknowledges the vital roles and positions of the workforce in developing institutions. Human resources or labor refers to an individual who can work and produce commodities with or without services to fulfill individual or public interests. In the described contest, labor is considered a development's actor and goal.

Human beings possess limited physical and mental levels in processing information and giving responses. Individuals' mental capacity defines their abilities in managing information, decision-making, and conducting their assigned tasks. When the assignments exceed individuals' mental capabilities, they suffer from overwork or overload. A mental overload happens when the given duties or responsibilities immensely affect one's mental and intellectual capacities. In overload conditions, people will feel overwhelmed and have difficulty properly managing their tasks. As a result, there is a higher chance of mistakes occurring or improper decision-making. People with mental overload tend to have a high stress level, which is commonly caused by the disbalance between work demands and capabilities in achieving the commands. If the assigned tasks exceed an individual mental capacity, they will be burdened and cannot handle their duties effectively. Then, it will adversely affect a person's physical and mental well-being.

According to a pre-requisite survey of two employees in the Penitentiary Class IIA at Magelang, several conclusions are obtained. The first employee expressed boredom, weariness, stress, and tiredness. Several factors that result in distress and fatigue are the splitting time between work and studies, administration tasks with high pressure (preparing reports or overlapping schedules), and excessive workload. The second employee has just been recently repositioned from post guard, which enables them to focus on their duty without much interaction with other people, to safety guard at the entrance gate, which requires them to encounter many people as they need to gatekeep the door and become a bridge between the penitentiary and outside world, is very uncomfortable to the point of having difficulties in adapting to the current position. The intense interaction with more people, such as preparing visitor reports, and receiving and checking packages, have increased their stress and discomfort levels. The hectic situation disrupts their concentration during work and can cause miscommunication with other people.

Both employees displayed stress triggered by internal (impartial work schedules and overload) and external (work demands and more interactions with people) factors. The
process of adaptation to new environments can also influence the well-being of employees. Stress can occur in various situations, including work settings, where it becomes the most frequent source of stress. Work environments heavily affect the risk of occupational stress. Occupational stress is the distress experienced by an individual with a high workload beyond their capabilities (Rizkiyani & Saragih, 2012). Intense and continuous pressure will lead to overstress. Work stress can be defined as the occurrence of pressure that is directly related to the individual's organization or institution.

Work-related stress refers to the pressure caused by their occupation and can result in mental or spiritual disruptions related to their health and occupational psychological well-being. In occupational psychology, stress significantly affects work performance, job satisfaction, and employees' internal relationships. Work pressures can result in beneficial effects, including additional motivation for the employee to achieve optimal performance. However, the adverse effect of work-related stress can affect their capacity and slow their expected work performance, consequently harming their work institution (Fitri et al., 2019).

Occupational stress comprises the discomposure pressure-triggering factors of an individual caused by their work environment. The main factors of occupational stress are high workload, work shifts, leadership style or employer-employee relationship, work duration, motivation, and environment (Li et al., 2017). An increase in work demand results in a higher stress level experienced by workers. Employees with high risks of occupational stress are those working in a penitentiary or prison. A penitentiary is a federal institution responsible for confining inmates and convicts who have been proven guilty after the court process (Situmorang, 2019). The penitentiary in Indonesia is part of the Directorate General of Correction under the Ministry of Law and Human Rights.

The primary role of the penitentiary is as a counseling and rehabilitation facility under Indonesian Law No. 12 of 1995 about Correctional Faculties (Hasanah & Atmasari, 2021). The law states that correctional activities aim to guide correctional inmates or Warga Binaan Pemasyarakatan (WBP) through institutional systems and counselling methods as the final stage of the enforcement system in the criminal justice system. The prison officers must carry out their duties and functions optimally. One of the main problems prisons and detention centers face throughout Indonesia is occupancy levels exceeding their capacity—the overoccupancy rate results in difficulties in counseling, supervision, and sanitary maintenance of the inmates.

The officers in penitentiaries do heavy-duty tasks, which include the life management of the convicted. They must face other stressful situations such as overcapacity, long working hours, behavioral issues of the inmates, inmate fights, damaged facilities, escape attempts, and other problems caused by the family members of the detainees. The prison officers are faced with monotonous working environments, socialize with complex and problematic inmates, and work within high walls and closed areas. The working situation in the penitentiary affects the officers' physical and psychological health. Job duties with scheduled work that are overloaded, risky, or hazardous tend to trigger occupational work compared to other jobs. The high cases of complex problems within the penitentiary system result in work demands exceeding prison officers' capacity.

According to Schaufeli & Peeters (2000), work-related stress in correction officers throughout the world is influenced by key factors which include role conflict, social pressure with their supervisor, inmates, and co-workers, exceeding workload, career
uncertainty, limited participation in the decision-making process, insufficient rewards, and limited knowledge and skills in doing their job. Moreover, the structure and condition of the institution can affect the stress level of prison officers.

The factors that can influence stress levels in correctional officers include the policies, structure, processes, and environment within the institution. The social status of prison officers in society, unusual working areas, and improper physical office conditions can also be a source of stress. However, according to research conducted by Imhonde et al. (2010), the dominant and key factors that are stress-inducing in Nigerian correctional faculty are inmate riots, injuries, physical assaults, possession of weapons, and inmates that are taking prisoner officers as hostage, among many others. The study found that 96% of correction officers have high-stress levels, which reduces their motivation to work and leads to their failure to achieve institutional goals.

A study by Hasanah & Atmasari (2021) reported that the prison officers in Penitentiary Class IIA in Sumbawa Besar City had work-related stress caused by environmental factors, such as uncontrollable inmate behaviors, continuous inmate violations, limited human resources, and interactions with colleagues that affect work performance. The efforts made by the subjects to deal with work stress are still ineffective and lead to several adverse effects such as dizziness, overthinking work problems even during their rests that the problems are carried into their dreams, unstable emotions, and low interaction with family members at home. During the study, one of the subjects often took time off because he was not feeling well.

The study concluded that the factors affecting the two participants that caused work stress include working conditions, individual personality, experience, feelings of gratitude, and hobbies. The work environment is the initial trigger for stress in prison employees caused by their extremely strict supervision within the penitentiary. Work-related stress can arise from a fickle personality, especially when managing emotions. Both study participants felt that their work positions are hectic and often result in stress due to demands from superiors. To cope with the occupational stress, the participants explained their solutions to adapt by being grateful and focusing on their hobbies and other activities outside of working hours.

Luthans described stress as a perception of self-adjustment influenced by the state of mind and psychological processes, which originate from individual behavior, situations, and events that create social and environmental demands. Individuals' perceptions of responding and dealing with situations can differ (Rizkiyani & Saragih, 2012). Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the stress level of correction officers in Penitentiary Class IIA, Magelang.

B. Research Method

1) Research Design

The study employs a qualitative research design with a qualitative-descriptive approach. The research aims to delve deeply into the participant's experience relating to the connection between work conditions and individual characteristics that trigger work-related stress in Penitentiary Class IIA, Magelang.

2) Participants

Three participants who fit the requirements through interviews and observations were selected. The selection criteria were working in the Penitentiary Class IIA
Magelang, between 18-65 years old, with three years of experience in the workplace. The participants were chosen using snowball sampling techniques, a recruitment method where selected participants are asked to recommend other potential subjects (Lenaini, 2021). The participants signed the informed consent form, which stated their voluntary agreement as research subjects and the disclosure guarantee of the study (Sugiyono, 2017).

3) Data Collection

The data was obtained using interviews and observation methods. In-depth and semi-structured interviews using guides were used to investigate stress-inducing factors, impacts on well-being and physical health, and the coping mechanisms employed by the participants. The study also observed the participants in their workplace to comprehend the context and dynamics of work stress the subjects face. The data collection using interview and observation techniques results in a profound understanding of work stress and develop effective stress management strategies in the workplace.

4) Data Analysis

The obtained data were evaluated using an interactive data analysis method, consisting of a) data from the interview and observation process collected, combined, and arranged into descriptive and reflective notes. The descriptive notes are natural notes adapted to the collected data and reduced to obtain summarized and selected data. Reflective notes contain the researcher's impressions, comments, and interpretations of the situation; b) The notes were combined, reduced, summarized, and selected to focus on the research objectives; c) The summarized data was presented to obtain data, which includes coded interview notes. The coded data was an attempt to categorize the data and simplify data analysis; d) The categorized data was verified, concluded, and supported using strong evidence at the end of the data collection stage (Miles et al., 2014).

C. Result and Discussion

1. Results

The demographic data of participants is displayed in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age (years old)</th>
<th>Educational Background</th>
<th>Job Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Vocational high school</td>
<td>Administrator Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Senior high school</td>
<td>Security guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Senior high school</td>
<td>Correction officers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Participant (K)

1. Individual experience

Participant K has worked in the Penitentiary Class IIA Magelang since 2018 and started as a watchkeeper in the guard post. Currently, Participant K has been relocated to administrative work. The roles and responsibilities of administrative staff in the penitentiary are managing assets, maintaining facilities, providing correspondence letters bookkeeping services, and preparing reports for the wardens or superintendents. Participant K is a
university student and needs to adapt their occupation according to their class schedule, which might overlap with their working hours. The working hours of all participants are divided into three shifts: morning (07.00-13.00 WIB), afternoon (13.00-19.00 WIB), and night shifts (19.00-07.00 WIB).

2. Work environment

   Participant K works in an open area, and they can still interact with the environment outside the penitentiary. The office is comfortable, and all required facilities are accessible. Participant K works with other employees and corresponds to a team leader or chief officer based on their positions. Participant K is commonly faced with work pressure due to a heavy load of tasks or urgent documents that must be completed. Sometimes, the participant brings their work home or continues the unfinished work the following day. Participant K sometimes felt stressed and indecisive when their outside work overlapped with their class schedule or during heavy workload, resulting in feeling overwhelmed and tired.

3. Personality

   Participant K considered themselves open-minded, which helped them to be versatile to the situation and environment at work. However, participant K tends to lose their temper and not bury their emotions due to their personality. The participant can express anger by talking to their co-workers in a higher tone and feeling drained afterward. Thus, in a displeasure state, the participant is sensitive towards other people.

4. Emotional balance, gratefulness, and hobbies

   As a working university student, Participant K was grateful for their position despite their stressful workload. Moreover, due to their personality, participant K openly expresses their positive and negative emotions. The participants used their hobbies as an alternative to gain positive emotions back. Participant K also hangs out with friends or shares their problems with their closest people to reduce negative emotions.

b. Participant (F)

1. Individual experience

   The employment of participant F started in 2021 as a watchkeeper in the guard post. Participant F has been repositioned to a security guard at the entrance gates. The security guard is responsible for checking visitors' possessions before entering the penitentiary area, guarding the entrance gates, and the frontman between the penitentiary and the outside world. As the first person who greets visitors, the security guard at the entrance gate corresponds with numerous people, giving information to guests and visitors and monitoring and reporting the number of people entering and leaving the penitentiary area. The working hours of all participants are divided into three shifts: morning (07.00-13.00 WIB), afternoon (13.00-19.00 WIB), and night shifts (19.00-07.00 WIB).

2. Work environment

   Participant F perceived their working space as comfortable, clean, and appropriate. One co-worker accompanies the participant in their shift; thus,
they do not have trouble adapting to their work environment. However, participant F would feel pressured during rush hour, especially when packages arrive consecutively, with other visitors asking for information. The security guards are responsible for multi-tasking between opening/closing the gates and recording every activity in the entrance gates to be reported to the superintendent. Hence, participant F felt work stress due to exhaustion and energy-drained conditions that forced them to ask for a leave and rest for the day.

3. Personality

The participant is an introverted and nonchalant person who tends to repress their anger and enjoy their own company but can do well in teamwork. Participant F’s personality makes it challenging to adapt to particular situations. However, they are trying hard to feel comfortable with their surroundings. Although in a crowded situation or event, participant F feels drained quickly. As a coping mechanism, the participant faced the problems cold-headed and calmly by trusting that the current stress was controllable. Participant F deals with negative emotions by burying them and being ignorant. The participant focused on the positive thought that the storm would pass soon, as portrayed in their life principle in Javanese proverbs: "adem ayem, noto ati noto pikiran."

4. Emotional balance, gratefulness, and hobbies

Participant F enjoys their work as they are motivated to be enthusiastic about their work, which will last until their old age. Participant F is satisfied with their current work as they did not expect to be accepted as an employee in a penitentiary. Therefore, participant F feels it is a responsibility that must be borne. To counter work-related stress, the participant focuses on being grateful and doing their job. Although breaks are limited, Participant F can still pursue his hobby of playing soccer as the penitentiary often holds sports events.

c. Participant (I)

1. Individual experience

Participant I have worked in the Penitentiary Class IIA in Magelang since 2017 as a correction officer in the area with direct contact with the imprisoned convicts. The participant is responsible for maintaining the security of the correctional inmates in the institute and counseling them. Participant I work in a group of 12 officers, and each guarding post has one correction officer responsible for the inmates within the post. The working hours of all participants are divided into three shifts: morning (07.00-13.00 WIB), afternoon (13.00-19.00 WIB), and night shifts (19.00-07.00 WIB).

2. Work environment

The participant is stationed in a relatively comfortable space with direct contact with inmates of the penitentiary. As an officer in a guard post and corresponding with the inmates, participant I is pressured and feels the heavy burdens. They are expected to be patient and reason during riots or fights between inmates and inmate violations. In particular events, the participant is stressed and pressured. Although participant I handled the situation, severe
violations by the inmates will be handed over to the authorities.

3. Personality

The participant is a tolerable and open individual, which makes them able to withstand the troubles in cooperating with other people and adapt quickly. Participant I always try to be motivated to work, but in particular conflicts or conditions, the participant will feel exhausted. If they clock out with negative emotions or are drained due to their work, Participant I choose to isolate themselves, repress their problems, and not share them with others or only share a part of their difficulties.

4. Emotional balance, gratefulness, and hobbies

The participant puts an effort into being grateful and believes that God does not burden any soul more than they can bear. Participant I like to do physical activity as a hobby, such as swimming and playing badminton and soccer. Thus, the participants channel their negative emotions by calming themselves, surrendering to God, focusing on rational thinking, and doing sports activities to decompress.

2. Discussion

This study's findings indicate several points that can be discussed in the description of work stress for employees of the Class II A Magelang Penitentiary, including experience, working conditions, personality, feelings, gratitude, and hobbies of the officers. The work stress experienced by the three participants was affected by the conditions and workload in their respective work environments. Therefore, it can be concluded that the work environment is a potential work stressor. According to Waluyo, 2009: 161 (in the work of Yuli Asih et al., 2018), work stressors are defined as any work conditions perceived by a person working as a demand and can cause stress.

Based on the study of Sutherland et al. (in the work of Smet, 1994:112), factors that induce occupational stress are 1) Cognitive assessment, stress is a subjective experience based on the perception of conditions in an environment; 2) Experience, particularly the experience in handling circumstances associated with familiarity, early receptiveness, the learning process, and the concept of reinforcement; 3) Demands are pressures, urges, desires and stimuli which directly influence the how the demands are accepted; 4) Interpersonal influence is the presence or absence of other individuals, situation and background factors that can affect subjective experiences, responses and coping behavior. The presence of other people can be a source of threat or support that increases self-esteem and validates personal values and identity, which results in positive individuality; 5) The state of stress or the imbalance between perceived demands and the individual's capacity. Therefore, coping strategies to overcome stressful situations are imperative.

This research found varying descriptions of work stress from participants K, F, and I. The three participants served in different departments, each facing various demands in the form of heavy pressure and responsibility in their respective jobs. Participant K felt work-related stress when he had a large pile of assignments and conflicting work schedules between work and university classes. As an administrative staff member, Participant K is overwhelmed when dealing with correspondence that has to be done suddenly in a short time or when piled-up reports must be taken home.
On the other hand, the participant also sometimes experiences boredom and lack of motivation due to monotonous working life.

Meanwhile, participant F faces pressures during busy working hours and inefficient changes of shift schedules, such as guests who have packages that need to be checked, yet at the same time, they need to answer various questions from other visitors. Adding more to the duties of receiving visitors, they are responsible for guarding the main door and recording various activities in the entrance gate area. The varied duties and responsibilities of Participant F make them exhausted and drained of energy. Participant, I felt the work pressure was overloaded as they dealt directly with the inmates. The participant would feel depressed and overwhelmed during riots and clashes between the inmates, which resulted in violations. The work conditions made Participant I feel afraid and stressed and have difficulties dealing with the inmates who caused the riots. Based on the study by Wijono, 2015: 168 (in Yuli Asih et al., 2018), occupational stress is heavily influenced by the interaction and communication between individuals and their work environment.

This study found that interpersonal impacts, namely situational factors such as other individuals’ presence, might impact correctional officers' stress levels. The work settings of the three participants are varied and result in various expressed emotions. Consequently, each participant has a different coping mechanism to handle their emotions and work-related stress. According to Participant K, their stress makes them unable to control their emotions well. When their stress level is high at work, the participant tends to be sensitive to their co-workers and burst out their emotions by talking in a high voice. One of the many occasions that triggers participant K's stress level is when their team leader delegates a heavy workload to them.

Meanwhile, participant F feels stress from dealing with other people, including visiting guests, co-workers, or superintendents. As a coping mechanism, participant F tends to think cold headed and rationally as he manifested that all their problems or challenges can still be handled. Participant F prefers to bury their anger and isolate themselves rather than venting it with negative emotions. When Participant F faces work stress, they trust that everything will pass and that it is more important to enjoy their life. The participants will also divert their stress by eating delicious food as an escape.

Participant I have heavy work responsibilities and prefer being alone to deal with stressful events rather than spending energy on unclear emotions. The participant believes that when the problem cannot be handled alone, it will be handed over to a higher party or the superintendent. All participants have their way of venting their work-related stress; where participant K prefers to express his emotions when stressed in a high tone to his colleagues, and Participant F and I tend to bottle up their anger and be alone rather than having to vent their emotions and avoid any mistakes during their burst out that would be a waste of energy. To counter negative emotions, penitentiary employees have different ways to calm themselves, such as doing activities outside of working hours, such as playing games, watching films, or hanging out with friends. However, all participants faced heavy work demands, resulting in the same response of overwhelming and exhausting feelings. Despite the energy-draining work, the three participants tried to remain enthusiastic about working and overcoming the situation with other activities to control their situation and shift their
emotions positively. For example, participant F used the facilities provided in the penitentiary to destress by watching entertainment on television during off-peak hours or break times. However, according to Notoatmodjo, 2012 (in Hasanah & Atmasari, 2021), occupational stress is an unavoidable aspect of work, and it is vital to engage in stress management techniques to overcome or prevent stress from affecting job performance. Stress is part of a response influenced by individual characteristics and/or psychological processes resulting from external actions, situations, and events/actions that impose physical and psychological demands on individuals (Widhiastuti et al., 2023).

The three participants in this study diverted their occupation stress through hobbies in the field of physical activities. Even between busy jobs, the participants channel their hobbies into sports using the facilities provided by the penitentiary. Participants K and F shared an interest in playing soccer, while participant I enjoyed playing badminton and football. The three participants engage in sports activities as a form of stress diversion and self-reward. On the downside, diversions can have negative consequences when an individual cannot cope with upcoming stressors or pressures, leading to cognitive processes and behavior changes. Beck, Judith, Azmi, 2017 (in Hasanah & Atmasari, 2021).

All participants displayed efforts to adjust and integrate socially while coping with occupation stress and as a learning process. Participant K and I are known as someone open-minded and tolerant of new people and work environments. At the same time, participant F tends to be introverted and indifferent but can also work together in a team. However, in different working environments, participants showed different ways of controlling their emotions. Participant K can easily blend with their colleagues and the work environment, but they cannot control their emotions and tend to burst their pent-up anger. On the contrary, Participant F and I used to harbor anger and were not significantly bothered by work problems. Both participants regarded their work as a responsibility that must be fulfilled, and they believed that work-related difficulties and hardships should be calmly approached to maintain their productivity.

In terms of working duration, the three participants have experience working for different durations; Participant K has worked for five years, Participant F has worked for two years, and Participant I have worked for six years. As an employee, they are used to people talking behind their backs. The penitentiary was the first work experience for all of the participants. Therefore, the participants considered their work as a learning process and were serious about achieving exemplary results. As stated by Handoko, 2001: 200 (in Yuli Asih et al., 2018), stress is a condition where pressures affect a person's emotions, comprehensive ability, and condition. Excessive stress can lead to an individual’s inability to deal with the environment. All three participants in this study deal with occupational stress by diverting their stress through channeling them into hobbies or other activities. The work-related stress experienced by penitentiary employees cannot be avoided and can occur when the work environment pushes their employees and assigns heavy workloads to the officers.
D. Conclusion

The study concluded that occupational stress on employees of Penitentiary Class IIA in Magelang is heavily affected by their work environment. All three participants face different demands, situational factors, and varied interactions with their work environment. Work-related stress is induced by cognitive judging, experience, demand, interpersonal effect, stress level in each individual, work environment, personality, emotions, gratefulness, and hobbies. Each participant's coping strategies for handling work stress were different. Regardless of their efforts to adapt to intense work situations and environments, occupational pressures are inevitable, mainly due to heavy workloads and pressures. Therefore, penitentiary employees must overcome work stress to avoid compromising their productivity and preserve their mental well-being.
Bibliography


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Supplementary Material

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