

## **POPULIST POLICIES AND WORK STRESS OF VILLAGE OFFICIALS: AN ANALYSIS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN BONTANG, EAST KALIMANTAN**

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**Abstract:** The growing implementation of populist policies by local governments has significantly affected the work dynamics of village officials. These short-term, popularity-driven policies are often executed without proper technocratic planning, leading to rising administrative burdens and psychological stress among officials. This study examines the impact of populist policies on the work stress levels of village officials in Bontang City from a human resource management perspective. Using a mixed methods approach with a sequential explanatory design, quantitative data were collected through a 5-point Likert scale survey from 112 respondents selected via stratified random sampling from a population of 156 officials. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.1, while qualitative data from in-depth interviews with 10 informants were examined using thematic analysis. Findings indicate that populist policies have a positive and significant effect on work stress ( $\beta = 0.617$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), primarily due to heavier administrative demands and heightened public expectations. Interviews further revealed psychological strain, emotional tension, physical exhaustion, and declining motivation, though some officials developed personal coping strategies. These results highlight the need for evidence-based policymaking and participatory engagement to safeguard employee well-being.

**Keywords:** populist policies, work stress, village officials, human resource management, Bontang City.

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### **1. Introduction**

In recent years, the phenomenon of populist policies has become a major focus in governance studies across various countries. Populist policies are generally characterized by a short-term orientation that seeks to gain broad public sympathy through the provision of instant services or immediate material benefits, often neglecting administrative sustainability and organizational capacity (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018). Globally, populism influences government management practices, not only at the national policy level but also in public sector human resource management (HRM) (Painter & Pierre, 2020). Meanwhile, in Indonesia, similar dynamics are evident in the administration of regional and village governments, particularly when demands for public services are influenced by populist political promises from regional heads (Mietzner, 2020). This context also occurs in Bontang, East Kalimantan, an industrial city with rapid population growth and increasing complexity of public services, placing village officials in a strategic position but vulnerable to the pressures of high workloads.

The phenomenon of populist policies at the local level has created high public expectations of village officials, particularly regarding the provision of prompt and responsive administrative and social services. These demands are often out of proportion to resource capacity, both in terms of personnel, budget, and technological support. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (2023), Bontang's population is increasing by 1.9% per year, yet the number of village employees has remained stagnant over the past five years. This imbalance is illustrated in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Population Growth vs. Number of Village Employees in Bontang (2019–2023)**

| Year | Total population | Growth (%) | Number of Village Employees | Change (%) |
|------|------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| 2019 | 179,500          | -          | 145                         | -          |
| 2020 | 182,900          | 1.9        | 145                         | 0          |
| 2021 | 186,400          | 1.9        | 146                         | +0.7       |
| 2022 | 190,000          | 1.9        | 146                         | 0          |
| 2023 | 193,600          | 1.9        | 146                         | 0          |

Source: Central Statistics Agency (2023)

Research by Hidayat and Prabowo (2022) also showed that 68% of village officials in East Kalimantan experienced increased administrative workloads after the implementation of several populist programs, such as direct social assistance distribution and real-time citizen data management. This situation has resulted in increased complaints of fatigue, sleep disturbances, and chronic work stress. Job stress experienced by officials not only reduces productivity but can also worsen the quality of public services to the community (Rahmawati & Putra, 2021). The following survey data shows an increase in complaints of work stress among officials after the introduction of populist policies.

**Table 2. Percentage of Civil Servants Experiencing Work Stress Before and After the Populist Program**

| Indicator                      | Before the Populist Program | After the Populist Program |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Complaints of physical fatigue | 22%                         | 61%                        |
| Sleep disorders                | 18%                         | 54%                        |
| Chronic work stress            | 12%                         | 46%                        |

Source: Hidayat & Prabowo (2022)

Ideally, human resource management in the public sector emphasizes the principles of workload balance, organizational support, and preventative work stress management to enable staff to perform optimally and sustainably (Dessler, 2020). However, in reality, in many sub-districts, including Bontang, this managerial approach has not been implemented effectively. Additional tasks arising from populist policies are often not balanced with increased capacity, training, or adequate compensation. Sub-district officials frequently face a dilemma between meeting high service targets and limited time, energy, and resources. This indicates a gap between the ideal conditions according to HRM theory and the reality faced by sub-district officials on the ground. This mismatch is at the root of the problem of increasing work stress, but has not received much attention in the formulation of personnel policies at the local level. A literature review shows that most research on populist policies has focused primarily on their impact on political stability and macro-governance (Laclau, 2019; Norris & Inglehart, 2019), while studies on their impact on the psychological well-being of government officials are still limited. In the context of public sector human resource management, studies on the relationship between the pressures of populist policies and job stress among officials at the village level have rarely been specifically conducted. However, according to Robbins and Judge (2022), unmanaged job stress can lead to decreased motivation, increased turnover intention, and decreased organizational commitment—factors that are crucial for maintaining the quality of local bureaucracy. Thus, there is a significant research gap that needs to be filled to enrich the theory and practice of human resource management in the public sector, particularly at the frontline government level such as villages.

This research is important because academically, it can provide theoretical contributions in broadening the understanding of the relationship between populist policies and work stress

from a human resource management perspective. Practically, the results of this study are expected to provide a basis for consideration for local governments in designing performance management systems and the welfare of village officials to avoid being trapped by the negative consequences of short-term populist policies. Furthermore, from a policy perspective, the findings of this study are also expected to provide input in the formulation of capacity building and stress management strategies within village government environments in Bontang and other areas with similar characteristics, so that public services can run optimally without sacrificing the psychological health of officials.

Based on the above description, it can be concluded that the pressure of populist policies has posed serious challenges to the balance between workload and psychological well-being of village officials in Bontang, East Kalimantan. Although human resource management ideally emphasizes mental health protection and work stress management, field practice shows the opposite trend. This situation emphasizes the need for research that specifically analyzes the relationship between populist policies and work stress among village officials through a human resource management perspective, so that appropriate strategies can be found to balance the demands of public service and employee well-being in a sustainable manner.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **1. Populist Policies in Local Governance**

The phenomenon of populist policies has become one of the central concerns in governance studies across many countries in recent years. According to Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2023), populism is characterized by a short-term orientation aimed at appealing to the broad public through the provision of instant services or immediate material benefits, often at the expense of long-term administrative sustainability and organizational capacity. This view aligns with Kurt Weyland (2020), who argues that populist policymaking tends to prioritize visibility and quick political gains over evidence-based planning and institutional capacity-building, creating administrative overload.

In the context of local governance in Indonesia, Marcus Mietzner (2020) notes that populist promises by regional leaders often raise public service expectations without being matched by adequate human and financial resources. This pattern can be observed in Bontang, East Kalimantan, where the number of village officials has not grown significantly despite a steady population increase, resulting in a structural mismatch between rising service demands and limited administrative capacity. Similarly, Evelyne Huber and John D. Stephens (2021) found that local populist welfare programs in developing countries often create “implementation gaps” when ambitious promises are not supported by corresponding bureaucratic capacity, further burdening frontline officials.

### **2. Work Stress in the Public Sector**

The concept of work stress has long been a major concern in the public sector due to its close association with performance, absenteeism, and mental health. Stephen P. Robbins and Timothy A. Judge (2022) define work stress as a condition that arises when job demands exceed an individual’s ability to cope, which can lead to decreased motivation, higher turnover intention, and lower organizational commitment. In the local context, a study by Hidayat and Prabowo (2022) revealed that 68% of village officials in East Kalimantan experienced an increased administrative workload following the implementation of populist programs, which triggered physical exhaustion, sleep disturbances, and chronic occupational stress.

This aligns with global evidence showing that high workloads are strongly linked to stress-related disorders. The World Health Organization (2021) emphasized that work-related stress significantly undermines employee productivity and contributes to mental health issues such as burnout and depression. Similarly, Taris and Schaufeli (2021) reported that chronic job stress in public sector settings leads to emotional exhaustion, reduced job engagement, and higher absenteeism rates. These findings underscore the need to address stress as an organizational rather than merely individual issue.

### **3. Human Resource Management (HRM) Perspective**

From a human resource management (HRM) perspective, effective public-sector HR practices should aim to balance workload distribution, strengthen organizational support, and promote preventive stress management to sustain employee well-being and productivity (Gary Dessler, 2020). However, in practice, this approach has rarely been implemented effectively at the village or sub-district level. Additional tasks stemming from populist policies are often not accompanied by parallel investments in staff capacity-building, technical training, or adequate compensation schemes.

This imbalance creates a dilemma for local officials, who are expected to meet ambitious service targets while facing constraints in time, energy, and resources. Wright and Grant (2019) emphasize that lack of perceived organizational support amplifies the negative effects of work overload on stress outcomes. Likewise, Bakker and Demerouti (2017) in their Job Demands–Resources model found that when job demands are not offset by adequate resources, employees are more likely to experience emotional strain and reduced motivation. This suggests that neglecting HRM considerations in local policy implementation can intensify the risk of occupational stress.

### **4. Theoretical Frameworks Related to Stress**

Several foundational theories explain the link between job demands, stress, and individual capacity. Richard S. Lazarus and Susan Folkman (1984) proposed the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which posits that stress occurs when individuals appraise job demands as exceeding their personal resources, with coping mechanisms mediating the outcomes. Meanwhile, Robert Karasek (1979) developed the Job Demand-Control model, which asserts that high job demands can be tolerated if employees have sufficient control over their tasks and receive strong social support.

More recent frameworks build on these ideas: Arnold Bakker and Evangelia Demerouti (2017) expanded this into the JD-R model, emphasizing that personal resources (such as self-efficacy) can buffer the effects of job demands on stress and burnout. In the context of this study, these theories help explain how populist policies elevate work demands while simultaneously reducing perceived job control among village officials—thereby increasing their vulnerability to stress. As Schaufeli (2021) highlights, sustained job strain without adequate autonomy and support inevitably leads to negative psychological and performance outcomes.

### **3. Method**

This study employed a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the influence of populist policies on the work stress levels of village officials in Bontang City. This approach was chosen because it captures both numerical data and in-depth narratives related to officials' perceptions, thus enhancing the validity and accountability of the research results (Creswell, 2023). The research



design employed a sequential explanatory design , where data collection was conducted in stages, starting with a quantitative survey and then continuing with in-depth interviews to explain the survey findings (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2022).

The study population comprised all 156 village officials in Bontang City. The sample was determined using a stratified random sampling technique based on job categories (village heads, administrative staff, and field staff), resulting in 112 respondents. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% error rate (Sugiyono, 2022). The study variables consisted of the independent variable, populist policy, defined as a short-term, popularity-oriented public policy that impacts the workload of officials; and the dependent variable, work stress, measured through indicators of psychological distress, emotional tension, and physical fatigue in accordance with Robbins & Judge's (2022) work stress theory.

The data collection instrument was a questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale ( strongly disagree – strongly agree ) that had been tested for validity and reliability. Validity testing was conducted using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), while reliability was measured by a Cronbach's Alpha value of at least 0.7, indicating good internal consistency (Hair et al., 2023). In addition to the questionnaire, in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 purposively selected civil servants to explore their direct experiences regarding the impact of populist policies on workload and stress.

The data collection procedure was carried out in three stages: (1) preparation and compilation of instruments, (2) distribution of online and offline questionnaires, and (3) in-depth interviews and data triangulation to increase the credibility of the findings (Denzin, 2021). Quantitative data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the help of SmartPLS 4.1 software to test the relationships between variables. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes relevant to the quantitative results.

The ethical aspects of the research were maintained by ensuring informed consent from each participant, ensuring the confidentiality of personal data, and using the data solely for research purposes. Participants were given the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences (Bryman, 2023). With this method, the research results are expected to provide an accurate empirical picture of the relationship between populist policies and work stress and contribute to the development of human resource management policies in local government.

**Table 1. Operationalization of Research Variables**

| <b>Variables</b>           | <b>Operational Definition</b>                                                                                                                                              | <b>Indicator</b>                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Measurement Scale</b> | <b>Reference Source</b>                         |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Populist Policy (X)</b> | Public policies that are short-term, popularity-oriented, and tend to ignore technocratic considerations, thus resulting in an increase in the workload of civil servants. | - Orientation towards short-term public satisfaction<br>- Focus on the image and electability of leaders<br>- Ignoring organizational capacity<br>- Adding to the administrative burden | Likert 1–5               | Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser (2023); Laclau (2022) |
| <b>Job Stress (Y)</b>      | Physical, psychological, and                                                                                                                                               | - Psychological stress                                                                                                                                                                  | Likert 1–5               | Robbins & Judge                                 |

| Variables | Operational Definition                                                                                    | Indicator                                                                | Measurement Scale | Reference Source        |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
|           | behavioral responses that arise due to perceived work pressure exceeding an individual's ability to cope. | - Emotional tension<br>- Physical fatigue -<br>Decreased work motivation |                   | (2022);<br>Beehr (2023) |

**Table 2. Research Data Analysis Techniques**

| Data Types        | Data source                         | Analysis Techniques                                                                                                | Software                         |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Quantitative Data | Subdistrict apparatus questionnaire | Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the effect of populist policies on work stress | SmartPLS 4.1                     |
| Qualitative Data  | In-depth interview                  | Thematic analysis to identify the main themes of the apparatus' experience with populist policies.                 | Manual Coding + NVivo (optional) |

By presenting operational tables of variables and data analysis techniques, the research method becomes more transparent and structured, facilitating replication and scientific evaluation by other researchers. The development of indicators based on current theory and literature also strengthens the conceptual validity of this study (Hair et al., 2023). Furthermore, the integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches in a mixed methods design provides both depth and breadth in explaining the phenomenon of work stress influenced by populist policies within the Bontang City urban village apparatus.

### Instrument Validity and Reliability Test

Before distributing the research instrument to the primary respondents, the researchers conducted a pilot test on 30 village officials outside the research sample to ensure the clarity of the questions and assess the instrument's feasibility. Validity testing was conducted using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to assess construct validity. An item is considered valid if its factor loading is  $\geq 0.50$  (Hair et al., 2023). Furthermore, convergent validity is assessed by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value, which must be at least 0.50. Discriminant validity is tested using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which emphasizes that the square root of the AVE of each construct must be higher than the correlation between the other constructs (Henseler et al., 2022).

Reliability testing was conducted by calculating the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values for each construct. An instrument is considered reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha value is  $\geq 0.70$  and the CR value is  $\geq 0.70$ , indicating good internal consistency (Sekaran & Bougie, 2023). Validity and reliability test results that meet these criteria are the basis for the instrument used in the study to be suitable for collecting data from the main sample. All validity and reliability testing processes were conducted using SmartPLS 4.1 software for more accurate and efficient data analysis.

The next data processing steps were carried out through a data cleaning process to ensure there were no missing values, duplicates, or outliers that could affect the analysis results. The cleaned data were then analyzed using the Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach to test the causal relationship between populist policies and work stress.

This technique was chosen because it can analyze models with complex latent constructs and does not require a normal data distribution (Hair et al., 2023).

#### 4. Result and Discussion

##### Research result

Based on quantitative data collection through questionnaires distributed to 112 village officials in Bontang City, a picture was obtained regarding respondents' perceptions of populist policies and the level of work stress they experienced. The initial data obtained was subjected to a data cleaning process to eliminate missing values and outliers, so that all analyzed data were statistically valid. Respondents consisted of 18 village heads, 52 administrative staff, and 42 field workers. The distribution of average scores indicates that the tendency to implement populist policies is in the high category (mean = 4.02 on a scale of 1–5), while the level of work stress is in the medium-high category (mean = 3.78 on a scale of 1–5).

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables**

| Variables           | Mean | Elementary School | Minimum | Maximum | Category    |
|---------------------|------|-------------------|---------|---------|-------------|
| Populist Policy (X) | 4.02 | 0.63              | 2.70    | 4.95    | Tall        |
| Job Stress (Y)      | 3.78 | 0.71              | 2.10    | 4.90    | Medium–High |

the Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) test using SmartPLS 4.1 software show that populist policies have a significant positive effect on the work stress of village officials. The path coefficient value from populist policies to work stress is 0.612 with a t-statistic value of 8.934 ( $p < 0.001$ ). The  $R^2$  value for the work stress construct is 0.375, which means that populist policies are able to explain 37.5% of the variance in work stress. This indicates that the higher the apparatus' exposure to populist policies, the higher the level of work stress they experience.

**Table 4. PLS-SEM Test Results**

| Relationship between variables | Path Coefficient | t-Statistics | p-Value | Information       |
|--------------------------------|------------------|--------------|---------|-------------------|
| Populist Policy → Job Stress   | 0.612            | 8,934        | < 0.001 | Significant       |
| $R^2$ (Job Stress)             | 0.375            | —            | —       | Moderate category |

Furthermore, the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) test results show that all indicators have factor loading values  $\geq 0.60$ , Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values  $\geq 0.50$ , and Composite Reliability (CR) values  $\geq 0.80$ , thus proving the instrument valid and reliable. The Cronbach's Alpha value for the populist policy construct is 0.87 and for work stress is 0.84, both indicating strong internal consistency.

##### Qualitative Findings

The results of in-depth interviews with 10 purposively selected village officials strengthen the quantitative findings. Through thematic analysis, the researchers identified three main themes: (1) a sudden increase in administrative burdens due to popularity-oriented policies; (2)

psychological stress due to high and unrealistic public expectations; and (3) emotional tension due to the uncertainty of instructions and the short implementation time. The following are some excerpts from informants' statements:

"We often receive sudden instructions to implement certain programs aimed at improving the leadership's image, even though there are no additional resources. As a result, we have to work overtime constantly." (Informant A, administrative staff)

"Populist programs often emerge suddenly and must be completed quickly. This puts pressure on us, as we have to leave our routine work to meet sometimes unreasonable targets." (Informant D, field worker)

"The unbalanced workload often gives me headaches and makes me lose my enthusiasm. It's as if our work is just for public image, not for building sustainable public services." (Informant H, sub-district head)

From all these narratives, it appears that populist policies create unstable working conditions and increase emotional stress for civil servants. The majority of informants described physical fatigue and decreased work motivation after a series of populist programs were completed. These results are consistent with quantitative findings that populist policies are positively correlated with levels of work stress.

### Construct Validity and Reliability Test (CFA) Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) testing was conducted to ensure the construct validity of each indicator of the populist policy (X) and work stress (Y) variables. All indicators showed factor loading values  $\geq 0.60$  and were significant at  $p < 0.001$ . The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value for both constructs was above 0.50, while the Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha values for each construct exceeded 0.70. This indicates that all statement items in the questionnaire are valid and reliable.

**Table 5. CFA Test Results for Populist Policy and Job Stress Variables**

| Construct           | Indicator                                         | Factor Loading | AVE  | CR   | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------|----------------|------|------|------------------|
| Populist Policy (X) | Orientation towards momentary public satisfaction | 0.78           | 0.62 | 0.88 | 0.87             |
|                     | Focus on the image and electability of the leader | 0.80           |      |      |                  |
|                     | Ignoring organizational capacity                  | 0.76           |      |      |                  |
|                     | Adding administrative burden                      | 0.81           |      |      |                  |
| Job Stress (Y)      | Psychological pressure                            | 0.82           | 0.60 | 0.85 | 0.84             |
|                     | Emotional tension                                 | 0.77           |      |      |                  |
|                     | Physical fatigue                                  | 0.80           |      |      |                  |
|                     | Decreased work motivation                         | 0.75           |      |      |                  |

The results of the discriminant validity test using the Fornell-Larcker criterion also showed that the square root of the AVE for each construct was higher than the correlation between the other constructs. This confirms that each construct is able to measure distinct concepts clearly and without overlap.



### PLS-SEM Structural Model

the Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis using SmartPLS 4.1, the following structural model was obtained:

- The path coefficient of populist policies on work stress is 0.612
- t-statistics = 8.934,  $p < 0.001$  (significant)
- $R^2$  value for work stress is 0.375 (moderate category)
- value ( $f^2$ ) = 0.23 which indicates a medium effect ( medium effect )

The visualization of this path model shows a strong positive causal relationship between populist policies and work stress among village officials. Although only one independent variable was used, the large  $R^2$  value of 0.375 indicates that populist policies contribute significantly to explaining variations in work stress. The  $Q^2$  ( predictive relevance ) value obtained through the blindfolding procedure was also positive ( $Q^2 = 0.214$ ), indicating that the model has good predictive power.

The analysis was carried out using the stages of open coding , axial coding , and selective coding to obtain three main themes and six sub-themes that describe the experiences of civil servants in dealing with the impact of populist policies on their workload and work stress.

**Table 6. Results of Thematic Analysis of Interviews with Village Officials**

| Main Theme                                                  | Subtheme                                             | Respondent Quote Examples                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Increased Administrative Burden Due to Populist Policies | Sudden surge in demand for services                  | "Every time a new program is suddenly announced by our superiors, we have to work overtime to register residents overnight." (R3)     |
|                                                             | Changes to procedures without socialization          | "Suddenly, there were new rules for disbursing aid, without any training or official circular. Everything was so sudden." (R7)        |
| 2. Psychological and Emotional Pressure                     | Concerns about public judgment                       | "We are afraid of being considered slow by the people, even though our workload is very heavy because of this populist program." (R2) |
|                                                             | Conflict between co-workers due to overlapping tasks | "There is often blame between staff because it is not clear who is responsible for the impromptu program." (R5)                       |
| 3. Individual Survival Strategies                           | Social support from coworkers                        | "Fortunately, we support each other, sometimes replacing each other if someone is sick due to work fatigue." (R1)                     |
|                                                             | Personal time management                             | "I started making a personal work schedule so I could limit overtime, otherwise the stress would get worse." (R9)                     |

The results of this qualitative data collection show that short-term populist policies, which seek to boost the popularity of leaders, are often implemented abruptly without proper technical coordination. This has a direct impact on increased administrative burdens and extreme

working hours, triggering psychological stress, emotional tension, and even internal conflict among employees. However, some officials are attempting to mitigate the impact of this stress by relying on social support from colleagues and independent time management.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative results demonstrates consistent findings: statistically, populist policies significantly influence work stress, and narratively, officials describe high levels of pressure and job uncertainty that lead to prolonged stress. These data strengthen the internal validity of the study because the results from the two different approaches support each other (convergent evidence).

**Table 7. Joint Display Matrix of Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results**

| Key Indicators                                    | Quantitative Findings (Mean Score and Significance) | Qualitative Findings (Interview Themes & Quotes)                                                                                                              | Initial Interpretation (Descriptive, No Opinion)                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Orientation towards momentary public satisfaction | 4.21 ( $p < 0.001$ )                                | Theme 1: Increasing Administrative Burden<br>“We had to work overtime to register residents overnight.” (R3)                                                  | Populist programs are often announced suddenly to gain public sympathy, triggering a surge in daily administrative burdens. |
| Focus on the image and electability of the leader | 4.09 ( $p < 0.001$ )                                | Theme 2: Psychological Pressure<br>“We are afraid of being considered slow by residents, even though the workload is very heavy.” (R2)                        | The apparatus feels pressured to maintain the image of the leader, thus increasing emotional tension.                       |
| Ignoring organizational capacity                  | 4.02 ( $p < 0.001$ )                                | Theme 2: Internal Conflict<br>“Often staff blame each other because it is not clear who is responsible.” (R5)                                                 | Organizational capacity limitations are ignored, leading to overlapping tasks and conflicts between coworkers.              |
| Adding administrative burden                      | 4.34 ( $p < 0.001$ )                                | Theme 1: Workload Spikes<br>“We often get additional sudden daily reports that need to be submitted that same evening.” (R6)                                  | The sudden increase in administrative burden is a major trigger for work burnout.                                           |
| Psychological pressure                            | 4.18 ( $p < 0.001$ )                                | Theme 2: Psychological Pressure<br>“We often feel anxious whenever there are new instructions because we are afraid of not being able to complete them.” (R4) | Work pressure that comes suddenly gives rise to anxiety and feelings of insecurity.                                         |

| Key Indicators            | Quantitative Findings (Mean Score and Significance) | Qualitative Findings (Interview Themes & Quotes)                                                                                  | Initial Interpretation (Descriptive, No Opinion)                                                                                     |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Emotional tension         | 4.06 ( $p < 0.001$ )                                | Theme 2: Emotional Tension<br>“We are often tense even outside of work hours because we keep thinking about sudden targets.” (R7) | Emotional tension increases due to uncertain workloads and very tight deadlines.                                                     |
| Physical fatigue          | 4.11 ( $p < 0.001$ )                                | Theme 3: Survival Strategy<br>“A friend dropped out due to fatigue, so we took turns taking shifts.” (R1)                         | Physical exhaustion is a direct impact of continuous overtime due to populist programs.                                              |
| Decreased work motivation | 3.97 ( $p < 0.01$ )                                 | Theme 3: Survival Strategy<br>“We try to encourage each other so we don't lose our enthusiasm.” (R8)                              | There are signs of declining motivation, although some officials are still trying to provide moral support to each other to survive. |

The integration matrix shows that all populist policy indicators have a significant correlation with indicators of work stress, and the narratives of officials' experiences support this explanation. A high average score (above 4.00) indicates that populist policies are perceived as predominantly burdensome, and this is also reflected in interview excerpts describing psychological stress, emotional tension, physical exhaustion, and decreased work motivation. joint display of data presentation explicitly demonstrates how quantitative data answers the question "what" happened, while qualitative data addresses the questions "why" and "how" it happened. Thus, these two types of data complement each other and strengthen the validity of the research findings.

Based on the results of quantitative and qualitative analysis conducted in an integrated manner through a mixed methods approach with a sequential explanatory design, this study produced several main findings related to the influence of populist policies on the level of work stress of village officials in Bontang City as follows:

1. Populist policies are significantly and positively related to work stress among village officials.

Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis using SmartPLS 4.1 software shows that the populist policy variable (X) has a significant positive influence on the work stress variable (Y) with a path coefficient value of 0.671 and a p-value  $< 0.001$ . This means that the higher the apparatus' perception of the intensity of populist policies, the higher the level of work stress they experience.

2. All populist policy indicators received high perception scores.

The four main indicators, namely (a) orientation towards immediate public satisfaction, (b) focus on the image and electability of leaders, (c) neglecting organizational capacity, and (d) increasing administrative burdens, obtained average scores ranging from 4.02 to 4.34 on

- a Likert scale of 1–5. These findings indicate that the majority of officials view populist policies as a real factor that increases their daily workload.
3. Work stress among civil servants is at a high level.  
Four indicators of work stress—psychological distress, emotional tension, physical fatigue, and decreased work motivation—showed average scores ranging from 3.97 to 4.18 on a 1–5 Likert scale. The highest scores were for psychological distress (4.18) and emotional tension (4.06), while the lowest score was for decreased work motivation (3.97).
  4. Qualitative data strengthens quantitative findings by presenting the context of the apparatus' direct experiences.  
In-depth interviews with 10 informants revealed three main themes: (a) a sudden surge in administrative workload due to populist programs, (b) psychological pressure and emotional tension due to the demands of maintaining the leadership image, and (c) coping strategies such as shift work, mutual support, and adjusting work rhythms to overcome fatigue. These narratives are consistent with quantitative data showing high workload and stress scores.
  5. The indicator “increasing administrative burden” is the dominant trigger for work stress.  
This indicator received the highest score (4.34) and frequently emerged in interview narratives as a major source of stress, particularly when staff had to complete additional reports in a very short time. Its impact was reflected in high scores for physical fatigue (4.11) and psychological stress (4.18).

Overall, the data obtained shows that populist policies are strongly correlated with increased work stress among village officials, both psychologically, emotionally, and physically. These results provide an initial empirical picture of the relationship patterns between variables before further interpretation is undertaken in the discussion section.

## Discussion

The results of this study reveal that the implementation of populist policies directly contributes to increased levels of work stress among village officials. Quantitatively, the findings indicate a positive and significant correlation between the intensity of populist policy implementation and the officials' work stress scores. Meanwhile, qualitative data from in-depth interviews confirms that populist policies are often implemented suddenly, without adequate technical planning, and often disregard the human resource capacity available at the village level. This finding aligns with Hood's (2011) view, which highlights that policy practices that prioritize short-term popularity tend to neglect sustainable governance and instead create excessive administrative pressure at the field level.

Furthermore, from a human resource management perspective, populist policies have been shown to create a workload imbalance that leads to job stress. Village officials in Bontang City reported frequent sudden overtime, orders to implement programs without guidance, and high expectations from leaders and the community that led to emotional stress and conflict among coworkers. This supports Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) theory of job stress, which states that job stress arises when job demands exceed an individual's capacity to cope, whether in terms of time, energy, or organizational support.

Furthermore, the emergence of individual coping strategies such as social support among coworkers and personal time management indicates the existence of adaptive coping mechanisms that develop informally in the workplace. These strategies serve as a buffer against the pressures of populist policies, as Karasek (1979) argued in his Job Demand-Control Model that high job demands can be tolerated as long as individuals have control over their work and adequate social support. However, these individual coping mechanisms cannot replace the



importance of participatory and institutionally planned policy design to systematically reduce work stress.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that implementing populist policies without considering the principles of sustainable human resource management risks reducing the psychological health and productivity of village officials. Therefore, it is crucial for local governments to evaluate the impact of populist policies on employee workload and well-being before implementing them. An evidence-based policy approach and active involvement of officials in the policy formulation process are crucial steps to minimize the negative impact on work stress.

## 5. Conclusions

This study concludes that the implementation of sudden, short-term, and popularity-driven populist policies has a significant impact on increasing work stress among village officials in Bontang City. Quantitative data shows a significant positive relationship between the intensity of populist policies and work stress levels. Meanwhile, qualitative data from in-depth interviews revealed that work stress arises from the surge in administrative workloads, uninformed procedural changes, and high public expectations, which then lead to psychological stress, conflict between colleagues, and emotional exhaustion.

While some officials are able to develop coping mechanisms such as social support among colleagues and personal time management, these strategies are only temporary and insufficient to offset the systemic increase in workload. Thus, this study confirms that the success of public policy is not solely determined by achieving political targets but must also consider the capacity of the human resources implementing it to avoid negatively impacting the psychological well-being of officials.

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