

## Workload, social support, and burnout: Testing the mediation effect of work-life balance

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### ABSTRACT

Critical problems in public sector organizations have arisen due to burnout, driven by limited organizational resources, increasing workloads, and higher performance demands. This study examines the relationship between workload, social support, and burnout, with a focus on the mediating role of work-life balance among Indonesian government employees. A quantitative method was used to collect data through census sampling, involving 235 civil servants at the Central Statistics Agency in Bengkulu, Indonesia. Partial least squares structural equation modeling in SmartPLS was used to analyze the data. The findings reveal two distinct mechanisms leading to burnout. Workload was identified as the primary job demand that significantly increases burnout, both directly and indirectly through reduced work-life balance. In contrast, social support serves as a resource for employment, directly reducing burnout without the mediation of work-life balance. Furthermore, workload negatively affects work-life balance, whereas social support positively influences it. Nevertheless, work-life balance serves only as a mediating variable in the workload-burnout relationship and does not act as a moderator in the social support-burnout relationship. These results empirically support social exchange theory and the job demands-resources model by showing that job resources do not all function through identical mechanisms. In practice, this study suggests that public sector organizations should prioritize strengthening workplace social support and improving workload management to enhance employee well-being and sustainably reduce burnout.

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### 1. Introduction

Managing the rising tide of burnout now represents one of the most significant hurdles for public-sector human resources departments, driven by rising performance demands, accountability pressures, and the bureaucratic nature of public-sector positions. Empirical studies indicate that excessive quantitative and qualitative workloads are primary contributors to burnout, leading to negative outcomes such as psychological distress and a decline in the quality of public services (Kaiser et al., 2020; Boumans & Dorant, 2021). Time

constraints, high performance expectations, and limited organizational resources further intensify these issues. Social support plays a central buffering role in high-stress job environments. When employees receive consistent backing from their managers, colleagues, and families, the detrimental effects of workplace stress are significantly diminished (Roslan et al., 2021). Furthermore, in the public sector, work-life balance is crucial, as an imbalance between personal and professional obligations can heighten stress levels. A balanced lifestyle serves as an essential recovery mechanism, enhancing psychological stability and personal resources and ultimately contributing to employee well-being (Prasad et al., 2025). As a result, this underscores the immediate need for human resource policies that prioritize employee well-being, particularly in addressing the unique pressures of public service, including job security, service demands, and administrative obligations.

Extensive empirical data points to a sustained upward correlation between workload and burnout, identifying excessive workload as a key stressor contributing to burnout. Studies show that high workload significantly increases burnout levels, leading to employee demotivation and reduced performance (Guntoro et al., 2024), while an unmanaged workload may also foster boredom and disengagement, further undermining job performance (Weni et al., 2023). As noted by Eikenhout et al. (2022), the extent to which workload contributes to burnout is often contingent on the specific organizational environment. Although social support serves as a buffer, its effects are contingent upon the specific type of employments (Eikenhout et al., 2022; Guntoro et al., 2024). Furthermore, a known cause of burnout is a lack of balance across the boundary separating work responsibilities from home life, which functions as a mediator between an individual's well-being and the demands of their job (Cipta et al., 2022; Weni et al., 2023). The job demands-resources (JD-R) theory by Demerouti and Bakker (2022) and Bakker et al. (2023), in conjunction with social exchange theory (SET) by Blau (1964) and Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) provide a dual lens to interpret how these resources and demands interact to influence employee health. There is still empirical ambiguity regarding whether workload and social support consistently predict burnout, as findings remain mixed and context-dependent. Existing research has largely focused on the private sector, leaving limited evidence from public organizations where these dynamics may differ. Additionally, examining mediating factors such as work-life balance can provide deeper insight into how job demands and resources interact. Therefore, further research is needed to explore these relationships in public sector contexts to understand the complex drivers of employee burnout better (Bunjak et al., 2023; Bakker et al., 2023; Al'Ararah et al., 2024).

The public sector in Indonesia, particularly government organizations such as the Central Statistics Agency (CSA), has characteristics that set it apart from the private sector in this study. Its hierarchical bureaucratic structure, high demands for public accountability, and limited work flexibility make the public sector particularly vulnerable to systemic work pressures (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). This condition becomes more salient as the demand for data-driven performance, transparency, and timely public services continues to increase (Borst & Knies, 2023). In the case of CSA in Bengkulu, Indonesia, these pressures are reflected in the rising number of statistical publications, which increased from 248 in 2019 to 355 in 2024, indicating a substantial escalation in workload. Although most employees demonstrate a relatively high level of professionalism according to the Civil Servant Professionalism Index (CSPI), the presence of employees in lower categories suggests that challenges related to performance and well-being persist. Accordingly, this context provides a relevant empirical basis for examining how workload, social support, and work-life balance interact to shape burnout among public-sector employees.

The research variables are closely interconnected within this context. In the public sector, workload is shaped not only by task quantity but also by institutional targets,

administrative limitations, and strict regulations (Demerouti & Bakker, 2022; Bakker et al., 2023), making it the primary job demand in JD-R theory. Social support, meanwhile, is influenced by formal organizational structures, so its effectiveness as a work-related resource depends on the quality of relationships among colleagues and supervisors. Achieving work-life balance is also challenging due to limited flexibility and heavy administrative responsibilities, highlighting its role in mitigating strain and reducing burnout. Burnout itself represents a strategic issue in public human resource management, affecting both employees and the quality of public services. Thus, the public sector is a relevant setting for examining how workload and social support interact to shape burnout, both directly and indirectly. This study aims to analyze key psychological and organizational factors associated with burnout, particularly the impact of workload, given evidence that excessive demands harm well-being (Meer et al., 2022) and the role of social support, which can reduce negative work outcomes and enhance mental health (Lamprinou et al., 2021; Meer et al., 2022).

This research examines how task demands and social support influence work-life balance, highlighting the importance of institutional support in managing boundaries between work and personal life. Work-life balance is positioned as a key mediator that determines how job stressors affect employee well-being (Meer et al., 2022). The study aims to analyze its role in the relationship among workload, social support, and burnout, thereby forming a comprehensive framework for managing mental health in public sector organizations. Work-life balance reflects an individual's ability to harmonize work and non-work responsibilities and acts as a central psychological mechanism linking job demands, resources, and well-being outcomes. Within the JD-R framework, it functions as a mediating process in which excessive workload depletes resources and disrupts balance, thereby increasing burnout risk. At the same time, strong social support helps maintain this balance through emotional and practical assistance. Empirical evidence confirms that work-life balance significantly shapes the relationship between job demands, resources, and employee well-being (Mäkiniemi et al., 2021). This study integrates the JD-R framework with SET in the public sector by offering conceptual and empirical insights into managing occupational demands. It extends the JD-R paradigm by identifying workload as a key job demand and social support as a vital resource influencing burnout. Work-life balance is positioned as a selective mediating mechanism, highlighting that not all resources operate indirectly and that their effectiveness depends on contextual and relational dynamics (Bakker et al., 2023).

This research is novel because it shows that job needs and job resources do not follow a single explanatory pathway, thereby reconciling these two theoretical approaches. Rather, social support functions as an instantaneous buffering resource, while workload directly and indirectly contributes to burnout by deteriorating work-life balance. This discovery fills a significant void in recent research on burnout, which increasingly demands more sophisticated models that consider the complex nature of employee experiences in various organizational contexts, especially in the public sector, where job demands are increased by structural rigidity and accountability pressures (Eikenhout et al., 2022). Practically speaking, the study suggests that interventions should not be developed consistently, offering a more refined basis for policy creation. While social support interventions should concentrate on enhancing interpersonal and organizational interactions, workload management necessitates structural changes to maintain work-life balance. The current study contributes to a more context-sensitive approach targeted at boosting employee well-being while maintaining organizational performance in public institutions by coordinating theoretical development with practical ramifications.

## 2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

### 2.1. Literature Review

#### 2.1.1. Grand Theory

As proposed by the job demands-resources (JD-R) theory by Demerouti and Bakker (2022) and Bakker et al. (2023), professional tiredness is caused by an imbalance between occupational assets that promote accomplishment and psychological well-being, and task-related pressures that deplete energy. According to empirical research, an excessive workload is a main job requirement that contributes to burnout by disrupting work-life balance and encouraging the process of health impairment, in which high expectations jeopardize workers' well-being (Chaves-Montero et al., 2025). In contrast, social support and work-life balance function as critical job resources that reduce burnout by strengthening employee resilience (Marsh et al., 2023). As posited by social exchange theory (SET) from Blau (1964) and Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), the interaction between employees and their organizations is built on mutual benefit. In this scenario, interpersonal assistance serves as an important transactional tool for protecting employees' mental health from the depleting effects of job stress (Möckli et al., 2020). Integrating JD-R and SET, prior studies by Awwad et al. (2022) and Al'Ararah et al. (2024) show that increased workload leads to burnout due to poor work-life balance, while organizational support alleviates burnout by meeting employees' psychological and emotional requirements. This combined theoretical framework underpins the selection of variables and research model examining the interactions among workload, social support, and burnout, thereby advancing understanding of health and happiness at work (Marsh et al., 2023; Al'Ararah et al., 2024).

#### 2.1.2. Burnout

Burnout represents a psychological condition that emerges due to chronic work stress and is marked by emotional exhaustion, the rise of a cynical view of labor, and a diminished sense of self-competence (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). As proposed in the theoretical framework developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), emotional burnout results from a person's incapacity to use healthy coping mechanisms, whereby they attempt to shield themselves from work-related stress but fail to produce the anticipated adaptive outcomes (Nowakowska-Domagala et al., 2015). It encompasses three core dimensions: emotional exhaustion, reflecting feelings of depletion, depersonalization, marked by detachment and cynicism toward work, as well as decreased personal accomplishment, evidenced by a decline in perceived professional competence (Dall'Ora et al., 2020; Kashtanov et al., 2022). Within government agencies, the escalation of service expectations and transparency mandates has left staff more susceptible to exhaustion. This fragility was especially evident during high-stress periods, such as the global health crisis, where institutional pressures reached critical levels. Burnout has substantial implications for job performance, job satisfaction, and service quality, establishing it as a critical variable in assessments of workplace well-being (Giménez-Espert et al., 2020; Kashtanov et al., 2022). Burnout is considered a central outcome variable, therefore essential for promoting healthier work environments and improving organizational effectiveness (Dall'Ora et al., 2020; Saputra & Satrya, 2024).

#### 2.1.3. Workload

A workload is a set of requirements that employees must meet to complete their tasks (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). High workloads can be a significant cause of

occupational stress, according to Faulkner and Patiar (1997) and Lo and Lamm (2005). As a result, workload is a source of psychological stress for people, in addition to representing the number of tasks that must be completed within a specific period. There are two primary conceptual perspectives on workload: quantitative and qualitative. The number of activities that must be finished within a particular time frame is commonly described as the quantitative dimension, whilst the intricacy of the work and the psychological effects that result from doing those tasks are related to the qualitative dimension. Workload is frequently assessed using the Reid and Nygren (1988) scale. This approach of workload assessment uses three primary elements: temporal demands, cognitive effort demands, and psychological stress demands. These characteristics collectively describe a person's assessment of the amount of work demands.

#### **2.1.4. Social Support**

The practical help that other important people in a person's life provide is known as social support (Siedlecki et al., 2014). This assistance can enhance an individual's well-being by cultivating sentiments of acceptance, appreciation, and connectedness to significant social interactions, making it both instrumental and emotional (Christianty & Latuconsina, 2023). Supervisor support serves as a fundamental occupational asset that enhances job satisfaction and reduces role ambiguity, thereby improving workplace outcomes (Orgambidez et al., 2022). Similarly, coworker support strengthens a sense of belonging and collaboration, providing emotional and instrumental assistance that supports both personal and professional development (Barry et al., 2025). Organizational support further contributes to a psychologically healthy work environment by alleviating occupational stress and lowering the risk of burnout (Campos et al., 2023). Emotional, instrumental, and informational forms of social support collectively enable employees to manage job demands more effectively while reinforcing organizational commitment (Galanti et al., 2021). Given its protective effect against stress and burnout, social support is a significant independent variable that deserves further investigation into how it affects employee well-being and productivity across varied organizational settings (Wontorczyk et al., 2023).

#### **2.1.5. Work-life Balance**

Work-life balance is the ability of a person to harmonize occupational demands with personal and family obligations (Stanley & Sebastine, 2023). This condition is achieved when a person can meet their obligations in both personal and professional spheres in a balanced way, without sacrificing their physical or mental health (Verma et al., 2024). Work-life equilibrium involves the harmonious integration of career duties and private obligations, serving as a fundamental predictor of job contentment. Under the JD-R framework, this synergy is maintained through personal assets such as resilience and communal support, which help mitigate task-related pressures. Existing research confirms that the interplay between task volume and external support dictates this balance, noting that overwhelming job requirements frequently lead to exhaustion and diminished morale (Lehmann et al., 2021; Mäkinieniemi et al., 2021). The 2019 coronavirus pandemic further highlighted the importance of personal resources and adaptive work arrangements in maintaining this balance amid rapidly changing conditions (Meer et al., 2022; Chowhan & Pike, 2023). Research suggests that work-life balance serves as a moderating factor in the relationship between job demands and employee

burnout. This underscores the essential role of developing a supportive workplace that encourages both job resources and individual well-being (Mäkiniemi et al., 2021; Meer et al., 2022).

## 2.2. Hypothesis Development

### 2.2.1. Positive Effect of Workload on Burnout

In conceptual terms, workload is seen as a fundamental employment demand that consumes both physical and psychological energy within the JD-R framework, which explains that ongoing job demands initiate the health deterioration process (Demerouti et al., 2009). Excessive workload depletes employees' internal resources and limits their ability to recover adequately, thereby generating prolonged stress that develops into emotional exhaustion as the core dimension of burnout (Dominguez-Espinosa & Fontaine, 2023). This relationship follows a clear causal mechanism in which high workload leads to continuous energy expenditure, reduces recovery opportunities, and ultimately accelerates the accumulation of strain (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). In the public sector context, this dynamic becomes more critical due to bureaucratic rigidity and high accountability demands, which restrict flexibility and intensify workload pressures (Brown et al., 2021). Empirical evidence consistently supports that insufficient recovery under sustained job demands significantly increases emotional exhaustion, reinforcing the central assumption of the JD-R framework (Ntumi et al., 2025). **H<sub>1</sub>: Workload Has a Positive Effect on Burnout.**

### 2.2.2. Negative Effect of Social Support on Burnout

In conceptual terms, social support is marketed as an employment resource that encompasses emotional, instrumental, and informational assistance, which, with the JD-R framework, functions to mitigate the negative consequences of work demands on employees' psychological well-being (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). From the perspective of SET, supportive interactions between employees and their organization foster reciprocal relationships that enhance psychological welfare and strengthen positive work attitudes (Usman et al., 2023). Through this mechanism, social support provides employees with additional coping resources that reduce perceived uncertainty and job-related stress (Liu & Zhou, 2020). As a result, individuals who receive consistent support are better able to manage work pressures, reducing emotional tiredness, which is the primary aspect of burnout (Ersoy et al., 2023). This buffering effect becomes stronger when support is derived from multiple sources, such as supervisors and family, as it enhances employees' resilience in high-demand work environments (Manuti et al., 2022). Empirical evidence further confirms that social support operates as a substantive protective mechanism that mitigates stress and reduces burnout risk, rather than merely reflecting a correlational relationship (Arenas et al., 2025). **H<sub>2</sub>: Social Support Has a Negative Effect on Burnout.**

### 2.2.3. Negative Effect of Workload on Work-Life Balance

In conceptual terms, work-life balance reflects a person's capacity to allocate and harmonize work and personal responsibilities in a long-term way. Within the JD-R framework, work-related demands, such as excessive workload and extended working hours, deplete employees' time and energy, thereby undermining their ability to maintain balance across life domains (Haar et al., 2019). This condition leads to an escalation of work-family conflict, driven by work demands that intrude

into personal life and disrupt non-work responsibilities (Björnftoft et al., 2020). Mechanistically, an excessive workload requires continuous time investment and psychological involvement, thereby reducing opportunities for recovery and weakening individuals' capacity to manage competing role demands (Stankevičiūtė & Kunska, 2022). Conversely, the presence of work-related resources, including organizational support, flexible work arrangements, and clear role boundaries, can help alleviate these adverse effects and preserve balance between occupational responsibilities and personal life (Ugwu et al., 2023). The deterioration of work-life balance is primarily attributed to the depletion of time and energy resources under sustained job demands, underscoring the pivotal role of workload in determining imbalance (Rashmi & Kataria, 2023). **H<sub>3</sub>: Workload Has a Negative Effect on Work-Life Balance.**

#### **2.2.4. Positive Effect of Social Support on Work-Life Balance**

In conceptual terms, social support is positioned as a social resource that facilitates individuals in managing boundaries between work and non-work domains effectively. Within the JD-R framework, work-related resources, such as social support, strengthen employees' capacity to manage job demands and maintain balance across life roles (Bakker et al., 2023). According to SET, when firms offer supportive and flexible settings, employees reciprocate through positive attitudes and improved well-being, including a stronger ability to achieve work-life balance (Talukder & Galang, 2021). Mechanistically, social support provides practical assistance and psychological safety, which reduces role conflict and facilitates more effective boundary management between work and non-work responsibilities (Brandão & Matias, 2024). This process becomes increasingly relevant in contemporary work contexts, where flexible arrangements and leadership support play a key role in assisting employees in managing conflicting expectations (Carinal-Go et al., 2025). As a result, the presence of strong social support enhances an individual's ability to maintain work-life balance by mitigating work-family conflict and preserving personal resources (Ferdous et al., 2026). **H<sub>4</sub>: Social Support Has a Positive Effect on Work-Life Balance.**

#### **2.2.5. Negative Effect of Work-Life Balance on Burnout**

In conceptual terms, work-life balance is defined as a personal resource within the JD-R framework, in which the ability to recover physical and psychological energy plays a central role in preventing burnout. The JD-R model explains that adequate recovery enables individuals to restore depleted resources, thereby reducing the accumulation of stress and protecting against emotional exhaustion as the core dimension of burnout (Strassburger et al., 2023). Employees who successfully manage their personal and professional lives are more inclined to experience effective recovery processes that replenish energy and sustain psychological well-being (Ferreira & Gomes, 2023). Mechanistically, this recovery process functions as a buffer against the health impairment pathway, as restored resources reduce vulnerability to prolonged strain and burnout (Sharma & Tiwari, 2023). Conversely, insufficient work-life balance limits recovery opportunities, resulting in ongoing resource depletion and heightened emotional fatigue (Kotera et al., 2021). This highlights that recovery is the key mechanism linking work-life balance to burnout reduction, strengthening its function as a safeguard in high-pressure work settings (Khan et al., 2022). **H<sub>5</sub>: Work-Life Balance Has a Negative Effect on Burnout.**

#### **2.2.6. The Effect of Workload on Burnout through Work-life Balance**

In conceptual terms, the correlation between workload and burnout can be elucidated by examining the mediating role of work-life balance within the JD-R framework. Workload categorized as a job demand depletes employees' time and energy resources, consequently impairing their ability to attain a balance between occupational responsibility and personal life (Molino et al., 2015). This imbalance reduces opportunities for recovery, particularly psychological detachment and relaxation, which are essential for restoring depleted resources (Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006). As a result, the lack of recovery leads to the accumulation of stress and enhances emotional tiredness, which is the main aspect of burnout (Kinnunen et al., 2019). Mechanistically, this process illustrates that in addition to having a direct impact on burnout, workload also indirectly affects burnout by first undermining work-life balance as a critical personal resource (Li et al., 2025). Furthermore, the quality of recovery experiences can weaken this negative pathway, as effective recovery helps individuals restore resources and lessen the negative effects of the workload (Ntumi et al., 2025). **H<sub>6</sub>: Work-Life Balance Mediates the Relationship between Workload and Burnout.**

#### **2.2.7. The Effect of Social Support on Burnout through Work-life Balance**

In conceptual terms, social support is a crucial resource for employees that enhances work-life balance and indirectly reduces burnout within the JD-R framework. As a job resource, social support strengthens individuals' ability to manage multiple role demands, thereby improving work-life balance (Bakker et al., 2023). From the perspective of SET, supportive interactions foster reciprocal relationships that enhance well-being and reduce psychological strain (Huang et al., 2022). Mechanistically, social support facilitates role clarity and reduces role conflict, which enables individuals to maintain a better work-life balance as a critical personal resource (Zhou et al., 2024). Improved balance subsequently supports recovery processes and limits the accumulation of stress, thereby lowering emotional exhaustion as the core dimension of burnout (Aminihajibashi et al., 2024). This indicates that social support functions both as a direct buffer and as an indirect factor in lowering burnout through the enhancement of work-life balance (Naruse et al., 2012). **H<sub>7</sub>: Work-Life Balance Mediates the Relationship between Social Support and Burnout.**

Under the JD-R model, workload can be considered a job demand that leads to stress and the possibility of burnout, while social support is a job resource that helps reduce these negative consequences and promote good well-being (Harunavamwe & Kanengoni, 2023; Kamboj & Eronimus, 2025). Complementarily, SET explains that social support reflects reciprocal relationships between employees and their organization, fostering positive psychological outcomes (García-Salirrosas et al., 2023). Furthermore, work-life balance is posited as a mediator through which workload and social support influence burnout, where high workload tends to reduce work-life balance, whereas social support enhances it, and improved work-life balance subsequently lowers burnout levels (Wood et al., 2020; Wei & Ye, 2022; Ferreira & Gomes, 2023). Thus, this integrated JD-R and SET framework highlights both direct and indirect pathways linking workload and social support to burnout through work-life balance. The correlations among the factors analyzed in this study are depicted in Figure 1.

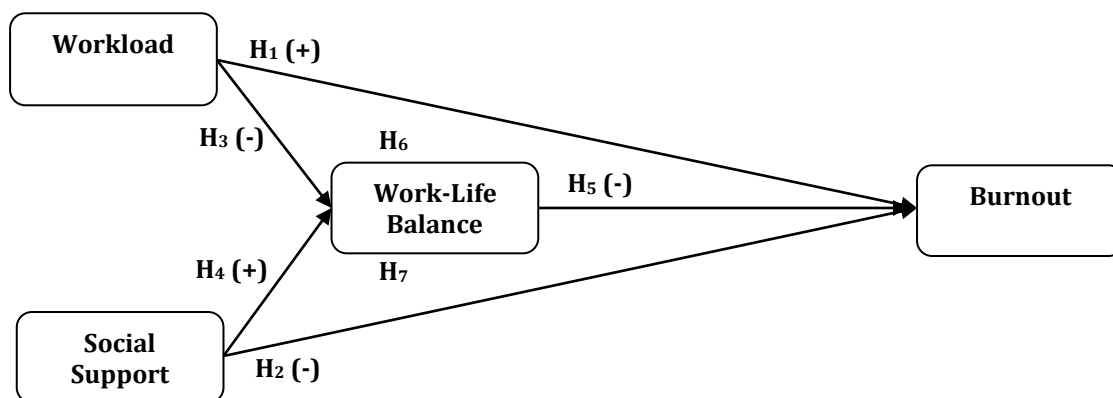


Figure 1. Research Framework

### 3. Research Methods

#### 3.1. Population and Sampling Method

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationships among workload, social support, work-life balance, and burnout in the public sector, as it allows simultaneous analysis of multiple variables related to burnout (Lin et al., 2025). The population consists of all civil servants at the CSA across Bengkulu, Indonesia, selected based on their exposure to administrative demands and involvement in core organizational tasks. Using a census (saturation sampling) approach, all population members were included to ensure full representation and minimize bias. A total of 235 valid samples were obtained, which is adequate for partial least squares-structural equation model (PLS-SEM) analysis, a method suitable for small to moderate sample sizes (Ghahramani et al., 2022; Qin et al., 2022).

#### 3.2. Data Collecting Method

Data were collected through directly distributed, self-administered questionnaires, allowing respondents to complete them independently and thereby reducing interviewer bias and capturing authentic perceptions. Distribution during working hours ensured accessibility and a high response rate, and this method is widely used in burnout research for efficiently gathering large-scale perceptual data (Babatope et al., 2023). The questionnaire was developed based on established theories and validated scales to ensure validity and relevance, and is grounded in the JD-R model, in which workload is a job demand and social support and work-life balance are resources that affect burnout. Measurements were adapted from prior studies: workload (task demands, time pressure) by Debets et al. (2022) and Pace et al. (2025), social support (supervisor, coworker, and family support) by Elst et al. (2019) and Darydzaky and Desiana (2023), work-life balance (time, psychological balance, role satisfaction) by Nong et al. (2022), and burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced personal accomplishment) by Woerkom et al. (2016). The instrument included 9 burnout items, 9 workload items, 7 social support items, and 9 work-life balance items, measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

#### 3.3. Data Analysis Method

The data were analyzed using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS, which was selected for its robustness to non-normal data, moderate sample sizes, and complex models involving mediation and multiple latent variables (Sabol et al., 2023). The analysis comprised two

stages: evaluation of the outer (measurement) model and the inner (structural) model. In the outer model, reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (>0.70), while convergent validity was evaluated through outer loadings (>0.70) and variance inflation factor (VIF) (0.50). Discriminant validity was also tested to ensure construct distinctiveness. In the inner model, R<sup>2</sup> assessed explanatory power, evaluated predictive relevance, and effect size. Bootstrapping with 5.000 resamples generated p-values to test direct and indirect effects, with significance determined by p-values (Hair et al., 2019).

#### 4. Results and Discussion

##### 4.1. Respondent Demographics

The questionnaire was distributed to all 279 civil servants employed by the CSA across Bengkulu, Indonesia. Out of these, 235 employees consented to participate and completed the questionnaire, yielding a response rate deemed sufficient for further investigation. The responders encompassed 11 CSA work units throughout the province, indicating extensive organizational representation.

**Table 1. Respondent Demographics**

Variable	Category	Amount	Percentage
Gender	Male	132	56%
	Female	103	44%
Age	<25 years	17	7%
	25-30 years	55	23%
	31-40 years	89	38%
	>40 years	74	32%
Work Experience	1-3 years	58	25%
	4-6 years	28	12%
	>6 years	149	63%
Marital Status	Married	188	80%
	Not Married	47	20%
Education Level	High School	27	11.5%
	Diploma	14	6%
	Bachelor	147	62.5%
	Master	46	19.6%
	Doctor	1	0.4%

According to the data presented in Table 1, the participant demographics are characterized by a predominance of male respondents (56%), whereas female respondents comprised 44% of the sample. This distribution represents the gender composition typically observed in public sector statistical institutes. The majority of responders were aged 31-40 years (38%), followed by those aged over 40 years (32%). Individuals aged 25 to 30 accounted for 23%, and those under 25 accounted for the lowest share at 7%. This suggests that the sample predominantly consisted of employees in their prime and mature working years. The majority of respondents (63%) had over 6 years of service, indicating considerable organizational experience. Simultaneously, 25% of participants possessed one to three years of professional experience, while 12% had four to six years of tenure. This demonstrates that the majority of respondents were acquainted with their work responsibilities and organizational requirements.

In terms of household demographics, the data show that married individuals constitute the largest segment of the study's participants (80%), while 20% are unmarried. This demographic characteristic is relevant because of the study's emphasis on work-life balance, as marital obligations may affect employees' ability to balance job

and personal demands. In terms of academic background, the largest cohort of participants is composed of those who have completed an undergraduate program (62.5%), followed by those with a master's degree (19.6%). Individuals with a high school education constituted 11.5%, whilst those with diplomas comprised 6% of the sample. A mere 0.4% of respondents possessed a doctoral degree. The educational profile demonstrates that the respondents held sufficient academic qualifications to fulfill their professional responsibilities inside the firm.

#### 4.2. Validity and Reliability Test

Before testing the proposed relationships, the measurement model was rigorously assessed for reliability and validity to ensure construct accuracy. The PLS-SEM results are presented in Figure 2. Beyond validity, the measurement model must demonstrate reliability, reflecting the instrument's consistency and precision.

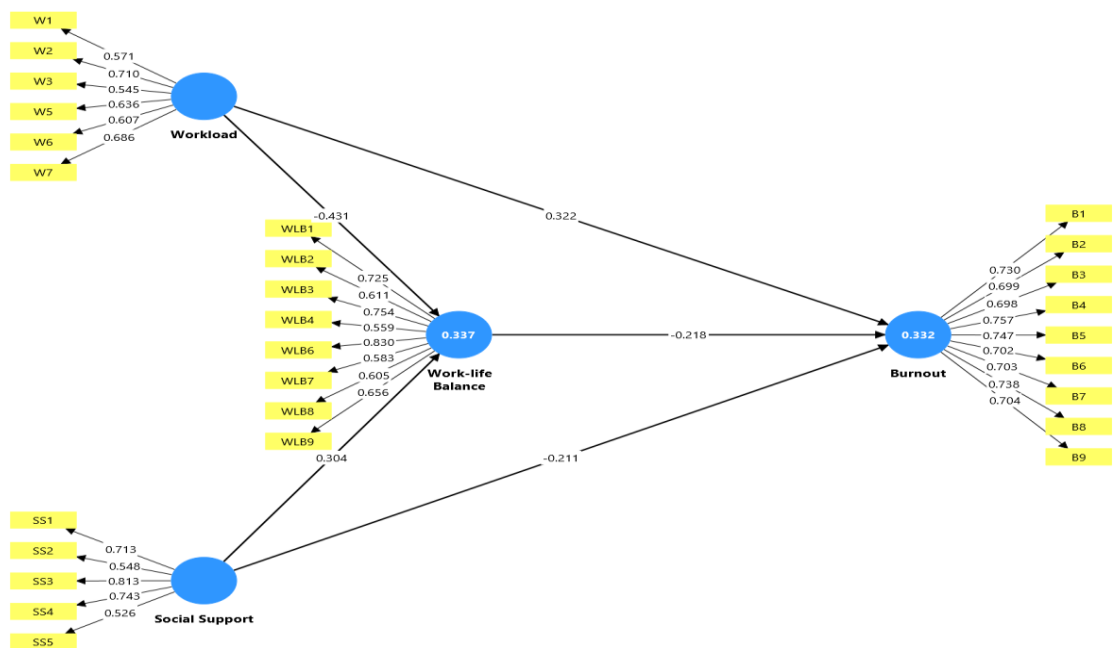


Figure 2. Measurement Model

Although ideal outer loadings exceed 0.70, values  $\geq 0.50$  are acceptable for convergent validity, and the VIF value is  $< 0.50$  (Hair et al., 2019), and thus retained in this study. Initial results showed several indicators below 0.50, leading to the removal of three workload, two social support, and one work-life balance indicators. After re-evaluation, all remaining indicators exceeded the 0.50 threshold (see Table 2), confirming adequate convergent validity and internal consistency in line with established standards. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with  $> 0.70$  as the standard threshold (and  $> 0.60$  acceptable for exploratory research), and composite reliability, which should exceed 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019; Jogiyanto, 2019). All constructs meet these criteria, with Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values consistently above the required thresholds. This indicates that all variables exhibit strong reliability, confirming that the instruments are consistent, free from significant measurement error, and suitable for further research.

**Table 2. Convergent Validity and Construct Reliability**

Variable	Outer Loading	VIF	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
<b>Workload (W)</b>			0.705	0.795
W1	0.571	1.229		
W2	0.710	1.261		
W3	0.545	1.240		
W5	0.636	1.167		
W6	0.607	1.324		
W7	0.686	1.346		
<b>Social Support (SS)</b>			0.698	0.805
SS1	0.713	1.413		
SS2	0.548	1.214		
SS3	0.813	1.594		
SS4	0.743	1.532		
SS5	0.526	1.285		
<b>Work-life Balance (WLB)</b>			0.824	0.866
WLB1	0.725	1.799		
WLB2	0.611	1.703		
WLB3	0.754	1.750		
WLB4	0.559	1.511		
WLB6	0.830	2.000		
WLB7	0.583	1.374		
WLB8	0.605	1.483		
WLB9	0.656	1.543		
<b>Burnout (B)</b>			0.885	0.906
B1	0.730	1.802		
B2	0.699	1.653		
B3	0.698	1.910		
B4	0.757	2.323		
B5	0.747	2.090		
B6	0.702	2.064		
B7	0.703	2.464		
B8	0.738	2.520		
B9	0.704	1.888		

#### 4.3. Hypothesis Test

Based on Table 3, the two variables have an R-squared value of approximately 33%. This means that the independent variables in this study are sufficient to explain burnout and work-life balance, although other factors outside the model still exert a greater influence.

**Table 3. Path Correlation**

	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Burnout	0.332	0.324
Work-life Balance	0.337	0.331

Findings from the hypothesis analysis reveal that increased job demands are a substantial driver of professional burnout, with a statistically significant positive correlation. This data indicates that elevated job expectations exacerbate burnout among federal personnel, thereby corroborating the first hypothesis. An excessive workload can lead to emotional fatigue when employees must maintain elevated effort for an extended period. The data suggest that social backing serves as a substantial deterrent to burnout,

effectively reducing its occurrence within the organization, corroborating the second hypothesis. This outcome indicates that assistance from supervisors and coworkers significantly helps alleviate burnout by helping employees manage work-related stress.

Moreover, workload has a significant negative effect on work-life balance, confirming the third hypothesis and indicating that increased demands hinder employees' ability to balance work and personal life. Conversely, social support positively and significantly enhances work-life balance, supporting the fourth hypothesis, by providing flexibility and support. Furthermore, work-life balance significantly reduces burnout, confirming the fifth hypothesis, suggesting it functions as a protective factor against professional exhaustion.

**Table 4. Path Analysis**

Hypothesis	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
Workload → Burnout	0.322	0.332	0.081	3.948	0.000
Social Support → Burnout	-0.211	-0.216	0.068	3.099	0.002
Workload → Work-Life Balance	-0.431	-0.436	0.067	6.453	0.000
Social Support → Work-Life Balance	0.304	0.310	0.076	3.992	0.000
Work-Life Balance → Burnout	-0.218	-0.212	0.095	2.295	0.022
Workload → Work-Life Balance → Burnout	0.094	0.091	0.041	2.268	0.023
Social Support → Work-Life Balance → Burnout	-0.066	-0.066	0.035	1.894	0.058

The mediating role of work-life balance was analyzed to assess its explanatory power in the relationships among workload, social support, and burnout. Table 4 demonstrates that work-life balance strongly influences the association between workload and burnout, hence corroborating the sixth hypothesis. This research indicates that workload causes burnout, both directly and indirectly, by impairing employees' ability to balance work and personal life. The data failed to provide sufficient evidence that work-life equilibrium acts as an intermediary between social resources and professional exhaustion. While social support directly mitigates burnout, it does not seem to affect burnout through work-life balance. Consequently, the seventh hypothesis lacks support. This outcome suggests that social support may alleviate burnout through alternative mechanisms, such as emotional buffering or enhanced motivation, rather than by improving work-life balance.

#### 4.4. Discussion

##### 4.4.1. Workload and Burnout

The analysis demonstrates a favorable, statistically significant impact of workload on burnout, supporting the JD-R model via the health impairment pathway. As a core job demand, workload depletes employees' physical and psychological resources, leading to emotional exhaustion and subsequent burnout (Bakker et al., 2023). This finding indicates that workload functions as a primary driver of energy depletion, a pattern consistently supported by cross-sector studies that identify workload as a key predictor of burnout (Cadena-Povea et al., 2025). Within public administration contexts, bureaucratic characteristics such as rigid rules, red tape, and high accountability further amplify the negative impact of workload by constraining resource recovery (Kulachai, 2025).

These conditions intensify the depletion process, increasing the likelihood of emotional exhaustion and burnout when job demands remain high and resources are limited (Jiang et al., 2026). These findings confirm that workload is the principal job demand shaping burnout outcomes, aligned with the JD-R health impairment model, wherein prolonged workloads induce energy depletion, ultimately resulting in emotional weariness and burnout (Weißmüller et al., 2024).

#### **4.4.2. Social Support and Burnout**

The results show a significant inverse relationship between social support and work-related stress, confirming its role as a key job resource within the JD-R model and SET. Social support enhances coping by providing emotional and practical resources, thereby reducing stress and improving well-being (Srija et al., 2024), with consistent evidence across sectors (Martinet & Nicolas, 2017). The JD-R framework explains that job resources mitigate the negative effects of demands, while SET highlights reciprocal relationships that strengthen psychological security and resilience (Saleem et al., 2021).

Importantly, social support operates through both direct and indirect mechanisms. It can directly reduce stress via emotional buffering and psychological safety (Rasmussen-Torvik et al., 2012), while also acting through context-dependent mediating pathways. These findings extend prior research by showing that social support does not rely solely on mediation but can flexibly influence coping and well-being through multiple mechanisms (Pazvantoğlu et al., 2009).

#### **4.4.3. Workload and Work-Life Balance**

The findings show that workload negatively affects work-life balance, consistent with the JD-R framework, as higher job demands consume time and energy, leading to work-family conflict and reduced life balance (Gordon et al., 2015). This occurs through role, time-based, and strain-based conflicts, where workload intensifies competing responsibilities, limits time availability, and generates psychological strain that spills into personal life (Faruque et al., 2024). Together, these mechanisms explain how workload disrupts the balance between work and non-work domains. Empirical evidence from public sector contexts reinforces these findings, showing that rigid working hours and limited flexibility tend to exacerbate work-life imbalance.

In contrast, organizations that provide flexibility and supportive supervisory practices can mitigate these negative effects by enabling better role integration (Tremblay, 2023). These findings align with the JD-R literature, indicating that heightened workload exacerbates work-family conflict and diminishes work-life balance, whereas job resources like autonomy, social support, and flexibility can mitigate these impacts (Kossek et al., 2016). However, the strength of these relationships may vary depending on factors such as the organization's culture, the nature of the job, and sector conditions.

#### **4.4.4. Social Support and Work-Life Balance**

The findings indicate that social support has a significant positive effect on work-life balance, consistent with the JD-R framework and SET. Within JD-R, social support functions as a key job resource that enhances employees' ability to maintain balance under high job demands, while SET suggests that supportive interactions foster a sense of security that promotes well-being (Demerouti, 2018). This relationship operates through mechanisms such as informal flexibility and the

provision of emotional and instrumental support, which enable employees to manage work better and personal responsibilities (Duan et al., 2024). Therefore, social support not only lessens stress but also directly improves work-life balance by enhancing people's ability to navigate competing role demands (Zhou et al., 2024).

According to additional empirical data, social support serves as a contextual resource that lessens the detrimental impact of workplace demands on work-life balance. By enhancing coping capacity and personal resources, such as coping self-efficacy, social support helps individuals sustain equilibrium between work and non-work domains (Cao & Meng, 2023). These findings reinforce the JD-R perspective that job resources play a crucial role in maintaining work-life balance, particularly under demanding conditions, and highlight the importance of social support as both a buffering and enabling mechanism in achieving balance across life domains (Duan et al., 2024).

#### **4.4.5. Work-Life Balance and Burnout**

The results show a strong negative relationship between work-life balance and burnout, consistent with the JD-R theory, where work-life balance acts as a resource that supports recovery and reduces the impact of job demands (Sharma & Tiwari, 2023). When work-life balance is compromised, employees experience greater strain due to insufficient recovery, which increases emotional exhaustion and overall burnout levels (Wei & Ye, 2022). This relationship is explained through boundary and recovery processes: blurred work-non-work boundaries, especially in remote work, increase conflict and hinder psychological detachment, accelerating burnout (Thörel et al., 2022).

Conversely, effective boundary management and recovery preserve energy and well-being. Within the JD-R framework, work-life balance functions as a buffering resource, while high demands and poor boundary control heighten burnout risk (Almahamid & Ayoub, 2022). Organizational support, such as flexible arrangements and supervision, further strengthens balance and reduces burnout (Khalid et al., 2024). These findings confirm the critical role of work-life balance in mitigating burnout, particularly in modern work contexts with blurred boundaries (Fauzi et al., 2024).

#### **4.4.6. Mediating Role of Work-life Balance on The Effect of Workload on Burnout**

The findings indicate that work-life balance significantly mediates the relationship between workload and burnout, consistent with the JD-R framework. Excessive workload as a job demand reduces recovery opportunities and disrupts work-life balance, which in turn increases burnout through the health impairment process (Chen et al., 2022). High workload limits psychological detachment and recovery experiences, leading to sustained energy depletion that undermines work-life balance and ultimately contributes to burnout (Wójcik et al., 2022). In contrast, adequate work-life balance supports recovery processes, helping individuals restore energy and reduce the negative effects of job demands.

From the JD-R perspective, work-life balance functions as a resource-like condition that buffers the adverse effects of workload while also acting as a pathway through which demands translate into strain (Debets et al., 2022). This highlights the importance of understanding burnout as a process in which a diminished work-life balance increases vulnerability to emotional exhaustion. Empirical evidence across healthcare and service contexts further supports this mechanism, showing that recovery-related factors and work-life balance play a significant mediating role in

linking job demands to burnout and well-being outcomes (Romero-Carazas et al., 2024).

#### **4.4.7. Mediating Role of Work-life Balance on The Effect of Workload on Burnout**

The findings indicate that work-life balance does not significantly mediate the relationship between social support and burnout, thereby rejecting the proposed hypothesis. This result suggests that the effect of social support on burnout does not operate primarily through work-life balance but rather through alternative mechanisms (Kamboj & Eronimus, 2025). One plausible explanation is a direct buffering effect, whereby social support reduces burnout independently of work-life balance. Supportive interactions may provide immediate emotional relief and stress reduction, creating a direct pathway from social support to lower burnout without requiring changes in work-life balance (Xiao et al., 2023). From a JD-R perspective, this finding highlights that not all resources operate through a single mediating mechanism. Social support, as a relational resource, may influence well-being through direct or alternative pathways rather than through work-life balance, indicating heterogeneity in how job resources function within the model (Alzadjali & Ahmad, 2024).

In line with SET, supportive relationships can directly enhance psychological well-being by fostering trust and relational security, which reduces burnout without necessarily affecting work-life balance (Khan et al., 2022). This explanation is particularly relevant in public sector contexts, where social support is often immediate and emotionally driven rather than structurally embedded. As a result, it may directly improve well-being but have a limited influence on structural aspects such as work-life balance (Kuralová et al., 2024). Empirical evidence also shows mixed results regarding the mediating role of work-life balance, with some studies confirming mediation and others reporting non-significant effects depending on context and measurement (Dousin et al., 2022; Sharma & Tiwari, 2023). These findings contribute to the JD-R literature by emphasizing the heterogeneity of job resources and showing that social support may operate through direct and context-dependent pathways rather than a single mediating mechanism such as work-life balance (Haar & Mowat, 2022).

## **5. Conclusion**

This study clarifies the mechanisms of burnout in the public sector by demonstrating how job demands and job resources interact within the JD-R framework. The findings show that workload significantly increases burnout, both directly and indirectly through work-life balance, confirming the health-impairment process in which excessive demands deplete energy and disrupt recovery. In contrast, social support reduces burnout directly, without a significant mediating role of work-life balance, indicating that its protective effect operates primarily through immediate emotional and relational mechanisms.

Empirically, these results demonstrate that different job resources do not operate through a single pathway, particularly in public sector contexts characterized by high demands and structural constraints. From a theoretical perspective, the study refines the JD-R model by emphasizing the heterogeneity of job resources, in which work-life balance serves as a mediating, resource-like condition linking workload to burnout, while social support functions as a direct buffering resource, thereby providing a more process-oriented and nuanced explanation of burnout development. From a practical perspective, the findings imply that burnout interventions should be designed based on distinct underlying mechanisms.

Workload-related problems require structural approaches such as improving job design, redistributing tasks, and enhancing work flexibility to maintain work-life balance. In contrast, social support should be strengthened through relational and managerial strategies, including supportive leadership, effective communication, and a positive organizational climate. These targeted strategies are essential for improving employee well-being and sustaining organizational performance in the public sector. However, several limitations should be acknowledged, including the use of a single-organization sample, which may limit generalizability; the cross-sectional design, which restricts causal interpretation; and the reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce bias. Therefore, future studies are recommended to adopt longitudinal approaches, incorporate multi-source data, and involve more diverse samples to improve robustness and external validity.

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