

Balancing the Load: How Workload Management Shapes Employee Performance at Igara Tea Factory — A Mixed-Methods Approach

Nabimanya Rhina, Tom Ongesa Nyamboga (PhD), Michael Nyasimi Manyange (PhD)

Department of Business Administration, Kampala International University Western Campus

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ABSTRACT

This study addressed a knowledge gap on how workload management influences employee performance in tea factory settings, where existing literature had largely focused on burnout, occupational stress, or general HRM practices rather than structured workload allocation. The study aimed to examine the effect of workload management on employee performance at Igara Tea Factory. It was anchored on the Job Demands–Resources theory and Goal-Setting theory, which explain how balanced job demands and clear task goals enhance employee outcomes. A descriptive research design supported by a mixed-methods approach was adopted to capture both numerical trends and contextual experiences. The target population comprised 489 employees, including supervisors, clerical staff, casual workers, and support staff. A sample size of 220 respondents was determined using Yamane’s formula, with proportionate stratified random sampling and simple random sampling applied for the quantitative component, while purposive sampling was used to select 19 supervisors for qualitative interviews. Quantitative findings revealed a strong and significant positive relationship between workload management and employee performance ($r = 0.688$, $p < 0.05$), while regression analysis confirmed workload management as a significant predictor ($B = 0.467$, $p = 0.000$). Qualitative findings further indicated that poor workload distribution reduced efficiency and morale, whereas fair task allocation and clear instructions enhanced performance. The study concluded that effective workload management significantly improves employee performance. It is significant to policy and practice by informing structured workload allocation systems and improved HR planning in tea factories. The study contributes to literature by integrating workload management within performance frameworks in agro-industrial contexts and extending application of JD-R and Goal-Setting theories to workload-performance relationships.

Keywords: Workload Management, Employee Performance, Igara Tea Factory

INTRODUCTION

Employee performance in the tea industry plays a decisive role in determining productivity, product quality, and overall organisational competitiveness, particularly in labour-intensive processing environments where efficiency depends heavily on human effort (Omukaga, 2024). Tea factories operate under time-sensitive conditions that require precise coordination of tasks such as plucking, transportation, processing, and packaging, making effective workload management essential for sustaining consistent output (Lewandowski & Walaszczyk, 2019). Workload management shapes how tasks are allocated, balanced, and monitored, influencing employees’ ability to meet performance targets without experiencing excessive fatigue or stress (Nuamah & Mehta, 2020). When workloads are well-structured, employees tend to demonstrate higher efficiency, improved morale, and greater commitment to organisational goals, whereas poorly managed workloads often lead to reduced productivity, errors in processing, and increased absenteeism (Souisa, et al., 2025). In tea-processing contexts such as Igara Tea Factory, aligning workload demands with employee capacity remains a critical factor in enhancing performance outcomes and ensuring sustainable operational success.

Integration of workload management and employee performance in the tea industry centres on aligning task demands with workers’ capacity to achieve optimal output and efficiency. Workload management refers to the systematic planning, allocation, and control of tasks to ensure that employees handle responsibilities within manageable limits, while employee performance denotes the effectiveness, quality, and productivity with which

assigned duties are executed (Giotopoulos et al., 2024; Rambulangi, et al., 2024). In tea-processing environments such as Igara Tea Factory, this integration ensures that labour-intensive activities are distributed in a balanced manner, reducing fatigue and operational errors while enhancing consistency in production. Properly coordinated workloads enable employees to maintain focus, meet processing timelines, and contribute to organisational productivity, whereas imbalance between workload and capacity undermines efficiency and overall performance outcomes.

Prior studies on employee performance in Uganda's tea sector consistently emphasise the role of human resource practices in shaping productivity, though with limited attention to workload dynamics. Empirical evidence from tea factories shows that effective employee management, welfare, and collective engagement significantly improve organisational performance, with strong positive correlations reported in studies at Igara Tea Factory (Kazooba, 2020). Research in other Ugandan tea factories indicates that human resource management practices, ethical behaviour, and employee involvement enhance performance through motivation, supervision, and participation in organisational activities (Mugume 2021). Evidence also shows that factors like teamwork, training, and conflict management contribute to improved productivity, while poor remuneration, low motivation, and weak job security undermine performance and increase turnover in tea-processing environments (Ninsiima, 2022). Despite these contributions, existing studies largely focus on isolated HR factors such as welfare, leadership, training, or conflict management, leaving a critical gap in understanding how workload management—specifically task allocation, work intensity, and balance—directly influences employee performance in tea factories. This gap necessitates a focused investigation into workload management at Igara Tea Factory to provide integrated insights into optimising employee output within labour-intensive production systems.

This study examines how workload management influences employee performance at Igara Tea Factory within a labour-intensive production environment, with a focus on task allocation, work intensity, and workload balance as key determinants of productivity, efficiency, and quality of output. The study generates empirical evidence to guide organisational decision-making and inform policy development by demonstrating how aligning workload demands with employee capacity can enhance performance while reducing fatigue and operational inefficiencies. The findings provide practical value to management in designing effective workload structures that improve employee well-being and sustain consistent production, while offering policymakers insights for developing labour guidelines that promote efficiency, fairness, and sustainable work practices in the tea industry and similar sectors.

Specific objectives

- i. The study evaluates the effect of workload balance on employee performance at Igara Tea Factory.
- ii. The study identifies key enablers and barriers affecting effective workload management and employee performance at Igara Tea Factory.
- iii. The study proposes evidence-based recommendations to improve workload management practices and enhance employee performance at Igara Tea Factory.
- iv. The study explores future directions for strengthening workload management systems to sustain employee performance in tea-processing environments.

Primary research question

How does workload management influence employee performance at Igara Tea Factory?

Null hypothesis

Workload management has no statistically significant effect on employee performance at Igara Tea Factory.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was anchored on two complementary theoretical perspectives that explain the relationship between workload management and employee performance, namely the Job Demands–Resources theory and Goal-Setting theory.

The Job Demands–Resources theory provides a robust foundation for understanding workload management within organisational settings. The theory posits that every job is characterised by demands, such as workload, time pressure, and physical effort, and resources, including support, autonomy, and adequate staffing, which influence employee well-being and performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The theory assumes that excessive job demands, particularly when not balanced by sufficient resources, lead to strain, fatigue, and reduced productivity, while an appropriate balance enhances motivation and efficiency (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Within the context of workload management, the theory explains how task allocation, workload intensity, and balance directly affect employees' ability to perform effectively. When workloads are structured within manageable limits and supported by adequate resources, employees are more likely to sustain high levels of performance, whereas imbalanced workloads result in stress, errors, and decreased output (Bakker et al., 2014). The relevance of this theory to the present study lies in its ability to conceptualise workload management as a dynamic interaction between demands and resources, making it particularly applicable to labour-intensive environments such as Igara Tea Factory, where employees face physically demanding tasks and strict production timelines.

Goal-Setting theory anchors the understanding of employee performance by emphasising the role of clear, specific, and challenging goals in driving individual effort and achievement. The theory posits that employees perform better when they are given well-defined goals, receive feedback, and are motivated to achieve set targets (Locke & Latham, 2002). The theory assumes that goal clarity, commitment, and feedback mechanisms are critical determinants of performance outcomes, as they guide behaviour and enhance focus (Latham & Locke, 2007). In relation to employee performance, the theory explains how structured workload management contributes to clearer task expectations and measurable performance targets, thereby improving efficiency and output quality. When workloads are aligned with achievable goals, employees are better able to concentrate their efforts, maintain motivation, and meet organisational expectations (Locke & Latham, 2019). The theory is relevant to this study because it highlights the importance of aligning workload structures with performance objectives, ensuring that employees at Igara Tea Factory are neither overburdened nor underutilised, but instead operate within clearly defined parameters that promote productivity and consistent performance outcomes.

Empirical Review

Effect of workload management on employee performance

Nanayakkara and Manujaya (2024) set out to examine how workload, work–family conflict, and occupational stress influence employee burnout among machine operators in tea factories in the Galle District, Sri Lanka. The study adopts a quantitative methodology, using a convenience sampling technique to select 240 respondents, of whom 228 provided usable data through structured questionnaires. These tools captured information on the key variables, and the data were analysed using SPSS and Microsoft Excel to establish statistical relationships. The findings reveal that workload and occupational stress are significant predictors of burnout, with higher levels of each leading to increased burnout among employees. Work–family conflict does not demonstrate a significant effect, indicating that job-related factors are more influential than personal-life pressures in this setting. The study concludes that excessive workload and occupational stress are the primary drivers of burnout and emphasises the need for interventions focused on workload reduction and stress management.

In comparison with the current study on the effects of workload management on employee performance, the empirical review provides a strong foundational insight into the negative consequences of poorly managed workload. While Nanayakkara and Manujaya focus on burnout as an outcome, the current study shifts attention to performance outcomes, yet both are interconnected within the Job Demands–Resources theory and Goal-Setting theory. The empirical findings suggest that excessive workload leads to stress and reduced efficiency, which contrasts with the current study's emphasis on structured workload allocation, task completion within

deadlines, alignment of tasks with employee skills, and clear prioritisation. These elements represent effective workload management practices that act as job resources, reducing stress and enhancing work quality. The comparison highlights that when workload is manageable, employees are less likely to experience burnout and more likely to feel motivated and satisfied, thereby improving performance. Therefore, the empirical review supports the current study's proposition that effective workload management reduces stress, improves work quality, and enhances employee motivation and job satisfaction, ultimately leading to better performance outcomes.

Guruge and Ban (2021) examined the impact of occupational stress on employee performance in the plantation industry in Sri Lanka using a quantitative survey design grounded in a positivist and deductive approach. The study sampled 81 employees selected through simple random sampling, and data were analysed statistically to establish the relationship between occupational stress and performance. The findings revealed a strong and significant positive relationship between occupational stress and employee performance ($r = .978$, $p < .01$), suggesting that stress, within this context, functioned as a motivating factor that enhanced performance rather than hindering it.

In comparison, the current study on workload management and employee performance is anchored on the Job Demands–Resources theory and Goal-Setting theory, emphasising that structured workload allocation improves performance by reducing excessive strain and enhancing clarity in task execution. While the empirical study suggests that occupational stress may enhance performance under certain conditions, the current study argues that unmanaged workload increases stress and undermines performance quality. It therefore positions effective workload management—through appropriate task distribution, skill alignment, and clear instructions—as essential for reducing harmful stress and sustaining improved employee motivation, satisfaction, and performance.

Gamage and Wickramaratne (2021) aimed to address the problem of declining worker productivity in Sri Lanka's tea industry by exploring sustainable human resource management practices that could enhance productivity. The study focused on proposing human care practices and knowledge management practices as sustainable HRM strategies, arguing that conventional HRM approaches were insufficient to address productivity challenges. It emphasised improving quality of work life and overall quality of life as key pathways to increasing worker productivity in the plantation sector.

The study adopted a qualitative research design using unstructured, one-on-one interviews with 100 randomly selected tea harvesters from well-performing estates. The responses were thematically organised and validated against existing literature, with the findings interpreted through psychological contract and social exchange theories. The results indicated that human care practices and knowledge management practices significantly contributed to improved quality of work life, which in turn enhanced worker productivity. The study concluded that sustainable HRM practices play a critical role in addressing productivity decline in the tea industry.

In relation to the current study on workload management and employee performance, the empirical review provides an important organisational and human resource perspective. While Gamage and Wickramaratne (2021) emphasised broader HRM strategies such as employee care and knowledge management in improving productivity, the current study focuses more specifically on workload distribution, task allocation, and clarity in job responsibilities as direct drivers of performance. Both studies align in recognising that employee productivity and performance are strongly influenced by working conditions and organisational practices. However, the current study narrows this focus by positioning workload management as a key operational factor that directly affects employee efficiency, motivation, and satisfaction. In contrast, the empirical study adopts a broader sustainability lens, suggesting that improving quality of work life through HRM systems indirectly enhances productivity. Therefore, the current study builds on these findings by demonstrating that effective workload management serves as a more immediate and practical mechanism for translating HRM intentions into improved employee performance outcomes.

Wisudawati and Pratama (2021) examined the effect of employee workload and work stress on performance in the production process of a palm oil mill (PT X) in Indonesia. The study focused on industrial working conditions characterised by prolonged standing, repetitive tasks, exposure to machine noise, and frequent overtime, all of

which contributed to workload and stress levels. A quantitative research design was adopted, and multiple linear regression analysis was applied using data from 32 respondents drawn from the production workforce.

The results showed that workload and work stress jointly had a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Individually, workload demonstrated a positive and significant influence on performance, while work stress did not show a significant effect. This indicated that workload was the more influential determinant of performance in this context, whereas stress alone had limited explanatory power.

In relation to the current study on workload management and employee performance, the empirical findings reinforce the importance of workload as a central performance driver. While Wisudawati and Pratama (2021) treated workload as an influencing factor, the current study extends this perspective by focusing on how workload is managed within organisations. Grounded in the Job Demands–Resources theory and Goal-Setting theory, the current study emphasises that performance improves when workload is properly distributed, aligned with employee skills, and supported by clear instructions and task prioritisation. Unlike the empirical study, which focuses on the presence of workload, the current study conceptualises workload management as a structured organisational practice that regulates job demands, reduces unnecessary strain, and enhances motivation, job satisfaction, and work quality.

Koech (2022) examined the challenges of staff management and operational practices in the tea sector in Kenya during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study focused on how performance appraisal, staff motivation, and flexible working time influenced organisational outcomes in Kenya Tea Development Agency companies in Kericho County. It was guided by Equity Theory, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, and Scientific Management Theory, and employed a descriptive survey research design targeting management employees in 12 KTDA companies. From a population of 456 employees, a sample of 216 respondents was selected using simple random sampling, and data were collected using Likert-scale questionnaires.

The findings from Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis indicated that performance appraisal, staff motivation, and flexible working time collectively explained 51.4% of variations in tea sector outcomes, with a statistically significant relationship ($p = .001$). This suggested that effective staff management practices played a substantial role in shaping operational performance during periods of disruption such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

In relation to the current study on workload management and employee performance, the empirical review provides a broader organisational context for understanding how management practices influence performance outcomes. While Koech (2022) focused on staff motivation, appraisal systems, and flexible work arrangements, the current study narrows its focus to workload management as a direct determinant of employee performance. However, both studies align in recognising that organisational systems significantly shape employee output. The empirical findings imply that structured management practices improve performance, which supports the current study's argument that effective workload distribution, clear task assignment, and appropriate prioritisation enhance employee performance. Anchored in the Job Demands–Resources theory and Goal-Setting theory, the current study extends this understanding by showing that workload management functions as a critical operational mechanism that translates broader HRM practices into improved motivation, reduced strain, and higher productivity.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design

The current study adopted a descriptive research design to examine the relationship between workload management and employee performance. This design was appropriate as it allowed the study to describe existing workplace conditions and relationships between variables without manipulation, ensuring an accurate reflection of real organisational practices (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). It facilitated the assessment of how workload distribution, task allocation, and clarity of instructions relate to employee performance within natural work settings.

A mixed research approach was also employed, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative component enabled statistical analysis of the relationship between workload management and performance, while the qualitative component provided contextual understanding of employee experiences and perceptions. This integration enhanced the validity and depth of findings, consistent with the pragmatist paradigm that supports methodological triangulation for comprehensive analysis of complex phenomena (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The approach strengthened interpretation by linking measurable outcomes with lived workplace experiences.

Target population and sample size

The study targeted a total population of 489 employees at Igara Tea Factory to ensure a comprehensive assessment of workload management and employee performance across all functional levels as shown in Table 1. The population was categorised into four groups: 42 supervisors responsible for operational oversight and team coordination, 80 clerical staff handling administrative and office duties, 309 casual workers engaged in core production activities within the tea fields and processing units, and 58 support staff providing essential services such as maintenance, security, and logistics. This categorisation ensured representation of all key operational and support functions within the factory.

The inclusion criteria comprised all employees actively working at Igara Tea Factory during the data collection period, provided they had a minimum continuous service period of six months. This requirement ensured that participants had adequate exposure to workload management practices, time management systems, and workplace support structures. The exclusion criteria eliminated temporary or contract employees with less than six months of service due to insufficient familiarity with organisational systems and practices under investigation.

The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations, with a 5% margin of error applied to the total population of 489 employees. This produced a sample size of 220 respondents. Proportional allocation was then used to distribute the sample across categories to ensure representativeness: 19 supervisors, 36 clerical staff, 139 casual workers, and 26 support staff. This approach ensured that each employee group was adequately represented in relation to its size within the population.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = Sample size

N = Population size (489)

e = Margin of error (0.05)

Therefore: n = $\frac{489}{1 + 489(5\%)^2}$

$$\begin{aligned} &= \frac{489}{2.2225} \\ &= 220 \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the sample size was 220 respondents

Table 1: Target Population & Sample Size Determination

Category	Target Population	Sample size
Supervisors	42	19
Clerical Staff	80	36
Casual Workers	309	139
Support Staff	58	26
Total	489	220

Source: Researcher 2026

The study employed a multistage sampling technique to select respondents from the target population at Igara Tea Factory for the quantitative component. In the first stage, the population was stratified into four distinct groups: supervisors, clerical staff, casual workers, and support staff. This stratification ensured that all key employee categories were adequately represented in the sample. In the second stage, proportionate sampling was used to determine the number of respondents drawn from each stratum based on their relative population sizes, ensuring fairness and representativeness across groups. In the final stage, simple random sampling was applied within each stratum to select individual participants. This approach reduced sampling bias and enhanced the representativeness and reliability of the quantitative findings.

For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was used to select key informants, particularly supervisors. These participants were intentionally chosen due to their direct involvement in overseeing operations and their in-depth knowledge of workload management, time management, social support systems, and employee performance. This method ensured that the qualitative data was rich, focused, and relevant to the study objectives. The combination of multistage probability sampling for the quantitative aspect and purposive sampling for the qualitative aspect strengthened the overall study by integrating broad representativeness with detailed, experience-based insights.

Research instruments

The study collected quantitative data using self-administered questionnaires consisting of closed-ended questions structured on a five-point Likert scale. This instrument was appropriate because it allowed respondents to indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement with statements related to workload management and employee performance. The use of self-administration ensured that respondents completed the questionnaires at their convenience, reducing interviewer bias and encouraging honest responses. The Likert scale format facilitated quantification of perceptions, making it suitable for statistical analysis of relationships between variables such as workload distribution, task clarity, and employee performance outcomes.

For the qualitative component, an unstructured interview guide with open-ended questions was used to collect data from supervisors. This approach enabled respondents to freely express their experiences and insights regarding workload management practices, time allocation, and employee performance without being restricted by predefined response options. The flexibility of unstructured interviews allowed for deeper exploration of emerging issues and provided rich contextual information that complemented the quantitative findings. Targeting supervisors ensured that the data reflected informed perspectives on operational and managerial practices within the factory.

The combination of self-administered questionnaires and unstructured interviews strengthened the study by integrating structured numerical data with detailed qualitative insights. This methodological triangulation improved the depth and validity of the findings, as quantitative results provided measurable relationships while

qualitative responses offered explanations for observed patterns in workload management and employee performance.

Data collection procedure

The data collection process began with obtaining permission from the management of Igara Tea Factory to conduct the study. After approval, the researcher personally administered the data collection instruments to ensure direct engagement with respondents and maintain control over the process. This also helped to clarify any questions raised by participants and ensured consistency in how the instruments were presented.

For the quantitative component, self-administered questionnaires were distributed to selected respondents across the different employee categories. Participants were given adequate time to complete the five-point Likert scale questions independently and return them to the researcher upon completion. This approach ensured privacy, reduced influence from external parties, and improved the accuracy of responses.

For the qualitative component, the researcher conducted unstructured interviews with selected supervisors using an open-ended interview guide. These interviews were carried out face-to-face, allowing participants to provide detailed explanations of their experiences with workload management and employee performance. The researcher recorded responses during the interviews to ensure that all relevant information was captured accurately.

After data collection, all completed questionnaires and interview responses were checked for completeness and consistency before analysis. This systematic procedure ensured data quality, minimized errors, and maintained the integrity of both quantitative and qualitative information used in the study.

Data analysis and presentation

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. Descriptive statistics were first used to summarise respondents' characteristics and distribution of responses on workload management and employee performance variables. Correlation analysis was then applied to determine the strength and direction of relationships between the study variables. Regression analysis was used to examine the extent to which workload management predicted employee performance. All statistical tests were conducted at a 0.05 significance level, and the null hypotheses were tested based on p-values to determine whether to reject or fail to reject them.

Qualitative data obtained from unstructured interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. The process involved organising responses into meaningful patterns and identifying recurring themes related to workload management practices and employee performance. These themes were then interpreted to provide contextual explanations for the quantitative findings. This approach enabled the study to integrate numerical results with detailed narrative insights, enhancing the overall understanding of the relationship between workload management and employee performance.

Table 2: Data Analysis Methods

Data Type	Analysis Technique	Purpose
Quantitative	Descriptive statistics	To summarise respondents' characteristics and distribution of responses on workload management and employee performance
Quantitative	Correlation analysis	To determine the strength and direction of the relationship between workload management and employee performance
Quantitative	Regression analysis	To examine the extent to which workload management predicts employee performance

Quantitative	Hypothesis testing (0.05 significance level)	To test null hypotheses and determine statistical significance of relationships
Qualitative	Thematic analysis	To identify, organise, and interpret patterns and themes from interview data on workload management and performance

Source: Researcher, 2026

Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical principles to ensure the protection of participants and the integrity of the research process. Prior to data collection, formal permission was obtained from the management of Igara Tea Factory to allow access to employees and organisational information. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to decline or withdraw at any stage without any consequences.

Informed consent was secured from all participants before data collection commenced, with clear explanations provided regarding the purpose of the study and how the data would be used. Confidentiality was strictly maintained by ensuring that no personal identifiers were included in the questionnaires or interview records, and all responses were treated anonymously.

The study also ensured data privacy by securely storing completed questionnaires and interview notes, with access limited solely to the researcher. Additionally, the findings were reported in aggregated form to prevent identification of individual respondents or their responses. These measures ensured adherence to ethical standards and promoted honesty, trust, and accuracy throughout the research process.

RESULTS

Response Rate

The study targeted 220 respondents in total, consisting of 19 supervisors who were interviewed and 201 employees who were administered questionnaires. Out of the 201 questionnaires distributed, 199 were fully completed and returned, resulting in a response rate of 99.0%. This rate is considered excellent in social science research, as a response rate above 80% is generally regarded as very good for ensuring reliable and valid findings (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). The high response rate reduced the likelihood of non-response bias and strengthened the credibility, reliability, and representativeness of the study results.

Table 3: Response Rate

Category	Targeted Respondents	Actual Responses	Response Rate (%)	Remarks
Employees (Questionnaire)	201	199	99.0	Excellent response rate; exceeds 80% benchmark (Baruch & Holtom, 2008); enhances reliability and validity
Supervisors (Interview)	19	19	100.0	Full participation; strengthens qualitative depth
Total	220	218	99.1	High overall participation enhances representativeness

Source: Primary Data, 2026

Descriptive Analysis of Workload Management and Employee Performance

The descriptive analysis examined how workload management influences employee performance at Igara Tea Factory using eight Likert-scale items. Responses were analysed using frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation to assess both the central tendency and variability of perceptions among employees. The findings presented in Table 4 indicate generally high levels of agreement that effective workload management positively influences performance outcomes.

The results show consistently high mean scores across all items, ranging from 4.04 to 4.67, with an overall mean of 4.31 and a standard deviation of 0.75. This indicates that respondents generally agreed that workload management practices such as proper task allocation, consideration of employee skills, clear instructions, and balanced workload distribution contribute positively to employee performance. The highest mean ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 0.472$) was recorded for proper workload distribution improving job performance, showing strong consensus among respondents. Similarly, recognition of employees' skills in task assignment ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 0.511$) also reflected strong agreement, indicating effective alignment of tasks with employee competencies.

Other indicators such as timely completion of tasks ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.727$), clarity of instructions ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.877$), and task allocation based on capacity ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.589$) further confirmed that structured workload management enhances performance efficiency. In addition, respondents agreed that effective workload management reduces stress and improves work quality ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.838$) and increases motivation and job satisfaction ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.841$), reinforcing its role in improving both psychological and performance outcomes.

However, the item on overtime and taking work home recorded a relatively lower mean ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 1.141$), indicating some variation in employee experiences. This suggests that while workload management is generally effective, a proportion of employees still experience periods of excessive workload that extend beyond normal working hours.

In summary, the descriptive findings demonstrate that employees perceive workload management as a strong determinant of their performance. The relatively low standard deviation values across most items indicate consistency in responses, confirming a shared perception among employees that effective workload distribution, clear instructions, and skill-based task allocation enhance productivity, motivation, and job satisfaction.

Table 4: Workload Management and Employee Performance at Igara Tea Factory

Statement	SA	A	NS	D	SD	Mean	S.D
I am able to complete assigned tasks within the required deadlines	81 (40.7%)	100 (50.3%)	14 (7.0%)	2 (1.0%)	2 (1.0%)	4.29	0.727
My skills and experience are considered when assigning work tasks	100 (50.3%)	98 (49.2%)	1 (0.5%)	0	0	4.50	0.511
Proper workload distribution at Igara Tea improves job performance	133 (66.8%)	66 (33.2%)	0	0	0	4.67	0.472
I often have to take work home or work overtime due to workload	79 (39.7%)	87 (43.7%)	11 (5.5%)	6 (3.0%)	16 (8.0%)	4.04	1.141
I receive clear instructions that help me prioritize my tasks effectively	80 (40.2%)	99 (49.7%)	11 (5.5%)	2 (1.0%)	7 (3.5%)	4.22	0.877
Tasks are assigned based on staff capacity and specialization	42 (21.1%)	146 (73.4%)	8 (4.0%)	1 (0.5%)	2 (1.0%)	4.13	0.589

Effective workload management reduces stress and improves work quality	88 (44.2%)	94 (47.2%)	10 (5.0%)	1 (0.5%)	6 (3.0%)	4.29	0.838
When workload is manageable, I feel more motivated and satisfied with my job	90 (45.2%)	92 (46.2%)	10 (5.0%)	1 (0.5%)	6 (3.0%)	4.30	0.841
Overall Mean and SD						4.31	0.75

Source: Primary Data, 2026

Key: SA = Strongly Agree (5), A = Agree (4), NS = Not Sure (3), D = Disagree (2), SD = Strongly Disagree (1)

Qualitative Data Analysis

To examine workload management and its influence on employee performance at Igara Tea Factory, interviews were conducted with 19 supervisors. The responses were analysed thematically, and the findings were organised under the theme: Workload Management and Employee Performance.

How does Workload Management affect Employee Performance?

The findings indicated that supervisors perceived workload levels as generally moderate to heavy, particularly during peak production periods. Most supervisors (14 out of 19) reported that employees were frequently assigned multiple tasks within a single shift, which affected task execution and efficiency. This was reflected in the statement that “Employees are often assigned multiple tasks per shift, especially during peak production, which sometimes makes it challenging to meet targets efficiently.” Similarly, another supervisor noted that “Workload increases when demand is high, and workers are expected to multitask, which can be overwhelming.” These responses suggested that workload intensity was a routine feature of operations.

In relation to performance outcomes, the majority of supervisors (15 out of 19) indicated that heavy or uneven workload distribution reduced employee efficiency and accuracy. They reported that excessive workload contributed to fatigue and errors, as captured in the statement that “When workers are overloaded, they become stressed and make mistakes, which affects quality and output.” Another supervisor added that “Too much work within a short time lowers concentration and reduces overall performance.” This highlighted that workload imbalance negatively affected work quality and productivity.

Supervisors further observed that workload management had a direct effect on employee morale and motivation. Nearly all respondents (17 out of 19) reported that poorly distributed workload reduced commitment and engagement among employees. One supervisor stated that “Heavy workload discourages workers; they feel tired and unappreciated, which lowers morale,” while another noted that “When tasks are not fairly distributed, some employees feel overburdened while others are less engaged.” These responses indicated that perceived fairness in workload allocation was important for maintaining motivation.

Regarding workload management practices, most departments (12 out of 19) relied on informal approaches such as daily task allocation, shift rotation, and supervisory discretion. One supervisor explained, “We try to rotate tasks fairly, but sometimes it depends on who is present and skilled for the duty,” while another stated, “There is no formal system; supervisors decide based on experience and urgency of tasks.” Only a few supervisors (7 out of 19) reported limited use of structured tools such as duty rosters, although these were inconsistently applied.

The findings indicated a strong consensus among supervisors that workload management directly influenced employee performance. Supervisors consistently linked poorly managed workload with reduced efficiency, increased errors, and lower motivation, while highlighting the need for more structured and balanced workload allocation practices to improve performance outcomes.

Triangulation of Findings (Quantitative and Qualitative Results)

The triangulation compared findings from descriptive statistics and qualitative interviews to establish areas of convergence and divergence regarding workload management and employee performance at Igara Tea Factory.

Convergence of Findings

Both quantitative and qualitative results consistently indicated that workload management positively influences employee performance when it is properly structured. The descriptive findings showed high mean scores (overall mean = 4.31), suggesting strong agreement that proper workload distribution, clear instructions, and alignment of tasks with employee skills enhance performance, motivation, and job satisfaction. Similarly, supervisors reported that fair task allocation and clear scheduling improved efficiency and reduced errors. Both data sets also agreed that effective workload management reduces stress and improves productivity, reinforcing its importance as a performance determinant.

Divergence of Findings

A key divergence emerged regarding workload intensity and overtime. While the quantitative results generally indicated agreement that workload is manageable and positively managed, the qualitative findings revealed that employees often experience moderate to heavy workloads, especially during peak production periods. Supervisors reported frequent multitasking and overtime, which was not strongly reflected as a major concern in the questionnaire responses. This suggests that while employees may perceive workload management positively in structured responses, practical experiences still include periods of overload and pressure.

Analytical Remarks

The convergence strengthens the reliability of the findings, confirming that workload management is a critical driver of employee performance. However, the divergence highlights a gap between perceived adequacy of workload systems and actual operational pressures experienced during peak periods. This implies that while workload management practices exist, their effectiveness may vary depending on production demands. It also suggests that structured systems may not be fully consistent in practice, particularly during high-demand periods.

Table 5: Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings on Workload Management

Aspect	Quantitative Findings (Descriptive)	Qualitative Findings (Supervisors)	Convergence / Divergence	Interpretation
Workload distribution	High agreement that proper distribution improves performance (M = 4.67)	Supervisors confirmed fair allocation improves efficiency	Convergence	Workload distribution is a key performance driver
Task allocation based on skills	Strong agreement (M = 4.50) that skills are considered	Supervisors confirmed task assignment based on ability	Convergence	Skill-based allocation enhances performance
Workload intensity	Moderate agreement that workload is manageable (M = 4.04–4.31)	Supervisors reported heavy workload and multitasking during peak periods	Divergence	Employees perceive workload as manageable, but supervisors report overload in practice

Productivity and performance	High agreement that workload improves performance	Supervisors linked poor workload balance to reduced efficiency and errors	Convergence	Workload management directly affects productivity
Stress and motivation	High agreement that manageable workload improves motivation	Supervisors observed stress and low morale under heavy workload	Convergence	Workload influences psychological outcomes and motivation
Workload management systems	Agreement that instructions and systems exist (M = 4.22)	Supervisors reported mainly informal systems	Partial divergence	Formal systems exist but are inconsistently applied

Source: Field Data, 2026

Inferential Statistics: Correlation Analysis of Workload Management and Employee Performance

The inferential analysis examined the relationship between workload management and employee performance using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r). The analysis was conducted at a 0.05 level of significance using 199 valid responses. The null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between workload management and employee performance was tested to determine whether a statistical relationship existed between the variables.

Table 6: Pearson Correlation Analysis of Workload Management and Employee Performance

Variables	Workload Management	Employee Performance
Workload Management	Pearson Correlation = 1	$r = .688^{**}$
	Sig. (2-tailed) = —	$p = .000$
	N = 199	N = 199
Employee Performance	$r = .688^{**}$	Pearson Correlation = 1
	$p = .000$	Sig. (2-tailed) = —
	N = 199	N = 199

Source: Primary Data, 2026

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results indicate a strong positive relationship between workload management and employee performance ($r = 0.688$, $p = 0.000$). This suggests that improvements in workload management practices such as balanced task allocation, clear instructions, and manageable responsibilities are associated with higher levels of employee performance. The positive coefficient implies that as workload management improves, employee performance also increases in a consistent manner.

Since the p -value (0.000) is less than 0.05, the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming that workload management has a significant effect on employee performance at Igara Tea Factory.

Inferential Statistics: ANOVA Analysis of Workload Management and Employee Performance

The ANOVA test was conducted to determine the overall significance of the regression model and the extent to which workload management, alongside other variables, explains variations in employee performance at Igara Tea Factory. The analysis assessed whether the combined predictors significantly influenced the dependent variable.

Table 4.7: ANOVA for Workload Management and Employee Performance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	6.597	3	2.199	60.418	.000
Residual	7.097	195	0.036		
Total	13.694	198			

Predictors: Workload Management

Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

Source: Primary Data, 2026

The results show that the regression model is statistically significant, with an F-value of 60.418 and a significance level of $p = 0.000$, which is below the 0.05 threshold. This indicates that workload management, together with the other predictors, significantly explains variations in employee performance. Specifically, workload management contributes meaningfully to the model's predictive power, confirming that it plays a key role in influencing employee performance outcomes. The sum of squares for regression (6.597) represents the variation in employee performance explained by the model, while the residual sum of squares (7.097) reflects unexplained variation. The relatively higher explanatory value of the regression component demonstrates that the model has strong predictive capacity. The high F-statistic further confirms that the variation in employee performance explained by workload management and the other predictors is significantly greater than the unexplained variation. This validates the model's usefulness in explaining how workload management contributes to employee performance. In conclusion, the ANOVA results confirm that workload management is a significant predictor within the regression model, and the model as a whole is statistically valid in explaining employee performance at Igara Tea Factory.

Regression Coefficients Analysis of Workload Management and Employee Performance

The coefficients analysis was conducted to determine the specific contribution of workload management to employee performance within the regression model. The results show the direction, magnitude, and significance of the relationship between workload management and employee performance.

Table 8: Regression Coefficients for Workload Management and Employee Performance

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	t-value	Sig.
(Constant)	2.296	0.365	—	6.290	.000
Workload Management	0.467	0.035	0.687	13.251	.000

Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

Source: Primary Data, 2026

The results indicate that workload management has a positive and statistically significant effect on employee performance ($B = 0.467$, $p = 0.000$). This implies that a one-unit improvement in workload management leads to a 0.467 increase in employee performance, holding other factors constant. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.687$) further confirms that workload management is a strong predictor of employee performance, contributing the highest explanatory power among the variables in the model.

The high t-value (13.251) and significance level ($p = 0.000$) confirm that the relationship between workload management and employee performance is statistically robust. This demonstrates that effective workload distribution, task allocation, and clarity in responsibilities significantly enhance employee performance at Igara Tea Factory.

Hypothesis Testing: Effect of Workload Management on Employee Performance

Null Hypothesis (H_{01})

Workload management has no significant effect on the performance of employees at Igara Tea Factory in Uganda.

Decision Criteria

The hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule stated that the null hypothesis would be rejected if the p-value was less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), and accepted if the p-value was greater than 0.05.

Findings and Decision

The regression results revealed that workload management had a statistically significant positive effect on employee performance ($t = 13.251$, $p = 0.000$). Since the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) was rejected.

The coefficient results further indicated that workload management positively influenced employee performance ($B = 0.467$, $\beta = 0.687$), meaning that a one-unit improvement in workload management led to a 0.467 increase in employee performance, holding other variables constant. The strong t-value confirms that this relationship is statistically robust and not due to chance.

Interpretation of the Findings

The results demonstrated that effective workload management significantly enhances employee performance at Igara Tea Factory. Proper task allocation, balanced workload distribution, and clear role definition were shown to improve employee focus, reduce work pressure, and increase productivity. These findings suggested that workload management is a key determinant of performance and plays a central role in improving organisational efficiency.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data consistently indicated that workload management has a significant and positive effect on employee performance at Igara Tea Factory. The regression results confirmed a strong and statistically significant relationship ($B = 0.467$, $p = 0.000$), while the correlation analysis also revealed a strong positive association ($r = 0.688$). Similarly, the qualitative findings from supervisors showed that effective workload allocation improves efficiency, reduces errors, and enhances employee motivation. However, they also revealed instances of heavy workload and multitasking during peak production, suggesting that workload management practices are not always consistently implemented.

These findings concur with Wisudawati and Pratama (2021), who established that workload significantly influences employee performance in a production environment, particularly when tasks are structured and well-

distributed. The current study also aligns with Nanayakkara and Manujaya (2024), who found that workload is a major determinant of employee outcomes, although their study focused more on burnout as an outcome variable. Similarly, Gamage and Wickramaratne (2021) support the present findings by emphasising that improved work conditions and structured HR practices enhance productivity, which corresponds with effective workload management in the current study. However, the findings partially contradict Guruge and Ban (2021), who reported a positive relationship between occupational stress and employee performance, suggesting that stress may enhance performance under certain conditions. In contrast, the current study and qualitative findings indicate that excessive workload and stress are generally associated with reduced efficiency and lower morale, particularly when workload is not properly managed.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings strongly support the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory. The study demonstrated that excessive workload represents a job demand that can lead to strain and reduced performance when not properly managed, while effective workload allocation functions as a job resource that enhances motivation, reduces stress, and improves performance outcomes. This aligns with the JD-R proposition that employee performance is optimised when job demands are balanced with adequate resources.

The findings also align with Goal-Setting Theory, which emphasises that clear, specific, and achievable goals enhance employee performance. The qualitative results showed that clear instructions and structured task allocation improve prioritisation and efficiency, while the quantitative findings confirmed that employees perform better when workload is well organised and manageable. Conversely, poorly defined or excessive workload undermines focus and reduces performance effectiveness.

In summary, the convergence of both data sets and supporting literature confirms that workload management is a critical determinant of employee performance. Where workload is properly structured and aligned with employee capacity, performance improves significantly; however, inconsistencies in workload distribution can lead to stress, reduced morale, and inefficiency, reinforcing the importance of systematic workload management practices within organisational settings.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study demonstrate that workload management is a significant and positive determinant of employee performance at Igara Tea Factory. Both quantitative and qualitative results consistently show that when workload is properly distributed, aligned with employee skills, and supported by clear task instructions, employee performance improves in terms of efficiency, productivity, and job satisfaction. The statistical evidence confirmed a strong and significant relationship between workload management and performance, while qualitative insights reinforced that effective task allocation reduces errors, enhances focus, and improves employee motivation.

The study also concludes that although workload management practices exist within the factory, their effectiveness is not always consistent, particularly during peak production periods where employees experience increased multitasking and occasional overload. This indicates that while the system has positive effects, gaps in implementation still affect optimal performance outcomes.

Grounded in the Job Demands–Resources theory and Goal-Setting theory, the study concludes that workload management functions as a critical organisational resource that regulates job demands and supports employee goal achievement. When effectively implemented, it reduces stress, improves clarity in task execution, and enhances overall productivity. Therefore, strengthening workload management systems is essential for sustaining high employee performance and improving organisational efficiency at Igara Tea Factory.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, several actionable recommendations are proposed to improve workload management and enhance employee performance at Igara Tea Factory.

The management of Igara Tea Factory should strengthen workload planning systems by introducing formal and structured task allocation mechanisms. This includes developing clear job schedules, workload distribution frameworks, and daily task monitoring tools to ensure that work is evenly shared among employees. Particular attention should be given to peak production periods where overload and multitasking were reported, in order to prevent fatigue, errors, and reduced productivity.

Human resource management should ensure that task assignment is consistently aligned with employees' skills, experience, and capacity. Regular workload assessments should be conducted to match employees with appropriate responsibilities, reducing inefficiencies caused by misallocation of tasks. In addition, supervisors should be trained in workload planning and employee capacity assessment to improve fairness and effectiveness in task distribution.

At a policy level, the factory management and relevant labour authorities should consider establishing formal workload management guidelines within the tea sector. These policies should define acceptable workload limits, regulate overtime practices, and promote balanced work distribution to safeguard employee well-being and productivity. Such guidelines would also support compliance with occupational health and safety standards.

Supervisors should adopt more structured monitoring and communication systems to ensure clarity of instructions and effective prioritisation of tasks. Regular feedback mechanisms should be introduced to identify workload challenges early and allow timely adjustments.

Finally, employees should be involved in workload planning processes through consultation and feedback systems. This participatory approach would improve transparency, enhance job satisfaction, and ensure that workload management practices reflect actual operational conditions, ultimately improving both motivation and performance.

Directions for Future Research

The findings of this study provide a basis for several directions for future research on workload management and employee performance in tea factories and similar industrial settings.

Future studies should examine additional organisational factors that may interact with workload management to influence employee performance. Variables such as leadership style, organisational culture, employee engagement, and reward systems could be incorporated to provide a more comprehensive understanding of performance determinants beyond workload alone.

Further research should also consider employing longitudinal designs to examine how changes in workload management practices over time affect employee performance. This would help establish causality more clearly and capture seasonal variations in workload, particularly in agricultural and production-based industries where peak periods significantly influence employee workload.

Subsequent studies may expand the scope beyond Igara Tea Factory to include multiple tea factories or other agro-processing industries. This would enhance the generalisability of findings and allow for comparative analysis across different organisational contexts and management systems.

In addition, future research could adopt purely qualitative or fully mixed-method comparative designs to explore deeper employee experiences and perceptions of workload management. This would provide richer insights into how employees interpret workload fairness, task allocation, and stress at the operational level.

Lastly, future studies should explore moderating and mediating effects, such as job stress, employee motivation, or job satisfaction, to better understand the mechanisms through which workload management influences performance outcomes.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of the study was its cross-sectional design, which captured data at a single point in time. This limited the ability to establish causal relationships between workload management and employee performance or to observe changes in perceptions and performance over time, particularly during varying production cycles such as peak and off-peak periods.

Another limitation was the reliance on self-reported data from questionnaires and interviews, which may have introduced response bias. Employees and supervisors might have provided socially desirable answers or subjective perceptions that do not fully reflect actual workplace practices or performance levels. This may affect the objectivity of some findings despite efforts to ensure confidentiality and honest responses.

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