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### Work stress management model through digital humor

*Modelo de gestión para el estrés laboral a través del humor digital*

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#### ABSTRACT

This study aims to manage stress through digital humor in an effort to improve the quality of work life. The research method uses a quantitative approach. Respondents are members of the WhatsApp Indonesian Lecturer Community group with a total of 120 people. The work stress that a teacher feels is quite high, that is, when a teacher is more intense in the use of humor in digital media, in the middle of his work schedule, the work stress that he feels will actually increase, then the perceived quality of work life will actually decrease. But in this study it was not possible to verify that the work stress variable is significantly related to the influence of digital humor on the quality of work life.

**Keywords:** Digital humor, quality work life, work Stress.

#### RESUMEN

Este estudio tiene como objetivo gestionar el estrés a través del humor digital en un esfuerzo por mejorar la calidad de vida laboral. El método de investigación utiliza un enfoque cuantitativo. Los encuestados son miembros del grupo WhatsApp Indonesian Lecturer Community con un total de 120 personas. El estrés laboral que siente un profesor es bastante alto, es decir, un profesor cuando es más intenso en la utilización del humor en los medios digitales, en medio de su horario de trabajo, el estrés laboral que se siente en realidad aumentará, entonces la calidad de vida laboral percibida realmente disminuirá. Pero en este estudio no se pudo comprobar que la variable de estrés laboral este relacionada significativamente con la influencia del humor digital en la calidad de vida laboral.

**Palabras clave:** Calidad de vida laboral, estrés laboral, humor digital.

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## INTRODUCTION

Human Resources in the world of education are also required to give their best performance, one of which is the world of education at the tertiary level where the teaching staff, namely lecturers, always interacts with the state of their work, both in internal and external tasks such as the wider community, government and other task activities (Budawati, 2016).

The hefty demands of the Lecturer task can cause stress if they are unable to adapt between desires and existing realities, both inside and outside of themselves. All forms of stress are basically caused by a lack of understanding of human's own limitations. It is this inability to fight against limitations that creates frustration, conflict, anxiety and guilt. Stress is a condition of tension that creates physical balance, which affects emotions, thought processes and the condition of an employee. Too much stress can threaten a person's ability to cope with the environment. As a result, employees develop various kinds of stress symptoms that can interfere with their work performance (Budawati, 2016).

The perception that arises about every task that is accepted and that must be done is that the task is very heavy; lack of the resources needed to carry out the assigned duties and responsibilities; or do not have enough ability to be able to achieve the expected results. When such feelings arise in a person, it can be said that the person is experiencing work stress.

Various attempts were made to be able to manage, reduce or avoid stress, one of which is by enjoying humor (Reyes, 2012). The perception that appears every time you hear the term humor cannot be separated from something that is considered funny, fun, and entertaining. Besides having these characteristics, humor also actually has a positive impact, which is able to encourage the emergence of positive emotions (Collum et al., 2011) and improve human health (Samson et al., 2008).

Torreta (2014) states that humor is mechanism coping a powerful to reduce work stress. With regard to the relationship between humor and job stress, Collum et al. (2011) in their research found that the use of comedy videos that contain humor can actually reduce levels of anxiety and stress in workers. Wijaya (2017) found specifically that superiority and self-defeating humor actually increase stress, while humor affiliative can reduce it.

Along with the development of communication and information technology, then humor that was previously spread through conventional means, such as with television intermediaries, in stage shows, or in forums that are formal or informal, so now humor can also be disseminated through the media on line. The digital media makes it easier for each individual to spread and accept humor in various forms, both in the form of interactive humor, funny photos, manipulations, phanimation, celebrity soundboards, and PowerPoint humor (Shifman, 2007).

WhatsApp is one of the media online that is widely used by people to communicate and interact with one another in the digital world. In practice, the use of WhatsApp is not only for non-formal social communication, but also for work purposes. On the one hand, the existence of WhatsApp encourages work-related communication to be more effective and efficient, but on the other hand there is also a negative impact that is felt, where delegation of tasks or work-related conversations is carried out without knowing the time. This phenomenon is also experienced by lecturers who are members of the group WhatsApp Indonesian Lecturers Community.

When this happens continuously, the lecturers feel that they don't have enough time to rest and be free from various work demands. Aware of this, the lecturers who are members of the group WhatsApp Indonesian Lecturer Community also try to reduce the work pressure that is felt by often sharing funny content in the group WhatsApp. Thus, WhatsApp is not only used for the sake of social communication and work, but also as a place to share humor.

The relationship between digital humor and work stress is important to be re-examined considering work stress has a relationship with quality of work life (QWL) (Ramya & Poornachandran, 2017) and work stress can be influenced by humor (Collum et al., 2011; Wijaya, 2017). QWL is defined by Kossen (1986) as thoughts

or opinions held by employees regarding the state of the work environment and the experience gained while carrying out work in a company.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Symbolic Interaction**

Theory of symbolic interaction was developed based on the thought of George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) into two streams, namely the flow of Chicago and Iowa. The Chicago school with its pioneer Herbert Blumer (1962) uses a qualitative approach to understand the concept of social interaction with human main actors who have positive characteristics in the form of the ability to innovate, think and act creatively, and be able to adapt to uncertain circumstances. Humans are part of a society that is having a social process (Ahmadi, 2005).

The second stream, namely Iowa with its pioneer Manford Kuhn emphasizes the position of the individual as the main capital for social interaction through his tendency to think, behave, and behave based on self-concept. In other words, interaction between individuals is a form of self-concept expression to achieve a social goal through representative symbols of this self-concept (Ahmadi, 2005).

Symbolic interaction theory is formed by three basic concepts, namely Mind, Self, and Society (Ardianto et al., 2007).

Mind if translated freely means mind, is part of individuals who experience development along with the increased social interaction through. Thoughts are the result of social interaction, which allows individuals to have various responses to the symbols they receive, and is able to become the basis for the creation of symbols by the individual.

Self is a concept that is a fundamental differentiator between humans and animals. The concept of self refers to the ability of humans to control and evaluate their thoughts, attitudes and behavior. Based on this concept, the individual will be able to choose the symbols that are considered the most appropriate to represent himself, as well as be able to interpret the symbols that are accepted in the social interactions that they pass.

Society is a concept that has a broad scope and is the basis for the concept of mind and self.

### **Job Stress**

Robbins & Judge (2015) states that work stress arises as a result of conflicts between individuals, both physically and psychologically, with conditions or problems encountered in carrying out work activities. The situation or problem can be related to work demands, opportunities that must be utilized, or related to the condition of resources needed to carry out productive activities. Gibson et al. (1993) states the same thing, that work stress is a form of reaction to the individual that arises because of demands from the work environment that do not have compatibility with the physical or mental capabilities of the individual.

Mangkunegara (2008) specifically states that job stress is something that many employees who work at a company experience, which have an impact, either directly or indirectly, on the employee's attitudes, feelings, thoughts, and behavior. The higher the work stress, the more unstable feelings or emotions, the more negative attitudes and behaviors, and the more tense the mind is filled with anxiety.

According to Hariyono (2004), job stress arises due to one's inability to cope with conditions or problems encountered at work. Employees who experience work stress will become less productive and tend to not be able to develop properly in accordance with the demands of the company. The employee will even have difficulty interacting with various important aspects of his job, including with colleagues, supervisors or supervisors, or with company relationships or customers.

Job stress can be measured using two dimensions, namely (Cohen & Williamson, 1988): Perceived helplessness is a feeling that an individual has that he does not have control over the surrounding environment, so that the individual is in an uncomfortable, unmotivated, and emotional state.

Perceived self-efficacy is a feeling that is opposite to perceived helplessness in which individuals have a strong belief in the ability of oneself to do various things that are desired to achieve certain goals.

### **Coping Stress through Humor**

Individual efforts to deal with stress are commonly known as coping. This means that the strategies undertaken by individuals cannot be considered better than other individuals. The effectiveness of a coping strategy is only determined by its impact in a specific situation and its impact in the long term. There are many ways to coping with existing stress, both those that focus on the problem, emotions, or how to assess a condition. The means used for coping also vary, one of which is stress coping using humor.

Some proverbs that are widely known states that "laughter is the best medicine". According to Markman (2017), a cognitive scientist from the University of Texas, humor can affect the way a person sees problems and reduce stress experienced. The view that humor has positive benefits in dealing with stress is in line with the results of several studies that have been conducted, which show that individuals with good sense of humor and using it as a coping strategy will be better able to deal with stresses that hit and adjust (Wu & Chan, 2013; Overholser, in Martin, 2007).

However, the use of humor as a coping strategy is not always beneficial. According to Markman (2017), improper use of humor, such as making oneself or another person a joke can make others have a negative view and reduce social support, which can impact on higher stress levels. In addition, the use of humor as a coping strategy is also not universal. For example, in China, humor is seen as dishonorable. This is due to the culture adopted, so individuals must continue to maintain behavior in accordance with polite and polite ethics (Yue, 2010). The data above are some of the results of research that are inconsistent with the results of research which show the positive impact of using humor as a coping strategy.

### **The Humor Style Model**

Kuiper (2012) has the concept that a sense of humor is a characteristic of individual diversity that involves four main styles, namely, affiliative, self enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating humor. Both Humor styles affiliative and self-enhancing generally touch on the positive or adaptive aspects of the sense of humor; whereas aggressive and self-defeating styles generally touch on negative or maladaptive aspects of the person.

Martin et al. (2003) & Oktug (2017) further explain four characteristics of humor, including:

Affiliative is humor or jokes created to encourage increased relationships between individuals. The characteristics of humor include non-offensive, tolerant, cheerful, containing positive emotions, and maintaining self-esteem.

Self-enhancing is humor that aims to defend oneself to avoid negative or nonconductive situations that have the potential to harm oneself. The characteristics of humor include being open, maintaining self-esteem, psychologically healthy, and focusing on internal psychological aspects.

Aggressive is humor that is carried out without regard to its impact on others by saying funny words that actually have the potential to hurt or hurt the feelings of others. The characteristics of this humor include sarcasm, tease, and ridicule, condescend, and insult. This humor is also closely related to situations of anger, aggression, harm, and neuroticism.

Self-defeating is humor that is done by humbling oneself to create jokes for others. This humor is characterized by a form of defensiveness or refusal to cover up negative feelings. Humor is related to emotional needs, avoidance, low self-esteem, and anxiety

### **Digital Humor**

Humor is a term that is often used in everyday life to describe something that is funny and entertaining. The definition of humor mentioned by Reyes et al. (2012) as "the presence of amusing effects, such as laughter or well-being sensations", that is, humor is something that can create confusing effects, which can

make people laugh or feel happy sensations. A similar definition of humor was stated by Martin (2003), that humor is a construct that has many dimensions, which mainly has the ability to present feelings of pleasure to oneself and others. Humor can come from a certain pattern of behavior or attitude from someone, which is generally used to build social relationships.

In accordance with the increasingly rapid development of communication and information technology, humor that was originally created and delivered through conventional means, such as being staged on the stage, aired on television stations, or delivered in direct interaction between individuals, both in formal and informal settings. At this time, it can also be conveyed using various types of online media, so that people can more easily accept various types of humor and consume them as a means to release tension or stress caused by various problems encountered in daily life or at work. The digital world in addition to making the spread of humor easier and wider, also causes the development of forms of humor to become more varied. According to Shifman (2007), interactive humor in the form of text contains funny words that require the active participation of the humor recipient to do certain things rather than just reading, listening, or seeing.

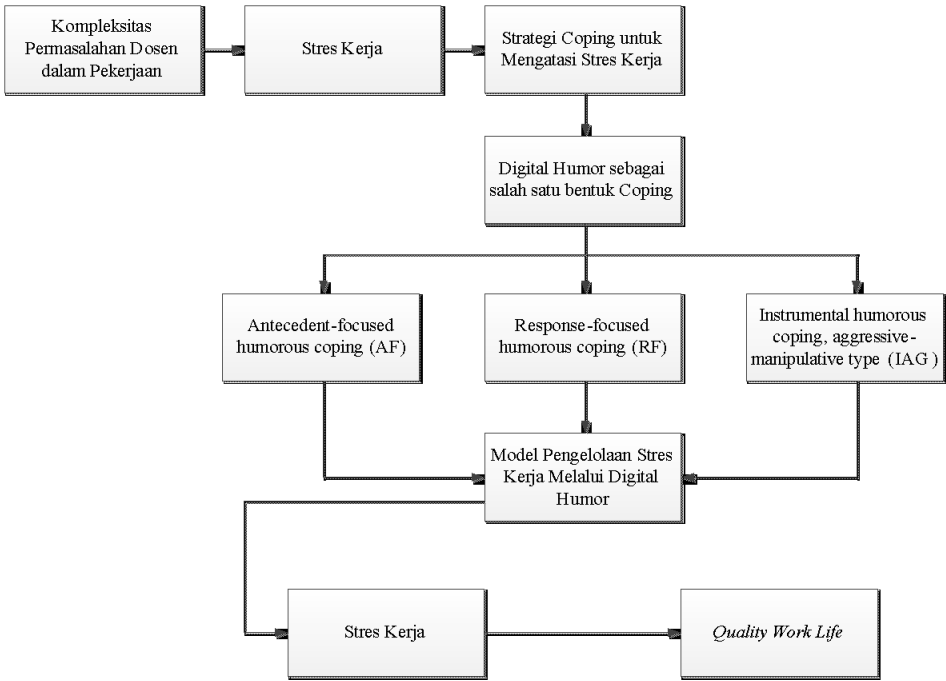
1. Funny Photos are photos that display a funny message, which are generally often presented with a funny text that provides additional descriptions.
2. Maniphotos are photos that are manipulated by combining them with other photos to create a funny or weird impression.
3. Phanimation is a moving or animated version of maniphotos.
4. Celebrity Soundboards are digital collections of film and/or voice clips that appear on television or radio owned by actors, which are intentionally quoted in the form of sound clips or short videos containing funny or strange messages.
5. PowerPoint Humor is funny text or images presented in the form of a presentation PowerPoint.

### Quality Work Life

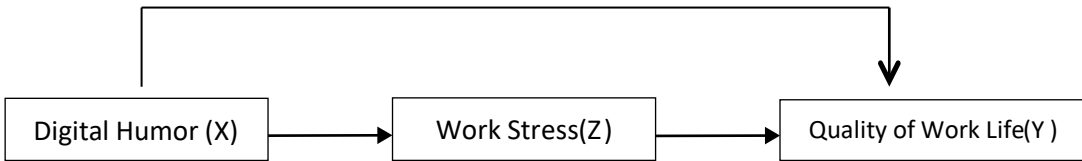
Luthans (2011) provides a more specific meaning, that QWL is "... a concern about the impact of work on people and organizational effectiveness combined with an emphasis on participation in problem solving and decision making", that is, QWL is related with the impact of work on individuals and also related to organizational effectiveness which is supported by an emphasis on participation in problem solving and decision making. In essence, Luthans (2011) defines QWL as an individual perception of organizational employees on the active role of the organization in meeting the various needs of employees, and positions employees as an integral part that is recognized as important by the organization.

Specifically, Wirawan (2015) mentions eight efforts that companies can make to create QWL, namely:

1. Providing adequate and fair compensation.
2. Creating safe and healthy work procedures.
3. Facilitating HR development needs.
4. Providing guarantees to career development and security of positions for HR.
5. Creating social environments that is conducive to create organizational norms that guarantee individual rights.
6. Increase work effectiveness and efficiency to provide a balance to employee life, namely between work and personal life.
7. Creating a connection between all elements of the company and the social environment outside the company.
8. Quality of Work Life (QWL) can be measured using four dimensions, namely (Wirawan, 2015):
  - 8.1. The level of employee involvement in problem solving
  - 8.2. The formulation of compensation is constantly developing.
  - 8.3. Restructuring of work
  - 8.4. Improving the work environment



Thinking Framework



### Analysis Model

In accordance with the analysis model above, the hypotheses developed in this study are:

**Hypothesis 1:** Digital Humor has a significant direct effect on Work Stress.

**Hypothesis 2:** Digital Humor has a significant direct effect on Quality of Work Life.

**Hypothesis 3:** Job Stress has a significant direct effect on Quality of Work Life.

**Hypothesis 4:** Digital Humor significant indirect effect on Quality of Work Life through the mediation of Work Stress.

### METHODOLOGY

This research is a causal type with a quantitative approach. In conducting this research, the respondents used to obtain the needed data were lecturers members of the WhatsApp group of Indonesian Lecturer Community. The total number of lecturers who are members of the WhatsApp group of Indonesian Lecturer Community and willing to be respondents in this study are as many as 120 people. While the sampling

technique is non-probabilistic with a simple random type, which in this technique anyone registered in the WhatsApp group is randomly selected, then contacted and sent a request to fill out an online questionnaire.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Table 1: Path Analysis Results**

		$\beta$	t	Sig.
Digital Humor (X)	→ Work Stress (Z)	$\beta_1 = 0.123$	3,682	0,000
Work Stress (Z)	→ Quality Work Life (Y)	$\beta_2 = 0.143$	1,702	0.091
Digital Humor (X)	→ Quality Work Life (Y)	$\beta_3 = -0.018$	0.554	0.581

**Table 2: Line coefficient Test Results Direct and Indirect Effects**

variable	coefficients Standardized	Significance Value
<b>Direct Impact</b>		
Digital Humor (X) → Quality Work Life (Y)	-0.018	0.581
<b>Indirect Influence</b>		
Digital Humor (X) → Stress working (Z) → Quality Work Life (Y)	0,018	

**Influence of digital Humor against Stress Work**

Based on test results, the variable digital humor has a tvalue of 3.682 with a significance value of 0.000, which is smaller than a critical value determined at 0.05.  $T_{value}$  obtained is positive, meaning that the impact that digital workplace humor to stress is the same direction and the significant value below a critical value indicates that the influence exerted is very real. This implies that if a lecturer is more intense in utilizing digital media of humor in between his busy work, the work stress will actually increase.

This can be due to high demands in the teaching profession that must be met almost at the same time such as making teaching materials, syllabus and lesson plans, fulfilling upgraded educational level, total credit points (KUM) and other tasks, making the lecturer profession workload quite dense. To be able to sort and choose priorities from the solid queue of tasks that must be completed, then at least a lecturer must have good time management to manage his rhythm and work time. When a lecturer allocates time to seriously work, when is the time for family and when is the time to joke with colleagues.

Generally, the problem is the factor of joking with colleagues. Because, on the sidelines of the lecturers working with high pressure, many of the lecturers eventually divert fatigue by opening the application WhatsApp on their cellphones, and then throwing small humor through the media to their fellow lecturers who are members of the WhatsApp group.

Because it is already concentrated to reciprocate digital humor exchanged in the WhatsApp group often a lecturer forgets time and the target of his work that has not been completed, not even closing the possibility because humor through WhatsApp media is done using memes, stickers, funny pictures and the words of satire, instead, cause new problems because it can offend other lecturers who have wrong perceptions of the humor material. Finally this is what the digital humor media is supposed to be a tool that can reduce work stress, instead the opposite is happening, namely work stress is getting higher because work is piling up because a lot of time is wasted and new problems arise between coworkers.

Therefore, a lecturer must be able to correctly understand whether he is experiencing work stress or not, so that before that happens protracted and eventually will have an impact on work productivity, then he must immediately find the most effective solution, not a temporary escape step to avoid these conditions.

### **Humor Digital Influence on the Quality of Work Life**

Based on test results, humor has a digital variable value of 0.018 with a significance value of 0.554 which is greater than the critical value determined namely 0.05.  $T_{\text{value}}$  obtained is negative meaning that the influence exerted by digital humor to the quality of work life is opposite the direction and the significant value above the critical value indicates that the influence exerted is unreal. This implies the meaning that if a lecturer is more intense in utilizing digital media humor in the midst of his busy work, the quality of work life perceived will actually decrease.

Workers who daily carry out various tasks and obligations which are the demands of their work will have a perception of their work life (Kossen, 1986). On the one hand, workers can feel that their work is a heavy burden and take up most of their time, while on the other hand, workers can also feel that their work is very important to themselves and must be taken care of despite having to do extra work. Two different perspectives of workers on their work life basically can still cause workers to experience work stress, namely when at a point where workers feel that what they get from their work is far below what is expected and is not commensurate with what has been done. In this situation, workers need entertainment to escape from increasing work pressure, namely by seeing, reading, or listening to humor.

But the opposite can happen if the humor that is done is not given restrictions and is based on ethics. These limits are like doing humor as necessary and not too often, because if too often will take up time and it will create an imbalance in his work life. Given that a lecturer is always active both at university and at home, because in the morning to evening he teaches, at home prepares material for tomorrow's subjects and on and on and vice versa.

So, if time management is not going well, or it is easier to say "too much joke (humor), rather than serious work," then this will potentially reduce the quality of work life. Moreover, if the humor offered is not based on ethics such as sending memes with harsh words, sending stickers that are not polite, then this can trigger new conflicts that will ultimately reduce the quality of work life as well.

### **Effect of Job Stress on the Quality of Work Life**

Based on test results, job stress variable has a value of  $t_{\text{count}}$  equal to 1.702 with a significance value of 0.091 which is greater than the critical value determined namely 0.05.  $T_{\text{value}}$  obtained is positive, meaning that the influence exerted by work stress on quality of work life is unidirectional and the significant value above the critical value indicates that the influence exerted unreal. This implies that the work stress felt by a lecturer is quite high, so the quality of work life owned by a lecturer will increase as well.

Generally, when workers feel stress, the perception they have of their work life will become increasingly negative, that their work tasks will become increasingly heavy and difficult to fulfill their targets, workers may also feel that the company's management has been unfair in deciding something, and less attention to the interests of workers. However, this is different from the findings in this study which coincidentally the research subjects are lecturers.

This can be caused by the high pressure on each lecturer over the workload given by his superiors, which actually motivates him to immediately find solutions in order to work effectively and efficiently. In the end, lecturers can create small groups or teams to complete their work, so that the work that initially feels heavy because it is carried on by themselves, will feel lighter because it can be done by sharing with the team.

Although still feeling stressed, but with team work, lecturers still have the hope to be able to complete the work and mainly can share stress by exchanging opinions and throwing light jokes. If such conditions are formed, it is not impossible when in a stressful position, a lecturer can actually improve the quality of his work life.



### **Effect of Digital Humor on Quality of Work Life through Mediation of Work Stress**

Testing the effect of digital humor on quality of work life through mediation of work stress is done by using manual calculations by comparing the results of the interaction of the two regression coefficients of the direct influence of the effect of digital humor on work stress and work stress on quality work life, which is then compared with the regression coefficient of the direct effect of humor on quality work life.

Through the calculation process, it is found that the indirect effect given by the quality of the work environment on employee performance has a smaller coefficient value than the direct effect, where not all of the resulting direct coefficients are significant. So it can be concluded that the work stress variable is not proven as a mediating variable in the influence of digital humor on the quality of work life.

This can be because, in this study, contradictory results were found on the exposure to the direct influence described earlier where not always the humor performed by the lecturers would be able to reduce the tension at work, and not always that when a lecturer experienced tension or stress at work at a high level will always reduce the quality of his work life.

This is suspected to be the cause of work stress variables not proven as mediating variables in the effect of digital humor on quality of work life. Even though in reality, when fatigue arises due to problems in work life within the lecturers' environment, the majority of the lecturers vent their emotions with the flavor of "humor" in the group of WhatsApp the lecturer community, with the consideration that the group consists of fellow lecturers and is considered the right space for sharing, to vent emotions through humor due to work stress experienced in carrying out their profession.

The lecturers considered that the humor in the media group WhatsApp that they did could be categorized as a "model for managing work stress through digital humor". They hope, by managing the stress from the lecturers through digital humor, the level of stress they feel can be reduced or even become unstressed which will ultimately be able to improve Quality Work Life (QWL). But they forget not to pay attention to aspects of the constraints of both the time and the categories of humor brought up, morally and ethically, so that the findings produced are out of habit.

### **CONCLUSION**

The influence given by digital humor on work stress is unidirectional and the significance value is below the critical value indicating that the effect given is very real. This implies that if a lecturer is more intense in utilizing digital media of humor in between his busy work, the work stress he feels will actually increase.

The influence given by digital humor on quality of work life is the opposite direction and the significance value above the critical value shows that the influence exerted is not real. This implies the meaning that if a lecturer is more intense in utilizing digital media humor in the midst of his busy work, the quality of work life perceived will actually decrease.

The effect that work stress has on the quality of work life is unidirectional and the significance value above the critical value indicates that the effect given is not real. This implies that the work stress felt by a lecturer is quite high, so the quality of work life owned by a lecturer will increase as well.

The indirect effect given by the work environment on employee performance has a coefficient value smaller than the direct effect, where not all of the direct coefficients produced are significant. So it can be concluded that the work stress variable is not proven as a mediating variable in the influence of digital humor on the quality of work life.

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