



STUDI EKSPLORASI DAMPAK BEKERJA DARI RUMAH (WFH) TERHADAP KINERJA KARYAWAN SELAMA PANDEMIK COVID-19

Exploration Study Of The Impact Of Working From Home (Wfh) On Employee Performance During The Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Currently, many countries around the globe including Indonesia are hugely affected by a novel pandemic COVID-19. This pandemic has impacted the economic and social sectors as well as caused dramatic changes in work patterns. Many employees are forced to shift their current working style from the office to work from home (WFH). This study aims to determine the impact of WFH on employee performance and to provide information regarding the advantages and disadvantages of WFH during the COVID-19 pandemic from the employee perspective. This exploratory study used the descriptive method and the data were obtained from the responses of 75 employees that are currently on WFH at different sectors in Surabaya. Evidently, 63% of the respondents are private employees, followed by 33% of them belongs to government employees, and 4% of employees have their state-owned enterprises. There were 83% of employees who experiences WFH due to the prevention of spreading COVID-19 transmission. The analysis of the work performance revealed that 47% of the respondents did not experience any differences between WFH and conventional office's working style. In addition, 29% of employees expressed their opinion regarding the decrease in productivity level during WFH, and 20% of them admitted that their performance level elevated during WFH. In fact, based on the employees' opinions, the biggest advantages of WFH include flexible working hours, efficient personal budget cuts for transportation costs, and more quality time to spend with families. However, the disadvantages of WHF are the increase in internet and electricity cost, some tasks from work that could not be performed at home such as scientific laboratory experiments, and the lack of focus to work properly due to distraction at home especially if they have their children around all time. Furthermore, even though work from home was accepted by most employees, but according to some correspondents' opinions, the current WFH trend was not ideal for many different types of jobs.

Keywords: Work from home, COVID-19, pandemic, employees, performance

ABSTRAK

Saat ini, banyak negara di dunia termasuk Indonesia yang sangat terpengaruh oleh pandemi baru COVID-19. Pandemi ini berdampak pada sektor ekonomi dan sosial serta menyebabkan perubahan drastis pada pola kerja. Banyak karyawan yang terpaksa mengubah gaya kerja mereka saat ini dari kantor ke bekerja dari rumah (WFH). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui dampak WFH terhadap kinerja karyawan dan memberikan informasi mengenai keuntungan dan kerugian WFH selama pandemi COVID-19 dari perspektif karyawan. Penelitian eksploratif ini menggunakan metode deskriptif dan data diperoleh dari tanggapan 75 karyawan yang saat ini

berada di WFH di berbagai sektor di Surabaya. Terbukti, 63% responden adalah pegawai swasta, 33% pegawai negeri, dan 4% pegawai BUMN. Terdapat 83% karyawan yang mengalami WFH akibat pencegahan penyebaran penularan COVID-19. Analisis kinerja menunjukkan bahwa 47% responden tidak mengalami perbedaan antara WFH dan gaya kerja kantor konvensional. Selain itu, 29% karyawan menyatakan pendapatnya tentang penurunan tingkat produktivitas selama WFH, dan 20% di antaranya mengakui bahwa tingkat kinerja mereka meningkat selama WFH. Padahal, berdasarkan opini karyawan, keuntungan terbesar WFH antara lain jam kerja fleksibel, pemotongan anggaran pribadi yang efisien untuk biaya transportasi, dan lebih banyak waktu berkualitas untuk dihabiskan bersama keluarga. Namun, kelemahan WFH adalah meningkatnya biaya internet dan listrik, beberapa tugas dari pekerjaan yang tidak dapat dilakukan di rumah seperti percobaan laboratorium ilmiah, dan kurangnya fokus untuk bekerja dengan baik karena adanya gangguan di rumah terutama jika ada anak-anak sepanjang waktu. Selain itu, meskipun bekerja dari rumah diterima oleh sebagian besar karyawan, namun menurut beberapa pendapat koresponden, tren WFH saat ini tidak ideal untuk berbagai jenis pekerjaan.

Kata kunci: Bekerja dari rumah, COVID-19, pandemi, karyawan, kinerja

INTRODUCTION

The current novel pandemic of Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is considered the biggest obstacle in over 200 countries around the world (Setiati & Azwar, 2020). Indonesia has been having a major negative impact since the outbreak of COVID-19, especially with a high index of case fatality rate (CFR) reported for 4.51, and in Surabaya particularly counted for 8.74 by early of August (Indonesian Ministry of Health, 2020). Additionally, the pandemic of COVID-19 has drastically transformed the previous daily life activities especially in working, socializing, and communicating and it has challenged us to create significant alterations in a short period on an exceptional scale. The recent pandemic has forced many active workers worldwide to shift their work remotely from home (ILO, 2020). The global citizens, including Indonesians, are advised to stay at home and to minimize direct social interactions to reduce the COVID-19 transmission.

The present trend of online working from home (WFH) is considered an efficient solution during the COVID-19 outbreak to keep the productivity running but some workers might not be as “lucky” to have the luxurious benefit of WFH. The first obstacle occurred is related to work performance due to the unexpected change of working habit. The opportunity to WFH with flexible working hour policy has been exploited by companies to persuade new talents. The next problem with WFH is the occurrence of mental health problems such as the feeling of being isolated at home and detachment from other human beings or coworkers. For such cases arisen, the human resource development (HRD) department should be able to act accordingly by implying a novel strategic plan as a supporting agent for workers from different professions and industries. By doing so hopefully the workers are able to develop strong self-confidence and create online communication with coworkers, consequently

facilitating them to work efficiently in virtual spaces and create a shared personality to construct resilience (Li *et al.*, 2020).

The COVID-19 outbreak predictably will create a long-term societal influence in inside and outside working environments. Sudden modifications in social interaction will consequently force many standard practices within employing associations to be reassessed and readjusted. A significant transformation in workplace relations and working habits will demand adjustment and flexibility in workers with the most abnormal anxieties, extreme health conditions, and working in the most dangerous environment (Shaw *et al.*, 2020).

This research was conducted based on 5 literary concepts, namely as follows: Concept A, according to Shareena P. and Mahammad Shahid (2020), the perception of Work From Home (WFH) is unconventional and new to the majority of the workers in all business divisions, perceived as the direct impact of COVID-19 pandemic. The study discovered that motivation to work from home exclusively depends on the presence of children, convenient space availability, unobtrusive surroundings, and a proper internet connection. Although the supportive conditions applied, most workers admitted they did not fancy the WFH concept; Concept B, Purwanto (2020) stated that there are numerous benefits and drawbacks of the WFH program. The positive values are its working hour flexibility, minimizing the transportation and gasoline costs, and reducing the stress levels due to congestion. By working from home, the availability of working hours can be increased since there is no time to spend traveling to work. The downsides of WFH are that it reduces the employees' motivation in working and increases electricity and internet bills. There is also an additional disadvantage by online working that is the confidential data that might leak via the internet; Concept C, Mustajab, Bauw, R asyid *et al.* (2020) showed that working from home (WFH) has benefited as well as given minor negative impacts for both workers and corporations, mostly related to employees' productivity. In addition, this study revealed that WFH was not commonly consented, since many subjects of labor are impossible to be performed at home. Albeit many workers who were doing WFH managed to establish personal and working life balance experience, yet it occasionally interfered with numerous household chores that must be completed at home; Concept D, Wahyu, and Sa'id (2020) reported that the workers applying WFH program will experience the increase in productivity level due to the effects of social assistance, such as fewer job burdens, fewer disturbances, and facilitators that can stimulate the workers' hidden personality skills. Therefore, individuals will achieve a new

pattern of working performance during WFH. In addition, there are several strategies to sustain productivity, namely by brainstorming with colleagues, sharing the workload within a team, and employing the Nominal Group Technique; and Concept E, Crosbie and Moore (2004) explained that the workers who currently plan to start working from home should consider the following aspects such as their characters, abilities, and targets. Given an example, workers who are used to work long hours at the office might realize that their life contentment is even further downgraded by working life after WFH. It is also important to investigate the effect of working (or not) from home regarding the increase in workers' abilities and to create a balance between their work and commitments during WFH. The objective of this study is to determine the impact of WFH on employee performance and to investigate the benefits and drawbacks of WFH during pandemic COVID-19 from an employee perspective.

METHOD

The primary data of this study were the answers collected from 75 participants experiencing work from home. The respondents are workers from various occupations who have been working from home since April 2020 in Surabaya during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study utilized exploration and descriptive methods for data analysis. The data were collected within July 2020, which is the perfect period because that was when all the respondents are obliged to work from home. The secondary data were analyzed from various published papers, websites, and online newsletters.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 75 respondents consisted of 28% male and 76% female, with 5.3% belong to the age group of <25 years and 94.7% are between 25 to 64 years. Additionally, 29% of respondents are unmarried and 71% are currently married. This study discovered that majority of the respondents with children are not keen to work from home compared to those without children.

The demographic data showed that 63% of participants work for private companies, with 4% of them work at BUMN and BUMD, and 53% for government institutes. Their educational backgrounds are diverse; 1% graduated from high school, 3% have a diploma

degree, 45% have an undergraduate degree, 39% held a graduate degree and 11% own doctorate.

Most of the respondents have faced work from home (WFH) situation due to the current impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to limit mobility and social interactions. Of 75 respondents, 17% disagreed with WFH while 83% decided to work from home voluntarily.

The result also revealed that the work performance during WFH of 47% of respondents was not different from the conventional office-style working. In addition, 29% of employees expressed their opinion regarding the decrease in productivity level during WFH, whereas 20% admitted their performance level elevated during WFH.

In the survey, the respondents were inquired to illustrate the reasons and differences in working from home compared to working from the office. The statements from the respondents are listed below:

1. WFH is efficient to avoid direct virus transmission by minimizing physical contact with other humans.
2. Working hours become more flexible as it saves more time as mobilization from home to office is reduced.
3. Reducing air pollution (especially in big cities like Jakarta and Surabaya due to fewer cars and motorbikes on the road).
4. More leisure time to be spent with relatives and family.
5. Working productivity increased.
6. WFH caused higher rates of electricity and internet costs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the managers or business owners to grant flexibility and independence for workers to continue working efficiently from home, to implement distinctive work routines, or to apply the innovative working style in an environment that changes rapidly recently. In fact, some companies are operating new health regulations to protect the staff from the infection. Furthermore, an environmental examination is held regularly to reduce the risk of virus transmission to individuals by contacting infected subjects, objects, equipment, or contaminated environmental surfaces (Cirrincione *et al*, 2020). Some might say that work from home system can reduce the risk of virus transmission by minimizing direct contact with other people. It is also recommended for all buildings to have a good ventilation system to reduce airborne pathogen circulation. The public health workers put up more campaigns as guidance on minimizing the risk of COVID-19

transmission through droplet spread by suggesting a thorough and proper way of handwashing and cleaning of the infected sites. Those mediations are expected to help to decrease the airborne-type infection rates not only for the recent COVID-19 crisis but also valid in any other circumstances (Morawska *et al*, 2020).

The current trend of working from home (WFH) is defined as the present adoptive approach of completing work flexibly by resuming daily working tasks using a desk and a laptop as an alternative workplace. During WFH, the workers should be able to complete the daily target responsibly despite the commotion at home. The main benefit of the WFH program is the efficient budget cut on public transportation or gasoline consumption for private vehicles. To conclude, the workers could save time in mobilization. Moreover, the workers are able to minimize the level of hassles, such as traffic jams and accumulation of work to be done (Purwanto *et al*, 2020). The WFH program is a perfect solution for people who live far away from work because they can easily adjust their time and venue to work efficiently. Furthermore, this current WFH trend had no negative impact on the monthly remuneration since company boards bestowed full compensation for all parties involved (Mustajab *et al*, 2020).

Surprisingly, the air pollution level declines as an indirect effect of the work from home program. This positive fresh air effect revolves around the reduction of dirty particles with a diameter of less than 2.5 μm and Nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) concentrations in many different industrial countries such as China, France, Germany, Spain, and Italy (Zambrano-Monserrate *et al*, 2020). Nitrogen dioxide is one of the biggest perpetrators behind the ozone effect. It is important to keep the ratio of Nitrogen dioxide to a minimum to prevent the ozone effect. Therefore, the minor escalation in NO_2 level can lead to an increase in ozone concentration (Zivin and Neidell, 2012). The previous report showed that the abnormal concentration of these gases was considered a major environmental obstacle in most developed countries (Sharma and Dhar, 2018).

As a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many companies opted to send their employees to work from home (WFH) and forcing their families to preserve work-family balance with insufficient assistance. However, due to the uncommon circumstances, the work-family balance has become progressively problematic. Fortunately, more male workers decided to step up to overcome the difficulties at home by sharing the childcare and household chores. By doing so, families who adopt the principle of 'we are all in this together' may

succeed to balance the quality of work and family during this challenging period (Fisher *et al*, 2020). Based on previous research by Rowe and Bentley (1992), the benefits of work from home were indeed diverse by gender. “To fully take care of the family” and “the flexibility to work in my own way, at my own pace” were declared as the major advantages of working from home for female workers. Although male workers also admitted the time flexibility as the major reward of working from home, only 38% of male respondents shared the same opinion. Males also acknowledged “save more time” as the essential motivation for working from home. Many male WFH workers disclosed that work from home was “easier” or “more convenient” and it improved their productivity. Additionally, by performing WFH, the majority of workers confessed that they enjoyed more quality time with family without necessarily abandoning their work. However, it was also hard to stay focus on working while closely interacting with the family during the daily working routine. The key is to maintain the work-family balance without sacrificing any of the two.

The implementation of work from home in Indonesia was majorly forced by the government to reduce the COVID-19 transmission rate. The decision was made to introduce WFH culture as “the new normal campaign” so that the workers must oblige to apply it as well as to maintain their productivity level. In the present study, some respondents, who live far away from their office, admitted that this new system is an ideal solution for maintaining productivity because it shortened the travel time from home to office. WFH also significantly reduced transportation costs so by saving more money and time, as well as provided more flexible working hours in a less stressful environment. Based on the survey, 29% of respondents showed an escalation in productivity level. However, 20% of them revealed that their productivity level was decreased, while 47% mentioned there were no significant changes, and the rest had no opinion regarding this issue.

In this study, 27% of female respondents shared the same agreement with the findings in the study done by Mustajab *et al* (2020) about gender perception. Often the male workers in comparison to females, in the circumstance of work productivity, are seen to be more practical. Partly due to the lack of distraction encountered by male workers and also the fact that female workers experienced more interventions by working from home. In Indonesia, women have a major role in the household by multitasking to complete household chores. The conventional belief dictates Indonesian women to serve faithfully to her husband and children. This might contradict the concept of work from home as it can be seen as the women

neglecting their “nature” and chose to work at home instead of doing their obligation as a wife and a mother to their family. For some traditional culture, this can be seen as a deed of sin and disobedience of religious norms. One female respondent stated, “During WFH, my children did not fully receive nor understood their lessons. This pressure made a difficult situation to our family, especially with both parents currently working (from home)”. The take-home note from this circumstance is how to balance the work and family time without sacrificing one or another, especially for female workers doing WFH. However, this case was not applicable to the unmarried women in this study.

Limited communication is a major inconvenience often experienced by workers (act as informants) which had a direct impact of disturbing the interaction between colleagues and managers. This problematic communication is frequently initiated by technical problems such as the interference of the internet network problem making it difficult to send work data and information. Before the pandemic, the workers could interact directly at the office and communicate freely to avoid miscommunication (Mustajab *et al*, 2020). At work, personality and communication satisfaction possess significant functions to achieve a healthy working environment (Clark *et al*, 2012). To date, the study on the influence of communication networks accessible to teleworkers has been fairly inadequate. In their daily routine, teleworkers work remotely and are employed in an individual workplace often away from the office's central location. Principally, teleworkers are subjected to the computer-mediated communication system and innovative technologies to achieve their daily duties, in addition, to directly converse with coworkers (Smith *et al*, 2018). By working at the office, the company has to pay for the expense of electricity and the internet. However, with the work from home situation, electricity and internet costs increased exponentially due to daily nonstop use. To anticipate the sudden increase in other expenses, workers should indeed allocate an additional budget. In order to maintain data security optimally, it is advisable to avoid using internet access in public areas unless no access was given to personal e-mail addresses or mobile phone numbers.

Reports also revealed that many workers experience the direct negative impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Low-income workers would be at the highest risk during this outbreak since their jobs are unsuitable for working from home concept and the unmanageable workplace exposures. For that group, WFH may be unattainable or impractical, and the high risk of sudden dismissals may force them to endure hazardous workplace exposure despite the

frights of infection. In addition, workers at the research institute and industrial fields had a major step back since it is impossible to switch their daily work routine to WFH. Other shortcomings related to age, race, and ethnicity, language, educational background, or social status may result in different issues regarding alternative working conditions and job flexibility. Employer policies related to the COVID-19 pandemic should be renewed regularly since it will have major effects on workers with socioeconomic difficulties.

CONCLUSION

WFH is programmed to switch the conventional working method to be adjustable with any unfortunate moments like the COVID-19 outbreak. The main purpose of WFH is to maintain the company productivity and minimize the loss for workers and the organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic. WFH has both advantages and disadvantages from the employee perspective. The work performance of employees during WFH is mainly dependent on proper facilities and a quiet environment at home. An evaluation is required to be done on the companies or institutions that have implemented the work from home program as a response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The human resource development can direct the discussion professionally on how to train individual workers, managers, and board members for the future new normal condition to maintain the employees' working performance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors wish to thank all the participants and those who supported the research.

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