

## **Fenomena Bekerja dari Rumah sebagai Upaya Mencegah Serangan COVID-19 dan Dampaknya terhadap Produktifitas Kerja**

### *Working from Home Phenomenon as an Effort to Prevent COVID-19 Attacks and Its Impacts on Work Productivity*

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#### **Abstrak**

Serangan COVID-19 telah mengubah metode dan budaya kerja pada banyak organisasi, fenomena kerja dari rumah sebagai upaya untuk mencegah penyebaran COVID-19 pada banyak negara di dunia berdampak pada produktifitas karyawan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi dampak bekerja dari rumah pada produktifitas karyawan dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Temuan ini menjelaskan bahwa bekerja dari rumah telah memberikan keuntungan dan kerugian bagi karyawan dan organisasi serta bertanggung jawab atas penurunan produktifitas karyawan. Selain itu, kami juga menemukan fakta bahwa bekerja dari rumah tidak dapat diterima secara umum, banyak bidang pekerjaan yang tidak dapat dilakukan dari rumah, meskipun bagi banyak karyawan, bekerja dari rumah telah memberikan keseimbangan kehidupan kerja tetapi hal ini terkadang terganggu oleh beberapa pekerjaan (multitasking) yang harus dilakukan dan ini memiliki makna yang berbeda dari aspek gender yang kami jelaskan dalam artikel.

**Kata kunci:** Bekerja dari rumah, perspektif gender, produktifitas kerja

#### **Abstract**

*COVID-19 attacks have changed the methods and cultures of work in many organizations, the working from home (WFH) phenomenon as an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in many countries in the world has impacts on employee productivity. This study aims to explore the impacts of working from home on employee productivity with a qualitative approach. The findings explain that working from home has provided advantages and disadvantages both for employee and organization as well as being responsible for the decline in employee productivity. Furthermore, we also find the fact that working from home cannot be generally accepted since many areas of work cannot be carried out from home, although for many employees, working from home has provided a work-life balance. Yet, this is sometimes interrupted by multiple jobs (multitasking) that must be done at home.*

**Keywords:** Working from home, gender perspective, work productivity

#### **Introduction**

Currently, all countries in the world are shocked by a global pandemic called Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19). This virus attack has had a huge impact on human life in the world and has changed many important aspects in life such as health, economy, politics and also security. It should be noted that COVID-19 has become a major threat to all organizations in

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the world, this has led to changes in work methods and also human interaction within the organization. The work method shifting in question is a change in the organization in giving tasks and responsibilities to its employees by “prohibiting” its employees to work in the office and gather in a room. This prohibition is not intended to destroy the performance of the organization but rather aims to prevent the spread of COVID-19, which until now continues to add the number of its victims in Indonesia. The concept of Work From Home (WFH) has been the subject of discussion and global study theme by researchers in the past 10 years, but this global phenomenon begins to emerge at the coming of the COVID-19 attack and becomes an alternative strategy for many organizations.

In Indonesia, Working From Home (WFH) has not become a work culture in the organization, there are still a few organizations that have given the flexibility to work for their employees, especially government employees as public servants. Furthermore, advances in information technology in the current era of the industrial revolution have greatly changed the organization's work order and culture, for which the organization is required to carry out transformations from all aspects to build its competitive advantage strategy. The development of technology and information does not only have impacts on the organization, but the lifestyle and social life of the community have also changed so the demand for special services for the community is certainly an important priority for many organizations. Nowadays, technology has changed the attitude and also the social life of the community, gender differences are no longer a limitation of qualifications and specifications in many jobs that no longer look at gender but more on the skills and knowledge of human resources, (Kumar & Aithal, 2016).

However, generally accepted in Indonesia today is that there is still a response that women are the most responsible ones for doing domestic chores, women's cultural sovereignty in the context of Indonesia's great culture, including the culture of Indonesia's ancestral roots rooted in tradition and culture of the earlier cultural tribes of the archipelago scattered throughout the provinces of Indonesia. In general, the culture of the society in the world places men at the top of the hierarchy, while women are in the second place, seeing the existing social construction in which men are responsible for family livelihoods that oblige men to work outside the home while women who are tasked with doing domestic chores becomes something that is considered normal so that it is a custom in many regions in Indonesia. Men and women are biologically different, there are differences in the reproductive organs and body construction in both sexes, but in the cultural context, the roles assumed by both have equality. However, culture (especially in Indonesia) has given privileges to men in which the cultural reality does not accommodate equality and balance. In culture, a woman is only a tool to complement, patriarchal culture has influenced the relationship of women and men and it leads to subordination. Although biologically women are different but in the perspective of gender equality, many women in Indonesia have succeeded in helping the family economy to help ease their husbands' burden, this is because women also have the motivation for entrepreneurship, (Irawati & Hati, 2017). The women's motivation in the field of entrepreneurship at this time in Indonesia continues to increase even many have developed their businesses through e-business, this has a positive impact on their economy, (Talib, Yusof, Zan, & Ngah, 2017). Gender is a social construction in a country that is influenced by the social, political, cultural, economic, religious, and ethnic environment. Gender is not sex, but gender can be in both men and women. However, in society, even among government officials and even academics, there is still a lot of gender equality with women.

WFH, which is a phenomenon today in Indonesia, is not a work culture found in many organizations, especially government organizations that are very bound by direct supervision, discipline and also public services. However, the WFH they do is not because the office as a facility provided by the employer is not adequate but carried out to prevent the spread of COVID-19 which is currently growing. In reality, WFH is not fully understood by the

employees, they feel a lot of dilemma conditions such as the mindset that the home is where they rest while work is generally done in the office. This dilemma condition sometimes creates conflicts within the family even though WFH creates flexibility of time and place, see (McCloskey, 2018). However, WFH has shortcomings such as the lack of performance as a team and also the system of supervision that is not maximal by the manager, (Lippe, 2019), but besides having its lacks, the study results have also shown that WFH provides flexibility and discretion for employees to do their works without being supervised directly by supervisors or managers (Ellen Ernst Kossek, 2015).

Currently, WFH is a strategy adopted by many organizations, WFH provides benefits for many organizations where many expenses can be cut such as rent for office buildings, employee mess and other work support facilities that must be prepared by the employer. However, WFH is certainly not without risk, what often happens is the mutual distrust that arises from both the employer and the recipient of work, for that the trust factor in the WFH concept is a very important factor that must be agreed by all parties, see (Roger C. Mayer, 1995) state that trust in others is based on the expectation that others will take actions deemed important, Trust in a relationship develops (or fails to grow) depending on several factors or bases of trust. It has been said that the implementation of WFH in Indonesia is not because many organizations have work from home cultures or methods, but this is done to reduce COVID-19 attacks so that decision making by managers must apply WFH to maintain employee productivity, for some informants whose residence access and office are far away, WFH is ideal for maintaining productivity because, with WFH, there is a significant reduction in transportation costs and time because, with the distance from home to office, the informant takes three hours on average to go and return so that with WFH, employees feel very benefited, see study results (de Vos, Meijers, & van Ham, 2018).

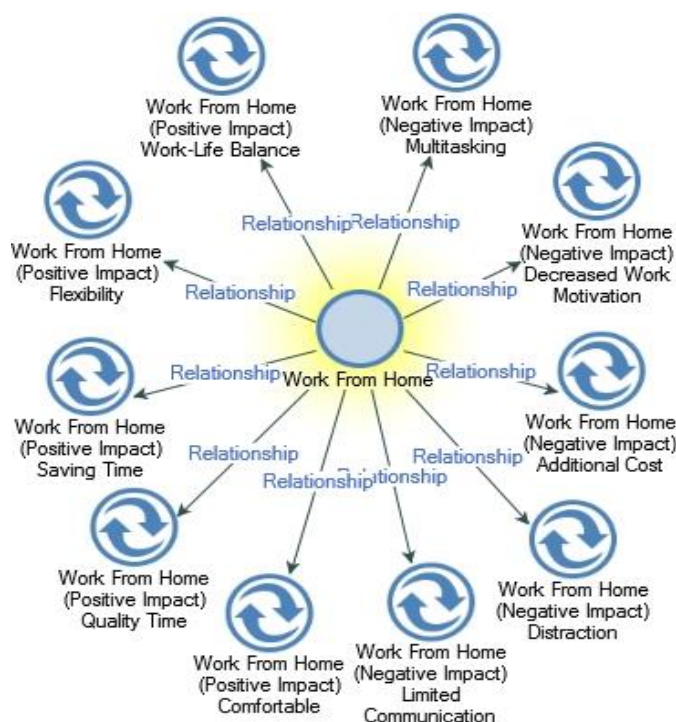
Thus it is clear that WFH is a strategy for many organizations with all the advantages and disadvantages that must be received by both the organization and its employees. Flexibility, trust, life balance between work, social, and losses that must be received such as lack of trust, additional costs and also multitasking of employees who are certainly different in gender is an interesting phenomenon to be studied so that the development of the WFH concept becomes wider and contributes to increasing the productivity of human resources work in organizations, see (Krasulja, Vasiljevic-Blagojevic, & Radojevic, 2015).

## **Method**

A qualitative method with an exploratory approach is used in this study which aims to explore and explain in full the phenomena that occur. 50 informants consisting of 30 female informants and 20 men were willing to be interviewed in-depth using snowball sampling, but with a COVID-19 outbreak, direct interviews (face to face) were very unlikely to be done so we conducted interviews via Telfon, facetime, Whatsapp and also Zoom Cloud Meeting (ZCM) so that the selected informants were believed to have represented the need for study with adequate location distribution.

## Results and Discussion

Figure.1 Positive Impact and Negative Impact of WFH



Furthermore, we can explain the positive and negative impacts of WFH as follows:

### *Work-life balance*

While doing WFH, many employees feel a balance in carrying out their work and social life, they can divide their time between doing work and their social lives. Furthermore, for male employees, the work-life balance is very dominant to be felt, they can do a good job and the remaining time can be used to live their social lives such as chatting and interacting with family and colleagues even though it can only be done through social media or other communication media without face to face directly, but this does not apply to female employees who are married, work-life balance cannot be felt because they have difficulty when dividing time between work and social life, this is because as married women, they have greater domestic household tasks so after they do office work at home, they generally have to complete household tasks such as taking care of children and cleaning the house. Furthermore, (Dockery & Bawa, 2018) who have proven that with WFH, there is balance and fairness in the division of family tasks and responsibilities and makes family relationships better and more harmonious when employees do WFH but this is different from (Cantera, Cubells, Martínez, & Blanch, 2009) who stated that family burdens have a relationship with higher job assessments that are a sociologically normal condition for men, but the problem is something new for women and the results of our study have provided support for this finding.

### *Flexibility*

All informants, both men and women, agree to say that in doing their WFH, they get freedom in determining the time and place of work, this is because there are no restrictions on the working hours they normally get in the office in which the time of going and returning has been determined by the rules set by employers, but in WFH, this does not apply and this has had a positive impact on them because it is more flexible in choosing the time and place to do

their work. Even this condition does not affect the wages they should receive because the organization provides compensation for the force majeure that must be faced by all parties.

### ***Saving time***

However, by doing WFH certainly has cut more time, this condition is felt by most employees in which when they have to do work in the office, it takes time to go and return home for about three hours. By doing WFH, they can use three hours to divide or allocate that time for office work or household chores for married female employees so they benefit from more time at home.

### ***Quality time***

Furthermore, by doing WFH, all employees agree to declare that they feel very high-quality time, especially they can enjoy more time with family without leaving their work even though sometimes they have to divide the focus between interacting with the family while focusing on the work they have to complete, but they say that the sharing of focus does not reduce the quality of their time with family during WFH.

### ***Comfortable***

By doing WFH, many employees feel comfortable in their work, they reveal that by doing work at home, they do not feel supervised directly by managers as they usually get in the office. However, working directly supervised sometimes makes employees feel uncomfortable because psychologically they must maintain attitudes and behaviors in the face of managers, but when doing WFH, supervision is no longer an obstacle in working because they are freer to do work without having to maintain attitudes and behavior as in the office.

Furthermore, the negative impacts of WFH are as follows:

### ***Multitasking***

Some female informants, especially those who are married and have children, state that they have difficulties in dividing household tasks with their husbands such as taking care of children, cooking and other tasks because the husbands cannot do these tasks and household assistants, who usually do the work, are forced to temporarily leave during the COVID19 prevention quarantine period to apply social distancing and protect all people to avoid the pandemic so that they do dual roles and tasks even though this has an impact on workload and high work stress for them. Furthermore, this dual role and task does not apply to couples who can divide tasks with their respective partners and this actually makes the atmosphere at home more harmonious and fuller of cooperation like a team work.

### ***Decreased work motivation***

Decreased motivation in working is felt by employees who do WFH, this is due to the dilemma conditions and the mindset they have about “the perception of the home is a place to rest”. However, when working at home, many employees lose focus on choosing to work or relax with the family to enjoy the area quarantine period and social distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Decreased work motivation is also caused by many disturbances such as invitations to communicate through social media, social interaction with colleagues without discussing work and enjoying the means of entertainment they have such as watching movies, karaoke and playing with children, these activities directly make them reluctant to do the work given and often postpone their work.

### ***Additional cost***

However, by doing WFH, there will be additional financing. To this problem, all informants state that by doing WFH, many of the bills they incur such as increased electricity, internet, and communication costs, differ when they work in the office, all of the financings is certainly borne by the employer, due using electronic devices, sending data and making virtual communications more often result in surges in the bills they have to pay and this problem weighs on their routine expenses.

### ***Distraction***

During the WFH, many employees feel technical and social distractions such as family disruptions and slow internet speeds or electrical power restrictions so they often lose focus and choose to postpone work until they rediscover work spirit and reduce distraction to do or complete work.

### ***Limited Communication***

The WFH phenomenon as an effort to prevent COVID-19 in Indonesia generally provides several advantages and disadvantages, but the most often felt by employees (who become informants) is the obstruction of communication both with colleagues and managers. Limited communication is often caused by technical problems such as disruption of the internet network so they have difficulty sending work data and information to each other and they feel the difference from the psychological aspects in which before the COVID-19 outbreak, they always interact in the office and communicate directly so they can see the face and the response of the other person directly.

## **Discussion**

### ***Negative Impact of WFH***

The spread of COVID-19 certainly does not only have an impact on health aspects but more broadly, its impacts on economic, social, cultural, political and security aspects of all countries in the world. Learning from this situation, all organizations must have a strategy and the ability to deal with changes that occur and cannot be predicted. COVID-19 has changed the organizational culture and also the productivity of its human resources, WFH which has now become a phenomenon in Indonesia and made a clear contribution to the organization through its positive and negative impacts. Although many employees benefit from WFH, however, there must be risks and losses that they must accept such as fatigue which can reduce work motivation caused by multitasking in which many employees have to do two jobs at the same time such as household chores and also work offices. They often lose focus on work, this is due to the number of disturbances caused by secondary tasks causing disturbances to the memories of their primary tasks especially to older employees and this supports the findings (Clapp, Rubens, Sabharwal, & Gazzaley, 2011). However, the use of work media such as notebook, laptop, and communication tools that must be used also sometimes provide disruption to employee work productivity when they often have to receive information and communication both from managers and coworkers, this has also been discussed by (Gürkan Tekman, İmren, Tekman, & Gürkan Tekman, 2019). Furthermore, the multitasking also causes decreased motivation and employee performance, (Jacobs, 2017).

### ***Positive Impact of WFH***

WFH has given many positive impacts for employees in which they get a balance of work-life and social life (work-life balance) and this greatly contributes to the improved employee morale and this should be an organizational culture that can support the work-life balance of its employees, this agrees with (Weerasinghe & Jayawardana, 2020). Furthermore,

WFH impacts also gives freedom in doing work in which the employee is more flexible to determine when and where he/she works, in other words, they have their work area that will provide comfort in doing their work to increase employee job satisfaction, see (Ma, 2018). In addition, WFH has also been proven to provide quality time for employees to enjoy time with family and save time in completing work. This is different when they have to do work in the office, they certainly cannot combine time for family and work even though this does not fully apply in male employees and tends to be felt by married female employees, see (Magnusson, 2019), although many male employees feel responsible for spending time with family, see also (Maume, 2016), they do this at the same time to protect them from the impacts of COVID-19 spread.

### ***Impacts of Working from Home on Work Productivity***

However, WFH will have an impact on work productivity. Through the positive and negative impacts, WFH has changed the work culture of most organizations in Indonesia and the work productivity of its employees during the COVID-19 spread. Furthermore, by looking at some of the positive and negative impacts, we also examine the employee work productivity while doing work at home. The results are very surprising that the productivity of most employees working at the home declines, this is due to lack of facilities to support work such as computers, internet networks and some other disturbances such as feeling saturated because of being in the same environment in a relatively long time with restrictions on social life that must be done to reduce the spread of COVID-19 such as social distancing or physical distancing. In addition, WFH, in many organizations in Indonesia, is not the main concept or work culture that has long been implemented so that in this condition, many organizations and employees are not ready to conduct WFH. Besides, other psychological disturbances are felt by many employees such as the fear of the COVID-19 outbreak which is the reason for the WFH so that they are more interested in finding information via television or surfing the internet about the latest information on the COVID-19 outbreak and to what extent the government has dealt with the problem. This sometimes costs so much time and causes a lot of work postponed.

Furthermore, in a gender perspective, it is found that male employees, when compared to women in the context of the size of their work productivity, are more productive, this can be seen through the lack of distraction faced by male employees than female employees who tend to get more interference in doing WFH, the strong reason is the role of multitasking that they have to do as well as “nature” for an Indonesian woman who is still bound by the culture that a wife must always be faithful in serving her husband and children let alone be seen from the faith which believes that if they do not fulfill their obligations as a wife and a mother to her children is an act of sin and violates religious norms. In addition to the smaller distractions of female employees, male employees also tend not to have a dual role in domestic chores, although they sometimes have to share tasks with their partners but this is not the main obligation they have to do, besides generally, male employees convey that their wives and children value it very much when they are doing office work and they don't want to disturb, it is rooted in the culture and ethics of courtesy held by a wife and children, in contrast to male employees who sometimes have more power to disturb or order children and his wife and ask that their needs to be a priority even though this does not fully apply to all male or female employees as a wife. Then, from the viewpoint of completing work, in general, men are more productive, but there is one interesting thing in which to report the work of female employees is more productive and more orderly administratively, this is because female employees better understand the use of information technology and other media used to support WFH due to the habit of female employees to use gadgets, laptops, and social media in their daily lives so that sometimes for reporting work done online, male employees will ask for help from female

employees or their wives. However, what has been stated in this article, WFH clearly does not provide an increase in employee productivity in general and this is an important note for further studies.

### Conclusion

Finally, we can conclude that WFH has clearly been shown to provide major changes in organizational culture and work productivity in Indonesia. These findings will certainly be the aim of further studies to explore deeper about the WFH concept and its impact on the broader organization. In addition to examining employees who work in the office, we also get data from employees who work in factories and transportation fields, stating that as long as the restrictions on working hours and social distancing are implemented, they have experienced a reduction in income, they cannot do WFH because it is not possible to do so, such as employees who work in factories, they are forced to stop temporarily from work because there are no job support facilities prepared by the employer to work at home, so as employees in their transportation are forced to accept this situation because their income is highly dependent on passenger delivery services. Thus, WFH might be effectively applied to organizations that already have good work facilities but WFH cannot be applied to all areas of work that are highly dependent on direct service to consumers such as health workers, manufacturing and also transportation.

Meanwhile, we also conclude that WFH in a gender perspective provides many disadvantages for women in which they have to do multitasking which requires them to do office work and also homework at the same time, this is felt by many women who are married although some of them can share their duties with their partners but it does not give satisfaction to the results of their domestic chores because women have high standards of work in the context of domestic works which generally cannot be achieved by men so sometimes domestic works that their husbands have already done must be done again by them to better ensure that all household tasks are completed as normal like before doing WFH. Besides, the division of household tasks that they do sometimes actually becomes a problem in the household, such as protests from husbands who are reluctant to do housework or stress caused by high workloads, causing emotional instability between them and triggering arguments.

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