

The Effectiveness of Virtual Work to Keep Achieving Optimal Performance Amid the Covid-19 Virus Outbreak

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Abstract: Currently around the world affected by the covid-19 virus or known as the corona. Virtual work is now important to do besides the outbreak of this virus case. This is a challenge for the company and employees in facing the coronavirus epidemic. The purpose of this study is to find out and explain the effectiveness of virtual working to achieve optimal employee performance amid the covid-19 pandemic. This research is a systematic review (Systematic Review) using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis) method which is carried out systematically by following the correct stages or research protocols. Next, we present the results of our analysis in the form of recommendations in the implementation of virtual work activities. we recommend six approaches to support virtual work, namely the first is managerial support, the second is infrastructure, the third is a new policy and new rules, the fourth is scheduling, the fifth is trust, communication, and feedback, the sixth is technology applications, the last is knowledge sharing.

Keywords: Virtual Work, Trust, Communication, Performance, Covid-19.

INTRODUCTION

Currently around the world affected by the covid-19 virus or known as the corona. This makes many regions isolated and has an impact on a very drastic decline in the economy (Bayuni 2020). This makes workers have to work from home to keep themselves productive and maintain their performance amid the outbreak of the covid-19 virus (Fachriansyah 2020). This virus was first discovered in China with the spread of this virus can be between humans and is growing very rapidly (Kampf *et al.* 2020). So, it is very important to prevent the spread of this virus. Working from home is one way to stay productive amid the outbreak of this virus. Workers keep trying to work and study for the sake of their lives.

Virtual work is now important to do besides the outbreak of this virus case. Virtual work is work that employees do by utilizing technology (Tremblay and Thomsin 2012). The development of wireless technology is currently increasing the possibility of working in any place and time (Verburg, Bosch-sijtsema, and Vartiainen 2013). We observe an increase in virtual working practices throughout the world today, especially in Indonesia, this will require employees to improve their competence and be adaptable to the use of information technology (Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, and Garud 2001). Another thing that is on guard against covid-19 virus transmission is that they do not meet face to face or

isolate themselves, with virtual working having a positive impact on employees, namely changing communication patterns between employees who previously had direct physical contact through meetings can be replaced virtually (Brunelle 2013), without having to be in the office (Rafnsdóttir and Stefánsson 2014).

This is a challenge for the company and employees in facing the coronavirus epidemic. Various organizational aspects can be seen positively, the current information technology can be utilized to the fullest in the form of virtual work where employees do not need to face-to-face in doing their work, costs incurred by the company will be reduced such as electricity costs and building maintenance costs (Robey, Schwaig, and Jin 2003). But on the other hand, the work will be disrupted during the outbreak of the covid-19 virus that is starting to supply disrupted goods especially imported products, people will be isolated and will be afraid to leave, lack of collaboration (Leede *et al.* 2008; Samboh 2020). For employees, this can also be seen in several aspects. Positive aspects can be seen that by working in a virtual way they can manage their work flexibly, the existence of work-life balance, and being able to gather family (Felstead and Henseke 2017). The negative aspect that they can experience is the possibility of termination of employment due to the economic decline caused by the coronavirus outbreak (Gorbiano, Mufti, and Rahman 2020).

The purpose of this study is to add insight into how effective the use of virtual work in today's work-life

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during the outbreak of the coronavirus which requires isolation and cannot escape freely from the review of existing literature and uses qualitative methodologies to support this research. Next, we present the results of our analysis in the form of recommendations in the implementation of virtual work activities

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual virtual work can be said to be any form of work done by employees digitally without being hindered by place, time (Brunelle 2013). Working virtually is also a form of work from a variety of locations that use technology in running virtual business processes that are connected with all stakeholders (Humala 2017). Virtuality is now not only connecting between individuals but has been connecting between organizations, domestic and international. Virtual work is identical with the flexibility of employees at work, free movement, dynamic, creativity, and support the work-life balance of employees (Humala 2017).

Virtual work has positive aspects, namely efficiency, the sharing of information between employees, can increase productivity. Fellow employees will have a sense of interdependence, especially in terms of information, due to the success of an organization in virtual work by minimizing the loss of information. Therefore, it is important to exchange information through communication technology. This will help to exchange ideas, ideas, and ideas in creating the best solutions for organizations that have an impact on organizational performance (Kaul, Pande, and Ahuja 2017). Sharing information will create synergy not only between employees but also between divisions within an organization. Lack of a sense of sharing information will inhibit organizational problem-solving factors usually due to competition between employees (Shi and Weber 2018).

On the other hand, virtual work has challenges that are technological problems, lack of collaboration, distrust (Leede *et al.* 2008). First, the lack of social exchange among fellow employees will give a negative influence on trust due to the absence of non-verbal cues and the inability to infer the nature of others (Eisenberg and Krishnan 2018). Virtual work is also very susceptible to the trust factor because they are formed by bringing together talents from various locations and functions and must interact for a limited working period. Therefore it is important to build trust as a whole to create an effective team (Jones and

Graham 2015; Kaul *et al.* 2017). Second, the lack of direct interaction will hinder communication due to the absence of non-verbal interactions, body language, facial expressions. This will hinder exchange due to differences in direct communication and mediated by the computer (Morley, Cormican, and Folan 2015). Third, cultural differences between national culture and organizational culture in terms of work expectations and time, or the level of risk-taking or sharing of knowledge will be a challenge for the company as well (Jones and Graham 2015). Fourth, generational differences can make it difficult for employees to collaborate because not all can be classified as employees who are fluent in technology (Eisenberg and Krishnan 2018; Jones and Graham 2015).

The following characteristics of a working virtual, namely:

- a. First, Temporal limits in virtual work done for a particular task and a certain period (Kaul *et al.* 2017) and refers to the time of employee interaction on a particular task (Martins, Gilson, and Maynard 2004).
- b. Second, Functional and Culturally Diverse, where functional diversity comes from a variety of different business units and is involved in joint tasks (Shi and Weber 2018). Culturally, members within coworkers come from a variety of cultural backgrounds. This diversity will produce a variety of ideas that will help solve organizational problems (Kaul *et al.* 2017). However, what is worth watching out for is that this diversity can lead to conflicts in priorities and performance degradation (Shi and Weber 2018).
- c. Third, Geographically Dispersed were working virtually can be very helpful for employees when in remote or isolated geographical conditions (Martins *et al.* 2004). Virtual work can reach any boundary (Kaul *et al.* 2017). Virtual connections between employees across organizations will give employees access to a variety of lessons, skills, and development (Shi and Weber 2018).
- d. Fourth, Communicates electronically whereby working virtually, colleagues can use technology to communicate with each other mediated by computers and is a very vital thing in exchanging information (Morley *et al.* 2015; Shi and Weber 2018). Employees can choose various technologies to replace face-to-face interactions and support their work (Jones and Graham

2015; Martins *et al.* 2004). Forms of communication that can be done for example via teleconference, email, skype, etc. Mediation technology in communication relationships has weaknesses, especially in terms of emotional relationships, and cannot read non-verbal cues (Kaul *et al.* 2017).

Performance is defined as the extent to which employees reach the quality and quantity set by the organization (Khalil 2017). The results of previous studies state that working virtually without face to face will affect employee involvement and affect employee performance (Okechukwu, Egbo, and Isikuru 2017). Working virtually shows lower performance compared to working directly and face-to-face and has challenges in motivating, building relationships, and achieving performance because between employees will be difficult to meet, therefore feedback is needed for employees in improving their performance (Geister and Hertel 2006).

METHOD

This research is a systematic review (Systematic Review) using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis) method which is carried out systematically by following the correct stages or research protocols. A systematic review is a research method that aims to evaluate, identify, analyze all previous research results that are related and relevant to a particular topic, particular research, or the latest phenomenon of concern (Perry and Hammond 2002); (Wolor *et al.* 2020). The facts presented are comprehensive and balanced because systematic reviews are used to synthesize relevant research findings. Qualitative systematic review includes the following steps: Formulating research questions, conducting systematic literature review searches, screening and selecting suitable research articles, Conduct analysis and synthesis of qualitative findings, Implement quality control, Prepare a final report (Perry and Hammond 2002); (Wolor *et al.* 2020).

A qualitative approach is used to frame, analyze, and provide comprehensive solutions in virtual working for the employee during the epidemic covid-19 virus (Berkah and Sawarjuwono 2019). Various scientific articles are taken from specialized journals to help build the most prominent elements in describing virtual work that affects performance, based on several important points explained by different authors (Moreno *et al.* 2017).

DISCUSSION

At present, amid the outbreak of the covid-19 virus, a company must pay attention to security aspects, especially for human resources. Although in practice not all work can be done online for example regarding shipping and distribution. But several other aspects of work can be optimized to be done online. This research will try to provide some recommendations related to the application of virtual work to companies and employees.

Managerial Support

For virtual work, work must be supported by a company's top management. It would be impossible if, during an outbreak of the covid-19 virus, employees were asked to stay in and were only advised to be careful such as physical distance (Morley *et al.* 2015; Verburg *et al.* 2013).

Infrastructure

Technology infrastructure is very important in supporting the existence of virtual work, especially regarding the company's internal servers must be facilitated by management (Morley *et al.* 2015; Verburg *et al.* 2013). Previous research found that the support of IT infrastructure will spur positive change in the field of innovation by sharing documents (download or upload) and technical support in technology is important to keep the company's operations running virtually (Leede *et al.* 2008; Wiesenfeld *et al.* 2001).

New Policy and New Rules

Policies and rules of the management division to continue to appreciate the virtual presence and compensation to employees to be considered in maintaining the productivity rhythm of the employees themselves (Robey *et al.* 2003; Wiesenfeld *et al.* 2001). Then the duties and responsibilities during virtual work must be clearly defined to employees to create good communication (Morley *et al.* 2015). This is noteworthy because compared to working face-to-face, the productivity of virtual work is lower in terms of coordination (Martins *et al.* 2004). But this should not be a concern because there are now many communication methods that support the needs of organizations such as teleconferences with many participants using applications such as skype or zoom. The addition of video resources increases employee performance compared to just limited e-mail because it only conveys text-based information (Verburg *et al.* 2013).

Scheduling

The determination of virtual work schedules must be clear and well informed to employees. This is important so that it does not interfere with other work and discussions between employees online can be done well so that it is possible to transfer knowledge to other fellow employees (Jones and Graham 2015).

Trust, Communication, and Feedback

This will encourage the leaders of each division to maintain the trust of members of their division because it is difficult to maintain trust without physical contact, be able to monitor team performance comprehensively and have skills in working virtually. (Kaul *et al.* 2017; Morley *et al.* 2015). Building trust and communication between leaders and their employees is important in maximizing performance (Jones and Graham 2015). Generational differences can also lead to conflicts between employees in working virtually, so leaders need to continue to monitor performance and provide feedback to employees (Verburg *et al.* 2013). Another thing that can lead to conflict is diversity in the team. On the one hand, there are positive factors which can increase innovation and positive performance, but on the other hand, there are negative aspects if not managed properly for communication matters ie groups will produce breakthroughs but there will also be more failures with more heterogeneous teams (Leede *et al.* 2008).

Technology Application

Employees are allowed to use various virtual technology applications in support of their performance in the company and use virtual telecommunications channels to avoid communication between fellow work teams (Kaul *et al.* 2017; Martins *et al.* 2004; Morley *et al.* 2015). In addition to e-mail via text message, it can be through other virtual communication media that support face to face such as teleconferences to increase employee performance productivity (Verburg *et al.* 2013).

Knowledge Sharing

The company is obliged and ensures that its employees in working virtually can share information with other colleagues in achieving organizational goals and not be selfish especially in the midst of the outbreak of the covid-19 virus (Kaul *et al.* 2017; Martins *et al.* 2004). Because the challenge now is to work face-to-face, it will be easier to share knowledge and

information compared to working virtual (Jones and Graham 2015).

CONCLUSION

Working virtually is very important in the current era to keep companies competitive and safe from today's global challenges, especially with the outbreak of the covid-19 virus in which employees must work at home and the company tries to keep its business operations running. This is a challenge for companies and employees in facing the co-19 pandemic.

Current technological developments can be maximally utilized in the form of virtual work where employees do not need to face-to-face in doing their work, the costs incurred by the company will be reduced. This will help employees and companies to continue to achieve optimal performance. However, working virtually also has an adverse effect, namely the lack of direct interaction will hinder communication due to the absence of non-verbal interactions, body language, facial expressions. Cultural differences between national culture and organizational culture in terms of expectations and work time and generational differences can make it difficult for employees to collaborate because not all can be classified as employees who are fluent in technology.

Through this article, we recommend six approaches to support virtual work, the first is managerial support, the second is infrastructure, the third is new policies and new rules, the fourth is scheduling, the fifth is trust, communication, and feedback, the sixth is the application of technology, the last is knowledge sharing.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This research is only based on the literature review chosen by the author to help provide recommendations to employees and companies in dealing with the covid-19 virus outbreak from a variety of available literature sources. This was taken because the author is currently undergoing a policy from the Indonesian government for self-isolation and working from home. Future research requires a broader method through direct interviews or with quantitative methods to increase the repertoire of knowledge.

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