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Does Flexible Working Arrangement Affect Worker's Perceived Stress and Productivity?

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Abstract

The flexible working arrangement has been widely used in lots of countries. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of the flexible working arrangement on subjective productivity and well-being in Indonesia, particularly West Java. The convenience sampling technique was used with the sample selection criteria are as follows: 1) Workers who are domiciled in West Java, 2) Have or are currently doing a flexible work system. A total of 126 respondents participated in this study. The results indicate that the average total score for all variables, namely flexible working arrangements, subjective well-being, and perceived productivity, is high. This implies that workers' attitudes towards flexible work arrangements are high, workers have a good emotional state and satisfaction during flexible work arrangements, and individual perceptions of their work results are following predetermined targets. The simple regression test results show that the application of flexible work systems can affect subjective well-being and perceived productivity. The application of flexible working arrangements enabling workers to manage their work-life as well as their personal life, which impacts their subjective well-being. Flexible working arrangements implementation in organizations can be used as a new system in the world of work, even though the Pandemic is over. Thus, organizations can concentrate on essentials things such as the quality of work and organizations outcome.

Keywords: Flexible Working Arrangement, Subjective Productivity, Subjective Well-Being, Workers' Attitudes, Work System.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on various sectors, such as the economic, social, political and environmental sectors in all parts of the world. It also presents unprecedented challenges for public health, the food system and the world of work. A flexible working system is implemented by organizations as a way to survive these uncertain conditions. In Indonesia, the government calls on organizations to enforce work from home as an effort to suppress the spread of the virus.

The concept of flexible working or working flexibly is not entirely new. This concept has been discussed a lot and used in several organizations. Flexible working arrangements (FWA) are organizational strategies that enable employees to better balance demands from various

domains (Allen, 2001). Wilson et al., (2001) define FWA as a work structure that changes the time or place of work regularly. Based on these two concepts, it can be inferred that a job can be performed flexibly and tailored to the needs of the company or the employee in the FWA system. The main reasons for the emergence of the concept of workplace flexibility are technological advancements and easier internet access. Flexitime, reducing working days, telecommuting such as working from home (WFH), and working part-time are examples of flexible working arrangements also known as Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA) that are widely used in developed countries (Timms et al., 2015). Many studies have found that this work strategy is appealing not only to employees who have family responsibilities but also to employees who want flexibility between life at work and life outside the workplace. (Been & Beijer, 2014; Klindžić & Marić, 2019; Timms et al., 2015). The FWA method is also considered to be able to decrease the company's operational costs as it no longer requires a large building to accommodate its employees. Employees also benefit from not having to pay for transportation from their home to work. This FWA is also beneficial to the environment. With less activity going from the place of residence to work, the emission of carbon dioxide is also lower (Skyrme, 1994; Timms & Cook, 2015; Wilson et al., 2001). FWA does not refer to just one work pattern. Common FWA work strategies include implementing flexibility, reducing working days, telecommuting, and part-time work (Skyrme, 1994; Timms et al., 2015). According to many studies, the use of FWA not only improves the quality of work-life balance but also increases work productivity (Been & Beijer, 2014; Klindžić & Marić, 2019).

Employee productivity in the organization is critical to the organization's success. In general, the higher the employee productivity, the higher the organizational productivity. Therefore, organizations need to pay attention to the productivity of each employee. Kopelman (1986) define productivity as a measure that compares input and output in a process, including in the production process. Greater productivity will be generated if the resulting output exceeds the input. Conversely, the lower the output produced compared to the input, the lower the productivity produced. The International Labor Organization (ILO) defines productivity as the ratio between the amount produced and the number of resources used to produce that output. In addition, the effective use of innovation and resources can also increase the value of the goods or services produced. Labor productivity is influenced by various factors, both those related to the workforce itself (internal factors) and other factors (external factors). These factors include, the level of education (the higher the level of education the better the work productivity), the environment and work climate (relations between employees, leaders), skills, attitudes and work ethics, technology, motivation (Leaders need to know and understand. work motivation of each employee to motivate them to work even better), nutrition and health, production facilities, income levels, and good management.

The occurrence of a pandemic can also increase stress and anxiety in the community. The community must not only deal with the pandemic but also adapt to changes in lifestyle and work patterns and devise strategies to maintain work productivity. Paredes et al., (2021) found that the threats posed by a pandemic significantly affect a person's well-being. Subjective well-being (SWB) is an individual's subjective evaluation of life which includes concepts such as life satisfaction, emotions, feelings of fulfilment, satisfaction with domains, work, and emotional levels. Well-being subjective is a product of an assessment of the whole of life both positively and negatively (Diener et al., 1999). Subjective well-being involves a multidimensional evaluation of life, including life satisfaction and affective evaluation of emotions and moods (Mcgillivray & Clarke, 2006). Emotions and moods represent a person's

assessment of events in their life, which are both referred to as effects. Affect is divided into two categories: positive affect and negative affect. Another thing that is also a component of SWB is domain satisfaction (Diener et al., 1999). SWB and happiness are two different things. Happiness is a narrower concept when compared to SWB and different from life satisfaction even though life satisfaction is a part of SWB. However, the terms life satisfaction, morals and happiness are often used interchangeably to refer to SWB. Several things have been identified that have the potential to affect well-being, namely income; individual characteristics; the quality of social relationships; how a person spends his time; attitudes and beliefs about yourself, others, or life; relationship; and the broader economic, social and political environment (Dolan et al., 2008). When a person's well-being decreases, it will affect work productivity and the person's contribution to society (Surya et al., 2017).

To date, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on many sectors not only in Indonesia but also around the world. However, no one has yet discussed the impact of implementing flexible working arrangements to reduce COVID-19 spread on subjective productivity and well-being in Indonesia. Thus, this study will discuss the effect of the flexible working arrangement on subjective productivity and well-being in Indonesia, particularly West Java.

Method

This study employs a verification method to quantitatively assess the impact of flexible work arrangements on well-being and work productivity. The convenience sampling technique was used for sampling. The sample selection criteria are as follows: 1) Workers who are domiciled in West Java, and 2) Have or are currently doing a flexible work system. Data were collected using online-distributed instruments that contained the three research variables. A total of 126 respondents participated in this study. The instruments used in this study used instruments that had been developed in previous research. The instrument for variable flexible working arrangements was adapted from an instrument developed by Albion (2004) and Gamal Aboelmaged & Mohamed el Subbaugh (2012) and consists of 18 statement items. The instrument for subjective well-being variables was adapted from The WHO-5 Well-Being Scale, which consists of 5 simple and non-invasive questions, which take advantage of the respondents' subjective well-being. This scale has sufficient validity both as a screening tool for depression and as an outcome measure in clinical trials and has been applied successfully in a variety of study areas (Topp et al., 2015). The perceived productivity variable is measured using an instrument developed by Staples et al., (1999) and consists of 5 statement items. All indicators in this study use a Likert scale. Then the data were analyzed using a simple regression test to determine the effect of the flexible work system (FWA) on subjective well-being and perceived productivity.

Results and Discussion

Validity and reliability tests were performed on the three research variables, namely the variable application of the flexible work system (FWA), subjective well-being, and perceived productivity, to assess the instrument's level of goodness. Indicators that have a validity value below the criteria are eliminated. The indicators whose data will be further analyzed for flexible working arrangement variables are 9 indicators, while subjective well-being and perceived productivity variables are 5 and 6, respectively, based on the validity test results. Based on the reliability test results, Cronbach's alpha value for the flexible working arrangement variable was .872, Cronbach's alpha value for the subjective well-being variable

was .888, and Cronbach's alpha value for the variable perceived productivity was .921. Based on the criteria, Cronbach's alpha with a value of > 0.6 was declared reliable, meaning that all variables in this study were declared reliable because they had a value of Cronbach's alpha > 0.6 .

The mean values for the three research variables are presented in the table below. In the Flexible Working Arrangement variable, all indicators are in the High category. The average value of the highest indicator on this variable is for the item "Working more flexible hours is very important for me to fulfil family responsibilities", and this indicator is in the High category. This demonstrates that the availability of flexible work arrangements or systems will allow workers to fulfil their responsibilities in family matters. Work-life balance has become a dominant issue in the workplace because workers, both men and women, believe they have less time to manage work commitments and personal responsibilities (Lockwood, 2003). The lowest average indicator value on this variable is for the statement "Flexible work arrangements are an effective work method". Even though the value is the lowest in this variable, this item is still included in the High category. This means that workers consider a flexible work system as an effective work method. Workers can manage their time for business and personal matters independently with a flexible work system. In the subjective well-being variable, all indicators are in the high category. The highest average score on this variable was for the item "My daily life is filled with things that are of interest to me", while the lowest average score was for the item "When I wake up, I feel refreshed and well-rested", and both are in the high category. That is, subjectively individuals judge that they have a good mood, and have satisfaction with their life, and it can be seen from the individual's view of their daily life, where they feel that their daily life is filled with interesting things, and every morning the individual feels enthusiastic to start their activities. In the variable perceived productivity, all items are in the high category. The highest score on this variable is for the item "I believe that I am an effective employee". This means that individual workers believe that the work results obtained are in accordance with the work targets established. The lowest average score is for the item "My boss believes that I am an efficient employee", but is still in the high category. This value can be increased by increasing communication between superiors and subordinates.

Table 1. Indicator Average Value

<i>Flexible Working Arrangement</i>			<i>Subjektif Well-being</i>			<i>Perceived Productivity</i>		
Item	Mean	Category	Item	Mean	Category	Item	Mean	Category
1	3.71	High	1	3.72	High	1	4.05	High
2	3.69	High	2	3.59	High	2	3.71	High
5	3.72	High	3	3.71	High	3	3.79	High
6	3.65	High	4	3.58	High	4	3.97	High
7	3.67	High	5	3.75	High	5	3.89	High
8	3.64	High				6	3.70	High
16	3.63	High						
17	3.46	High						
18	3.40	High						

The average total score for the flexible working arrangement variable is 3.62 and is in the high category. This means that the attitude of workers towards the existence of flexible work arrangements is high. Since the existence of government regulation in March 2020, which

regulates the application of the Work-from-home system that emerged as a result of overcoming and preventing the spread of Covid 19 in Indonesia, flexible work arrangements have become widely recognized. Currently, the work system applied to workers is the WFH system and the picket work system (alternating WFH and WFO). The application of this flexible work system was also welcomed positively by workers. This occurs because workers believe that flexible work arrangements can help them balance their personal and professional lives and that they can independently determine their time for work and personal matters. The value of this FWA can be increased to Very High, by supporting workers by providing technology that makes it easier for workers to coordinate for task completion, arranging virtual routine meeting schedules, arranging working hours so that work can run well and more effectively, besides that workers are given trust by the organization or superiors/managers so that workers can be more comfortable in doing work. The average total score for the subjective well-being variable is 3.67 and is in the high category. This means that workers have a good mood and satisfaction. With a high level of well-being, it can provide life benefits and increase life satisfaction significantly (Diener & Ryan, 2008). Worker's well-being is an important thing that can be assessed as a predictor of employee and organizational productivity, absenteeism, employee turnover, and performance deficits (R, 2004; TA, 2001; Wright TA, 2007). In addition, interest in individual well-being in work has increased along with the higher risk of workers facing labour mental and physical health as a result of job stress (Bennett P, Williams Y, Page N, 2004). Rothmann (2002) states that there is a relationship between the well being perceived by workers, job satisfaction, stress, and work attachments. The subjective value of well-being can be increased to a very high level, by doing activities that are positive and interesting and by practising positive thinking that can affect subjective well-being (Diener & Ryan, 2008). The average total score for the perceived productivity variable is 3.85 and is in the high category. This means that people's perceptions of their work are aligned with predetermined goals. This can be caused by several factors, one of which is individuals who tend to rate their work higher than usual, as evidenced by various types of self-report measurements such as perceived productivity. Many individuals are reluctant to report if the individual is working productively or unproductively. Even so, the perception of productivity can describe individual productivity to a certain level (Aboelmagd & Mohamed el Subbaugh, 2012; Van Der Voordt, 2004).

Table 2. Average Total Variable Score

Variable	Mean	Category
<i>Flexible Working Arrangement</i>	3.62	High
<i>Subjective Well-being</i>	3.67	High
<i>Perceived Productivity</i>	3.85	High

The next table shows the results of a simple regression test to examine the effect of the independent flexible working arrangements on the dependent variable of subjective well-being. Based on this test, the coefficient value remains at 8,176, while the FWA value is 0.312. The positive constant value of 8,176 shows the positive constant value of the independent variable, namely the flexible working arrangement. This shows that if the value of the independent variable increases, the subjective well being variable will increase. The regression coefficient X is 0.312, which states that if the flexible working arrangement

increases by one unit, then the well being will increase by 0.312. Meanwhile, if there is a decrease in flexible working arrangements, it will reduce subjective well-being.

Table 3. Regression Test Results from Effect of FWA on WB

	Unstandardized Coefficients			T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	8.176	1.1415		5.777	.000
<i>Flexible Working Arrangement (X)</i>	.312	.043	.550	7.333	.000

The table below shows the value of the relationship between flexible working arrangement variables and subjective well-being variables. In the table, the correlation value between variables is 0.550. This value can be interpreted that the relationship between the two variables is quite strong. The table also shows the coefficient of determination of 0.302. This value implies that the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable is 30.2%. While the other 69.8% are influenced by other factors outside the variables examined in this study.

Table 4. Value of the coefficient of determination

Model	R	R Square
1	.550	.302

Testing the meaning of the model significantly uses the t-test to test the hypothesis of whether the flexible working arrangement variable influences subjective well-being. The significant level used is 5% with degrees of freedom $df = n - k = 126 - 2 = 124$. Then the t-table value is 1.65723. Based on Table 3, it is found that the t-test statistical value for a flexible working arrangement is 7,333, and the sig (p-value) for a flexible working arrangement is 0,000. Based on the testing criteria for the variable t-count value of the flexible working arrangement = $7.333 > t \text{ table} = 1.65723$, then H_0 is rejected. This means that with a confidence level of 95% it is reasonable to suggest that the regression coefficient of a flexible working arrangement is meaningful in the model, or it can be concluded that a flexible working arrangement influences subjective well-being, or that a flexible working arrangement has a role in improving the subjective well-being of workers. It's because the implementation of flexible work arrangements, where work can be done flexibly (both in terms of time and location of work) and adjusted to the conditions of the organization and the workers themselves, can have a positive impact on improving the quality of work-life balance of the workers themselves. Workers can have time to manage their work-life as well as their personal life, which results in increased feelings of happiness, satisfaction, or subjective well-being from a person. Following the results of the study by Dolan et al., (2008), where a person's well-being can be influenced by the quality of social relationships, as well as how a person spends his time. Of course, flexible work arrangements can maintain the quality of relationships, not only social relations with colleagues but also with family. In addition, by implementing a flexible work system, a person can better manage how he spends his time.

The results of the regression test to see the effect of the independent flexible working arrangement on the dependent variable on perceived productivity can be seen in the table below. Based on this test, the fixed coefficient value (a) is 16.306, and the coefficient (b) value is 0.208. The positive constant value of 16,306 shows the positive influence of the independent variable, namely the flexible working arrangement. This shows that if the value

of the independent variable increases, the variable perceived productivity will increase. At the regression coefficient X of 0.208, it states that if the flexible working arrangement increases by one unit, then productivity will increase by 0.208. The probability value t-count of the independent variable FWA is lower than 0.05, this indicates that the independent variable FWA has a significant effect on the dependent variable productivity at alpha 5%. This means that the application of FWA in organizations has a significant effect on increasing the perception of individual productivity. This result is in line with the research of Kelliher & Anderson (2008) which shows a relationship between FWA and individual perceptions of the quality of their work. Different results are shown in research by Been & Beijer (2014) and Van Der Voordt (2004) where FWA does not show a significant difference in the perception of individual productivity.

Table 5. Regression Test Results from Effect of FWA on PP

	Unstandardized Coefficients			T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	16.306	1.579		10.324	.000
<i>Flexible Working Arrangement (X)</i>	.208	.048	.366	4.385	.000

The following table shows the value of the relationship between flexible working arrangement variables and perceived productivity variables. In the table, the correlation value between variables is 0.336. This value can be interpreted that the relationship between the two variables is quite strong. The table also shows the coefficient of determination of 0.336. This value implies that the FWA variable is influenced by the productivity variable by 36.6%. While the other 63.4% are influenced by other factors outside the variables examined in this study.

Table 6. Value of the coefficient of determination

Model	R	R Square
2	.366	.134

Testing the significant meaning of the model also uses the t-test to test the hypothesis of whether the flexible working arrangement variable influences perceived productivity. The significant level used is 5% with degrees of freedom $df = n - k = 126 - 2 = 124$. Then the t-table value is obtained at 1.65723. Based on Table 5, it is found that the t-count statistical value for a flexible working arrangement is 4.385, and the sig value (p-value) for a flexible working arrangement is 0.000. Based on the testing criteria for the t-count value of the flexible working arrangement = $4.385 > t \text{ table} = 1.65723$, H_0 is rejected. This means that with a 95% confidence level it is reasonable to suggest that the regression coefficient of a flexible working arrangement means meaning in the model, or it can be concluded that flexible working arrangements have a significant effect on perceived productivity, or flexible working arrangements have a role in increasing the perceived productivity of workers. This is in line with the results of research by Skyrme (1994) and studies conducted by Wilson et al., (2001) which shows that the positive benefits obtained by implementing a flexible work system are that it can increase work productivity, both in terms of the organization and the employees concerned. Not only productivity, worker satisfaction and morale can increase with the application of flexible work systems, and organizations can focus more on the outcome and

quality of work, not on other things such as worker attendance (Wilson et al., 2001). The positive results shown by implementing a flexible work system can be used as a working system chosen by the organization. Strategies for implementing flexible work systems that can be carried out by organizations can be done by implementing flexitime, reducing working days, or working remotely, which is not limited in terms of space and time. Of course, to implement a flexible work system, organizations need to prepare several things such as qualified telecommunication support facilities, as well as rules and policies that facilitate coordination between work teams and good supervision to complete work tasks.

Conclusions

Flexible work arrangements, which have become widely accepted in Indonesia since the implementation of government regulations in March 2020 govern the use of a work-from-home system that arose as a result of overcoming and preventing the spread of Covid 19 in Indonesia. Currently, the work system applied to workers is the WFH work system and the picket work system (alternating WFH and WFO). According to the findings of the study, the average total score for the variable flexible working arrangement, subjective well-being, and perceived productivity are in the high range. This means that, first and foremost, workers have a positive attitude toward the existence of flexible work arrangements. This occurs because workers believe that flexible work arrangements can help them balance their personal and professional lives and that they can independently determine how much time they spend on work and personal matters. Second, a high average value of the total subjective well-being score indicates that the worker is in a good mood and is satisfied. It can provide life benefits and significantly increase life satisfaction, and it can be used as a predictor of employee and organizational productivity, absenteeism, employee turnover, and performance deficits. Third, a high perceived productivity value indicates that an individual's perception of their work is aligned with the predetermined target.

The results of a simple regression test conducted to determine whether implementing a flexible work system has an effect on subjective well-being and perceived productivity show that implementing a flexible work system can affect subjective well-being and perceived productivity. This is due to the fact that implementing flexible work arrangements, where work can be done flexibly (both in terms of time and location of work) and adjusted to the conditions of the organization and the workers themselves, can have a positive impact on improving the workers' quality of work-life balance. Workers can have time to manage their work and personal lives, resulting in increased feelings of happiness, satisfaction, or subjective well-being. Furthermore, the positive outcomes of implementing a flexible work system include increased work productivity, both for the organization and the employees involved. Implementing a flexible work system can increase not only productivity but also worker satisfaction and morale, and organizations can focus more on the outcome and quality of work rather than other factors such as worker attendance.

This study adds novelty and value by providing empirical results of flexible working arrangements in organizations. This study also includes information on how flexible working arrangements affect workers' well-being and perceived performance. The findings of this study lend support to the notion that implementing flexible working arrangements can benefit both the organization and the workers themselves.

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