

The Effect of Work Flexibility and Stress on the Performance of Civil Servants during the Covid-19 Pandemic (Study on Employees Aceh Watershed Department)

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Abstract

This study aims to examine how much influence the variable flexible work arrangements have on the performance of civil servants at the Aceh Water Service through work stress during the covid-19 pandemic. Data were collected using a survey method through an online questionnaire from a population of 268 employees of the Aceh Water Service with the status of civil servants using a census sampling technique. The data is processed using AMOS 24.0 software to find out the results. The findings show that flexible work arrangements have a positive and significant effect on employee performance, flexible work arrangements have a negative and significant effect on work stress, work stress has a negative and significant effect on employee performance, flexible work arrangements have an indirect effect on employee performance through work stress as a mediation. This research shows that flexible work arrangements are proven to improve employee performance during the pandemic. In addition, work stress will reduce employee performance because flexible work causes multitasking and stress in completing tasks.

Keywords

flexible work arrangements;
work stress; employee
performance



I. Introduction

The number of cases of the spread of the COVID-19 virus that has spread to almost all countries in the world, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declares that COVID-19 is a global pandemic and is seriously welcomed by the President of the Republic of Indonesia who declares the spread of COVID-19 as a national disaster (disaster). non-natural). Seeing the significant developments in the spread of the virus, President Joko Widodo on March 15, 2020, officially appealed to all office employees to be able to maintain direct contact and avoid human crowds, then a policy was taken with a decision for workers to be able to work from their homes, study, worship as well. carried out from their respective homes (Purnamasari, 2020). In this regard, the Minister of State Apparatus Empowerment and Bureaucratic Reform responded to the President's appeal through Circular Letter Number 19 of 2020 concerning Adjustment of the work system of the state civil apparatus in an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within government agencies, and urges to carry out official duties by working from home. (Work From Home) for State Civil Apparatus. The Circular contains provisions for guidelines for implementing work from home (WFH) for state civil servants, including adjustments to the work system, organization of official travel activities, application of hygiene standards, and health report (KemenpanRB, 2020).

In reality, WFH is not yet fully understood by civil servants as a flexible work system. Civil servants found a problem where these employees previously worked in the office manually, now they have to adjust their work not at the office but at home and a

place that can be used as a place to work. The majority of office employees experience a dilemma because of the mindset that so far the office is an area/place to carry out work tasks and routines, while the home is used as a place to rest and gather with family (McCloskey, 2018). WFH also has shortcomings in its performance as a team, as well as a less than optimal monitoring system by managers (Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). One of the problems that appears from working from home or remote work is how to find ways and solutions so that productivity can continue to be increased, especially employees who work from home are a critical concern for managers or leaders who consider remote work (Bosch-Sijtsema, *et al*, 2010).

Covid 19 pandemic caused all efforts not to be as maximal as expected (Sihombing and Nasib, 2020). The outbreak of this virus has an impact of a nation and Globally (Ningrum *et al*, 2020). The presence of Covid-19 as a pandemic certainly has an economic, social and psychological impact on society (Saleh and Mujahiddin, 2020).

There are several things that can affect employee performance including flexible work arrangements and work stress. One of the systems implemented related to flexible work arrangements, namely remote work known as work from home, Remote Work with other terms Work From Home has changed the work culture in most organizations in Indonesia in particular and affected the performance of each employee during the outbreak of the epidemic. COVID-19. Employee performance is the achievement of an employee or group of people in an organization whose results are in accordance with the authorities, duties, and responsibilities to achieve organizational goals legally, not violating the law, and in accordance with ethics and morals (Moeheriono, 2014). It is the same as the definition of civil servant performance as described in Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 30 of 2019 that the performance of civil servants is the result of work achieved by every civil servant in the organization/unit in accordance with employee performance targets and work behavior. As state servants, civil servants must have work discipline and carry out their assigned tasks, because with good performance and time efficiency, the.

There are three main factors that influence how individuals work. These factors are the individual's ability to perform the job, the level of effort expended, and organizational support. Job criteria or specific dimensions of job performance will identify the most important elements in the job. Job criteria are the most important factors that people do in their jobs because they define what organizations pay employees to do; Therefore, the performance of individuals on job criteria should be measured and compared against standards, and then the results communicated to employees (Mathis & Jackson, 2009).

Work flexibility or what is commonly called a flexible working arrangement is a policy that has been flexibly set by management, which means that they can choose the place and time of workers (Carlson *et al*, 2010). According to Casper & Harris (2008), employees and companies benefit from the application of work flexibility. Companies that offer flexibility in terms of work can be attractive, attractive and can also maintain the quality of their workforce or employees who are good at the company.

According to research (Davidescu, Apostu, Paul, & Casuneanu, 2020), Work flexibility has occupied an important place in recent decades in sociology, industry as well as resource management. Human resources, being a popular term in various fields and research directions, are presented as a necessity in the contemporary workplace. Certain jobs also require employees to be physically present.

Employee friendly flexibility can be an alternative for employees to choose over the way they do their job. Therefore, flexible work practices are expected to have a positive impact on employees' perceptions of their jobs (Kelliher & Anderson, 2008). On the other

hand, some experts say that flexibility can be beneficial for organizations and employees, but it is not a powerful problem solver, because on the other hand it can also be detrimental to the employees themselves.

The mental well-being of employees is an important determinant of overall health and has a major impact on quality of life and work productivity (Burton, Schultz, Dee, & Burton, 2008). Currently, it is a major source of stressors that increase employee emotional stress, which has never happened before (Hamouche, 2020). Stress at work is a person's physical and psychological reaction to changes in their environment that are considered disturbing and threatening, so that individuals who are experiencing stress feel nervous and chronically ill. (Anoraga, 2011).

Stress is unavoidable in life. Humans have many needs in life, but obstacles and obstacles always accompany them to satisfy them. According to Singer (1990, p.369) in (Mardiana, 2001:165), stress compensates for the physiological and psychological reactions that people show in response to environmental events, which are called stressors. There are three classifications of stressors, first: organizational stressors that are directly related to the work area and functions that are directly related to activities. Second, life events that are not interfered with by organizational aspects, are only influenced by personal life problems. Third, individual stressors are related to individual characteristics when looking at their environment (Mardiana, 2001).

The purpose of this study is to analyze how much influence the variable flexible work arrangements have on the performance of civil servants at the Aceh Water Service through work stress during the covid-19 pandemic.

II. Review of Literature

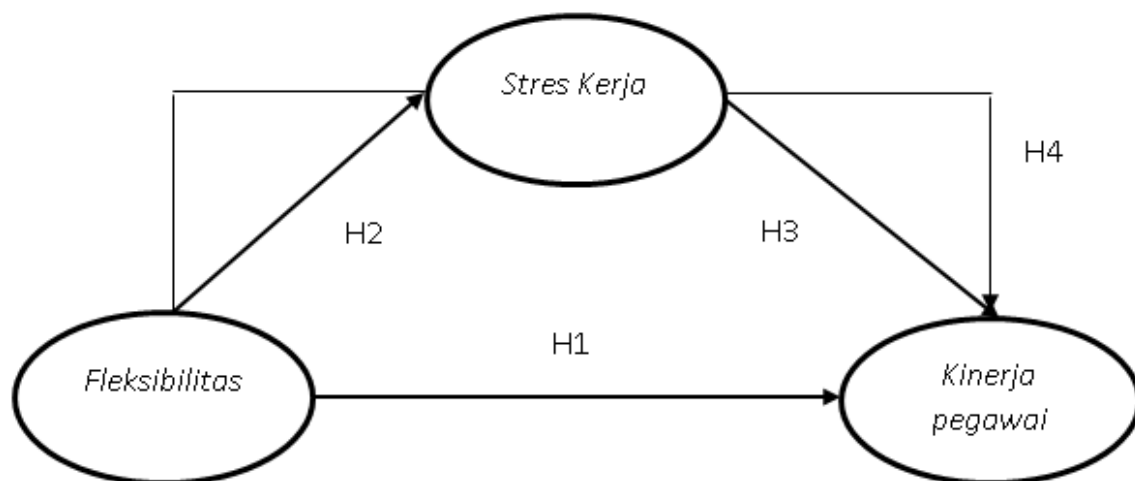


Figure 1. Theoretical Thinking Framework

Source : H1 : (Donnelly & Johns, 2020; Vincent, 2018);

H2 : (Alifyanti, Singh, & Hussain, 2021; Kapoor, Yadav, Bajpai, & Srivastava, 2021; Mache, Servaty, & Harth, 2020)

H3 : (Abid & Barech, 2017; Purwandini et al, 2021; Saleem, Malik, & Qureshi, 2021)

H4 : (Hastutiningsih, 2018; Jamshed, Khan, Haq, & Arif, 2011)

2.1 Influence of Flexible Work Arrangements on Employee Performance

In the WFH concept, trust is a very important factor that must be agreed upon by all parties, trust in other individuals is based on the hope that other individuals will take steps that are considered important, trust in a relationship develops (or fails)) depends on several factors or on the basis of belief (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995).

A flexible work strategy has a significant effect on employee performance in an organization (Vincent, 2018). Workers who work remotely tend to be overworked by spending long working hours than they would normally do just in the office during normal working hours (Donnelly & Johns, 2020). Flexibility, work-life balance between activities, social, and the loss that is the consequence such as reduced trust, over-cost and also multitasking workers of different sexes are certainly an attractive event to be researched in order to expand the development of the concept of remote work and contribute to increasing labor productivity. human resource work in organizations (Krasulja, Vasiljevic-Blagojevic, & Radojevic, 2015). Based on the explanation above, the following hypotheses are generated:

H1: Flexibility has a positive and significant effect on the performance of civil servants at the Aceh Water Service during the pandemic.

Work from home for employees or employees have the right to set work locations and durations as work flexibility, because there is no working time limit as is the custom set by the office for them. Based on the research of Kapoor *et al.*, (2021) , found an inverse relationship between perceived stress and psychological well-being. Flexible work arrangements or teleworking act as partial mediators and resilience proved to be a significant moderator for the teleworking-well-being relationship.

Flexibility allows for increased work stress, in this case showing the difference between men and women, female workers who also act as mothers continue to struggle to balance the demands of work and family, especially if their income is low (Ray & Pana-Cryan, 2021). There is a significant relationship between flexible work arrangements and work stress, thereby promoting work-life balance and well-being for employees because it reduces work-life conflict, pressure, and is beneficial in reducing work stress due to the implementation of flexible work arrangements (Adebayo, 2020). Based on the description above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Flexibility has a significant negative effect on work stress for civil servants at the Aceh Water Service during the pandemic.

2.2 The Effect of Work Stress on Employee Performance

Many stress factors are experienced by employees, the effect of work stress on performance shows negative factors that make employees depressed have a negative effect on employee performance (Daniel, 2020). Theoretically, job stress has an impact on performance appraisal. According to (Velampy, T. & Aravinthan, 2013) states that "Occupational stress is a pattern of emotional, cognitive, behavior and psychological reactions to adverse and noxious aspects of work context, work organization, and the work environment". This means that work stress is an emotional pattern of cognitive behavior and psychological reactions to harmful and harmful aspects of every job, work organization and work environment. Based on the description above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Work stress has a significant negative effect on the performance of the Aceh Water Service Civil Servants during the pandemic

2.3 Effect of Flexible Work Arrangements on Employee Performance through Job Stress

(Song *et al.*, 2020) revealed that Chinese remote workers had lower stress levels than working from the office after resuming work during the pandemic. Tri Hastutiningsih, (2018) in his research entitled "The Influence of Workload and Work Environment on Employee Performance Mediated by Work Stress" shows the results that workload on performance through work stress has a negative and significant effect on employee performance the ability of each employee is different from one another, this causes job stress to appear both consciously and unconsciously.

Flexible work can lead to work-multitasking and stress resulting in blurred boundaries between work and home roles leading to an increase in work-family conflict (Dfesrochers *et al*, 2000). An employee in his profession in the banking sector becomes a potential source of stress due to the amount of time they spend at work and often reduces their performance (Jamshed *et al.*, 2011). Based on the description above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Job stress mediates the effect of flexible work regulations on employee performance

III. Research Method

The population in this study were civil servants at the Aceh Irrigation Service Office as many as 268 people. While the sample in this study were all civil servants at the Aceh Water Service who worked from home during the COVID-19 pandemic, and did not serve as the highest structural officials (echelon II and echelon III).

This study uses a sampling technique with a saturated sampling method (census), namely a sampling technique where all members of the population are all sampled (Sugiyono, 2019).

The data collection method used in this study was to conduct a survey using a questionnaire. The questionnaire used in this study is a closed questionnaire, where a questionnaire with closed questions can make it easier for respondents to provide answers and compensate for the limitations of research costs and time (Manoppo, 2020).

The form of the measurement scale in this study uses a Likert Scale in the form of a checklist. The questionnaire in this study uses a Likert scale because it can measure the attitudes, opinions, and views of a person or group of people about social events (Sugiyono, 2019). This questionnaire uses an interval of 1 to 5, where 1 indicates strongly disagree and 5 indicates strongly agree. Employee performance will be measured using the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) method developed by (Koopmans *et al.*, 2014), as many as 8 items, Counterproductive work behavior (CWB) as many as 5 items.

Work flexibility was measured using the Organizational Support Scales developed by (Baker, Avery, & Crawford, 2007), with a scale of technical support, human resource support, and manager trust.

Job stress was measured using The New Job Stress Scale, which was developed by (Shukla & Srivastava, 2016), with 9 items. And the analytical method used in this study is the Structural Equation Model (SEM) which is operated using the AMOS 24.0 program.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

Description of Research Sample Description of the sample in the study are as follows:

Table 1. Description of the Research Sample

No.	Demographic Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age	21 – 30 years	23	8.58%
		31 – 40 years	130	48.51 %
		41 – 50 years	95	35.45 %
		> 51 years	20	7.46 %
2	Gender	Male	199	74.25 %
		Female	69	25, 75 %
3	Last Education	SMA / SMK Diploma (I/III)	99 7	36.94 % 2.61 %
		Bachelor (S1)	115	42.91 %
		Master (S2)	47	17.54 %
4	Working Period	1 – 10 years	42	15,67 %
		11 – 15 years	94	35,07 %
		16 – 20 years	96	35,82 %
		> 20 years	36	13,43 %

4.2 Discussion

Testing the SEM assumptions in this study are as follows:

a. Normality

Test The normality test of the data can be shown by using the *critical ratio skewness value* which has a value range of ± 2.58 at a significance level of 0.01. In this study, it can be seen that the *multivariate* data has been normally distributed because it has a *critical ratio (cr)* value of -1.793.

b. Outlier Test

In determining outliers, it can be detected from the *Mahalonobis Distance* value by paying attention to the *chi-square* of the degree of freedom or *degree of freedom* at a significance level of 0.001 (Ghozali, 2014). In this study, there were no *multivariate outliers*.

c. Multicollinearity Test

If the determinant value of the covariance matrix is 0 then the data has a multicollinearity or singularity problem. In this study, the output using AMOS 24.0 shows the following results: *Determinant of Sample Covariance Matrix* 0.9 so it can be concluded that there is no multicollinearity or singularity problem. Thus, the data is feasible to be used in this study.

d. Residual Test

Residual test can be done by looking at the value of the *standardized residual covariances* with a significance level below 2.58. In this study, the output results shown by all data have met the required value, which is not outside ± 2.58 so that the research model is good.

e. Validity Test

The indicator can be said to be valid if it has a *standardized loading estimate* of 0.50. This study shows that all indicators have a *standardized loading estimate* above 0.50. Therefore, the indicator is declared valid as a variable measuring instrument.

f. Reliability Test

Value of *construct reliability* acceptable While the *variance extracted* > 0.50 (Ferdinand, 2014). In this study, *construct reliability* and *variance extracted* have met the *cut-off value* where the resulting value is above the significance level. Therefore, each indicator used in this study is reliable.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis Testing in this study is based on the Critical Ratio (CR) of the causal relationship as follows:

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing

	Estimate	SE	CR	P	Label
Individual_Performance <--- Flexibility	.543	.078	6.985	***	par_28
Work_Stress <--- Flexibility	-.675	.099	-6.848	***	par_15
Individual_Performance <--- Work_Stress	-.276	.047	-5.821	***	par_16

H1: Flexibility has a positive and significant impact on the performance of civil servants at the Aceh Water Service during the pandemic.

Flexibility has a positive and significant impact on the performance of civil servants at the Aceh Water Service during the pandemic because the CR value is > 1.96 , which is 6.985 and p value < 0.05 . Thus, **H1 is accepted**.

H2: Flexibility has a significant negative effect on Work Stress on Civil Servants of the Aceh Water Service during the pandemic.

Flexibility has a significant negative effect on Job Stress in Civil Servants of the Aceh Irrigation Service during the pandemic because the CR value is > 1.96 , which is -6.848 (with absolute value = 6.848) and the p value is smaller than 0.05. So, **H2 is accepted**.

H3: Work stress has a significant negative effect on the performance of civil servants at the Aceh Water Service during the pandemic.

Job stress has a significant negative effect on the performance of civil servants at the Aceh Water Service during the pandemic because it has a CR value greater than 1.96, which is -5.821 where (with absolute value = 5.821) and p value is smaller than 0.05. Thus, **H3 is accepted**.

H4: Job stress mediates the effect of flexible work arrangements on employee performance.

Job stress mediates the effect of flexible work arrangements on employee performance because based on the results of calculations using the Sobel test with the Sobel test calculator with the results of the Sobel test statistic of 4.450 where the result is greater than 1.96 and the *P Value* is 0.000 where the value is less than 0.05.

V. Conclusion

Based on the results of data analysis that has been carried out in the previous chapter, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Flexible work arrangements have a positive and significant impact on employee performance. This can be interpreted that the higher the flexible work arrangements applied to employees, the better the performance of the employees produced.
2. Flexible work arrangements have a negative and significant effect on work stress. That is, the higher the flexible work arrangements applied to employees, the lower the stress felt on employees.
3. Job stress has a negative and significant effect on employee performance. That is, the higher the perceived work stress on employees, the employee's performance will decrease.
4. Flexible work arrangements have an indirect effect on employee performance through work stress as a mediation. That is, work stress mediates.

Research Limitations

In the implementation of this study, there were several limitations experienced, namely the Covid-19 pandemic conditions did not allow researchers to distribute questionnaires directly to respondents and provide assistance when respondents gave statements to the questionnaire, so that conclusions drawn were only based on data collected through the questionnaire google forms instrument.

The process of data collection, the information provided by respondents through questionnaires sometimes does not show the actual opinion of the respondents, this happens because of differences in thoughts, assumptions and different understandings of each respondent, as well as other factors such as honesty in filling out respondents' opinions in the questionnaire.

Suggestions

Based on the limitations of this study, future research is expected to

1. Researchers can provide assistance to respondents in filling out questionnaires to minimize errors in answering questionnaires.
2. Expanding the object of research, not only in one agency, but research can be done with several different agencies.
3. Future research can use the mix method to get more information and is not limited to the questions in the questionnaire.

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