Impact of Telework on Employee Engagement and Employee Performance

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ABSTRACT

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   This research aimed 1) to explore telework characteristics; 2) to investigate telework impact on employee engagement; and 3) to investigate the relationship between employee engagement and employee performance while implementing telework in organizations. Telework is an occupational activity that encourages employees to be versatile with the way they conduct their duties. Telework was known as work from home or remote work and became popular in the 20th century. In January 2020, the Covid-19 global pandemic forced companies to shift to work from home or telework. This study focused on the problem of how telework impacts employee engagement and employee performance. This research used documentary and secondary data to explore the impact of telework. The study found that workplace conditions, workforce issues, organizational issues and technological issues were important factors in implementing telework. This research also showed that communication was important for employee engagement and employees wellness was an essential factor in employee performance. This study suggested that organizations should focus on communication breakdowns, fairness policy, organization support, and workplace condition. The organizations should take care of employees' wellness to gain high employee performance and to attract new employees.

Keywords: Telework, Employee Engagement, Employee Performance

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Introduction

Research Background

Telework is an occupational activity that encourages employees to be versatile with the way they conduct their duties. The most known form of telework is work from home or flexible work arrangements (Weideman & Hofmeyr, 2020). Remote work was not popular a decade ago. In the 20th century, since the world have advanced internet access and communication technology, the remote work is becoming popular among telework industry. (Peek, 2020)

The global pandemic of Covid-19 emerged worldwide in January, 2020. The companies needed to develop social distancing; thus, the companies practiced the remote work or work from home method to prevent disease spread (OECD, 2020). However, the uncertain situation of covid-19 outbreak as a pandemic has caused mental stress (Abbas & Zhiqiang, 2020) and had impacted on employee engagement. Unlike previous recessions, the Covid-19 pandemic may have caused employment and health losses (Angelucci, et al., 2020). Moreover, everyone trying to deal with distractions at home: kids, noise and also anxiety will make it challenging for employees. These changes have headed workers to concern about the virus, stress about retaining their jobs and many are dealing with isolation. It is also challenging for workers to communicate and connect online, as well as face difficulties that remain concentrated on work. (Oak & Schoeffler, 2020)

The remote work or home work that research indicated has positive associations with employee engagement and employee performance (Zeijen, Peeters, & Hakanen, 2018). In addition, remote work has been emphasized as policies that can support sustain a balance between work and life, health and safety of workers and efficiency (Caesens, et al., 2016). However, Remote working needs set up work place with technology facilities. The effect of remote work on employee engagement is important for organizations to enhance performance (Zhong, Wayne, & Liden, 2015). Most employers thought remote working made the result of low employee performance (Lee, 2018).

Employee engagement is a crucial essential responsibility that drives the success, achievement, and continuous employee performance throughout the year. Social union, feeling upheld by one's supervisor, exchange of knowledge, good communication can influence engagement and performance (Adhitama & Riyanto, 2020).

Research Problem

The workplace is now a blended operating environment combining both in-office and remote jobs, but because of different working environments, the engagement requirements of employees vary (Khan, 2015). Currently, coronavirus pandemic forced employees to work from home and during pandemic isolation, employees faced mental health about nervousness and depression (Nakrosiene, Buciuniene, & Gostautaite, 2019). The problem was that the number of remote employees grew steadily, while the rate of job interaction

declined (Adkins, 2015). A relationship between remote work and different constructs of employee engagement has been suggested by literature (Chen & Fulmer, 2017). However, the number of variables driving employee performance is theoretically endless. A greater awareness of the contributing factors affecting employee engagement is required for organizations to enhance employee engagement and maximize employee performance (Sasaki, et al., 2020). Therefore, the problem of this study is how telework effects on employee engagement and employee performance.

Objective of the study

This research was focused on telework characteristics within the organization, especially during Covid-19 pandemic. Besides, this research will investigate how telework impact on employee engagement. This research will explore telework impact on employee performance. Besides, this research will investigate the relationship between employee engagement and employee performance while implementing telework in organizations.

Scope of the study

This paper used documentary research methodology for exploring impact of telework on employee motivation and employee performance. This study used documentary and secondary research by reviewing past researches, journals, and electronic sources which have been studied about telework challenges and its impacts on employee engagement and employee performance.

Research Significance

This study has contributed to the broader previous studies and literature on remote work. A continuing decline in on-the-job physical proximity, and videoconferencing has possibly exacerbated this pandemic. In addition to minizine the cost of future pandemics, an appreciation of the wider effect of this evolving environment is important and applicable to policy. Moreover, the findings of this study may result in further study and analysis of the phenomenon of remote workplace participation.

Literatures Review

Telework

Telework is an organizational versatility in which employees work from an alternate venue beyond the traditional workplace hosting the company's offices (Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 2001). Telework has been defined as work carried out from various locations – work from home that allows employees to use information and communication technologies to access their labor activities. The main issues for telework are workforce issues, organizational issues, technological issues and workplace condition at home issues which are strong related with telecommuting.

Workforce issues. The workforce issues include work-life balance, efficiency, effects of job satisfaction, communication channels, working life quality and attitude of employees towards telecommunication (Siha & Monroe, 2006). Workforce challenges are most frequently interwoven with organizational problems and problems with technology.

Organizational issues. In this category, concerns range from acceptance of telecommuting, management of staff, corporate culture, employee-manager relationships, organizational communication system and trust. The more teleworkers operate from home, the less chance they have of getting help from others at work (Lapierre, et al., 2015) especially from supervisors.

Technological issues. The central element in the telecommuting is technology. In the continuing support of all telecommuting services, handling information infrastructure is important. In the central office and in the virtual office, organizations must invest in the necessary equipment.

Workplace condition at home. A close relationship exists between the workplace and employee performance and employee motivation. An improper workplace has a negative effect on the performance of employees, while an effective productivity resource can be called a well-arranged workplace. Work conditions and environment impact employee efficiency, such as noise, temperature, and others. The workplace condition considered as an essential resource that improves efficiency and satisfaction with telework. (Nakrosiene et al., 2019)

Employee Engagement

Employee engagements are task-related activities correlated with the capacity and ability of a person to honestly communicate their desires and views at work (Robinson, Wang, & Kiewitz, 2014). The level of individual obligation and participation of employees towards the company and its missions, morals and beliefs is employee engagement. Employee engagement stands a relationship between employees and organizations which encouraged to provide employee performance. Not only cognition, but also the flexible implementation of emotions and behaviors is involved in employee engagement. in addition, employee engagement is a mixture of devotion, allegiance, efficiency and ownership. (Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019)

Organization Culture. Organizational leaders want to develop cultures of work that keep employees engaged. Organizational leaders have focused on open, face-to-face approaches to build cultures of interaction. Telework creates a communication gap between superior and the subordinates and other co-employees in the team (Singh, Kumar, & Varghese, 2017).

Work System or Organization Structure System. Complexity of integration refers to the form and number of processes needed in the work system to ensure the differentiated elements in a work system are communicated, interacted and managed. The organizational structure subsystem characterizes of work system related to telecommuting, defining the amount and degree of separation complexity that occurs in the organization when telecommuting. (Martinez-Amador, 2016)

Communication. The key drawbacks of telework were social isolation and lack of contact with co-workers. A sense of alienation from people at work can suffer from teleworkers. On the other hand, telework eliminates irrelevant communications with peers, one of the key benefits of telework, which is correlated with less interruptions. It can be concluded that decreased co-workers additional time resources that contribute to higher productivity. (Martin & MacDonnell, 2012)

Employee Performance

The performance of employees relates to how employees behave in the work environment and how well meet the work responsibilities that corporations have committed to employees. Organizations often organize success expectations for individual employees and organizations as a whole, with the aim that company can provide consumers with great value, minimize waste and work efficiently. For an individual employee, performance at the duty level can relate to job productivity, quality and competence (Adhitama & Riyanto, 2020).

Processes. Performance is influenced by job-related variables that involve tension in position conflicts (Jayaweera, 2015). A person's appearance is a blend of skills, talents, companies and resources that can be decided by their jobs. People's success can be affected by commitment, ability and the state of the environment (Riyanto, Ariyanto, & Lukertina, 2019). Each employee offers an individual contribution to the performance of the hierarchical unit and to the whole business in this way. Employee performance reviews can be very useful at the moment when used as a reason for decision-making.

Employee Wellness. Employee performance also depends on employees' mental condition. Moreover, safety is one of important factor of employee performance.

Work Environment. The work atmosphere of an employee affects their occupational attitude, drive and overall performance. When the employees give reassuring work environment, the employees performance increase. The working environment included not only working atmosphere but also safe workplace zone. The workplace safe zone is a place the employees can express their ideas to colleagues and also supervisors. (Hamid

et al., 2020)

Each employee makes an individual contribution to the success of the hierarchical unit and to the overall business. This will cause reorganization or redundancy on the off chance that a hierarchical unit or individual worker's output falls behind for a very long time. Employee performance reviews can be very useful at the moment when used as a reason for decision-making.

Past Researches

Lee (2018) studied about employee engagement of remote workers. The issue was that more than half of disengaged employees of the nation, leading significantly to upwards of $550 billion in related annual costs of employee disengagement for companies. The purpose of this study was to elicit reactions that are appropriate to sustain, reinforce or erode the present of the workplace.

Weideman & Hofmeyr (2020) studied about the influence of work from home (WFH) on employee engagement. This research purpose was to evaluate why organizations in South Africa adopt work from home, investigating the effects of employee participation considered by organizations while adopting work from home, grasp employee interactions using work from home, identify the disadvantages of WFH, and understand how WFHs can be strengthened to facilitate employee engagement.

Nakrosiene et al., (2019) was studied about characteristics of working from home and outcomes of telework. The purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship between potentially dependent variables of telework and various person and organizational effects of telework (over telework fulfilment, telework alleged benefits, and self-reported productivity).

Adhitama & Riyanto (2020) was studied about how to sustain employee engagement and employee performance in Covid-19. The tremendous bearing of the Covid-19 pandemic on the private and working lives of employees is causing anxiety, anger, and burnout among employees. This research is the progress of an ongoing study at PT Koexim Mandiri Finance on the effect of the work atmosphere on employee performance and employee engagement. The two objectives are to be accomplished in this research under close scrutiny, namely maintaining employee engagement and maintaining employee efficiency. This study applies qualitative approaches to virtual face-to-face interview processes.

Hamid et al., (2020) studied about coronavirus impact and employee's reaction to changes on employee performance of Bangladesh. This study was carried out in order to control the effect of Covid-19 and its impact on the performance of employees in Bangladesh. The employee's reaction to changes in employee performance has been assessed to complete this report.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework
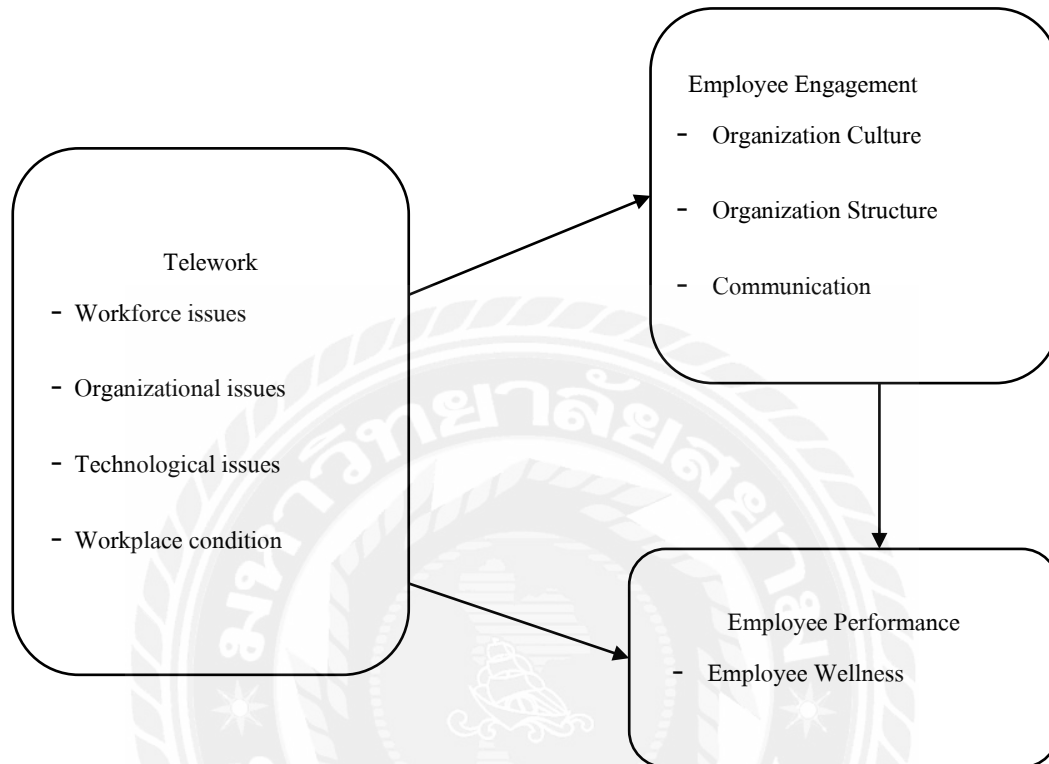
Source: Adhitama & Riyanto (2020), Weideman & Hofmeyr (2020), Lee (2018), Hamid et al., (2020), Siha & Monroe (2006), Lapierre, et al., (2015)

Finding and Conclusion

The study was focused on four characteristics of telework – workforce issue, organizational issues, technological issue and workplace condition which impact on employee engagement and employee performance. The study found that flexible work conditions are considered to be necessary for a company to remain desirable to employees. Technology has encouraged organizations to move to modern ways of electronic communication, such as multimedia communication channels and access to teleconference services, from conventional modes of communication. Technology, however, was a prohibiting factor, especially in remote meetings, for the effective implementation of telework. Employees found that, for various reasons, having WFHs allowed them to be more efficient. The experts and employees said that communication within an organization must be strengthened. Adhitama & Riyanto, (2020) implied that numerous employees have to share the living room, bedroom, even bedroom with family members by working from home while also trying to organize live video calls. It concluded that working conditions is important in telework effectiveness.

Lee (2020) observed that because of the corporate atmosphere, employees have encountered high levels of commitment, such as work-life balance, commitments, flexible working hours and interactions with colleagues. In addition, (Weideman & Hofmeyr, 2020) found that there is a strong connection between level of commitment, employee engagement and employee performance. Nakrosiene et al., (2019) and (Makarius & Larson, 2017) demonstrated that the importance of the supervisor's role in the development of corporate telecommuting. A significant antecedent of overall satisfaction with telework was found to be supervisor trust, and it was clearly related to employee engagement and performance.

Hamid et al., (2020) concluded that Covid-19 has impacted on employees' lifestyle. It implies that employees and organizations need to adapt in new normal lifestyles. However, some employees' feelings and reactions are important. Because if employees' reactions to change are negative that might end up as a barrier on their performance. The study concluded that Covid-19 had an influence on the lifestyle of staff. It means that workers and companies need to adapt to new normal lifestyles. However, the feelings and reactions of some employees are important. Because if the reactions of workers to change are negative, that could end up as a barrier to their performance.

Recommendation

The objectives of the study were to explore telework characteristics, to investigate telework (remote work) impact on employee engagement and to investigate relationship between employee engagement and employee performance while telework implementing. To strengthen the employee engagement and performance while using telework, the companies should focus on workplace condition for employees. The organization should provide facilities to employees. Moreover, the company should take care about technology readiness of employees. Widerman & Hofmeyr (2020) recommended that employers should also have the uniqueness of the work atmosphere in order to retain their employee engagement and efficiency.

The telework effectiveness has strong impact on employee engagement. The employees' need is the important factor to get employee engagement. While implementing telework, management has major adverse effects on the company including communication breakdowns and employee policy. To implement the policy, the perceived fairness of the policy is major key. In order for telework to be effective, Lee (2020) recommended that the company should implement effective communication and real-time information sharing between the manager and employees.

Supervisor's trust, organization support was strongly impact on employee engagement while telework used (Nakrosiene et al., 2019). Therefore, companies should focus on social union, which feeling upheld by manager or supervisor, sharing of data, goals and vision, communication, and trust can influence engagement and performance. Besides, Adhitama & Riyanto (2020) recommended that employers should realize their employees' desires and requirements. Therefore, employees who are extremely engaged are highly profitable and concentrate on the organizations.

Employee performance has affected by telework effectiveness and employee engagement. Employees engaged more; their performance high. Companies should determine employees' performance based on their productivity rather than working hours. Employee wellness is the major factor for employee performance during pandemic. Therefore, in order to have healthier and more motivated employees, businesses need to take action to care for their employees from a substantial and spiritual well-being perspective. Hamid et al., (2020) recommended that the companies should support mentally rather than physically to employees during pandemic situation. Organizational leaders should take initiative to retain and handle employees' reluctant to new normal changes. The fair policy, workplace support encourages employees to work more persuasive and will also attract new employees to company.

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