

Occupational self-efficacy as a predictor of work engagement in telecommuting employees during the covid-19 pandemic

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has influenced changes in the work environment in many companies, specifically the shift from traditional to digital remote work system known as telecommuting. This system enables employees to sufficiently adapt to new work rhythms and professional obstacles. Also, the pandemic presented a challenge for companies to maintain employees' engagement to survive in an uncertain environment. Therefore, this research aims to determine the effect of occupational self-efficacy as a predictor of work engagement in telecommuting during the Covid-19 pandemic. A quantitative approach that applied simple linear regression was used for statistical analysis. The active participants totaled 130 employees who worked for at least two years in various companies, telecommuting during the pandemic, and were located in JABODETABEK (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi). The results of simple linear regression showed that occupational self-efficacy was significantly able to predict 43.5% of the variance of work engagement ($R^2 = 0.435$, $F(1, 128) = 98.698$, $p < 0.001$). Consequently, this research can help companies to design and implement employees' development programs to boost occupational self-efficacy during the pandemic. This research also recommended that telecommuting employees prepare themselves by enhancing current skills to build confidence and resistance during work.

Keywords

employees, occupational self-efficacy, the Covid-19 pandemic, telecommuting, work engagement

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic is a global concern due to the number of victims affected in a relatively short time. In Indonesia, the government prevented the spread of Covid-19 by enforcing several health protocols which impacted lives, particularly in industrial and organizational sectors. There have been several consequent changes in the work system in several companies, particularly the enactment of a workplace modification policy that requires employees to work remotely. Furthermore, many government and private offices had to implement a remote working system, commonly known as telecommuting (Fawziah & Irwansyah, 2020).

Due to the pandemic, employees have to adapt to changing conditions in the work environment. The provinces of Jakarta and West Java were the most affected by the change in the telecommuting system when evaluated from a geographical standpoint (Jobstreet, 2020). Although there is a change towards remote work, employees still have to show the best performance (Sutrisno, 2021). Companies also need to consider the management of a remote workforce to prevent future uncertainties. Therefore, human resources (HR) in remote workforce management needs to be developed to manage employees (Rusilowati, 2020). This was also reflected in the ILO's third pillar on dealing with the pandemic by modifying work arrangements through telecommuting (ILO, 2020). As this new work environment evolves, employee adaptability is required to adjust to the online system. Furthermore, telecommuting is not a common culture used

by many companies in Indonesia that require the direct supervision of employees.

The switch to a telecommuting work system requires adjustment to new patterns and difficulties (Mungkasa, 2020). Productivity may be affected due to this new work rhythm, as it causes employees to become weary quicker. During work, this system can also cause a sense of boredom, making it difficult to remain productive (Sakitri, 2020). Furthermore, the pandemic has accelerated the high turnover rate, and employees are dissatisfied with work due to feelings of unappreciation (Smet et al., 2021). Companies must also be aware of these difficulties as the ability to remain productive is an indicator of effectiveness in attaining organizational objectives.

The performance of employees affect the general workplace efficiency and performance. Therefore, individuals are expected to consistently adhere to standards to ensure excellent performance. Organizations require enthusiastic employees to enhance the rate of completing tasks. According to Mewengkang & Panggabean (2016), work engagement is a factor that affects performance. Furthermore, Schaufeli (2013) defined it as the relationship between employees and their work.

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Work engagement involves an interaction between employees, employers, and respective colleagues to improve company performance (Endres & Mancheno-Smoak, 2008). According to Schaufeli et al. (2002), a good state of mind and a sense of fulfillment at work is necessary for good work engagement.

The level of work engagement can be influenced by three dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Vigor is a high amount of energy, resilience, and determination to hard work. Dedication is a sense of worth, pride, and enthusiasm toward work. Meanwhile, absorption is the intensity with which one concentrates on work.

Employees with high engagement show full involvement and enthusiasm for work in matters related to companies' activities. Highly engaged employees are driven, committed, enthusiastic, more productive, and perform better (Xanthopoulou et al., 2013). Furthermore, employees are satisfied with work, find meaning during work, feel a sense of pride, and connect to the companies' vision and mission (Bailey, 2020).

Employees' engagement has been on a decline during the pandemic, where McFeely (2021) observed that the rates fell from 81% to 74% in 2021. Smet et al. (2021) predicted that about 40% of the respondents would leave their current work in the next three to six months. According to the data, 53% of employers reported higher voluntary turnover than the previous year, and 64% expect the problem to remain or worsen over the next six months. Therefore, this research determines the work engagement of employees during the pandemic, and the enormous benefits and its underlying factors render it a significant research topic.

Rakhim (2020) observed that one of the factors affecting work engagement is the personal factor known as self-efficacy, an intrinsic factor in personality. According to Kholiq et al. (2021), self-efficacy significantly affected performance during the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, employees are more likely to work hard and carry out more tasks. When there is a positive personal perspective and self-belief, hard work and commitment is enhanced, which improves occupational self-efficacy.

Bandura (1997) described occupational self-efficacy as a belief in an employee's ability to demonstrate the behavior required to achieve work results. It is necessary to compare the levels of occupational self-efficacy as this significantly influences the working environment (Hyas & Nurtjahjanti, 2015). The most crucial aspect of overcoming all hurdles and tensions during the pandemic is self-confidence in the ability to carry out tasks. Consequently, high occupational self-efficacy enables employees to maintain a flexible attitude in adversity and successfully adapt to future uncertainty.

Occupational self-efficacy impacts effort and endurance at work by shaping behavior, mental processes and emotions (Bandura, 2006). It reflects a commitment to personal goals, the level of effort given, expected outcomes, and the ability to face environmental demands. Furthermore, occupational self-efficacy is essential in motivating employees to accomplish tasks and enhance work performance.

Occupational self-efficacy is dynamic and grows in tandem with experience in performing tasks, either directly or indirectly. Therefore, it differs among employees due to variances in the three dimensions of occupational self-efficacy

namely level, strength, and generality (Bandura, 1997). This factor also highlights a capacity to succeed in work duties.

The level of occupational self-efficacy refers to the ability to complete tasks of varying complexity. This aspect examines how an employee can meet the behavioral demands required at each difficulty level. The second aspect is strength, which is determined by ability, confidence, and expectations for completing tasks. Employees with strong beliefs and expectations are more likely to persevere in finishing their functions, even when the work is challenging. The third aspect is generality which indicates the aspect of occupational self-efficacy shown in specific tasks, situations, and various cases. Furthermore, generality affects how many activities an individual can handle. Employees with high occupational self-efficacy master a variety of work, while others with low occupational self-efficacy master only a few.

When confronted with a challenge, employees with high occupational self-efficacy show unyielding despair and demonstrate active commitment to their work. However, employees with low occupational self-efficacy are more pessimistic and unable to cope with environmental demands (Putri et al., 2021).

Work engagement is positively correlated with the aspects of occupational self-efficacy (Prahara & Khasanah, 2018). Previous research showed a significant effect of occupational self-efficacy on work engagement (Wahyuni, 2017; Ardi, 2017; Mulyani et al., 2020). Therefore, performance is influenced by the level of self-efficacy. Employees with better occupational self-efficacy have higher performance and vice versa. Numerous research also highlighted the impact of occupational self-efficacy on work engagement (Wahyuni, 2017; Ardi, 2017; Mulyani et al., 2020; Putri et al., 2021). Therefore, this research was conducted to deeply examine the effect of occupational self-efficacy. Due to the differences in environmental conditions, the results may differ from that of pre-pandemic research.

To enhance performance during the pandemic, the effect of occupational self-efficacy on the emergence of work engagement should be examined. It is also essential to ascertain the personal factors in work, as this enables companies to design HR management and maximize performance. Therefore, this research aims to determine the predictive effect of occupational self-efficacy on work engagement in telecommuting employees during the Covid-19 pandemic in JABODETABEK. The exploratory method will examine self-efficacy in carrying out their work as a kind of labor involved during the pandemic.

Method

Research Design

A quantitative approach was applied in this research with a non-experimental design which involved data analysis in the form of numbers processed statistically (Azwar, 2010; Creswell, 2012). Furthermore, the method was non-experimental and did not entail manipulating research variables (Seniati et al., 2011).

Participants

The population consisted of employees who worked remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic in JABODETABEK. The sampling used the non-probability technique, while convenience sampling was applied in the selection process. Furthermore, the convenience sampling approach obtained data on individuals with similar characteristics that were easily accessible (Creswell, 2012).

Research Instrument

A psychological scale was used as a measuring instrument that contained statements to obtain individual attributes (Azwar, 2010). The model used in this research was the Likert attitude scale. Furthermore, the instrument used to measure occupational self-efficacy was the short-scale version (OSS-SF) of Rigotti et al. (2008) which was modified from Schyns & Von Collani (2002) occupational self-efficacy scale in an online questionnaire. The total number of valid items on the measuring instrument was six ($\alpha = 0.789$, $r = 0.362 - 0.595$). The items on the OSS-SF measuring instrument were adapted by using forward and backward translation methods. Examples of OSS-SF items are "When faced with problems at work, I can devise several solutions" and "Whatever happens at work, I can handle it". Furthermore, in answering item statements, participants are asked to fill in each word according to themselves and to determine each weight on a Likert scale from favorable items on a scale of 1 – 5. Scale 1 indicates Almost Never, 2 signifies Rarely, 3 represents Sometimes, 4 indicates Often, while scale 5 means Almost All the Time. However, when the item is unfavorable, the opposite is true.

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) was developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002) as an online questionnaire to assess work engagement. This instrument measures employee work engagement in vigor, dedication, and absorption, and was applied and translated into Bahasa Indonesia by Venesa (2021). Furthermore, there were 17 valid items: 6 on the vigor, 5 on the dedication, and 6 on the absorption dimensions respectively ($\alpha = 0.901$, $r = 0.403 - 0.779$). Examples of UWES items are "At work, I feel full of energy" and "I am enthusiastic about my work". In responding to item statements, participants will be asked to fill in each word according to themselves and to determine each weight on a Likert scale from favorable items on a scale of 1 - 6. Scale 1 indicates Strongly Disagree on the statement, 2 denotes Strongly Disagree, 3 means Slightly Disagree, 4 signifies Slightly Agree, 5 represents Agree, while scale 6 means Strongly Agree. However, when the item is unfavorable, the opposite is true.

Data Analysis Technique

To test the hypothesis, a simple linear regression analysis was performed using the JASP (Jeffreys' Amazing Statistics Program) application and an alpha level (α) of 0.05. The simple linear regression model is a probabilistic technique that highlights a linear relationship between two variables where one variable is considered to affect the others (Suyono, 2018). However, several assumptions must be met first, which include the assumptions of autocorrelation, normality using

the Shapiro-Wilk, and homoscedasticity using the residual scatter plot graph.

The assumptions of Autocorrelation, normally distributed data, and heteroscedasticity must all be adhered to in a good regression model. The requirements of the first assumption test of autocorrelation were met by this research, as data were obtained through random sampling within a specific time frame (Bidang Kajian Kebijakan dan Inovasi Administrasi Negara, 2018). The normality test for residual data is the second assumption test using Saphiro-Wilk which showed that the data were normally distributed above the significant limit $0.094 > 0.05$ (OSS-SF) and $0.055 > 0.05$ (UWES).

Homoscedasticity was determined using the scatterplot graph which considered the random distribution of the data on the X or horizontal axis. The results showed that the residual data were randomly distributed above and below 0 on the Y-axis and did not establish a specific pattern. Therefore, the regression model was not heteroscedastic.

Result

From the results of data filtering, most participants were female with a percentage of 66.92%. In terms of residence, 74 participants or 56.92 lived in Jakarta. Furthermore, 61.71% have non-managerial work titles in companies. Most have worked for less than five years and are aged between 21 and 30.

The descriptive analysis showed that the average score of participants using the OSS-SF measuring instrument was 29.146, with a standard deviation of 3.727. Meanwhile, on the OSSF, there was a minimum score of 16 and a maximum of 36. The average participants' score on UWES was 65.94, with a standard deviation of 9.15. The distribution ranged from 36 to 85, with 36 being the lowest and 85 the highest.

The simple linear regression shows that occupational self-efficacy significantly predicts 43.5% of the variance of work engagement ($R^2 = 0.435$, $F(1, 128) = 98.698$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H1 was accepted. The following equation was derived from the analysis: $Y = 1.620 * \text{Occupational self-efficacy} + 18.736$.

Discussion

Most of the participants in the survey were female, lived in Jakarta, had non-managerial work titles in companies, had been working for less than five years, and were between 21 and 30 years old. According to the demographic data, up to 130 participants met all criteria. The results of this research support the hypothesis which states that occupational self-efficacy influences work engagement for remote employees during the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, these results are consistent with prior research by Putri et al. (2021), where occupational self-efficacy highly contributed to work engagement.

In a different context, during the pandemic, occupational self-efficacy was reasonably high. This proved that the occupational self-efficacy variable remains a critical predictor during the pandemic and pre-pandemic periods, specifically in telecommuting work.

High levels of occupational self-efficacy can increase work resources through skill utilization. Self-confidence in

employee abilities and competencies at work will indirectly boost the utilization of their skills. Therefore, employees are better prepared to meet many obstacles, including uncertain conditions during the pandemic. Employees will also aspire to grow by increasing abilities and using these talents to establish higher goals. There will be more control over the work environment, and a high OSE will be obtained (Putri et al., 2021).

According to Putri et al. (2021), employees with high occupational self-efficacy tend to avoid work stress and experience positive emotions at work, such as excitement, enthusiasm, and energy. These positive emotions motivate employees to participate actively in tasks related to aspects of work engagement with vigor, dedication, and absorption.

Employees who show excitement even though working from home feel positive emotions, and strive to give the best effort to achieve work goals. A sense of accomplishment is often felt when these goals are achieved. These employees are energized, focused, and strive to complete tasks despite the numerous obstacles they may experience. Furthermore, employees will feel proud and attached to work when they believe the company is the right place to build a career. Due to this positive outcome, work performance is improved.

Research showed that the remote work system can affect loyalty and performance, and may not be adopted in certain companies (Nasution et al., 2020; Soelistyoningrum, 2020). Fawziah & Irwansyah (2020) also stated that the telecommuting work system could be adapted as a valuable solution to enhance mobility at work. This system can bring benefits on multiple levels monetarily, technologically, and socially. Furthermore, it boosts morale, commitment, and work satisfaction.

Meanwhile, it is necessary to highlight several obstacles and disadvantages of telecommuting systems. When companies utilize the system in the long term, it is necessary to focus on appropriate management and reduce the factors that prevent them from developing an ideal telecommuting workspace.

Telecommuting employees must persevere despite constant distractions and rising work demands (Faaroek, 2020). A strong personal factor is required to accomplish work demands. (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009) stated that personal factors play an essential role in increasing the effectiveness of work resources in balancing high work demands. One of the influential personal factors is self-efficacy, specifically referred to as occupational self-efficacy.

According to the results, some areas can be improved in the methodological aspect. First, a convenience sampling method was used in this research, therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to the entire population. Assumptions were tested in simple linear regression, but this only increased the likelihood that the regression equation model is similar to the population (Field, 2009). Additionally, only one variable was examined, namely occupational self-efficacy, in employees' work engagement. This research focused only on personal factors, although there are other distinguishing factors that affect employee performance. Furthermore, external variables are not constant, such as the length or duration of participants' telecommuting, which also affects work engagement or occupational self-efficacy.

Conclusion

In Indonesia, the majority of parents still choose not to engage their adolescents in sexual communication, even though they have spent more time together and have more intensive communication patterns as an effect of working from home caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This research recommended that related government institutions such as social ministry, woman empowerment ministry, health ministry and private institutions or future researchers hold an intervention program, particularly for parents or both parents and teenagers about the importance of sexual communication as a safeguard for teenagers' psychological and physical health. For future studies, the involvement of parents in the research process and the adolescents' age limit might be considered to receive more optimal results.

Declarations

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Author contributions

LR: Conceptualization, data curation, writing – original draft preparation. EMK: Supervision, writing – review & editing, and validation

Conflict of interest

The authors stated that there is not any conflict of interest

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