



IS WORKING FROM HOME GOOD FOR WORK-LIFE BALANCE, STRESS, AND PRODUCTIVITY, OR DOES IT CAUSE PROBLEMS?

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to investigate the impact of employee productivity while working from home for a long period due to the COVID-19 pandemic quantitatively from the aspects of work-life balance, and employee stress levels. Several previous studies have explained that working from home (WFH) is known to contribute positively to work productivity. However, in contrast, several other studies have shown that working from home harms employee productivity. This research was conducted in Jakarta, Indonesia. The study sample comprised 135 employees who worked from home and the analysis was carried out using LISREL 8.5. The results of this study indicate that work-life balance and work-related stress affect work productivity. Meanwhile, working from home does not affect work productivity. The findings of this study show surprising results and can influence changes in organizational policies and strategies for collaborating between working from home and working from an office for employees.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature related to work from home policies during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research has never been carried out by previous research regarding the impact of work from home on work-life balance, stress, and work productivity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. INTRODUCTION

During the COVID-19 pandemic, adjustments to work arrangements have been very important. One of the things that organizations can now accommodate is allowing their employees to work from home, which goes by a variety of names, such as remote working, teleworking, or telecommuting. Although these terms are different, they have the same meaning. Working from home is a radical change to the way we work, especially during a pandemic, and it takes time to adapt. It also has an impact on the function of human resources in the company (Bao et al., 2020; Madero, Ortiz, Ramírez, & Olivás-Luján, 2020). In the past few years, before COVID-19, employees tended to view remote working as a way to avoid workplace-related stress and an attempt to reduce their working hours. Also, working at home helps to reduce stress by avoiding office politics and tiring commutes (Golden, 2008; Lim & Teo, 2000; Olson & Primps, 1984).

Several previous studies have explained that working from home is known to contribute to positive work productivity, and is often claimed to increase employee productivity (Baker, Avery, & Crawford, 2007; Lim & Teo, 2000), reduce employee absence, reduce employee turnover rates, develop more creative employees, and create job satisfaction (Frolick, Wilkes, & Urwiler, 1993; Singh, Kumar, & Varghese, 2017). The application of working from

home gives employees more flexibility to manage work and life. Research has found that working from home has positive effects on employees, such as work-life balance and reduced family conflicts. It also provides several benefits for companies and employees. When employees can work from home, they are better able to balance work and life responsibilities, which can increase employee retention as a result of happier and more productive employees. For companies, it can save costs in building maintenance and reduce overhead costs (Baker et al., 2007; Bao et al., 2020; Feng & Savani, 2020; Lim & Teo, 2000), improve employee productivity and performance, lower absenteeism, reduce employee turnover, and reduce the need for office space (Bloom, 2014; Lakshmi, Nigam, & Mishra, 2017). However, in contrast, several other studies have shown that working from home harms employee productivity. Yuhsuan Chang found that remote working can be associated with employees' self-reported decreased productivity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the causes are increased workload, childcare problems, social isolation, and disturbed work-life balance. These issues have made it difficult for employees to achieve optimal work productivity during this global crisis (Chang, Chien, & Shen, 2021). To fill the gaps that exist in the current literature, this study aims to determine the extent of the impact of working from home for organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic and how effective it is.

Working from home blurs the boundaries between work and family, thereby increasing conflict between the two. A consequence of employees working at home all day is that other people who are at home will demand more of their time, attention, and affection (Feng & Savani, 2020; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). Also, working from home reduces opportunities for interaction in the office, and employees lose the opportunity to exchange ideas with colleagues, which is important for the development of technical skills, and ultimately, it can negatively affect individual career development (Bao et al., 2020; Lim & Teo, 2000). In terms of employees' work-related stress levels, several previous studies have explained that working from home is not considered to create stressful situations. Employees claim that working at home will reduce stress as they don't have a daily commute, they can avoid distractions, and they have the flexibility to handle family and personal issues without directly affecting work-related commitments. Using portable devices or online work platforms can help employees to work efficiently and avoid stress (Crosbie & Moore, 2004; Frolick et al., 1993; Kotteeswari & Sharief, 2014; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020).

However, recent research shows that people who have quarantined due to COVID-19 experience a variety of psychological problems, such as stress, fear, and frustration. A study of health professionals shows a significant positive relationship between stress and fatigue which adversely affects employee productivity and work-life balance (Yıldırım & Solmaz, 2020). Also, separating workers from their colleagues can be stressful and reduce worker morale (Lim & Teo, 2000). Previous research has focused on employees who worked from home for a short period and used a qualitative approach. This study aims to fill the gap in the existing literature by investigating the impact of employee productivity while working from home for a long period quantitatively from the aspects of work-life balance, and employee stress levels.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Working from home is a term that refers to work done at home, regardless of whether the individual performing the work is an employee of an organization or is self-employed. Telecommuting is used to describe when an employee uses stationary or portable devices to do their office work outside the office. This allows the flexibility of using telecommunications to connect with colleagues in real-time. Other benefits include autonomy, absence of distractions, decreased travel, and increased productivity, which are the main variables motivating people to work at home (Lakshmi et al., 2017; Meenakshi, V, & Ravichandran, 2013).

Basically, employee work productivity is the result of a series of behaviors that are carried out by employees in work situations (Hartini, Fakhrorazi, & Islam, 2019) and determine viability and profitability for the organization (Islam, Osman, Othman, & Raihan, 2019; Van Nguyen, Doan, Nu, Quoc, & Quynh, 2021). Productivity is also an

important mechanism for management to clarify performance goals and standards, and to motivate individuals to ensure the sustainability of the organization (Shaki & Khoshsaligheh, 2017). It is also a rating system used in most companies to evaluate an employee's abilities (Khuong & Quoc, 2016).

H1: Working from home affects work productivity.

A person can achieve work-life balance if there is a satisfactory level of involvement in the various roles in one's life. This allows employees to have a healthy balance between work and personal responsibilities and thereby strengthen employee loyalty and productivity. To truly have a balance, employees need to have more time at home, away from the traditional work environment (Delecta, 2011; Dow-Clarke, 2002).

The basis of work-life balance departs from the conflict between personal and work lives experienced by employees. Work-life balance is explained as the balance of time a person spends at work compared to the time spent on one's personal life (Abioro, Oladejo, & Ashogbon, 2018; Lazar, Osoian, & Ratiu, 2010). It is also an incentive for companies to create a healthy and supportive work environment, which allows employees to have a balance between work and personal responsibilities, thereby improving employee performance (Delecta, 2011; Dhas, 2015).

Work-life balance is supported by two concepts, namely achievement and happiness, and one must have both. This is the reason why those who are considered successful don't feel as happy as they should (Bataineh, 2019). A person's success is not only based on how much money they have, but also a good family life. Schedules that are not well managed can create conflicts in domestic life due to not having enough time together with family, and can lead to depression and poor work performance (Meenakshi et al., 2013).

Organizations provide support for employees in the form of telecommuting and flexible work options, as happy and productive employees enjoy a healthy work-life balance (Baker et al., 2007; Darcy, Mccarthy, Hill, & Grady, 2012; Darko-Asumadu, Sika-Bright, & Osei-Tutu, 2018; Dhas, 2015).

H2: Working from home affects the work-life balance.

H3: Work-life balance affects work productivity.

The benefits of working from home for employees include less time and stress commuting in congested areas and increased flexibility when dealing with family demands (Bataineh, 2019; Kotteeswari & Sharief, 2014). But the potential disadvantage may be the lack of social contact that a regular office environment provides. Working from home can increase feelings of isolation and decrease job satisfaction (Lakshmi et al., 2017). At home, employees may not have time to rest. Conversely, even though the office is a very distracting place, employees take breaks from their work. Working from home blurs the boundaries between work and family, thereby increasing conflict between work and family (Ahmed & Ramzan, 2013; Feng & Savani, 2020; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). Previous research has shown that telecommuters do not work as hard as people in the office, but, in truth, it is quite the opposite (Bloom, 2014). Work stress experienced by employees, if not managed properly, will result in low work productivity and lead to an increase in absence (Ahmed & Ramzan, 2013; Kakkos & Trivellas, 2011; Yahaya, Yahaya, Bon, Ismail, & Ing, 2011).

Job stress is a phenomenon experienced by a person when what is expected does not become a reality and this condition creates pressure in his life. According to Robbins, the source of work stress that occurs in employees can be caused by three factors – environmental factors, such as environmental uncertainty affecting the changing organizational structure and technological advances; organizational factors in the form of high task demands; and individual factors in the form of the employee's personal matters (Robbins & Judge, 2019). Family factors can also affect employee stress, such as having little or no support from family and lack of stability in household life (Ahmed & Ramzan, 2013; Dolcos & Daley, 2009). There are many reasons that cause stress, including workload, work conflicts, and family (Ahmed & Ramzan, 2013). For individuals, it is important to address any issues that may be causing stress because it can affect life, health, productivity, and income. For a company, and not only for humanitarian reasons, stress impacts performance in all aspects and the effectiveness of the company as a whole.

H4: Working from home affects work stress.

H5: Job stress affects work productivity.

All hypotheses are explained in Figure 1.

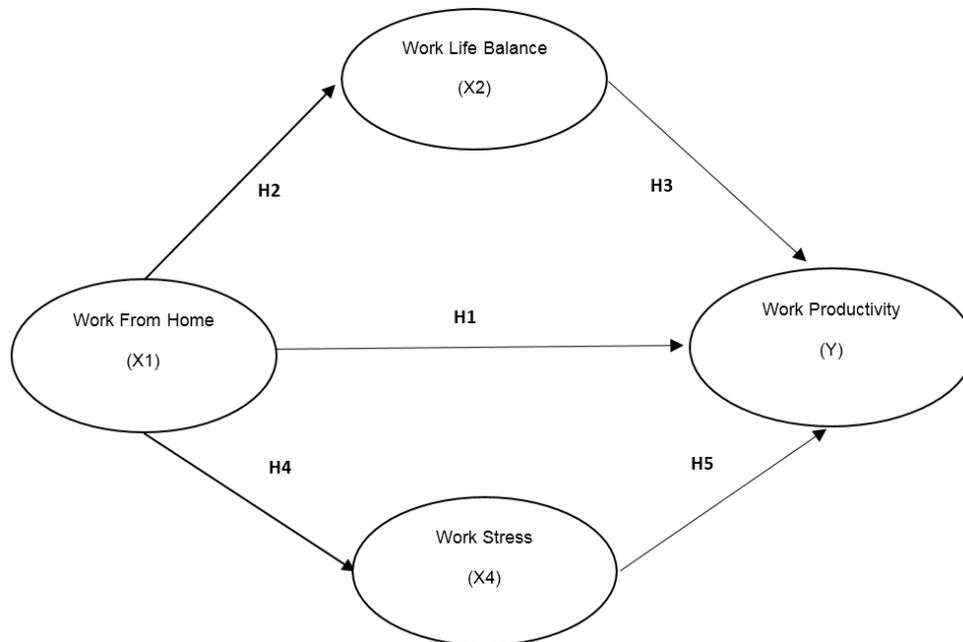


Figure 1. Research Model.

3. METHOD

The research was conducted in Jakarta from September 2020 to March 2021. The research method used was an associative quantitative approach through survey methods and structural equation modeling (SEM) by collecting data through questionnaires distributed to employees whose results were then processed through the LISREL 8.5 program. The population in this study are employees who work from home in Jakarta. The sampling technique that the researchers used was the non-probability sampling method with a purposive sampling technique.

Table 1. Profiles of Respondents.

Profile		Frequency	Percent
Sex	Male	64	47.4
	Female	71	52.6
Age	< 26	11	8.1
	> 41	50	37.0
	26–30	34	25.2
	31–35	23	17.0
	36–40	17	12.6
Marital Status	Unmarried	30	22.2
	Married	105	77.8
Level of Education Completed	High School	7	5.2
	Diploma	11	8.1
	Undergraduate	71	52.6
	Graduate	40	29.6
	Postgraduate	6	4.4

The maximum likelihood (ML) estimation was used as it has a multivariate normal data distribution, so a sample size of 100–200 works well. For sample sizes above 200, this test tends to reject H0. Conversely, if it is less than 100, it tends to accept H0 (Jr, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014; Wijanto, 2008; Yamin & Kurniawan, 2009).

Table 2. Convergent Validity.

Construct	Indicator (Likert Scale 1–5)	t-value	Standardized loading factors	Adapted from
Working From Home	I can complete my work responsibilities from home.	9.27	0.72	(Bao et al., 2020; Madero et al., 2020)
	I have the right conditions to do my work from home.	7.50	0.61	
	Due to the coronavirus, the process of working at home is facilitated.	9.63	0.74	
	Sometimes I think that working from home is the best option (at least temporarily).	12.26	0.88	
	I love my job and I can do it anywhere.	11.25	0.83	
Work-Life Balance	Because I have many work duties and responsibilities, I cannot spend time with my family.	9.27	0.72	(Aydin, 2016)
	Physical and mental fatigue related to work make my responsibilities at home difficult.	7.50	0.61	
	I can't spare time for homework because of my job, I always put off homework.	9.63	0.74	
	My duties and responsibilities regarding my work take precedence over my family life.	12.26	0.88	
	Because of my job responsibilities, I need to change my plans with my family.	11.25	0.83	
Work Stress	I am very busy with my work, and the workload is heavy.	7.92	0.63	(Wu et al., 2018)
	I often work overtime in my job.	9.30	0.71	
	The details of the work I do are not clearly explained.	10.56	0.78	
	Sometimes I receive tasks that are different from my job description.	9.59	0.73	
	Sometimes I get assigned to various positions at the same time.	8.81	0.69	
	I often have conflicts with colleagues and feel unhappy.	8.99	0.70	
	I feel isolated.	10.18	0.7	
	Lack of support from my boss.	9.52	0.73	
	My boss is unwilling or unable to help me with my work problems.	10.30	0.77	
	The organization did not respond well to my performance.	9.94	0.75	
	I am worried about my future career development.	-9.33	-0.72	
	Sometimes my rights are not protected.	2.29	0.51	
	I was required to finish my work, so there was no time to take care of my family.	3.58	0.57	
	My family members do not provide support for my work.	5.14	0.61	
Work Productivity	I managed to plan my work so that I got it done on time.	7.92	0.63	(Ramos-Villagrasa, Barrada, Fernandez-del-Rio, & Koopmans, 2019)
	I remember the work I have to accomplish.	9.30	0.71	
	I set priorities.	10.56	0.78	
	I can do my job efficiently.	9.59	0.73	
	I manage my time well.	8.81	0.69	
	Using my initiative, I started a new assignment after my old one was finished.	8.99	0.70	
	I take on challenging assignments as they become available.	10.18	0.76	
	I work to always update my knowledge related to work.	9.52	0.73	
	I try to keep updating my job skills.	10.30	0.77	
	I find creative solutions to new problems.	9.94	0.75	
	I am constantly looking for new challenges in my job.	-9.33	-0.72	
	I complain about minor work-related problems at work.	2.29	0.55	
	I make problems at work bigger than ever.	3.58	0.56	
	I focus on the negative aspects of situations at work rather than the positive aspects.	5.14	0.61	

The number of samples of this study was 135 and the feasibility of the model was tested with the goodness of fit method. This method gives an indication of the comparison of the specified model with the covariance matrix between indicators or observed variables. If the goodness of fit produced by a model is bad, then the model must be rejected.

This study used a Likert scale of 1–5 (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree). We reject H_0 if the t -value > 1.96 , and we accept H_0 if the t -value < 1.96 (Jr et al., 2014; Wijanto, 2008; Yamin & Kurniawan, 2009).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Respondents

A total of 135 questionnaires were collected and the information about the respondents is shown in Table 1. About half of the total respondents are undergraduates, and more than 70% are married.

4.2. Data Validity and Reliability Testing

A variable is said to have good validity if the value of loading factors is greater than the critical value that is ≥ 1.96 , and has a standardized factor loading (SLF) that is ≥ 0.5 or a more expected value of SF ≥ 0.7 (Jr et al., 2014; Wijanto, 2008; Yamin & Kurniawan, 2009). From Table 2, two items did not meet these values and must be discarded because the loading factor value is ≤ 1.96 . Indicators that do not meet are “I am worried about my future career development” ($-9.33 \leq 1.96$) and “I am constantly looking for new challenges in my job” ($-9.33 \leq 1.96$).

To measure reliability in SEM, the construct reliability measure and average variance extracted measure will be used. The expected Construct Reliability (CR) value is ≥ 0.7 . The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value indicates the amount of variation in the indicators that the construct can contain. The acceptable Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value is at least ≥ 0.5 (Jr et al., 2014; Wijanto, 2008; Yamin & Kurniawan, 2009). From Table 3, we can see that the construct reliability is above the recommended level.

Table 3. Construct Reliability.

Construct	Construct reliability	Average variance extracted
Working from Home	0.87	0.58
Work Life Balance	0.87	0.51
Work Stress	0.89	0.51
Work Productivity	0.90	0.58

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

The results of the goodness of fit (see Table 4) indicate that this model is good. These results are used to simultaneously estimate the initial measurement model (CFA) and then evaluate the measurement model.

Table 4. Goodness of Fit.

No	Goodness of Fit	Cut-off Value	Table	Ket
1	Expected cross-validation index (ECVI)	$< \text{ECVI Saturated and Independence Models}$	ECVI Sat = 9.94 < 16 ; ECVI = 61.75	Good Fit
2	Parsimonious Normed Fit Index (PNFI)	> 0.6	0.75	Good Fit
3	Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	> 0.9	0.86	Marginal Fit
4	Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	> 0.9	0.86	Marginal Fit

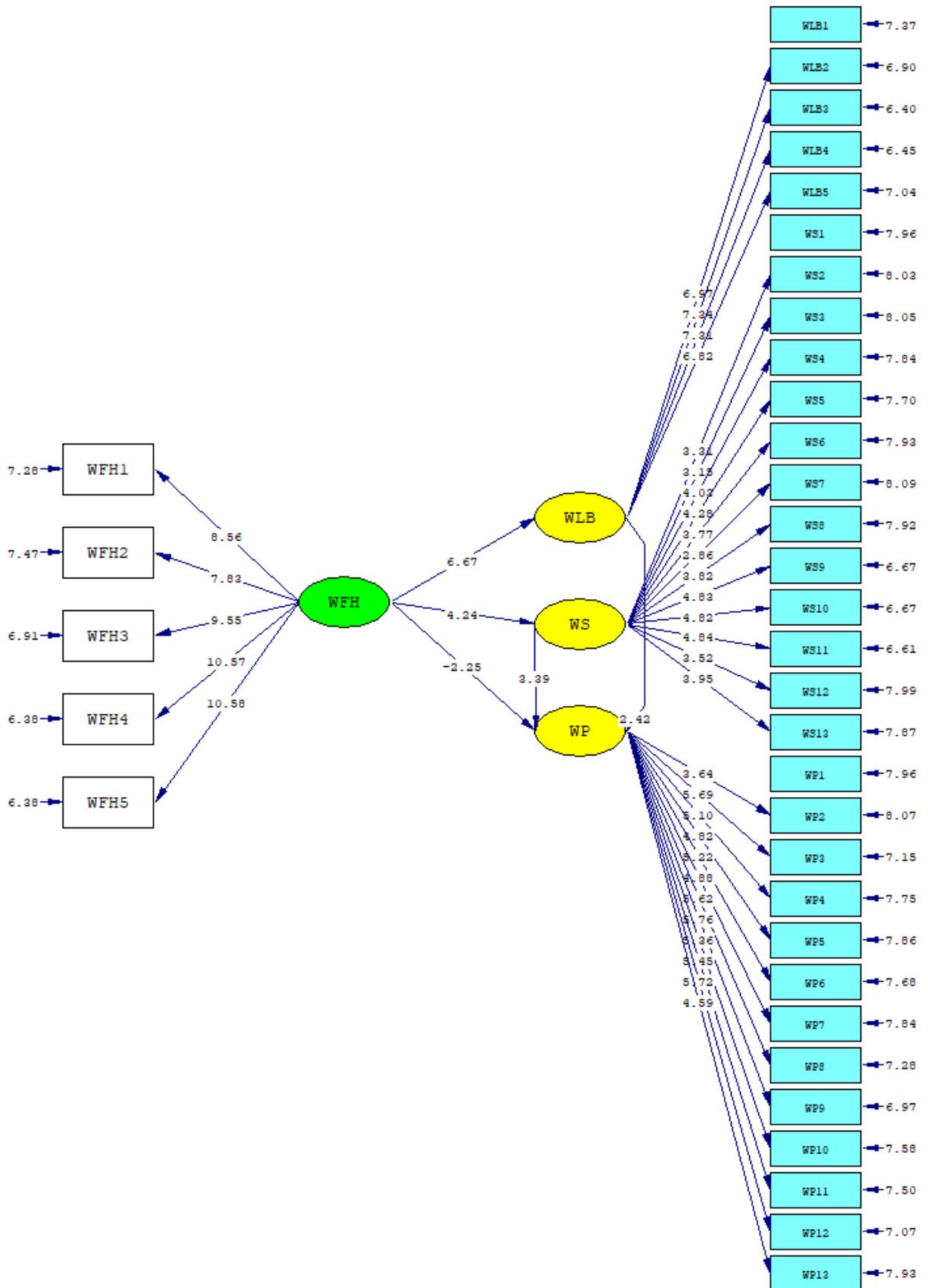


Figure 2. Structural Model (t-values).

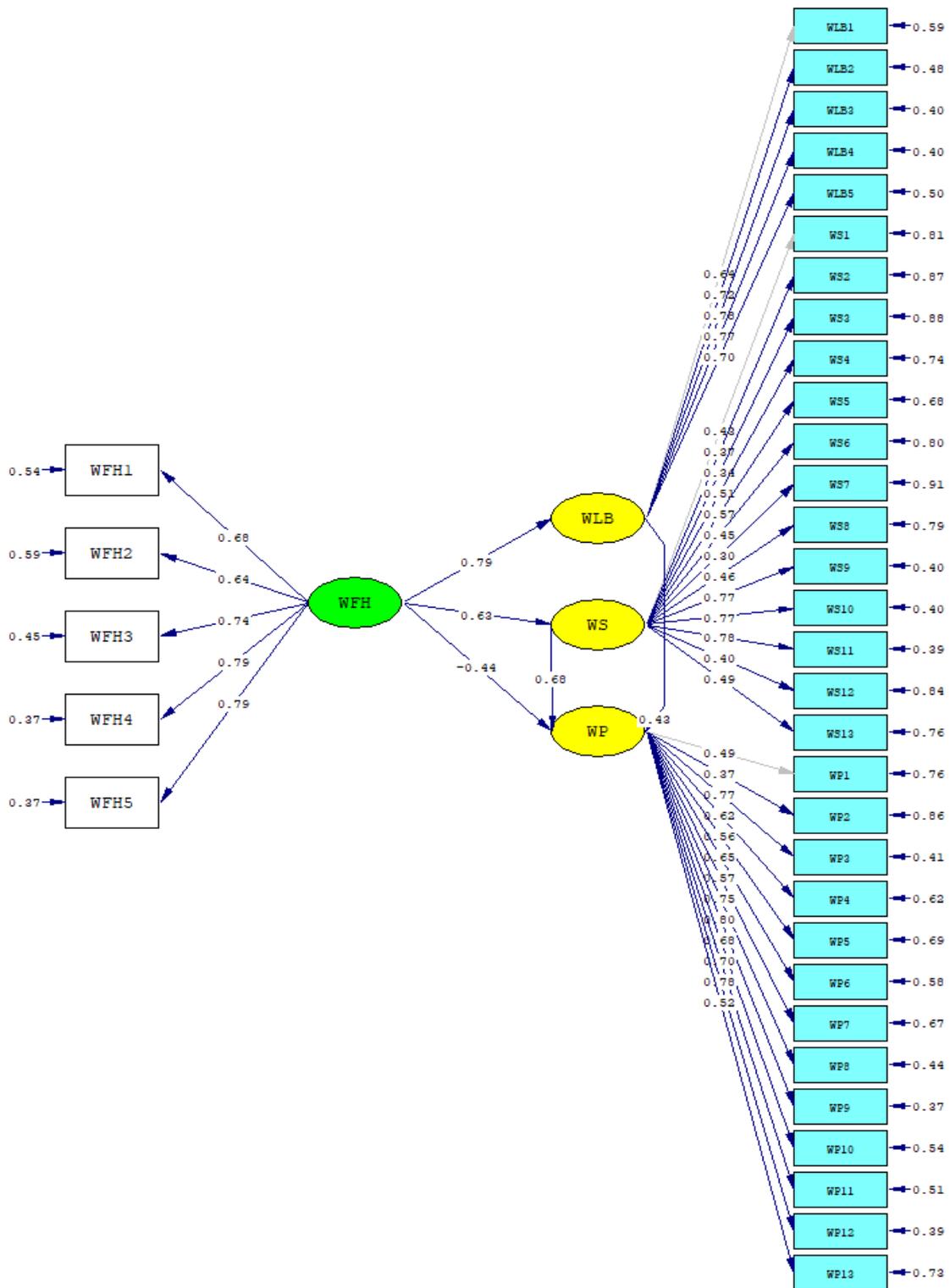


Figure 3. Structural Model (Standardized Solution).

Information:

1. WFH: Work from Home.
2. WS: Work Stress.
3. WLB: Work-Life Balance.
4. WP: Work Productivity.

Table 5. Causal Relations Between Variables.

No	Path	Standardization Coefficient	t-value	t-table	Significance	Conclusion
1	Working from Home → Work Productivity	-0.44	-2.25	1.96	Not significant	There is no sufficient evidence that working from home has a positive effect on work productivity.
2	Working from Home → Work-Life Balance	0.79	6.67	1.96	Significant	There is sufficient evidence that working from home has a positive effect on work-life balance.
3	Work-Life Balance → Work Productivity	0.43	2.42	1.96	Significant	There is sufficient evidence that work-life balance has a positive effect on work productivity.
4	Working from Home → Work Stress	0.63	4.24	1.96	Significant	There is sufficient evidence that work stress has a positive effect on work-life balance.
5	Work Stress → Work Productivity	0.68	3.39	1.96	Significant	There is sufficient evidence that work stress has a positive effect on work productivity.

From the results of hypothesis testing (see Table 5), it was found for H1 that working from home has no significant effect on work productivity because it has a t-value ≤ 1.96 according to Figure 2, and has a standardized solution value of -0.44 according to Figure 3. This contradicts the theory and previous research that claims that working from home increases employee productivity (Baker et al., 2007; Lim & Teo, 2000), reduces employee absence levels, reduces employee turnover rates, develops more creative employees, and creates job satisfaction (Frolick et al., 1993; Singh et al., 2017). This result is surprising because it is different from previous research. The prolonged COVID-19 pandemic is one of the reasons that working from home no longer makes employees productive. In contrast, the results of H2 and H4 show that working from home has a significant effect on work-life balance and work stress because they have t-values ≥ 1.96 according to Figure 2, and have standardized solution values of 0.79 and 0.63, respectively, according to Figure 3. Working from home gives employees more flexibility to manage their time and they can work and take care of their families at home (Delecta, 2011; Dow-Clarke, 2002). However, we must also be aware of the results of H4, which show that working from home has a significant effect on work-related stress experienced by employees. Working from home blurs the line between work and family and increases work time needed because the family at home also demands more time, attention, and affection (Feng & Savani, 2020; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). This study reveals that working from home can improve the work-life balance of employees. When work is balanced within a worker's life, they can manage their work and home lives effectively (Nwosu et al., 2020). However, the results of this study show that, in contrast, they are not productive. Therefore, companies must ensure discipline related to the work carried out by employees, even when working from home, so that tasks are completed in a timely manner. Supervision and communication are essential in the current pandemic to ensure that employee productivity remains optimal. This form of supervision can be done by enforcing deadlines for each task and evaluating them periodically (Arop et al., 2020). When regular monitoring and evaluation is carried out, it is hoped that it can become a new culture to remain productive (Filomachi & Stavros, 2017). Quick adaptation of all employees will ensure that optimal productivity is maintained (Van Nguyen et al., 2021). In addition to supervision and control, companies should consider appropriate programs and incentives to increase productivity while demanding obligations from employees (Nwosu et al., 2020; Van Nguyen et al., 2021).

Likewise, H3 and H5 are accepted because they have t-values ≥ 1.96 according to Figure 2, and have standardized solution values of 0.43 and 0.68, respectively, according to Figure 3. From the results of previous research, when employees have a good work-life balance and can divide their time effectively between work and family, their families support them at work. This, in turn, has a positive impact on work productivity (Baker et al., 2007; Darcy et al., 2012; Darko-Asumadu et al., 2018; Dhas, 2015). Some level of stress is important, because without stress, employees will not have the drive to work. Stress has a U curve; if it is managed properly, it will increase work productivity. Conversely, if it is not managed properly, it will result in low work productivity and an increase in absence (Ahmed & Ramzan, 2013; Kakkos & Trivellas, 2011; Yahaya et al., 2011). Companies can create pleasant and conducive atmospheres, even though work is done from home, by using online media platforms to effectively manage stress (Foulidi, Papakitsos, Vamvakeros, & Dimou, 2018).

Further analysis can be done using the data provided by the respondents, the majority of whom are women and already married, to examine if this is related to the application of working from home. Married women tend to choose to work from home due to family responsibilities in addition to work. Therefore, it can be said that the application of working from home is good for work-life balance and stress management, but this topic will be a focus for organizations because it does not affect employee work productivity.

The findings of this study will certainly have an impact on company policies and strategies for increasing work productivity. Allowing a combination of working from home and working from an office is expected to increase employee work productivity without reducing work-life balance and will keep employee stress at a manageable level. Face-to-face meetings are essential for developing new ideas and keeping employees motivated and focused, so having employees working from an office part-time is beneficial for companies. An experiment from previous

research explicitly asked employees to work from home four days a week and come to the office on the fifth day (Feng & Savani, 2020; Gorlick, 2020). Returning to work and minimizing the spread of COVID-19 will improve social relations again while increasing employee productivity, leading to a better quality of life, and less depression and stress (Lupe, Keefer, & Szigethy, 2020; Tan et al., 2020). Of course, the implementation of health protocols must still be carried out while working in an office so that employees can work safely.

5. CONCLUSION

Until now, there has been no effective strategy that increases work productivity amid the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic. One way to cut the spread of this virus is through working from home. However, the results of this study indicate that working from home has no influence on increasing employee productivity. Therefore, this research will have an impact on company policies and strategies regarding increasing productivity, one of which is the collaboration between working from home and working from an office. This research is limited to employees who work from home in Jakarta. Due to various restrictive rules that apply in Indonesia, future research is expected to reach broader areas and evaluate the results of allowing employees to split their working week between home and office.

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