Indonesian professionals' perspectives on flexible working arrangements as an alternative employment option post-Covid 19 recovery

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study is to assess how industry professionals perceive the implementation of flexible work arrangements (FWA) and what challenges are likely to enable or hinder its adoption in Indonesian companies. We conducted an intensive qualitative study for three months, guided by phenomenology, with 15 industry professionals representing multi-sectorial industries, as respondents. Laddered open-ended interviewing using two series of focus group discussions was employed. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Our findings show that industry professionals are in favor of FWA due to the many benefits it could bring to the employees like work-life balance, health and safety, flexible hours, convenience and comfort, and efficiency in the utilization of office space facilities.

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Introduction

In addressing the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesian businesses instituted strategies to keep their employees safe. One of these strategies is flexible work arrangements (FWA) which came in the form of working from home, instituting flexible working hours, and adjusting contracts of employment to reflect shorter work weeks, and other mechanisms. While there seems to have been welcome response to it, not much is known whether FWA could be considered as an alternative human resource practice in Indonesian companies post COVID-19.

The objective of this study is to explore how Indonesian industry professionals perceive the implementation of flexible work arrangements (FWA) and what challenges are likely to enable or hinder its adoption in Indonesian companies. In 2016, the Asian Development Bank projected that Indonesia will be moving towards a more flexible labor market to reduce the perceived high level of labor force underutilization and create quality jobs. To achieve this, it is important that government manpower regulatory bodies provide the right combination of flexibility for enterprises and security for workers is critical (ADB, 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic that hit the world has made many changes in human behavior around the world. In fact, the world of work will certainly be different post-COVID 19, as changes in the work patterns of many organizations are predicted (Spurk and Straub, 2020).

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To minimize the impact, many governments-imposed restrictions on community activities or a lockdown. This situation pushed companies to implement flexible work arrangements (FWA), e.g. work-from home, as companies grapple with the confounding economic fall-outs of the pandemic. The Indonesian Ministry of Manpower supports FWA, in which the government issued a regulation (UU Cipta Kerja 2020) that allows women workers to work flexible hours in order to support the role of female workers in the world of work (The Jakarta Post, 2019).

There is limited empirical research in the field of FWA implementation in Indonesia (e.g. see Rahman, Kristyanto, & Surjanti, 2020)⁵. According to Duhita (2018), the implementation of the FWA concept has only been carried out in a number of industries, such as in the creative industry which includes media, advertising, and architecture and design companies. This means a research gap in scope as other sectors and industries have not been studied. Spruk and Straub (2020) indicated in their recent research that the COVID-19 situation in fact is creating a big opportunity to undertake research to find out whether companies are expecting to move towards flexible working arrangements, and then find out its effects on the behavior and motivation, and career development of employees. Anticipating the challenges of the FWA and coupled with the strong urge to look for alternative work arrangements post COVID-19, it is necessary to examine the readiness of the workers and companies in facing this phenomenon.

Specifically, the three research questions that are being addressed by this study are:

- i. How do industry professionals view the advantages and disadvantages of implementing FWA in their organizations?
- ii. In their view, what are the likely challenges that FWA will bring if organizations implement them?
- iii. What recommendations can industry professionals suggest to enable smooth implementation of the FWA in their organizations?

This research will produce an initial model of perception related to flexible work arrangement experience and perceptions, that may be used as a framework to do bigger research on FWA. The end purpose is helping organizations and their employees transition to a flexible-based work arrangement that could offer them alternative work choices suited to their needs and requirements

Literature Review

Flexible work arrangements are alternate arrangements or schedules from the traditional work setting. Under flexible work arrangement (FWA), workers and employees are given greater scheduling freedom in how they fulfil their job responsibilities, and may therefore meet personal or family needs and achieve better work-life balance (UNICEF, 2020). Theoretically, according to Voyandoff (2005), FWAs offer employees some degree of control over the temporal and/or physical boundaries around which they work. FWAs vary on two independent but related dimensions: Discretion over work time and discretion over work place (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2013). FWA is any work policies and practices, whether formal or informal, that allow workers to work anywhere and anytime (Maxwell, Rankine, Bell, and MacVicar, 2007). In Indonesia, the main form of labor flexibility is through short-term contracting or outsourcing that is regulated under Indonesian Manpower Law 13/2003. Short-term contracts are made for at least two years with the option to extend for an additional 12 months. This practice is taken after an employee has reached retirement, or when there is a project where certain expertise is needed and no resource is available

As a strategy, companies use flexible work arrangements (FWAs) to better balance demands from multiple domains (Brough, O'Driscoll & Kalliath 2005). In its guidelines for companies to manage the COVID-19, UNICEF indicated examples of FWAs include flexi-time (e.g., employees choose their start and finishing times of work), compressed work week (e.g. employees choose to work four long days instead of five regular days), telecommuting (e.g. employees work from home via information communication technology (ICT)) and finally, part-time work (UNICEF, 2020). Meanwhile, the needs of employers, e.g. timely delivery of tasks with quality, is not to be compromised. In short, workplace flexibility arrangements are expected to create a win-win working relationship, which simultaneously recognizes and realizes the needs of both employers and employees. Yet not all types of flexible work arrangements are manageable or worthwhile for all sizes and types of organizations, so every employer considering flexible work arrangement should undertake an organisational assessment to determine whether and what kind of flexible scheduling will meet their needs the best.

Instead of using FWA, Spreitzer, Cameron and Garrett (2017) use the term 'alternative work arrangements' as another way to describe flexible work, and identified that there are three dimensions of flexibility that underline alternative work arrangements: (a) flexibility in the employment relationship, (b) flexibility in the scheduling of work, and (c) flexibility in where work is accomplished (p.473). Another term used concern those in the 'gig economy' - those whose work on short-term arrangements (minutes, hours or days) that are enabled or coordinated by a mobile app or other technology platforms that connect workers directly with customers for that specific gig (Farrell & Greig, 2016).

Previous research has found that these provisions are seen as attractive to employees who do not have family responsibilities but who desire flexibility nevertheless between their work and non-work lives (Brough & O'Driscoll 2010¹⁵; Carless & Wintle 2007). Studies have found that FWA is desired by employees under a supportive work culture; it prevents them from leaving (low turn- over intention) and higher engagement because of the flexibility it offers to them; yet its utilization seems to be reduced with longer work engagement over time (Timms, Brough, O'Driscoll, et al, 2014).

Flexible working arrangement is apparently attractive to millennial jobseekers. Timewise (2017) survey states that 92% of millennials make flexibility their priority in choosing a job, earlier reinforced by previous research (Rau & Hyland, 2002)¹⁹ that FWA is a work pattern that allows flexibility in terms of place and time. However, despite many of its perceived benefits, there are also perceived disadvantages. From the employees' side, the policy of implementing FWA is interesting because it is a manifestation of the attention or concern of the organizations they work for. Flexible work may help workers manage work and family responsibilities (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Having control over the timing and location of work can help employees cope with such potential stressors (Hammer et al., 2005). On the other hand, previous research found a negative side that concerns all organizations, namely the lack of direct supervision of workers from their organizations during the FWA could result in decreased intrinsic motivation and unethical behavior of these workers (Falk & Ichino, 2006). Research shows that flexible work could lead to work–family conflicts as couples need to multi-task taking care of family responsibilities and work responsibilities at the same time, exposing themselves to stressors, leading to greater stress. For example, flexible work arrangements may result in blurred boundaries between work and home roles (Beigi, Shirmohammadi, Stewart, 2018) leading to increased work-to-family conflict.

This is certainly a dilemma in itself for organizations in implementing this FWA concept. Thompson, Payne, and Taylor (2014) and Chandola, et al (2019) offer suggestions that in the future, organizations offering FWAs should periodically assess whether employees perceive FWAs as attractive and facilitating different states of flexibility. In Indonesia, this suggestion is certainly welcome as organizations are considering what sort of contractual relationships must be pursued post-COVID 19, and whether Indonesian companies and employees are willing to try FWA as attractive to them and end up using them, or if they do not end up using FWA, what factors are actually causing such decisions to be there in the first place.

Research and Methodology

Phenomenology

This research used a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is qualitative research used to explore ideas and develop concepts that enabled understanding of social phenomena in natural contexts, and gave the research the ability to analyze meanings, experiences and views of the participants (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Phenomenology has been widely applied in multi-disciplinary settings where the sole objective of the research is to capture the lived experiences of participants and the meaning it holds for them as individuals (Symon and Cassell, 2012).

Sampling Technique and Respondents

The study was participated by 15 industry managers and supervisors coming from a variety of sectors, namely, entertainment, logistics, property, IT consulting, and others. According to Creswell (2007) 5-25 respondents can represent the number of respondents for phenomenological study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants. Purposive sampling technique is considered appropriate for interpretive research where generalization is not the purpose of the study (Neuman, 2012), but whether the data that were collected were sufficiently rich to bring refinement and clarity to understanding an experience (Polkinghorne, 2006, p. 140). The respondents were enjoined to participate if they fulfilled the key criteria of the study: a) Manager/Team Leader position; b) Work experience above 2 years; c) Educational attainment (Bachelor's degree graduate); d) these managers are working in several in Jakarta area, who experience flexible working arrangement during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Data Collection: Focus Group Discussions

Under the phenomenological approach, the study used a variety of method, e.g. in-depth interviews, diaries, visual methods, and focus group discussions (Symon and Cassell, 2012). The focus group discussion puts the respondent on record as having said certain things and having agreed to the correctness of the investigator's findings. Furthermore, it makes it difficult later for the respondent to claim misunderstanding or investigator error (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314).

For purposes of this research, we used interview as a data collection tool during the FGD. Interviewing provided access to the context of people's behaviour and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behaviour. Through the interview, we were able to obtain descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena (Kvale, 1996, pp. 5-6). Interviews are argued as the most popular form of data collection in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). An interview protocol will be drafted consisting of open-ended questions that represent the research sub-questions; prior to the field work, the interview protocol will be pretested to ensure reliability and validity.

Data Analysis Technique

After the interview process, the data which have been recorded were collected and the verbatim transcripts were analyzed using content analysis as a procedure. In qualitative research, content analysis is considered as a one of the reliable and popular procedures for analyzing textual material, especially data from interview results (Flick 2009). 'Content' refers to words, pictures, meanings, symbols and themes or any message that can be communicated (Mouton, 2001). The constant comparison method was used to identify the common themes arising from the coded data. This process involved gathering segments of code from different parts of the database and clustering them into related categories or nodes (Kvale, 1996). Then, the units were separated into groups of themes and sub-themes, and later will be summarized and presented into a table in order to feature key themes arising from the study findings.

How do industry professionals view the advantages and disadvantages of implementing FWA in their organizations?

Advantages of Flexible Working Arrangement (FWA)

There are several advantages result from FWA as mention by FGD respondents namely: a) Flexible hours; b) work and family life balance; c) freedom of choosing comfort place to work; d) safety and security; e) company budget saving on facilities and utilities; f) develop trust among employees; and g) and develop digital working environment.

These advantages are explained below:

Flexible hours

Some respondents stated that FWA makes more flexibility to do and finish their job. Respondents have more hours for work that are not consumed for going and back home from office. It is just like many choices of time to do the job. Table 1 presents some statements from the respondents.

Table 1: Respondents' Statements

Statement	Position Title and Industry
WFA make flexibility to start working at my time preference	Respondent #7, Manager, Banking
WFH give flexibility of when to get up when to start working as long as the required working hours is fulfilled	Respondent #10, HR Manager, Outsourcing
We feel flexible to work from home in this Covid - 19 situation	Respondent #9, Banking
Flexible hours when to wake up and when to start working	Respondent #15, Head of Brand Marketing

Work and family life balance

Other advantages experienced by respondents especially those who are balancing home and work-life. Working from home makes respondents able to take care of their family needs. Children can be controlled easily when studying and household activities can be finished. It is beneficial to respondents with young children, *“because FWA gives them the chance to get closer with their families”* (Respondent #11, Entertainment Industry). FWA also gives them the opportunity to have better bonding with relatives, *“with mothers and daughters”* (Respondent #16, E-commerce). Others are given more time to rest which they believe can be good for them mentally and physically. Respondents work from anywhere as long as the internet connection is there. Even respondents could work from their hometown which is located in different provinces. Working on a comfortable place will contribute to productivity. The performance of respondents is even higher with FWA. This arrangement enables many of the participants to work from anywhere, *“where they can feel comfortable to work”* (Respondent # 9, Banking). This choice is healthy for them as they can then *“manage their time and their personal responsibilities”* (Respondent #12, FMCG). This finding is consistent with Voyandoff (2005) and Kiburz & Shockley (2013) whose arguments note that FWA offers employees some degree of control over the temporal and physical boundaries around which they can work. This arrangement gives them autonomy to choose how and where they work. From the employees' side, the policy of implementing FWA is interesting because it is a manifestation of the attention or concern of the organizations they work for. Flexible work may help workers manage work and family responsibilities effectively (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000).

Safety and security

Respondents stated that working from home create a safety net against the pandemic. At least they feel safe from the virus. Female respondents also feel safe especially those having to go home late at night, and dangerous things could happen on the way. Respondents feel more secure to just stay home doing their job. One of them said that *“working from home create security for employee especially in this pandemic situation”* (Respondent # 11, Entertainment). Majority of the respondents commented that the FWA has given them the comfort and safety guarantee during the COVID – 19 pandemic situations. UNICEF (2020) emphasized that having an FWA program will enable employees to feel safe in the time and space they work. The COVID-19 pandemic certainly created such a desire for safety and FWA was a viable response that is necessary in a crisis of this magnitude.

Company budget saving on facilities and utilities

FWA bring advantages to companies because reduces operational expenses such as rentals which can be so expensive especially the one located in business district areas. It can also save cost for cleaning and maintenance of the office. Moreover, it will also save cost to pay electricity, water, and waste treatment. It is deemed a much efficient alternative for offices because FWA offers the benefits of less overhead cost such as utilization of paper, and operational expenses related to power and utilities. One respondent said that FWA is:

“...less costly in terms of utilization of internet, electricity and employee lunch meals” (Respondent # 12, FMC).

Develop engagement among employees

FWA will also give a positive impact on how a manager trust their staff. Working without direct supervision is highly appreciated especially when the work is done correctly. Trust is essential for employees’ commitment to work and finish work. Majority of the respondents said that with the use of online technology, “*employee engagement increases during WFH*” (Respondent # 1, *Investment/Start up*). Coordination among team members is easier and interactions through online between leaders and staff also increases. FWA enables staff to “*share job knowledge faster and easier because it is aided by technology*” (Respondent # 4, *Motor Parts Industry*). Technology is extremely important that companies have to use. FWA can push companies to implement digital work environment. This is part of the future direction, and like it or not, all companies should use it. Thus FWA has made full use of technology and this is a situation that mindsets related to traditional work needs to change, as FWA “*pushes us to develop technology –based mind set step by step*” (Respondent # 5, *Logistics Transportation*). Studies have found that FWA is desired by employees under a supportive work culture; it prevents them from leaving (low turn- over intention) and higher engagement because of the flexibility it offers to them (Timms, Brough, O’Driscoll, et al, 2014).

Disadvantages of Flexible Working Arrangement (FWA)

Besides the advantages, the respondents also mentioned the disadvantages of the flexible working arrangement. From the FGD results, there are several disadvantages mentioned by the respondents, namely: a) lack of engagement; b) lack of supervision; c) performance monitoring and controlling over the employees; d) lack of coordination among employees; e) workload increase; f) lack of productivity; g) lack of social connection; h) distraction at home i) mental and physical health problem; and j) lack of infrastructure support. These issues are discussed below:

Lack of engagement

Some of the respondents said that engagement of the employees has also become a problem during working from home as they perceive that employee engagement decreased drastically during working from home. They require to be given enough time to adjust to the FWA environment at home and at work.

Lack of engagement especially new employees because they do not come to their office for more than six months and they even do not meet their workmates directly yet (Respondent # 2, IT Service)

They realized that during the pandemic, the employees do not come to office as usual, especially new employees or junior ones; hence they could not feel the on-site company experience in their day-to-day activities. This condition will probably decrease their engagement to their organization. However, it will take time for the employees to be adaptable to the new condition, where they are not accustomed to dealing with the new mode of work, from offline to online.

Lack of supervision, performance monitoring and controlling over the employees.

Most of the respondents of this study expressed their arguments that by implementing FWA, the problem of supervision and controlling work has arisen. Hence, the role of supervision is not effective as one of them expressed this view:

By working from home, employees sometimes are difficult to be contacted by their supervisors, so it’s difficult for the supervisors to monitor them (Respondent # 9, Banking)

One of the disadvantages is that the company may not be able to control every employee, and it will not be able to “*to see if everyone is working or not, or whether they are productive*” (Respondent # 12, FMCG). This is indeed a problem of monitoring performance that can arise due to FWA. By implementing FWA, it is difficult for the supervisor or manager to monitor and control employees’ activities at home and their performance achievement. This finding is consistent with arguments that while FWA has many benefits, it does raise questions related to supervisory monitoring and control: previous research shows that the lack of direct supervision of workers from their organizations during the FWA could result in decreased intrinsic motivation and unethical behavior of these workers (Falk & Ichino, 2006).

Lack of coordination among employees

The issue of coordination has become a problem for most respondents in their organizations. They complained (although they have facilities to communicate) about some obstacles in coordinating work. Some have to wait for the schedule of online meeting while it is “*easy actually for them to meet each other directly if offline*” (Respondent # 7, Banking). Approval processes for hard copy documents can also be taxing because they have to wait for their bosses to sign documents personally because electronic signatures are often unacceptable. Therefore, one way by which they “*can surmount this problem is to fully utilize common social media platforms like GMeet, WhatsApp and many other apps available to process communication faster*” (Respondent # 1, E-commerce). Hence, it is clear that although the employees have several media and facilities to communicate, most of them still have problem in coordination among them.

Increase in workload

By implementing a flexible working arrangement, workers and supervisors tend to be flexible in their time and this condition will unwittingly increase the workload where working hours become erratic. This argument was revealed by some of the respondents who said that when they work from home, they *“do not realize that they have been working too long and too late”* (Respondent # 1, E-commerce). The disadvantage is that the workload has actually increased because of this flexibility. Thus *“meeting becomes a never-ending process because so many things can happen at any one time”* (Respondent # 13, Education).

Meetings can go long until 7 or 8 pm which can be too tiring and exhausting (Respondent # 14, Property)

This reality leads us to understand that by experiencing the WFH, the employees cannot limit their time at work and unconsciously they have to work overtime. This condition will make the workload increase.

Lack of social connection

Working from home has a several consequences for employees, especially feeling alone. It is different when they work in the office, where they can get in touch with others, and socialize with one another directly. This social connection problem not occurs only between employees with their peers but also with their supervisors, as they said:

Lack of social connection, if the employees who just joined with normal condition will be easier to get in touch with others, although they still can get in touch via Teams or Zoom but it's still less intense (Respondent # 11, Entertainment)

This discussion indicates that one of the disadvantages is the employees might not experience the real social connection among them although they can get in touch via social media. Based on the discussion above, WFH environment may cause lack of productivity for the employees. This condition tends to make them not focus to do their office tasks at home.

Distractions at home

Research shows that flexible work could lead to work– family conflicts as couples need to multi-task taking care of family responsibilities and work responsibilities at the same time, exposing themselves to stressors, leading to greater stress. For example, flexible work arrangements may result in blurred boundaries between work and home roles (Beigi, Shirmohammadi, Stewart, 2018) leading to increased work-to-family conflict. This finding is consistent with this argument. Most problems found in the FWA, the employees are difficult to concentrate and share their tasks between office and home. When they do their office work at home, some interventions might probably happen especially for mothers with their kids. Others complain that they could not really do their job because the distraction is too much, especially from their kids. This fact accentuates that WFH is sometimes not effective because some distractions may possibly happen at home. Another said:

At home, we certainly concern on family as well or we have to do other things besides our office work (Respondent # 12, FMCG).

Physical and mental health problem

One of the pressing issues about FWA is the anticipated gradual degradation of employee mental health. This issue was picked up in half of the respondents. One respondent said it is due to *“the overload of work due to unrelenting demands of WFH drive employees to feel anxious and depressed. This causes our employees to lose productivity”* (Respondent # 12, FMCG). The issue of mental health has been caused by *“lack of social mobility which can be resolved by injecting interventions that might work for employees”* (Respondent # 7, Banking). Hence this is a challenge that needs to be handled by organizations through continuing mental health assessment and counselling. It is necessary to have mental health awareness led by a good leader who cares about their employees emotional and mental conditions.

One intervention designed for this problem was to work with online health providers like *Halodoc* for confidential assessment and counselling, not only for the employee but for their families as well. Working in monotonous situation or condition may cause something serious to our mental or physical health. Fatigue can arise from too much sitting or being glued to the computer *“more about fatigue, it's related to tired eyes, it's related to fatigue and it's possible if you don't move too much at home, low back pain”* (Respondent # 5, Transportation Logistic). This might happen to employees who work from home for a long period of time. One respondent said that:

The worrying thing is probably about mental health, sir. By working from home, the mobility will certainly rather limited. So, some of the employees will have problem with their mental health. (Respondent # 7, Banking)

In their view, what are the likely challenges that FWA will bring if organizations implement them?

Challenges

The respondents identified five critical challenges facing them in the companies' flexible working arrangement. These five challenges are 1) Lack of leadership direction; 2) Lack of communication; 3) Minimum feedback on performance; and 4) Lack of technological support.

Lack of leadership direction

Respondents indicated that it is important to have top management direction where the company is going related to the flexibility of work arrangements. This direction needs to be coming from the top and then trickled down to the staff level. This objective must be “*clear as much as possible, as simple as possible to avoid confusion*” (Respondent # 7, Banking). The CEO can “*delegate this important objective of direction sharing to his/her tactical team*” (Respondent #2, IT Service). Along with top management direction is showing care to the employees. One respondent said:

Even though we hardly meet because of this pandemic, it is important the top show they are engaged with us through communication and show of care (Respondent # 7, Banking)

Leadership direction when it comes to employee welfare is important as it was revealed that one of the main issues confronting employees who work from home is mental health. As a strategy, companies use flexible work arrangements (FWAs) to better balance demands from multiple domains (Brough, O’Driscoll & Kalliath 2005), and one such domain that needs leadership attention (Falk & Ichino, 2006; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000) and direction is mental health. The social disconnection and the lack of social interaction have created depression among employees. One of them described the situation as:

We need a leader who can reach out to the employees especially if they detect that there are employees who are down or depressed. We need their empathy because we are away from work and we are separated from our colleagues (Respondent # 2, IT Service)

Lack of communication

During the FWA, the effort to communicate has dropped significantly. because There needs to be more collaboration between teams because without collaboration the outcomes coming from WFH will not be maximal. Collaboration through active communication cannot be done face to face, and “*this is compounded by delayed meeting online because they have to adjust to everyone’s schedule*” (Respondent # 2, IT Service). Another challenge is that some leaders do not care enough about sending the right message to their teams. The messages often become confusing, especially on the health protocols that must be followed, with one respondent saying, “*we don’t know whether we are required to take antigen swab or RT –PCR.*” (Respondent # 13, Education).

Minimum feedback on performance

Employees on FWA arrangements feel that there is lack of efficient monitoring of performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents feel that this is “both a deficiency and a challenge that needs to be looked into effectively” (Respondent # 2, IT Service). For example, in the outsourcing business, there are issues related to coordination between staff and the outsourced employees. A respondents said sometimes she does not know whether, in fact, “*the outsourced employees are working, sleeping or somewhere else because every time we look for them, they cannot be found*” (Respondent # 10, Outsourcing). In order to monitor daily attendance, and the work performance of employees, many respondents reported that employees are “*required to fill in an activity log*”. She explains:

We require our employees to fill up a daily activity log where they must fill in their whereabouts every hour, every day. We make WFH a strict business and we want our employees to be disciplined (Respondent # 14, Property)

This finding is consistent with Falk & Ichino (2006) who contend that remote working could raise questions of employee unethical behaviour in how and where they work. Direct supervision enables managers to monitor employee performance and there are fears that FWA might encourage certain employees to play the field and become less productive.

Lack of technological support

It has been difficult for respondents to keep motivated in FWA if there is not enough technological support from their organizations. Majority said having a “*functional and working internet system and connection will do enough support – as simple as that*” (Respondent # 5, Transportation Logistic). Yet it was also revealed during the interviews that the employees who suffered the most during WFH are those employees who “*work in remote areas where there is hardly any internet connection.*” (Respondent # 3, Agribusiness). Often times the internet connections hangs up or lags, causing delays in transmission. Employees in this situation must go to the nearest town just to get a network line. It creates a lot of hassles and encumbers the employee who must spend time travelling back and forth the villages and towns. One respondent said that his organization does not provide him with laptop to be able to serve his bank customers during WFH. He is forced to meet his customers face to face in the bank, “*which is not good really because they do not like to be served face to face. But what can we do? We have no access to the data or the facilities?*” (Respondent # 9, Banking).

Studies have found that FWA is desired by employees under a supportive work culture (Timms, Brough, O’Driscoll, et al, 2014), this means that first and foremost the infrastructure facilities like laptops, internet, internet support and incentives, and learning management systems (LMS) and other technological mechanisms must be made available to employees. Such facilities enable employees to connect directly with their peers, their customers, and the stakeholders they must report to in an efficient manner. Having these facilities send the message that organizations show their attention and concern for the employees who work for them, directly or remotely (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Farrell & Greig, 2016).

What recommendations can industry professionals suggest to enable smooth implementation of the FWA in their organizations?

The respondents put forward many recommendations that needed to be given attention to by organizations. These recommendations pertain to:

- i. Providing sound leadership direction that will enable the organization to make a decision related to where it will take the organization towards implementing FWA
- ii. Providing infrastructure support to all employees to make it convenient for them to do FWA
- iii. Providing a sound system of monitoring employee performance using technological-based monitoring
- iv. Providing support for mental and psychological health of employees
- v. Providing programs that will encourage better social connectedness among employees
- vi. Providing socialization and communication about any organization policy that is related to future FWA policies

Conclusion

This study has highlighted the need for FWA policies to be in place in organizations as they try to recover from the COVID -19 pandemic. This FWA is currently meeting ambivalent response from professionals as the system has its many advantages while at the same time, disadvantages. Our research team conducted ladder FGD with several professionals across a multitude of industries. The study found various advantages and disadvantages as well as challenges that related to management, organizational, and infrastructure support. These are the key factors for the successful implementation of any FWA policies in organizations. From the study it appears that sound leadership direction is important, especially as employees are looking towards their leaders for support, both policy-wise and engagement-wise. Workplace flexibility arrangements are expected to create a win-win working relationship, which simultaneously recognizes and realizes the needs of both employers and employees. Yet not all types of flexible work arrangements are manageable or worthwhile for all sizes and types of organizations, so every employer considering flexible work arrangement should undertake an organizational assessment to determine whether and what kind of flexible scheduling will meet their needs the best. Leaders are very important in this arena of successful FWA in organizations. We hope that based on this research we can propose a bigger study that would capture the sentiment of wider number of industries across the Indonesian archipelago.

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