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2
A study of work-culture changes at post Covid-19 pandemic in greater Jakarta

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2
Abstract. This paper presents an examination of culture change in working places due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with a study case in the Greater Jakarta. During the Covid-19 pandemic, most of companies around the world made policy for the employee to work from home (WFH). Implementation of the WFH policy has showed a great success not only in keeping the employee safety and health but also in maintaining employee performance. Now, the pandemic has been shifting to endemic such that working culture is going to change. Health, safety, and flexibility are being keywords of the new working culture. This study assessed the employee perspective about a trend of workplace changing and the needs of supporting facilities. The assessment was done through a survey and analysing the survey data. The result show different types of working system, where 66% work from office, 30% work in hybrid system, 2% work from home, and 2% work from anywhere.

1. Introduction

Working life has changed dramatically in the last two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It forcing us to rethink our perceptions of the workplace and the nature of work itself. So far, our understanding of work has been interwoven with concepts of place, which are associated with an office or workplace. Several studies explore how the Covid-19 pandemic affects to the workplace culture in the real world [1–3]. Those studies give a message about adaptation and preparation for success in future, especially in the face of unexpected disruptions like the Covid-19 pandemic. As [4] points out, the Covid-19 pandemic has shown many weaknesses of many systems that have been applied and implemented in daily life around the world. The pandemic has raised numerous questions for businesses such as about the working culture. Some current changes are expected to be temporary, while others will have long-term implications. Arguably, the pandemic has pushed several pre-existing trends in the office sector, such as flexibility, activity-based working, health and wellness, and the desire for better space utilization.

The pandemic has pushed most of the companies to adopt work from-home (WFH) since beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. Surprisingly, the pandemic has shown that working from home is possible. Even though it is far from ideal, the absence of a commute and the ability to balance work and life are



highlighted as significant advantages of remote working. In fact, remote working had been implemented in several countries before the pandemic [4–6]. However, the pandemic has enabled millions of employees to work from home worldwide. Arguably, with the advent of cloud storage and the shift to a paperless working culture, the need to work from an office has become obsolete, as work can be done anywhere.

This trend has also had an impact on Indonesia's working culture. Many companies are finally rethinking about the importance of workplace and how work should be done. In order to attract potential employees, many companies are becoming more flexible in their work environments. Employees are the most valuable and costly resource in any organisation, so employee needs must be prioritised [7]. Indonesia has a distinct work culture. Arguably, the differences between its work culture and other countries significantly impact how businesses adapt to the new normal post-Covid-19 pandemic. This study examines how the companies in Greater Jakarta have adapted to the new normal during the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Method

This study is evaluating working culture change after the Covid-19 pandemic. Three aspects are considered in the evaluation: 1) rethinking about remote working, 2) acceleration of digital transformation, and 3) hybrid working and workplace culture. A survey about the working culture change is conducted to collect data from employees. The resulted survey data is used in the evaluation.

2.1 A Rethink of Remote Working

As of July 2022, most companies are already back to work from the office, as the public activity restrictions (PPKM) have been relaxed for more than five months. Since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, the office must implement social distancing and a 50% reduction in office capacity to prevent workplace-related clusters. There are several reasons why remote working will be a viable option such as:

1. Many companies were left with cash-flow issues due to the pandemic, having to pay high rent on offices they were not using. This has been a distressing experience for them, and they will increasingly want to advocate for a more flexible model [4].
2. Previously held meetings and collaborations in meeting rooms are now being replaced by online platforms such as Zoom, Ms Team, Cisco Webex, Google Meet, and others. Because virtual spaces can be accessed from anywhere, the office function as a place for collaboration has shifted to virtual spaces with greater flexibility. Many companies of all sizes are opting for a more decentralised working model as more businesses embrace the concept of remote working. People no longer need to travel to a central office and can work from anywhere. As a result, companies must broaden the definition of "workplace".
3. Viability of working from home or the office has been accepted by both employers and employees. Finally, the current generation (Generation Y & Z) of workers desires more job satisfaction and control over how, where, and when they work. They also want places where they can collaborate, share ideas, and innovate [8]. Generation Y & Z are more digitally savvy and value flexibility than previous generations.

On the other hand, many managers from local and national companies may prefer to work in the office because it gives them more control and reduces the number of emails to which they must respond. Companies are also concerned about the remote working affecting the workforce. Many companies attract employees by emphasising values and cultural practices that are more visible in a formal office setting (for example, training, on-the-job learning, and mentoring). Maintaining these practices is critical for corporate culture, particularly as employees spend more time away from work. In addition, a study also highlighted that employees were concerned about missing out on conversations and office interaction in a situation of isolation [9]. Office is still required as it is a place for employee to have a social interaction.

2.2. Acceleration of Digital Transformation

The requirement to move work online has emphasised the significance of digital transformation. Undoubtedly, the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated digital technology adoption by several years. The Covid-19 crisis has caused years of change in how businesses in all sectors and regions operate [10]. The crisis has vividly demonstrated the power of digital technologies, and some changes may now be too significant to postpone [11]. According to a McKinsey survey, respondents said their companies moved 40 times faster than expected before the remote working pandemic. Respondents previously stated that implementing the level of remote working during the crisis would have taken more than a year. It took an average of 11 days [12].

As email has altered how we work and communicate, technological advancements will continue to change our work culture and methods. Technology will play a more significant role in office development in the future. Many businesses expect to continue investing in technology such as data security, remote working, and artificial intelligence to maintain productivity. Furthermore, paperless working and collaboration via video conferencing and asynchronous training collaboration have become the new norms in almost all businesses. This is both an opportunity and a challenge for companies, especially given the lack of good infrastructures such as fast internet connections and cloud-based work systems in many developing countries such as Indonesia. Work, space, and information technology (IT) alignment are necessary for success.

2.3. Hybrid Working and Workplace Culture

According to some surveys, even during the Covid-19 pandemic, many employees reported a positive experience with remote working. Nonetheless, very few of them prefer to work in this manner all of the time, preferring instead to work in a hybrid work environment. According to a recent Hays survey, more than half of employees will shift to a hybrid work model [13]. In addition to traditional cubicles and factory spaces, a hybrid workforce is dispersed across multiple locations [9]. Flexibility and choice characterise the working model. Furthermore, according to another survey, hybrid working is driving the office footprint strategy [14].

It is worth noting that hybrid models emphasise activities that build and demonstrate trust. A diverse set of essential values that all employees respect and practice contribute to the positive and effective functioning of the workplace. Organisations can recruit talent better, achieve innovation, and create value for all stakeholders thanks to hybrid work models [15]. Furthermore, the absence of commuting means higher individual productivity in the case of work from-home (WFH) and hybrid model strategies [9]. Employees can choose between at-will employment, split weeks, shift work, and a flexible workweek.

Several studies have begun to look into the benefits and drawbacks of hybrid working. It has been discovered that hybrid working contributes to the reduction of toxic workplace cultures. According to a recent study, most employees would not consider joining a company with a higher salary but a poor work culture [16]. Cooperation and interaction, on the other hand, are more critical than ever in the remote working environment. Working remotely may make the employees to be isolated such that they will lack of conversations and office interaction [9]. Humans are social creatures, and social interaction at work can be difficult for many people, especially during Covid-19.

2.4. Survey to Employees in Greater Jakarta

Employee perspectives are essential in understanding how workplace culture has changed in the last two years during the Covid-19 pandemic. This viewpoint has become critical in the current situation in which businesses reflect their office requirements. A quantitative approach using questionnaires was chosen to understand changes in working culture in various companies and regions of Greater Jakarta. From June to July 2022, data was collected using a Google form via the WhatsApp application. Respondents worked in offices in and around Greater Jakarta for national and multinational corporations. The questionnaire respondents were 61 employees from various industries and locations

throughout Greater Jakarta. The questionnaire uses a combination of multiple-choice and open-ended questions to provide a more detailed picture of how workplace culture is changing.

Results of the survey are applied in qualitative research to investigate how the pandemic affected the setting of working arrangements. Moreover, inductive analysis is done in analysis and generalisation. Objectives of using the inductive approach are to: (a) condense raw textual data into a brief summary format, (b) establish clear links between research objectives and the summary of findings derived from the raw data, and (c) develop a framework of the underlying structure of experiences or processes visible in the raw data [17]. This method is beneficial for studying phenomena that are still new and changing; the author recognised that pandemic cases would greatly influence responses during questionnaire distribution.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 *Rethinking business model*

The presented result in this paper is at the early stage of the research. At this stage, the survey got 61 respondents who are employees in the Greater Jakarta area. The survey results show a changing pattern of working cultures across many companies in Greater Jakarta. According to the survey, nearly 30% of respondents now work in a hybrid model, 2% work entirely from home (WFH), 2% work from anywhere (WFA), and the rest return to the office. The survey result demonstrates various working models that companies in Greater Jakarta implemented even though office capacity is no longer restricted. Some businesses that return to the office also implement more flexible working hours to assist their employees in adapting to their individual needs. The findings also show that the working culture in Indonesia needs to be more adaptable to the possibility of working from home. Many businesses prefer their employees to present in the office, while others use "wait and see" approach by following the Covid-19 cases day to day. Nevertheless, working cultures in many companies appear to be rapidly changing in response to the new normal needs. According to the questionnaire, the readiness of companies' digital technology significantly impacts the choice of the working model. Leading companies have increased capital expenditures in digital technology and corporate strategies during this period of disruption. Indicators of success are not only strategy and leadership, but also the technology [18].

3.2 *Transformation of working culture*

What stands out in the data is that almost all respondents said they are now shifting from face-to-face meetings to online meetings; even among respondents who have returned to the office, online meetings are still the preferred option. In the possibility of Covid-19 cases, people likely feel more comfortable having meetings online than offline, and some respondents highlight that online meeting are far more effective. It is included that business travel is significantly reduced because most tasks can be completed through online meetings. Most respondents stated that they have not travelled for business in the last few months. The majority of respondents also want more flexibility in their current working arrangement, with respondents who have the option of working from home or anywhere expressing greater satisfaction with their current working situation. Some respondents also feel unsafe and tired of wearing masks all day in the office, highlighting the importance of health and safety for most employees. According to several reports, the office will be a place to build corporate culture, conduct training, socialise, meet clients, and attract potential talents [4, 18, 19].

3.3 *The New Normal Post Covid-19 Pandemic*

The covid-19 pandemic reinforced a fact of modern life: we live in a period of change and uncertainty, in which everything can change in a matter of weeks or days due to dramatic economic changes, natural disasters, or other disruptions. The workplace is evolving toward greater collaboration and teamwork. Employees are becoming more empowered; work/life balance is becoming more important; and there is a widespread desire for egalitarian and socially engaging workplaces. In order to respond to these trends, the workplace must be adaptable enough to accommodate a wide range of working styles.

When asked what they thought about the challenges in the new normal following the Covid-19 pandemic, the majority of respondents reflected on this. The constant fear of health when going to work, the fast-paced working culture, how to meet targets with economic uncertainty, and how to collaborate with other colleagues in the new working arrangements are some of the survey respondents' responses. Thus, understanding work and providing flexible workplaces that enable continuous improvement of that work are two things that organisations can do to help differentiate in the era of new normal post Covid-19 pandemic.

4. Conclusion

With advancements in Covid-19 treatment and vaccine rollout, countries are beginning to imagine a future in which the pandemic has no impact on employee and employer decisions. The Covid-19 pandemic will eventually end, and it will be up to the business sector to develop new ways of working in order to maintain and foster this positive shift in workplace management. One thing is certain: many of our offline meetings will be replaced by online meetings in the near future. Short-term and long-term changes in working culture will significantly impact how the office operates following the Covid-19 pandemic.

A hybrid form of work may predominate in terms of the working system: a model in which employees can work at the office, from home, or mix it up throughout the working week. While some workdays may require all employees to be physically present, others may necessitate a combination of physical and virtual presence. Depending on the nature of their tasks and their personal needs or preferences, employees and managers must find ways to work that combine the benefits of face-to face contact with the flexibility of remote work [20].

Technology must play a more significant role in increasing remote workers' productivity and making workplaces safer for returning employees. Employees must be flexible in order to benefit from both modes of operation. People anticipate a much more open and flexible work environment in the future. Furthermore, rather than simply reverting to the past, responsible companies will seize the opportunity in the new normal to reinvent their working model, fostering collaboration and productivity and creating a better human experience for their talents.

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PAGE 1

PAGE 2

PAGE 3

PAGE 4

PAGE 5

PAGE 6

PAGE 7
