Deviations in Employee Behaviour While Working from Home During the COVID-19 Pandemic Period

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Abstract. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed people's working way, including in Engineering, Construction, and Procurement (EPC), therefore many EPC companies in Indonesia implement work-from-home policies. This research was intended to determine deviations in employee behavior while working from home, as well as the role of supervisor support in reducing its potential. 260 workers from an EPC company in Indonesia participated in this study, and their responses were analyzed by using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The findings indicate that deviations in worker behavior occur while working from home, and supervisor support has a positive influence in reducing its potential.

Keywords: burnout · organizational deviance behavior · supervisor support · work from home · work stress

1 Introduction

The impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak that swept across the globe created economic and social shocks in a relatively short time in early 2020, reshaping the way people live, and work and the way industries and organizations operate. One of the most visible changes because of the COVID-19 pandemic is the existence of teleworking, telecommuting, or work-from-home policies across multiple jobs [1]. Work from home is recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) to be implemented by governments and organizations around the world as a new form of work innovation to prevent the spread of the virus as well as a solution so that work can continue as usual, and also as an alternative way because there is potential for cost savings and the effectiveness of work schedule during the pandemic that can be given to workers [2]. Therefore, the concept of work from home is starting to be widely accepted by organizational management, considering that work from home can increase the expected productivity and profit [3].

However, the shift from working from the office to working from home has not only affected the way organizations work but also the relationship between workers and employers. Workers' perspectives regarding the implementation of work from home that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic also varied, some argued that working from

home could have a positive impact, and others believe that working from home could have a negative impact.

There are two contradictory images about working from home where some people will think that working from home is the best of both worlds because it facilitates the integration between work and family while still getting paid [4]. Working from home gives workers more flexibility in dealing with family issues as permanent workers can work anywhere including at home, thus strengthening the family environment, and enabling workers to align time management autonomy between personal matters and tasks in their work. Working from home is also perceived as effective for improving quality of life [5] and employee happiness, and job satisfaction [6]. Working from home also removes the burden of individual and organizational absenteeism as it enables workers fulfilling their job obligations and complete their responsibilities properly while not physically working from the office. These benefits of working from home lead to greater loyalty and commitment to the organization, job satisfaction, work-life balance, and well-being [7].

Like a double-edged sword, it turns out that working from home also has several negative impacts. The problem of social isolation can be a serious problem during working from home which can make workers feel as if they are working alone and can lead to decreased motivation and performance [8]. Distractions at home including interference from family and the feeling of having to be on standby 24/7 are the other problems, when not every worker has adequate facilities to carry out work from home. These negative distractions that occur while at home, as well as the excessive workload the workers received make them think that working from home is like cutting their throats [4].

In terms of mental health, working from home frequently makes workers not have clear boundaries between work and their personal lives, therefore it has an impact on work overload, which will increase stress and anxiety, and affect job satisfaction [9]. Long-term stress can form burnout as its manifestation, which has many consequences for the individual who experiences it. Burnout has been shown to increase during the COVID-19 pandemic due to changes in individual work environments [10]. Research on job stress in female workers also found that psychosocial risk factors, such as high job demands, low job control, and low social support in the workplace, along with low job fairness and work-reward imbalance where high blood pressure can be the forerunner of stress-related disorders. In addition, a poor organizational climate, including conflicts in the workplace, relational injustice, and poor social relations in the workplace can lead to an increased risk of poor health and absenteeism [11].

Furthermore, working from home conditions can also cause deviation in employee behavior. Deviant behavior can range from relatively small and simple things to very serious things. Deviations in work behavior in the context of working from home can be different from the one in the context of working from the office. While working from home, many forms of deviant behavior cannot be measured, such as "hitting or pushing someone at work" [12]. It is because they tend to use electronic media to interact during work from home [13]. Additionally, work-from-home arrangements that give workers great flexibility can create deviant behavior in terms of attendance [14]. Unlike working from an office that has clear norms for required working time and location, workers who work from home can feel that they have more time flexibility since they are allowed

to start and finish working whenever they want, and can also increase non-working activities, such as watching television or cyber-loafing during working hours.

This type of worker behavior is an important organizational event and should be better understood [15]. Forms of deviant behavior that occur while working from home tend to go unnoticed and cause various problems in the organization. Although the form of deviant behavior while working from home can be seen as simple and is not specifically intended to harm the organization, such as delaying work, the organization in this case has the right to demand work discipline and the right to expect its workers to continue maintaining their performance to minimize loss suffered by the organization. When worker behavior is outside the organizational norms, the consequences are far-reaching and affect all levels of the organization including the decision-making process, productivity, and even financial costs [16].

Thus, organizations also need to look at the side effects of working from home and consider the risks when introducing telecommuting jobs [8]. The benefits of working from home can only be obtained if workers receive adequate managerial support, peer support, and technological support [17]. One way to reduce the potential of workers' deviant behavior while working from home is to maintain their psychological well-being as well as working norms by providing social support, one of the supports that workers can receive is support from their supervisors. Supervisor support reflects workers' perceptions of the quality of their relationship with supervisors [18], and it represents the extent to which workers realize that their supervisors care about their problems and personal well-being [19]. Supervisory support plays a role in encouraging positive attitudes about the organization among workers [20], particularly in maintaining the morale and psychological well-being of workers during times of crisis. From a theoretical perspective, the role of supervisor support in reducing workers' perceived uncertainty and emotional exhaustion during the COVID-19 crisis can be explained by social support theory, which suggests that social support protects people from the harmful effects of stressful events by influencing what they think and how they feel [21].

2   Method

This study aims to determine the effect of work stress on burnout, the effect of burnout on behavioral deviations at the organizational level (organizational deviance behavior), and the effect of perceived supervisor support against behavioral deviations that occur in workers during the period of working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, this study also aims to determine the effect of perceived supervisor support on conditions of stress and fatigue at work, which can lead to deviations in worker behavior. This research is based on the responses of 260 workers in the Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) sector who implemented a work-from-home system due to the COVID-19 pandemic in full, which is 5 days in 1 week since March 2020. The following is the research model carried out in this study; there are five variables were used, namely work stress, burnout, perceived supervisor support, and organizational deviance behavior. Conceptual model of the research shown in Fig. 1.

The purposive sampling method was used to determine 260 workers from an EPC company in Indonesia who had worked from home during the COVID-19 pandemic.
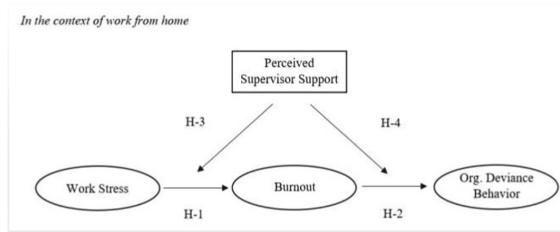
Fig. 1. Conceptual Model of the Research

The characteristics tested were graded on a 6-point Likert scale, with 1 and 6 indicating strong disagreement and agreement, respectively. The research models were evaluated using structural equation modeling (SEM), namely Lisrel 8.80.

The hypotheses were also determined as below:

H-1: Work stress has a positive relationship with burnout.
H-2: Burnout has a positive relationship with organizational deviance behavior.
H-3: Perceived supervisor support weakens the positive relationship between work stress and burnout.
H-4: Perceived supervisor support weakens the positive relationship between burnout and organizational deviance behavior.

3 Result and Discussion

This research used 8 goodness-of-fit indicators, namely chi-square, RMSEA, GFI, NFI, NNFI, CFI, IFI, and RFI, to assess the overall model fit, which all resulted in a good fit. The overall structural model was also a good fit. Moreover, according to the findings of confirmatory factor analysis, each indicator has standardized loadings and AVE values larger than 0.5. In addition, each variable has a build reliability value greater than 0.6, which indicates that these indications are very reliable. The measuring model's validity and reliability requirements are satisfactory, and this is also supported by the measurement model's goodness-of-fit criteria.

The proposed hypotheses were tested with SEM, and the result showed majority support for the relationship between constructs in the research model as follows:

1 Work stress has a positive relationship with burnout (t-value = 6.33; SLF = 0.45).
2 Burnout has a positive relationship with organizational deviance behaviour (t-value = 5.19; SLF = 0.38).
3 Perceived supervisor support weakens the positive relationship between work stress and burnout, with moderating effect of 0.18 (t- value = 2.84).
4 Perceived supervisor support weakens the positive relationship between burnout and organizational deviance behavior, with moderating effect of 0.15 (t-value = 2.49).

Result of the research shown in Fig. 2.

From the results of this study, it was found that the cause of stress that occurred was of their conflict and ambiguity in the organization, where in this case it was found that the research respondents felt stress because they had been involved in conflicts that
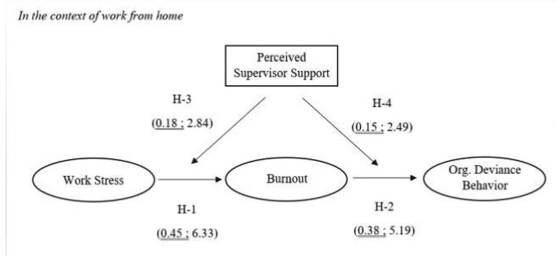
Fig. 2. Result of the Research

occurred in the company and felt that their supervisors had never done anything for them. Resolve conflicts that occur. In addition, high-performance demands and commitment to oneself while working from home are also other causes of stress experienced by workers while working from home, where in this case it is also found that workers always demand high performance of themselves while working from home. And it is common for workers to feel stressed because they always work past regular working hours to complete their work. This finding confirms the findings in the study on job stress that found psychosocial risk factors, such as high job demands, low job control, and low social support at work can be a precursor to stress-related work disorders [10]. In addition to well-known risk factors such as influence at work, increased workload and workplace conflict, poor work organization, and unclear leadership be associated with symptoms of work-related stress and anxiety and increasing the number of workers' sick leave [22]. Other studies also describe how factors related to the individual's inner circumstances, such as demanding too much of one's capacities or abilities, can have a negative influence on health development [22, 23].

In terms of burnout, the results of the study indicate that physical exhaustion and emotional separation from work occurred and were felt by workers while working from home. Physical exhaustion is experienced by workers including tiredness before starting to work and often needing more time to relax after working hours to feel better than before. Furthermore, the findings of this study illustrate the emotional separation experienced by workers, where over time workers sometimes feel fed up and even care no more about their current job, and at the same time also show despair where workers feel that this type of work is the only thing they can do. In particular, the more workers feel exhausted, the more counterproductive behavior will be carried out [24]. When workers feel an emotional imbalance, workers will actively try to create a sense of balance and reduce negative feelings by implementing coping strategies, including by engaging in counterproductive behavior [25]. Based on the findings in this study, several behavioral deviations occurred, such as ignoring instructions or directions given by supervisors, not trying their best to complete work, taking longer breaks than they should, and most importantly discussing confidential company information with unauthorized people.

Other results from this study indicate that perceived supervisor support can weaken the positive relationship, both between work stress and burnout, as well as burnout and organizational deviation behavior.
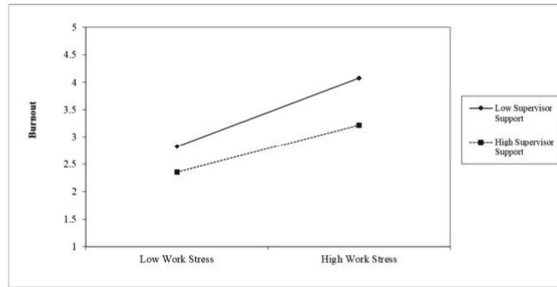
Fig. 3. Moderation of Perceived Supervisor Support on the Relationship between Work Stress and Burnout.

Moderation of Perceived Supervisor Support on the Relationship between Work Stress and Burnout shown in Fig. 3.

In Fig. 3 the higher the support provided by the supervisor, the lower the level of stress and fatigue at work. This confirms another research where it was found that supportive supervisors can reduce the effect of workload in individuals on emotional exhaustion [26]. Likewise in Fig. 3, the higher the support provided by the supervisor, the level of burnout and the tendency to engage in deviant behavior also decreases.

Moderation of perceived supervisor support on the relationship between burnout and organizational deviance behavior shown in Fig. 4.

The results of the study illustrate that research respondents feel that their supervisors can be good role models during their working from the home period. In addition, based on the results, it is also known that research respondents feel that their supervisors show effective behavior in terms of managing work and non-work balance during the period of working from home. Research respondents feel that their supervisors work effectively and creatively in resolving conflicts between work and non-work roles and can be relied upon when they need help due to work schedule conflicts.

During the current COVID-19 pandemic crisis, the perception of uncertainty makes workers feel insecure and easily anxious about the uncertainty of their work situation, which in turn can make workers feel emotionally exhausted [27]. In this case, support from supervisors is considered a social support resource that can reduce the concerns
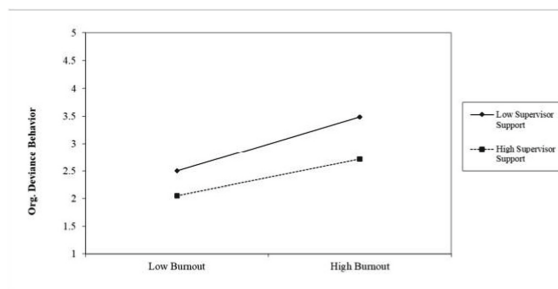

Fig. 4. Moderation of Perceived Supervisor Support on the Relationship between Burnout and Organizational Deviance Behaviour.

that employees have about the uncertainty caused by the crisis. When workers receive more support from supervisors, their level of uncertainty about their work is reduced and workers can feel greater confidence that they can rely on their supervisors to help deal with uncertainty. Additionally, other findings of this study also indicate that research respondents feel that their supervisors often ask for advice on how to make it easier for workers to balance demands both at work and outside of work. Thus, it can be concluded that the research respondents have received good supervisor support during their working from the home period.

4   Conclusion

Overall, this study has several implications for research and policy practice of working from home, namely by clarifying that support from supervisors can play an important role in reducing the potential for deviations in workers' behavior based on stress and burnout at work during the period of working from home. Workers must have self-control in terms of managing perceived stress due to individual demands and commitments. On the other hand, organizations must also remind workers of the mental and physical exhaustion consequences of working past regular working hours.

In reducing the impact of physical exhaustion, organizations can establish arrangements for the implementation of daily work, conduct HSE meetings every month to be able to continue to remind workers to live a healthy lifestyle while working at home, and ask workers to do a self-assessment of the work environment at home, whether it meets ergonomic standards or not. Workers in this case must also make their arrangements regarding their tasks and ensure that they maintain their health by exercising and eating healthy foods while working from home. Organizations can implement a routine work schedule, where the organization can identify a fixed work schedule to maintain a proper work-life balance. In addition, organizations can also implement microbreaks, where workers are allowed to take short breaks in the middle of work.

Moreover, organizations must strengthen supervisor support to workers while working from home, considering the organizational model in the EPC industry allows one worker to have several matrix managers. Organizations can also provide mental health support through the EAP (Employee Assistance Program), which is intended to help workers better manage their stress while working from home.

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