

ARE MARRIED FEMALE EMPLOYEES SATISFIED WITH WORKING FROM HOME DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

Christian Wiradendi Wolor^{a,*}, Ayatulloh Michael Musyaffi^a, Hera Khairunnisa^a, Nadya Fadillah F^a, Ardiansyah^b

^a Faculty of Economics, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia

^b International Marketing Management Department, Politeknik Tempo, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This study identified and analysed the job satisfaction of married female employees working from home during the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic. The research was conducted in Jakarta. This study adopted a quantitative approach, using surveys and structural equation modelling (SEM). The results were then obtained using the Lisrel 8.5 program. The population in this study were female employees who were married and working from home in Jakarta. The sampling technique used was a nonprobability sampling method, with a purposive sampling technique. The findings are surprising, as work from home (WFH) had no positive effect on work stress and work-life balance. Work-life balance also had no negative effect on job satisfaction. The implication of this finding is that companies can make new policies that regulate working hours and put in place new mechanisms for working in the office or from home.

Keywords: Work From Home, Work-Life Balance, Work Stress, Job Satisfaction, Married Female Employees

JEL classification: E24, J24, O15

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed almost all the ways of working in all levels of organizations in the world. Meanwhile, human resources (HR) plays

a central role in work within organizations. Many variables affect employee job satisfaction, such as promotion opportunities, security, recognition, working conditions, co-workers, and rewards (Anuradha & Pandey, 2016). However, there is something unique about job satisfaction for married women.

Several previous studies (Bombuwela & De Alwis, 2013; Ahmad, Fakhr & Ahmed, 2011; Berntsson, Lundberg & Krantz, 2006; Moore, 1985) have stated that role conflict often occurs when women have to work, especially those who are married. This conflict occurs when married women combine roles in domestic life, namely taking care of the home, their husbands and children, and at the same time have to work full-time. They have difficulty balancing work and family life. Mainly, women work to support their husbands because they desire a better economic life for their families. The pressure that results makes it the most important contributor to role conflict and low satisfaction for working married women.

In general, married female employees will prepare everything to take care of the family in the morning before going to work, starting with preparing food, clothes, etc. This puts pressure on them (Deshmukh, 2018). On average, women work between 6 and 8 hours in their workplace. Sometimes, female employees work to the point of saturation and just want to spend time with their families. This is often due to the increased stress they experience due to their work. This makes time management the biggest challenge for women workers (Berntsson et al., 2006; Bombuwela & De Alwis, 2013; Kumari & Saradadevi, 2016; Mani, 2013; Zarra-Nezhad et al., 2010).

Role conflict exists for women workers because women treasure family values, spirituality and health, kindness, and respect for the environment. In contrast, men value work, money, freedom, and strong character more. (Jaworek & Dylag, 2015). Instead of a higher salary or promotion, married female employees prefer to have a work-life balance with part-time work hours to enable them take care of the family. This is, of course, different from the priorities of male employees (Bombuwela & De Alwis, 2013; Hakim, 2006). Uthman (2017) found that women prefer jobs that allow this balance despite inequality in salary achievement. Several studies have found that women get higher job satisfaction from jobs that allow time flexibility (Moore, 1985; Uthman, 2017).

Deshmukh (2018), based on research, stated that married female employees in developing countries experience stress and pressure, and find it challenging to spend time with their families due to the burden of work. Things are however different in developed countries. One example is that highly-educated women in the US will put their careers second and not sacrifice their families (Asia & Brinton, 2019). However, some literature shows that income factors also influence the job satisfaction of married female employees. Compensation can reduce the conflict experienced when women decide to work to support their livelihood and the burden of leaving home for a job. However, compensation alone cannot prevent women from thinking about their families at work (Siahaan, 2017). Other studies show that married female employees prefer work-life balance compared to issues regarding their compensation. The correlation coefficient between income and job satisfaction gives a fragile negative relationship that is not statistically significant (Uthman, 2017).

Every effort made by married female employees to manage the roles of wife and mother and employee puts them under pressure. The conflict that often arises is how to meet family responsibilities, fulfil work duties and achieve work-life balance. Organized division of time between work and family will reduce the conflict and stress experienced by married female employees and lead to job satisfaction. The general issue of sources of stress for women is likely to require future organizational attention. Most stress research looks at job characteristics that may cause stress. Various factors constitute stressors for female employees, such as role conflicts, bad relationships with colleagues and superiors, lack of work-life balance (Freedman & Bisesi, 1988; Zarra-Nezhad et al., 2010).

Therefore, if the work-life balance for employees is appropriately maintained, it will improve employees' quality of life and job satisfaction. Work-life balance has become an essential factor in the needs of married female employees today (Deshmukh, 2018). The flexibility of hours and availability of maternity leave are significant factors for greater satisfaction (Moore, 1985). If the critical theme of job satisfaction for married female employees is not considered necessary by an organization, it will lead to a high turnover intention (Rahmatika & Parahyanti, 2018; Stewart et al., 2007).

Previous research has shown that work from home (WFH) has a positive effect on employee satisfaction (Purwanto et al., 2020; Susilo, 2020). However, during the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic when employees were required to work from home for long periods of time, it caused boredom and resulted in very long working hours; leaving no boundaries between work and family time (van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020).

This study was therefore conducted to compare the assertion of previous research which stated that the work from home policy will greatly satisfy employees, reduce work stress, and improve work-life balance against the observed results of the COVID-19 stay at home. Therefore, this study aims to identify and analyze the job satisfaction of married female employees due to the impact of working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research will greatly contribute to academic and practical developments related to policies and rules that must be applied by companies to support job satisfaction.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Job satisfaction

When a person likes the work he does and has positive feelings, it is called job satisfaction (Dey & Ghosh, 2017; Singh, 2014; Tinu & Adeniji, 2015). When someone has a negative opinion and attitude towards his job, it shows that they are not satisfied. Conversely, when someone thinks and has a positive attitude towards his work, it shows that the person is satisfied. Job satisfaction is reflected in the employee's attitude (Zaman & Rahman, 2013). The findings of previous studies indicate that the job satisfaction of married female workers is higher than that of male workers because of their lower ambitions and financial needs. The comfort factor is an essential determinant of women's job satisfaction, and it includes shorter working hours and shorter trips to work (Zaman & Rahman, 2013).

Job satisfaction for working women is vital for personal life, employee well-being, and for the organization in terms of productivity (Dey & Ghosh, 2017; Rahmatika & Parahyanti, 2018). Life satisfaction for married women workers is also closely related to their satisfaction with family life, marriage, and work. Regardless of the size of married women employees' work, they

tend to like part-time jobs because this allows them to have time for the family (Singh, 2014). It is crucial to learn about employee job satisfaction because of its effect on organizational productivity and performance. In addition, job satisfaction can encourage employees to stay long in an organization (Metle & Alali, 2018).

2.2 Work stress

The reaction of an employee when faced with job demands that are beyond their skills/knowledge/ability and how the employee copes can be referred to as job stress. Stress could come from many sources; it could be the consequence of the work environment or social relationships that cause various kinds of responses, both positive and negative. The forms of stress experienced by female workers are work overload, unclear roles, conflicts, and responsibilities (Zarra-Nezhad et al., 2010; Nandakumar & Sandhu, 2014; O'neill & Zeichner, 1985; Tripathi & Bhattacharjee, 2012).

Work and family often make equal demands on women. Increased psychological stress for married women workers is often caused by overlapping responsibilities between work and family (O'neill & Zeichner, 1985). In today's challenging economic climate, work is necessary for most mothers. Most families can no longer afford to live on a single salary. Despite the greater participation of women in the workforce, most men do not share household tasks. This impacts the stress level of married female workers, increasing it considerably (Tripathi & Bhattacharjee, 2012). Untreated stress will reduce the job satisfaction of married female workers (Rahmatika & Parahyanti, 2018).

2.3 Work-life balance

The achievement of work-life balance requires the involvement of every stakeholder and satisfying role sharing. This can be shown by how work-life balance is achieved when a worker successfully manages their time for family and work. Proper work-life balance will strengthen job satisfaction and employee productivity. To have balance, employees need to have more time at home, away from the traditional work environment (Delecta, 2011; Dow-Clarke, 2002). Organizations can provide support in realizing work-life

balance in the form of flexible work options and telecommuting. When employees enjoy a healthy work-life balance, they are happy and productive (Baker, Avery & Crawford, 2007; Darcy et al., 2012; Darko-Asumadu, Sika-Bright & Osei-Tutu, 2018; Dhas, 2015)

Working women, especially married ones, often find it challenging to balance their personal and work lives. Research has shown that when an employee enjoys an excellent work-life balance, it guarantees their job satisfaction (Deshmukh, 2018).

2.4 Work from home

Working from home is an activity or work activity carried out by someone in the home or outside the office environment, regardless of whether that person is an entrepreneur or an employee. Another term, "telecommuting", describes when an employee uses a stationary or portable device 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, no distractions, reduced travel, and increased productivity as the main variables that motivate people to work at home (Lakshmi, Nigam & Mishra, 2017; Meenakshi, Subrahmanyam & Ravichandran, 2013).

2.5 Conceptual framework and hypothesis

The following hypotheses were suggested based on the comprehensive literature review:

H1: Work from home affects job satisfaction.

H2: Work from home affects work-life balance.

H3: Work-life balance affects job satisfaction.

H4: Work from home affects work stress.

H5: Work stress affects job satisfaction.

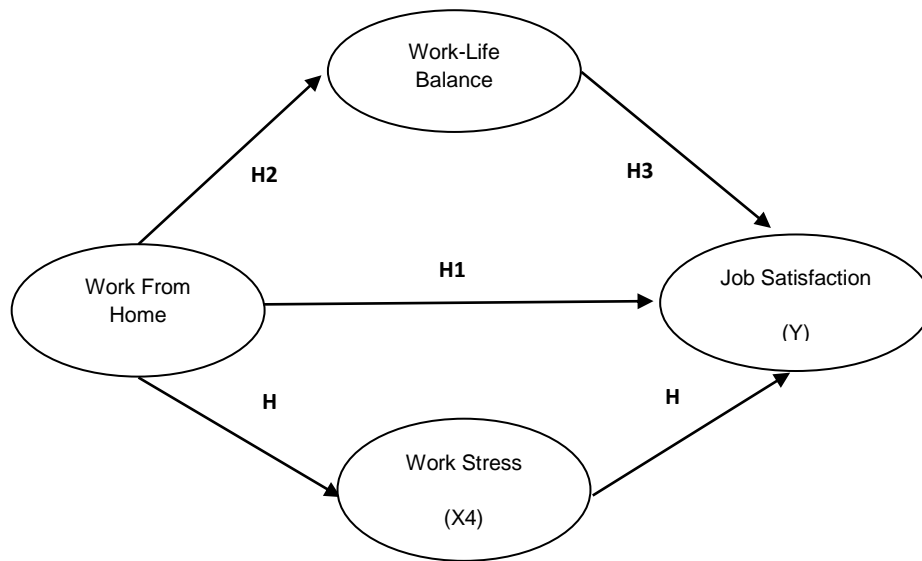


Figure 1. Research Model

3. Method

The research was conducted in Jakarta from December 2020 to April 2021. This study adopted a quantitative approach using surveys and structural equation modelling (SEM). Data was collected through the research instrument, which was a questionnaire distributed to married female employees using Google forms due to restrictions issued by the Indonesian government as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The results were then obtained using the Lisrel 8.5 program. The population for this study comprised female employees who were married and worked from home in Jakarta. The sampling technique used by the researcher is a nonprobability sampling method, with a purposive sampling technique.

The estimation used was ML and had a multivariate normal data distribution, so the sample size of 100-200 is good. For a sample size above 200, this test tends to reject H_0 . On the other hand, if it is less than 100, this test tends to accept H_0 (Yamin & Kurniawan, 2009). The number of samples in this study was 100. The feasibility of the model was assessed using the Goodness of fit method. This study used a Likert scale of 1-5 (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree). H_0 was rejected if t-value > 1.96 and accepted if t-value < 1.96 (Yamin & Kurniawan, 2009).

4. Results and Discussion

The questionnaire used in this study contained 33 items and was filled out and returned by all 100 respondents. This study followed ethical guidelines approved by the university's study ethics office on January 31st, 2022. This department ensures that the consent form defines the purpose of the study and ensures voluntary participation and confidentiality of responses. The descriptive statistics of the sample are shown in Table 1.

4.1 Respondents

Information about the respondents as presented in table 1 shows that more than half of the total respondents (60%) were undergraduates. Most of the husbands worked both from home and from the office.

Table 1. Profile of Respondents

Profile		Frequency	Per cent
Age	<26	2	2
	>41	41	41
	26–30	21	21
	31–35	25	25
	36–40	11	11
Level of Education Completed	High School	3	3
	Diploma	6	6
	Under Graduate	60	60
	Graduate	29	29
	Post Graduate	2	2
Number of Children	0	14	14
	1	18	18
	2	42	42
	3	22	22
	>3	4	4
Husband's Activity	Full Work from Home (WFH)	18	18
	Full Work from Office (WFO)	29	29

Profile	Frequency	Per cent
Work from Home and Work from Office	45	45
Unemployment	8	8

4.2 Data validity and reliability testing

A variable is said to have good validity on the construct or latent variable if the value of the loading factors is greater than the critical value > 1.96 and has a standardized factor loading (SFL) 0.5, and it is more desirable that the SF value > 0.7 (Hair et al., 2014; Wijanto, 2008; Yamin & Kurniawan, 2009). From table 2, 14 items do not have convergent validity and should be discarded because the value of loading factors is < 1.96 and has a standardized factor loading (SFL) < 0.5.

Table 2. Convergent Validity

Construct	Indicator (Likert Scale 1-5)	t-value	Standardized loading factors	Adapted from
Work From Home	I can complete my work responsibilities from home	10.68	0.98	Gómez (2020)
	I have the right conditions to do my work from home	7.57	0.73	
	Due to the coronavirus, the process of working at home is facilitated	-0.47	-0.05	
	Sometimes I think that working from home is the best option (at least temporarily)	-3.47	-0.35	
	I love my job, and I can do it anywhere	-6.15	-0.60	
Work-Life Balance	Because I have many work duties and responsibilities, I cannot spend time with my family.	8.83	0.78	Aydin (2016)
	Physical and mental fatigue related to work made my responsibilities at home difficult.	11.20	0.91	
	I cannot spare time for homework because of my job, and I always put off homework	9.79	0.83	
	My duties and responsibilities regarding my work take precedence over my family life.	4.79	0.47	
Work Stress	Because of my job responsibilities, I need to change my plans with my family.	5.97	0.57	Xiang Wu et al.
	I am very busy with my work, and the workload is heavy	5.07	0.50	

Construct	Indicator (Likert Scale 1-5)	t-value	Standardized loading factors	Adapted from
	I often work overtime in my job	2.66	0.27	(2018)
	The details of the work I do are not clearly explained	5.70	0.55	
	Sometimes I receive a job that is different from my job description	4.54	0.45	
	Sometimes I was assigned to various positions at the same time	3.47	0.35	
	I often have conflicts with colleagues and feel unhappy	5.72	0.55	
	I feel isolated	7.90	0.71	
	Lack of support from my boss	8.13	0.73	
	My boss is unwilling or unable to help me with my work problems	7.72	0.70	
	The organization did not respond well to my performance	8.70	0.76	
	I am worried about my future career development	8.12	0.73	
	Sometimes my rights are not protected	9.13	0.79	
	I was required to finish my work, so there was no time to take care of my family	8.07	0.72	
	My family members do not provide support for my work	4.25	0.43	
	I am satisfied with my chances for promotion	3.44	0.35	
	Employees who do well on the job stand a fair chance of being promoted	1.46	0.15	
	I like my supervisor	10.59	0.94	
	My supervisor is not interested in the feelings of subordinates	5.54	0.54	
Job Satisfaction	My supervisor is reasonably competent in doing his/her job	8.53	0.79	Abaasi (2016)
	My job is enjoyable	1.53	0.16	
	I like doing the things I do at work	0.50	0.05	
	The benefits package we have is equitable	3.28	0.34	
	There are benefits we do not have which we should have	2.00	0.21	

In measuring reliability in SEM, the construct reliability (CR) measure and average variance extracted (AVE) measure will be used. The expected CR value is $CR > 0.7$. The AVE value shows the meaning of the significant

content of indicator variations that the construct can contain. The acceptable minimum AVE value is > 0.5 (Hair et al., 2014; Wijanto, 2008; Yamin & Kurniawan, 2009). From table 3, the construct reliability is above the recommended level.

Table 3. Construct Reliability

Construct	Construct Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Work From Home	0.99	1
Work-Life Balance	1	0.99
Work Stress	1	0.98
Job Satisfaction	1	0.98

4.3 Hypothesis testing

The goodness of fit results generated in this model can be accepted based on the measurement results in Table 4, which show that this model is good. These results are used to estimate the initial measurement model (CFA) simultaneously and then evaluate the measurement model.

Table 4. Goodness of Fit

No.	Goodness of Fit	Cut-Off Value	Table	Ket
1	P-Value for RMSEA	> 0.05	0.00	Good Fit
2	Parsimonious Normed Fit Index (PNFI)	> 0.6	0.72	Good Fit
3	Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	> 0.9	0.89	Marginal Fit
4	Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	> 0.9	0.89	Marginal Fit

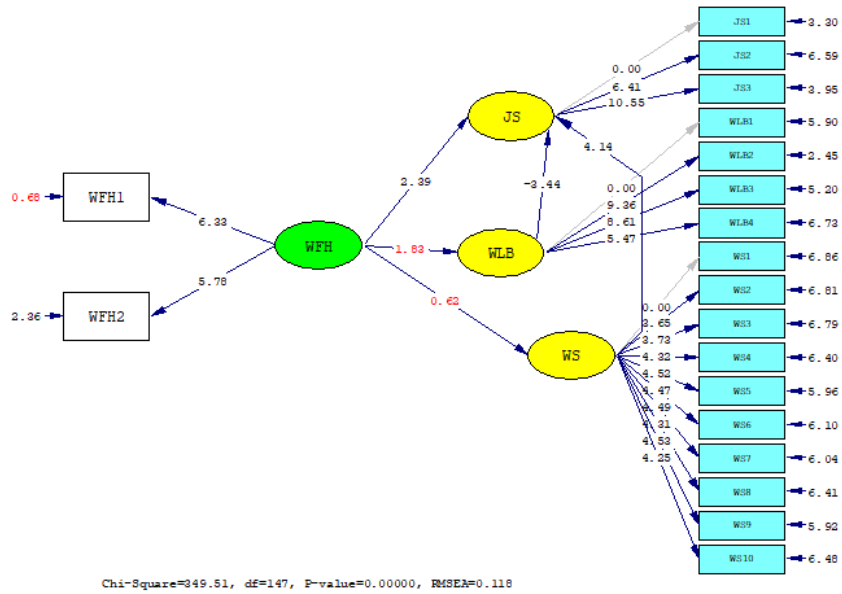


Figure 2. Structural Model (t-value)

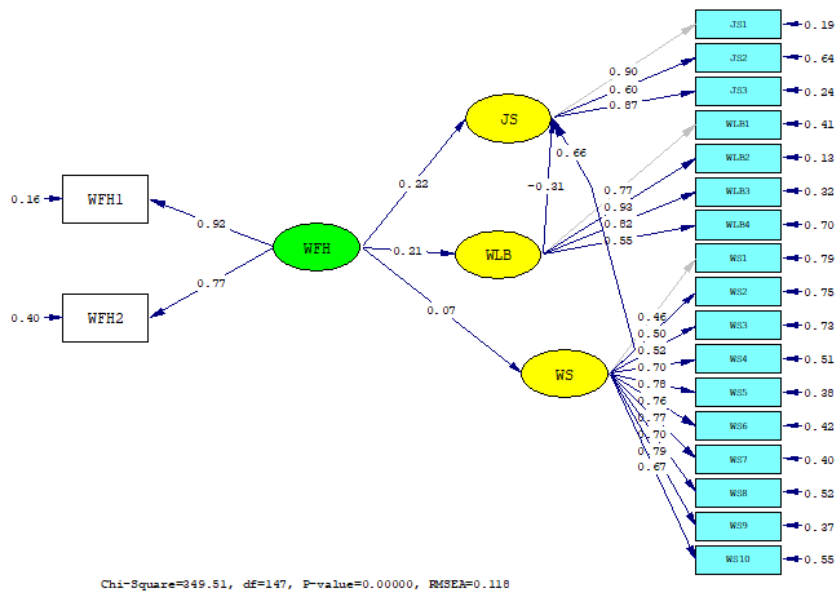


Figure 3. Structural Model (Standardized Solution)

Notes: WFH: Work from Home; WS: Work Stress; WLB: Work-Life Balance; JS: Job Satisfaction

Table 5. Causal Relations Between Variables

No	Path	Standardization Coefficient	t-value	t-table	Significance	Conclusion
1	Work From Home → Job Satisfaction	0.22	2.39	1.96	Significant	There is sufficient evidence that Work From Home has a positive effect on Job Satisfaction
2	Work From Home → Work-Life Balance	0.21	1.82	1.96	Not Significant	There is no sufficient evidence that Work From Home has a positive effect on Work-Life Balance
3	Work-Life Balance → Job Satisfaction	-0.31	-3.44	1.96	Not Significant	There is no sufficient evidence that Work-Life Balance has a positive effect on Job Satisfaction
4	Work From Home → Work Stress	0.07	0.62	1.96	Not Significant	There is no sufficient evidence that Work From Home has a positive effect on Work Stress
5	Work Stress → Job Satisfaction	0.66	4.14	1.96	Significant	There is sufficient evidence that Work Stress has a positive effect on Job Satisfaction.

4.4 Discussion

The results obtained from the test of hypothesis 1 indicate that work from home (WFH) had a significant effect on job satisfaction. This conforms with the results obtained from several previous studies that female employees who work from home feel that the work they do is significant and they are not sacrificing the welfare of their children for their own benefit. With work from home, a mother can do her job and still control the growth and development of her children. This is one of the keys to job satisfaction for a married female employee (Zarra-Nezhad et al., 2010). On the other hand, financial assistance in online training and health can increase job satisfaction for women, although financial assistance for women is not significant (García-Mainar, García-Martín & Montuenga, 2016). The results of the hypothesis 5 test also show similar results; work stress had a significant effect on job satisfaction.

This shows that with the presence of employee activities related to stressful work, female employees were still trusted by the company to work even though there were dilemmas and conflict with their roles as mothers. Companies can improve teamwork, provide promotion opportunities and a pleasant social environment to increase job satisfaction. Formal programmes and policies should be reviewed with the aim to reduce stress, such as flexible work schedules, daycare centre offers, work from home, and time off. This will help reduce absenteeism, turnover from work, and increase the willingness of female employees to work overtime (Bombuwela & De Alwis, 2013; Freedman & Bisesi, 1988; Kitana & Karam, 2017; Mani, 2013; Meleis et al., 1989; Metle & Alali, 2018). Availability of sports equipment related to health, mentoring, and consultation can also help relieve stress for female workers. Some of these programmes should be adopted by organizations mainly because women's contribution is essential, and stress levels are almost twice as high as that of men. Their contribution can be optimized by providing greater autonomy and support in the work environment while adjusting the workload of married female employees (Bombuwela & De Alwis, 2013; Freedman & Bisesi, 1988; Jaworek & Dylag, 2015; Kitana & Karam, 2017; Mani, 2013; Zarra-Nezhad et al., 2010; Meleis et al., 1989; Metle & Alali, 2018).

In contrast to the results of hypothesis testing 1 and 5. The results of hypothesis testing 2, 3 and 4 showed no significant effect. The results of hypothesis testing 2, 3, and 4 state that work from home had no significant effect on work-life balance and work stress. Likewise, work-life balance did not significantly affect job satisfaction because it had an a t-value < 1.96 . This is, of course, contrary to the theory and previous research that WFH improves work-life balance and reduces work stress. These results imply that female employees who are married and who work from home for a long time do not feel that there is a balance between work and personal life.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, working from home provided married female employees satisfaction because they could work and at the same time take care of their families and balance personal time. However, with the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic, WFH no longer provided work-life balance and reduced the essence of the balance itself, mainly due to uncontrolled working hours, having to work at weekends, and long hours of meetings. This

made them see that work from home does not necessarily provide the work-life balance. Other factors that support work-life balance for married female employees are good time management, exercise, and travelling with family. This will open up opportunities for women's development, improve their quality of life, and contribute to organizational development (Mai & Thuy, 2015; Meleis et al., 1989).

This research provides a surprise where research so far states that employees claim that working from home will reduce stress (Crosbie & Moore, 2004; Frolick, Wilkes & Urwiler, 1993; Kotteeswari & Sharief, 2014; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). The difference in research results means that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is changing the human resource approach map. By working from home, employees still feel stressed. The conflict lies in dividing time between family and work and fatigue due to work that does not know time. A study on health professionals showed a significant positive relationship between stress and fatigue which adversely affects employee productivity and work-life balance (Yıldırım & Solmaz, 2020).

The findings of this study have implications for company policy; they indicate that there must be a review regarding how to work, especially for married female employees. The results of this study indicate that prolonged work from home does not make employees feel that they have a work-life balance that can reduce stress and lead to job satisfaction. This study shows that WFH has become a habit and daily routine. Therefore, organizations need to design new rules, policies, and guidelines for employees to carry out work activities effectively. Guidelines for working hours for work from home targets to be achieved, work from office policies with health protocols, support for health programmes, and sharing programmes among employees are needed to maintain good relations and smooth communication. Such a programme will eventually lead to a sense of satisfaction for married female employees.

5. Conclusion

Work from home has been something that married female employees covet and has provided a form of job satisfaction. However, it became a different

story in the prolonged state of the COVID-19 pandemic. Work from home is now routine and is no longer considered a form of achieving work-life balance and stress reduction that lead to job satisfaction. The implication of the findings of this research is that companies need to institute new policies that regulate working hours, and new mechanisms for working in the office or from home.

This study was limited to female employees who were married and working from home in Jakarta, Indonesia, as a result of various restrictions that apply in Indonesia. Future research is expected to reach a broader area in many parts of the country and evaluate the results of implementing a combination strategy between work from home (WFH) and work from office (WFO).

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