

## Covid-19 Pandemic and Transformation of Organizational Culture in Universities

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### ABSTRACT

Changes in organizational culture within the scope of universities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic are the focus of this study. Currently, there are 2 choices of work arrangement, namely: Work from Home (WFH), and working offline at the workplace. As such, changes in the values adopted by members of the organization or in organizational culture are expected. This study focuses on the influence of organizational culture in universities on the performance of organizational members who are lecturers, teaching staff, and other elements. Each member of the organization has a different view and ways of responding to the reality of changing organizational culture during this COVID-19 pandemic. Differences in roles in the organization can be a factor in the differing opinion. A lecturer during the WFH period must carry out teaching and learning activities and conduct online meetings. While other staff who take care of administration are faced with different kinds of online work. Consequently, these staff from different roles may have a different view. This study aims at understanding how organizational culture in universities today can affect the performance of organizational members in the post-COVID-19 pandemic and other elements. The result shows that universities are organizations that have been heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. It has transformed their culture from various directions, from academic activities, administrative, up to the social value order.

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### INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided a new experience for the world of work. The COVID-19 pandemic that has been running for two years has brought many changes and influences on socio-cultural conditions, the economy, and various other sectors. COVID-19 has caused many governments in the world to lock down economic activities (Foss, 2021). Many institutions, organizations, or companies are experiencing work patterns because of the Work From Home (WFH) policy or working from home. All work is done remotely. COVID-19 has transformed

organizational culture (Spicer, 2020). Formal work uniforms can be replaced with green screens that can manipulate a member of the organization until conversations carried out through face-to-face meetings are currently being replaced by teleconference applications such as Zoom.

The COVID-19 pandemic has heavily impacted the education sector. All teaching and learning activities which are generally carried out face to face in class, are replaced by meetings through teleconference applications. All students who previously could interact directly, sitting with adjacent benches, are now replaced by communication through groups on social media. Not only changing the teaching and learning process in the classroom but also the interactions between educators, from school to university levels. WFH makes all activities carried out remotely, and this is a form of activity towards a new balance,

Currently, the pandemic has provided a new way of working, including how an organization member plays a role and becomes productive at work. Referring to previous research in America, at least 80% of workers responded that they could enjoy the process of working from home. Of these 80%, 41% of respondents stated that they could be more productive than before. They have found freedom in work, and a way of working that is considered flexible, adapted to the proportions of their personal and professional lives (Boland et al., 2020).

However, working from home for some individuals has a considerable impact on their mental health. Loneliness at work, conversations between members of the organization that can only be done through teleconference or chat applications can lead to depression which is quite closely related to suicidal thoughts. As an overview, a Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9), a questionnaire to measure the level of depression distributed to 1,013 representative samples in the United States, shows that loneliness and isolation during COVID-19 are strongly associated with mental health problems (Killgore et al., 2020).

Based on the current reality, various kinds of problems can be found within the organization's scope. For example, the personal and professional worlds of a member of an organization whose boundaries are getting thinner due to professional work carried out in a personal place. Before the pandemic, a house was a place to rest but now turned into a workplace. All conversations that can be carried out with mobile phones or laptops make everything can be done anywhere and unlimited time. The work rules established by Law No. 21/2020 and Article 21 paragraph 2 of PP No. 35/2021 require that the working time limit is 40 hours in a week, or 8 hours in a day with five active working days in a week becomes very "grey". There is no time and place limit when WFH is implemented during this COVID-19 pandemic. As another example, several organizational meetings are held simultaneously because currently, meetings can be held via teleconference applications. This reality is a problem many organizational members face during the COVID-19 period.

### **COVID-19 & Work from Home: A Transformation of Organizational Culture**

Culture is an aspect of the fundamental structure of the organization. The concept of culture in organizations is as unique as "personality". Organizational culture, in another perspective, can also describe the meaning symbolically or behaviorally if you understand the phenomena that occur in depth. The concept of culture must be understood in-depth, in which there are norms, attitudes, patterns, and climates with unique symbols. Organizational culture is a social

phenomenon that can be the core of studying social concepts. There are several latent variables, including organizational structure and roles, organizational values, organizational tasks, work climate, and values or beliefs of each individual in an organization to measure organizational culture (Marcoulides & Heck, 1993). The organizational structure can describe an organization's operational processes through the complexity of an administrative hierarchy. Organizational values can be defined through ideology or values held within the organization, for example, how to serve customers. Every organization has a different "personality". There is no specific reference that can be a solution to form an appropriate organizational culture. It depends on the ability or potential contained in the organization, the important role, and the main thing is the collaboration contained therein (Boland et al., 2020). Several work patterns existed before the pandemic and massively occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as WFH and virtual teamwork (Kniffin et al., 2021).

WFH is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world of work. At the individual level, WFH causes an organization member to work no-night hours or "overtime". All work can be done remotely or can be done anywhere, not limited to just at home (Kniffin et al., 2021). As previously stated, WFH makes it difficult for organizational members to set boundaries between personal and professional activities (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). There is no separation between the personal and professional realms, the house, which is a place to rest, becomes a place to work becomes a different problem, and this problem existed before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Virtual Team is an organizational culture that was born during the COVID-19 pandemic. All team collaboration is done by mediating communication media such as teleconference applications to social media conversations or chats. All work coordination is carried out, including virtual leadership and management. Virtual teamwork can influence an organization member's helping behaviour and social awareness. When there is a long distance between members of the organization caused by WFH, which results in reduced "direct" helping behaviour, someone will become more "brave" to ask for help from other colleagues, even though sometimes it is not very comfortable to convey (Newark et al., 2017).

It does not stop at the collaboration between organizational members; the current "virtual" organizational structure can affect organizational culture. The role of the leader greatly impacts members of the organization at all levels. Studies related to the effectiveness of organizational leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic can be carried out remotely if they can convey the values that direct the goals of an institution, are open to understanding the collective expectations of the institution, communicate optimistically regarding future goals of the institution, and can show that strategic goals can be achieved (Antonakis et al., 2016)

### **Organizational Performance**

Organizational performance can be observed from achieving an organization through several aspects such as workers, capital, marketing, and financial problems (Marcoulides & Heck, 1993). Massively changing organizational culture has resulted in several problems. As previously mentioned, work patterns such as WFH and virtual teamwork are not new but have become a form of transformation because this is happening massively worldwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the problems that are often encountered are mental health caused by social distancing between members of the organization (Kniffin et al., 2021).

*Social distancing is one of the most important things during this COVID-19 pandemic, aiming to avoid spreading the virus.* Almost all activities that previously had to be face-to-face were transformed into remote ones. Even now, face-to-face meetings are carried out with physical distancing. Keeping the distance between individuals is the main thing at this time. The handshake symbolizes the existence of a "valuable" relationship from a social relationship (Schroeder et al., 2019) which is currently prohibited. In connection with the current organizational culture transformation, all symbols are replaced with "virtual symbols" such as emoticons or icons available in teleconference applications and social media conversations (chat). Various types of restrictions exist in an organization (Brooks et al., 2020). Based on the current work situation, solitude at work can strongly influence the decline in affective relationships between organization members, organizational behaviour, and individual performance in an organization (Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018). Through an organizational culture where everything is done virtually and can still run, it should be noted that virtual activities cannot replace touching, face-to-face, and direct talking. In other words, there are many disadvantages of virtual communication, such as the absence of expression, the possibility of misunderstanding between the communicator and the communicator is quite large, and these things can cause problems and rejection that lead to loneliness.

To maintain the performance of its members, an organization must support the health and well-being of its members. Psychological support in the form of reciprocity, inspiration through video calls, counselling guidance, training, and therapy can help organizational members remain able to run a system that has changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Kniffin et al., 2021). Stress and mental health disruption during the COVID-19 pandemic also affect organizational performance; when members of the organization continue to work under stress conditions, they will give less than optimal results (Johns, 2010).

The relationship and influence between culture and organizational performance during the COVID-19 pandemic are also influenced by several other factors, such as demographic characteristics. Social, economic, age, health, gender conditions can determine how an organization member responds to organizational culture transformation and how they carry out their roles (Kniffin et al., 2021).

## **METHODS**

This article is included in the scope of organizational sociology which aims to understand the process of the occurrence of relationships between members of the organization through the behaviour and actions that occur in it. In this study, phenomenology is one of the qualitative approaches that can be used to understand the subjectivity of each individual who becomes the informant. Phenomenology is a philosophical change in the 20th century started by Edmund Husserl. Phenomenology underlies almost all schools of thought that argue that it is necessary to understand the meanings associated with people's activities to understand their behaviour (Moran, 2005). In the same phenomenon, everyone has different activities and experiences, and from this, it can be understood the behaviour of each person. As many as four informants from this article are lecturers at public and private universities and structural officials in each of the informants' places of work. The retrieval of the four informants aims to obtain a diversity of data characteristics through the differences in the position and type of higher education institution

where the informant works. The research was conducted through observation and interviews for six months.

Primary and secondary data support this article to get an overview of the reality, especially in the context of this Covid-19 Pandemic, which makes the organizational situation in companies or other workplaces quite different from the previous normal situation.

1. Primary data is obtained from informants by conducting observations and unstructured interviews, where conversations are carried out naturally so that the informants are expected to provide answers spontaneously. Interviews were conducted with face-to-face meetings through several activities (not specifically to conduct interviews).
2. Secondary data is obtained through literature studies such as scientific articles or other supporting data such as news in online media related to gender in the work environment during a pandemic, data in the number of cases, and others.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Universities are part of the education sector that has have been badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In general, all university activities during the pre-COVID-19 period were carried out face-to-face physically. Remote work has been done before the COVID-19 pandemic, but the number is very small and conditional. This situation is different from post-COVID-19 when all activities are generally carried out remotely via WFH. Virtual activities are limited to the teaching and learning process and administrative activities, along with the obligations of lecturers to fulfil the Tri Dharma of Higher Education.

Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted, the problems that are generally encountered are related to irregular activity schedules. For example, all the informants complained that meeting activities piled up with one another. This problem will not happen during the pre-COVID-19 period, where all meetings or meetings are held face-to-face, so the possibility of meeting schedules colliding is minimal. Different from the situation during the COVID-19 pandemic when all meetings were accessed via a teleconference application which was considered to "facilitate" remote meeting access so that some respondents could attend more than one meeting at the same time with several communication media, such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, PCs. and other gadgets. This condition has an impact on their main job as teaching staff. Too many meetings at one time make organizational members unable to focus on a topic or concentrate on several gadgets. Based on the observations, working in the personal realm (home) is another aspect of organizational performance that becomes distracted. For example, one of the duties of a lecturer is to conduct teaching and learning activities with students, which are currently being carried out virtually through teleconference applications and other media. Lecturers need additional updating of their knowledge to improve the quality of the material given to students, so it takes time to study the latest material and things so that the knowledge possessed by students is expected to keep up with the times. The main obstacles faced are time.

The accumulation of virtual activities such as meetings, and organizational culture, can spend time for a member of the organization, in this context, a lecturer, to carry out other activities that can improve personal qualities related to their organizational performance. Easy access to the internet

provides "fresh air" for all education sectors, including universities. Access to tens of thousands of journals can be opened freely. Several universities collaborate or subscribe with providers of indexed international journals so that their entire academic community can access journals and other literature freely. Based on the results of observations made, Lecturers who also serve as structural officers have a very long working time to make arrangements and integration into their organizations, plus students who can communicate and provide guidance at any time without knowing time limits. These things impact the lack of lecturer capacity development so that they cannot deliver updated material amidst tens of thousands of open access articles and training webinars that are being intensively conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Concerning organizational performance in higher education, it is also inseparable from the output or output of the process of teaching and learning activities. Based on the observations, some problems occur when conducting virtual meetings, namely supervision. On the one hand, virtual meetings make it easier for every organization member to do their work anywhere and anytime just by pressing a link. In contrast to all higher education activities in the Pre-COVID-19 period, which were carried out face-to-face, and social control could be carried out between members of the organization while they were working, in the Post-COVID-19 period, remote work made the social control less effective have an impact on schedule settings and the system does not run according to the initial plan. This impact also occurs in virtual teaching and learning activities between lecturers and students. The emergence of noise coming from one of the virtual class participants, the phenomenon of "surrender of absences" where students only attend virtual classes without displaying pictures or videos and in reality, the student does not attend the class is an example of the severity of supervision and social control when conducting virtual meetings during COVID-19 pandemic.

Phenomenology is a philosophical change in the 20th century started by Husserl. Phenomenology underlies almost all schools of thought that argue that it is necessary to understand the meanings associated with people with their activities to understand their behaviour. In the same phenomenon, everyone has different activities and experiences, and from this, it can be understood the behaviour of each person.

How about the conditions during the Covid-19 Pandemic? A pandemic is a big phenomenon, and the world feels its impact. Every individual is currently in a big phenomenon and a part of the Covid-19 pandemic. When using phenomenology, each person has different opinions and views on the same phenomenon, namely the Covid-19 pandemic. Differences in socio-cultural backgrounds, economics, education, and other aspects can affect individuals' understanding and response to social reality. Differences in position in an organization alone can provide an overview of the different ways of understanding and responding to situations. For example, a lecturer who doubles as a structural officer, of course, the level of organizational activity will be very different from a lecturer who does not have other positions. Lecturers with structural positions at the department level will of course have different "levels of activity" from faculty and even university level officials. A lecturer who doubles as a structural official can carry out teaching activities online, along with organizational meetings that are held online using other gadgets, in contrast to ordinary lecturers whose levels of activity are at a lower level. This also results in different responses between one lecturer and another due to different levels of activity, so that it is related to other things such as physical health, social interaction, and various other aspects, supported by

different socio-economic conditions. Changes in this form can change organizational performance, which leads to the quality of education, where a lecturer has very dense activities so that the time for scientific development and other ability supporting activities is very limited, even an informant can hold department meetings simultaneously with lecture activities. together with students. Higher education is enough to describe organizational culture transformation during this COVID-19 pandemic. The way to respond to the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic between lecturers, staff, employees, and students is certainly different even though they are in the same university environment due to various factors. Based on information obtained through observations and interviews with four informants who are lecturers with structural positions in a university (Kniffin et al., 2021)

Still based on the facts obtained through informants, organizations in higher education have also experienced changes related to certain procedures related to administrative functions. Currently, some lecturers are willing to give their signature directly by e-signing, however, some other lecturers give "permission" to other people such as administrative or academic departments to include their signatures. This is certainly a form of transformation, when signatures are "entrusted" to someone else, in contrast to before the COVID-19 pandemic, where things like that are considered a deviant act.

WFH and virtual teamwork are nothing new in the world of work. However, the context of the COVID-19 pandemic makes these two things a new challenge. Changes on a large scale make several issues related to WFH and virtual teamwork big. How many issues are caused by WFH as a form of Social Distancing, such as the loss of valuable symbols (for example a handshake, or other gestures that have a certain meaning) (Schroeder et al., 2019) and result in changes in a person's mental health at work (Brooks et al., 2020) can also occur in a university environment. College life, which is a face-to-face activity, physically replaced massively through virtual, certainly raises many issues according to the information obtained through observations that have been carried out where the social control function is difficult to implement.

## **CONCLUSION**

In general, universities are organizations that have been heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. All activities carried out through face-to-face meetings turned into virtual meetings in all aspects of organizational activities, teaching and learning activities with students, and internal processes with fellow teaching staff or lecturers. This COVID-19 pandemic can cause the transformation of organizational culture in the educational environment, or this article focuses on universities. The transformation process is a form of adaptation to maintain the running process of an organization. However, several issues related to the transformation process include the social control function that is difficult to implement, the loss of some meaningful symbols, and changes in values and norms that have existed for a long time. This process comes to the individual level, namely those related to mental health, where these things affect organizational performance, leading to higher education quality. However, several things need to be noted, where the number of informants in this article is very limited. A wider scope is needed to understand the COVID-19 phenomenon related to universities. It is hoped that the study can practically expand organizational culture qualitatively through informants' experiences in responding to a big reality. These things affect the organization's performance, which leads to the quality of education in

higher education. However, several things need to be noted, where the number of informants in this article is very limited. A wider scope is needed to understand the COVID-19 phenomenon related to universities. It is hoped that the study can practically expand organizational culture qualitatively through informants' experiences in responding to a big reality. These things affect the organization's performance, which leads to the quality of education in higher education. However, several things need to be noted, where the number of informants in this article is very limited. A wider scope is needed to understand the COVID-19 phenomenon related to universities. It is hoped that the study can practically expand organizational culture qualitatively through informants' experiences in responding to a big reality.

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