

The Role Of Work From Home In Improving Work–Life Balance

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Abstract. *The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of work from home on work–life balance through work engagement. The population of the study included staff from Badan Pendapatan Pengelolaan Keuangan dan Aset Daerah (BPKAD) of the Jalur Pantura (Blora, Rembang, and Pati). The number of samples was calculated based on the method of maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) proposed by Hair et al., and a total sample of 120 respondents was obtained using the proportional random sampling method. The data were collected through questionnaires. The data analysis method used partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with the SmartPLS 3.0 test tool. Results show that home-based work has a negative and marginal impact on work–life balance and a positive and significant impact on work engagement. Further, work engagement has a positive and significant impact on work–life balance. Indirect results indicate that work engagement may mediate the effects of work from home on work–life balance.*

Keywords: *Work from Home, Work Engagement, Work–Life Balance, Public Sector, State Civil Apparatus.*

Abstract. *Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menguji dampak bekerja dari rumah pada keseimbangan kehidupan kerja melalui keterlibatan di tempat kerja. Subyek penelitian ini adalah pegawai Badan Pendapatan dan Pengelolaan Keuangan Daerah (BPKAD) jalur Pantura (Blora, Rembang dan Pati). Jumlah sampel dihitung berdasarkan teknik Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) yang dikemukakan oleh Hair dan diperoleh jumlah sampel sebanyak 120 responden dengan menggunakan metode proportional random sampling. Metode pengumpulan data menggunakan teknik survei dengan menyebarkan kuesioner. Metode analisis data yang digunakan minimal Partial Square Structural Equation Modeling (SEMPLS) dengan program SmartPLS 3.0. Hasil pengujian langsung menunjukkan bahwa work from home berpengaruh negatif dan tidak signifikan terhadap work-life balance, work from home berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap work engagement, work engagement berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap work-life balance. Hasil eksperimen tidak langsung menunjukkan bahwa keterlibatan kerja dapat memediasi efek bekerja dari rumah pada keseimbangan kehidupan kerja.*

Kata kunci: *Bekerja dari Rumah, Keterlibatan Kerja, Keseimbangan Kehidupan-Kerja, Sektor Publik, Aparatur Sipil Negara (ASN).*

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Introduction

Work–life balance has been a topic of interest for research during the last few decades because it has an important role in business organizations and the personal lives of employees. Work–life balance receives a great deal of attention from workers and researchers as a way to maintain employee health (Greenhaus et al., 2003; Wood et al., 2003). If roles within and outside an organization support each other and there is no conflict, the organization will facilitate the achievement of work–life balance. So, employees will achieve work–life balance if they achieve success in their personal lives and develop satisfying work lives through work engagement; in other words, if the allocation of their time is balanced and their different roles align (Greenhaus et al., 2003; Machuca et al., 2016).

However, since the Covid-19 pandemic reached every corner of the world, including Indonesia, it has caused significant disruptions to individuals' work–life balance. One factor that can affect the work–life balance of workers is work from home (WFH), which changes the style of workers' work–life balance because the rhythm of their work changes, including a shift to a work system that relies on all people to be familiar with technology to complete their office work.

The WFH scheme is part of the concept of working remotely (telecommuting), which is becoming increasingly common alongside technological developments. WFH has been a practice since the 1970s, when it began as an effort to overcome traffic congestion (Bellmann & Hübler, 2020; Mungkasa, 2020), and has become a global phenomenon since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, as an alternative strategy for many organizations in treating their employees (Mustajab et al., 2020).

WFH is partially implemented to fulfill employee obligations in meeting work targets. In carrying out WFH, the work completed remains in accordance with office regulations.

For example, the work schedule is the same as the usual office schedule, the work location should be separated from domestic activities, domestic work and office work should not be carried out simultaneously, and formal clothes should be worn (Mungkasa, 2020).

Although the practice of WFH has become increasingly popular since the Covid-19 outbreak, some practitioners are still inconsistent in discussing the impact of WFH on work–life balance. Remote work, which was considered a solution to unprecedented challenges, has created several problems (Palumbo, 2020). Thus, more information is needed to understand the influence that WFH has on various outcomes and its various effects at the individual level, especially in the context of workers in the public service sector.

In this study, work engagement was considered as a mediating variable to address the effect of WFH on reducing work–life balance disorders. Work engagement variables were chosen as mediators in this study because the mediating effect of work engagement was demonstrated in a study conducted by Palumbo (2020), which indicates that work engagement positively mediates the relationship between WFH and work–life balance. When workers work from home, they show a high level of absorption, dedication, and enthusiasm related to their work. The increase in workers' work engagement was driven by perceptions of organizational support related to arrangements for work flexibility. Having work engagement is thought to reduce distractions and inconsistencies among work-related commitments and daily life.

The object of this research was the Badan Pendapatan Pengelolaan Keuangan dan Aset Daerah (BPKAD) employees of the Jalur Pantura (Blora, Rembang, and Pati), selected based on the similarities in the characteristics of employees' work in income and asset management in their respective regions, and the similarities in each BPKAD in responding to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic by providing public services in two stages, namely WFH and work from office (WFO).

To explore the research problems, researchers also conducted pre-studies by interviewing the leaders in each BPKAD of the Jalur Pantura (Blora, Rembang, and Pati). Each leader reported that there was a change in the work scheme from WFO to WFH as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The leaders felt that the coordination among employees was constrained while running WFH. Although WFH has been implemented since March 2020, according to the regent's SE and leadership policies (75% WFH and 25% WFO), communication among employees related to work is still often difficult or misunderstood. Therefore, it is necessary to re-examine the effects of WFH on work-life balance through work engagement.

Little is known about the direct and indirect effects of WFH programs on the work-life balance of public servants. This paper addresses this gap in the literature by providing an empirical investigation of the application of WFH programs and their effects on employees' work-life balance.

This research was inspired by the following questions:

Question 1: Does WFH affect ASN employees' ability to manage work-life balance?

Question 2: Can work engagement mediate the relationship between working from home and ASN employee work-life balance?

Work-life balance

Bhumika (2020) defines work-life balance as experiencing satisfaction and functioning effectively at work and home by avoiding role conflicts. Thus, an individual's work-life balance depends on one's perception of how well their different life roles are balanced.

There are two dimensions of work-life balance disorders according to Bhumika (2020) and Karkoulian et al. (2016):

1. Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL). This disorder has a negative effect on personal life. This means that work interruptions indicate a poor work-life balance.

2. Personal Life with Interference Work (PLIW). This disorder affects individual performance at work. That is, if individuals have problems in their personal lives, they will have an impact on performance that is not optimal at work.

Work from home

Gadecki et al. (2018) suggest that WFH means that employees experience two worlds (private and public, home and workplace) in a single unit and a confined space. In short, WFH involves people working remotely with their employers and customers using computers and the internet for communication purposes.

Over the last few decades, the number of people working from home has grown only slightly (Bellmann & Hübler, 2020); for example, in Germany, only 12% of all employees mainly or occasionally work from home (Brenke, 2016). The concept of WFH is part of fulfilling the obligations of meeting work targets so that in carrying out WFH, work is still conducted in accordance with office regulations (Mungkasa, 2020).

There are three dimensions of WFH according to Gadecki et al. (2018: 82) and Diab Bahman et al. (2020):

1. Space. The transformation of the private space of the house (as a place of the expression of one's tastes) into a pseudo-public space.
2. Time. The personal use of the workspace leads to the collision of two time systems: cyclic time (housework) and linear time (professional work).
3. Social Roles. The experience of oneself as a worker from home. The role of a constant remote worker is performed.

Work engagement

Work engagement is becoming a popular topic in organizations considering its relationship to employee well-being and performance. Employees who are engaged in work have an energetic and affective relationship with their work activities and their ability to handle the demands of their work (Schaufeli et al., 2006).

In building employee engagement, organizations can use certain strategies. For example, through a compelling work plan, work engagement is increased, since it challenges representatives and invigorates learning.

Work engagement is characterized by high vitality levels and clear and recognizable proof of one's work, centering on involvement in work activities (Bakker et al., 2008) Generally, work engagement is characterized as a job-related positive and fulfilling mental state, marked by excitement, commitment, and retention (Schaufeli et al., 2006).

As a result, engaged employees are more enthusiastic about their work (de Vries et al., 2019). Therefore, it can be concluded that work engagement is a person's commitment to work, characterized by positive thoughts regarding work and enthusiasm, dedication, and receptivity. According to Schaufeli et al., there are three aspects of work commitment (2006):

1. Spirit (Vigor). Refers to high vitality and flexibility at work, eagerness to contribute, and diligence when confronted with adversity.
2. Dedication. Refers to being deeply involved in one's work and feeling eager, motivated, glad, and challenged.
3. Absorption/Appreciation. Refers to complete concentration and joy at work, where time passes quickly and a person finds it difficult to leave work.

1. Social Exchange Theory (SET). Social exchange theory is derived from public choice theory and the norm of reciprocity that is often used in the context of WFH and to increase employee commitment to an organization (de Vries et al., 2019). According to Cook et al. (2013), social exchange is a process of central importance in social life and the foundation for relationships among individuals and groups. The reciprocal exchange of external interests and the forms of association and social structures that emerge are created through social interaction.

SET is the most influential conceptual paradigm in organizational behavior and influences the understanding of behavior in the workplace. This theory is used in the context of WFH because employees involved in the organization will give back in proportion to what the organization has given them. If the organization provides benefits that are beneficial to employees, then employees are obliged to reciprocate with a high degree of commitment to the organization. This theory explains the WFH variable.

1. Affective Events Theory (AET). The affective event theory focuses on affective experience as a counterweight to the theory that focuses exclusively on the appraisal process, arguing that affective experience can influence judgment and satisfaction (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). According to the AET, when employees experience positive events, they will experience positive emotions (de Vries et al., 2019). In this case, it is hoped that a positive relationship with work in the context of WFH can increase work engagement.

De Vries et al.'s (2019) research suggests that various aspects of the WFH environment can result in a higher rate of positive events, ultimately leading to positive emotions. For example, WFH can reduce distractions at work (Haddad et al., 2009), which can lead to the advancement of greater goals, usually stemming from positive emotions (Anderson et al., 2015). In summary, the overall characteristics of the remote work environment (increased autonomy, flexible schedules, decreased distraction, and increased ability to achieve goals) suggest that WFH needs to be associated with increased positive events experienced by employees to increase work engagement (Anderson et al., 2015).

It can be assumed that the experience of different workplace circumstances can affect the emotional state of employees. When employees experience positive events, they experience positive emotions. Involved employees are able to handle the demands of work in the organization.

Through the approach of AET, WFH must be associated with positive events to increase employee work engagement. This theory explains the relationship between WFH variables and work engagement.

1. Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory. The conservation of resources theory (COR theory) states that when a loss occurs, it depletes more of the resource than the gain that generates the resource (Hobfoll & Ford, 2007). The basic principle of the COR theory is that employees strive to maintain, protect, and build resources, and potential loss threatens those resources. Therefore, people work to obtain resources that are not owned, conserve resources, protect resources when threatened, and develop resources by positioning themselves to make the best use of resources (Hobfoll & Ford, 2007).

According to Wood et al. (2020), the COR theory can be used to define the positive effect of work engagement on work–life balance or the positive effect of work–life balance on work engagement. In addition, the COR theory assumes that as a resource that can bring additional resources, employees who have more resources will be better able to initiate proactive behavior in problem-solving. Having a good work–life balance increases resources (energy, self-confidence, and a positive attitude), which, in turn, motivates and energizes employees to engage in their work (Niessen et al., 2018).

It can be assumed that the COR theory can be used to define the effect of work–life balance on work engagement or work engagement on work–life balance. Factors of work engagement and work–life balance can be mutually reinforcing based on the COR theory. This is because the experience of positive events will create positive emotions, which will increase one's engagement in work. This theory explains the relationship between the variables of work engagement and work–life balance.

The next section discusses previous research and the development of the hypotheses regarding the relationship between WFH, work engagement, and work–life balance.

Work from home and work–life balance

Currently, WFH is a response to the unexpected challenge presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the work arrangement system from workers working from the office to working from home. Organizations are required to allow staff to operate remotely after the worldwide lockdown, as the pandemic has resulted in movement restrictions and closures, often restricting access to the workplace or office (Matli, 2020). WFH is a flexible work alternative in which employees complete their work, duties, and responsibilities outside the office, at home or elsewhere by using information technology to complete their work or interact with superiors or coworkers (Dua & Hyronimus, 2003). However, WFH presents several side effects for employees, particularly in terms of work–life balance (Palumbo et al., 2020).

Little is known about the direct and indirect impacts of WFH on the work–life balance of civil servants (Palumbo, 2020). A study conducted by Bloom et al. (2015) showed that organizations with employees who work from home pose two main questions. First, does WFH increase organizational productivity and profitability? Second, will WFH worsen employees' work–life balance? As a quick fix to prevent disruption in the organization, WFH allows employees to work safely in accordance with the health protocols that have been issued by the World Health Organization (WHO). Palumbo's research (2020) indicates that WFH has a side effect on the dynamic life of remote workers.

The overlap of work commitments and personal concerns is enabled by WFH due to workers' potential inability to manage the boundaries between work and personal life. In this situation, WFH can create conflict between employees' personal and work lives and have a negative impact on work–life balance.

Relevant to Palumbo's (2020) research, Bellmann and Hübler (2020) found that remote workers who work from home have a worse work–life balance than workers who do not work from home. Thus, based on these research findings, it is assumed that:

H1: There is a negative and significant effect of WFH on work–life balance.

Work from home and work engagement

WFH is a new form of working in which individuals must strike a balance between their professional and personal obligations to achieve a better work–life balance. As a result, WFH should improve work engagement. When engaged, employees feel stimulated and have a fruitful relationship with their work. Work engagement is a pleasant, satisfying, work-related mental state characterized by strength, dedication, and attractiveness in general (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008). Based on AET, in which the experience of different work conditions is understood to affect a person's emotional state, workers who experience positive events will experience positive emotions (de Vries et al., 2019). In organizations, engaged employees better handle their job requirements, so employee engagement drives business success (Schaufeli, 2012).

Employees who identify themselves through their work have a high level of enthusiasm, dedication, and receptivity in their work (Wood et al., 2020). As a result, employees who are engaged in their work have been observed to show enthusiasm and commitment (Sharma & Kumra, 2020). Anderson et al. (2015) showed that WFH should be associated with an increase in positive events experienced by employees, which will increase engagement at work. Based on the arguments of these previous studies, the following hypothesis is advanced:

H2: There is a positive and significant effect of WFH on work engagement.

Work engagement and work–life balance

Work engagement has been associated with various positive organizational outcomes in terms of productive employee behavior (Spiegelaere et al., 2016). Employees who are attached to their work perceive their work as important and spend more time working. Therefore, employees who have high work engagement are immersed in their work. Meanwhile, employees with low work engagement view their work as a burden and not important in their lives. The existence of active work engagement arrangements and the application of various factors, such as flexible work hours, accommodating workplaces, part-time contracts, and organizational leave, can promote employee work engagement (Wood et al., 2020).

Work–life balance is interpreted around the theme of engagement in various roles, as well as balance across life domains (Bhumika, 2020). Essentially, the notion of balance assumes a positive balance, with balanced participation in work and home life being tied to an individual's well-being since work–life balance can reduce work–life conflict (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Several studies have shown that work engagement is positively related to work–life balance and employee well-being (Truss et al., 2013) and that increased engagement with work will reduce the conflict between personal and work-related activities (van der Lippe and Lippényi, 2020). Ultimately, a healthy work–life balance leads to positive outcomes for individuals and organizations (Kaur & Randhawa, 2020). Therefore, the following hypothesis is put forth:

H3: There is a positive and significant effect of work engagement on work–life balance.

Work from home and work–life balance through work engagement

Balancing work and personal life while working from home during the pandemic is a challenge for many employees (Bhumika, 2020). This is related to official responsibilities that demand individuals devote more energy to the organization, as well as personal responsibilities to family, which require time and energy; ultimately, employees working from home are experiencing work–life conflicts (Bhumika, 2003). 2020). Employees who are better able to divide their time between their work and family roles will experience less conflict (Dua & Hyronimus, 2020). Ultimately, a high degree of integration among work and home life roles can facilitate role transitions and improve work–life balance. Results from a meta-analysis performed by Palumbo (2020) suggest that work engagement positively mediates the relationship between WFH and work–life balance, increasing employees' ability to manage their professional lives.

This means that people who work from home show enthusiasm, dedication, and a high receptivity towards their jobs. The increased participation of remote employees in the workplace is driven by the perception of strong organizational support in the form of flexibility in work arrangements (Jin and McDonald, 2017). Work engagement not only varies among individuals but also within individuals over time (Bakker and Bal, 2010). In addition, work engagement is the result of a better alignment of personal needs and organizational needs, thereby increasing individual work dedication (Palumbo 2020). Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: There is a positive and significant effect of WFH on work–life balance with work engagement as a mediator.

Theoretical Framework

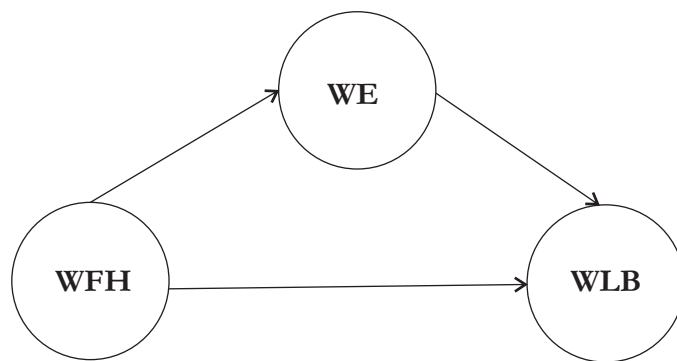


Figure 1.
Research model

Research Methodology

This investigation is a type of descriptive research, intended to describe the phenomena of interest. This study uses a quantitative research design that aims to show the relationship among variables, test theories, describe facts, test hypotheses, and make generalizations (Yusuf, 2014). In this study, the researchers attempted to determine the direct

and indirect effects of WFH on the work–life balance of BPKAD Jalur Pantura employees (Blora, Rembang, Pati) with work engagement as a mediating variable. The sources of data in this study are primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected directly by the researchers from interviews and questionnaires based on a predetermined sample. Based on the results of interviews with the BPKAD Blora leadership, during

the implementation of WFH practices, workers are required to conduct work according to office hours (8 hours a day) and are willing to be called into the office if something is urgent. According to the head of the general and personnel sub-section of BPKAD Rembang, there was a change in the work scheme from WFO to WFH due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, in an interview with the Sarpras manager at the BPKAD Pati office, he stated that during the implementation of WFH beginning in March 2020, there were various problems in different divisions, namely related to ineffective coordination among employees.

In this case, though a work plan of 50% WFH and 50% WFO has been implemented, the facts show that the work–life balance of BPKAD employees on the Coastal Line is deteriorating so it has become a challenge for organizations in the public sector to provide public services in two stages (WFH and WFO). Therefore, the effects of WFH and work engagement on the work–life balance of BPKAD employees are important for researchers to examine.

Secondary data were obtained by researchers from data already available in the organization concerned. The researchers took data such as the number of BPKAD employees on the northern coast (Blora, Rembang, Pati).

The population in this study was BPKAD employees of the Jalur Pantura (Blora, Rembang, and Pati). Data were collected using a survey method by distributing questionnaires to the employees. The sampling technique in this study went through two stages, firstly determining the object sample (BPKAD Jalur Pantura) using purposive sampling with certain criteria, namely the employee job characteristics in the field of management, income, and assets in each region and the similarities in each BPKAD branch in terms of their response to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic by providing public services in two stages (WFH and WFO). Samples were thus selected at BPKAD Blora, BPKAD Rembang, and BPKAD Pati.

Second, the sample of respondents was determined using random sampling and proportional random sampling, namely in the distribution of research questionnaires with sampling techniques from population members carried out randomly without regard to the strata in the population (Sugiyono, 2015). Based on the maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) technique proposed by Hair et al. (2014), the study obtained 120 respondents.

Respondents answered questionnaire items on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The WFH variable was measured using 9 indicators developed by Gadecki et al. (2018) and Diab Bahman et al. (2020). Work engagement was measured using 8 indicators developed by Schaufeli et al. (2006). The work–life balance variable was measured using 7 indicators developed by Bhumika (2020). In testing the hypotheses, the data analysis in this study used partial least square analysis tools (SmartPLS) with structural equation modeling (SEM). The SmartPLS analysis tool is used because it does not have many conditions and assumptions, therefore data processing using SmartPLS is very suitable for research in the field of business and management, especially in the scope of human resource management.

Results and Discussion

The study utilized SEM analysis. By using SmartPLS version 3.0., SEM may be used to test estimate causal relationships by integrating factor analysis and path analysis. SEM is known as a statistical technique that is reliable, illustrative, and vigorous (Abdillah & Jogiyanto, 2015). In this study, SmartPLS software is used to explain the relationship among two or more latent variables (prediction) and can be used to analyze paths (path analysis) on a relatively small number of samples. SmartPLS uses a bootstrapping procedure (random doubling that does not affect the results of the assumptions' normality).

SmartPLS is used to analyze the measurement model (outer model) and structural model (inner model). The latent construct of the measurement model was tested first for validity and reliability. The reliability of this study was tested using Cronbach's alpha. Then, composite reliability (CR) is also tested as recommended by Henseler, Hubona, and Ray (2016). Convergent validity and discriminant validity are tested.

Convergent validity in PLS is measured by utilizing outer loading for the reflective indicator model and component loading for the formative indicator model; thus, the higher the factor loading value, the more the factor loading is vital in translating the calculated framework.

An outer loading value of 0.5–0.7 is sufficient to prove that data are valid. The required values of communality and average variance extracted (AVE) are both 0.5 (Abdillah & Jogiyanto, 2015).

Discriminant validity is measured by utilizing cross-loading; if the correlation value of each construct is greater than the correlation among other constructs, the relevant indicator meets discriminant validity. Another strategy for determining discriminant validity is comparing the AVE root values with a correlation coefficient. If the AVE root is more prominent than the correlation value between the given construct and other constructs, the data is considered to have great discriminant validity (Abdillah & Jogiyanto, 2015).

Table 1.
Consistency and Reliability

Latent Variable	Construct	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Convergent Validity AVE
Work from Home (WFH)	WFH1	0.770	0.887	0.904	0.513
	WFH2	0.693			
	WFH3	0.682			
	WFH4	0.774			
	WFH5	0.688			
	WFH6	0.740			
	WFH7	0.601			
	WFH8	0.725			
	WFH9	0.756			
Work Engagement (WE)	WE1	0.906	0.969	0.974	0.822
	WE2	0.933			
	WE3	0.875			
	WE4	0.907			
	WE5	0.906			
	WE6	0.866			
	WE7	0.928			
	WE8	0.931			

Table 1.
Consistency and Reliability

Latent Variable	Construct	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Convergent Validity AVE
Work-Life Balance (WLB)	WLB1	0.911	0.952	0.960	0.776
	WLB2	0.903			
	WLB3	0.808			
	WLB4	0.879			
	WLB5	0.891			
	WLB6	0.885			
	WLB7	0.885			

Table 2.
Discriminant Validity

	WE	WFH	WLB	Information
WE	0.907			valid
WFH	0.391	0.716		valid
WLB	0.536	0.132	0.881	valid

Table 3.
Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis	Connection	Original Sample	P-Values	Information
H1	WFH -> WLB	-0.092	0.427	Not significant
H2	WFH -> WE	0.391	0.000	Significant
H3	WE -> WLB	0.572	0.000	Significant
H4	WFH -> WE -> WLB	0.224	0.001	Significant

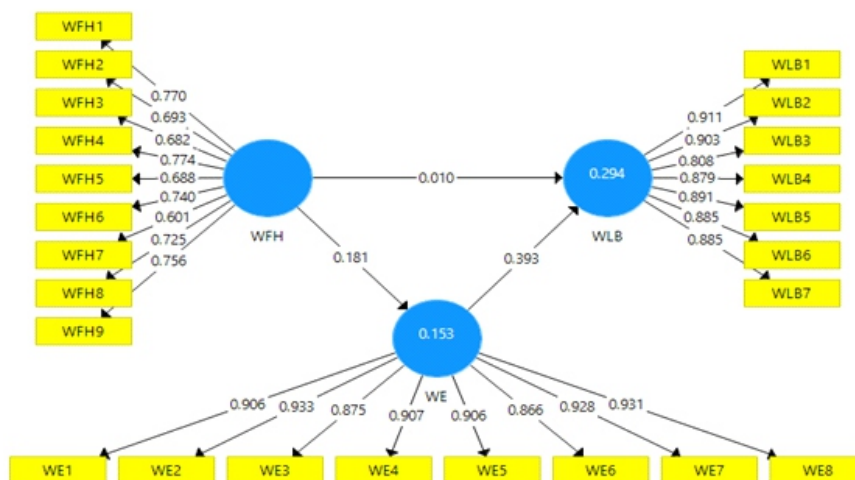


Figure 2.
Outer Path Diagram Model

Table 4.
Coefficient of Determination Value

Variable	R-square
Work Engagement	0.483
Work–Life Balance	0.374

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that all the indices in this study have a factor loading value greater than 0.5, which means that all the indices for each variable have convergent values. In addition to the factor loading value, the convergence effect can also be determined based on the AVE value. In this study, the AVE value was above 0.5, with the lowest value of 0.513 on the WFH variable and the highest value of 0.822 on the work–life balance variable, which means that all variables in this study have good convergent validity. The Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values for all constructs were above 0.70, so it can be concluded that the construct used has consistency and the accuracy of the measurement is reliable.

Table 2 shows that the original AVE value is larger than the correlation value of the construct with other constructs. Therefore, all constructs were declared to have good discriminant validity. Table 3 shows the results of direct and indirect hypothesis testing.

A structural model describing the direct effects of WFH and the mediating effects of work engagement on work–life balance is shown in Figure 2. The significance of path coefficients was checked by the bootstrap resampling procedure using Smart PLS as illustrated in Table 3. WFH has a direct negative effect on work–life balance (original sample = -0.092, $p = 0.05$), thus rejecting H1. Previous research has proven that WFH has a negative and significant effect on work–life balance. For example, Bellmann and Hübler, (2020: 11), Bhumika, (2020: 707), and (Palumbo, 2020: 785) obtained similar results.

WFH was, however, found to have a positive effect on work engagement (original sample = 0.391, $p = 0.05$), thus supporting H2. The results of this study are in line with previous research conducted by Petters et al. (2014: 282), Ten et al. (2012: 117), and Spiegelaere et al. (2016: 10), who concluded that WFH is positively related to and supports work engagement, due to greater autonomy in regulating individual work conditions.

Furthermore, work engagement is found to have a positive effect on work–life balance (original sample = 0.572, $p = 0.05$). H3 is therefore supported. These results are in accordance with the previous studies conducted by Bakker et al. (2014: 71), Niessen et al. (2018: 121), and Wood et al. (2020: 15), which found that work engagement has a positive and significant effect on work–life balance. Through increased work engagement, organizations are increasingly trying to create the right environment in which workers experience a good work–life balance.

Finally, the indirect path coefficients reveal that work engagement fully mediates the relationship between WFH and work–life balance (original sample = 0.224, $p = 0.05$) because the relationship between the independent variable (WFH) and the dependent variable (work–life balance) is significant in the presence of the mediator. Therefore, H4 is supported. The results of this study are supported by previous research conducted by Palumbo, (2020: 787), which stated that work engagement positively mediates the negative implications of WFH on work–life balance, triggering increased ability to manage work–life interfaces.

The coefficient of determination for work engagement is 0.483, or 48%. The coefficient of determination for the work engagement variable can thus be categorized as weak. This value indicates that 48% of the variation in the value of work engagement can be explained by WFH and work–life balance, while the remaining 52% is explained by other variables outside the analytical model. The coefficient of determination for work–life balance is 0.374, or 37%. The coefficient of determination for work–life balance is therefore weak. This value indicates that 37% of the variation in the work–life balance variable is explained by the WFH and work engagement variables, while the remaining 63% is explained by other variables outside the analytical model of this study.

Based on the findings, WFH has a negative but not significant effect on work–life balance. This means that the impact of BPKAD employees on the northern coastline (Blora, Rembang, and Pati) working from home is not enough to reduce their work–life balance.

WFH has a positive and significant effect on work engagement. This means that when employees have high work engagement, they show a high level of enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption/appreciation when they work from home. This shows that the implementation of WFH practices helps increase the work engagement of BPKAD employees of the Jalur Pantura (Blora, Rembang, and Pati). The increase in employee work engagement during WFH is also driven by organizational support related to flexibility in work arrangements.

Work engagement has a positive and significant effect on work–life balance. That is, when there is high work engagement among BPKAD employees of the Jalur Pantura (Blora, Rembang, and Pati), conflict disturbances among work-related commitments and employees' daily lives will be reduced.

Work engagement mediates the effect of WFH on work–life balance. This means that the high levels of work engagement of BPKAD employees of the Jalur Pantura (Blora, Rembang, and Pati) will further increase their level of success in improving work–life balance. Employees who have a high level of absorption and appreciation, dedication, and enthusiasm related to their workplace will foster work–life balance.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the relationship between WFH and work–life balance through the mediating role of work engagement in Jalur Pantura's BPKAD employees (Blora, Rembang, and Pati). Overall, this study shows that WFH has a negative but insignificant effect on work–life balance and a positive and significant impact on employee engagement, while work engagement has a positive and significant impact on work–life balance. Furthermore, this study clearly shows that work engagement can mediate the impact of WFH on work–life balance. Figure 2 shows the results of the relationship assumed in this study. Overall, this study provides interesting lessons about the effect of WFH on ASN's work–life balance and offers the opportunity to extend the results to other areas.

Theoretical Suggestions

This research is expected to add references for future researchers studying the relationship between WFH and work–life balance, as mediated by work engagement. Future research is expected to consider mediating variables other than work engagement, such as work stress, work-related fatigue, or job satisfaction. Furthermore, future research is expected to expand the object of research by testing this research model outside the public sector. For example, this model could be tested in the economic, social, tourist, manufacturing, transportation, and food sectors.

Practice Advice

BPKAD employees of the Jalur Pantura (Blora, Rembang, and Pati) are expected to be able to increase work engagement while working from home by showing enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption/appreciation related to their work. The work–life balance of BPKAD employees on the northern coast (Blora, Rembang, and Pati) is moderate. The lowest score on work–life balance was 60.83% on the statement item “Because of work remotely during this pandemic, my neglect of family responsibilities caused conflicts in my personal life.” The BPKAD for the Jalur Pantura (Blora, Rembang, and Pati) is expected to be able to resolve conflicts between employees' personal lives and work lives by separating work hours to avoid being disturbed by personal matters or to ensure that personal matters are resolved after office hours.

Limitations and Further Research

Although this study adds to the understanding of the direct and indirect effects of WFH on work–life balance with work engagement as a mediating variable, this research model has limitations. First, the sample provides detailed information about ASN employees who work in the public sector, which may not yield similar results when sampling from other sectors. Therefore, the results presented in this study are very meaningful for BPKAD employees, but may not be generalizable for other organizations.

Therefore, future studies can be conducted to investigate the impacts (direct and indirect) of WFH on work–life balance in other areas (such as economic, social, tourist, production, transportation, and food sectors). Second, considering the exploratory study design in this study, it is considered appropriate to use a quantitative deductive research design with a cross-sectional framework. However, future research should try to apply longitudinal design to data collection to test the proposed relationship, which will ensure a better understanding of the exact causal relationship among variables.

In addition, for further study, the scope of the present study can be extended by considering the role of mediating variables in the relationship between WFH and work–life balance. This will help to understand what factors might strengthen or weaken the relationship found in this research model.

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