

# Digital Organizational Support and Religious Coping to Minimize Fatigue and Working Stress during COVID-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract**--The fast-changing and *unpredictable* business environment influence working pattern and organizational sustainability as it is in COVID-19 pandemic. An organization is demanded to promote *social distancing* by having *work from home*. It is to keep providing service for the people. Although having network-based work has given great flexibility for individuals and organizations in providing service and completing the tasks, *work from home* with a relatively longer period would influence the productivity and the individual's wellbeing. It would even negatively influence certain conditions, for example, due to *social distancing* and dissatisfaction of a working partner. This article aims to discuss the impacts and *religious coping* strategies to overcome fatigue and working stress due to *work from home* experienced by the employees in the COVID-19 pandemic toward *wellbeing*.

**Keywords:** *work from home, religious coping, wellbeing, digital support*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The breakout of COVID-19 impacts greatly on various human life sectors. Based on the information, thousands or even millions of people may be fired due to this pandemic. When this massive unemployment occurs, it will cause other complex social problems (*multiplier effect*). Therefore, the government struggles to overcome this pandemic spread. The government applies for *social distancing* and *work from home* policies. In this situation, each organization is required to keep providing its service with the *telework* method.

*Telework* or *work from home (WFH)* is defined as working flexibility. It allows the employees to not work at their offices but at their houses or other locations without personal contact. Even so, the communication skill is still available by applying the information technology (Bentley et al., 2016). In several related studies, this matter has been done. It showed that network-based work provided flexibility for individuals or organizations to provide services and to complete their jobs anytime and anywhere without always being in the office (Bayrak, 2012). Other analysis results were also found by (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Martin & MacDonnell, 2012; Bentley et al., 2016). They found that telework

had a positive correlation in terms of retention improvement, commitment, organizational performance, individual wellbeing, and work satisfaction. However, there are several literary works, such as the works conducted by (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Bosua, Nederland, Gloet, Kurnia, & Mendoza, 2012; Bélanger, Watson- Manheim, & Swan, 2013) that found telework could improve the individuals' performances when it was applied for a short-term. For a relatively long-term, further investigation about its effects on productivity is required. In other literature, telework might not be always effective. It could also negatively influence under certain conditions (Mahler, 2012; Sardeshmukh, Sharma, & Golden, 2012). They were such as social isolation and dissatisfaction with peer-performances (Golden, Veiga, & Dino, 2008). Emotional fatigue could occur when the working process has to be done at home for a longer time with several social interaction limitations. Such conditions could influence performance effectiveness (Weinert, Maier, Laumer, & Weitzel, 2014) and their wellbeing (Golden et al., 2008). These factors should be managed so the work pressure could be decreased and the employees' wellbeing remains uninterrupted.

This article aims to discuss the effects and strategies of *religious coping* to manage the fatigue and work stress due to *work from home* for the employees in this COVID-19 pandemic toward *wellbeing*.

## II. THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON HUMAN LIVES

COVID-19 pandemic triggers various problems on various life sectors. Based on the government report, thousands of people have been deemed being infected by this virus. Meanwhile, there are thousands of people who die due to this virus. In the industrial sectors, this effect threatens thousand or even million employees to lose their jobs. This massive unemployment occurs, it will cause other complex social problems (*multiplier effect*)

Besides that, the influences of the COVID-19 virus also could be seen in social life. They are

such as suspicion and crisis of trust for the surrounding people or newly recognized people. For example, when an individual buys meals at a branded restaurant or food-street stall. This individual will seek whether the meals are clean or not. This individual will also ask whether the waiters and waitress are free from COVID-19. This individual may also ask whether they have ever contacted anyone infected or carried the virus. He may also ask whether the waiters or waitress have washed their hands while cooking or processing the meals or not. All of those matters may lead to doubt. When an individual talks or meets around his office or home with the local persons, he may be feeling doubt. He is probably not willing to shake his hand although it should have been done with his parents. It is in contrast to what the parents teach for his children, to always respect older people (Bariah, 2020).

This COVID-19 pandemic covers all social aspects of religion. For example, the government policy that suggests people not to stay in a crowd and do prayers together. This policy makes almost all mosques quite. This condition makes people anxious. They may wonder whether what they do will contribute because for the Muslims when they do not worship and pray at mosques, it means they have left Allah the Almighty. In fact, for Muslims when they go to mosques and pray there, they will be blessed by Allah the Almighty. It is as the commandment of Allah the Almighty:

*The mosques of Allah are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and establish prayer and give zakah and do not fear except Allah, for it is expected that those will be of the [rightly] guided (QS At Taubah: 18).*

In the educational aspect and non-medical public services, the government encourages all parties to promote distant learning and *work from home*. Such a service should be always maintained by the *telework* method. However, is this method effective? How is the psychological impact for the educators, the learners, and the employees? Such strategies to overcome the effects should be investigated to maintain the pattern of *work from home* running and provide positive impacts for all parties.

### III. THE EMOTIONAL FATIGUE AND THE EMPLOYEES' WELLBEING

Working online could reduce working pressure felt in the office. It provides autonomy in working and reduces working conflict (Sardeshmukh et al., 2012). However, this condition is investigated in a relatively short-term (Bosua et al., 2012; Bélanger et al., 2013). For a relatively long term, it may raise to fatigue and burnout. Moreover, if there are a lot of inquires outside of their formal jobs. This condition will be getting worse if the individuals are

socially limited, known as *social distancing*. It will trigger working fatigue (Golden et al., 2008). Such emotional fatigue is a psychological condition experienced by the employees during their work (Karatepe, 2015). Emotional fatigue is a manifestation of burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). These fatigue responses may take form into feeling burnout with the jobs, feeling fatigued with the jobs, feeling frustrated, feeling cynic, and having the intention to keep an individual distance emotionally and cognitively from the jobs, and lacking productivity ((Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Karatepe, 2015)).

A study conducted by (Lizano & Mor Barak, 2015) showed that the emotional fatigue of employees would negatively influence their wellbeing. Employees who had fatigue would reduce their activities and exploit their sources (Marchand & Vandenberghe, 2016). With such condition, it would influence their performance, their given service, and wellbeing. It is in line with the findings, (Song & Gao, 2019) found that working from home, instead of the workplace, had negative effects on an individual's subjective wellbeing. When it is compared to working in a workplace, by taking the jobs at home on the day, will make them unhappy. *Telework*, that is carried out during workdays, weekends, or days off are always correlated to high-stress level and poor wellbeing of employees.

The wellbeing of employees deals with subjective emotions or job experience of the employees. It covers happiness upon their works, feelings about the workloads, convenience in working, and work balance (Bosua et al., 2012). In this COVID- 19 pandemic, working from home as what employees do is expected to maintain their psychological wellbeing high. They are expected to conveniently work, to have no pressure and workload, to be able to provide excellent services and productivities.

To reach that condition, social and digital supports of an organization are needed to facilitate this *work from a home* pattern. The internal effort from the employees such as an appropriate strategy to relieve and engage with stress and psychological stress are required during carrying out the jobs in this pandemic occasion.

### IV. DIGITAL SUPPORTS OF THE ORGANIZATION ON *WORK FROM A HOME* PATTERN.

The working pattern changes, via *telework* or *work from home*, involve both physical capability, cognitive dynamics, work demand, and high-work participation (Sardeshmukh et al., 2012). Such a condition will lead to fatigue when organizational support is low (Bosua et al., 2012; Sardeshmukh et al., 2012; Coenen & Kok, 2014). Due to this working environment and positive organizational support, it

could develop a personal source of the employees. It will also improve their psychological strengths (Michel, Kavanagh, & Tracey, 2013). In line with the statement, employees perceive the emotional and instrumental supports of the organization or working peers to have positive effects on their wellbeing (Rego, Sousa, Marques, & Pina e Cunha, 2014). The empirical evidence as shown by (Karatepe, 2015) stated that personal sources could fully mediate the role of organizational support and the employees' intention to leave their jobs. This condition also makes the employees capable to handle their emotional fatigues. It means they who obtain the contribution and positive support upon their works could motivate and improve their self-efficacies. Unfortunately, not every organization provides such support. It is due to their limitation and potential source differences of every organization to support its employees during this COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on several studies, an organization had to support its employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the *work from the home* process could provide positive impacts on their performance effectiveness and wellbeing. The realization of such supports could be done as follows ((Bentley et al., 2016)):

1. Organizations could provide suggestions and beneficial technology information for the employees to promote *work from home*.
2. Believing in the employees, they could carry out and complete the given tasks with *the telework* method.
3. It is important to provide the working and instrumental supports of the organization. For example, it could be done by giving a free phone balance or Internet data package.
4. Providing solutions when a problem occurs during the employees' *WFH*.
5. Providing facilities and supportive tools to carry out the jobs from home.

Besides the instrumental support, the role and social support of the organization leader and peer-employees are also important in this COVID-19 pandemic era. The psychological power of the leader and the leadership strategies to overcome emotional pressure could be shared with the employees. Thus, individually and collectively, the employees could overcome the condition and situation. The emotional communication (Barsade, 2002) is a process in which individuals or groups of people influence emotionally and behaviorally other people. It is done inductively and unconsciously. It is important because social support makes the employees feeling not alone in engaging these difficult events.

It is in line with a study conducted by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2012). They confirmed that positive expansive behaviors and kindness made the employees did a good thing to other people. It would trigger a more effective performance

correlation with the peers and the superordinate. Employees perceive that any policy and procedure which allows them to decide, see, and accept emotional support from their superordinate and working partners would have high effectiveness. The social cognitive theory supports this matter. When individuals obtain realistic encouragement, they tend to put more effort and their potentials to meet the job quality. They would be more successful than other individuals who have doubts in themselves (Wood, R. and Bandura, 1989). However, besides organizational support, *self-efficacy* of individuals also influence their decision to provide emotional reaction, to attempt, and to reach the targeted results as the consequences of their learning and experience while engaging with the situation and emotional pressure (Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Maslach et al., 2001). A religious approach is also frequently used by individuals to overcome this matter (Ellison & Taylor, 1996).

#### V. THE ROLE OF *RELIGIOUS COPING* TO RELIEVE EMOTIONAL FATIGUE AND WORK STRESS.

There are two behaviors that individuals experience during feeling stressed out and having emotional fatigue. They are desperation or effort to engage with it. Such strategy and action depend on the personal characteristics of individuals while engaging with problems or emotional pressures (Maslach et al., 2001). A coping strategy is an individual's way to engage and manage a certain situation or problem that is considered as hindrances, challenges, threats, and disadvantages (Revenson, 1987; Ana Wong- McDonald and Gorsuch, 2000).

There are four basic strategies in managing emotional fatigue (Lazarus, 1981) such as:

1. *Instrumental strategy*. It is a direct action to manage threats or stressors.
2. *Intra-psychoic strategy*. It is a behavior to regulate or minimize emotional pressure felt by individuals and its entailing effects.
3. *Inhibition of action*. It is an action referring to skills to reject to commit an action if it is deemed stressful, difficult, dangerous, or threatening.
4. *Information seeking*. It is an instrumental activity to gain support that could relieve the emotional pressure.

To reflect differences of an individual's characteristics in overcoming psychological pressure or emotional fatigue, (Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, 1984) explains two *coping* strategies. They are:

1. *Problem-focused coping*. It is a coping strategy focused on an attempt to engage with stress, problem, and to cope with the problem. In this condition, an individual feels confident and has skills to manage or solve the stressor or problem. (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989) explains

the coping strategy aspects in this following *problem-focused coping*:

- a. *Planning* is a strategy to act and to think about the required attempt to solve a problem.
- b. *Suppression of competing activities*, it is an attempt to seek other activities which could relieve the stressor.
- c. *Restrain coping* is an active individual who attempts to relieve the stressor or to improve the effects indirectly. This individual also carefully acts in doing it.
- d. *Seeking social support for instrumental reasons*. It is a social support search such as suggestions, assistance, or information.

## 2. *Emotion-focused coping*

The coping stress strategy is an individual strategy focused on responding to stressful situations emotionally. It is especially by using defensive judgment. This strategy is internal in nature. It could be carried out when individuals feel that they are unable to overcome or solve the stressor. Therefore, individuals could keep and struggle to overcome it with an emotional approach.

(Carver et al., 1989) state several actions to do in this strategy focused on the emotional aspects. They are:

- a. *Seeking social support for emotional reasons*. It is a social support search such as moral support, sympathy, or care.
- b. *Positive reinterpretation and growth*. It means to provide positive perceptions and interpretations about the existing problems.
- c. *Acceptance*. It is an effort to accept so this individual could calm himself and relieve his stress.
- d. *Denial*. It is a denial of what has been going on. This condition could overcome the stress when the denied problems bring goodness. However, it could be a problem in the future.
- e. *Turning to religion*. It is an individual behavior in calming himself and solving the problems with the religious approach.

The religious coping approach is mostly applied to help individuals relieving their stresses (Ellison & Taylor, 1996). In a situation where an individual could not find any solution to help, religion offers various solutions to solve it. It is due to religion is a meaningful and comprehensive system to inform the values and the objective of life completely (Park, 2005). It is in line with the statement, the attribution to God will help individuals understanding the difficult or stressing events, and any event that facilitates them to adapt to unpleasant situations (Lee, 2007). The empirical studies of various groups in engaging the main trigger of fatigue or stress showed that *religious coping* strategy had positive implications for individuals' wellbeing (Pargament, Tarakeshwar, Ellison, & Wulff, 2001; Park, 2005; Lee, 2007). A

study conducted by (Ekedahl & Wengström, 2010; Utami, 2012; Perera, Pandey, & Srivastava, 2018) showed that in several cases engaged by college students and nurses, *the religious coping* strategy became the most preferred strategy to manage various stressful problems and psychological pressures. This *religious coping* model could also provide various - unique effects than *non-religious coping* method effects (Pargament et al., 2001).

Islam also teaches its believers how to deal and engage each problem based on religious values. It includes the most difficult condition such as this COVID-19 pandemic that destroys all economic and social sectors. It even interrupts the Muslim worshipping activities to Allah the Almighty. Therefore, it is important to rely on Allah the Almighty in engaging various critical conditions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When an individual relies on Allah the Almighty, this individual does not need to worry anymore about himself. An individual's devotion realized into doing good charity and deed in each action will be granted with the guarantee of Allah the Almighty. Here are the guarantees of Allah the Almighty for those devoted individuals:

1. Allah will give the best solution to each problem.
2. Allah guarantees to provide a very broad and unexpected fortune. It is as stated in the Qur'an. *"And when they have [nearly] fulfilled their term, either retain them according to acceptable terms or part with them according to acceptable terms. And bring to witness two just men from among you and establish the testimony for [the acceptance of] Allah. That is instructed to whoever should believe in Allah and the Last day. And whoever fears Allah - He will make for him a way out" "And will provide for him from where he does not expect. And whoever relies upon Allah - then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, Allah will accomplish His purpose. Allah has already set for everything a [decreed] extent."* (QS. At Thalaq:2-3)
3. All of their businesses would be eased by Allah the Almighty. *And those who no longer expect menstruation among your women - if you doubt, then their period is three months, and [also for] those who have not menstruated. And for those who are pregnant, their term is until they give birth. And whoever fears Allah - He will make for him of his matter ease.* (QS At Thalaq: 4).
4. Allah also guarantees mercy upon people's mistakes and will grant them a reward. *That is the command of Allah, which He has sent down to you; and whoever fears Allah - He will remove for him his misdeeds and make great for him his reward.* (QS At Thalaq: 5).

COVID-19 pandemic triggers many anxieties and worries for people, even the whole world. However, it should not make us behaving

excessively. Consistent devotion to Allah the Almighty and a strong belief would strengthen our mental and psychological. It would also bring tranquility and optimism. It would be the strength to positively carry out the activities and provide benefits for all people during this COVID-19 pandemic. This pattern is in line with the teachings of Allah the Almighty as follows:

*"Indeed, those who have said, "Our Lord is Allah " and then remained on a right course - the angels will descend upon them, [saying], "Do not fear and do not grieve but receive good tidings of Paradise, which you were promised" (QS Fussilat: 30). Thus, it is the human task, to improve their life qualities and to make themselves deserve. Thus, humans will be granted a right by Allah with the devotion quality. When it could be struggled for, then anything dealing with the worldly life and hereafter will be guaranteed by Allah. It is as explained by the next verse of the Surah: *We [angels] were your allies in worldly life and [are so] in the Hereafter. And you will have therein whatever your souls desire, and you will have therein whatever you request [or wish] (QS Fussilat: 31).**

Finally, to cope and overcome such a situation due to COVID-19, *religious coping* could be used as the first method. It is by believing the current condition is a test of Allah the Almighty. It is as the realization of HIS compassion to all humans which humans should be grateful. This condition may not seem correct in humans' perspectives and very unpleasant. However, beyond this condition, there is a good thing for humans and vice versa. *Fighting has been enjoined upon you while it is hateful to you. But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you, and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah Knows, while you know not.* (QS Al Baqarah: 216). Secondly, it makes humans getting closer to Allah in solving any problems. They pray to be strengthened and guided by Allah the Almighty. Thus, do not ever expect humans could handle all business and problems only by relying on their senses and thought. Humans need religious guidance to enlighten their hearts so they could understand and comprehend the guidance of Allah the Almighty (QS: Al Baqarah:2). The third is to take the wisdom of each event since it has a certain lesson. Those two things could be obtained by suave persons. The fourth is to provide spiritual support for other people to deal with this problem together.

Through such an approach, inconvenient working situations, hindrances, workloads, and less conducive social situations could be seen from the positive sides. It is done by devoting humans to Allah the Almighty as the *psycho-spiritual strength* to create positive energy to improve humans' psychological wellbeing.

## VI. CONCLUSION

COVID-19 pandemic has changed the various aspects of life such as the economy, politics, and even religious life in Indonesia. *Work from the home* pattern and *social distancing* are the realizations of such changes due to this pandemic. The instrumental limitations to support the working pattern and psychological unreadiness could trigger tensions, pressure, and emotional fatigue of individuals to promote their daily activities. An individual who could apply the *coping* strategy well will be able to adjust social matters properly. However, every individual has different reactions to cope with his problem. It depends on the individual's cognition, experience, perception, and his *world view*. *The religious coping* is a positive reappraisal and a coping strategy with religious orientation and faith to Allah the Almighty to engage and manage the emotional fatigue or stress due to the working pattern and this COVID-19 pandemic. Through such an approach, inconvenient working situations, hindrances, workloads, and less conducive social situations could be seen from the positive sides. It is done by devoting humans to Allah the Almighty as the *psycho-spiritual strength* to create positive energy to improve humans' psychological wellbeing.

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