
How to Maintain Employee Motivation Amid The Covid-19 Virus Pandemic

Submitted 21/06/20, 1st revision 18/07/20, 2nd revision 20/08/20, accepted 15/09/20

Christian Wiradendi Wolor¹, Solikhah², Dewi Susita³, S. Martono⁴

Abstract:

Purpose: *The main aim of this article is to broaden insights on how to keep motivating employees in working amid dangerous conditions, especially now with the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus by reviewing various existing literature and using qualitative methodologies to support this research..*

Design/Methodology/Approach: *This research is a systematic review using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis) method which is carried out systematically by following the correct stages or research protocols.*

Findings: *The results of our analysis are in the form of recommendations related to maintaining employee work motivation, namely work from home and work shifts.*

Practical Implications: *All organizations affected by the Covid-19 pandemic can take different approaches to maintain employee motivation in the workplace as working from home and working shifts.*

Originality Value: *This is the first paper which has analyzed employee motivation amid the Covid-19 virus pandemic*

Keywords: *Employee motivation, work from home, work shift, Covid-19.*

JEL codes: *J24, O15.*

Paper Type: *Research study.*

¹Lecturer, Faculty of Economics, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, christianwiradendi@unj.ac.id;

²Lecturer, Faculty of Economics, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, sholikhah@unj.ac.id

³Lecturer, Faculty of Economics, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, dewisusita_man@unj.ac.id

⁴Lecturer, Faculty of Economics, Universitas Negeri Semarang, martono@mail.unnes.ac.id;

1. Introduction

Currently, the whole world is being hit by concerns about the spread of the covid-19 virus that does not know the time and place. Amid the current outbreak of the covid-19 virus, many workers must be closed, isolated or worked from home as directed by the local government to reduce the spread of this virus (Fachriansyah, 2020). However, there are still companies that continue to operate with a record of employee shifts or made virtual to keep getting income from the business. This is a challenge for the company facing the coronavirus pandemic on how to maintain employee motivation at work. Companies that continue to run their business amid the covid-19 virus outbreak should be equipped with a supply of masks and hand sanitizers to provide security to their employees, but the fact is that many workers, especially those in the lower classes are not equipped with safety equipment and extensive knowledge about the covid-19 virus (Syakriah, 2020a; Grima *et al.*, 2020).

The Covid-19 virus was first discovered in China with the spread of this virus can be between humans and is currently developing throughout the world (Kampf, Todt, Pfaender, and Steinmann, 2020). So employees need to work from home or at a minimum if they keep working, they must be equipped with masks, physical distance and hand sanitizer policies to protect themselves so that they can cut off the spread of this virus (Desk, 2020).

Anxiety about this disease outbreak will negatively affect employee's motivation which affects the level of negative emotions that arise and will be difficult to maintain the performance of these employees (Assor, Kaplan, Kanat-maymon, and Roth, 2005). However, on the other hand, employees will be motivated to continue to act even if it is dangerous when it comes to life values especially their basic needs (Amiot, Sansfaçon, and Louis, 2013). As it is today, not a few people who have a low economic level to continue to work when the Covid-10 virus outbreak to support their daily needs (Amiot *et al.*, 2013; Syakriah, 2020b). Organizational leaders can still motivate employees by providing various ways by relying on employee creativity and flexibility in carrying out their obligations as employees (Humala, 2017).

The purpose of this study is to broaden insights on how to keep motivating employees in working amid dangerous conditions, especially now with the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus from reviewing various existing literature and using qualitative methodologies to support this research. Next, we present the results of our empirical analysis and discuss the implications of our research.

2. Literature Review

Work motivation is the desire that causes the person to take action (Slamet and Riyadi, 2011) to achieve the goal of meeting the needs or achieving balance (Wiradendi, Supriyati, and Purwana, 2019). There are several motivational theories at this time, this study uses motivation theory from Abraham H. Maslow as a reference in

analyzing existing problems and providing several solutions for the company's recommendations.

Abraham H. Maslow's theory states that motivation is formed because of a hierarchy of needs. First, physiological needs, such as clothing, food, and shelter. Second, security needs, security is meant not only physical security but also psychologically and intellectually. Third, social needs, recognition of the existence and giving of appreciation for their dignity. Fourth, the need for prestige, that all people need recognition of their existence and status by others. Finally, the need for self-actualization in the sense of the availability of opportunities for someone to develop the potential contained in him/her so that it turns into real abilities (Maslow, 1954).

The essence of Maslow's theory is that human needs are arranged in a hierarchy, if needs at a lower level have been fulfilled or satisfied, then there will be needs at a higher level, and so on in their order. According to Maslow, every manager who wants to motivate his subordinates needs to understand the hierarchy of human needs because satisfying human needs continuously is the key to motivating employees so they want to work well (Maslow, 1954; Siagian, 2014).

3. Methods

This research is a systematic review using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis) method which is carried out systematically by following the correct stages or research protocols. A systematic review is a research method that aims to evaluate, identify, analyze all previous research results that are related and relevant to a particular topic, particular research, or the latest phenomenon of concern (Perry and Hammond, 2002; Wolor, Pratama, Aditya, and Purwana, 2020). The facts presented are comprehensive and balanced because systematic reviews are used to synthesize relevant research findings. Qualitative systematic review includes the following steps: Formulating research questions, conducting systematic literature review searches, screening and selecting suitable research articles, conduct analysis and synthesis of qualitative findings, implement quality control, prepare a final report (Perry and Hammond, 2002; Wolor *et al.*, 2020).

A qualitative approach is used to frame, analyze, and provide comprehensive solutions in maintaining employee motivation amid the pandemic Covid-19 virus (Berkah and Sawarjuwono, 2019). Various scientific articles are taken from specialized journals to help build the most prominent elements in describing work motivation in a dangerous environment, based on several important points explained by different authors (Moreno, Lafuente, Carreón, and Moreno, 2017).

4. Discussion

Employees will be motivated to work and perform well in the company where they work if their safety is thought of by the company (Christian, Bradley, Wallace, and Burke, 2009; Mensah and Tawiah, 2016). If this is not thought about, then there is anxiety that is felt by the employee and there is a feeling of discomfort at work (O'Rourke, Smith, Smoll, and Cumming, 2011). Companies that dare to make policies and decisions to provide security for employees are very important to keep growing positive motivation from their employees, especially amid the pandemic Covid-19 virus (Anderson, Baur, Grif, and Buckley, 2016; Balda and Mora, 2017). Therefore, the organization becomes a central role in increasing the motivation of its employees in completing their work and a sense of security for employees (Eisenberg and Krishnan, 2018; Martins, Gilson, and Maynard, 2004).

Companies can play an important role in accommodating the operational needs of the company amid the Covid-19 virus outbreak by providing extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation in the form of tangible rewards as short-term is given to employees for example with overtime pay, compensation for coming to work directly in the middle of this pandemic. However, it should be interpreted for companies that extrinsic motivation does not last long and will endanger companies such as turn over, absenteeism, low performance, especially with this pandemic. Next, employees need to have intrinsic motivation where their achievements and work are recognized by the company (Cameron, Banko, and Pierce, 2001; May, Li, Mencl, and Huang, 2014; Reitman, 1998).

Based on Maslow's motivation theory there are 5 hierarchies of human needs namely physiological, security, social, prestige, self-actualization needs (Maslow, 1954). The three requirements above regarding social, prestige, and self-actualization will not be considered by employees amid the outbreak of Covid-19 virus due to policies regarding social distance and self-isolation to prevent transmission of the Covid-19 virus that can result in human death (Fachriansyah, 2020; Kampf *et al.*, 2020; Syakriah, 2020b). Therefore, employees will focus on two basic needs regarding physiological needs related to food and daily needs and safety needs for employees at work. This is following Maslow's theory where if the needs at a lower level have been fulfilled or satisfied, there will be needs at a higher level (Maslow, 1954; Siagian, 2014). But what is happening right now is the need for security for employees that have not been fulfilled, so it will not be able to move to the needs above it.

In dealing with the condition of the Covid-19 virus outbreak this research will try to provide some recommendations related to maintaining employee motivation, namely:

Work from home: One thing that can be done is working from home that is working virtually which makes it easy and provides a sense of security for employees. Working from home, especially virtual, will make employees motivated because on one side they can feel there is a work-life balance (Felstead and Henseke, 2017; Humala, 2017; Robey, Schwaig, and Jin, 2003). But on the other hand, there is a decrease in interpersonal contact, feelings of isolation, and a high chance of misunderstanding

(Morley, Cormican, and Folan, 2015). This needs to be a concern for leaders. Because this will reduce their motivation because they do not meet face to face, do not know directly their emotions, and do not receive enough help from them directly (Geister and Hertel, 2006; Humala, 2017). One solution to reduce the motivation reduction of employees related to working virtually can be done by video conferencing that is not just a text message such as email (Humala, 2017; Raghuram, Hill, Gibbs, and Maruping, 2019; Verburg, Bosch-Sijtsema, and Vartiainen, 2013). In applying the work form, several things must be observed by the company leadership, namely:

First, managerial support implemented through company policies and regulations in facilitating the implementation of work from home can increase employee's motivation. Employees feel safe, comfortable, and protected by company policies and regulations (Morley *et al.*, 2015; Verburg *et al.*, 2013). One form can be applied to the latest operating procedure standards, the latest work assessment and balanced also by continuing to appreciate the virtual presence and compensation to employees in maintaining the productivity rhythm of the employees themselves (Morley *et al.*, 2015; Robey *et al.*, 2003).

Second, sharing information and maintaining effective communication between employees through technology in work from home will increase employee motivation in completing work (Raghuram *et al.*, 2019). Because the challenge now is to work face-to-face, it will be easier to share knowledge and information compared to working virtual (Jones and Graham, 2015), then do not be selfish especially in the midst of the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus (Kaul, Pande, and Ahuja, 2017; Martins *et al.*, 2004). Effective communication between employees and listening to each other's opinions even though virtually, will be able to increase employee motivation (Morley *et al.*, 2015).

Work shifts: The application of work shifts can be done in industrial sectors that do not allow for virtual work such as manufacturing, distribution and shipping companies. This should be seriously considered for companies to run to employees amid the Covid-19 virus outbreak because the risk of the possibility of transmission of the Covid-19 virus will be greater when compared to working from home. In the implementation of work shifts several things need to be considered by the company, namely:

First, even though working shifts, is not recommended for companies to impose long shifts for employees especially amid this virus outbreak. This will threaten not only employee's motivation and low employee's performance, but also threaten safety for employees due to reduced employee endurance (Ackah, 2014; Ayed, Thulth, and Sayej, 2015). Designing an effective shift schedule with due regard to health and safety will increase employee motivation (Hooi and Su, 2017).

Second, the safety, safety and health factors of employees need to be considered by the company, namely the provision of personal safety equipment, masks, disinfectants, appeals to a healthy lifestyle starting from food, and regular exercise, especially at this time (Nea *et al.*, 2017; Syakriah, 2020a).

Third, recognition and appreciation from the company for the work done by employees, especially those who dare to work in shifts in a pandemic situation like this, both intrinsically, namely appreciation, praise, company recognition or extrinsic compensation in the form of money (Hooi and Su, 2017; Shen and Dicker, 2008).

Fourth, there is good teamwork between colleagues while working at the current shift (Hooi and Su, 2017). Helping each other when difficulties can improve emotional relationships between employees and motivate employees (Kaul *et al.*, 2017; Martins *et al.*, 2004).

5. Conclusion

Keep working is a choice that must be made by employees to continue to meet their daily needs. However, amid the Covid-19 pandemic virus, attention needs to be paid to employee's safety and security. The company must establish policies to support the safety and security of its employees while continuing the operations of the company. Through this article, we recommend two different approaches that companies must pay attention to maintaining employee motivation at work. First is work from home and work shifts.

6. Limitations and Future Research

This research is only based on a review of literature selected by the authors from various sources of literature available to help to provide recommendations to companies to keep the working motivation of employees even though they are in danger of a Covid-19 pandemic virus. This was taken because the author is currently undergoing a policy from the Indonesian government for self-isolation and working from home. Future research requires a broader method through direct interviews or with quantitative methods to increase the repertoire of knowledge.

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