

Exploring the Factors that Affect Employee Motivation during COVID-19 Pandemic: An Empirical Study from Indonesia



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ABSTRACT. The COVID-19 pandemic has created working condition that is totally new to working population globally, including Indonesia. Social distancing policies have forced employee to work from home where work-life and family-life domains become blur and may increase level of stress due to various reasons. Employees that need to work in the office may be fear of infection if the working environment is perceived not safe. Other factors, such as leadership style, may complicate the issues faced by the employees. Previous studies on how COVID-19 pandemic affects employee motivation are still limited. This study answers the limited research on employee motivation during COVID-19 pandemic and attempts to minimize the gap by investigating the relationship and impact of four independent variables (safe working environment, special benefit, perceived work-life balance, and transformational leadership) on employee motivation during COVID-19 pandemic. Online questionnaire survey method was employed to collect data from 325 active working employees mainly across Java Island. Multiple regression using SPSS version 25 was applied to analyze the data. Results show that all four variables have positive relationship with employee motivation. However, only three variables (safe working environment, special benefits, and transformational leadership) have significant impact on employee motivation.

KEYWORDS: COVID-19, employee motivation, safe working environment, special benefits, work-life balance, transformational leadership

INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) that hit the world in early 2020 has forced many companies to adopt remote working or famously addressed as work-from-home (WFH). Working at home is different compared to working in the office where problems can be discussed and resolved immediately with work colleagues or superior. Working remotely means an employee must have sufficient knowledge to solve the problem encountered without the help of others and yet the expected performance is the same with working in the office when all facilities are available. Working from home may blur the boundaries between work life and family life. Therefore, working at home may induced stress level and demotivated employees.

In the current competitive market, employee motivation has become a critical success factor for an organization to achieve its objectives. Motivation can be distinguished into intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Deci (1972) defined intrinsic motivation as inherent motivation reside in a person where an activity is performed for the sake of enjoyment with no reward expectation, and extrinsic motivation is defined as motivation to perform an activity because it will lead to external rewards such as status, recognition, or passing grades. Deci (1972) argues that monetary rewards will decrease intrinsic motivation because it will make people dependent on monetary materials. Working professionals are motivated by different factors, whether it is intrinsic motivation where self-satisfaction in completing a task is enough while other may need an extrinsic motivation to complete a task. During COVID-19 pandemic, fear of infection has forced many companies to adopt work from home policies to adhere social distancing, this has created new working environment where collaboration between employees is now done online instead of offline prior to pandemic. This new working arrangement can be stressful when the employees are not equipped with sufficient knowledge to resolve problem by themselves or using online media to collect data or collaboration which have higher level of difficulty compared to collecting data or collaborating in person when all employees are working in the office premises. Therefore, it is important to study which factors motivate employees amidst current COVID-19 pandemic. There may be many factors that affecting employee motivation during COVID-19 pandemic, however, for this study, we limited the motivation factors

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to four variables only that we considered the most relevant variables (safe working environment, special benefits, perceived work life balance and transformational leadership).

Prior to COVID-19 pandemic, definition of safe working environment is limited to certain industries and related to work accident or to prevent employees from physical accident in the workplace which can be managed through proper training to operate the machines in the factories, tools in the construction site or put safety sign in the dangerous location, among other things. Since COVID-19 pandemic affects working population globally, the definition of safe working environment has changed tremendously and affect working population in different ways due to fear of infection. Safety is an important factor to employee motivation and performance (Wolor et al., 2020) during COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is imperative for organizations to ensure their employees feel safe by implementing strict health protocol suggested by World Health Organization (WHO). Munir et al. (2021) found that working environment has substantial impact on employee motivation. During pandemic, a safe working environment will motivate employee to perform well despite the threat of infection.

Rewards are linked to performance where rewards motivate employees to excel. In normal business condition, intrinsic rewards such as encouragement or appreciation (Baqir et al., 2020) may be enough to motivate employees to excel. However, during pandemic condition, encouragement or appreciation may not be enough to boost employee motivation because fear of infection will change employee mindset. Employee may become reluctant to work in the office and choose to work from home instead due to fear of infection, however, not all have the luxury to work from home especially those who work in the essential industries. Work from home may also incur additional expense for data communication to connect online for meetings. Therefore, extrinsic rewards may be more relevant to boost employee motivation during pandemic, i.e., additional transportation allowance will allow employees to choose their own comfortable transportation rather than public transportation, additional allowance for internet expense may ease the burden of employees who work from home. However, little are known whether these extrinsic rewards are effective to boost employee motivation, thus, this will be the focus of the current study.

Work life balance has become an important topic and has been studied since decades ago (Guest, 2002; Felstead et al., 2002; Byrne, 2005) where work life balance is perceived to be achieved when employees are allowed to manage their works from their own home. Work from home has become more prevalent now amidst COVID-19 global pandemic that started in early 2020. Byrne (2005) argues that work life balance is important and could be benefited the employer because when perceived work life balance is achieved, an employee will become more motivated, productive, and less stressful. Felstead et al. (2002) suggest that work from home is not for everybody but limited to individual working in the public sector, large establishments, and working environment where the individuals are responsible for their own result. However, COVID-19 pandemic that hit the world since early 2020 has made work from home available for almost every individual except those individuals that work in the essential industries such as food, utilities, hospitals etc.

Work from home will require certain ICT skill and steady internet connection to connect online with coworkers and third parties for meetings and collaboration. Lack of skill in using online application and unstable internet connection will lead to emotional exhaustion and stress due to meetings take longer than in-person meeting. Consequently, work domain and family life domain boundaries will become significantly blurred and is likely to increase tension if work from home is prolonged amidst COVID-19 pandemic (Kusairi et al., 2021). Contrary, work from home will be advantage for those that equipped with ICT skill and stable internet connection where there is enough time to juggle between work life and family life. However, equipped with ICT skill may not be enough as research reveals that women were affected the most during COVID-19 pandemic where they were buried with heavy workloads at home due to lockdowns (Kusairi et al., 2021) caused physical and emotional exhaustion that may lead to decreasing of motivation. The current research will study perceived work life balance during COVID-19 pandemic and how it affects employee motivation.

COVID-19 pandemic has created a new phenomenon that is novel for all working population, however, leaders are expected to play important roles to ease the pain of their subordinates in coping with this new normal. Thus, having an understanding and supportive managers or leaders has become critical factor to achieve perceived work life balance especially in the current pandemic condition. Perceived work life balance become even more important for both physical and mental health because of the fear of infection pressure caused by pandemic. According to Kim et al. (2021), transformational leadership is effective in facilitating performance and mitigating tensions of employees during organizational change in normal business condition. However, in the current pandemic condition, further studies are required focusing on the impact of transformational leadership in motivating employees and facilitating performance.

The four dimensions of transformational leadership are (1) idealized influence where leaders influenced their followers using their charisma to emphasize the importance of purpose, commitment, and decision result from ethical perspective; (2) inspirational motivation where leaders inspire their followers by clearly communicating the vision and future goals and provide reasonable

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meaning on the current task; (3) intellectual stimulation where leaders empower, encourage and stimulate the intellectual of their followers; (4) individualized consideration where leaders act as coach or mentor for their followers (Fauzi et al., 2021). This study will investigate the relationship between transformational leadership during COVID-19 pandemic and employee motivation.

To further understand the factors that affect employee motivation, we summarize our research objectives as (1) to investigate the motivation factors of working employees during COVID-19 pandemic and (2) to study which factors (safe working environment, special benefits, perceived work life balance or transformational leadership) that influence the most on employees working motivation during COVID-19 pandemic. We developed the following research questions using four independent variables and one dependent variable to achieve our research objectives (1) to what extent does the safe working environment influence employee motivation during COVID-19 pandemic, (2) to what extent does the special benefits influence employee motivation during COVID-19 pandemic, (3) to what extent does the perceived work life balance influence employee motivation during COVID-19 pandemic, and (4) to what extent does the transformational leadership influence employee motivation during COVID-19 pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee motivation during COVID-19 pandemic become more prevalent since the adoption of work from home due to social distancing policies. Working remotely can become a big challenge for those that are not equipped with certain technology knowledge. Dividing time between works and taken care of the family can become challenging also especially for those that have demanding leaders that want immediate results with certain high standards.

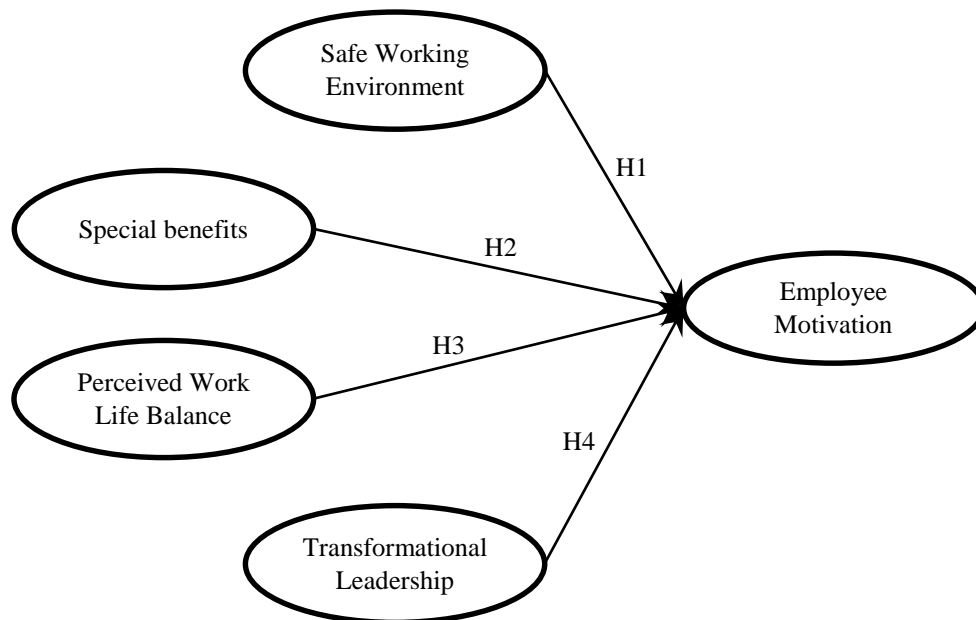


Figure 1. Research Model

To understand the factors that have impact on employee motivation, this study proposes a research model to assess the impact of safe working environment, special benefits, perceived work life balance and transformational leadership towards employee motivation during COVID-19 pandemic condition. The proposed research model is shown in Figure 1 and the theoretical logic for each hypothesis is discussed in the next section.

This study integrates various theoretical perspective generated from literature review to identify the main variables of the research model and establish relationships between them. The main variables in this study are safe working environment; special benefits; perceived work life balance; transformational leadership; and employee motivation.

1.1. Employee motivation

The term motivation originated from the Latin word *movere*, which means to move (Ramlall, 2004). Motivation is what drives a person to act voluntarily in achieving goal. Motivation as defined by Ramlall (2004) is the willingness to apply high levels of effort in pursuit of an organizational goals if the effort is able to satisfy an individual need. The factors that motivate an employee to voluntarily act are depends on the outcome that an employee will receive at the end. A favorable outcome such as reward and appreciation will motivate an employee to exert more efforts compared to unfavorable outcome. According to Khuong and Hoang

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(2015), employee motivation is considered the most important determinants in achieving success and prosperity of an organization in the current dynamic and fierce market competition.

The literature review unveils the existence of many approaches associated with motivation concepts, categorized in accordance with specific criteria. For the purpose of the current study, motivation will be divided into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Hennessey et al. (2014), defined intrinsic motivation as the motivation to accomplish something for the sake of one's enjoyment while extrinsic motivation refers to the drive to accomplish something in order to achieve specific external goal or meet imposed external constraint. Intrinsic motivation usually relates the individual to the task where the task comes from within the individual self. The pleasure of completing the task will become the reward for the individual. Extrinsic motivation can be influenced by many factors, including expected reward and recognition, expected evaluation, competition, and external controls over task engagement (Hennessey et al., 2014). The current study will investigate which factors motivate employee more during COVID-19 pandemic whether it is safe working environment, special benefits, perceived work life balance or transformational leadership which are discussed next.

1.2. *Safe working environment*

Literature review reveals that safe working environment studies during COVID-19 pandemic are limited to essential workers, such as construction industry (Pamidimukkala & Kermanshachi, 2021; Araya, 2021; Gan & Koh, 2020), hospitality industry (Hu et al., 2021; Zanni et al., 2021), etc. While in the healthcare industry, the focus is on the workers' health and well-being (Delgado et al., 2020; Foster et al., 2020; Bourgeault et al., 2020). Pamidimukkala and Kermanshachi (2021) studied the challenges faced by construction industry during COVID-19 pandemic to provide safe working environment and practices at the construction site that involved many entities and size working together. As COVID-19 pandemic created a new normal, little are known on the definition of safe working environment. Research by Dennerlein et al. (2020) on the safety management system related to safety, health, and well-being of essential workers during COVID-19 pandemic revealed that essential workers live in fear of infection due to contact with general public that may increase the level of stress. Although essential workers face higher risk of infections because of their interaction with general public, the highly contagious COVID-19 virus may also cause fear in the working population such as white-collar employees. The main concern of employees working in the office is the fear of infection and spread it to their families. The fear of infection may increase the stress level of workers that are required to work in the office and eventually affected their mental health. Therefore, it is imperative for an organization to provide working environment that is perceived safe by its employees.

Munir et al. (2021) suggest that conducive and comfortable working environment is a critical factor to improve and maintain employee morale, increase commitment and productivity. Nakpodia (2011) uncovers a conducive working environment has significant relationship with employees' motivation where all needs to carry out their works are fulfilled. Siswanto et al. (2021) suggest that employees' motivation is affected by the following factors, such as pleasant working environment, rewards for best performance, and fair treatment from the management. During pandemic, pleasant working environment is including safety, cleanliness, and comfortable where employees can perform their works without fear of infection of the virus. In the COVID-19 pandemic setting, a safe working environment will increase employee motivation to work in the office. Thus, we hypothesize:

H1: Safe working environment has positive relationship with employee motivation during COVID-19 pandemic

1.3. *Special benefits*

Siswanto et al. (2021) suggest positive relationship between rewards and motivation. Therefore, rewards are critical factor to motivate employees to perform beyond their original expectation. Rewards are categorized into extrinsic and intrinsic where extrinsic rewards are basically tangible benefits such as pay promotion, holiday abroad, impressive titles and bonuses while intrinsic rewards such as trust, recognition, job satisfaction, empowerment, social status, personal development, etc. are related to employees' personal satisfaction (Baqir et al., 2020).

Alam et al. (2020) introduced broader term called worker welfare that comprising different benefits, facilities and services provided to workers by the employer to boost and motivate their employees. All these benefits provided by the employers are to motivate their employee to perform better. During pandemic, employees that commute to the office using public transportation are afraid of infection on the road from their residential home to office and vice versa. Contrary, employees work from home have concerns on ICT infrastructure at their residential home and may incur higher expense on data communication. As COVID-19 pandemic is a new phenomenon, little are known on which welfare or benefits will boost employees' motivation amidst fear of infection. In the current study, we will investigate whether special benefits provided by the employers, such as transportation allowance to allow employees commute comfortably to office and back home and data communication allowance for employee that work from home will boost employee motivation. Thus, we hypothesize:

H2: Special benefits have positive relationship with employee motivation during COVID-19 pandemic

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1.4. Perceived work life balance

COVID-19 has become global pandemic since early 2020 and has forced many companies around the globe to adopt work from home for their employees to stop the spreading of the virus and comply with the regulations of social-distancing policies imposed by many governments around the globe. The concept of work from home or flexible working arrangement or remote working is not a new phenomenon and has been introduced by many companies to improve work life balance of their employees long before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, COVID-19 crisis has put remote working or work from home become a new phenomenon due to its extensity (Oksanen et al., 2021).

Work life balance can be defined as employees' perception of having adequate time to meet their commitments at work and at home or perceived balance between work and non-work activities (Guest, 2002), harmonious division of time and attention between work and personal life (Oksanen et al., 2021), harmony and role conflict minimization between work and personal life domains (Caringal-Go et al., 2021). During work from home, work-life domain and personal-life domain may be interrupted and spillover from one domain to the other where private life may be interrupted by work tasks or online meetings after office hours and work tasks or online meetings in the daytime may be interrupted by family errands or duties (Oksanen et al., 2021). The borders of work-life domain and personal-life domain must be managed carefully to avoid negative spillover and to achieve expected work life balance. In fact, work life balance has become more prevalent during COVID-19 pandemic because most people were forced to spend their time at home juggling between work and family where sometimes work-life and private-life could no longer be separated clearly. While many researchers have studied work life balance (Oksanen et al., 2021; Bauwens et al., 2020; Caringal-Go et al., 2021) but the studies were not directed to employee motivation. Caringal-Go et al. (2021) studied work life balance while telecommuting or remote working, Oksanen et al. (2021) studied the COVID-19 crisis and its impact to work life balance where the border of work-life and personal-life become a thin line, and Bauwens et al. (2020) studied the impact of work-related information and communication technology (ICT) use after hours to work life balance of teachers. We opined that work from home arrangement during COVID-19 pandemic may increase employee's motivation when perceived work life balance is achieved, thus the current study will investigate the relationship between work life balance and employee motivation with the following hypothesis:

H3: Perceived work life balance has positive relationship with employee motivation during COVID-19 pandemic

1.5. Transformational leadership

The global pandemic crisis has created unprecedented challenges in many factors that affecting human life from students to employees. In a situation of VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) like this, a standout leadership style will make a difference. Leadership can be described as a process that comprises of several factors, one of these could be the ability to influence an organized group towards accomplishing its goals (Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 2019). There are several leadership styles namely, transactional, laissez-faire, and transformational leadership. Deichmann and Stam (2015) defined transactional leadership as a leadership style where the leader clearly expressed the expectation to the followers on the exchange relationship. In this type of leadership, the leader will clearly communicate the expectation including reward for achieved goals agreed upon. Relationship between the leaders and the followers are formal in the transactional leadership and based on the agreed upon objectives set. Transactional leadership will be suitable in a normal setting environment and not pandemic condition. Laissez-faire leadership is described as a passive leadership style where leaders ignore followers' needs and lack of responses to followers' performance and variety of potential stimuli in a variety of circumstances (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 2008). Therefore, laissez-faire leadership will be applicable in an environment where the followers have high capability to work independently and do not need further guidance from their leaders. However, Agotnes et al. (2021) argues that laissez-faire leadership may cause the followers to become frustrated, stress, more vulnerable to experience negative social interaction in the absence of support from the leaders at a particular time. Thus, we opined that laissez-faire leadership style may not be suitable to motivate employee during pandemic time.

Transforming leadership was initially introduced by Burns (1978) as a process where leaders and followers raise one another to a higher level of morale and motivation. Bass (1995) defined transformational leaders as those who motivate their followers to do more than what they originally expected to do and raise the awareness of important matters, and Yammarino (1993) explained that Bernard M. Bass extended the concept of transformational leadership in 1985, by adding three dimensions – inspirational leadership, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation – and described that transformational leadership drives employees to work devotedly in accomplishing the organizational goal. Subsequently, Bass and Riggio (2006) summarized the four dimensions of transformational leadership (1) *Idealized Influence (II)*, it refers to the leaders who serve as role models for their followers. Usually, this type of leadership's behavior demonstrating high standards of ethical and moral conduct. Idealized Influence which also refers as charisma is the idealized behavior of the leaders that attract the followers through an emotional

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bond (Fauzi et al., 2021). Cetin and Kinik (2015) suggest that idealized behavior of a transformational leaders motivate their followers to emulate them. (2) *Inspirational Motivation (IM)*, it refers to the leaders who motivate and inspire their followers by involving the followers in envisioning the challenging and appealing future states and clearly communicating the expectations for the followers to meet. In Inspirational Motivation, transformational leaders inspire and motivate their followers by spreading a sense of belief and giving challenges in pursuing company’s goals and objectives (Fauzi et al., 2021). (3) *Intellectual Stimulation (IS)*, it refers to the leaders who encourage their followers to be innovative, creative, and thinking outside of the box in solving problem. In Intellectual Stimulation, transformational leaders motivate their followers by stimulating their intellectual to increase their interest in problem-solving, challenge their followers to think outside of box (Fauzi, et al., 2021), and motivate their followers to find other alternative for problem solving by assessing all possible solutions (Cetin & Kinik, 2015). (4) *Individualized Consideration (IC)*, it refers to the leaders who are attentive to their followers needs for achievement and growth by acting as a coach or mentor. In Individualized Consideration, transformational leaders treat each of their followers differently with their personalized attention which will make their followers feel appreciated and recognized, and each follower will be given an individual goal and encouraged to achieve the goal (Fauzi et al., 2021). A supportive climate is established by the transformational leader where individual differences are respected (Cetin & Kinik, 2015).

During COVID-19 pandemic where most employees are forced to work remotely from their own home while at the same time attending to their family needs can be challenging. We opined that transformational leadership style that understand the individual needs of their followers become more prevalent in this situation. Thus, we hypothesize:

H4: Transformational leadership has positive relationship with employee motivation during COVID-19 pandemic.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This current study used a correlational study in a non-contrived settings and individual employee that is currently has occupation as the unit of analysis. A cross-sectional study method was applied where data was collected at one point in time in duration of five days in normal environment (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Specific questionnaire was designed to measure the hypotheses of five variables described in the Research Model depicted in Figure 1. Each variable was operationalized by developing definition, dimension and indicators that was used to design the questionnaire or item measurement (Table 1). Multiple regression analysis using SPSS version 25 was applied to test the survey result and helped to identify error in response, outlier, and measure the data result with some statistical data for analysis.

The study population were employees with working location mainly in Java Island. We were using non-probability convenience sampling method with a sampling size of 325 respondents as suggested by Memon et al. (2020) where sampling size must be between 30 to 500 for behavioral study based on Roscoe’s (1975) guideline which has been a common choice for the last few decades. A five-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 “strong disagree” to 5 “strongly agree” was used as a measurement for the questionnaires that will be conducted through online survey. To ensure the quality of responses, we distributed the questionnaire to white-collar employees and used “currently active working” as filter for the respondent to continue answering the questionnaire.

Table 1. Item Measurement

Variable	Dimension	Item Measurement
Safe working environment (SWE)		
SWE 1		I feel safe and comfortable at work because the company I work for strictly enforces government regulations regarding health protocols in the work environment.
SWE 2		I feel safe and comfortable at work because the company I work for has a task force for handling the COVID-19 pandemic.
SWE 3		I feel safe and comfortable at work because the company I work for ensures safe workplace arrangements for employees such as installing partitions and maintaining distance between employees.
SWE 4		I feel safe and comfortable at work because the company where I work does air and workspace cleaning regularly and periodically.

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Variable	Dimension	Item Measurement
SWE 5		I feel safe and comfortable because the company where I work provides masks, face shields, gloves, and PPE (personal protective equipment) for those who need it.
Special benefit (SB)		
SB 1		Companies should pay more attention to their employees by providing vitamins/supplements for their employees.
SB 2		The company must provide work-at-home operational allowances (internet quota, telephone credit).
SB 3		The company provides transportation allowances so that employees do not need to use mass public transportation.
SB 4		The company provides/pays for the cost of regular antigen/PCR swab tests.
SB 5		The company provides healthy and delicious catering at work, so the employees don't have to go out of the office into the crowd.
Perceived work-life balance (PWLb)		
PWLb 1		I feel more efficient working from home because I can avoid traffic jams on the road.
PWLb 2		By working from home, I can avoid unnecessary conflicts.
PWLb 3		By working from home, I have the flexibility to do various activities.
PWLb 4		I can separate work time and family time.
PWLb 5		Working from home gives me the freedom to organize and complete my own work.
Transformational Leadership		
TL 1	Idealized Influence (II)	My supervisor makes me feel comfortable working with him.
TL 2		My supervisor has good credibility and can be trusted.
TL 3		My supervisor has expertise, knowledge, and personality with high ethical and moral standards.
TL 4	Inspirational Motivation (IM)	My supervisor supports and trusts me in my work.
TL 5		My supervisor has a clear vision and uses simple and easy-to-understand language in giving job instructions.
TL 6		My supervisor pays attention and appreciates my performance sincerely
TL 7	Intellectual Simulation (IS)	My supervisor always encourages me to be innovative and creative.
TL 8		My supervisor always guides and encourages me to think critically in solving problems
TL 9		My supervisor helps me by using new methods for new work problems.
TL 10	Individualized Consideration (IC)	My supervisor pays close attention to each of his subordinates according to their respective conditions and needs.
TL 11		My supervisor prioritizes two-way communication in directing, teaching, and guiding me to ensure the best tutoring results.
TL 12		My supervisor gives challenging assignments, but always provides support and direction, so I learn a lot and can finish the job well.

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Variable	Dimension	Item Measurement
Employee Motivation (EM)		
EM 1		I am motivated at work because my supervisor gives full trust.
EM 2		Competitive compensation provided by the company to employees will increase work motivation.
EM 3		Rewards given by superiors to employees will increase work motivation.
EM 4		A pleasant and respectful work environment can increase employee motivation.
EM 5		The competency development program provided by the Company will increase employee motivation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From 334 respondents received in the survey, we kept 325 respondents based on currently active working selection criteria. The sample profiles are shown in Table 2. The respondents were 56.3% of female and 47.3% of male. Sixty-one-point five percent (61.5%) of respondents were millennials (age of 21-40) with 51.7% respondents have been working more than 10 years and 71% respondents' education were undergraduate (S1). Eighty-seven (87%) of respondents are working in Greater Jakarta area.

Table 2. Sample Profiles

Variable	Percentage
Gender	
Female	56.3%
Male	43.7%
Age	
Millennials (21-40 years)	61.5%
Gen X (41-56 years)	36.6%
Baby Boomers (above 56 years)	1.8%
Education	
Undergraduate (S1)	77.2%
Graduate (S2)	21.5%
Post-graduate (S3)	1.2%
Year of service	
Less than 3 years	16.3%
3 - 10 years	32.0%
More than 10 years	51.7%
Working location	
Jakarta	57.5%
Greater Jakarta	29.5%
West Java	7.7%
Central Java	1.2%
East Java	0.3%
Others	3.7%
Working Arrangement	
Fully work from home	17.2%
Fully work in the office	43.7%
Hybrid (50% - 50%)	39.1%

We conducted classical assumption test to ensure our regression analysis is valid. First, we tested data normality using regression standardized residual histogram which showed a bell-shaped histogram of standardized residuals and Q plot, where the data

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spreads around the diagonal line and follows the direction of the diagonal line. Based on the result we can conclude that the regression model meets the assumption of normality (Santoso & Tjiptono, 2002). Second, a multi-collinearity check was also tested, and the results of variance inflation factor (VIF) were below the threshold value of 10 and collinearity tolerance > 0.10 which showed no correlation between independent variables (Gujarati, 2003). The results of VIF and collinearity tolerance are shown in Table 3. Last, heteroscedasticity test using the scatterplot method, concluded that there are no heteroscedasticity symptoms or problems in the regression model (Priyatno, 2012).

Table 3

Variables	Collinearity Tolerance	VIF
Safe working environment	.815	1.227
Special benefits	.898	1.113
Perceived work-life balance	.970	1.030
Transformational leadership	.833	1.200

Data validity test using Pearson correlation that correlated between each score item with total score obtained from the respondents' answers to the questionnaire showed all items were valid. In addition, reliability test was evaluated by assessing the internal consistency of the items representing each variable using Cronbach's Alpha with the threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). All variables showed Cronbach's Alpha value more than 0.70 which showed that they are reliable to be used in the study. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Construct Measurement, Validity, and Reliability

Constructs	Mean	Standard Deviation	Pearson correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Safe working Environment (SWE)				0.854
SWE 1	4.2708	0.83550	0.775	
SWE 2	4.0862	0.90878	0.821	
SWE 3	4.1385	0.85485	0.849	
SWE 4	4.1415	0.83053	0.793	
SWE 5	3.8492	0.97438	0.748	
Special Benefit (SB)				0.814
SB 1	4.1938	0.83294	0.642	
SB 2	4.0985	0.91092	0.746	
SB 3	3.8400	0.99951	0.841	
SB 4	4.1846	0.91780	0.727	
SB 5	3.7169	1.13578	0.820	
Perceived work-life balance (PWLb)				0.861
PWLb 1	3.6400	1.09556	0.826	
PWLb 2	3.3231	1.13186	0.793	
PWLb 3	3.6523	1.09954	0.850	
PWLb 4	3.7785	1.02447	0.665	
PWLb 5	3.7354	1.00499	0.875	
Transformational Leadership (TL)				0.973
TL 1	3.8738	0.88162	0.860	
TL 2	3.9846	0.83319	0.868	

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Constructs	Mean	Standard Deviation	Pearson correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
TL 3	3.9662	0.84002	0.900	
TL 4	4.1169	0.74028	0.821	
TL 5	3.9046	0.87143	0.877	
TL 6	3.9477	0.84640	0.892	
TL 7	3.8215	0.93566	0.870	
TL 8	3.8554	0.92996	0.892	
TL 9	3.7815	0.88102	0.868	
TL 10	3.8154	0.90765	0.898	
TL 11	3.8677	0.89116	0.910	
TL 12	3.8092	0.93981	0.907	
Employee Motivation (EM)				0.819
EM 1	3.9908	0.82210	0.860	
EM 2	4.2154	0.75955	0.868	
EM 3	4.3292	0.71529	0.900	
EM 4	4.5231	0.58022	0.821	
EM 5	4.3077	0.66488	0.877	

Using multi regression analysis, the R square for model summary showed that our independent variables influenced 40.6% to the dependent variables. However, the four variables of safe working environment, special benefits, perceived work-life balance, and transformational leadership together are positively influencing employee motivation ($p < 0.05$). Results are shown in Table 5. Based on hypothesis test result, safe working environment ($\beta=0.092$, $p < 0.05$), special benefits ($\beta=0.091$, $p < 0.05$), and transformational leadership ($\beta=0.155$, $p < 0.05$) showed positive and significant influence on employee motivation during COVID-19 pandemic, thus H1, H2 and H4 are supported. Perceived work life balance ($\beta=0.049$, $p > 0.05$) is positively influence employee motivation during COVID-19 pandemic but not significant, hence H3 is still supported (Figure 2).

Table 5. Result of The Structural Model

Hypotheses	β	t-value	p-value
H1: Safe working environment \rightarrow employee motivation	0.092	2.490	.013
H2: Special benefit \rightarrow employee motivation	0.091	2.682	.008
H3: Perceived work-life balance \rightarrow employee motivation	0.049	1.784	.075
H4: Transformational leadership \rightarrow employee motivation	0.155	11.208	.000

Note: β : positive, t-value: positive

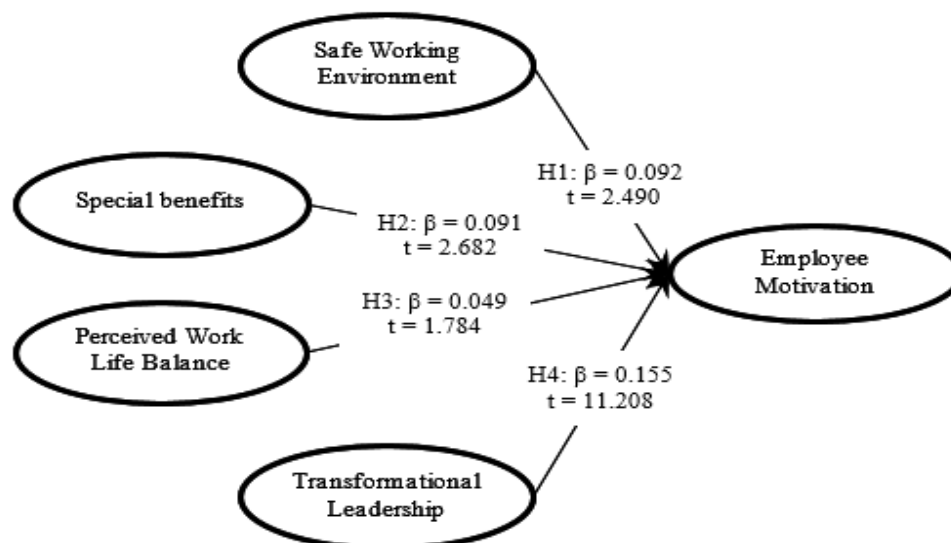


Figure 2. Structural model with results

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Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world in early 2020 that affected working population around the globe, limited research is conducted to investigate the employees' motivation because the fear of infection, among other factors, may affect the motivation of employees to physically come to work in the office, thus the current study answers the limited research on employees' motivation during pandemic time. In the current study, we investigated whether and how safe working environment, special benefits, perceived work life balance and transformational leadership influence employees' motivation during COVID-19 pandemic. The results demonstrate that safe working environment, special benefits, and transformational leadership have significant and positive relationship with employees' motivation during COVID-19 pandemic. However, to our surprise, perceived work life balance does not have significant impact on employees' motivation during COVID-19 pandemic.

Munir et al. (2020) found that work environment has a substantial impact on employee motivation in pandemic time. Nakpodia (2011) discovered that a good working environment has significant relationship with employee motivation. The findings are supported by the current study results, since most of our respondents felt comfortable and secure in their current working environment because the company practices strict health protocol imposed by the Government. Working environment that is perceived safe by the employees become important matters during the pandemic time, because it will increase employee motivation to physically come to office to work. Safety working environment during COVID-19 pandemic is more on the psychological side, an organization that adhere the strict protocol such as sitting arrangement that follow social distancing policies, regular cleaning of office ventilation system and office space, among others, will provide safety feeling to the employees, that in return will increase their motivation. This finding is consistent with study by Pamidimukkala and Kermanshachi (2021) where ensuring a safe distance, providing sanitizers, and washing stations will keep employees safe and improve productivity, while Araya (2021) suggests working in shift to address the fear of infection between workers in the construction projects.

In a normal business condition, intrinsic rewards such as encouragement or appreciation from the leaders and extrinsic reward such as salary and benefit, may be enough to motivate the employee to excel, however, during pandemic condition, special benefits such as additional allowance for transportation and internet data, vitamin, and supplements, and providing PCR swab test to those who are in need were proven to positively influencing employee motivation during COVID-19 pandemic as it will ease the burden caused by the pandemic.

Wolor et al. (2020) argues that work from home arrangement during pandemic will increase employees' motivation because the employees feel secure working from their own home and perceived work life balance is achieved. Following Wolor et al. (2020) argument, we hypothesized work from home arrangement during COVID-19 pandemic will increase employee's motivation when perceived work life balance is achieved which in line with Byrne (2005), however, our findings show perceived work life balance does not have significant relationship with employee motivation during COVID-19 pandemic. Employees are forced to work from home due to social distancing policies, this may create additional problem when employees are not equipped with ICT skill and stable internet connection to connect with co-workers or third parties for meetings and collaborations. Although 61.5% of our respondents are millennials which is considered tech-savvy, but unstable internet connection will cause longer meetings or working hours and less personal hours. Also, women were buried with heavy workloads at home during COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns (Kusairi et al., 2021) caused perceived work life balance is not achieved. This correlate with our finding because 56.3% of our respondents is female employees. The result may also be affected by the fact that only 17.2% of our respondents are working from home and 39.1% have hybrid working arrangement (50% work from home and 50% work in the office).

Previous studies on transformational leadership were focusing on transformational leadership in relation to students' entrepreneurial behavior (Fauzi et al., 2021); commitment to change on restaurant employees' quality of work life during a crisis (Kim et al., 2021); and academic leadership behavior (Cetin & Kinik, 2015) while the current study focused on the relationship between transformational leadership and employees motivation and discovered that transformational leadership has significantly and positively influence employees motivation during COVID-19 pandemic. Clear communication, giving trust, continuous support, and encouragement to employees, are some of the many that leaders can support during this time of pandemic. Employees need to feel a comfortable relationship with the leader when working from home. This finding is consistent with study by Deichmann and Stam (2015) in organization-focused idea who found that transformational leadership increase the commitment of the employees to the ideation program.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Overall, the results of the study show safe working environment, special benefits, perceived work-life balance, and transformational leadership have positive relationship with employee motivation during COVID-19 pandemic, where transformational leadership is the most influencing factor to employee motivation. Safe working environment, special benefits,

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and transformational leadership have significant impact to employee motivation, but not perceived work-life balance, because most of the respondents does not work from home during the period of survey.

Theoretically, this study contributes in three ways: firstly, this study is amongst the few limited studies to examine the constructs that affect employee motivation during COVID-19 pandemic, thus, the current study contributes to the literature by confirming that three constructs – safe working environment, special benefits, and transformational leadership – significantly and positively influence employee motivation during COVID-19 pandemic. Secondly, the current study contributes to the literature by confirming the definition of safe working environment during COVID-19 pandemic. The definition of safe working environment during COVID-19 pandemic is extended to include the psychological side. Thirdly, the current study contributes to the literature by confirming the insignificant relationship between perceived work-life balance and employee motivation during work-from-home arrangement.

However, the current study also has its limitations. First, we employed cross-sectional study through online survey that was opened for five days only and targeted working population mainly in Java Island where generalization cannot be developed to confirm the significant relationship between safe working environment, special benefits, and transformational relationship with employees' motivation. Therefore, it is suggested for future research to apply longitudinal study method and expand to working population outside Java Island to examine whether the generalization can be established. Second, this study cannot generalize the finding of insignificant relationship between perceived work-life balance and employee motivation because only 17.2% of total respondents has work-from-home arrangement. Further studies are encouraged to investigate employees with 100% work-from-home arrangement during pandemic, whether perceived work-life balance is achieved and how it affects employees' motivation, to examine whether generalization can be established. Finally, the constructs of the current study only have influence of 40.6% over employee motivation, therefore, it will be interesting to investigate the remaining constructs that represent 59.4%, whether these constructs have significant impact on employee motivation.

The results presented in the current study indicate the importance of safe working environment, special benefits, and transformational leadership in motivating employees during pandemic time. Therefore, we recommend that organization should adhere to safety protocol during pandemic such as promoting social distancing in the workplace; providing special benefits such as internet data plan or special transportation allowance for the employees to commute safely and comfortably. The other important thing is leadership style that influences the most to employee motivation. Organization needs to have more transformational leaders who communicate well, give trust, continuously encourage and understand the condition faced by the employees during pandemic, and offer supports when needed.

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