



The Effect of Mobile Device Usage on Employees' Work-Life Conflict in a Non-Governmental Organization in South Jakarta

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Abstract. This study examines the relationship between mobile device usage, employee productivity, employer expectations and work-life conflict in a non-governmental organization operating in South Jakarta, Indonesia. Device usage is separated into three domains: work-related use at the office, work-related use at home, and personal use during office hours. Job satisfaction and flexibility in work structure are treated as further antecedents, while productivity and employer expectations act as mediating constructs. Primary data were obtained from all 160 full-time employees of the organization through an online questionnaire distributed between March and May 2024, and the eleven hypothesised paths were tested with partial least squares structural equation modelling in SmartPLS 4. Four hypotheses were supported. Work-related device use at home is positively related to productivity and to employer expectations, personal use during office hours is negatively related to employer expectations, and employer expectations are strongly and positively related to work-life conflict. Flexibility in work structure, contrary to the hypothesis, is negatively related to employer expectations. Work-life conflict in this organization therefore appears to be driven less by the device than by the expectations that surround its use.

Keywords: Employer Expectations; Flexibility in Work Structure; Mobile Device Usage; Productivity; Work Life Conflict.

1. INTRODUCTION

Few technologies have reshaped the working day as quietly as the mobile device. What began as a tool for calls and short messages now carries documents, meetings, approvals and the informal conversation that holds a team together. Indonesia illustrates the scale of that shift with unusual clarity. Against a population of roughly 276.4 million people there were about 353.8 million cellular mobile connections in 2023, some 212.9 million internet users, and active social media penetration of around 60.4 percent (We Are Social, 2023). Many Indonesians therefore carry more than one connected device, and a growing share of them carry work on it.

The organizational gains are easy to recognise. Documents no longer need to be printed or carried from desk to desk, and files can be sent and received at any hour from almost anywhere (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016). Messaging platforms have absorbed a large part of routine work communication and have been associated with higher workplace productivity (Varghese & Kumari, 2018). Mobile working also reduces the amount of office space an organization needs to rent, so the benefit is not only in speed but in cost (Reissner & Izak, 2018).

The same connectivity, however, removes the boundary that once separated the working day from everything else. Work-life conflict arises when the demands of work interfere with the demands of personal life (Huo & Jiang, 2023), and long hours, rigid schedules, rising job demands and weak support at home or at work are among its familiar

sources. Where employees are expected to remain reachable, the expectation of an immediate reply follows them home (Mazmanian, Orlikowski, & Yates, 2013). The consequences reported in the literature include stress, reduced job satisfaction and poorer health outcomes.

The organization studied here, referred to throughout as Non-Governmental Organization X, is an international independent research institution based in Indonesia that works with government, business, multilateral institutions and civil society on forest and land use, climate, energy, cities, transport and the ocean. Project deadlines and donor reporting cycles make responsiveness a practical requirement, and staff are expected to answer messages and turn around proposals and presentations quickly. A short preliminary survey conducted by the researcher among 30 employees of the organization, asking only whether they experienced work-life conflict, produced 28 affirmative answers, or 93.3 percent. That figure was the starting point for this study.

Two earlier studies frame the present one. Brown & Palvia (2015) examined mobile device usage, productivity, employer expectations, flexibility and work-life conflict among 165 usable respondents in the United States, and reported that employer expectations rose through device use at home, enhanced productivity and greater flexibility, and that those expectations in turn fed work-life conflict. Senyamator et al. (2019) surveyed 217 basic school teachers in the Asante Akim South District of Ghana and found job satisfaction and productivity to be positively related. Neither study was conducted in Indonesia, and neither addressed the non-governmental sector, where funding is project-based, teams are dispersed and a substantial part of the workforce sits outside the permanent payroll. Research on work-life balance in Indonesian non-governmental organizations remains scarce. This study therefore combines the two models and re-tests them in a single Indonesian NGO, with the aim of establishing whether mobile device usage, job satisfaction and flexibility in work structure relate to productivity and employer expectations, and whether those relationships carry through to work-life conflict.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Mobile device usage is usefully divided by purpose rather than by hardware. Utilitarian usage serves an instrumental goal and is directed at completing work, while hedonic usage is undertaken for personal enjoyment or benefit (Scarpi, 2005; Schroeder, 2010). Brown & Palvia (2015) operationalized this distinction across two settings, separating work-related use at the office, work-related use at home, and personal use during office hours. The same three-way split is adopted here, since a device used for a proposal at nine in the evening and a device used for online shopping at eleven in the morning are not the same organizational phenomenon.

Productivity is commonly understood as a measure of the efficiency of production (Yadav & Marwah, 2015). Advances in information and communication technology have been credited with substantial productivity gains (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014), and mobile devices in particular support immediate client service and faster internal coordination (Lu, Yueh, & Lin, 2015). The evidence is not one-directional. Personal use during working hours has been linked to distraction and to addictive patterns of use that reduce focus (Pitichat, 2013), and technology overload has been shown to erode the very efficiency it promises (Rasool, Warraich, & Sajid, 2022; Tarafdar et al., 2015).

Employer expectations refer to what an employer anticipates from an employee's performance. Mazmanian, Orlikowski & Yates (2004) observed early that ubiquitous wireless email produced a favourable impression of accessibility among managers while simultaneously tethering employees to the organization, and Yun et al. (2012) documented the anxiety that accompanies constant checking of work email outside office hours. Lotko et al. (2015) add that employers tend to treat efficient device use as a quality employees should already possess rather than one the organization should develop, while Wright, Mooney & Parham (2011) note that unrestricted access to organizational documents raises security and trust concerns.

Flexibility in work structure has been defined as the ability of workers to make choices influencing when, where and for how long they engage in work-related tasks (Hill et al., 2008). Dessler (2016) frames it as control over schedule, location and role in a way that serves both organizational goals and personal needs, and flexible arrangements have been associated with higher job satisfaction and lower turnover intention (McNall et al., 2018). Reduced visibility, however, complicates supervision and coordination (Hill et al., 2015).

Job satisfaction reflects how an employee evaluates the job itself, and dissatisfaction tends to surface as withdrawal and negative behaviour (Locke, 1991; Camp, 1994). Pay, benefits, security, organizational justice and career prospects are among its recognised determinants (Imran et al. 2015), and psychological well-being and satisfaction have been treated as predictors of job performance (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000). Fisher (2003) nonetheless cautions that the intuitive link between satisfaction and performance is weaker and more conditional than lay belief assumes.

Work-life conflict occurs when an individual cannot achieve balance between work and life matters (Anwar & Shahzad, 2011). Higher expectations raise workload and performance pressure, which increases job stress and, through it, conflict between the two domains (Bell et al., 2012). Communication technology used outside regular working hours has been associated with conflict, burnout and turnover intention (Wright et al. 2014), while the blurring of

boundaries and the pull towards constant availability have been described as an autonomy paradox and, at the extreme, as technology addiction (Mazmanian et al., 2013; Turel et al., 2011). Social norms and work engagement moderate how strongly smartphone use interferes with home life (Derks et al., 2014).

Drawing these strands together, eleven hypotheses were formulated. Work-related device use at work is expected to be positively related to productivity (H1a) and to employer expectations (H1b). The same pattern is expected for work-related use at home, both for productivity (H2a) and for employer expectations (H2b). Personal use during working hours is expected to be negatively related to productivity (H3a) and to employer expectations (H3b). Job satisfaction is expected to be positively related to productivity (H4), productivity to employer expectations (H5), and flexibility in work structure to employer expectations (H6). Finally, work-related use at home (H7) and employer expectations (H8) are each expected to be positively related to work-life conflict. The resulting model, adapted from Brown and Palvia (2015) and Senyameter et al. (2019), is shown in Figure 1.

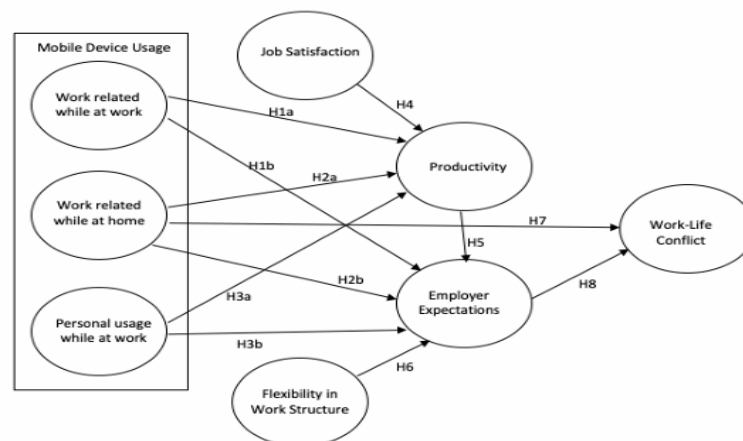


Figure 1. Research Model.

Source: Adapted from Brown and Palvia (2015) and Senyameter et al. (2019).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The study follows a positivist paradigm and a quantitative, cross-sectional design, in which data are gathered once within a defined period and then analysed to answer the research questions (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The unit of analysis is the individual employee. Respondents had to be full-time employees of Non-Governmental Organization X in South Jakarta, aged eighteen or above, working in one of four departments, namely Agriculture, Forest and Other Land Use, Climate, Energy, Cities and Ocean, Communications, and Operations, and owning at least one mobile device.

Following the ratio of twenty observations per variable recommended for this type of model (Malhotra, 2017), a minimum of 120 responses was required for the six variable groups in the framework. Questionnaires were distributed to all 160 full-time employees through Google Forms, circulated by WhatsApp, between March and May 2024, and all 160 were returned, so the analysis effectively covers the whole full-time population rather than a sample drawn from it. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, informed consent was obtained before completion, and responses were treated confidentially.

The instrument had two parts. The first recorded respondent characteristics, including gender, age, marital and parental status, education, department, working experience, devices owned, time spent at home on work, applications used and whether tasks continued to arrive outside working hours. The second measured the eight constructs on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, a length chosen to shorten response time and to limit acquiescence and extreme response bias. Items for mobile device usage, productivity, employer expectations, flexibility and work-life conflict were adapted from Brown & Palvia (2015), and items for job satisfaction from Senyamator et al. (2019). Both instruments had previously been tested for validity and reliability, and a pre-test was carried out before full distribution.

Data were analysed by partial least squares structural equation modelling using SmartPLS 4 (Ghozali & Latan, 2012). The measurement model was assessed through outer loadings, with 0.4 as the cut-off, average variance extracted above 0.5, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability above 0.7, and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio below 0.9 for discriminant validity. The structural model was assessed through variance inflation factors, which were required to remain below 5, the coefficient of determination, and bootstrapping with a one-tailed test at the five percent level. A path was treated as significant where the t-statistic exceeded 1.65 and the p-value fell below 0.05.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

All 160 questionnaires distributed between March and May 2024 were completed and usable. Table 1 summarizes the profile of the respondents.

Table 1. Respondent Profile (n = 160).

Characteristic	Category	Percentage
Gender	Male	61%
	Female	39%

Characteristic	Category	Percentage
Age	18–24 years	7.5%
	25–31 years	50%
	32–38 years	19%
	Above 38 years	23.5%
Marital status	Single	61%
	Married	38%
Parental status	No children	45%
	One child	13%
	Two children or more	42%
Last education pursued	Bachelor's degree (D4/S1)	41%
	Postgraduate	59%
Job department	Agriculture, Forest and Other Land Use	40%
	Climate, Energy, Cities and Ocean	26%
	Communications	9%
	Operations	25%
Working experience	1–3 years	6%
	4–6 years	47%
	More than 6 years	47%
Devices owned	Smartphone	100%
	Laptop	100%
Time spent at home for work	More than 3 hours	100%
The organization has a work group chat	Yes	100%
Still receives tasks outside working hours	Yes	100%
Still works while travelling	Yes	88%

Source: Processed primary data, 2024.

Two entries in the table deserve emphasis before any statistical result is considered. Every respondent reported spending more than three hours at home on work, and every respondent reported still receiving tasks while not at work. Availability outside working hours is not a minority experience in this organization; it is the normal condition.

Measurement Model

The outer model was run three times, and six indicators were removed for failing the loading criterion, namely PRO2, PRO3, WAW2, WAW3, WLC5 and FLX4. Forty indicators across eight constructs were retained. Table 2 reports the results for the retained items.

Table 2. Measurement Model Assessment.

Construct	Items	Loading range	AVE	CA	CR
Work-related use at work (WAW)	4	0.662 – 0.937	0.633	0.811	0.906
Work-related use at home (WAH)	6	0.557 – 0.911	0.664	0.899	0.927
Personal use at work (PAW)	8	0.519 – 0.919	0.558	0.889	0.921
Job satisfaction (JS)	6	0.563 – 0.887	0.667	0.907	0.968

Construct	Items	Loading range	AVE	CA	CR
Productivity (PRO)	3	0.767 – 0.847	0.649	0.732	0.749
Employer expectations (EE)	5	0.566 – 0.948	0.724	0.899	0.935
Flexibility in work structure (FLX)	4	0.610 – 0.839	0.553	0.758	0.905
Work-life conflict (WLC)	4	0.818 – 0.896	0.755	0.891	0.892

Source: SmartPLS 4 output, 2024.

All retained loadings exceed 0.4 and every average variance extracted exceeds 0.5, so convergent validity is established. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability likewise exceed 0.7 for all eight constructs, confirming internal consistency. Discriminant validity was assessed through the heterotrait-monotrait ratio. All values fall below 1.0, although one pair, work-related use at work and employer expectations, returns 0.977 and therefore sits above the 0.90 benchmark adopted in this study. That result is reported here as a constraint on the interpretation of the two paths involving work-related use at work, and is revisited among the limitations. Variance inflation factors range from 1.001 to 2.555 and confirm the absence of multicollinearity.

Structural Model

The coefficients of determination are set out in Table 3. Employer expectations and productivity are explained only modestly by the model, whereas work-life conflict is explained substantially.

Table 3. Coefficient of Determination.

Endogenous variable	R-square
Employer expectations	0.425
Productivity	0.356
Work-life conflict	0.807

Source: SmartPLS 4 output, 2024.

Table 3 reports the bootstrapped path coefficients. Of the eleven hypothesised relationships, four are supported.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing Results.

Hypothesised path	Coefficient	t-statistic	p-value	Result
H1a WAW → Productivity	0.152	1.184	0.118	Not supported
H1b WAW → Employer expectations	-0.185	1.388	0.083	Not supported
H2a WAH → Productivity	0.296	2.734	0.003	Supported
H2b WAH → Employer expectations	0.499	5.952	0.000	Supported
H3a PAW → Productivity	0.191	2.555	0.005	Not supported
H3b PAW → Employer expectations	-0.473	6.804	0.000	Supported
H4 Job satisfaction → Productivity	0.126	1.576	0.058	Not supported
H5 Productivity → Employer expectations	0.128	1.415	0.079	Not supported
H6 Flexibility → Employer expectations	-0.472	4.978	0.000	Not supported

Hypothesised path	Coefficient	t-statistic	p-value	Result
H7 WAH → Work-life conflict	-0.075	2.910	0.002	Not supported
H8 Employer expectations → Work-life conflict	0.898	33.274	0.000	Supported

Source: SmartPLS 4 output, 2024. H3a, H6 and H7 are significant but carry the opposite sign to the one hypothesised, and are therefore recorded as not supported.

Three indirect paths reach significance, and all three run through employer expectations. They are reported in Table 5.

Table 5. Significant Specific Indirect Effects.

Indirect path	t-statistic	p-value
PAW → Employer expectations → Work-life conflict	6.171	0.000
WAH → Employer expectations → Work-life conflict	5.978	0.000
Flexibility → Employer expectations → Work-life conflict	4.494	0.000

Source: SmartPLS 4 output, 2024.

Discussion

The clearest finding concerns location. Work-related device use at the office is unrelated to productivity (H1a) and to employer expectations (H1b), while the same behaviour performed at home is significantly related to both (H2a, H2b). Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that they use their devices for work while in the office, so the absence of an effect is not a matter of low usage. A plausible reading is that in-office use is simply the baseline against which nothing is measured, and that it is accompanied by notifications from applications unrelated to work, which fragments attention and offsets whatever gain the device provides (Bittner et al., 2021; Rasool et al., 2022). The negative coefficient on H1b is consistent with the argument of Lotko et al. (2015) that employers regard competent device use as a quality staff should bring with them rather than an achievement to be rewarded, and with the security reservations documented by Wright et al. (2011). Use at home, by contrast, is visible precisely because it is discretionary, and it is rewarded with higher expectations, a result that matches Brown & Palvia (2015) and the wider evidence on work performed outside office hours (Yun et al., 2012).

Personal use during working hours produced the most interesting departure from the hypothesis. It was expected to depress productivity, and instead the relationship is significant and positive (H3a, coefficient 0.191). Prohibition of personal internet use has been linked to employee resistance, higher absence and higher turnover (Ivarsson & Larsson, 2012), and a short personal interruption may protect psychological well-being rather than damage output (Delecta, 2011). Employers, however, do not read the behaviour the same way. The negative path to employer expectations (H3b) is one of the strongest in the model and aligns with the concerns about professionalism, focus and data security raised by Pitichat (2013) and Wright

et al. (2011). Employees experience personal use as recovery; managers appear to read it as inattention.

Neither job satisfaction (H4) nor productivity (H5) reaches significance in its path to the downstream construct. Job satisfaction is a composite of pay, benefits, motivation, training and career prospects, and the respondents did not evaluate these uniformly. Satisfaction with salary coexisted with dissatisfaction over fringe benefits, over the availability of skills training, where the mean response was 2.506, and over motivation to come to work, where the mean was 2.731. A construct pulled in opposite directions by its own indicators will not translate cleanly into output, which is broadly the caution Fisher (2003) raises. The absence of a productivity effect on employer expectations invites a similar reading, since expectations are frequently set without close reference to actual capability (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2007) and productivity measures capture volume more readily than quality (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). This result diverges from Senyamator et al. (2019), whose Ghanaian teachers worked under performance conditions considerably more standardised than those of a project-based research organisation.

Flexibility in work structure was expected to raise employer expectations and instead lowered them (H6, coefficient -0.472). Where staff work away from the office, managers lose the immediate supervision that provides assurance about effort and quality (McNall et al., 2018), and coordination across dispersed schedules becomes harder even in an organisation where every respondent belongs to a work group chat (Hill et al., 2015). Flexibility, in this setting, seems to buy discretion at the cost of managerial confidence.

The negative coefficient linking work-related use at home to work-life conflict (H7) is the result most in tension with earlier work. Taken at face value it suggests that employees who handle work at home report less conflict, perhaps because completing a task in the evening removes an obligation that would otherwise remain unresolved. The coefficient is very small at -0.075, and the indirect route tells the more convincing story. Use at home reaches work-life conflict through employer expectations with a t-statistic of 5.978, and personal use at work and flexibility travel the same road. What harms the boundary between work and home is not the act of opening a laptop after dinner but the expectation that one will.

That interpretation rests on the strongest relationship in the model. Employer expectations are positively related to work-life conflict with a coefficient of 0.898 and a t-statistic of 33.274 (H8), and the construct alone accounts for the bulk of the 80.7 percent of variance explained in work-life conflict. The item recording interference between work demands and family life returned a mean of 4.225. Where the expectation of availability is

continuous, as it is for all 160 respondents, the personal domain contracts accordingly. This confirms Bell et al. (2012) and is consistent with the pattern reported by Brown and Palvia (2015).

5. CONCLUSION

This study set out to establish how mobile device usage relates to productivity, employer expectations and work-life conflict among full-time employees of a non-governmental organisation in South Jakarta. Four of the eleven hypothesised paths were supported. Work-related device use at home is positively related to productivity and to employer expectations, personal use during office hours is negatively related to employer expectations, and employer expectations are positively and strongly related to work-life conflict. Three further paths reached statistical significance in the direction opposite to the one predicted: personal use at work is positively related to productivity, flexibility in work structure is negatively related to employer expectations, and work-related use at home is negatively related to work-life conflict. The remaining four paths, covering work-related use at the office and the effects of job satisfaction and productivity, were not significant.

Theoretically, the results qualify the assumption that mobile devices harm work-life balance directly. In this organization the device is a conduit rather than a cause, and the damaging variable is the expectation that accompanies it. The finding that flexibility lowers rather than raises employer expectations also runs against the pattern reported in the source studies and suggests that the relationship is sensitive to supervisory culture and to how visible work is made.

For management, the practical implication follows directly from the strength of the path between employer expectations and work-life conflict. Written guidance on availability would set out when employees are and are not expected to respond, and would discourage routine messaging in the evening and at weekends other than in genuine emergencies. Consolidating communication onto fewer platforms would reduce the volume of channels each employee monitors, since every respondent already belongs to at least one work group chat and most use several applications for work. Senior managers set the tone in practice, and their own messaging behaviour will determine whether such guidance is credible; encouraging staff to take their leave entitlement without the expectation of remaining reachable belongs to the same effort. Training in time management and access to stress support would address the low scores recorded on skills training and motivation.

Several limitations should temper these conclusions. The 160 full-time employees represent the whole permanent workforce but exclude roughly 210 part-time consultants who are dispersed across Indonesia and who carry a different workload profile. Respondents are concentrated in Jakarta, so regional variation in working culture is not captured, and the gender split is uneven, which prevents any reliable comparison of how work-life conflict is experienced by men and women. The heterotrait-monotrait value of 0.977 between work-related use at work and employer expectations indicates that these two constructs were not cleanly separated by the present instrument, and the paths involving work-related use at work should be treated with corresponding caution. The device usage items are also broad, referring to mobile devices in general rather than distinguishing smartphones from laptops and tablets. Future research would benefit from including employee grade or position, since responsibility varies with seniority, from separating device types, and from examining the relationship between job satisfaction and productivity with the additional constructs, such as organizational commitment, job characteristics and organizational culture, that the present model leaves out.

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