

Lark: As a Medium of Interpersonal Communication for TNS Employees to Manage Work Stress Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Working from home (WFH) during the community activity restrictions period (PPKM), such as those imposed by Indonesia's government, leaves employees with little choice in dealing with work stress. Lark is a collaborative working media tool, during work from home all communication in TNS department took place in Lark. This study's importance is to see how Lark basically a formal working media tool can form an interpersonal communication between woman employees that help them to manage work stress during WFH and PPKM period. Since the trend of working from home is likely to continue even after pandemic, this research provides contribution and information related to communication tools and work from home consequences. The theory for this research is Computer-mediated Communication and Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT). This research method employs a qualitative approach through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and library study. This study finds that implementing WFH during the Covid-19 period resulted in heightened work stress among female employees in TNS Department. It was observed that sharing work-related burdens with coworkers proved to be effective in reducing work stress. Interestingly, sharing with a coworker was considered more beneficial than sharing with a spouse or family. Lark application which serves as a working media tool turns out can facilitate interpersonal communication among female employees. The application's instant messenger, phone call, and expressive emoji make it convenient for employees to share their concerns and stress, as compared to using video conferences.

Keywords: *Lark, Computer-Mediated Communication, Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT), Work from home, Work Stress, Covid-19 Pandemic*

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Covid-19, a highly contagious disease that was rapidly spreading across the globe, had altered business, people, and life in general. As of April 2022, there are over 400 million confirmed cases and over 6 million deaths from this disease (World Health Organization, 2022). To combat the spread of this virus, many countries are implementing WHO-recommended health protocols, as well as imposing total lockdowns (Satgas Covid-19, 2022). To combat the spread of this virus, many

countries are implementing WHO-recommended health protocols, as well as imposing total lockdowns (Bastoni et al., 2021). Indonesia was one of the countries that imposed PSBB, or Large-Scale Social Restrictions, which were later replaced by PPKM, or Implementation of Restrictions on Community Activities (Muhyiddin & Nugroho, 2021). Government restrictions on the movement of community activities (PPKM) of course have an impact on economic activities and businesspeople. This then normalizes WFH activities, which companies must implement to maintain business continuity (Mungkasa, 2020).

The phrases "work from home" or "remote working" have existed for many years, accompanied by extensive studies and research into these concepts. However, it is during the Covid-19 pandemic that these terms became widely known and used (Klopotek, 2017). Remote work, commonly known as WFH (Working from Home), is recognized as having both advantages and disadvantages in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. On the one hand, WFH offers increased flexibility in managing work-related tasks (Buffer & Angellist, 2020; Ipsen et al., 2021). However, it is also associated with certain perceived drawbacks such as decreased work motivation, additional expenses for utilities and home internet, and challenges in establishing clear boundaries between personal and professional life (Asbari et al., 2020; Febrianty et al., 2021; Galanti et al., 2021; Sahni, 2020).

The interplay between WFH, work-life balance, and job stress has a substantial impact on job satisfaction, both directly and indirectly. Notably, the study reveals that adopting WFH as a novel approach can effectively maintain job satisfaction among Indonesian workers amidst the Covid-19 pandemic (Shabuur & Mangundjaya, 2021). Consequently, WFH is perceived as having positive implications that organizations should consider attentively in the future. On the other hand, studies also found that WFH during Covid-19 and restricted periods raised work stress, loneliness, and sleep deprivation (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021). Especially woman, according to a United Nations assessment based on research undertaken by UN Women in collaboration with UNICEF, WFP, and UNDP, COVID-19 has a disproportionate impact on women's mental and emotional health, with 57% of women suffering greater stress and anxiety compared to 48% of males. Increased demands of care and household work, concern over job and income loss, and the consequences of movement limitations on gender-based violence may all be contributory causes (UN Women, 2020).

TNS department is one of the departments that has implemented a full-time WFH work system for employees during Covid-19 pandemic and PPKM period. During this day, all communication and information related to work took place in a company application called Lark. As the department in charge of platform security, there is a chance that TNS team will be exposed to or asked to review potentially harmful content (Bailliencourt, 2023). Given this, the company understands the importance of putting employees' mental health and stress levels first, for example, provides team-building sessions and gives employees the freedom to choose the date and location of the event, which usually occurs outside of the workplace. Unfortunately, when forced to work from

home (WFH) and face restrictions on outdoor activities, employees are left with few options for dealing with work-related stress.

Every human interaction involves communication. Even when words are not exchanged with another person, the nature of our shared lifeworld inherently assumes a communicative context in every encounter. To be human is to be with other humans (Petricini, 2022). Humans are social beings according to Aristotle, the need to have interpersonal relationships and socializing are regarded to be one of the most fundamental aspects of life (Fudian & Oktavianti, 2021). Study shows that when people spend their time alone is less pleasurable than spending time with others and given the restriction period imposed by the government (PPKM) during Covid-19 pose a challenge to fulfilling the innate need for social relationships.

Given the pandemic situation, face-to-face communication and physical contact are no longer prioritized, and alternative forms of communication are emphasized to ensure safety. Poor communication characterized by intensity, lack of clarity, and complexity can give rise to misunderstandings, ultimately leading to decreased motivation and diminished psychological well-being (Yuliana & Rahadi, 2021). To alleviate stress during the Covid-19 period, several measures can be taken, including engaging in family communication, maintaining effective workplace communication, adhering to schedules, prioritizing health and safety, following government regulations, and minimizing exposure to Covid-19 news (Wolor et al., 2020).

The study found that communication plays a crucial role in supporting the mental and psychological well-being of students who are separated from their families due to migration during the pandemic. In this context, open and empathetic communication, along with a family's willingness to listen to the concerns of migrating students, becomes essential (Wowor & Putri, 2021). An additional study suggests that implementing successful approaches to interpersonal communication, whether in personal or professional settings, can alleviate stress, promote well-being, and enhance overall quality of life (Vertino, 2014). Moreover, virtual interpersonal communication is acknowledged as having a positive influence on increasing teacher motivation to engage in teaching activities (Das & Banerjee, 2021).

Information and communication technology in the form of computer-mediated communication (CMC) played a critical role in adopting WFH during a pandemic (Meier et al., 2021; Putri & Irwansyah, 2020). The advance of technology provides media to keep communicating, maintaining social connections, and fulfilling the need to interact during Covid-19 with one another. WFH offered a variety of media during the Covid 19 epidemic, ranging from lean to rich. The capacity of various technologies and mediums to duplicate messages varies. As a result, the communication parties can select the most appropriate technology and media to convey desired messages or to carry out communication. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) allows us to communicate, and share stories and information virtually without must be in the same room, even location. Indeed, CMC was found to have a good and positive impact on people's well-being amid the restriction period (Liu et al., 2019).

Therefore, based on that background, this study aims to see how the Lark application, a working media tool, can form interpersonal communication between woman employees that help them to manage work stress during WFH and PPKM period amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. It is important to note that this research specifically focuses on the role of interpersonal communication among TNS woman employees as a coping mechanism for stress during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study is confined to woman employees within specific departments of TNS Indonesia, and the timeframe of the research is limited to the years 2021-2022, coinciding with the full implementation of WFH for TNS employees. The newness of this study is to explore the sources of stress of TNS employees amidst Covid-19. While some previous studies focus on the role of interpersonal communication in teacher motivation, and employee motivation, this research will analyze how the role of interpersonal communication between employee help them in managing their work stress amidst Covid-19, and then analyze the role of CMC in this research focus on Lark application as a medium for employee's communication, while the previous study focuses on another application such as Zoom, WhatsApp, Twitter, and others.

LITERATURE REVIEW & RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Computer-Mediated Communication

In 1991, Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) was a relatively new and unexplored field in academic disciplines, and its credibility was not widely accepted. During that time, CMC mainly consisted of email and asynchronous discussion groups, such as newsgroups, listservs, and privately hosted BBS (Kelsey & Amant, 2010). Walther (1992) defined synchronous or asynchronous electronic mail and computer conferencing as processes in which senders encrypt text messages sent from their computers to receiver computers (Walther, 1992). According to Goldman (1999), CMC was broadly defined as text, audio, and video exchanges occurring between two or more individuals using computer software and interfaces, including private email exchanges, private chat rooms, newsgroups, and the World Wide Web (Dehkordi et al., 2012). The information shared through CMC could be directed toward oneself, others, or even an imaginary audience.

As time passed, the term "computer" in CMC evolved to consider the context of digital technology beyond just desktop computers. Today, people can access the internet through various devices like smartphones, laptops, tablets, etc. Therefore, CMC can be defined as the transfer of meaning between two or more humans using digital technology, focusing on how mediation affects communication processes via specific technology practices (Carr, 2021; Yao & Ling, 2020). CMC interactions can take various forms, including one-to-many or one-to-one transactions, synchronous or asynchronous processes, and diverse modes of interaction like typed text, spoken discussions, or visual/video messages (Holmes, 2005; Kelsey & Amant, 2010).

During the pandemic, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) played a crucial role in various aspects of life (Király et al., 2020; Y. C. Lee et al., 2021). The

patterns of CMC significantly impacted the psychological, social, and economic aspects of communities (Arnus, 2015). Social media, being an internet-based platform that emphasizes human connections, played a vital role during this period, enabling people to connect, exchange knowledge, and create online network communities without face-to-face interactions. The introduction of new media tools has transformed how we establish and maintain relationships with others, whether they are friends, family, coworkers, or acquaintances (Carr, 2021; Luo & Walden, 2019; Treem et al., 2020).

CMC has accelerated the transmission and receipt of messages, and while it still takes time for senders to compose and receivers to respond to messages, the actual time to send and receive messages globally is now nearly instantaneous due to computer networks. This type of interaction is known as Interpersonal CMC. Interpersonal CMC includes dyadic interaction, where CMC tools facilitate direct one-to-one communication with a relational partner. It also involves lightweight interaction, referring to simple and quick messages that do not require significant time or effort to transmit, often seen on social network sites like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. Additionally, phatic interaction, which involves messages to establish mood, acknowledge, or demonstrate sociability, has adapted and evolved online despite the absence of many socioemotional cues (Carr, 2021).

Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT)

Understanding differences between individuals in various settings, whether in professional or personal interactions, is facilitated through interpersonal communication (Knapp & Daly, 2011). It involves communication between individuals who share fundamental connections, such as parents and children, coworkers and employers, and teachers and students. Interpersonal communication can occur in dyadic forms, involving two people, or extend to smaller groups, such as families (Berger & Roloff, 2019; DeVito, 2016). Certain theories regarding Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) suggest that new media might not be suitable for fostering interpersonal relationships due to their limited support for nonverbal cues. This limitation makes it challenging to effectively convey aspects of one's personality, emotions, or sentiments in CMC interactions.

One of the earliest theories exploring how Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) facilitates interpersonal interactions and relationships is the Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT). Walther's (1992) SIPT investigated how technology affects the development of relationships. Despite the absence of nonverbal cues in online communication, Walther suggested that relationships can still form, albeit at a slower pace (Carr, 2021; Olaniran et al., 2011; Walther, 1992). Interestingly, individuals adapt their communication styles to fit the different communication platforms available. The fundamental mechanism in SIPT is time: Users can adjust their verbal communication over a period in online settings to compensate for the lack of nonverbal cues and create a sense of electronic propinquity. Time in this context is not merely interpreted as

minutes or days passing, but rather as the sequential exchange of interactive messages (Carr, 2021).

Interpersonal relationships are crucial in our lives, as they provide valuable support and assistance in our daily interactions. Through interpersonal communication, we nurture close connections with friends, family, and coworkers, allowing us to understand and be understood by others. This deepens and broadens our relationships, as we become more integrated into each other's lives. Interpersonal ties offer us social support, guidance, and a sense of belonging (Valo & Mikkola, 2019). Interpersonal communication, whether face-to-face or online, brings several advantages, including five key goals: learning, relating, influencing, playing, and helping (DeVito, 2016). The focus of this study is on interpersonal communication through CMC in this context is Lark among women employees within a single work department.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted using qualitative methods with interpretive paradigm, qualitative research can help to understand the viewpoints and experiences of participants or research subjects, which can provide useful insights into the phenomena or event subject of study (Creswell, 2013; Smith et al., 2009). McQueen (2002) stated that the interpretive perspective sees the world through "a set of individual eyes" and selects people who "have their own interpretation of reality" to "embrace the world view." The interpretive paradigm emphasizes the importance of the researcher obtaining 'insightful' and 'depth' information. (Thanh & Thanh, 2015).

Participant observation, interviews, and analysis of documents or literature are the data-gathering methods employed in this study, which are expected to be valuable and support the validity of this research (Flick, 2014; Hadi et al., 2021). As explained by Neuman, some factors to consider when picking informants include familiarity with the culture and involvement in, witnessing, and directly experiencing the phenomena presented in the research. Furthermore, they get involved in the field or research environment to ensure they can later provide answers and insights into the topic being studied (Neuman, 2007).

Therefore, researchers recruited exclusively female informants for this study, three of whom are married and two who are single. This is because women endure higher levels of stress during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic; according to UN Woman research, 57% of Indonesian women feel heightened stress compared to 48% of men.

Table 1: Informants Information (Processed by Author, 2023)

Code Name and Age (Anonymous)	Marital Status in 2021-2022	Position in TNS at 2022-2022
KR/27	Single-Married	Quality Analyst
NS/32	Married	Content Analyst- Quality Analyst
MD/30	Single	Quality Analyst- Team Leader
MS/27	Single- Married	Quality Analyst - Team Leader
HR/29	Single	Content Analyst- Quality Analyst

This study employed a semi-structured interview method, in which interviews were done with open questions but with some constraints specified by the researcher in terms of themes and conversation flow. Furthermore, the outcomes of this study were analyzed utilizing the Miles and Huberman model data processing procedures described by Sugiyono, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and data verification (Sugiyono, 2013).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

WFH and TNS Employees Work Stress During PPKM Amidst Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about significant changes in various aspects of human life, both personally and professionally, particularly in terms of social interaction and communication. Everyday activities such as exchanging handshakes as a means of introduction, conducting business meetings or in-person teaching, enjoying casual gatherings at cafes, going to malls, and exploring the outdoors have become uncommon, severely limited, or strongly discouraged during this period. The transition from working from the office (WFO) to working from home (WFH) is one of the key transformations experienced by employees, and it has had a profound impact on the workplace. TNS is one of the departments that has required employees to have a full-time WFH. While working from home offers certain conveniences during a pandemic, it is also believed to contribute to an increase in work-related stress. Informant KR27, argued that:

.....TNS served as my initial employer in Indonesia, the first place I work in Indonesia, I pursued a college education abroad and resumed my employment there. Upon returning to Indonesia, I faced the challenge start work during the pandemic and PPKM. I have to adapt swiftly under these circumstances, and it surely added stress to the situation. Not only did I have to adjust to my work responsibilities and a new environment, but I also had to contend with the constraints of PPKM, which limited my freedom of movement (Informant KR27).

The study by Buffer & Angellist claimed that employees at WFH during the Covid-19 period struggled to communicate with coworkers (Buffer & Angellist, 2020). According to Beehr and Newman, job stress is a condition that arises from individuals' interactions with their work and involves making adjustments that deviate from their usual roles (T. K. Lee et al., 2022). Luthans (2008) defines stress as the way individuals respond to overwhelming physical and psychological demands brought about by specific circumstances. This adaptive response is influenced by individual differences and psychological processes related to adjustment.

In an organizational context, stress describes an individual's adaptive reaction to environmental factors that disrupt their physical, psychological, or behavioral well-being. Ivancevich and Matteson also suggest that stress can be understood as the

outcome of an individual's interaction with their environment (Luthans, 2011). As the person that started to work in a new company with a new culture, vision, and mission especially started it during the pandemic, the stress felt by the informant can be seen as their response to adjust to a new environment.

According to the findings of the interviews, the informants claimed that WFH, particularly during the implementation of PPKM, influenced their working style and level of work stress. Informant NS32, added that:

.....when WFH, my father was ill, it diverted my attention from my work because, aside from work, of course, I also had to take care of him, not to mention take care of my husband, and household chores. In addition, I was the first and only person working on my project for Indonesia when I initially started at TNS, thus I had complete responsibility in all the decision, without coworker to talk from the same country, my stress at the time was increased by feeling alone and the lack of friends with whom to chat (Informant NS32).

In the statement of the informant above, we can see that stress during WFH occurs due to the division of focus between homework and office work. When working in an office, the focus of employees is just getting the job done, but at home, external conditions such as the problems above are hard to avoid. This finding similar with UN analysis based on data from UN Women, UNICEF, WFP, and UNDP claims that COVID-19 has a disproportionately negative impact on women's mental and emotional health, with 57% of women experiencing higher levels of stress. Increased home and caregiver responsibilities, fear of losing one's job and money, and the effect of movement restrictions on gender-based violence may all be contributory factors (UN Women, 2020). The informants experienced the same event.

Data shows a significant proportion (67%) of individuals experience sleep deprivation while working from home, particularly during the lockdown period. This is mainly due to the absence of household assistants to help with domestic tasks, resulting in individuals having to manage both household responsibilities and their work (Joy, 2020). Married workers face additional challenges in establishing boundaries between their household duties, such as caring for children and family, while simultaneously fulfilling their work obligations. This situation becomes even more challenging as they find themselves confined within the conditions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic for an unspecified duration at that time (Bahney, 2020).

One of the study's findings indicates that during the Covid-19 time, it became stressful for employees for them to work on sensitive subject during WFH. The possibility exists that TNS team could be exposed to or requested to examine potentially hazardous information as the division responsible for platform security. This was not a problem for workers prior to Covid-19 because TNS personnel had access to welfare services,

including training, research-based resources, and professional counseling (Baillencourt, 2023).

.....TNS is the department that ensures the security of the platform and content shared, there were times when I worked on a lot of sensitive content, especially during the Covid period, and this really affected my mood and gave me stress. Especially because there are restrictions on movement by the government (Informant MD30).

Basically, both working from home and working centrally from the office, employees must still work according to the company's competency standards. This means that employees will still experience demands and feel the same work pressure as when working in an office (Asbari et al., 2020). Working from home does not mean reducing work tasks and employee responsibilities to the company, employees must still be able to complete work targets in a timely manner, achieve KPIs set by the company, and still be exposed to sensitive content. Employees who are unable to achieve work targets can experience stress. When restrictions on community activities are imposed by the government and employees must work from home, the employee's options for reducing work stress are limited.

Furthermore, an unstable internet connection also contributed to the stress of TNS employees at this time. According to a survey published by Ookla in the Speedtest Global Index for February 2023, Indonesia has slower internet speeds than other Southeast Asian nations. At 20.17 Mbps, Indonesia presently ranks 103rd out of 137 nations in the world for average mobile internet speed (Humas UM Sumbar, 2023).

.....living in a relatively remote area of Indonesia with an often-poor internet connection and regular power outages are two things that can make WFH more stressed. Not to mention the unfriendly condition of the house. Naturally, if we work in an office, this issue won't be a concern, but when we work from home, things are different (Informant MS27).

It was discovered that the erratic nature of this internet connection contributed to the work stress experienced by TNS personnel throughout the WFH period, particularly by those who reside in Indonesia's rural districts. Additionally, the issue of power outages is a challenge for employees because, for those who use Wi-Fi at home, power outages also result in the loss of internet access.

The Role of Interpersonal Communication in Managing TNS Employee Work-Stress

In an early textbook on interpersonal communication, Giffin and Patton (1971) provided a definition of communication as "a process involving the sending and receiving of messages". During that period, group communication was understood as communication between more than two individuals, while interpersonal communication was typically considered as conversation between two people.

However, relying solely on numerical criteria to define interpersonal communication presents a dilemma, as there are instances of interpersonal communication within families, among friends, and in the workplace that go beyond mere dyadic interactions (Carr, 2021). During the Covid-19 outbreak, the Indonesian government implemented a community movement control mechanism known as PPKM. The goal was to stop the virus's spread. However, the limitations imposed by PPKM limit the options available to people for stress management. This encompasses stress caused by the pandemic itself, as well as work-related stress, which is experienced by TNS employees.

Human interaction with others is a necessary part of life. Since human connection plays such a crucial part in their life, humans rely on interpersonal interaction to satisfy both their material and spiritual needs (DeVito, 2016; Yunus, 2023). According to Kathleen A. Vertino's research in *"Effective Interpersonal Communication: A Practical Guide to Improving Your Life,"* nurses have the opportunity to employ effective interpersonal communication strategies in various contexts, including personal and professional settings. By doing so, they can effectively mitigate stress, enhance health, and elevate their overall quality of life (Vertino, 2014). Face-to-face or online intrapersonal communication serves numerous goals. The five objectives are: to learn, to relate, to influence, to play, and to help (DeVito, 2016). From the interview, this objective is aligned with the experience of informants:

.....in spite of the strain that comes with (WFH), I think that talking to coworkers about personal struggles and experiences—whether they are work-related or from personal life—can help lighten the load we are carrying throughout the pandemic. By communicating what we have gone through, we can collectively ease our burdens and find support in one another (Informant MD30).

.....I've already mentioned that when I first started at this company, I was the only one in charge of projects for Indonesia. After two months of work, two additional team members were added to this project. At the time, I was relieved because I finally had companions with whom I could discuss work, and I no longer felt alone and lonely (Informant NS32).

The informants stated that their goal of conducting interpersonal communication with co-workers had various reasons. However, basically emphasizes the purpose of connecting, playing, and helping. Interpersonal Communication helps us in relating. This relationship will help relieve loneliness and depression, allow us to share and increase happiness and make us a more positive person. This informant's statement is in line with previous research which stated that communication has an important role in supporting mental and psychological health during a pandemic (King et al., 2023; Reddy & Gupta, 2020). Communication with others not only affects the sense of identity

but also directly influences physical and emotional well-being. Consistently, research shows that communicating with others promotes health, whereas social isolation is linked to stress, disease, and early death (Wood, 2008).

According to the findings of the interviews, the informants claimed that they discussed their difficulties with coworkers. Share stories about enjoyable things, weekend activities, images, amusing memes, or simply spend time confiding in one another with friends, best friends, or coworkers. This objective may sound basic, but it is necessary because it can offer us time to balance our activities and take a mental break from all the serious things going on around us.

.....for me, sharing stories and venting with coworkers helps me feel rejuvenated during WFH. Even while they can't offer solutions to the issues I'm experiencing, at least they will listen and provide entertainment. Chatting with pals was quite useful at the time because we couldn't go out, right, no hangout, no cinema, so we just chatted and shared stories (Informant KR27).

The informants also mentioned that communicating with coworkers about work stress during WFH was better than talking about it with their husband or family, the reason because they sense a deeper understanding. According to NS32 and MS27 while their spouses or family members may offer support when they share about their work stress, the understanding of the specific obstacles the informants face may be restricted due to their lack of involvement in the same work context. Contrarily, chatting and discussing with coworkers, who are working on the same project and encountering similar difficulties, leads to a deeper understanding. As a result, there are times when they don't need to elaborate on a problem because without any explanation of the issue, coworker quickly understands the situation. Through interpersonal communication people become aware of each other, build connections to other people, construct and maintain relations with them, and develop a sense of belonging to the same social system (Carr, 2021).

The Role of Lark as a Medium of Interpersonal Communication and Implementation of Computer-Mediated Communication

Previous studies on Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) revealed that due to the lack of nonverbal indicators, CMC had problems in establishing interpersonal communication. The lack of features such as tone, bodily movement, gestures, and facial expressions in CMC limits the depth of message delivery. However, research also found that given time and in line with technological developments, interpersonal communication in CMC can be established. Zhenyang Luo and Justin Walden in *Fundamental Changes Brought by Computer-Mediated Communication* examine the impact of technology on the delivery of useful contextual cues in communications, whether and how closeness can be sensed through communication technologies, and how communication interactions between peers evolve over time.

During the pandemic, numerous changes occurred, and one notable shift was the increased reliance on performing tasks "online." Work, education, and caregiving responsibilities all underwent a transformation, transitioning to a new connected way of functioning. The primary response to continue working from home and maintaining social connections was the widespread adoption of digital communication tools. However, the extent to which communication technologies played a protective role is still a matter of debate. While some previous research suggests that technology could help alleviate feelings of loneliness, particularly during lockdowns (Shah et al., 2020), there is also a considerable body of literature pointing to the potentially destructive effects of technology-mediated communication on interpersonal relationships during COVID-19 (Choi & Choung, 2021).

Lark is a comprehensive toolkit designed for modern teams to facilitate communication and collaboration. It offers a wide range of features, including audio and video conferencing, live chat, hand raising, project management tools like approval flow and workflow automation, instant messaging, and file sharing. Additionally, Lark provides unique capabilities like creating wiki pages and screen recordings.

During the outbreak of Covid-19 and the transition to remote work (WFH), the TNS department relied heavily on Lark for all communication and work-related activities. From on-boarding training to project collaboration and day-to-day tasks, the department utilized Lark's messenger, document sharing, meeting capabilities, minutes recording, chat rooms, calendar, and email services to effectively manage their work processes. The TNS department belongs to a tech start-up company, where the reliance on technology for communication tools is inevitable. The majority of TNS employees consists of Millennials or Gen-Z individuals who are well-versed with familiar knowledge in using technology.

As stated above, research mentioned how CMC can form communication especially during lockdown periods. All the Informants of this research stated that CMC in the form of Lark give them the ability to feel connection with people. Informants stated that:

.....when WFH, I confided in or shared my problem to team mate on Lark application. Since all work communication is on Lark, talks or chats on Lark are like killing two birds with one stone, you can work and talk with friend at the same time (Informant NS32).

.....if I felt overwhelmed, stressed at work, or had problems at home during WFH, I would have a chat with one of my friends on Lark, if they are not busy we usually do phone call, but if we're busy we will just chat, chatting on Lark is fun because of the emojis it's very expressive, so even if it's just chatting we can use emojis or stickers to show more emotion (Informant KR27).


















.....when I started to feel lonely or bored because of WFH, me and my teammate who are also my best friends, will share and talk either by chats or voice call on Lark, so it won't be too lonely, this is convenient because we can still do all the work at the same time (Informant HR29).

In online communication, when individuals share personal information or emotions with their conversation partner, the partner tends to perceive the discloser as more likable and intimate than in face-to-face (FtF) interactions (Pang et al., 2018). People learn from others' self-disclosures, discovering commonalities and developing stronger affection. Cues in Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT) can be adapted through languages and emoticons. Other studies emphasize that in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), social norms of politeness must be explicitly expressed through linguistic means, conveying as much or even more affection than non-verbal vocal and physical cues in parallel face-to-face interactions (Carr, 2021). This includes using explicit statements of positive affection, offering encouragement, and praising the conversation partner's abilities or qualities (Pang et al., 2018; Walther et al., 2005)

According to informants (KR27 and MD30) when narrating their difficulties or offering support to friends experiencing stress and fatigue, they frequently express affection and encouragement through words, whether during text chats or voice calls. For instance, phrases like “pretty girl can do it”, or “don't worry, everything will be fine, stay strong mom “, and “patient beb, sis, this shall pass” are commonly used. Adding expressions of affection to their conversations fosters a sense of closeness, uplifts each other, and helps alleviate the stress they feel.

According to informants' statement various and expressive emoji in Lark give joy and fun in conversation, the emojis can show the feeling and creating meaning. Informants will choose specific emoji to show their exact feeling while on chat. When they feel overwhelmed or exhausted by work and house chorus, they will show their feeling by specific emoji. According to informants there are some emojis they usually use to express their feelings.

Table 2: Emoticons Table (Processed by Author, 2023)

Informant Feeling	Chosen Lark Emoji
Exhausted, Tired, Overwhelmed.	   
Support, Thankful, Entertain.	    
Happy, Shy, Admire.	    
Encourage.	  

Celebrate.



Emoticons have unquestionably gained widespread popularity among individuals who grew up in the digital age, and their frequent usage is a means of adapting to communication platforms with limited nonverbal cues (Candrasari, 2020). The incorporation of emoticons and emojis as substitutes for conventional non-verbal communication has brought about positive changes in digital interactions (Gesselman et al., 2019). Emojis have emerged as a significant element of social behavior in today's digital realm and can be strategically employed as affective signals, especially in the context of human courtship (Venter, 2019).

Lark has the feature of instant messenger, phone or voice calls and video conferencing or video calls. Previous studies have discovered that video conferencing or video calls were adopted as an alternative to face-to-face interactions during the Covid-19 pandemic, addressing the limitations posed by the situation (Fudian & Oktavianti, 2021). To fulfill the need for interaction with peers during this time, video calls became one of the most preferred communication formats, with approximately 70% of participants using them more frequently during lockdown than before (Meier et al., 2021). However, this current study conducted within the TNS department found that informants were more at ease and engaged in communication with coworkers through Lark's instant messenger and phone calls, rather than relying on video conferencing or video calls. This observation aligns with other research results, indicating that individuals adapted to the restrictions and diversified their communication methods, with a notable preference for instant messengers and video calls.

Based on the informants' perspectives, communication through Lark's instant messengers or phone calls is considered easier and more efficient, akin to sharing stories while working with coworkers to alleviate feelings of loneliness. The use of video calls was not deemed essential because the main priority during that time was work, and the informants did not place significant emphasis on gestures or facial expressions while sharing stories. Additionally, one informant mentioned that the unstable internet connection posed a challenge, making video calls disruptive to work productivity, especially since their work heavily relied on stable internet connections.

Supporting this finding, unstable internet connection has been a challenge for effective CMC. In some regions, video conferencing may not be a feasible choice due to limited access to reliable internet and high bandwidth connections. Despite being considered a solution, internet access on affordable mobile devices is still in its early stages of development. Consequently, the absence of accessible internet, sufficient bandwidth, and up-to-date technology significantly hinders the successful adoption and implementation of online media (Kelsey & Amant, 2010).

According to the informants' statements, interpersonal communication is possible in Lark, and from their statement, it's all because of the tools and features that are provided in the application. Lark has many features that can be used to

communicate, from instant messaging to phone calls, and video conferencing. According to a previous study, video conferencing enables parties to see each other's faces through communication devices and establish a social presence, which is like to meeting in person directly, and helps them to pick up on non-verbal cues, sensory cues, and socio-emotional indicators. The finding also shows that Lark an application basically a formal working tool can establish interpersonal communication between coworkers.

Limitation, the study's focus on TNS employees during the Covid-19 pandemic may limit the generalizability of findings to other industries or non-pandemic scenarios. The Covid-19 pandemic and the associated WFH period may represent a unique and exceptional context. Consequently, the findings might not be applicable in non-pandemic or post-pandemic situations. Important to note that most employees in TNS consist of Millennials or Gen-Z individuals who possess a high level of familiarity and proficiency with technology, they are equally proficient in using the Lark application and similar technologies, neglecting potential differences in technology competency that might influence their stress management. Based on this limitation, the researcher proposes that upcoming studies should center on examining how baby boomer generation employees perceive the adoption of communication technologies like Lark. This research can delve into their attitudes and experiences, while also identifying potential factors that may hinder or facilitate their use of the platform. Future research can also perform comparative research involving multiple organizations to assess the effectiveness of Lark and other communication platforms in building interpersonal communication to manage work stress during different circumstances, such as normal working conditions, crises, or remote work situations while also considering employee demographics such as age, job role, and technological proficiency.

CONCLUSION

Working from home (WFH) during the community activity restrictions period (PPKM), such as those imposed by Indonesia's government, leaves employees with little choice in dealing with work stress. Lark is a collaborative tool, where chat, email, video conferencing, calendar, and documents can all be found in one spot. During work from home in the covid-19 pandemic all communication in TNS took place in Lark. This study's importance is to see how Lark, that basically a formal working media tool can form an interpersonal communication between woman employees that help them to manage work stress during WFH and PPKM period amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to the findings of this study, implementing WFH during the Covid-19 period resulted in heightened work stress among female employees in TNS Department. The stress was attributed to factors such as exposure to sensitive content, challenges in setting boundaries between household chores and office work, unreliable internet connection, feelings of isolation, and a lack of communication and interaction. However, it was observed that sharing work-related burdens with coworkers proved to be effective in reducing work stress. Interestingly, confiding in a coworker was considered

more beneficial than sharing with a spouse or family, likely due to the shared understanding of similar challenges and issues in the work environment.

This study also discovered that Computer-mediated-communication plays a crucial role in fostering interpersonal communication and helps employees maintain a sense of connection, even while working from home. Particularly, the Lark application, which serves as a working media tool, facilitates interpersonal communication among female employees, aiding them in managing work stress during the WFH and PPKM period amid the Covid-19 pandemic. The application's instant messenger, phone call features, and expressive emoji make it convenient for employees to share their concerns and stress related to WFH and the pandemic, as compared to using video conferences or video calls. Lark allows employees to interact and communicate with colleagues efficiently while remaining focused on their tasks, considering its primary function as a professional working media tool.

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