# 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.

## 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

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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).

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Therefore, based on this background, this study aims to investigate how the Lark application, a tool for workplace communication, facilitates interpersonal communication among female employees at TNS to manage work stress during the WFH and PPKM periods amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Specifically focusing on female employees within select departments of TNS Indonesia, the research spans from 2021 to 2022, coinciding with the full implementation of WFH. This study innovatively explores the sources of stress for TNS employees during the pandemic, contrasting with previous studies that predominantly examine interpersonal communication's impact on teacher and employee motivation, often using platforms such as Zoom, WhatsApp, or Twitter.

In conclusion, as organizations like TNS adapt to the challenges posed by Covid-19 and the widespread adoption of remote work, understanding how communication tools like Lark contribute to stress management becomes crucial. This research endeavors to uncover how Lark functions as a medium for interpersonal communication among TNS employees, influencing both their day-to-day work dynamics and the academic discourse surrounding remote work in crisis scenarios. By scrutinizing its implications for stress management and employee well-being, this study aims to offer valuable insights that can shape future organizational strategies and enrich discussions on effective remote work practices during global health crises.

## 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

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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)*
Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT) explores how interpersonal communication dynamics manifest across different settings, whether professional or personal, emphasizing the crucial role of communication in building and sustaining relationships (Knapp & Daly, 2011). These interactions occur within various relational contexts, from familial bonds between parents and children to professional engagements among coworkers and employers, and educational connections between teachers and students. The theory acknowledges that interpersonal communication can take place in dyadic forms involving two individuals or extend to smaller groups like families (Berger & Roloff, 2019; DeVito, 2016).

In the realm of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), which includes digital platforms and online environments, theories suggest that the absence of nonverbal cues might hinder the development of interpersonal relationships (DeVito, 2016). This limitation poses challenges in conveying one's personality traits, emotions, and sentiments effectively through online interactions. Despite these challenges, Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT), pioneered by Walther (1992), posits that relationships can still form and develop through CMC, albeit at a slower pace compared to face-to-face interactions (Carr, 2021; Olaniran et al., 2011; Walther, 1992).

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Walther's SIPT underscores the adaptive nature of communication styles in online environments, where users adjust their verbal interactions over time to compensate for the lack of nonverbal cues, thereby fostering a sense of electronic propinquity (Carr, 2021). This temporal aspect in SIPT is not merely chronological but rather signifies the sequential exchange of interactive messages, shaping the development of virtual relationships (Carr, 2021).

Interpersonal relationships formed through communication, whether face-to-face or mediated by technology, play a vital role in our lives by providing support, understanding, and a sense of belonging (Valo & Mikkola, 2019). These relationships enhance our social networks and contribute to personal well-being by fulfilling emotional needs and fostering mutual understanding (DeVito, 2016). Moreover, interpersonal communication serves multiple functions such as learning, relating, influencing, playing, and helping, illustrating its diverse roles in human interactions (DeVito, 2016).

This study delves into the nuanced realm of interpersonal communication through Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) among female employees within a specific department, aiming to uncover the intricate ways in which digital platforms shape relationship dynamics in professional environments. By focusing on CMC, which encompasses various digital tools and platforms, the research seeks to understand how these technologies facilitate or hinder interpersonal interactions among women in the workplace. This investigation is particularly relevant as it addresses contemporary challenges and opportunities posed by digital communication tools that have power to change the behaviour (Putri & Oktaviani, 2022), offering insights into how virtual interactions impact teamwork, collaboration, and social dynamics within organizational contexts. By examining these dynamics within a single department, the study aims to provide a detailed exploration of how gender influences communication practices and relationship-building strategies in the digital age. This approach not only contributes to the literature on interpersonal communication and technology but also offers practical implications for enhancing workplace communication strategies and fostering inclusive and supportive work environments for female employees.

## 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

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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, for this study, researchers deliberately chose to recruit female participants exclusively, comprising a diverse group of individuals: three married and two single. This decision was grounded in the recognition that women have been disproportionately affected by higher stress levels during the Covid-19 pandemic. Research by UN Women has underscored this disparity, revealing that 57% of Indonesian women reported experiencing heightened stress during this period, compared to 48% of men. By focusing on female informants, this study aimed to explore how gender influences the experience and perception of stress amidst the pandemic's challenges. This approach not only seeks to shed light on the unique pressures faced by women but also to contribute to a deeper understanding of gender-specific responses to crises, thereby enriching the broader discourse on mental health and gender dynamics in times of adversity.

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 utilized a rigorous semi-structured interview approach, designed to capture rich and detailed insights from participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with open-ended questions, allowing for flexibility in responses while maintaining focus on predefined themes and conversation trajectories set by the researcher. This methodological choice aimed to ensure a comprehensive exploration of participants' perspectives on the dynamics of interpersonal communication through Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) within the workplace.

To analyze the gathered data, this study employed the well-established Miles and Huberman model, as outlined in Sugiyono's methodology framework (Sugiyono, 2013). This model involves three iterative stages: data reduction, where raw data is systematically condensed into manageable units; data display, where patterns and relationships within the data are visually represented to facilitate interpretation; and data verification, where the accuracy and reliability of findings are rigorously scrutinized. By adhering to this structured analytical process, the study aimed to uncover nuanced insights into how digital platforms influence communication dynamics among female employees, offering a robust foundation for understanding the complexities of CMC in professional settings.

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Moreover, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for a deep exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and strategies in utilizing digital communication tools. By combining methodological rigor with participant-centered inquiry, the study sought to provide a holistic understanding of the interpersonal challenges and opportunities presented by CMC, thereby contributing valuable insights to both academic literature and practical workplace communication strategies.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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

The Covid-19 pandemic has precipitated sweeping changes across various facets of daily life, profoundly altering social interactions and communication norms on both personal and professional fronts. Previously commonplace activities like handshakes as a customary greeting, in-person business meetings, classroom teaching, casual meet-ups at cafes, mall outings, and outdoor explorations have either dwindled to a rarity or been strongly discouraged during these unprecedented times. One of the most notable shifts has been the widespread transition from traditional office settings to remote work environments, commonly known as Working From Home (WFH), which has reshaped the dynamics of the workplace.

Within the context of this study, the TNS department mandated full-time WFH arrangements for its employees, reflecting a broader trend towards remote work adoption across industries. While remote work offers certain conveniences, such as flexibility and reduced commute times, it has also been associated with heightened levels of work-related stress. Informants within the study, such as KR27, underscored these challenges, highlighting concerns over blurred boundaries between work and personal life, increased isolation, and the pressure to maintain productivity amidst global uncertainties.

The shift to remote work has not only altered the physical workspace but has also reshaped interpersonal communication dynamics within professional settings. Digital communication tools and platforms have become essential lifelines for maintaining connectivity and collaboration among colleagues. However, the reliance on these virtual channels has introduced new challenges, including difficulties in conveying nonverbal cues, fostering team cohesion, and navigating complex social interactions without face-to-face contact.

As organizations and individuals adapt to these changes, understanding the nuanced impacts of remote work on communication practices and employee well-being becomes increasingly crucial. This study aims to explore how female employees within the TNS department navigate these challenges, offering insights into the evolving nature of interpersonal communication in the digital age and its implications for workplace dynamics and organizational culture. By examining these dynamics amidst the backdrop of the pandemic, the research aims to contribute valuable perspectives to ongoing discussions on remote work, stress management, and effective communication strategies in contemporary workplaces.

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......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 is commonly defined as an individual's adaptive response to environmental pressures that disrupt their physical, psychological, or behavioral well-being (Ivancevich & Matteson, as cited in Luthans, 2011). It reflects the dynamic interaction between individuals and their work environment, where external factors such as workload, organizational culture, and interpersonal dynamics play significant roles in shaping employees' experiences.

For instance, starting a new job during the pandemic introduces unique challenges for individuals adapting to unfamiliar organizational cultures, visions, and missions. The stress experienced by new employees can be viewed as a natural response to navigating these new environments amidst global uncertainties. As they strive to integrate into their roles and establish professional identities within the organization, they may encounter heightened pressures to perform, build relationships remotely, and align with organizational expectations under unprecedented circumstances.

Understanding these stressors is crucial for organizations seeking to support their employees effectively, particularly during periods of rapid change and uncertainty. By acknowledging the multifaceted nature of stress in organizational settings, from individual adaptation to broader systemic challenges, organizations can implement targeted interventions and supportive measures to foster resilience, enhance well-being, and promote sustainable performance among their workforce. This holistic approach not only benefits individual employees but also contributes to a healthier organizational culture and improved overall productivity in dynamic and evolving work environments.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:

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……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 reveals a substantial impact of remote work on sleep patterns, with a notable 67% of individuals reporting sleep deprivation, particularly during periods of lockdown. This phenomenon is largely attributed to the absence of household assistance, compelling individuals to juggle domestic responsibilities alongside their professional duties (Joy, 2020). For married workers, managing these dual roles becomes even more demanding as they navigate the complexities of setting clear boundaries between family obligations, such as childcare and household management, and their work responsibilities. This challenge is exacerbated by the prolonged uncertainty and confinement imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic (Bahney, 2020).

The transition to remote work has blurred traditional lines between professional and personal life, creating a need for individuals to adapt quickly to new routines and coping strategies. Many find themselves grappling with increased stress levels stemming from the pressures of maintaining productivity in home environments that were not initially designed for continuous work. As individuals strive to balance competing demands, such as attending virtual meetings while attending to household chores or childcare, they often experience heightened mental and emotional strain.

Moreover, the absence of physical separation between workspace and living space can lead to difficulties in disengaging from work, contributing to prolonged work hours and disrupted sleep patterns. This phenomenon underscores the importance of implementing effective strategies to support remote workers' well-being, including promoting work-life balance, encouraging regular breaks, and providing resources for managing stress and sleep hygiene. By addressing these challenges proactively, organizations can mitigate the adverse effects of remote work on sleep quality and

overall employee health, fostering a more sustainable and supportive work environment amidst ongoing global uncertainties.

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 (Bailliencourt, 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).

During the research, it became evident that the unreliable internet connectivity significantly exacerbated work-related stress among TNS personnel during the extended period of Working From Home (WFH), especially for those residing in rural districts of

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Indonesia. This connectivity issue posed a persistent challenge, impacting the ability of employees to maintain consistent communication, attend virtual meetings, and meet deadlines effectively. Furthermore, the frequent occurrence of power outages further compounded these challenges, particularly for employees reliant on home Wi-Fi setups. Power failures not only disrupted their work tasks but also led to temporary loss of internet access, exacerbating feelings of frustration and hindering productivity.

For employees navigating these technological challenges, the WFH experience often involved navigating a precarious balance between professional responsibilities and the unpredictable realities of their home environments. The need to adapt to these conditions highlighted the resilience and resourcefulness of individuals in managing diverse and sometimes adverse working conditions. Moreover, these challenges underscored the importance of organizational support in terms of providing robust IT infrastructure, offering flexible work arrangements, and implementing contingency plans to mitigate the impact of technical disruptions on employee performance and well-being.

Addressing these connectivity and power-related issues is essential not only for improving individual work experiences but also for optimizing organizational efficiency in remote work setups. By investing in reliable technology solutions, providing training on remote work best practices, and fostering a supportive work culture that prioritizes employee well-being, organizations can enhance resilience and productivity in the face of unforeseen challenges, ensuring sustainable success in remote work environments.

*The Role of Interpersonal Communication in Managing TNS Employee Work-Stress*
In an early exploration of interpersonal communication by Giffin and Patton (1971), communication was defined as "a process involving the sending and receiving of messages." During this period, group communication typically referred to interactions among more than two individuals, while interpersonal communication was often narrowly construed as dialogue between two people. However, as Carr (2021) notes, defining interpersonal communication solely based on numerical criteria overlooks the nuanced dynamics that can occur within familial, friendship, and professional contexts, where interactions often transcend simple dyadic exchanges.

Amidst the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Indonesian government implemented the Community Activity Restrictions Enforcement (PPKM) as a measure to curb the virus's spread. These restrictions significantly limited individuals' avenues for stress management, exacerbating both the stress stemming from the pandemic itself and work-related stress experienced by TNS employees. The PPKM measures constrained social interactions, restricted mobility, and reshaped daily routines, thereby impacting the ways in which individuals cope with and adapt to stressors in their personal and professional lives.

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:*

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*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).

Based on insights gleaned from interviews, participants emphasized the importance of engaging in informal conversations with coworkers as a means of coping with challenges. These interactions often involved sharing anecdotes about enjoyable experiences, discussing weekend activities, exchanging humorous memes, or simply confiding in one another as friends or colleagues. Such casual exchanges were described as essential not only for fostering camaraderie and team spirit but also for providing much-needed mental breaks amidst the pressures of work and the broader uncertainties brought about by the ongoing pandemic.

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The act of discussing lighter topics and sharing personal anecdotes was perceived as a vital strategy for maintaining balance and emotional well-being in the face of pervasive stressors. These informal interactions not only helped alleviate tension but also contributed to a sense of connectedness and solidarity within the workplace community. By creating opportunities for informal bonding, individuals were able to navigate the challenges of remote work and social distancing more effectively, reinforcing the importance of social support networks in sustaining morale and resilience during turbulent times.

Furthermore, the informal nature of these interactions allowed participants to unwind and recharge, enhancing their overall ability to cope with the demands of their professional roles amidst unprecedented disruptions. This aspect underscores the role of interpersonal communication not only in facilitating task-oriented collaboration but also in fostering a supportive organizational culture that prioritizes holistic well-being and mutual support among colleagues.

> …….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 research on Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) has highlighted significant challenges stemming from the absence of nonverbal cues, which traditionally play a crucial role in interpersonal communication dynamics. The limitations of CMC, such as the inability to convey tone, bodily movements, gestures, and facial expressions, have been cited as factors that restrict the richness and depth of message delivery (Jones

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& Pitt, 2019; Kock, 2005). These deficiencies initially posed barriers to effective communication and relationship building in virtual environments.

However, studies also indicate that over time, advancements in technology and adaptation strategies have facilitated the establishment of meaningful interpersonal communication through CMC channels (Luo & Walden, 2020). For instance, research by Zhenyang Luo and Justin Walden explores how technological advancements have introduced new methods for conveying contextual cues and fostering a sense of closeness in virtual interactions (Luo & Walden, 2020). These developments have reshaped communication dynamics, enabling individuals to adapt their communication styles and utilize digital tools more effectively to build and sustain relationships over extended periods.

The evolving landscape of CMC has not only expanded the possibilities for virtual interaction but has also influenced the nature of interpersonal relationships in contemporary society. As individuals increasingly rely on digital platforms for communication, understanding these technological shifts becomes crucial for navigating the complexities of modern interpersonal dynamics. By examining the intersection of technology and communication, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how digital tools shape interpersonal interactions and influence social behaviors in today's interconnected world.

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 stands out as a robust and versatile toolkit tailored to meet the diverse communication and collaboration needs of modern teams. It integrates an extensive array of features aimed at enhancing productivity and fostering seamless interaction among team members. Key functionalities include high-quality audio and video conferencing capabilities, facilitating virtual meetings and discussions with clarity and efficiency. The platform also supports real-time live chat, enabling instant communication and quick exchanges of ideas or updates.

In addition to facilitating direct communication, Lark offers advanced project management tools such as approval flows and workflow automation, streamlining task delegation and project tracking processes. These features empower teams to coordinate tasks effectively and maintain project momentum even in distributed work environments. Instant messaging functionality further enhances collaboration by

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providing a platform for casual conversations, brainstorming sessions, and quick consultations, promoting agile decision-making and responsiveness.

Moreover, Lark distinguishes itself with innovative features like wiki page creation and screen recording capabilities. Wiki pages serve as centralized repositories for information, allowing teams to document processes, share knowledge, and maintain organizational insights effortlessly. Meanwhile, screen recording functionality enables users to capture and share tutorials, presentations, or demonstrations seamlessly, enhancing clarity and facilitating effective remote training or knowledge sharing.

By combining these diverse functionalities within a user-friendly interface, Lark not only supports day-to-day communication but also empowers teams to innovate, collaborate efficiently, and adapt to evolving work dynamics. As organizations increasingly embrace remote and hybrid work models, platforms like Lark play a pivotal role in enabling seamless communication, enhancing productivity, and fostering a cohesive team environment regardless of physical location.

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

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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. | 🥳 🥳 🎉 |

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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 LarkThis 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

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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.

## BIODATA

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