TECHNOLOGY USE ANALYSIS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS BY USING THE THEORY OF TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL

Maria Francisca Lies Ambarwati

Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Komunikasi dan Sekretari Tarakanita, Kompleks Billy & Moon, Pondok Kelapa, Jakarta

maria.ambarwati@gmail.com

Abstract

Working behaviour has changed because of the unprecedented condition of the Covid-19 pandemic. People manage to find new ways of doing their work from their houses with the help of technology. Using the concept of Theory of Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the purpose of this study was to reveal the perception of secretaries, administrative assistants, and administrative staffs in carrying out their administrative work during the Covid-19 pandemic. By conducting in depth interview on 15 secretaries, administrative assistants, and administrative staffs, this qualitative case study method was used to obtain information about the constraints and consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on the interviewees. The findings of this study revealed that the 15 secretaries, administrative assistants, and administration staffs could perceive the ease of use of and the usefulness of technology in supporting their work during the Covid-19 pandemic. The result showed that technology supported the interviewees in doing their administrative work and eliminated the delay in time as they could execute and finish the work in time and maintain their good performance in working. It is recommended that organizations should provide their secretaries with sufficient trainings in modern technology and equipment usage to upgrade and enhance their skills and competencies in technological advancement. The limitations of this study laid in the age and gender of the interviewees.

Keywords: Covid-19 Pandemic, Perception, Theory of Technology Acceptance Model, Administrative Work.

Abstrak

Perilaku kerja berubah karena kondisi pandemi Covid-19 yang belum pernah terjadi sebelumnya. Orang-orang berhasil menemukan cara baru untuk melakukan pekerjaan mereka dari rumah mereka dengan bantuan teknologi. Dengan menggunakan konsep Theory of Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengungkap persepsi sekretaris, asisten administrasi, dan tenaga administrasi dalam menjalankan pekerjaan administrasi pada saat pandemi Covid-19. Dengan melakukan wawancara mendalam terhadap 15 sekretaris, asisten administrasi, dan staf administrasi, metode studi kasus kualitatif digunakan untuk memperoleh informasi tentang kendala dan akibat pandemi Covid-19 pada narasumber. Temuan penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa 15 sekretaris, asisten administrasi, dan staf administrasi dapat merasakan kemudahan penggunaan dan kegunaan teknologi dalam mendukung pekerjaan mereka selama pandemi Covid-19. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa teknologi mendukung para narasumber dalam melakukan pekerjaan administrasi dan menghilangkan keterlambatan waktu karena mereka dapat melaksanakan dan menyelesaikan pekerjaan tepat waktu dan mempertahankan kinerja yang baik dalam bekerja. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan agar perusahaan memberikan pelatihan yang memadai kepada sekretarisnya dalam hal penggunaan peralatan dan teknologi modern, sehingga mereka dapat meningkatkan keterampilan dan kompetensi, serta dapat mengikuti perkembangan teknologi. Keterbatasan penelitian ini terletak pada usia dan jenis kelamin orang yang diwawancara.

Kata kunci: Pandemi Covid-19, Persepsi, Teori Model Penerimaan Teknologi (TAM), Pekerjaan Administratif.

A. Introduction

The spread of corona infection disease in 2019 (COVID-19) was firstly recognized in Wuhan, China, that was in December 2019. From that time, the virus had threatened everybody all over the world. The worsened condition had caused the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare Covid-19 as the pandemic. WHO also declared a physical distancing policy as one of the policies to be applied in dealing with the spread of Covid-19. Physical distancing is a policy of keeping physical distance while people are doing communications between individuals (World Health Organization, 2020). Following the WHO policy, the Indonesian government decided to adopt physical distancing policy to prevent nation from the spread of the virus. In responding to this policy, corporations and organizations instructed their employees to telecommute wherever and whenever possible, that means running offices and administration duties through "Work from Home" mode (Pandey, 2020).

The situation of working from home (WFH) definitely needs the involvement of technology to solve the distance problems and improve time effectiveness. During the WFH, employees perform their tasks from home through massive use of digital platforms. The employees are forced to remain positive and productive in this hard condition. The condition has also driven companies to look at alternative ways to manage the companies' operations through distant connection and the adoption of digital technology (Mulyani et al., 2020). Even though the research conducted by Keshtmand et al. (2016) revealed a significant positive effect on the use of technology and administrative automation on the quality of working life of employees (Keshtmand et al., 2016), the Human Resources Department of the company has a big homework in order to manage, redesign, and create the best practices for operating the businesses from home effectively and efficiently (Bouziri et al., 2020).

The results of the previous studies agree that today's secretaries are exposed to office automation and using the internet in supporting their work. Secretaries and administrative assistants nowadays have many technologically advanced office gadgets to improve their proficiency and productivity (Akpomi & Ordu, 2009). The performance of the secretaries, administrative assistants, and administrative staffs in the companies depend on the optimal utilisation of the office technologies as well as the knowledge and skills in manipulating the available office technologies (Mohd Salleh et al., 2017). Those activities were usually done in the office and the sets of equipment as well as the technologies are provided by the companies. In the condition of Covid-19 pandemic, people were forced to work from home. A lot of employees had to provide their own gadgets, internet connection, and other facilities needed to support their work. Moreover, they had to learn new things such as video conferences or virtual meetings using new

technology or soft wares. On the other hand, some employees themselves found problems in using the digital technology. The problems were not only found in the technical matters such as the requirement of stable internet connection and the hardware needed for doing the work, but also in the willingness of the individuals to learn new technology. The technology of using certain application for meeting virtually with different platforms has given employees some kinds of burden since they did not have enough experience in using the technology. This condition could make somebody have positive or negative reactions toward the use of technology in their work. That reaction was initiated by the lack of technology skills that hinder the ability in online working (Purwanto et al., 2020). How people react toward the use of technology is formulated in the concept known as the Theory of Technology Acceptance Model (Ma & Liu, 2011).

Based on the above facts, the purpose of this study was to reveal the Secretary and administrative assistant perception toward the use of technology during the Covid-19 pandemic could be accepted as a system that improved performance, not just an obligation that had to be fulfilled. This study used a qualitative explorative method for obtaining information, administering the semi structured questions given to 15 secretaries, administrative assistants, and administration staff from different companies in Jakarta, Bogor, Tangerang, and Bekasi (Jabodetabek) areas.

B. Theoretical Review

1. The Theory of Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

In the modern era, people apply the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in their work. One of the the important elements in the application of the information system is the acceptance of this system by the people who need it and manage to use it to enhance their work performance (Sayekti & Putarta, 2016). Therefore, the use of technology or information systems indicates an individual's decision to use or not to use information technology or systems in completing a series of tasks.

In their study, Enu-Kwesi and Opoku (2020) explained that the Theory of Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a model that adopts the Theory of Reasoned Action developed by Fishbein and Ajzen in 1975 (Enu-Kwesi & Opoku, 2020). TAM is a model that links cognitive beliefs with individual attitudes and behavior towards technology acceptance. TAM is then used to explain the behavior of individual recipients towards information technology which concludes that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are the main determinants of technology use. TAM has been recognized as a

powerful model for explaining and predicting individual acceptance of technology. The model of TAM is described in figure 1 as follows.
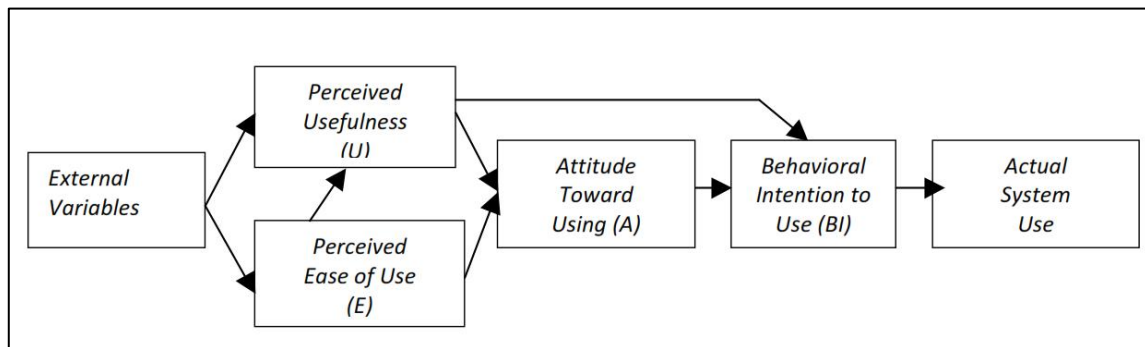

Figure 1: Davis' The Technology Acceptance Model (Ma & Liu, 2011)

Davis et.al. (1989) cited by Sayekti and Putarta in 2016 stated that the main purpose of TAM is to provide a description of the determination in computer technology acceptance in general, providing an explanation of the behavior or attitudes of users in a population (Sayekti & Putarta, 2016). TAM explains that behavioral intention to use is controlled by two beliefs, are perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. The first, perceived usefulness is defined as the extent to which a person has some confidence that using the system will improve her or his performance. The later, perceived ease of use is defined as the extent to which a person considers that the system is user friendly or easy to use. TAM also testifies that the impact of several external variables such as the characteristics of the system, training, and development processes on intention to use is facilitated by the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Attitude towards use in TAM is conceptualized as an attitude towards using a system in the form of acceptance or rejection as an impact when someone uses a technology in their work (Liao et al., 2018). This means that the person's subjectivity toward the technology acceptance is quite high, depending on the environment and the necessity in using the technology.

Several studies had been done on the implementation of TAM in analyzing the employees' perceptions towards technology in the workplace. Previous study about the workers' perception in using new technology analyzed with TAM was done by Kartika in 2009. The study analyzed the acceptance of employees of PT. Bank Negara Indonesia (Persero) Tbk. on the change of technology usage in the institution, that is from the BOSS information system to the iCons system. The results of Kartika's study showed that only eight hypotheses out of the sixteen hypotheses could be proven significant. The result showed that the process of migration from the BOSS system to the iCons system in the

PT. Bank Negara Indonesia (Persero) Tbk. could not be fully explained by the Technology Acceptance Model (Kartika, 2009).

A study done by Laurie Stewart was about computer-mediated communication and technology acceptance by exploring information technology use within a volunteer or not-for-profit organization (NPO). Applying a qualitative method, the result of Stewart's study revealed that perceived usefulness and perceived ease were confirmed as determinants of technology acceptance. Not only it confirmed the influencing factors of perceived usefulness but also it confirmed the perceived ease of use in using technology. In her study, Stewart emerged two new influencing factors of perceived usefulness, those were appropriateness and information overload (Stewart & Laurie, 2013).

Another study using the Technology Acceptance Model was done by Fran Sayekti and Pulsna Putarta in 2016. The researchers studied the factors that encourage the acceptance of the Financial Information System for the Local Government (SIPKD). The result found that the perceived of use of the system impacted the using of SIPKD, while the perceived of ease of use did not show any impacts (Sayekti & Putarta, 2016).

Having found some inconsistencies in the previous study results, this study is meant to reveal the administrative staff's perception toward technology usage during the covid-19 pandemic era analyzed using The Theory of Acceptance Model

2. Administrative Assistants and Technology Usage

Administrative Assistants are responsible for running and coordinating the day-to-day administrative duties of an organization (Betterteam, 2020). In the book titled Administrative Assistant's and Secretary's Handbook written by James Stroman et. al. (2008), administrative assistants include the profession of secretaries, administrative assistants, and administrative staffs. Further, Stroman stated that an administrative assistant is an assistant or often referred to as the right hand of the company's leader, the secret holder of the leaders in the company, as a filter and liaison between the leaders and clients or other visitors who want to meet the boss. Therefore, secretaries, administrative assistants, and administrative staffs should maintain and preserve the company's reputation. To support that, a secretary should be good at using technology to help the boss in managing the company's operation (Stroman et al., 2008). Moreover, the secretary plays a great role in the running of a company and the effectiveness of her functions largely depends on the availability of office technology (Oteng & Seidu, 2016).

Not only the functions and effectiveness of the secretary in each organization depends on the availability of the skills and competencies of the secretary, but also on the office technologies (Akpomi & Ordu, 2009). The need of using technology in performing the administrative work is supported by Cascio and Montealegre in their study in 2016, saying that nowadays we live in a global world where technology, especially information and communication technology, is changing the manner in which businesses create and capture value, the way and the place where we work, and the way we interact and communicate (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016). Another study mentioned that the secretary is the chief organiser in doing administrative work for or on behalf of the boss and the activities put the secretary at the centre of playing a great role in the efficient management of the organization. The use of ICT and office automation in executing the tasks has made the secretary to be part of office technology and management practitioner (Mohd Salleh et al., 2017).

C. Methodology

This study was an exploratory case study and the research approach used was a qualitative case study method. The samples were selected using the purposive sampling method to achieve the research objectives. To obtain information about how secretaries, administrative assistants, and administrative staffs managed their work to maintain their good performance, the researcher developed a list of semi-structured interview questions based on the related literature to collect in-depth information from the interviewees. 25 secretaries, administrative assistants, and administrative staff from different institutions and companies were given the list of questions but only 15 of them responded and sent the complete answers.

A list of semi structured questions was sent through email and social media (Telegram and Whatsapp) The primary data collected from the interviewees were analyzed using the literature mentioned in the theoretical review.

The list of questions sent to the interviewees consisted three parts, namely:

Part A: The interviewees' Profiles

Part B: Questions about the Perceives Ease of Use of the technology used during the WFH

Part C: Questions about the Perceives of Usefulness of the technology

D. Results and Findings

In doing their daily tasks, secretaries, administrative assistants, and administrative staffs generally use technology; such as sending secretarial letters using a fax machine, typing letters

and reports using personal computer (PC) or laptop, sending emails using the internet connections, making calls and communications using the telephone or cellphone or smartphone (Stroman et al., 2008). Those things are usually provided in the office where the secretaries and administrative assistant work. During the Covid-19 pandemic, secretaries and administrative assistant mostly did their work from their own house, therefore they should manage to provide the facilities for their working activities.

1. Profiles of Interviewees

    a. The 15 interviewees' age are in the range of 22 – 30 years old. From the age range, it can been seen that the interviewees belong to the millennial group who were born between 1980 and 2000 (Sharon, 2015). The people in this age range are called Millennials because of their proximity to the new millennium and being raised in a more technological or digital era. Being raised in this digital era, these millennials are familiar with new technology especially computers and smartphones. They are also familiar in using the internet in their daily activities, especially doing communication using the social media.

    b. The interviewees work in different institutions in Jabodetabek (Jakarta, Bogor, Tangerang, and Bekasi) areas. The data show that all the interviewees work in relatively moderate and settled companies which are modern and quite common with the use of technology in their operations.

    c. The industry in which the institutions operate are quite varied. From this information, we can say that the data are gathered from heterogenous sources that means the samples taken could represent the various industries.

    d. The positions of interviewees in the companies are secretaries, administrative assistants, and administrative staffs. This is relevant with the objective of this study, so that the information gathered are relevant to be analyzed.

    e. The interviewees' working periods are ranging from 2 months until 4 years. From this information, we can say that even during the Covid-19 pandemic the position of secretaries, administrative assistants, and administrative staffs are still actively needed even though most of the work are done in their own house not in the office.

2. Perceived Ease of Use of the technology used during the WFH

    From the survey it was found that interviewees mostly used laptops and smartphone and must have internet connection in carrying out their work. Since they are known as the

generation that belongs to the digital era, the interviewees did not find any difficulties in using the technology. They are quite familiar in retrieving and sending emails, accessing information through different websites, and communicating with different kind of platforms.

One thing that they need to learn at the early state of the Covid-19 pandemic era was the use of virtual meeting platforms. The interviewees use different virtual meeting platforms, i.e. Skype, Microsoft Teams, Zoom Cloud Meeting, Google Meet, Gsuite or Google Workspace, Cisco Jabber, Cisco Systems, WeBex, and the internal application built by the institution or company such as PwC Apps, Binus Maya, etcetera. The interviewees did not find any difficulties in using the virtual meeting platforms. They did not stick to only one platform or virtual meeting application because they had to communicate with different people from the office and also with clients who were not familiar with only one virtual meeting application.

All of them stated that they only needed to know how to operate the application and it only took about several minutes to learn how to use it. The only problem that they mentioned was the internet connection. Sometimes they could not do their administrative duties properly because of the slow internet connection or unstable connection. Most of them subscribed from prominent internet providers as they considered that without internet connection, they could not perform their job as they were required by the company to always keep in touch with the boss or other employees.

From the information gathered, the interviewees mostly have no difficulties with the use of technology. This means that all the women interviewees comply with the perceived the ease use of the technology from TAM. This was supported by Venkatesh and Morris (2000) research that revealed the statement women are more strongly influenced by perceived ease of use and subjective norms (Morris & Venkatesh, 2000).

Their main obstacle was the unstable internet connection which was not in their control. Constraints in the form of an unstable internet connection could result in miscommunication, because the secretaries, administrative assistants, and administrative staffs got incomplete information due to intermittent voice. If this condition was related to the secretary's coordinative duties, it would interfere with the way of delivering information to the boss or vice versa. In order to solve the problem of internet connection, they also used the tethering from their smartphone. They did not rely on one internet provider, but they subscribed to at least two internet providers. This was because the boss asked them to be connected to the office most of the time. The characteristics of millennial

generation could be one of the other considerations for the interviewees to perceive the ease of use of the technology. Sharon (2015) in her study revealed that millennials feel a lot of contentment in utilizing technology. They became very dependent on technology since their very early age than other generations (Sharon, 2015). This condition made millennials could work comfortably in the integrated technology environment.

3. Perceived of Usefulness of the technology during the work from home activities

Most of the interviewees used the common technology such as emails, virtual meetings, texting, and telephoning that were functioned through the internet-based operation, and only some of them answered that they used certain application built by their institutions. The interviewees were confident in using the technology and said that technology was one of the best requirements in life. They stated that with the help of technology, they could do the work easier, faster, and efficient. They felt comfortable with the modern technology and learning new technology would make them more skillful and knowledgeable. The interviewees stated with more skills and knowledge they could perform their work better.

Even though they mostly did their duties at home and came to the office when needed, the interviewees mentioned that the work they carried out were almost the same with the ones they did when they were in the office. The administrative or clerical work that the interviewees did when they had WFH mode were divided into routine and non-routine work.

The interviewees' routine activities were as follows:

a. Handling incoming and outgoing telephone calls using a smartphone:
b. Handling electronic correspondence;
c. Typing reports with a laptop;
d. Preparing virtual meetings, including: making invitation, managing the link, preparing the materials for the meeting;
e. Attending periodic virtual meetings;
f. Taking minutes of meetings in the laptop;
g. Handling documents for business trips supported with of a laptop and smartphone;
h. Preparing the boss' agenda using computers and Microsoft outlook application;
i. Distributing documents through emails;
j. Handling documents in the electronic filing system;
k. Handling invoices with the help of a computer;

l. Coordinating the work with other employees using the social media or teleconferencing.

The interviewees' non-routine activities were as follows:

a. Participating in the company project and join the virtual meetings;

b. Joining some virtual trainings;

c. Finalizing documents for company's clients; such as reports, contracts, MoU, etc. with a laptop;

d. Dealing with vendors for certain projects by communicating with the smartphone or through email;

e. Preparing special events for special company occasion with the help of laptop and smartphone for communication and coordination as well as for doing the correspondence and other administrative work.

The interviewees mentioned that those activities were done and managed at home as they still needed to follow the government's regulation. The data that were gathered from the interview showed that the interviewees needed some technology and internet connection in doing their work. The equipment that they used were mainly laptops and smart phones. This result is relevant with the result of Laurie Stewart's which stated that technology has made business runs efficiently and faster by nearly eliminating the delay in time to get the information. The examples that Stewart gave included video conferencing, instant messages using smart phones, accessing information through the Google search engine or other search engines (Stewart & Laurie, 2013). In communication, the interviewees found that a lot of thing became more flexible and not too formal comparing to the communication done in the office. They could do the texting via social media platforms and send informal emails but still with certain ethics and etiquettes to be applied.

Despite the help of the technology, there were still some obstacles in conducting the duties. For those secretary or administrative assistant who worked in the state institutions they had to see the Director or Head of Division to get their signature. This was related to the policy that electronic signatures were not accepted in the institutions. Therefore, the secretary or administrative assistant had to meet the person in charge as the documents were quite important or confidential. If the documents were not either important or confidential, the secretary or administrative assistant could send the documents by using a courier. In that case the secretary or administrative assistant could order the service from the provider using the online application service.

Another drawback that was faced by the interviewees was about the working hours. The working hours became more flexible than usual. Some institutions did not follow the office hours as they considered that the work could be done from home. In some cases, there were virtual meetings in the evening, not in the office hours, because the meeting was quite urgent. Even though the activity could happen several times in a week, most of the interviewees still felt comfortable because they did not need to go but just stay at home and take a good use of the technology to support them in doing their duties. Technological advancement has a positive effect on people's quality of life and the way people manage their business, and eventually the trend of using new technology is expected to keep escalating (Pfano et al., 2016).

E. Conclusion

The fact that Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way people do their work is obvious. People stayed at home and did their work using the WFH mode. The secretaries, administrative assistants, and administrative staffs managed the administrative work using technology and internet connection. They have achieved the perceived of ease in using the technology for it was not difficult for them to access information and leaned the new technology. The interviewees found that technology helped their work a lot and eliminated the delay in time as they could execute and finish the work in time and maintain their good performance in working. Therefore, it is recommended that organizations should provide their secretaries with sufficient trainings in modern technology and equipment usage to upgrade and enhance their skills and competencies in technological advancement.

Practical implications of this study are that in the Covid-19 pandemic the administrative work could be executed with the support of modern technology. The WFH mode could reduce the use of paper and limit office space usage as the activities were mostly done digitally at the employees' home. The limitations of this study laid in the age and gender of the interviewees. It is recommended that the future study include different generation interviewees and include male interviewees.

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