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The Saliency of Work from Home Policy in Street-Level Bureaucracy for Managing Immigration Services

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation of work-from-home (WFH) arrangements in Indonesian immigration public service delivery through the lens of street-level bureaucracy. The study is situated within the 2026 policy context, in which WFH was introduced as a crisis-responsive governance measure to reduce mobility, support energy efficiency, and maintain public-sector productivity amid global energy uncertainty. Using a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach, this study combines document analysis of national and sectoral WFH regulations with non-participant observation of frontline immigration service practices in five Immigration Offices in Jabodetabek. The findings show that WFH in immigration services cannot be applied uniformly because immigration work combines administrative service, legal authority, identity verification, public interaction, and state security functions. Remote work is suitable for administrative and document-based tasks, while biometric capture, passport interviews, detention management, immigration checkpoints, and enforcement functions require physical presence. The study concludes that WFH should be governed as a controlled hybrid mechanism supported by task classification, digital supervision, data protection, output-based accountability, and service-continuity safeguards.

INTRODUCTION

The escalation of conflict involving Iran has intensified global concerns over energy security because geopolitical instability in the Middle East can disrupt oil supply chains, raise crude oil prices, and increase fiscal pressure on energy-importing countries. In Indonesia, this external shock became an immediate policy concern because rising oil prices were projected to increase the burden of energy subsidies and compensation spending. Reuters reported that Indonesia estimated the need for up to Rp100 trillion, or around US\$5.9 billion, in additional energy subsidies due to the impact of the Iran-related conflict, while crude oil prices had reportedly increased to around US\$100 per barrel amid disrupted shipments and oil-supply pressure (Reuters, 2026). At the global level, the International Energy Agency also recommended immediate demand-side measures, including working from home, reducing travel, and avoiding

unnecessary air transport, as practical responses to higher energy prices caused by the conflict (Reuters, 2026). In response to this situation, the Indonesian government considered and introduced a one-day work-from-home policy for civil servants as part of a broader strategy to reduce mobility, curb fuel consumption, limit official travel, encourage the use of public transportation, and maintain economic productivity. ANTARA reported that Indonesia was considering WFH to reduce fuel consumption and mitigate risks from global oil-supply disruptions linked to Middle East tensions, while the Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia later stated that the policy would take effect on April 1, 2026, be evaluated after two months, and potentially generate significant savings in fuel compensation and public fuel expenditure (ANTARA, 2026; Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, 2026). Therefore, the emergence of WFH in this context should not be

viewed merely as an administrative flexibility arrangement, but as a crisis-responsive governance measure that connects international conflict, domestic energy resilience, fiscal stability, and adaptive public-sector work arrangements (Reuters, 2026).

Building on this policy context, WFH in the public sector must be understood not only as a flexible work arrangement, but also as a regulated and accountability-based system of bureaucratic continuity. In general, WFH refers to a flexible work arrangement in which employees perform official duties from outside the conventional office setting, usually from their residence, by relying on information and communication technologies (Allen et al., 2015; International Labour Organization [ILO], 2020). However, in the public sector, WFH cannot be understood only as a matter of individual work preference or organizational convenience. It must be viewed as a formal, regulated, and accountability-based work system because public officials remain bound by administrative rules, service standards, performance targets, data protection obligations, and public accountability requirements. The Indonesian government's one-day WFH policy for civil servants therefore reflects a dual policy logic: on the one hand, it aims to support national energy efficiency by reducing commuting and fuel consumption; on the other hand, it must ensure that government functions, public services, and bureaucratic performance continue to operate effectively. Thus, WFH in the Indonesian public sector can be conceptualized as an adaptive governance response that combines energy resilience, bureaucratic continuity, digital work practices, and administrative accountability.

The application of WFH in essential public services presents a more complex challenge than its application in general administrative or private-sector work. Although studies show that WFH may improve flexibility, reduce commuting time, support work-life balance, and maintain operational continuity during disruption, its effectiveness depends heavily on job characteristics, managerial control, digital readiness, and the nature of organizational tasks (Dingel & Neiman, 2020; Galanti et al., 2021; OECD, 2021). In public administration, work is not evaluated solely through productivity, but also through legality, fairness, accessibility, responsiveness, continuity of service,

and public trust. De Vries et al. (2019) found that teleworking in the public sector does not automatically produce positive outcomes; while it may offer flexibility, it can also generate professional isolation and weaken organizational commitment. Similarly, broader telecommuting research suggests that the benefits of remote work are conditional rather than universal because its success depends on task autonomy, communication quality, supervisory systems, and organizational culture (Allen et al., 2015; Kossek et al., 2015). Therefore, WFH in government must be designed as a selective and performance-based arrangement, rather than as a blanket policy applied equally to all forms of public-sector work.

Immigration services represent a special case in the application of WFH because they combine administrative service delivery with legal authority, public control, and national security functions. Immigration officers are not merely back-office administrators; they perform public-facing services and exercise state authority through passport services, visa processing, residence permit services, immigration supervision, border inspection, detention-related functions, and enforcement actions. Their work involves administrative processing, legal judgment, identity verification, document authentication, risk assessment, public communication, and security-sensitive decision-making. Indonesian immigration law defines the immigration function as part of state administration covering immigration services, law enforcement, state security, and the facilitation of public welfare, while also recognizing immigration information systems as instruments for operational, managerial, and decision-making support. For this reason, WFH in immigration services should be understood as a differentiated work arrangement. Some immigration tasks may be suitable for remote or hybrid execution, such as document review, internal coordination, data verification, report preparation, policy drafting, online consultation, and administrative monitoring. However, other tasks require physical presence because they involve direct public interaction, biometric capture, passport interviews, immigration checkpoint inspection, detention management, deportation processes, and emergency enforcement. This distinction is consistent with Dingel and Neiman's (2020) argument that the feasibility of working from home

varies across occupations and task structures. Therefore, in immigration services, task suitability becomes central: WFH may support back-office efficiency, but it cannot fully replace frontline functions that require bodily presence, direct verification, and institutional control over persons, documents, and spaces.

This differentiated nature of immigration work makes street-level bureaucracy a relevant analytical lens for examining WFH implementation in immigration public service delivery. Street-level bureaucracy refers to the role of frontline public officials who interact directly with citizens and translate formal policy into concrete administrative decisions through daily judgment, interpretation, and discretionary action (Lipsky, 1971, 2010). Immigration officers fit this conceptual category because they operate at the frontline of the state, interact with citizens and foreign nationals, and implement immigration law through services, supervision, verification, inspection, and enforcement. Their decisions are not purely technical because they often involve the interpretation of documents, assessment of eligibility, identification of risks, evaluation of travel or stay purposes, and determination of whether applicants satisfy legal and administrative requirements. In this sense, discretion is not merely a deviation from formal rules, but an unavoidable feature of frontline governance because officers must apply general regulations to specific and varied cases (Scott, 1997; Tummers & Bekkers, 2014). When WFH is introduced into this context, the central issue is not only whether immigration officers can work remotely, but how remote or hybrid work reshapes their interaction with applicants, internal coordination, access to digital systems, documentation of decisions, supervision of discretion, and accountability for public service outcomes.

Despite the growing literature on WFH, telework, hybrid work arrangements, and digital public administration, existing studies have not sufficiently examined how WFH operates within immigration public service delivery as a security-sensitive form of street-level bureaucracy. Previous studies have largely discussed WFH in relation to flexibility, productivity, work-life balance, commuting reduction, organizational continuity, job satisfaction, and digital readiness (Allen et al.,

2015; Dingel & Neiman, 2020; Galanti et al., 2021; ILO, 2020; OECD, 2021). Public-sector telework studies have also shown that remote work may generate both benefits and risks, including flexibility, professional isolation, weakened organizational commitment, and dependence on communication quality, supervisory systems, and organizational culture (De Vries et al., 2019; Kossek et al., 2015). However, these studies tend to examine WFH as a general administrative or organizational arrangement, rather than as a governance mechanism in essential public services where frontline officials exercise legal discretion, verify identity, assess risk, protect confidential data, and maintain direct public accountability. Similarly, street-level bureaucracy literature has extensively examined discretion, accountability, standardization, flexibility, digitalization, and crisis governance (Bovens & Zouridis, 2002; Brodtkin, 2008; Buffat, 2015; Gofen & Lotta, 2021; Hupe & Hill, 2007; Lipsky, 2010; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003), but limited attention has been given to how WFH or hybrid work arrangements reshape frontline discretion, supervision, coordination, and service quality in immigration institutions. In migration and immigration studies, scholars have shown that frontline officials in migration control exercise significant discretionary power when dealing with law, fraud suspicion, applicant credibility, organizational constraints, and security concerns (Alpes & Spire, 2014), yet the relationship between such discretion and remote work arrangements remains underexplored. Therefore, an important research gap remains: there is limited scholarly understanding of how WFH can be implemented in immigration services without weakening task suitability, legal accountability, data protection, supervision of discretion, continuity of essential services, public trust, and state security. This gap is especially relevant in the Indonesian context, where WFH was introduced as a crisis-responsive policy to support energy efficiency, while immigration institutions must continue to perform public service, law enforcement, state security, and public welfare functions under a differentiated arrangement between remote-capable administrative tasks and presence-based frontline operations.

This study aims to analyze the feasibility and governance requirements of applying the 2026

WFH policy in Indonesian immigration public service delivery through the lens of street-level bureaucracy. This study does not evaluate the actual post-implementation performance of the 2026 WFH policy. Instead, it assesses the feasibility, risks, and governance requirements of applying WFH to immigration services by comparing the policy framework with the operational characteristics of frontline immigration work. Specifically, it examines how immigration tasks can be differentiated between remote-capable and presence-based functions, how WFH may affect discretion, accountability, coordination, digital supervision, and service continuity, and how hybrid work arrangements can be governed to maintain service quality, legal certainty, data protection, public trust, and state security. By focusing on immigration services, this study moves beyond the dominant view of WFH as merely an employee flexibility or productivity arrangement and instead positions it as a controlled hybrid governance mechanism within a security-sensitive public service institution. The contribution of this study is threefold. First, it contributes empirically by examining the feasibility of the 2026 Indonesian ASN WFH policy in the specific context of immigration services. Second, it contributes theoretically by extending street-level bureaucracy analysis to the study of WFH and hybrid work, particularly in relation to discretion, accountability, task suitability, and digitally mediated supervision. Third, it contributes practically by offering a policy-oriented understanding of how immigration institutions can classify tasks, regulate remote work, supervise frontline discretion, protect confidential data, and ensure the continuity of essential immigration services without weakening the core functions of public service, law enforcement, and state security.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative feasibility-assessment design with an interpretive and descriptive-analytical approach. The purpose of this design is not to measure the completed outcomes of WFH implementation, but to assess whether, how, and under what governance conditions WFH can be applied to immigration public service delivery. Given the introduction of WFH as a crisis-responsive policy in 2026, this study analyzes how

such an arrangement can be understood in the context of immigration services, where public service continuity, legal accountability, digital supervision, and state security must be maintained. The study does not treat WFH merely as an employee flexibility policy, but as a hybrid governance mechanism that requires careful classification of tasks, supervision of discretion, and protection of essential public service functions.

This study combines document analysis of national and sectoral WFH regulations with direct non-participant observation of frontline immigration service practices at five Immigration Offices in the Jabodetabek area. The document analysis focuses on legal, policy, institutional, academic, and comparative international documents, including Undang-Undang No. 6 Tahun 2011 tentang Keimigrasian, Peraturan Pemerintah No. 31 Tahun 2013 as amended by Peraturan Pemerintah No. 40 Tahun 2023, Peraturan Menteri Imigrasi dan Pemasarakatan No. 1 Tahun 2024, relevant circular letters on WFH for civil servants, sectoral regulations issued by the Directorate General of Immigration, and academic literature on work-from-home arrangements and street-level bureaucracy. These documents are used to examine how WFH policy regulates work arrangements, service continuity, task classification, digital reporting, supervision, accountability, and institutional control in immigration services.

Primary data were obtained through direct non-participant observation at five Immigration Offices in the Jabodetabek area. Observation was conducted in public service areas, including registration counters, document verification points, queue-management areas, biometric service points, and applicant waiting areas. These observations were not used to evaluate the actual implementation outcomes of the 2026 WFH policy. Rather, they were used as baseline empirical evidence to identify the operational characteristics of immigration services, including public interaction, document verification, biometric procedures, digital-system dependence, queue management, and physical-presence requirements. The five offices were selected purposively because they represent high-demand urban immigration service units with intensive public interaction, digital service use, complex queue-management practices, and varied administrative and frontline functions. Observation

focused on frontline service practices, officer-user interaction, queue management, digital service use, responsiveness, service accessibility, document verification, service flow, and the distinction between functions requiring physical presence and those potentially suitable for remote or hybrid work. Thus, the observation data are used to understand the institutional and task characteristics of immigration services, whereas the 2026 policy documents are used to analyze the implications of WFH implementation in the immigration sector.

The five immigration offices were anonymized as Office A, Office B, Office C, Office D, and Office E. Field notes were organized using an observation matrix covering service activity, level of public interaction, need for physical presence, digital-system use, document verification, queue management, officer-user interaction, and officer discretion. This matrix was then used to classify immigration tasks according to their suitability for remote, hybrid, or presence-based work arrangements.

Data collection was conducted through field observation and document analysis. Field observation was used to identify how immigration services are delivered in practice, particularly in relation to direct public interaction, service bottlenecks, digital-system dependence, officer responsiveness, and the operational need for physical presence. Document analysis was used to examine how legal and institutional rules define immigration functions, regulate work arrangements, classify essential services, and establish accountability mechanisms. By combining these two sources of data, the study seeks to understand not only what the WFH policy formally requires, but also how such a policy can be assessed against the practical realities of immigration service delivery.

Data were analyzed using a deductive-inductive hybrid thematic analysis guided by Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory. Deductively, the analysis used five theoretical dimensions: discretion, rule interpretation, coping mechanisms, accountability, and citizen-state interaction. These dimensions were used to assess how frontline immigration officers interpret procedures, exercise judgment, manage workload, interact with service users, and remain accountable under changing work arrangements. Inductively, themes were developed

from observation and document analysis to identify practical issues such as service bottlenecks, coordination challenges, digital-system dependence, task suitability, service accessibility, and the tension between flexibility and service certainty.

The analytical process was conducted in several stages. First, legal and policy documents were examined to identify formal provisions related to WFH, WFO, public service continuity, digital reporting, and immigration-sector work arrangements. Second, observation data from the five Immigration Offices were categorized according to the type of service activity, level of public interaction, need for physical presence, use of digital systems, and degree of officer discretion. Third, the findings were interpreted using the five dimensions of street-level bureaucracy to assess how WFH may affect task performance, accountability, supervision, and citizen-state interaction in immigration services. Finally, the analysis was synthesized to determine which immigration functions are more suitable for remote or hybrid work and which functions require full physical presence due to legal, administrative, biometric, security, or service-accessibility considerations.

This study has several limitations. First, the empirical observation is limited to five Immigration Offices in the Jabodetabek area and therefore does not represent all immigration offices in Indonesia. Second, the study does not use structured surveys or formal stakeholder interviews, so the analysis focuses on observable service practices and documentary evidence rather than the subjective perceptions of officers, managers, or service users. Third, access to internal performance data, detailed WFH productivity records, and confidential institutional evaluation reports was limited.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion are organized based on the three objectives stated in the introduction. Since the study is designed as a feasibility assessment, the findings are interpreted as analytical indications of task suitability, governance risks, and institutional requirements rather than as measurements of completed WFH implementation outcomes. The first subsection discusses the differentiation of immigration tasks between remote-capable and presence-based functions. The

second subsection discusses how WFH may affect discretion, rule interpretation, accountability, coordination, digital supervision, and service continuity. The third subsection discusses how hybrid work arrangements should be governed to maintain service quality, legal certainty, data protection, public trust, and state security.

Differentiation of Immigration Tasks under WFH Policy

The feasibility analysis indicates that work-from-home arrangements in Indonesian immigration services cannot be understood merely as a flexible work policy for civil servants. WFH emerged within a broader crisis-responsive governance context, particularly in response to global energy uncertainty, rising oil prices, the need to reduce fuel consumption, and the pressure to maintain public-sector productivity during external disruption. In this context, WFH functions as a demand-side governance instrument designed to reduce mobility, limit commuting, support fuel efficiency, and preserve bureaucratic continuity.

However, the analysis also indicates that immigration services require a more cautious and selective interpretation of WFH. Immigration institutions are not ordinary administrative bodies because they perform public service, law enforcement, state security, and welfare facilitation functions. Therefore, while WFH may support national energy resilience and administrative efficiency, its implementation in immigration services must be balanced against the need to maintain service continuity, legal certainty, public access, data confidentiality, and immigration control.

The most important analytical finding in this subsection is that task classification determines the feasibility of WFH in immigration services. Baseline observation across Office A to Office E showed that service activities involving document review, queue monitoring, and internal coordination were more digitally mediated, whereas biometric capture, identity verification, and applicant interviews remained dependent on physical presence. Not all immigration functions can be relocated outside the office. Some tasks are suitable for remote or hybrid work, especially those that are administrative, document-based, digital, standardized, and less dependent on direct physical interaction. These include document review,

internal coordination, data verification, report writing, policy drafting, administrative monitoring, online consultation, and preparation of service-related documentation. These tasks can be conducted through digital platforms as long as officers have secure system access, clear work targets, measurable outputs, and supervisory control.

In contrast, several immigration functions require full physical presence. These include biometric capture, passport interviews, direct identity verification, immigration checkpoint inspection, detention management, deportation execution, emergency enforcement, and services involving physical control over persons, documents, and institutional spaces. These functions cannot be fully replaced by remote work because they involve legal authority, bodily presence, physical verification, direct public interaction, and security-sensitive decision-making.

This finding means that the central issue in immigration WFH is not simply whether officers are allowed to work from home, but whether each task can be performed remotely without weakening verification, supervision, service accessibility, and institutional control. WFH is appropriate only when the task does not require direct control over persons, physical documents, biometric data, or legally sensitive interactions. Therefore, immigration WFH must be designed as a task-based arrangement rather than a blanket policy.

From the perspective of Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory, this finding confirms that immigration officers are not merely administrative processors. They are frontline public officials who interpret rules, verify identity, assess eligibility, interact with service users, and make decisions that may affect legal status, mobility rights, public access, and state security. Because of this, the feasibility of WFH depends not only on digital readiness, but also on the legal, operational, and security characteristics of each task.

The implication is that immigration institutions need a clear task-classification guideline. Immigration work should be divided into at least three categories. The first category consists of tasks suitable for WFH, such as report writing, data review, internal coordination, policy drafting, and administrative monitoring. The second category consists of tasks suitable for hybrid arrangements,

such as preliminary document screening, online consultation, administrative verification, and internal case preparation. The third category consists of tasks that must remain office-based or field-based, such as biometric capture, passport interviews, border inspection, detention management, deportation, emergency enforcement, and direct identity verification. This classification is necessary to ensure that WFH supports efficiency without weakening the core functions of immigration services.

WFH, Street-Level Discretion, Accountability, and Service Continuity

The study indicates that WFH may not eliminate the discretionary role of immigration officers. Instead, it changes the space, medium, and mechanism through which discretion is exercised. Immigration officers remain street-level bureaucrats because they continue to interpret rules, assess documents, evaluate eligibility, respond to service users, coordinate with colleagues, and make decisions that affect legal status, mobility rights, service access, and state security. Observation also showed that frontline officers frequently relied on direct clarification, immediate supervisor consultation, and face-to-face interaction when handling incomplete documents or unclear applicant information.

In office-based service delivery, discretion is exercised through direct interaction, physical document examination, interviews, face-to-face clarification, and immediate coordination with supervisors or colleagues. Under WFH or hybrid arrangements, some discretionary activities may shift into digital systems, online communication, electronic document review, virtual coordination, and remote reporting. This shift creates both opportunities and risks. The opportunity lies in the possibility of improving documentation, digital traceability, administrative efficiency, and written accountability. However, the risk lies in weaker direct supervision, fragmented communication, delayed clarification, inconsistent interpretation of rules, and reduced capacity to assess cases that require physical verification.

This finding confirms the core argument of Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory that discretion is unavoidable in public service delivery. In immigration services, the challenge is not to eliminate discretion, but to ensure that discretion

remains accountable, consistent, legally justified, and properly supervised under hybrid work conditions. Discretion under WFH must therefore be supported by clear standard operating procedures, digital audit trails, supervisory review, secure system access, written justification of decisions, and clear escalation mechanisms for cases requiring physical verification.

The introduction of WFH would add another layer of rule interpretation for immigration officers and managers. Officers must not only interpret immigration laws and service procedures, but also interpret WFH regulations, attendance rules, reporting obligations, digital coordination requirements, and service-continuity standards. This creates a potential tension between formal WFH policy and practical immigration service delivery. On the one hand, national WFH policy provides flexibility for civil servants. On the other hand, immigration-sector implementation requires strict differentiation between administrative tasks and frontline operational functions.

This finding means that rule interpretation must be institutionalized through clear task maps, internal technical guidelines, service-level standards, and supervisory instructions. Without such guidance, officers may interpret WFH either too broadly as a general entitlement or too narrowly as irrelevant to immigration services. Both interpretations are problematic. A broad interpretation may weaken service continuity, while an overly restrictive interpretation may prevent immigration institutions from using WFH to improve efficiency in suitable back-office functions.

Baseline observation indicates that immigration officers and service units already use coping mechanisms to manage high service demand, queue pressure, limited time, digital-system dependence, and coordination constraints. Officers may prioritize urgent cases, rely on digital queues, separate document-checking tasks from face-to-face verification, shift internal coordination to online platforms, or redistribute work between WFO officers and officers performing remote administrative tasks. These coping mechanisms can support service continuity and reduce unnecessary physical interaction. However, they may also create risks. Prioritization may create perceptions of unequal treatment if the criteria are not transparent. Digital queues may disadvantage applicants with

limited digital literacy. Reduced direct interaction may weaken public understanding of procedures. Work redistribution may also create unequal workloads between frontline officers and remote-working officers.

From a theoretical perspective, these coping mechanisms show that frontline officials adapt formal policy to practical constraints. This is consistent with the street-level bureaucracy perspective, which views frontline officials as active actors who manage workload, resource limitations, and public expectations through practical strategies. However, in the context of immigration WFH, coping mechanisms should not remain informal or dependent only on individual judgment. They must be transformed into institutional procedures.

The implication is that immigration institutions must strengthen accountability and service-continuity safeguards. Accountability under WFH should not be measured only through attendance. Digital attendance systems are necessary, but they are insufficient. Immigration institutions must also monitor work outputs, quality of service, timeliness, coordination effectiveness, compliance with procedures, protection of confidential data, and the traceability of decisions. Accountability mechanisms should include digital attendance, daily or weekly work reports, measurable performance targets, supervisory review, secure communication channels, system-access control, complaint mechanisms, documentation of decisions, and approval layers for tasks involving legal or security implications.

Citizen-state interaction may also be reshaped under WFH, but it cannot be fully virtualized. In immigration services, citizen-state interaction occurs when applicants seek information, submit documents, ask questions, undergo interviews, complete biometric processes, receive service decisions, or file complaints. Digital channels may improve some aspects of interaction, especially through online consultation, digital information systems, electronic document checking, and remote administrative communication. These channels may reduce unnecessary visits, improve applicant preparation, and support faster administrative processing. However, some immigration interactions still require bodily presence because identity verification, biometric capture, passport

interviews, and document authentication require direct contact between officers and applicants.

The implication is that WFH should not replace frontline immigration interaction. Instead, it should support a hybrid service model in which digital channels are used for preparation, coordination, information, and administrative processing, while physical service remains available for verification, biometric procedures, interviews, complaint handling, and legally sensitive decisions. This is essential to protect service accessibility, procedural fairness, public trust, and legal certainty.

Controlled Hybrid Governance Model for Immigration Services

The analysis suggests that WFH in immigration services should be governed as a controlled hybrid governance mechanism rather than as a general employee-centered flexibility arrangement. These observations suggest that a hybrid model can only function when remote administrative work is integrated with clear office-based service points and supervisory control. This finding is important because immigration services are not limited to administrative processing. They also involve legal authority, public interaction, identity verification, discretion, confidential data, enforcement functions, and state security. Therefore, WFH must be filtered through the institutional characteristics of immigration work.

This finding means that digital systems can mediate immigration services, but they cannot replace street-level bureaucracy. Digital systems support attendance, reporting, document review, coordination, public information, service monitoring, and decision-support processes. However, digitalization does not eliminate the role of immigration officers. It changes how officers interpret rules, access information, communicate with service users, document decisions, coordinate with supervisors, and remain accountable. In digitally mediated immigration services, discretion may shift from face-to-face counters to databases, online forms, electronic records, and virtual coordination. Officers continue to make judgments, but those judgments are increasingly shaped by system access, data availability, digital workflows, and institutional monitoring tools.

From the perspective of Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory, this finding extends the understanding of frontline bureaucracy into a hybrid

and digitally mediated context. Traditional street-level bureaucracy emphasizes face-to-face interaction between officials and citizens. However, WFH and digital systems create a hybrid form of frontline governance in which some interactions occur physically while others occur through digital platforms. This does not eliminate the role of the officer. Rather, it changes how officers interpret rules, communicate with service users, document decisions, and remain accountable to supervisors.

The analysis indicates that accountability becomes the core requirement of immigration WFH. This is because immigration officers handle legal documents, personal data, identity records, travel documents, foreign supervision, and security-sensitive information. Remote work may increase risks related to data confidentiality, weak supervision, unclear outputs, delayed response, unauthorized system access, and fragmented coordination. Therefore, digital efficiency should not be pursued at the expense of confidentiality, procedural control, and legal accountability.

The implication is that immigration institutions need stronger digital governance. Officers working remotely must have controlled access to necessary systems, secure communication channels, clear reporting tools, and protection against unauthorized data use. Since immigration data involves identity, travel documents, legal status, and security information, data protection must become a central element of WFH governance. Digital systems should be treated as governance infrastructure, not merely technical tools. Their effectiveness depends on whether they support accountability, service accessibility, data protection, decision documentation, user assistance, and human oversight.

The analysis further suggests that WFH implementation must preserve public service accessibility. Immigration services involve diverse users, including citizens, foreign nationals, vulnerable applicants, people with limited digital literacy, and users facing urgent mobility needs. If WFH reduces access to officers, creates unclear service channels, delays responses, or weakens complaint handling, public trust may decline. Therefore, immigration offices must maintain clear service information, responsive communication channels, complaint mechanisms, and physical service points for functions that cannot be digitized.

Leadership and supervision also become critical in a controlled hybrid model. Hybrid work requires managers to monitor not only attendance, but also output, service quality, responsiveness, procedural compliance, and workload distribution. Supervisors must ensure that officers working remotely remain reachable, productive, and accountable. They must also coordinate workload distribution between WFO and WFH officers to prevent inequality, delay, and service bottlenecks. Without strong supervision, WFH may create fragmented work processes and weaken institutional control.

Another important implication concerns the balance between efficiency and legal certainty. WFH may increase efficiency by reducing office density, commuting time, administrative congestion, and unnecessary physical interaction. However, immigration services must not be evaluated solely by efficiency. Legal certainty, procedural fairness, accuracy of verification, protection of rights, and state security are equally important. A faster service is not necessarily better if it creates errors, inconsistent decisions, weak accountability, or security risks. Therefore, WFH should support efficiency only within the boundaries of legal and institutional safeguards.

The analysis also indicates that immigration WFH has implications for state security. Immigration functions are closely related to border control, foreigner supervision, legal status, and the prevention of irregular mobility. Any work arrangement that affects verification, supervision, or enforcement must be assessed in relation to security risk. For this reason, WFH should not be applied to functions that require immediate response, direct control, physical verification, or enforcement authority. Security-sensitive functions must remain presence-based, while remote work should be limited to supporting functions that do not compromise institutional control.

Overall, the findings indicate that the most appropriate model for immigration services is a controlled hybrid model. This model combines flexibility with regulation, digitalization with supervision, efficiency with legal certainty, and remote work with physical frontline presence. It recognizes that some immigration tasks can be performed remotely, but it also affirms that core immigration functions require direct institutional

control. Practically, immigration institutions need clear task-classification guidelines, secure digital reporting systems, data-protection mechanisms, physical service safeguards, output-based supervision, and strong leadership control. These measures are necessary to ensure that WFH supports administrative efficiency, energy efficiency, and bureaucratic modernization without weakening immigration service quality, legal accountability, public trust, and national security.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that WFH arrangements in Indonesian immigration services should be understood as a conditionally feasible controlled hybrid governance mechanism. Because this study is based on policy-document analysis and baseline observation rather than post-implementation performance data, its conclusion should be understood as a feasibility-based assessment of WFH governance in immigration services. The findings indicate that WFH can support administrative efficiency, energy efficiency, and bureaucratic modernization only when it is applied selectively according to task suitability, legal accountability, data protection, public service continuity, and state-security safeguards.

The study further concludes that immigration services represent a special and security-sensitive form of public administration. Unlike general administrative services, immigration functions involve public service delivery, legal authority, identity verification, document authentication, immigration supervision, law enforcement, and state security. Therefore, WFH cannot be applied uniformly across all immigration functions. Its implementation must be based on task suitability, distinguishing between tasks that can be performed remotely, tasks that can be managed through hybrid arrangements, and tasks that must remain fully office-based or field-based.

The findings show that remote-capable tasks include document review, report writing, data verification, internal coordination, policy drafting, administrative monitoring, and online consultation. Meanwhile, tasks such as biometric capture, passport interviews, immigration checkpoint inspection, detention management, deportation, emergency enforcement, and direct identity verification require physical presence. This

confirms that the feasibility of WFH in immigration services depends not on institutional preference alone, but on the legal, technical, operational, and security characteristics of each task.

Through the lens of Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory, this study also concludes that WFH does not eliminate frontline discretion. Rather, it relocates and reshapes discretion through digital systems, virtual coordination, electronic documents, and remote reporting mechanisms. Immigration officers remain street-level bureaucrats because they continue to interpret rules, assess eligibility, verify documents, identify risks, respond to service users, and make decisions that affect legal status, mobility, public trust, and state security. Therefore, discretion under WFH must be supported by clear standard operating procedures, secure digital systems, audit trails, supervisory review, and accountable documentation.

Another important conclusion is that accountability becomes the core requirement of immigration WFH. Attendance monitoring alone is insufficient to ensure effective remote work. Immigration institutions must also evaluate work outputs, service quality, response time, coordination effectiveness, procedural compliance, data protection, and the traceability of decisions. Without strong accountability mechanisms, WFH may create risks such as weak supervision, data insecurity, delayed services, fragmented coordination, and inconsistent decision-making.

Finally, this study concludes that WFH in immigration services is neither wholly suitable nor wholly unsuitable. Its relevance depends on the ability of immigration institutions to design a selective, task-based, accountable, and digitally supported work arrangement. Properly governed, WFH can support administrative efficiency, energy efficiency, digital transformation, and bureaucratic modernization. Poorly governed, however, it may weaken service continuity, legal certainty, public trust, and immigration control. Therefore, the most appropriate model for immigration services is a controlled hybrid model that combines flexibility with regulation, digitalization with supervision, and administrative efficiency with legal and security safeguards.

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