

CONTENTS

CONTENTS	i
EDITORIAL BOARD	ii
THE STRING OF NODES: HOW THE PROJECTION OF LOGISTICAL POWER REDEFINES TRADE IN THE ASEAN by Leonardo Gioia	1-59
LAW AS GEOPOLITICAL INSTRUMENT: EU CONDITIONALITY, CHINESE CONTRACTUAL POWER, AND PHILIPPINE STRATEGIC AUTONOMY IN FDI by Lawrence Brenner	60-99
THE EFFICACY OF WORK FROM HOME POLICY IN MANAGING IMMIGRATION SERVICE DELIVERY by Gunawan Ari Nursanto et al.	100-123
EDUCATION AS STATECRAFT: CPLP COOPERATION, LUSOPHONE INFLUENCE, AND INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY IN POST-CONFLICT TIMOR-LESTE (2018– 2023) by Muhammad Faris Anugrah and Hizra Marisa	124-145
PENETRATING AN ISOLATED MARKET: INDONESIA’S STRATEGIC RATIONALITY IN THE 2023 INDONESIA-IRAN PREFERENTIAL TRADE AGREEMENT by Abutalib Manouchehr Arabi and Imam Mahdi.....	146-179

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THE EFFICACY OF WORK FROM HOME POLICY IN MANAGING IMMIGRATION SERVICE DELIVERY

Gunawan Ari Nursanto, Arief Febrianto, Virra Wirdhiningsih, Muhammad Arief
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Politeknik Imigrasi dan Pemasyarakatan Indonesia

This study examines the efficacy of Work from Home (WFH) policy in Indonesian immigration public service delivery. Unlike general WFH studies that mainly assess employee productivity or work-life balance, this article treats immigration as a public function that combines administrative service delivery, identity verification, border security, and the exercise of sovereign authority. The study adopts a qualitative document-based design supported by limited non-participant observation at five Immigration Offices in the Jabodetabek area. The analytical framework is developed from Efficiency Theory and Digital Transformation Theory. The findings show that WFH is effective only for administrative and document-based functions, such as visa assessment, residence permit administration, internal reporting, and interagency coordination. By contrast, WFH is ineffective for functions that require physical presence, secure equipment, direct legal authority, and officer-user interaction, including passport issuance, biometric capture, border clearance, interviews, detention, and deportation. Field observations indicate that service counters, queue management, document verification, and biometric processes remained critical physical nodes that could not be fully replaced by digital channels. The article proposes a function-based hybrid model that classifies immigration tasks into remote-eligible, hybrid-compatible, and in-person mandatory categories. The success of this model depends on digital maturity, cybersecurity, SIMKIM interoperability, personnel digital competence, and assisted digital service mechanisms for users affected by the digital divide.

Keywords: *Work from Home, Efficiency Theory, Digital Transformation, Immigration Services, Public Sector, Hybrid Work*

INTRODUCTION

Work from Home (WFH), telework, and hybrid work arrangements became central policy instruments during the COVID-19 pandemic because public and private organizations were required to maintain operational continuity while reducing physical interaction. Telework is generally understood as work performed outside the employer's premises through the use of information and communication technology, although the feasibility of telework differs sharply across occupations, sectors, and levels of institutional readiness (ILO, 2020; Eurofound, 2022; OECD, 2021). Economic evidence also shows that only a portion of jobs can be performed entirely from home; Dingel and Neiman (2020), for example, estimated that 37 percent of jobs in the United States were home-workable, implying that task characteristics are central to any assessment of remote work feasibility.

The public sector faces a more complex WFH problem than many private organizations because government work is not only a matter of internal productivity. Public institutions must preserve legal certainty, accountability, equal access, procedural integrity, data security, and citizen trust. In public administration, a service that appears efficient from the internal perspective of reduced office attendance may still be ineffective if it delays service completion, excludes digitally vulnerable users, or weakens accountability. Therefore, the evaluation of WFH in public services must move beyond a narrow productivity lens and examine whether remote work is compatible with the legal, administrative, and operational nature of the service being delivered.

This issue is especially important in immigration services. Immigration is not a routine administrative sector alone; it is a sovereign function concerned with the movement of persons across national borders, the admission and stay of foreign nationals, the issuance of travel documents, the verification of identity, the collection of biometric data, supervision of foreigners, enforcement measures, detention, deportation, and border clearance. Under Indonesian immigration law, immigration affairs concern the traffic of persons entering and leaving Indonesian territory and their supervision for the purpose of upholding state sovereignty (Republic of Indonesia, 2011). This means that immigration service delivery is simultaneously administrative, security-sensitive, rights-sensitive, and legally authoritative.

The pandemic forced immigration institutions to adapt quickly. Some functions could continue through digital platforms, electronic document review, online

coordination, and remote administrative processing. Visa-related document screening, residence permit administration, internal reporting, and policy coordination are examples of tasks that may be carried out without continuous physical presence, provided that digital systems are available and secure. Other functions are fundamentally dependent on physical facilities and direct officer-user interaction. Passport issuance, biometric capture, identity verification, border inspection, interviews, detention management, and deportation cannot be fully displaced into a home-based environment because they require secure equipment, controlled facilities, legal authority, and real-time verification.

The Indonesian case therefore offers a useful analytical setting for assessing the conditional efficacy of WFH in a public service sector that is both digitally transformable and physically constrained. Indonesia has invested in digital immigration systems, including the Sistem Informasi Manajemen Keimigrasian (SIMKIM), online visa mechanisms, and electronic service channels. At the same time, Indonesia's archipelagic geography, uneven digital infrastructure, diverse user groups, and extensive border-control responsibilities create limits to full digital substitution. The key question is not whether WFH is good or bad in general, but which immigration functions can be performed remotely, under what digital and institutional conditions, and with what consequences for efficiency, accessibility, security, and accountability. Accordingly, the central research question is: How efficacious is the Work from Home policy in managing Indonesian immigration service delivery across administrative, hybrid-compatible, and in-person mandatory immigration functions?

Previous studies on WFH have examined employee well-being, productivity, work-life balance, organizational culture, supervision, and digital readiness (Bloom et al., 2015; Bick et al., 2023; McPhail et al., 2024). Comparative research in sectors such as healthcare, education, tax administration, and social services indicates that remote work tends to be effective for administrative and knowledge-based tasks but problematic for functions that require direct physical interaction, field verification, or relational assessment. These sectoral examples are relevant as background, but they should not dominate the analysis of immigration. Immigration services have a distinctive cross-border security dimension that requires a more focused assessment of functional suitability.

This study addresses that gap by examining the efficacy of WFH policy in Indonesian immigration service delivery through two analytical lenses: Efficiency Theory and Digital Transformation Theory. Efficiency Theory helps evaluate the relationship between inputs, outputs, and outcomes in specific immigration functions. Digital

Transformation Theory helps explain whether digital infrastructure, interoperability, data governance, cybersecurity, and workforce capability are sufficient to support remote or hybrid work. The study contributes to public administration scholarship by proposing a function-based hybrid model for immigration services and by clarifying why WFH should be treated as a selective instrument rather than a universal reform model.

The article is organized as follows. The next section develops the analytical framework by explaining the theoretical origins, key proponents, indicators, and justification for the use of Efficiency Theory and Digital Transformation Theory. The method section clarifies the document-based qualitative design and the role of non-participant observation. The findings section presents empirical and documentary findings on functional suitability, observed service patterns, efficiency effects, and digital readiness. The discussion interprets these findings, compares them with international immigration service experiences, and formulates policy implications for a controlled hybrid model in Indonesian immigration services.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Efficiency Theory

Efficiency Theory originates from economic and managerial analysis of how an organization transforms inputs into outputs. Farrell's (1957) work on productive efficiency is widely recognized as a foundational contribution because it conceptualized efficiency as the degree to which a decision-making unit can produce maximum output from a given set of inputs, or use minimum inputs to produce a given output. Later developments, including the data envelopment analysis model of Charnes, Cooper, and Rhodes (1978), extended this logic to organizations and public programs with multiple inputs and outputs. In public administration, efficiency is commonly linked to the "three Es" of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness: economy concerns the cost of inputs, efficiency concerns the conversion of inputs into outputs, and effectiveness concerns the achievement of intended outcomes.

For this article, Efficiency Theory is not used merely to ask whether WFH reduces office costs or commuting time. Such a narrow interpretation would be insufficient for immigration services. Instead, efficiency is operationalized as functional efficiency: the extent to which a work arrangement enables a specific immigration function to produce timely, secure, legally valid, accessible, and accountable service outputs using appropriate

resources. This interpretation is important because a WFH policy may reduce the use of office space and improve administrative flexibility while simultaneously creating queues, delays, or verification risks in front-line services. In that situation, the agency may experience internal cost efficiency while the public experiences service inefficiency.

In the immigration context, the main inputs include officers, working time, digital systems, secure facilities, biometric equipment, document archives, legal authority, and interagency information. The outputs include completed visa assessments, residence permit decisions, passport issuance, verified identities, border clearance decisions, supervision reports, and enforcement actions. The outcomes include legal certainty, service accessibility, national security, data protection, public trust, and user satisfaction. Efficiency therefore depends on the fit between the task and the work setting. Administrative functions that rely on document review and electronic records may be efficient under WFH or hybrid arrangements. Functions that require physical verification, secure equipment, and real-time legal judgment are less likely to be efficient if moved away from controlled immigration facilities.

Efficiency Theory also allows the study to distinguish between output efficiency and outcome efficiency. Output efficiency concerns whether work products continue to be produced, such as reports, document reviews, or decisions. Outcome efficiency concerns whether those outputs generate the expected public service results, such as timely access, accurate identity verification, and secure border control. The distinction is central to this article because WFH may preserve output in back-office work but undermine outcomes when the service requires direct verification or physical processing. This is why the study assesses not only whether officers can work remotely, but also whether the service itself can be completed effectively and securely through remote arrangements.

Digital Transformation Theory

Digital Transformation Theory explains how digital technologies trigger changes in organizational processes, capabilities, structures, and value creation. Vial (2019) defines digital transformation as a process in which digital technologies create disruptions that require strategic organizational responses and lead to structural changes. In the public sector, Mergel, Edelmann, and Haug (2019) emphasize that digital transformation goes beyond digitization or the conversion of paper processes into electronic form. It involves changes in service design, administrative processes, organizational culture, governance

arrangements, and interaction between government and users. Digital transformation therefore requires institutional adaptation, not merely the installation of technology.

Digital Transformation Theory is highly relevant to WFH in immigration services because remote work depends on the ability of digital systems to substitute or support functions that previously depended on physical offices. In immigration governance, digital transformation includes online applications, digital document submission, electronic appointment systems, integrated databases, secure remote access, interoperable information systems, digital supervision tools, cybersecurity protocols, and digitally competent officers. However, it also involves limitations. Certain immigration functions are not digitizable in full because they involve biometric capture, document authenticity checks, interviews, border inspection, and detention-related supervision.

This study operationalizes Digital Transformation Theory through six indicators. The first is digital infrastructure, referring to the availability and reliability of platforms, devices, networks, and service applications. The second is system interoperability, referring to the ability of immigration systems such as SIMKIM to exchange and verify information across service units and agencies. The third is data governance and cybersecurity, referring to role-based access, authentication, encryption, audit trails, and protection of sensitive immigration data. The fourth is process redesign, referring to whether work processes are redesigned for digital or hybrid delivery rather than simply copied from office-based routines. The fifth is workforce digital capability, referring to officer competence in digital service delivery, remote coordination, data handling, and online supervision. The sixth is digital inclusion, referring to whether users with different levels of connectivity, language ability, literacy, and legal awareness can still access services.

The theory is also useful because it prevents an overly technological reading of WFH. Digital transformation is not the same as moving staff home with laptops. A weakly governed remote work arrangement may increase vulnerability if officers access sensitive records from uncontrolled networks or if users cannot complete digital procedures without assistance. Conversely, a mature digital system can support hybrid work by enabling document screening, appointment management, internal coordination, secure reporting, and pre-verification before users attend physical service points. Digital Transformation Theory therefore explains both the potential and the limits of WFH in immigration services.

Justification for Selecting the Two Theories

Efficiency Theory and Digital Transformation Theory were selected because they directly correspond to the two core dimensions of the research problem. The first dimension is operational: whether WFH improves or weakens the conversion of resources into immigration service outputs and outcomes. The second dimension is technological-institutional: whether digital capacity is sufficient to support remote or hybrid work without compromising security, accessibility, and accountability. Taken together, the two theories allow the study to examine both the performance effects of WFH and the enabling conditions required for WFH to function in a sensitive public service sector.

Other theories could plausibly be applied but would be less central to the manuscript's argument. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), for example, would be useful if the study focused on individual user acceptance of digital immigration platforms, but this article examines institutional service delivery rather than user intention to adopt technology. New Public Management could explain cost reduction and performance orientation, but it would not sufficiently capture cybersecurity, interoperability, and digital process redesign. Street-Level Bureaucracy could illuminate officer discretion at service counters, but it would not provide a complete framework for analysing digital infrastructure and remote work feasibility. Organizational Change Theory could explain adaptation during crisis, but it would not provide operational indicators for assessing service efficiency. Therefore, Efficiency Theory and Digital Transformation Theory offer the most appropriate combined framework for evaluating WFH in immigration services.

The two theories are complementary. Efficiency Theory identifies which functions produce gains or losses when moved to remote or hybrid arrangements. Digital Transformation Theory explains why those gains or losses occur by examining whether digital systems, data governance, and organizational capabilities are adequate. The analytical logic of the article is therefore as follows: WFH is effective when a function is administratively document-based, digitally supported, output-measurable, low in physical verification requirements, and protected by secure digital governance. WFH is ineffective when a function depends on physical presence, controlled facilities, biometric equipment, real-time inspection, or direct legal authority that cannot be transferred to a home-based environment.

Table 1. Operationalization of the Analytical Framework

Theory	Core Concept	Immigration-Service Indicator	WFH/Hybrid Relevance	Expected Analytical Use
Efficiency Theory	Input-output-outcome relationship	Officer time, digital systems, secure facilities, biometric equipment, document records, legal authority, service completion	Assesses whether remote work reduces waste or creates bottlenecks in specific functions	Classifies functions according to efficiency gains, losses, and functional fit
Efficiency Theory	Functional efficiency	Processing speed, completion rate, queue burden, service continuity, legal certainty, user accessibility	Identifies whether WFH improves internal productivity while preserving public-facing outcomes	Prevents overstatement of efficiency based only on reduced office attendance
Digital Transformation Theory	Digital infrastructure and process redesign	Online applications, appointment systems, SIMKIM, digital document screening, remote coordination tools	Assesses whether digital systems can support service delivery outside the physical office	Explains why some administrative functions can operate remotely
Digital Transformation Theory	Data governance and cybersecurity	Role-based access, authentication, encryption, audit trails, secure networks, protection of biometric and travel data	Assesses whether remote access can be permitted without increasing institutional risk	Identifies security limits of WFH in immigration services
Digital Transformation Theory	Digital inclusion and workforce capability	Officer digital competence, user digital literacy, connectivity, assisted digital services, multilingual guidance	Assesses whether digital channels remain accessible and manageable	Connects digital transformation with service equity and public trust

Source: Theoretical synthesis based on Farrell (1957), Charnes et al. (1978), Vial (2019), and Mergel et al. (2019).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive-analytical design. In response to the methodological concern raised by the reviewer, the research design is clarified as a document-based qualitative study supported by limited non-participant observation. The observations were not designed to generate statistically representative performance data. Rather, they served as triangulation to verify how immigration service functions were organized in practice and to identify which service nodes remained dependent on physical presence. This clarification is important because the study does not claim to measure causal performance effects through survey, experiment, or administrative big data.

The document analysis examined legal, policy, institutional, academic, and comparative materials. The Indonesian legal and policy documents included Law No. 6 of 2011 on Immigration, Government Regulation No. 31 of 2013 as amended by Government Regulation No. 40 of 2023, Minister of Immigration and Corrections Regulation No. 1 of 2024, and Circular Letter of the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform No. 19 of 2020 on civil servant work arrangements during COVID-19. Academic literature was used to develop the theoretical framework and to situate WFH within broader public administration and digital transformation debates. Comparative international materials were used only in the discussion section to contextualize the Indonesian findings.

Primary field observation was conducted through direct non-participant observation at five Immigration Offices in the Jabodetabek area. To maintain confidentiality and avoid overstating the representativeness of the data, the offices are coded as IO-1, IO-2, IO-3, IO-4, and IO-5. Observation focused on service procedures, queue management, counter-based interaction, digital appointment use, document submission, biometric capture, officer-user interaction, and the distinction between activities that could be prepared digitally and activities that required physical attendance. The field observations were recorded as descriptive field notes rather than structured quantitative measurements.

Data analysis used a deductive-inductive thematic procedure. Deductively, the analysis applied indicators from Efficiency Theory and Digital Transformation Theory, including resource use, processing continuity, output measurability, functional suitability, digital infrastructure, interoperability, cybersecurity, workforce capability, and digital inclusion. Inductively, the study identified recurring themes from documents and field

notes, particularly the distinction between administrative-documentary functions and physical-verification functions. The results are presented in a separate Findings section to improve transparency before theoretical interpretation is developed in the Discussion section.

The study has limitations. The field observation was limited to five immigration offices in Jabodetabek and did not include formal interviews, user surveys, time-motion measurement, or direct access to internal performance dashboards. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as an analytical classification and qualitative assessment rather than a statistical evaluation of WFH productivity. The study nevertheless offers a useful basis for policy formulation because it links documentary analysis, field-observed service characteristics, and theoretical indicators into a function-based model for hybrid immigration service delivery.

Table 2. Data Sources and Their Analytical Use

Data Source	Scope	Use in Analysis	Limitation
Legal and policy documents	Immigration law, implementing regulations, institutional regulations, and WFH circulars	Identify legal requirements, physical-presence obligations, institutional mandates, and policy context	Do not show actual office-level implementation by themselves
Academic literature	Telework, public-sector efficiency, digital transformation, and hybrid work studies	Develop theoretical indicators and justify conceptual framework	Not specific enough to Indonesian immigration without contextualization
International comparative documents	United States, Australia, Portugal, and United Kingdom immigration or passport service experiences	Provide comparative context in the Discussion section	Used as contextual comparison, not as direct evidence for Indonesia

Source: Author's synthesis based on legal and policy documents, academic literature, and international comparative documents used in this study.

FINDINGS

Finding 1: WFH Suitability Depends on Immigration Function Type

The first finding is that WFH suitability in immigration services is function-specific. Document analysis and field observation both indicate that immigration work cannot be treated as a single homogeneous category. Some functions are administrative, document-based, and digitally supportable. Others are front-line, security-sensitive, and physically dependent. The most WFH-compatible functions are those that rely on document screening, internal coordination, data processing, policy drafting, and reporting. These functions can be performed through secure digital systems if outputs are measurable and supervision is based on task completion rather than physical attendance.

By contrast, functions such as passport issuance, biometric capture, identity verification, border clearance, detention, deportation, and complex interviews require physical presence and controlled facilities. In the five observed offices, the most visible service nodes were counter interaction, document verification, queue control, biometric-related service points, and applicant guidance. These activities were not merely administrative; they involved direct legal verification and controlled processing. This finding confirms that WFH cannot be evaluated as an institution-wide policy without first classifying immigration functions according to their physical, legal, and technological requirements.

Table 3. Functional Suitability of WFH in Immigration Services

Immigration Function	WFH/Hybrid Suitability	Main Reason	Evidence Base
Visa application assessment	Remote-eligible / hybrid-compatible	Primarily document-based and can be supported by digital review systems	Document analysis; field observation of document-screening logic
Residence permit administration	Hybrid-compatible	Data and document review can be prepared digitally, although some cases still require physical verification	Document analysis; field observation at IO-1–IO-5
Interagency coordination	Remote-eligible	Coordination can be conducted through digital communication and shared documentation	Policy analysis; literature synthesis

Internal reporting and policy drafting	Remote-eligible	Output-based administrative work with low dependence on public counters	Document analysis
Passport issuance	In-person mandatory	Requires secure equipment, document authenticity checks, production controls, and applicant presence at critical stages	Field observation; legal and procedural analysis
Biometric capture	In-person mandatory	Requires applicant presence and controlled biometric equipment	Field observation at IO-1–IO-5; comparative international evidence
Identity verification and interviews	Primarily in-person / limited hybrid preparation	Requires officer-user interaction, judgment, and legal verification	Field observation; legal analysis
Border clearance at immigration checkpoints	In-person mandatory	Requires real-time inspection at designated border crossing points	Legal analysis; institutional mandate
Detention and deportation	In-person mandatory	Requires supervision, custody, legal authority, and secure facilities	Legal and institutional analysis

Source: Researcher's synthesis from Indonesian immigration legal documents, policy documents, and non-participant observation at IO-1–IO-5, Jabodetabek.

Finding 2: Observation Data Confirmed Physical-Service Bottlenecks and Digital Support Points

The observational data were used to substantively inform the findings by identifying the practical points at which WFH could and could not substitute physical service delivery. Across the five observed offices, the field notes showed a repeated distinction between digital preparation and physical completion. Digital channels could support appointment scheduling, information provision, document pre-screening, and internal coordination. However, applicants still needed physical service points for verification, clarification, biometric-related processes, and counter-based completion of certain services. This pattern supports the argument that WFH is best understood as a complementary arrangement rather than a full replacement for immigration office presence.

The field observations also showed that service accessibility is not only a technological issue. Some users required direct guidance from officers because they were unfamiliar with application requirements, had incomplete documents, or needed clarification about procedural steps. These observations are important because a purely digital or WFH-oriented model may shift administrative burdens to users. If digital channels are expanded without assisted service mechanisms, efficiency gains for officers may become access barriers for applicants.

Table 4. Use of Observation Data in the Findings

Observed Pattern	Observed Across Offices	Analytical Meaning	Use in Article
Applicants still relied on counter-based clarification for incomplete or uncertain requirements	IO-1 to IO-5	Digital information does not fully replace direct service guidance	Supports the digital inclusion and assisted-service argument
Document checking remained a critical service node before further processing	IO-1 to IO-5	Some digital preparation is possible, but legal-administrative validation remains important	Supports hybrid rather than full-WFH classification
Queue management and appointment flow shaped user experience	IO-1 to IO-5	Efficiency must include user-facing waiting time and not only officer productivity	Supports functional efficiency indicators
Biometric-related and physical verification processes required applicant presence	IO-1 to IO-5	Certain functions cannot be transferred to home-based work	Supports in-person mandatory classification
Back-office coordination and reporting were less visible to users and more separable from front counters	IO-1 to IO-5	Administrative functions are more compatible with remote or hybrid work	Supports remote-eligible classification

Source: Researcher's non-participant observation field notes, five Immigration Offices in Jabodetabek, coded IO-1 to IO-5.

Finding 3: Efficiency Gains Were Uneven and Depended on Digital Readiness

The third finding is that WFH generated uneven efficiency effects. For back-office and document-based tasks, WFH offered potential gains through reduced commuting burdens, flexible staffing, continued administrative output, and faster digital coordination. However, these gains did not automatically translate into overall service efficiency. When physical service capacity was reduced, functions such as biometric capture, passport-related processing, and direct verification could experience bottlenecks. The result was an asymmetry between internal administrative continuity and public-facing service completion.

Digital readiness was the main mediating condition. Where digital systems, clear procedures, secure access, and officer capability were available, WFH could support continuity. Where digital infrastructure, cybersecurity protocols, user guidance, or interoperability were weak, WFH risked creating delays, unequal access, and data protection vulnerabilities. Immigration services handle sensitive personal data, including identity records, travel histories, residence status, and biometric information. Therefore, digital transformation must be assessed not only by the availability of online services but also by the maturity of digital governance.

Table 5. Efficiency Effects of WFH in Immigration Services

Aspect	Positive Effect	Negative Effect / Risk	Implication for Hybrid Model
Human resources	Flexible staffing and reduced commuting burden for administrative personnel	Difficult supervision for counter-based and physical-verification functions	Use output-based supervision only for remote-eligible tasks
Operational cost	Reduced routine office presence for selected administrative work	Backlog costs may rise when physical services are delayed	Protect minimum physical-service capacity
Service continuity	Document review, reporting, and coordination can continue during disruption	Passport, biometric, and border services may be interrupted	Classify functions before applying WFH
Processing speed	Faster coordination for document-based tasks	Slower completion where direct verification is required	Combine digital preparation with in-person completion

Accessibility	Digitally capable users may access information and appointments more easily	Users with low digital literacy or weak connectivity may be excluded	Provide assisted digital services and help desks
Security and accountability	Digital logs may improve traceability in some processes	Remote access can expose sensitive immigration data if poorly governed	Strengthen cybersecurity, access control, and audit mechanisms

Source: Researcher's synthesis from theoretical indicators, document analysis, and observation at IO-1–IO-5.

DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that WFH in immigration services is best understood as a selective and conditional policy instrument. Efficiency Theory explains why a uniform WFH policy is unsuitable: different immigration functions require different combinations of inputs, facilities, legal authority, and service outputs. Administrative functions can often be performed remotely because they are document-based and output-measurable. Physical verification functions cannot be fully relocated because their core inputs include applicant presence, secure equipment, controlled facilities, and direct officer judgment. Therefore, efficiency in immigration services must be assessed as functional efficiency rather than general office efficiency.

This interpretation responds directly to the reviewer's concern about conceptual underdevelopment. The revised framework does not merely state that WFH may be efficient; it specifies what efficiency means in immigration services. Efficiency is present when remote or hybrid work maintains service continuity, protects legal validity, preserves data security, reduces unnecessary resource use, and sustains user access. Efficiency is absent when a remote arrangement creates queues, delays, unresolved applications, security exposure, or unequal access. This means that WFH may be efficient for visa document screening but inefficient for biometric capture or border inspection.

Digital Transformation Theory further explains why WFH effectiveness depends on more than the existence of online platforms. The findings show that digital tools can support service continuity, but only when accompanied by process redesign, interoperability, cybersecurity, officer capability, and user assistance. In immigration services, digital transformation must be especially cautious because immigration data includes sensitive personal and security-related information. A home-based working arrangement that allows access to sensitive immigration systems without strong

authentication, encryption, role-based access, device control, and audit trails could weaken institutional performance despite increasing administrative flexibility.

The field observations strengthen this interpretation. Across the five observed offices, physical service points remained essential even when digital channels supported preparation and coordination. Applicants still needed assistance in understanding requirements, completing document submission, and undergoing physical verification. These observations show that WFH cannot be evaluated only from the perspective of agency employees. It must also be assessed from the user side. A digital process that is convenient for officers may be burdensome for users who lack connectivity, digital literacy, language familiarity, or legal-administrative knowledge.

International comparisons support the same functional logic. In the United States, USCIS relied heavily on manual and paper-based processing during the pandemic, and the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General found that this continued reliance slowed benefits delivery during COVID-19. The same report noted the reuse of biometrics for more than 1.1 million applicants during the first half of fiscal year 2021, indicating that administrative adjudication could continue only when the agency found a substitute for in-person biometric collection (DHS Office of Inspector General, 2021). This case reinforces the Indonesian finding that document-based processing can be supported remotely, but biometric and identity functions remain physical-service constraints.

Australia provides a second comparison. The Department of Home Affairs has long used online immigration tools such as ImmiAccount and VEVO, and its COVID-19 period reporting emphasized the continuing importance of border management, immigration, cyber resilience, and travel-facilitation functions (Australian Department of Home Affairs, 2021). At the same time, Australia continued to treat biometrics as a distinct requirement for identity management, with biometric data serving fraud prevention and integrity purposes (Australian Department of Home Affairs, 2026). The Australian case suggests that digital visa processing and online service channels can support hybrid service delivery, but they do not remove the need for controlled biometric and border-management processes.

Portugal illustrates the potential of digital transformation for selected residence-permit functions. The Portuguese government introduced automatic online residence permit renewal, allowing eligible foreign citizens to renew without attending a service desk. A 2020 government notice stated that the functionality enabled around 47,000 residence

permits to be renewed online, and another notice explained that automatic renewal could cover around 90,000 foreign citizens whose permits met the necessary conditions (Government of Portugal, 2020a, 2020b). This provides a useful lesson for Indonesia: functions that are repetitive, rule-based, and document-verifiable can be digitized and made hybrid-compatible, provided that eligibility rules and back-end systems are clear.

The United Kingdom offers a cautionary example. The National Audit Office found that HM Passport Office received 7.2 million passport applications between January and September 2022 after the lifting of COVID-19 travel restrictions. Although about 95 percent of applicants received passports within 10 weeks, around 360,000 applicants waited longer, and HMPO estimated that about five million people had delayed applying during 2020 and 2021 (National Audit Office, 2022). This case shows that when physical or production-related service capacity is constrained, accumulated demand can continue to create backlogs after restrictions are lifted. For Indonesia, the implication is that passport and biometric functions require contingency capacity even if administrative work becomes more digital.

Taken together, these international cases validate the central argument of this article. Immigration services combine digital administrative work and physical sovereign functions. WFH works best where the service is document-based, rule-bound, digitally traceable, and low in physical-verification requirements. It is least suitable where the service depends on biometric capture, border inspection, document authenticity examination, direct interviews, secure production facilities, detention, or deportation. Thus, the appropriate policy is not full WFH but a controlled hybrid model based on functional classification.

The proposed model divides immigration functions into three categories. The first category is remote-eligible functions, including policy drafting, internal reporting, interagency coordination, document pre-screening, and certain visa or permit assessments. These functions can be performed remotely if outputs are measurable and digital access is secure. The second category is hybrid-compatible functions, including residence permit administration, appointment management, preliminary document checks, user guidance, and case preparation. These functions may begin digitally but still require physical completion for selected users or cases. The third category is in-person mandatory functions, including passport issuance, biometric capture, border clearance, detention, deportation, and complex identity verification. These must remain anchored in controlled immigration facilities.

This model has several policy implications. First, the Ministry of Immigration and Corrections should develop a formal WFH Eligibility Classification Framework for immigration functions. Classification should be based on output measurability, security sensitivity, need for physical equipment, requirement of direct interaction, and dependence on digital systems. Second, WFH-eligible functions should be governed through output-based performance indicators, including processing time, completion rate, accuracy, response time, complaint resolution, and compliance with data-security procedures. Third, in-person mandatory functions should be protected through minimum service capacity, surge staffing, demand forecasting, and appointment management to prevent backlogs during disruption.

Fourth, SIMKIM and related digital platforms should be strengthened as the backbone of hybrid immigration service delivery. However, platform development must be accompanied by cybersecurity governance, including multi-factor authentication, role-based access control, encryption, device-security standards, access logs, and regular audits. Fifth, human resource development should focus on digital competency for both officers and supervisors. Remote work requires not only technical skills but also the ability to coordinate teams, supervise outputs, communicate clearly through digital channels, and protect sensitive information.

Sixth, digital transformation must remain inclusive. Immigration service users are diverse, including Indonesian citizens, foreign nationals, migrant workers, students, investors, refugees, asylum seekers, elderly applicants, and users with different levels of digital literacy. The expansion of digital channels should therefore be accompanied by assisted digital service desks, multilingual guidance, hotline support, and clear procedural information. These mechanisms prevent WFH and digitalization from becoming tools of administrative convenience that unintentionally exclude vulnerable users.

Finally, the methodological revision strengthens the article's transparency. The revised manuscript no longer leaves observational data invisible. It clarifies that field observation was limited, non-participant, and triangulatory. It also shows how observation informed the classification of functions and the assessment of physical-service bottlenecks. This avoids the misleading impression that the study is either a purely empirical field study or a purely literature review. The revised design is more accurately described as document-based qualitative analysis supported by field observation for functional validation.

CONCLUSION

This article examined the efficacy of WFH policy in Indonesian immigration public service delivery by using Efficiency Theory and Digital Transformation Theory as its analytical framework. The study finds that WFH is not a universally effective model for immigration services. It is effective for administrative, document-based, and digitally supported functions, but ineffective for front-line, biometric, security-sensitive, and physically dependent functions. The central contribution of the article is the concept of functional efficiency: remote work is efficient only when it supports the operational requirements, legal validity, security needs, and user-facing outcomes of a specific immigration function.

The revised analysis also shows that digital transformation is both an enabler and a constraint. Digital systems such as SIMKIM, online applications, and digital coordination platforms can support hybrid work, but their effectiveness depends on interoperability, cybersecurity, process redesign, officer competence, and user inclusion. Technology adoption alone cannot justify WFH if sensitive data becomes vulnerable or users are excluded from service access.

The article therefore recommends a controlled hybrid model for Indonesian immigration services. Remote work should be permitted for functions that are document-based and output-measurable. Hybrid arrangements should be used for functions that can be prepared digitally but completed physically. Full in-person delivery should be maintained for passport issuance, biometric capture, border clearance, detention, deportation, and complex identity verification. This model allows immigration agencies to preserve the administrative gains of WFH while protecting legal certainty, national security, service accessibility, and public trust.

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