

ICMC 2023**The 3rd International Conference on Management and Communication****WORKING FROM HOME AND JOB PERFORMANCE: THE ROLE
OF EMPLOYEE WORK MOTIVATION**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of work-from-home (WFH) practices on the performance of academics under the drastic circumstances of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). This study's population comprised faculty members from a higher education institution in Kelantan, Malaysia. Work-from-home policies are widely used due to their great efficacy in reducing physical encounters in the workplace and reducing Covid-19 transmission. Remote employment has emerged as a fresh technique to conducting business activities. Many people are discovering profitable alternatives for home-based enterprises. However, several industries are unable to run smoothly when people work remotely, which has added stress to already difficult situations for both firms and individuals. Numerous scholarly studies have revealed that remote work arrangements have both positive and negative outcomes. A systematic questionnaire in printed form was created and distributed to 69 employees in Jeli, a rural location in the state of Kelantan. With a special focus on the Malaysian environment, this study examines the limited amount of information on the implications of remote work on employee performance during lockdown measures adopted to reduce the spread of Covid-19. The study's findings reveal that remote work has a significant influence on employee performance, creating a strong and positive link with motivation acting as a moderator. The findings of this study provide a foundation for improving existing approaches for obtaining optimal performance among faculty members in the higher education area when working remotely.

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Keywords: Academics, Employee Motivation, Job Performance, Work From Home

1. Introduction

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious respiratory and vascular illness caused by SARS coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). While the epidemic killed thousands of people, it also impacted the business and social elements of life (Irshad et al., 2021). WHO recommended social separation as the first prevention measure. Every country shut down its schools, colleges, and universities. Online education has emerged as a crucial resource for both students and academics, providing essential support and opportunities for learning. Assignments were distributed to students electronically, leveraging the internet as a medium. Additionally, lectures were delivered through live video conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Google Meets, Facebook, YouTube, and Skype. WhatsApp groups are utilised as a means of facilitating communication and information sharing among students, academics, and guardians, with the primary purpose of keeping them updated on class schedules. Online learning is often regarded as the optimal solution and is unequivocally better to a complete absence of learning (Jena, 2020).

The global pandemic of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has prompted individuals to reassess various behaviors encompassing business, leisure, travel, and routine responsibilities. As a result, several economic sectors have stagnated, having an effect not only on individuals but even on entire countries. Despite the presence of high expectations and repeated warnings, notably from public health specialists, the challenge persisted as a substantial transformation that necessitated adequate preparation, training, and facilitation. Despite society's psychological preparedness, the enormity and solution remain incomprehensible and pose a severe issue. The novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19, commenced its transmission among individuals in December of 2019. This particular virus belongs to the similar Betacoronavirus as the coronaviruses which contribute to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) as well as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) (Petrosillo et al., 2020). Given the current understanding, it is widely acknowledged that respiratory droplets serve as the predominant mode of transmission, leading to the inference that the disease disseminates mostly through close interpersonal proximity. The right use of masks, using social isolation strategies, and regularly exercising hand hygiene are now the only ways to prevent the transmission of viruses (Sutarto et al., 2021). On January 31, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially designated the COVID-19 outbreak as a global health emergency. The infection has since quickly spread.

As of November 26, 2020, the global dissemination of the virus has occurred rapidly, resulting in over 60 million confirmed cases and in excess of 1.4 million verified fatalities (Safitri & Padmantlyo, 2022). Numerous governments worldwide have implemented and subsequently enforced rigorous lockdown measures, encompassing the closure of non-essential businesses and the prohibition of non-essential gatherings, in order to mitigate the risk of overwhelming healthcare facilities due to the rapid transmission of COVID-19. In order to reduce in-person encounters, a number of individuals' coworkers have advocated for the adoption of social distancing measures, encouraging their compatriots to prioritize staying at home and minimizing contact with others. It is strongly recommended that authorities and event organizers undertake a comprehensive risk assessment for their activities in light of the ongoing pandemic in order to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone. In order to assess the security of forthcoming public gatherings, the World Health Organization (WHO) has developed a risk assessment tool that can be employed by relevant stakeholders. The evaluation of this instrument is based on three

fundamental components: risk communication, risk mitigation, and risk evaluation (Sultana et al., 2021). The collected data is promptly integrated into a Decision Matrix, wherein the complete risk score, ranging from 0 to 5, is juxtaposed with the total mitigation score to evaluate the comprehensive risk of transmission and dissemination, spanning from exceedingly low to exceedingly high percentages. It is imperative for employers to do a comprehensive risk assessment specifically tailored to the coronavirus within the workplace, considering everyone, to guarantee the safety of their on-site employees.

Due to COVID-19 pandemic, various countries have implemented lockdown and social isolation measures, resulting in the closure of schools, training centers, and higher education institutions. Consequently, students are mandated to remain at home. A major change has occurred in how educators deliver high-quality training using several online channels. Working from home for educators entails delivering lectures online. To stop coronavirus epidemics, the government adopted strategic measures. These regulations have benefits and drawbacks, particularly for remote workers. Online learning, remote learning, and continuing education have been identified as potential solutions for addressing the unprecedented global health crisis, despite the various obstacles that educators and students alike need to navigate (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). The adoption of "Education in Emergency" by the educational system and academic institutions has been facilitated through various online platforms, necessitating their utilization of a system for which they may not have been well trained.

Therefore, academics must also work remotely. During the epidemic, the WFH capacity varies between different countries. Based on research (Barrot et al., 2021; Dingel & Neiman, 2020), approximately 40% of employment in the United States and Europe has the potential to be conducted remotely, whereas in emerging nations, this proportion ranges from 29.6% to 31.2%. Globally, there is a possibility that around 16.67% of all employment opportunities might be conducted remotely (ILO, 2020). Despite being a commonly observed working arrangement, the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on productivity has exhibited variability. According to research among Japanese workers, employee productivity decreased, although a survey in the USA found a little gain (Sutarto et al., 2022). Nowadays, a lot of businesses permit government-regulated remote employment. Most companies investigated other options, such allowing workers to work from home, to maintain corporate operations (Adam et al., 2023).

However, it is still unclear how working from home would affect an employee's capacity to do their duties. Previous studies have also revealed that working from home (WFH) improves the satisfaction in workplace (Khan et al., 2022). The practice of remote work enables individuals to circumvent the expenditure of time, finances, and resources associated with commuting or being physically present in a traditional office setting (Morikawa, 2022). According to Susilo (2020), remote workers have more freedom to plan their time for appointments and household duties. By avoiding commuting, they also save time and money. Research has demonstrated that engaging in remote work arrangements has been associated with positive effects on individuals' overall well-being and performance results. Additionally, such arrangements have been found to enhance work-life balance, reduce commuting durations, and provide employees with increased autonomy in terms of both temporal and spatial flexibility within their work environment (Sutarto et al., 2022). Office workers have more freedom when they work from home. Scholars have posited that the implementation of remote work arrangements may foster a work

environment characterized by more flexibility, as employees experience a sense of empowerment in selecting their own schedules and working conditions (Susilo, 2020).

Several challenges, including the presence of a high-context culture within the country, a lack of dedicated workstations and finishing tools, and a poor internet connection, may potentially limit the productivity of an efficient work-from-home (WFH) arrangement (Mustajab et al., 2020; Suarlan, 2018). A qualitative investigation conducted in the Indonesian context revealed several benefits and obstacles associated with remote work, subsequently leading to a decrease in productivity (Mustajab et al., 2020). Conversely, an investigation by Sutarto et al. (2022) discovered that the main obstacles to working from home include the lack of a designated workplace, a lack of tools and ICT assistance, interference with work-life balance, inadequate communication, and social isolation. Sutarto et al. (2021) examined the obstacles associated with working from home (WFH), which encompassed several aspects such as multitasking, social isolation, diminished job passion, increased financial burden, distraction, and constrained communication.

Numerous governmental entities, particularly the Public Higher Institution in Malaysia, have established regulations permitting their employees to engage in remote work, as evidenced by the Public Service Department's release of a sample letter including comprehensive instructions for the implementation of telecommuting. This is because COVID-19 was established (Hashim & Muhamad, 2021). That undoubtedly will affect management across all facets of corporate operations (Mukhathi et al., 2022). The work-from-home policy will contribute to the ultimate triumph of humanity. On the other side, this will make work oversight more difficult for both the employee and the business.

Moreover, there is a dearth of research on this matter from a Malaysian perspective, particularly among scholars residing in rural areas. The objective of this study is to examine the influence of remote work on employee performance, with work motivation serving as a mediating variable. The Malaysian government, with a vested interest in assessing the efficacy of its work-from-home policy in response to the outbreak, will find significant value in this newly conducted study. It can also serve as a tool to aid corporations and governments in determining whether to endorse legislation that permits employees to telecommute or explore alternative options.

2. Research Gaps

The concept of job performance holds significant importance within the field of industrial and organizational psychology, and it refers to the measurable actions, attitudes, and outcomes that employees take inside of organisations. The degree to which employee behaviours support company goals is another characteristic of it. How successfully a task is completed is influenced by a person's characteristics (experience and aptitude), results (such as feedback and job security), the work environment, and education. The general individual factors affecting work performance include declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge and talents, and motivation. Considering our objectives, it is important to note the findings of Waldman and Spangler, who developed an integrated model of job performance impacted by person traits (experience, aptitude), outcomes (feedback, job security), as well as work environment. Employees in Romania can do their tasks more effectively thanks to a variety of innate factors, which fosters a sense of appreciation and serve as a source of motivation for them to actively pursue the goals

and objectives set forth by the business. This improves engagement at work, reduces absences, raises self-confidence, and lessens emotional fluctuations related to the job.

In order to improve employee performance, it is important to take into account several factors such as self-determination, job security, authority, responsibility, autonomy in the workplace, comfort, career prospects, benefits, professional development, job appeal, and remuneration. The key factors for fostering a productive work environment include efficient communication between management and employees, early allocation of tasks, and the provision of recognition and competitive compensation. The work adjustment theory states that work flexibility improves job performance and employee engagement. Balasundran et al. (2021) shown through empirical evidence that employee dedication played a mediating role in the association between work flexibility and job performance. Furthermore, their study proved a noteworthy influence of time flexibility on labor productivity. Research conducted by Mustajab et al. (2020), Nugraha et al. (2022), and Melinda et al. (2022) suggests that performance can be enhanced by work flexibility. Research has also demonstrated that investments in human capital enhance employee employability, labour market stability, and capability to adapt to shifting global labour conditions, in addition to improving work performance (Balasundran et al., 2021). To entice the best talent and increase employee productivity, businesses are now putting more and more emphasis on workplace flexibility. Since flexibility is a desirable quality that both employers and job seekers highly value, it is essential in the labour market. The present study aims to elucidate the impact of emerging forms of workspace flexibility on various aspects such as time and space management, comfort, personal and professional relationships, learning and professional development, as well as work motivation. To achieve this objective, a set of hypotheses has been formulated, drawing upon existing theoretical frameworks.

3. Research Objective

In order to accomplish the goal of the research, the subsequent objective is formulated:

- i. To examine the impact of working from home on job performance among academics in Politechnic Kota Bharu, Jeli Campus.

4. Literature Review

4.1. Job performance

The performance of a business is fundamentally influenced by three key aspects, namely the employee, the workplace, and the market (Sultana et al., 2021). Individuality encompasses various aspects such as preferences, ambitions, ideals, knowledge, nature, abilities, professional path, and interests, being the primary determinant. The second notable determinant is the organizational environment, encompassing core competencies, broader context, industrial maturity, organizational strategic position, structure, and processes. The third element pertains to work demand, encompassing the many responsibilities, tasks, and obligations assigned to each employee.

The optimal performance (best fit) inside an organization can be achieved by integrating several components, such as individual aspects, the environment, and the activities and responsibilities undertaken by human resources, including organizational leaders. The influence of the organizational

environment on a leader's capacity to fulfill responsibilities and engage in activities aimed at attaining optimal organizational performance has been highlighted by Sultana et al. (2021). This impact is attributed to the alignment of values, qualities, styles, and expertise within the organizational context. Enhancing the efficacy of a company can be achieved through the employment of proficient and well-trained personnel. This finding supports the central argument of the research. The present study employs self-reported work motivation as an independent variable to forecast job performance. Given that the work-from-home employees were already employed prior to the implementation of the policy, it was hypothesized that the employment expectations would be incongruent with the research design.

The potential for enhancing productivity may be heightened with the capacity to customize and modify one's work environment while operating remotely from home. The availability of remote work options has led to a decrease in both the amount of time and financial resources individuals allocate towards their professional endeavors. Moreover, it facilitates the cultivation of employees' autonomy, thereby enhancing their emotional well-being and overall efficiency inside the workplace (Marbun & Purba, 2021). There is a positive correlation between the frequency of remote work and the level of motivation exhibited by individuals. Consequently, it has the potential to improve their overall performance (Nuur et al., 2021). Considering its potential to enhance motivation for both individual and organizational objectives, employing this method may prove advantageous in improving employee performance. The significance of employee motivation cannot be overstated as it plays a crucial role in enhancing productivity and work efficiency, both of which are widely recognized as key indicators of effective job performance (Purwanto et al., 2020). According to the studies conducted by Sultana et al. (2021) and Toniolo-Barrios and Pitt (2021), there is a theoretical association between work motivation and job performance. These researchers examined the impact of work environment and motivation on performance. Furthermore, he asserted that the presence of job satisfaction mitigates the influence of motivation and the work environment on work performance. The probability of attaining an organization's objectives is enhanced when employees exhibit a high level of motivation in carrying out their job responsibilities. Hence, organizations must allocate significant focus to this matter.

4.2. Work from home

The work-from-home (WFH) strategy implemented to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has yielded several unforeseen outcomes. According to Anh et al. (2022), many people, including both employees and businesswomen, may profit from working remotely. One advantage of achieving work-life balance is the potential to enhance efficiency and save time. The said factors could draw top talent, present attractive job prospects, and even speed up economic growth in rural places. The absence of office amenities such as computers and communication tools in a work-from-home setting adversely impacts performance. The researchers reached the determination that the feasibility of remote work was contingent upon the presence of a dedicated workspace within one's residence. The absence of a well-developed remote work support infrastructure within the organization renders the option of working from home impractical for factory workers who sometimes require breaks (Rožman et al., 2021).

According to Pristiyono et al. (2020), the provision of increased autonomy in work schedule management enhances organizational performance without concomitant elevations in workplace stress or

weariness. The level of an employee's motivation is contingent upon the extent of control they possess over their working hours. Hence, the worker's performance is enhanced. WFH alters current workplace behaviour by efficiently utilising its people resources. One should be motivated to work in an office just by the shift. Therefore, it requires organisational backing and workplaces that permit employees to work remotely. It is recommended that organizations and businesses implement a work-from-home (WFH) policy in order to offer comfort and safeguard all employees against the detrimental effects of stress and the transmission of the Covid-19 virus. The proposed approach aims to foster courteous conduct inside the workplace and incentivize employees to exert diligent efforts, all the while safeguarding their privacy and preserving their sense of self-worth (Awit & Marticio, 2022). Management may respect employees' rights to privacy and dignity to keep them motivated. The future significance of investigating the impact of legislation enabling remote work on employee behavior and attitudes towards employers and coworkers cannot be overstated. The performance of employees may be influenced by the implementation of WFH. WFH often facilitates schedule modifications and offers more flexible working hours, which may aid businesses in keeping their staff members.

Numerous studies demonstrate the many benefits, including how employees exhibit enhanced performance, increased work effort, and reduced levels of stress inside the workplace. Rupiotta and Beckmann (2018) argue that the implementation of remote work arrangements has significant implications for enterprises and organizations, as it necessitates a reevaluation of operational strategies in order to achieve a sustainable competitive edge in the long run. In the current era of rapid technological advancement, it is imperative for companies and organizations to adapt to the principles and practices of human resource management. In the event that such circumstances arise, businesses or organizations, including smaller entities within or a conventional establishment, will reach a critical juncture leading to potential failure. WFH is now one of several elements that influence businesses to alter their behaviour. These factors encompass the necessity of financial investment, the cost of living, and the influence of energy prices, sometimes driven by elevated transportation costs (Safian et al., 2021). Efficient allocation of resources is crucial for the effective management of human resources within a business or organization.

Based on the aforementioned literature evaluation, the present study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1. Working from home has a positive and significant effect on Job Performance.

5. Method

This study utilised a collection of surveys to collect quantitative data through a quantitative procedure. In non-experimental research, correlational studies are chosen. According to Salkind (2012), the purpose of a correlational study is to demonstrate how two or more items are related, the similarities they may share, or how well one or more inputs can predict an output. He also explains how to measure the intensity of the relationship using the correlation coefficient, a numerical index. Thus, a correlational investigation will be prioritised and implemented. An online survey that was given to instructors in Jeli yielded 69 responses, which were used to compile the data. Following the government's announcement of the implementation of the Movement Control Order (MCO) in March 2020, individuals were

inadvertently selected and proceeded to fulfill their responsibilities remotely, adhering to the established work-from-home (WFH) protocols set by their respective organizations. The demographic data pertaining to the participants can be found in Section A of the survey, where the respondents are instructors at Politeknik Kota Bahru Jeli Campus and their job nature is educator. In Section B, questions regarding working from home are raised. The rating of each variable was conducted using a Likert scale consisting of five points, with 1 representing severe disagreement and 5 representing strong agreement (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019). The said data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 26.0. The research hypothesis was addressed using regression analysis in this study.

6. Findings

6.1. Survey return rate

Table 1. Details of Distributed Questionnaires

Number of questionnaires distributed	Number of questionnaires returned	Percentage returned (%)	Number of valid questionnaires	Percentage valid (%)
76	69	90	69	100.0

Based on Table 1 above, 69 questionnaires were returned in total, contributing to a 90% response rate. The 69 returned surveys have all been reviewed, and none of them have any missing values. Basically, 61.2% of respondents are female and 38.8% are male, according to study of their demographic features. Majority of respondents (37.3%) are between the ages of 31 and 40.

6.2. Descriptive statistics

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Work from home

Variables	Mean	SD
Working from home	4.76	.32
Job performance	4.32	.36

On the study's variables, a descriptive analysis was done. The analysis' findings, including the mean value and standard deviation of each variable, are shown in Table 2 above. The average values fall between 4.32 and 4.76. The values of the standard deviation range from .32 to .36. The work from home option has the greatest mean value (4.76), while job performance has the lowest mean value (4.32).

6.3. Reliability analysis

Table 3. Reliability Analysis for Work from Home and Job Performance

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Working from home	7	0.795
Job performance	7	0.993

The Cronbach's Alpha value for working from home as an independent variable is 0.795, as seen in Table 3 above. The data show that the measures' Cronbach's Alpha scores were adequate and good. The Cronbach's Alpha using job performance as the dependent variable, which is 0.993, also supports

this. Nunnally (1978) is frequently connected with the idea that fundamental research instruments should have a dependability of .70 or above. A reliability of .80, on the other hand, may not be sufficient for instruments used in applied settings. When crucial judgments concerning an individual's fate are based on test scores, reliability should be at least .90, preferably .95 or higher. This is supported by Bougie and Sekaran (2019) that reliability below .60 is regarded as bad, between .70 and .80 is acceptable, and above .80 is good.

6.4. Regression Analysis

Table 4. Results of Regression Analysis with Job Performance as the Dependent Variable

Independent variables	Standardized Beta Values
WFH	.293*
R	.385
R squared	.148
F values	6.252
Significant F values	.003
Durbin Watson	2.134

Table 4 reveals that the R squared value is 14.8%, meaning that the independent variables account for 14.8% of the variation in the regression model. Model fit is indicated by the significance F value ($F=6.252, p=0.003$), while the Durbin Watson value is 2.134, which is still within the acceptable range. PU ($=.293, p01$) is discovered to be a significant predictor when examining the individual contributions of independent variables in explaining work from home as the dependent variable. The idea is therefore supported. Based on the results, work from home is determined to be a significant predictor when each independent variable's contribution to explaining job performance as the dependent variable is taken into account ($=.293, p01$).

7. Conclusions

This study has contributed to a substantial increase in the body of knowledge regarding the impact of working from home on job performance. Working from home (WFH) has a substantial impact on the level of motivation exhibited by individuals in their job endeavors. This study has a substantial impact on the existing body of knowledge concerning the influence of working from home on job performance. The study's shortcomings open up fresh avenues for investigation in the future. The utilization of a longitudinal study would provide a suitable framework for elucidating the conclusions of the investigation, given its cross-sectional nature. University academics from East Coast universities made up the study's sample so that further investigation of the effects of working from home on the West Coast region could be pursued in future studies. Subsequent investigations could explore the potential moderating elements, such as coping strategies, support from the business, employee self-efficacy, or resilience, that could significantly influence the phenomenon of working from home and its effects on employee job performance. Future research may also concentrate on how WFH improves academic achievement as well as the well-being of students in terms of their mental, physical, and social aspects.

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