

Working From Home on Job Performance During COVID-19: A Pilot Study of Malaysia Public Higher Education Institutions' Academics

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Abstract. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a worldwide change in working patterns between employees' work environments and their homes in order to reduce exposure to deadly infections. This pilot study sought to investigate the impact of innovative work practices on job performance among Malaysian researchers at higher education institutions. The findings revealed that new work practices and work motivation had a substantial impact on academics' job performance. Work motivation was confirmed as a moderating element in academics' job performance while working from home in the study. The research conducted confirmed that job motivation influences academics work performance while working from home.

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

1. Introduction

Many governments throughout the world struggle to put strict regulations into place while still trying to stop additional economic loss. As a result, work from home (WFH) emerges as the best option, including for public organisations [1]. The World Health Organization recommended to stop the virus from spreading while also providing a way to carry on with business as usual [2]. Work from home refers to doing the regular work done in the office from home, which is one of the terminology for remote working [3]. By eliminating the need for a commute to work, it has the ability to reduce the exposure of COVID-19 among employees. The Malaysian government has instructed a few movement control order (MCO) keeping a safe distance and perform the work activities at home to minimise the transmission of COVID-19 [4]. Pursuant to the International Labour Organization, lockdown measures have touched roughly 81 percent of the world's workforce (International Labour Organization 2020). One of the major consequences of the epidemic was the relocation of most enterprises' human resources to their homes and the acceptance of remote work [5].

Top management and specifically Human Resource personnel are obligated for foresee and establish new procedures as part of the WFH programme. A proposal for new concept and practices of WFH had been published by The Minister of Higher Education in response to the need of the implementation [4]. The main concern is the teaching and learning activities and working at home that ought to be done from home during the COVID-19-impacted regions. Like many other elements of everyday life, the coronavirus illness had a huge consequences on educational institutions, including students and academics throughout the world [6]. As a result of new policy implemented, higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide have take the place of their classrooms with online remote

learning (Ibrahim et al., 2020). The provision resulted to the delivery of online courses, online administration work and meetings. The practice of virtual work expanded dramatically amid Malaysia's movement restrictions, with the exception of individuals delivering important services, who were prevented from reporting to their places of employment in order to avoid having in-person meetings [7].

Working from home is becoming more widespread in several countries, with the number of employees forecast to double on an annual basis [8]. Teleworking enhances job efficiency, lowers work-family imbalance, lessens anxiety, and reduces intent to quit the job [9]. Reduced stress from not having to commute, the ability to lower the household expenditure, monitor family members simultaneously, and less procrastinate on unproductive overtime are all benefits of working from home [11]. Employees might save income by working from home by reducing travel, food (consuming out for brunch and lunchtime), and childcare costs. When employees work from home, businesses save money on things like rent, water, and electricity [7].

However, a few constraints, such as the country's context-sensitive situations culture, a shortage of specialized workstations and finishing tools, and a poor internet connection, could limit an effective WFH's potential output [1]. Academics in Malaysian as well as at the east coast state namely Kelantan also facing the difficulty in term of employee's quality of work during this restriction period. Therefore, this study aims to examine the implementation of WFH and its impact to work performance among academic staff at a public higher education institution in Kelantan. Using work motivation as a moderating variable, this current research examines how working from home influences academics' job performance.

Additionally, there has been little study on this issue in Malaysia, particularly by intellectuals [12][13]. The Malaysian government, which wants to know how well its freelance work strategy performed during the outbreak, will gain immensely from this novel research strategy. It can also be used to help firms and governments decide whether to support legislation that allows people to work from home or to check into alternatives. Before using the full-scale sample, a pilot test, which uses a smaller sample size of the study, is conducted [14]. The researchers completed a pilot test to analyze the tool's reliability and validity, as well as to get a sense of where things are in terms of problem detection and resolution [15]. The results of that study are presented in this paper.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Job Performance

Job performance is determined by how well an individual applies his or her abilities, skills, and aptitudes in the context of a job within an organization [17]. The complexities of the job have an impact on performance, which is defined in a variety of ways according to its various stages and complications [18]. Job performance is referred to as task proficiency, and it is assessed on the job by one's current manager [19]. The Concept of Action and Work states that The individual, the organizational climate, and the type of work all have a substantial impact on an organization's effectiveness [20].

2.2 Working From Home and Job Performance

For the COVID-19 circumstance, knowledge, abilities, and confidence in the efficacy of online education are required [6]. As a result of the pandemic-related lockdown of higher education institutions, academics have to improvise new methods of instruction approximating "emergency remote teaching" [21]. For academics, working from home entails giving online courses from home. While studying from home, academics must be aware of the interactions between the three key components of the learning atmosphere: content, pedagogy, and tech. [22]. At the same time, working from home will also save employees money and time. It also fosters a sense of independence in employees that positively impacts their achievement [6]. Prior research has also demonstrated that working from home (WFH) increases worker satisfaction. People who conduct business from home conserve time, cash, and other assets that might otherwise be spent on travel or at work [23]. They continue to choose not to dress formally when at work so that they can more freely connect their work with their genuine selves. The WFH is now less depressed and hence less likely to change occupations, which results in lower employee turnover. Thus, the hypotheses were proposed:

H1: Working from home has a positive significant effect on job performance.

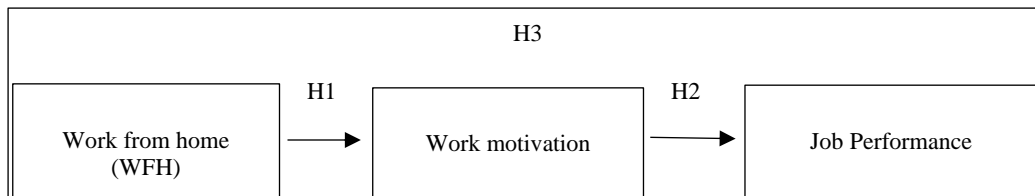
2.3 Work From Home and Work Motivation

Previous research has emphasised that teleworking may result in increases in intrinsic motivation by enabling employees to localize their professional activities in a friendlier and more enjoyable environment [24]. Contrarily, as employee find their regular home obligations interlaced with their professional requirements, the abrupt and drastic move to a largely working from home altered the previous work norm and policies previously stipulated by the organization. Employees are feeling stress, anxiety, and burnout symptoms as a result of the COVID-19 new work policy and it increasingly rose from time to time [25]. Employee job performance is impacted positively, greatly, and indirectly by motivational rewards [26]. It is conceivable to draw the conclusion that WFH's impact on performance is mediated by motivation [7]. Accordingly, remote working has been found to have good benefits on individuals' motivation, satisfaction, and productivity as well as their work-life balance and absenteeism. It has also been found to improve the performance of the entire organisation [27]. Employee motivation is an important aspect in enhancing efficiency and efficacy, both of which are commonly recognized as indications of great job performance [28].

H2: Work from home has a positive and significant effect on work motivation.

H3: Work motivation mediates the effect of working from home on job performance.

2.4 Research Framework



Although the majority of the questionnaire items were modified from a well-known device, a pilot test was conducted prior to the intended test to guarantee clear wording and topic relevancy.

Furthermore, the method is thought to be vital in any research to assure the precision and uniformity of the replies acquired via surveys [29]. The pre-test study sample should be between 15 and 30 participants [11]. This is because one of the most commonly utilized quantities of the dependability measurement, inter-item consistency reliability, is regarded as the ideal measure of the pilot experiment [15]. The first pilot test was conducted in April 2022 to prepare the items and assess the dependability of every device aspect. To create and distribute the online survey to 30 academics from public higher education institution in Peninsular Malaysia's east coast, a Google form was employed. However, based on the first pilot test, only 10 of respondents' response to our online questionnaire. Therefore, second pilot test was conducted in Jun 2022. A total of 30 academics from public higher education institution namely in Jeli, Kelantan participated in this pilot test. The academics were selected for the pilot test because they are from the similar field that is education. A previous study of 157 undergraduate students done by [30] found that 100 of the sample answered the printed questionnaire initially. Seven days later, ten students responded to the online questionnaire. As a result, it demonstrates that the traditional method is still relevant.

However, [31] on the comparison of the printed and online administration questionnaire highlighted that there is no difference result by using two different formats (either the questionnaire is distributed through online or hard copy). Moreover, it is expected that distributing surveys online lessens respondents' tendency to offer socially acceptable responses. This is due to the possibility that computers might create an environment in which people feel more impersonal and less concerned with how others may see them. Moreover, [13] study compared the response rates, data completeness, and cost of various invitation methods: traditional paper printed questionnaire and online questionnaire found out that there is a higher return rate using traditional paper printed. There is a low return rate through online survey, but online survey was somewhat more affordable and had fewer missing values compared to surveys issued with paper based. Offering an online questionnaire provides several benefits over conventional printed data collecting techniques. These benefits include less administrative expenses, quicker data collection, more accurate response recording, easier access to participants, increased sense of privacy and decreased ecological effect [31]. Therefore, in the future, distributing online surveys might be a great way to gather data for study.

2. Result and Discussion

3.1 Measurement of Variables and Instrumentation

The survey that was used for the study was fully completed and comprised multiple-choice and open-ended items. To meet the criteria for establishing scales for latent concepts in social science research, the independent, mediating, and dependent variables were assessed using a Likert scale with a score of five [32].

3.2 Reliability Test

Along with the face and content validity checks, a reliability test needs to be done. Although there are alternative reliability tests, academics prefer the internal consistency reliability test

[33]. At this stage, the elements "dangle together as a set," and the same concept can be measured independently in terms of how closely the pieces are connected [15]. As a result, it was used in the present research to evaluate the mechanism's internal coherence.

Testing and validation are still required even though concept measurements were drawn from past studies and literature [29]. The data were analyzed with SPSS version 27, and the results show that the items are reliable, with reliability ratings ranging from 0.883 to 0.987.

Table 1
Each variable's dependability and size for the pilot test

Constructs	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Work From Home	7	0.910
Work Motivation	8	0.883
Job Performance	7	0.987

3.3 Data Distribution

For inferential statistical processes, the normality test is the acknowledged standard [14]. The distribution of scores for each variable is referred to as being normal. The skewness and kurtosis of the data distribution can be changed to test for normality [29]. This is done so that skewness and kurtosis can be tested empirically by some statistical programs. Taking this into consideration, the metric variables for Skewness and Kurtosis should be between -1.96 and +1.96 [29]. The present investigation's data analysis found that the skewness and kurtosis were normal and within the expected ranges of -1.96 and +1.96 [33].

4. Conclusion

To prepare for a larger examination, this pilot study assessed the validity and reliability of the assessment techniques. In order to make the necessary modifications prior to the bigger study, professionals were used in this investigation, which used a small sample size of thirty respondents for the pilot study. The results obtained for skewness and kurtosis were all within the predicted range, indicating that the data was normally distributed. This study's findings indicate that work employment and home motivation have an important effect on academic job performance. None published studies, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, dealt with the job performance of academics in Kelantan during COVID-19. The study has a broader context since public higher education institution in Malaysia plays a significant role in future human development. The outcomes of this study will help top management and policymakers at public institutions of higher learning raise awareness of the importance of improving academic well-being. It is important to take the appropriate steps to prevent jeopardising their ability to do their jobs and motivation to do so.

Finally, it focused on the Malaysian context because Malaysia is a developing country with unique values that contrast from those found in Western countries, contributing to the study's usefulness [4]. The difference in its social, religious, and cultural characteristics may bring the different result from the other developed country. The new research methodology will greatly increase business practitioners' understanding, particularly Malaysian academics who must analyze the efficacy of their WFH plan during COVID-19. It can also be used as a key criterion in determining whether private businesses and governments

should implement WFH regulations. This study changed the questionnaires to fit the COVID-19, and it became a fresh contribution to the body of knowledge in the education field.

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