

Original Research Article

Effect of Work from Home on Job Satisfaction in Response to the Outbreak of COVID 19

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Abstract: COVID-19 pandemic has made it impossible for the current workforce to interact with stakeholders, and this is to mitigate the viral spread for a significant proportion of the workforce. The pandemic situation in the country led both employers and employees to look for alternative work arrangements. According to various research findings, the empirical knowledge gap was identified regarding the work from home and job satisfaction of women employees in Sri Lanka. To fill this empirical knowledge gap, this study was conducted with two research objectives to determine the level of WFH and job satisfaction and explore the impact of WFH factors on the job satisfaction of women employees who WFH in Sri Lanka. Primary data were collected from 120 women employees working from home for the companies located in the Colombo area, Sri Lanka using structured questionnaires. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. Based on the findings of this study, the level of the WFH factors and job satisfaction was high. Multiple regression analysis revealed that among all WFH factors, seven of them including time planning skills, reduce the time for communication with co-workers, possibility to WFH in case of sickness, supervisor's trust and support, possibility to save expenses, possibility to take care of family members and suitability of working place at home has a significant impact on the job satisfaction of women employees and the possibility to access the organization documents at home has no significant impact on the job satisfaction of women employees. The findings of this study identify a significant positive effect of WFH on the job satisfaction of women employees. Moreover, the results of this study guide to exercise effective strategies to direct employees for the usage of modern technology to access documents online.

Keywords: Work from Home, Job satisfaction, COVID-19.

I. INTRODUCTION

At present, all the countries in the world feel worse with the pandemic known as Corona. Coronavirus (COVID-19) is defined as a respiratory illness that spreads from person to person. Investigations have found a novel coronavirus as the cause factor of the coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. This was first detected in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. The virus is thought to spread by droplets made when people affected by coronavirus cough, sneeze or talk. The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified novel coronavirus as the cause of an outbreak of respiratory illness. It is still uncertain about the detection and spread of the emerging respiratory pathogen. Additionally, with the cases reported in Wuhan, WHO announced the high risk of spreading coronavirus to other countries in the world. Hence the role of governments, businesses, and employers to avoid the spread of disease around the world was very important.

Governments put several efforts, including quarantine, lockdown, restrictions on labor mobility and travel, closing down of factories, and imposing policies and procedures to work from home as coronavirus has a significant impact on human lives and economy. Therefore, extraordinary measures have suggested alleviating the outbreak of economies of the countries (Settlements, 2020). OECD (2020), the report noted that widely spreading coronavirus in the Asia Pacific, North America, and Europe would considerably influence the global economy, and by 1 ½ % global

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economy will drop down at the end of 2020. The pathetic situation of this virus at present is it has affected not only developing countries' economies but also developed countries' economies at a considerable level. In contrast with the economic outbreak in 2003 due to SARS, the global economy has become more interconnected. Therefore, governments of all countries have taken swift actions to overcome coronavirus and its economic impact. As a result, the Sri Lankan government has announced to work from home for both private and public employees in order to minimize the economic crisis and spread of disease.

Working from home is a trending concept in the modern world. The article concerns mainly the effectiveness of the combination of work and family with the current pandemic situation for women. Women spend more time on domestic chores and child-rearing (Carmen & Margaret, 2001). Women often take care of domestic tasks, irrespective of their employment status. Therefore, women employees face many difficulties in balancing work and family (Hyman & Juliette, 2004). Wendy, Marcinkus, Karen, Whelan-Berry, and Judith (2007), indicated that supports receive for work is positively related with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and career accomplishment. Vanderlippe (1994), described that the negative effect of working from home is stronger for women than for men. However, working from home has benefits as well as disadvantages. Valcour and Hunter (2005), described the disadvantages of working from home as work for longer periods of time: weekends and evenings. Furthermore, home working could be stressful for women if young children have to be managed (Valcour & Hunter, 2005). Gunkel (2007), indicated Gender as an important effect on home working. The capacity of women to engage in work and meet family needs depends on her values and priorities, the tendency of support she gets from her spouse, the age-based needs of her children, and the support she gets from the organization she works for in terms of flexibility in working hours, and assistance for childcare (Silver, 1993).

Been (2016), identified employee work-life balance and wellbeing as the two main reasons to offer working from home. However, work from home also reduces conflicts by providing employees control over the scheduling of their workdays (Glass & Noonan 2016). Several authors argued that women could play a better role when working from home and balance work and non-work domains (Sullivan & Lewis, 2002). These reviews highlight the need to address the effectiveness of working from home for women.

Work from home is a new work arrangement introduced by the industry due to the lockdown period in Sri Lanka. Emerge of this work arrangement has impact on work outcomes in different perspectives, and this has to be investigate by research authors to ensure the effectiveness of work from home in the organizations. Over the time, there have been some studies concentrating mainly on the effect of work from home on work outcomes before the Covid 19 pandemic and very few studies investigated the effect of working from home with the outbreak of Covid 19. Hence, it is noted that there is a lack of researches conducted to identify the critical work from home factors influencing on job satisfaction of the women workforce, especially in Sri Lankan context. Based on the research problem, the following study was conducted to fill the empirical knowledge gap of this research area.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Work from Home (WFH): An Overview*

The present study was developed to guide the investigation of work from home (WFH) during the COVID 19 pandemic in Sri Lankan context. Hence, work from home can be stated as a form of work arrangement in which the work is performed from other locations of employee's choice or their homes other than the work premises using telecommunication technologies. Work from home is an excellent alternative way of work design introduced by the organizations during the quarantine period of the COVID 19 pandemic situation in many countries, including Sri Lanka. Work from home, telework, telecommunicating, virtual work, remote work, mobile telework are defined as working from places other than a traditional office space (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Nilles, 1997). This unique work arrangement allowed the people to experience the work from home to mitigate the outbreak of COVID 19 in Sri Lanka and its effect on the work outcomes. Studies highlighted that work from home offers greater flexibility in work and foster work-life balance (Dizaho, Salleh, and Abdullah 2017), enhances productivity of employees (Fonner & Roloff, 2010), increased job satisfaction (Gurstein, 2001) and increased job opportunities for women with children, students and disabled persons (Morgan, 2004).

Specifically, the authors investigated two main factors in the literature, which will be taken into consideration by the employees when working from home. Studies discussed that organizational and individual-family factors are crucial for work from home arrangements (Baker, Avery & Crawford, 2007). Employers' trust and support, accessibility of documents demanded by employees, usage of new technology, less collaboration of co-workers while work from home are few factors influencing the effectiveness of work from home (Baruch, 2000; Grant, Wallace, Spurgeon, Tramontano, & Charalampous, 2019; Baker et al., 2007). Further, individual-family factors also significantly affect the work from home arrangement; for example, some household characteristics such as the number of family members, age and number of children, size of the living area are considered as family factors effects on work from home (Baker et al.,

2007). Additionally, burdensome to travel, family-work balance, flexible scheduling, or autonomy in planning time are few individual-family factors found in the literature (Ford & Butts, 1991; Reshma, Aithal, Shailashree & Sridhar Acharya, 2015; Lupu, 2017). Hence the two factors, organizational and individual-family, are linked to work from home (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021). The authors of the current study aim to scrutinize how these factors influenced work from home during COVID 19 pandemic in Sri Lanka.

Time planning skills

Satisfaction or the ability to plan the time to accomplish the given tasks before deadlines when working from home is a considerable factor influencing the work from home arrangement. Ford and Butts (1991), mentioned that employees could modify or decide on the daily working schedule or routine when working from home. Good time planning skills are considered as an important resource while working autonomously at home (Harpaz, 2002), and autonomy to plan the time is examined as an advantage of telework (Ammons & Markham, 2004). Wienclaw (2019), pointed that flexible scheduling in work from home allows being free to sleep in and work late at night, scheduling personal appointments during work hours, and completing assigned tasks in the evenings or on vacation days.

Supervisor's support and trust

Literature revealed that supervisors' level of trust in assigning several tasks to perform at home and support to undertake those work as expected would significantly affect work from home. Baruch (2000) and Grant et al., (2019), found that a culture of trust in an organization by colleagues and managers is needed for teleworking and e-working. The supervisors do not have a better understanding of the employees work from home and do not have a strong relationship with those employees to recommend them for future jobs. Therefore, delivery of agreed results, active or anytime participation and timely responses of employees who work from home increases the trust among supervisors (Henttonen & Blomqvist, 2005). Hence, it is examined that the employees work from home, have the less possibility they have of gaining support from others (Lapierre, Steenbergen, Peeters, & Kluwer, 2015), especially from their supervisors.

Reduced time for communication with co-workers

Lacking opportunity to have interpersonal communication with the co-workers or creating a social network is a drawback of work from home. Workers may suffer from isolation when work from home due to the absence of colleagues (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). And in contrast, unnecessary interaction with co-workers will reduce the negative effect of job satisfaction (Martin & MacDonnell, 2012) and employees work from home find more time to resource it in work due to less communication with co-workers.

Possibility to take care of family members

Work from home allows the employees to take care of their family members while reducing the stress of balancing both work and family domains. The possibility to work from home enables individuals to combine work with family needs and issues (Ammons & Markham, 2004). Option of providing care to sick children and elders while working from home is an advantage of work from home (Beno, 2018) and studies reveal that work from home improved the employee retention, especially working parents with responsibilities of children (Thatcher & Zhu, 2006).

Possibility to work from home in case of sickness

Employees feel comfortable and mentally relax when they are sick is an identified factor of work from home. Ability to work from home in a state of sickness can be concerned as an excellent alternative to workplace presenteeism, which is examined as "attending to work while sick or ill" (Johns, 2010, p. 521). Hence, (Johnson, Audrey, & Shaw, 2007), have mentioned that possibility to work from the employee's home in case of a sickness as an advantage of work from home.

Suitability of the working place at home

Having a suitable, separate work space at home when working from is a critical factor, as it allows the employees to work peacefully at home without any distractions. Many studies revealed that the number of people present while working at home and individual space available in the house has an effect on the work from home (Baruch 2000; Shaw, Audrey & Johnson, 2003). According to the studies of Morgeson and Humphrey (2006), work ergonomics and work conditions, such as temperature noise, lightning, and others, impact employee job satisfaction.

Possibility to access the organization's documents when work from home

The less possibility of authority and accessibility of the organization's document is examined as a disadvantage in many studies, and all the necessary documents should be available online to deliver the expected outcomes from work from home employees. Additionally, providing the employees with adequate technology and tools positively impacts the success of telework (Cooper & Kurland, 2002; Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 2001). However, studies pointed that the accessibility of confidential documents for civil servants through government intranet servers will not be much convenient (Hksar Government, 2020).

Possibility to save other expenses

Employees can save money by eliminating the cost of commuting, clothing, and expenses on daycare or others due to the opportunity to work from home. Employees can save the time wasted on commuting to the office and avoid rush traffic hours, reducing stress and saving money on purchasing appropriate office clothing and lunches (Ford & Butts, 1991). Another financial benefit of work from home is that it decreases the cost with babysitting/kinder gardens/nurses to take care of the children and elders at home (Lupu, 2017) and eliminates the expenses paid for afterschool programs (Wienclaw, 2019).

B. Work from Home (WFH) and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is an individual's viewpoint encompassing the way that the employee feels about his/her job and the organization. Hence, Courtney and Younkyoung (2017), states that job satisfaction is a pleasurable and positive emotional state which can be emerged from an achievement of job values. Job satisfaction is correlated with job performance, productivity, work motivation and life satisfaction (Landy, 1978).

Previous studies have shown that work from home has beneficial for both employees and employers in a way of increased motivation, healthy workforce with less absenteeism and turnover intension, job satisfaction and productivity (Mello, 2007). Stress was at lower level when working from home, which leads to satisfaction with their daily job activities and less intention to quit the job (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Similarly, Grant *et al.*, (2019), revealed that e-working can increase flexibility, employee satisfaction, work life balance while reducing work-life conflict and commuting. Controversy, satisfaction level of employees can decrease due to a feeling of social distance and isolation from their colleagues when the employees are force to work from home for a longer period of time.

Based on the Job Demands-Resources Model and the studies of Vyas and Butakhieo (2021), particularly this study conceptualizes the following conceptual framework as shown in the Figure 1.

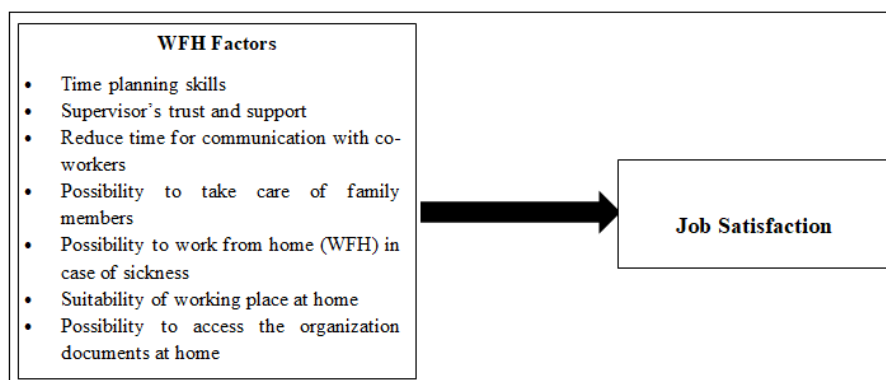


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

III. METHODOLOGY

The research was carried as a survey as it is based on a deductive approach. Since the deductive approach is an assumption development and the deductive method is used for a research project, the author makes a set of hypotheses and tests the hypothesis with a corresponding methodology (Wilson, 2010). As the study is carried out as a survey, it enables the researchers to collect enormous amounts of data from a large target population. The data analyzed using descriptive and inferential tools. Data was gathered using a well-structured questionnaire consists of 25 question items that were used as research instruments. Factors of WFH questionnaire was developed by the researchers of the current study based on the Job Demand Resource theory and the studies of Nakrošienė, Bučiūnienė and Goštautaitė (2019), and the job satisfaction questionnaire was adopted from the study of Susilo (2020).

The questionnaire was provided through emails to workers in Colombo, and Five Point Likert Scale was used to measure the variables, while the Nominal scale was used to measure demographic factors. As the population was unknown, a convenient sampling technique was used to select the sample randomly from the companies in the area of Colombo, Sri Lanka for the current study. The sample was 120 women who work from home due to the COVID 19 pandemic situations in Sri Lanka. Further, the collected data was analyzed using univariate and multiple regressions analysis (SPSS 23.0) to achieve the research objectives of the study.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The most common measure of inner consistency is the Cronbach's alpha test. If the Cronbach's alpha value is above 0.70, the coefficient is considered and recognized as a reliable tool. In this research, the Cronbach Alpha

coefficient value is exceeding 0.70, therefore all the elements are considered as reliable suggesting that each instrument's internal reliability is satisfactory. Out of the overall sample size of 120, 53.3% (64) of the women are in the age group of 26-35 and the number of women above the age of 35 years is significantly lower. There are also 55.0% (66) of married women, which can be considered as a key factor. 51.5% (35) of the women among them have 1-3 number of children and also there is a considerable number of women 28 (41.2%) who do not have children. In addition, 87 (72.5%) of women are working in private sector. Further, 58 (48.3%) of the women selected are employees with more than 2 years of work experience and very few 4 (3.3%) have less than 6 months of experience.

Mean and standard deviation of all the indicators of dimensions of independent variable were used to identify the level of work from home and job satisfaction of the selected sample. Accordingly, the mean value of WFH is 3.95 and the standard deviation is 0.310 which reports a high level in WFH according to the decision rule. Moreover, the mean value and the standard deviation of the employee job satisfaction during the work from home period, which was considered as the dependent variable is 3.92 and 0.400 respectively. This indicates a high level of job satisfaction during the work from home period among the selected women employees who work in the companies in Colombo area.

After extracting several factors of work from home in the literature, the study reveals that seven factors has a higher mean value. The possibility and flexibility to plan the time when working from home has a high mean value ($M=3.86$) and significantly influence the satisfaction of the employees. Results of the current study was support by the study of Lupu (2017), states that flexible scheduling when working from home enables the employees to have a certain autonomy in planning their daily lives according to their needs.

Respondents mostly agree with the statements regarding reduced time for communication with their colleagues when working from home ($M=4.16$). Even though they get a less exposure with their colleagues, the type of the job limits the degree of seeking help from colleagues and especially the employees are not depend on each other, which does not leads to lower satisfaction with the job. Our findings show that reduced time for collaborating with co-workers increase the job satisfaction of the working from home crowd, can be a contradictory arguments to the study which states that 68% of the workers missed commuting to the office and missed interaction with human, the professional environment, and face to face interaction for better collaboration (JLL, 2020).

Possibility to work from home even in sickness ($M=3.86$) is also an identified factor of work from home and this study explains that the selected sample feels comfortable in working from home when they are sick and they can seek for medical assistance easily at home and it is a mental relax for the employees which is a greater advantage of work from home. Therefore, working from home in case of sickness is also has an effects on the level of satisfaction and this is better option for a competitive working environment. Another study revealed that the possibility to work when a person is sick will increase the teleworker's satisfaction with the work (Nakrošienė *et al.*, 2019).

Another important findings of the study is that the employees level of satisfaction increases when they are allowed to work from home, rather than travelling to office. The office workers who use public and private transport in the Colombo area are escaped from the suffering of commuting burden, traffic jams, expenses and the feel of mental relax has influenced to increase the job satisfaction among the sample. Also as women, they are satisfy with the money they save on the expenses they made to take care of their beloved ones and expenses on other materials due to work from home arrangement, rather than the increase in expenses for electricity and internet bills. Reshma *et al.*, (2015), highlights that work from home allows to decrease expenditure for travelling, ability consume homely food etc. as advantages of employees in his model.

The results of the current study highlight how work from home is beneficial for the women workforce, where working from home makes it easy for them to take care of their family members while reducing their stress to cope up with both work and family responsibilities. Moreover, the study states that employees have a strong feel that working from home help to reduce the risk of family members falling ill with Covid 19. Hence, the study concludes that the employees are more satisfied with the job due the possibility to take care of the family members ($p<0.05$; $\beta=0.476$).

Supervisor's trust and support is a factor of work from home discussed in the literature in different perspectives. Baker *et al.*, (2007), and Grant *et al.*, (2019), revealed that organizational support from organizations, influence WFH. Therefore, the current study also supports the evidence in literature, that the supervisors trust their employees will deliver outputs as agreed on time and helpful in working from home is in high level ($M= 4.08$). And this factor has a positive impact on job satisfaction. Employees' immediate responsiveness to official calls and emails during the working time enhances the trust of the supervisors. Therefore, this is an important factor in evaluating the effectiveness of work from home and satisfaction of employees.

The mean value of the suitability of working place at home is in a high level ($M=3.70$), as the present study explicate that the selected sample has arranged a proper and well-arranged place at home to do their work effectively. Therefore, the well set up work place with suitable ergonomics at home shows a positive influence on the job satisfaction of the employees ($p<0.05$; $\beta=0.420$). The findings supports in a study which reveal that suitability of working place has a significant effect on overall satisfaction and career opportunities (Nakrošienė *et al.*, 2019) and work ergonomics of working place influence on employee job satisfaction (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006).

Finally, the possibility of accessing necessary documents when working from home had no significant impact on job satisfaction ($p>0.05$; $\beta=0.125$). The employees feel difficulties in finding all the necessary documents and past records online to execute their work easily, also the study depicts that few employees are not much familiar with the modern technology to access documents online. Similar, Nakrošienė *et al.*, (2019), also outlines that accessing work documents at home had no significant effect on telework outcomes.

The finding of the regression analysis of the study presents that the factors of work from home has a significant positive impact on job satisfaction (52%) and this clearly explains, when factors of work from home increases, job satisfaction will also increases. This supports the findings of Bloom, Liang, Roberts and Ying (2015), (2015), which states that job satisfaction to increase by work from home. Further, another study demonstrates that work from home significantly and positively affected job satisfaction with a p-value of $0.001 < 0.05$ and critical ratio of $4.026 > 1.96$ (Susilo, 2020).

V. Conclusion and Direction for Future Research

The critical contribution of our current study is that the identification of both individual and family factors which influence on work from home based on the literature and whether it has an effect on job satisfaction level of employees in Sri Lankan context. Therefore, the study revealed that seven factors have a high level of mean value, which highlights the importance of work from home, except one factor which imposes that the possibility of accessing the necessary documents online while working from home does not significantly impact ($p>0.05$; $\beta=0.125$) on the higher level of job satisfaction among the selected sample. Hence, the results of simple regression analysis thoroughly depicts that 52% of variance in the job satisfaction in terms of factors of work from home. Consequently, our study has proved that possibility to take care of family members as the most important work from home factor impacting on job satisfaction ($p<0.05$; $\beta=0.476$) of the selected sample. As women has a dual responsibility in balancing both work and family domains, the present study has revealed that the new work arrangement of work from home (WFH) has a significant positive effect on the job satisfaction level of the women workforce in Sri Lankan context.

Further, studies should be implemented to investigate the effect of work from home on many other work outcomes in Sri Lankan context. Moreover, the studies should focus to evaluate the variance of work from home based on their demographic factors such as age, marital status, number of family members, number of children, education knowledge etc. Finally, we limited the study in one specific area, and the results can be differ with the effect of different social, cultural and geographic location.

Appendix

Study Items Measuring Work from Home Factors and Job Satisfaction

Work from home factors	Items
Time planning skills	I am able to meet the deadlines without rushing at the last minute when Working from home (WFH)
	I accomplish what needs to be done during the day when WFH
	I am satisfied with the way I plan my time when WFH
Reduce time for communication with co-workers	I do not like that I spend less time for communication with my co-workers when WFH
	I feel WFH limits the ability to obtain ideas from my co-workers
	I am unable to get my co-workers help in difficult tasks when WFH
	I feel WFH limits to build a good relationship with my co-workers
Possibility to work from home (WFH) in case of sickness	I feel it is comfortable for me to WFH when I'm sick
	I feel mentally relax to WFH when I'm sick
	I feel it is easy to get medical support when WFH
Supervisor's trust and support	I think my supervisor trust me a lot when providing the opportunity to WFH
	I think my supervisor trust me that I will deliver the agreed results on time when WFH
	I believe my supervisor is helpful to me in getting the job done when WFH

Possibility to save expenses	I am able to save travel expense when WFH
	I am able to save expense for purchasing office dress, shoes, bags and other necessary items when WFH
	I am able to save expense spend to take care of my family members (Eg. Day care expenses) when WFH
Possibility to take care of family members	I am able to take care of my family members when WFH
	I feel WFH help to cope up with stress of balancing work and family life
	I feel WFH help to reduce the risk of family members falling ill with Covid 19
Suitability of working place at home	I have a well arranged separate workspace at home to do my work
	I feel that workspace set up aligned with good ergonomics (Eg. supportive chair)
	I feel that workplace at home is suitable for work
Possibility to access the organization's documents at home	I have authority and access to organization's documents when WFH
	I believe that all the necessary documents are available online
	I am familiar with the use of modern technology to access documents online when WFH

Source: Authors (2021)

Job Satisfaction	Items
Job Satisfaction	I am satisfied to do my job without risking my safety from the COVID-19 virus
	I am satisfied with being appropriately recognized for performing my duties while the economy is down, and many people are fired during the COVID-19 pandemic
	I am satisfied with my chance to get promotion from my job during the COVID-19 pandemic
	I am satisfied to receive my salary during the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: Susilo (2020)

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