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The Influence of Working from Home on Job Performance among Academicians from Kota Bharu Polytechnic, Kelantan During Covid-19 Pandemic: A Pilot Study

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Abstract

The world's wealthiest countries were first hit by the unique coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. One of the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic has been a global shift in work ergonomic patterns, since millions of individuals have substituted their typical work environment with their homes in order to restrict the spread of the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2) infection. The goal of our cross-sectional pilot research was to determine the impact of working from home on job performance among academicians at Kota Bharu Polytechnic who had been working from home before they joined this study. The participants were asked to fill in our printed questionnaire about the impact of working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic job performance and how it influences academicians' performance. The results indicate that the entire measures achieved a high-reliability coefficient that ranged from 0.768 to 0.945, based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient test (they all exceeded 0.70 benchmark) with no significant deviation of skewness values from zero. In addition, the results of the study indicated that work from home and work motivation significantly affect academicians' job performance. The study confirmed the validity of an instrument that investigated at work motivation as a mediating variable when analysing the effects of working from home on job performance and how it affects academicians' performance.

Keyword: Work Motivation, Working from Home, Job Performance

Introduction

Work from home (WFH) arrangements have been introduced internationally in industries where services may be offered online since the outbreak of COVID-19 (Arruda, 2020). Working from home decreases employee exposure to COVID-19 and eliminates the need for them to commute to work. The Malaysian government has asked Malaysians to maintain social distance and, when feasible, undertake activities at home, such as learning and working from home, in order to minimise the spread of COVID-19 (Osman et al., 2020).

HR managers are responsible for providing assistance for the implementation and oversight of work from home as part of the WFH programme. The Minister of Higher Education published a suggestion to study and work from home in response to this necessity (Osman et al., 2020). In the COVID-19 impacted regions, learning activities in schools and higher learning institutions must be carried out at home, and academic staff and students are urged to stay off-campus.

Universities all across the world are shifting to online education as a result of the current COVID-19 pandemic, which has forced campuses to close completely or partially. University students and faculty have been forced to adjust to working and studying remotely due to travel prohibitions, campus closures, and social distancing tactics that have driven them into their homes for teaching and learning. Infected nations and areas' university lecturers are now providing courses online, administrative duties are being handled online, and meetings are being scheduled online. The International Association of Universities (IAU) said that 67 percent of HEIs throughout the world had replaced their classrooms with online remote teaching and learning as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic (Ibrahim et al., 2020).

Lecturers in Malaysia's public higher education institutions, notably in the state of Kelantan, confront problems with work performance. As a result, the goal of this study is to see how WFH affects work performance among academics at Kelantan's public institutions in reaction to COVID-19. The factors are divided into two categories: organisational and individual. There are just a few published studies addressing academician job performance in Kelantan during COVID 19, to the best of the researchers' knowledge. IT training, digital infrastructure, and management support were among the organisational characteristics identified in the research as possibly significant to job performance.

The significance of this study is that it investigates a forced and significant shift in work habits as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, as well as its applicability to the whole workforce rather than just a few individuals. The study has a broader context since higher education plays an important role in Malaysia in terms of employment, training, skills, and development. Finally, because this is an emerging economy environment, and while Malaysia is an emerging economy in Southeast Asia, its social, religious, and cultural characteristics differ from those found in Western countries, which adds to the study's value (Osman et al., 2020).

This study uses work motivation as a mediating variable to examine the impact of working from home on job performance and how it influences academicians' performance. The association between WFH and academics' performance is mediated by work motivation. Workplace motivation is linked to job performance, and many circumstances can be used as a reason for employees to be unmotivated. Bastari et al (2020) found that reward had a favourable, substantial, and indirect influence on performance through motivation. It is possible to deduce that motivation mediates the influence of WFH on performance.

The new study model will greatly contribute to business practitioners' understanding, particularly for Malaysian academics who need to assess the efficiency of their WFH strategy during the epidemic. It may also be used as a key factor in determining whether governments and businesses should push WFH regulations or pursue other options. The study's novel contribution is its questionnaire, which will be adjusted to COVID-19-related modifications.

A pilot test is a preliminary test that uses a small sample size of the study before employing the full-scale sample of the study (Kassim et al., 2021). As a result, this study conducted a pilot test to assess the instrument's validity, reliability, and to gain a sense of the situation in terms of detecting and correcting flaws. The investigation was conducted with a small sample size in mind. Instrument validity is the degree to which an instrument accurately measures what

it is designed to measure, whereas measurement reliability is the degree to which an instrument is error-free, consistent, and stable through time and across distinct scale items (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). As a result, this paper presents the findings of a pilot study on the impact of working from home on job performance among academicians from Department of Civil Engineering, Kota Bharu Polytechnic.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the influence of work from home on job performance among academicians at Kota Bharu Polytechnic in Kelantan.
2. To investigate the mediating role of work motivation in influencing the relationship between work from home and job performance among academicians at Kota Bharu Polytechnic in Kelantan.

Methodology

Even though most of the items in the questionnaires had been adopted from a well-established instrument, a pilot test is still required. A pilot test is important prior to the actual test being conducted so as to ensure clear wordings and content relevancy. The process is considered important in any research to ensure accuracy and consistency of the responses gathered via questionnaires (Hair et al., 2019).

As stated in the previous chapter, this study is about a pilot test of an ongoing research using a small sample of lecturers as respondents, in accordance with Faruk (2019) recommendation that the pre-test sample size should be around 15 to 30 respondents, but it can be increased if the test involves multiple stages. Furthermore, Sekaran and Bougie (2019) noted that Cronbach's alpha coefficient is the most used test of inter-item uniformity dependability. This is because the inter-item uniformity reliability is the most realistic measure of pilot test, and the reliability measurement is referred to as Cronbach's alpha coefficient's most popular value (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). Thus, the Cronbach alpha test is used in this work to establish and assess the tool's internal uniformity.

A pilot test was conducted in May 2022 to pre-test the items and to examine the reliability value of each dimension in the instrument. A total of 30 lecturers from Kota Bharu, Polytechnic Kelantan were involved in the pilot test. Lecturers from Kota Bharu Polytechnic were selected in the pilot test because of they also involved with online remote teaching and learning because of the COVID-19 epidemic.

Measurement of Variables and Instrumentation

The questionnaire used in this study was appropriately constructed and consisted of multiple-choice, closed-ended items. For questionnaires, a 5-point Likert scale was employed to cover the independent, mediating, and dependent variables in order to fulfil the criteria of measuring scales for latent constructs in social science research (Almadana et al., 2021).

Reliability Test

A reliability test should be conducted in addition to the face and content validity tests. There are other types of reliability tests, but the internal consistency reliability test is the most popular among scholars (Black & Babin, 2019). This is the level at which objects "dangle together as a set," as well as the capacity to independently measure the same idea about the degree at which the items are linked. Cronbach's alpha coefficient is the most widely used

inter-item consistency reliability test (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019), hence it was used in this study to determine the mechanism's internal consistency.

Despite the fact that concept measures were derived from earlier studies and literature, testing and validation (Hair et al., 2019) are still necessary (Hair et al., 2019). Hair et al (2019) also said that while a Cronbach alpha value of 0.70 is commonly considered the minimum, smaller coefficients may be acceptable as well. The data was analysed using the SPSS version 27 programme, and the results suggest that the items are reliable, ranging from 0.768 to 0.945, which is consistent with other research that used the same assessment and found it to be reliable.

Table 1

Reliability of each variable and its dimensions for pilot test

Constructs	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Work From Home	7	0.768
Work Motivation	8	0.779
Job Performance	7	0.945

Data Distribution

According to Kassim et al (2021), the normality test is the universal benchmark for inferential statistical methods. The term "normality" refers to the distribution of scores for each variable (Hair et al., 2019). Normality may be tested using changing values of skewness and kurtosis of the data distribution, as recommended by (Hair et al., 2019)

This is because some statistical programmes provide empirical measurements for skewness and kurtosis, and hence the metric variables for both Skewness and Kurtosis should lie between -1.96 and +1.96. (Hair et al., 2019).

Thus, the current study's data were analysed for skewness and kurtosis and found to be normal, falling within the typical range of -1.96 and +1.96. (Ebenehi et al., 2019).

Conclusion

The goal of this pilot research is to assess the measuring equipment' reliability and validity in preparation for a larger investigation. This study used a small sample size of 30 instances for the pilot test, since specialists were utilised to make required modifications before the bigger study. This study looked at face and content validity, whereas the main study would look into the implications of the study components. Furthermore, the inter-item reliability test demonstrated that all of the items under investigation were reliable and above the 0.07 minimal threshold. The skewness and kurtosis values all fall within the usual range, indicating that the data is normal. The results of this study indicated that work from home and work motivation significantly affect academicians' job performance. The result of this study will benefit the top management and the policymaker of Kota Bharu Polytechnic in increasing the awareness about the importance of improving the well-being among academicians. The necessary action should be made so the academicians' job performance and work motivation will not be jeopardized in the future.

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