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The Mediating Role of Employee Work Motivation in The Relationship between Working From Home and Job Performance

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Abstract

Work-from-home rules are commonly adopted because they are one of the most effective ways for preventing workplace physical contact and halting the spread of COVID-19. Working at home provides an additional layer of stress to an already stressful environment for both firms and people. Several studies have revealed both the positive and negative consequences of working from home. Working from home, epidemic or not, has evolved as a new method to do business. Certain industries cannot function efficiently with staff working from home. Many people are discovering lucrative home-based business opportunities. A printed structured questionnaire was developed and distributed to 69 employees at one of rural area in Kelantan namely Jeli. The findings suggest that working from home has an intriguing influence on employee motivation. Working from home employees were more motivated, which improved job performance.

Keywords: Work From Home, Work Motivation, Job Performance

Introduction

People have been forced to re-evaluate a wide variety of behaviours, from business to pleasure to basic travel and everyday tasks, because of the new coronavirus (COVID-19), a pandemic that is sweeping the globe. As a result, a number of economic sectors have come to a standstill, having an impact not just on people but even on entire nations. Even though there had been great expectation and several warnings, especially from public health professionals, the challenge remained as a big transition that required planning, training, and facilitation. The enormity and solution remained incomprehensible, despite society's psychological preparation, and constitute a serious problem. Since December 2019, the new virus COVID-19 has begun spreading among people. It belongs to the coronavirus family, which caused the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome epidemic in 2012 and the South East Asia Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome outbreak in 2002 (Dewiyani et al., 2022). The disease is believed to spread through close contact with other individuals since respiratory droplets are now recognised as the main route of transmission. Currently, the only means of preventing the transmission of viruses are the proper use of masks, the adoption of social

isolation strategies, and the regular practise of hand hygiene (Sutarto et al., 2021). The COVID-19 outbreak was deemed a global health emergency by the World Health Organization (WHO) on January 31, 2020. Since then, the infection has rapidly spread.

As of November 26, 2020, the virus has spread rapidly around the world, with more than 60 million confirmed cases and more than 1.4 million verified fatalities (Safitri & Padmayanto, 2022). To prevent hospitals from being overrun by COVID-19 as the coronavirus spreads, several governments throughout the world have implemented and reimplemented strict lockdowns, which include the closure of non-essential businesses and the restriction of non-essential gatherings. Many of their colleagues have encouraged their countrymen to embrace social distance and spend as much time as possible at home in order to minimise face-to-face interactions with people.

In order to protect people from harm, authorities and administrators of big gathering events are being encouraged to do a risk assessment for their operations in the context of the pandemic. For instance, the WHO has developed a risk assessment tool that interested parties can use to assess the security of any scheduled public meetings. The three pillars of this tool's evaluation are risk evaluation, risk mitigation, and risk communication (Sultana et al., 2021). The information is instantly incorporated into a Decision Matrix, which ranks the overall risk of transmission and spread from extremely low to very high by comparing the entire risk score (from 0 to 5) to the overall mitigation score (percent). To ensure the security of their on-site workers, employers should also conduct a coronavirus-specific risk assessment of the workplace, considering everyone.

Schools, training centres, and higher education institutions have been forced to close in most nations because of lockdown and social isolation measures brought on by the COVID-19 epidemic and have to stay at home. The way educators provide high-quality instruction through a variety of online platforms has undergone a fundamental shift. For educators, work from home means to conduct online lectures from home. The government made strategic policies to prevent coronavirus outbreaks. These policies acquire pros and cons, especially for employees who are working from home. Despite the difficulties faced by both teachers and students, online learning, distant learning, and continuing education have emerged as a cure-all for this unprecedented worldwide epidemic (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Through a variety of online channels, the educational system and instructors have accepted "Education in Emergency," forcing them to use a system for which they are not ready.

As a result, academics also have to work from home. Different nations have varying degrees of WFH capacity during the epidemic. Approximately 40% of employment in the USA and 40% in Europe might perhaps be done from home, according to studies (Dingel and Neiman, 2020; Barrot et al., 2020); in emerging nations, the percentage was only around 29.6-31.2%. Approximately 16.67 percent of all jobs might be performed remotely on a worldwide scale (ILO, 2020). Although it may be a common working arrangement, the COVID-19 crisis's consequences on productivity show mixed outcomes. Employee productivity declined according to a study performed among Japanese workers, whereas it marginally increased according to a survey conducted in the USA (Sutarto et al., 2022). Nowadays, many companies now allow remote employees to work under government regulation. Majority of businesses investigated other solutions to keep up with corporate operations, including implementing work from home for their employees (Razak & Adam, 2021).

The impact of working from home, however, on employees' ability to execute their jobs is still up for debate. Work from home (WFH) has also been found in prior research to

increase workplace satisfaction (Khan et al., 2022). People who work from home save time, money, and resources that would otherwise be wasted on travel or in the office (Morikawa, 2022). According to Susilo (2020), employees who work from home have greater flexibility when scheduling appointments and doing chores. Additionally, they save time and money by not having to commute. Work from home have been recognised to be helpful for well-being and performance results, including greater work-life balance, shorter commutes, and increased workplace autonomy in both time and location (Sutarto et al., 2022). Working from home gives office workers more freedom. Researchers contended that having workers work from home might foster a more adaptable work atmosphere since they feel free to set their own work hours and working conditions (Susilo, 2020).

However, a few challenges, including the nation's high-context culture, a lack of a dedicated workstation and tools for finishing the task, and a poor internet connection, might limit the potential productivity of an efficient WFH (Mustajab et al., 2020; Suarlan, 2017). A study in Indonesian qualitative study revealed certain benefits and difficulties associated with working from home, followed by a drop in output (Mustajab et al., 2020). On the other hand, a study by Sutarto et al (2022) found that some key challenges of WFH key challenges are unavailability of dedicated workspace, lack of equipment and ICT support, work-home interference, ineffective communication, and social isolation). In his other study, Sutarto et al (2021) highlighted WFH faces difficulties including multitasking, social isolation, a decline in job enthusiasm, extra expenses, distraction, and restricted communication.

As indicated by the Public Service Department's published form letter containing work-from-home guidelines, many public organisations, notably Public Higher Institution in Malaysia, have policies permitting employees to do so because of the establishment of COVID-19 (Hashim & Muhammad, 2021). That surely will have an impact on management in all areas of corporate operations (Mukhathi et al., 2022). The WFH policy will win out on behalf of humanity. On the other hand, this will increase organisational complexity for the employee and the company when it comes to work supervision.

Furthermore, research on this topic from a Malaysian perspective has been scant, especially among educators in rural areas. Through the use of work motivation as a mediating variable, this study seeks to explore the effects of working from home on employee performance. The Malaysian government, which is interested in gauging the effectiveness of its work-from-home policy during the epidemic, will find the new research tool to be of particular use to management scholars. Additionally, it may be used to help firms and governments decide whether to support laws that allow employees to work from home or look into other options.

Research Gaps

Job performance is a key concept in industrial and organisational psychology, representing the scalable activities, behaviours, and results that people participate in or contribute to inside businesses. It is also characterised by the extent to which employee behaviours advance corporate objectives. Individual traits (experience and aptitude), outcomes (such as feedback and job security), the work environment, and education all have an impact on how well a task is done. Declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge and abilities, and motivation are the general individual factors of work performance. The findings of Waldman and Spangler, who created an integrated model of job performance impacted by person attributes (experience, ability), outcomes (feedback, job security), as well as work

environment, are worth mentioning in light of our aims. In Romania, a number of innate factors help employees perform their jobs better, which makes them feel valued and encourages them to work toward the organization's goals. This increases involvement in their jobs, lowers absenteeism, and boosts self-confidence, which reduces mood swings related to their work. Additionally, factors like self-determination job stability, authority, responsibility, and autonomy at work, workplace comfort, career prospects, benefits packages, professional development, job attractiveness, and compensation [85] are crucial in raising employee performance. Other factors include effective management-employee communication, early task distribution, a sense of recognition, and an alluring salary. Work flexibility, according to the work adjustment idea, increases employee engagement and job performance. If Balasundram et al (2021) established that employee commitment served as a mediating factor in the link between work flexibility and job performance, it was also established that labour productivity was considerably influenced by time flexibility. Several studies, including those by Mustajab et al (2020); Nugraha et al (2022); Melinda et al (2020), have produced significant findings showing work flexibility improves performance. Research has also shown that investments in human capital improve work performance as well as employee employability, stability in the labour market, and capacity to adjust to changing global labour circumstances (Balasundram et al., 2021). Companies now increasingly demand flexibility in the workplace to attract the finest talent and boost employee productivity. Flexibility in the labour market is crucial since it is a good trait that both employers and job seekers strongly value. The following hypotheses have been developed based on prior theoretical considerations to explain how the new types of workspace flexibility result in improved time and space management, a higher level of comfort, better personal and professional relationships, higher levels of learning and professional development, and higher levels of work motivation.

Research Objectives

To achieve the aim of the study, the following objectives are formulated:

1. To examine the impact of working from home on job performance among lecturers in Jeli
2. To examine the mediating role of work motivation in influencing the relationship between work from home and job performance among lecturers in Jeli.

Literature Review

Job Performance

Organizational success is primarily influenced by three factors: the individual, the work environment, and the market (Sultana et al., 2021). The first factor is individuality, which includes a person's preferences, ambitions, ideals, knowledge, nature, skills, job path, and interests. The organisational environment, which also includes the core competencies, wider context, industrial maturity, organisational strategic position, structure, and processes, is the second important consideration. Work demand, which includes each employee's duties, tasks, and obligations, is the third element.

The best performance may be achieved by combining individual factors, the environment, and the duties and responsibilities carried out by human resources, including leaders in an organisation (best fit). A leader's role in carrying out tasks and actions meant to attain the highest level of organisational performance can be influenced by values, traits, style, and expertise supported by the organisational environment (Sultana et al., 2021). An organization's effectiveness may be increased by having knowledgeable and trained staff. This

supports the study's central idea. Work motivation is used in this study as a self-reported predictor of job performance. Employment expectations were believed to be inconsistent with the research's framework since work-from-home employees had already been employed prior to the policy's adoption.

Telecommuters may customise and change their working environment as they like, which can increase productivity. As a result of being able to work from home, people spend less time and money on work. Additionally, it encourages workers to feel independent, which improves their mood and how well they perform at work (Marbun & Purba, 2021). Regular telecommuters have higher levels of motivation than less frequent ones. It can therefore improve their performance (Nuur et al., 2021).

It is a possible technique for improving employee performance since it increases motivation for both personal and organisational goals. Employee motivation has a vital part in increasing productivity and work efficiency, which are attributes of good job performance that are widely recognised (Purwanto et al., 2020). Sultana et al (2021); Toniolo and Pitt (2021), who conducted studies on the effect of work environment and motivation on performance, have hypothesised that work motivation has a favourable impact on job performance. He also asserted that job satisfaction lessens the effect of motivation and work environment on job performance. When employees are highly motivated to do their duties, the organization's goals are more likely to be met. Therefore, organisations have to pay close attention to it.

Work From Home

The Covid-19 outbreak's containment strategy, known as the WFH method, involves a variety of unexpected outcomes. Working remotely might benefit many people, including both workers and businesswomen, claims (Linh, 2021). One advantage of work-life balance is the capacity to reduce time spent and boost efficiency. These elements have the potential to attract top talent, offer compelling employment opportunities, and even accelerate economic growth in rural areas. Working from home has a negative impact on performance because there aren't any working conveniences like computers and communication tools there. Without a home office, they came to the conclusion that working from home was impossible. Factory workers must occasionally take breaks, and WFH is not feasible since the corporation has not built up any work support infrastructure for remote work (Rozman et al., 2021).

According to Pristiyono et al (2020), allowing employees greater autonomy over their work schedules enhances corporate performance without increasing workplace stress or weariness. The degree of an employee's control over their working hours influences their motivation. It thus improves the worker's performance. WFH changes existing workplace behaviour through the effective utilisation of human resources. The shift alone should keep one motivated to work at an office. It thus needs organisational support and workplaces that let employees work from home.

Businesses and organisations are advisable to have a WFH policy to provide comfort and shield all employees from stress and the growth of Covid-19. The plan seeks to promote civil behaviour in the workplace and encourage employees to give their all while preserving their privacy and dignity (Awit & Marticio, 2022). In an effort to keep employees motivated, management may uphold their rights to privacy and dignity. In the future, it will be crucial to do research on how laws governing remote work effect employee behaviour and sentiments toward their employers and coworkers. WFH will affect the worker's performance. In general,

WFH may help firms retain their staff members by allowing schedule changes and providing more flexible working hours.

Numerous studies show the numerous impacts, such as how people perform better, how they work harder, and how it reduces workplace stress. Rupietta and Beckmann (2018) claim that productivity from WFH changes how companies or organisations run their operations to achieve a long-term advantage over WFH. In this revolutionary day where technology has grown so swiftly, a corporation or organisation must adapt to human resource management. The firms or organisations, including any smaller ones inside or a traditional organisation, will reach a tipping point if this is the case (failure).

WFH has become one of several factors that motivate enterprises to change their behaviour. These factors include pressure on energy prices (which is more frequently brought on by high transportation costs), a living expenditure, and the need for investment (Safian et al., 2021). Management of human resources in a company or organisation requires efficient resource allocation.

Work Motivation

More workers are choosing to work remotely since it increases productivity and improves their quality of life. Employees may be more productive when working remotely since they may save on traffic and commuting costs. Even if it is distant from their firm, they might choose to live in a less costly neighbourhood like a suburb. Additionally, they have time to address personal issues while at work, which enables them to experience higher levels of personal fulfilment (Rambe et al., 2022).

According to Nugraha (2022), work motivation is the need a person has to take action that is felt both inside and externally. The similar idea is held by Sultana (2021), who claims that motivation is anything that drives a person to engage in an activity. The motivation of teachers to work is significantly influenced by public higher education institutions administrators. Establishing good relationships with lecturers, carrying out open management, carrying out clear job descriptions and functions, carrying out continuous and thorough supervision, and implementing evaluation programmes are some actions that public higher education institutions administrators can take to boost academicians' work motivation (Izzah, 2020). When compared to instructors with low work motivation, teachers with strong work motivation are likely to perform better.

A job itself acts as a trigger for employees' motivation. This is because depending on the sort of task given to them, employees will love their work (Adriana et al., 2020). These personnel will, in turn, be pleased with the outcomes and develop the kind of self-confidence that will enable more professional task execution. Additionally, the degree of motivation among teachers is significantly influenced by the leadership of the public higher education institutions (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021). Teachers will have a higher degree of work satisfaction and be more motivated to do their jobs when principals engage in this sort of transformative leadership at the highest level (Barkley & Benton, 2021).

People typically assume that their actions will be properly acknowledged and supported. The same is true for the employees. According to Ong et al (2021), when school administrators acknowledge that instructors are involved in making choices about the management of the public higher education institutions, those academicians would feel more motivated and dedicated to accomplishing their duties. The availability of opportunity to raise living standards is another factor in employee motivation. No one wants to remain stagnant at one point in their lives. If given enough chances to succeed, they will undoubtedly work

even more to raise and improve their level of living (Izzah, 2020). To improve academicians' job performance in the classroom during working from home, it is crucial that they be motivated at work.

The motive of an individual has a tremendous impact on their behaviour. Motivation and behaviour start-up and maintenance are related. You can better comprehend someone's motivations and behaviours if you know what motivates them. The workforce gains from having motivated workers who put in a lot of effort to accomplish the company's goals. One of the most important elements in preventative measures is the employees' own motivation (Sultana et al., 2021). Self-determination affects how motivated individuals are to do their tasks. Participants appreciate the interaction more and find it more appealing as a consequence.

Personal challenge may be defined as an inner motivation that supports learning and mastering new skills and information. Both job and employee qualities have a significant impact on employee motivation. For instance, if someone has high moral standards and considers their job to be engaging, they will be sufficiently intrinsically driven to do well. To make a lasting impact on someone, you must be internally motivated. One is more motivated to accomplish the more fulfilled one feels. Thus, it may be inferred that employee work motivation and job performance are tightly associated.

The following hypotheses are put forth considering the literature review above:

- H1. Working from home has a positive and significant effect on Work Motivation
- H2. Working from home has a positive and significant effect on Job Performance
- H3. Work Motivation has a positive and significant effect on Job Performance
- H4. Work motivation mediates the effect of Working from home on Job Performance

Method

This study uses quantitative methods. The information was acquired from 69 respondents via a survey that was distributed to lecturers in Jeli. Respondents were unintentionally chosen and performing their duties through WFH, in accordance with corporate standards, shortly after the government announced that the Movement Control Order (MCO) was implemented in March 2020. Section A of the surveys contains demographic data about the respondents, whereas Section B contains inquiries concerning working from home. Questions about motivation and work performance are included in Section C. A five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) was used to evaluate each variable (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019)

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 26.0 was used to enter the data. To address the research issues, regression analysis was used in this study.

Analysis and Discussion

The total number of responded questionnaires is 69 which contributed to the respond rate is 90%. Every questionnaire has been checked, and there are no missing values among the 69 returned surveys. Basically, on analysis of demographic profiles of the respondents, 61.2% of them are female and 38.8% are male. The majority of the respondents are age between 31 to 40 years old (37.4%).

Table 1

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

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Work from home

Variables	Mean	SD
Working from home	4.76	.32
Work motivation	4.21	.34
Job performance	4.32	.36

Descriptive analysis was performed on the variables in this study. As presented in Table 3 above, it shows the results of the analysis which involve mean value and standard deviation of each variable. The mean values are in the range of 4.21 and 4.76. Standard deviation values range from .32 to .36. The highest mean value is for work from home with the score of 4.76 and the lowest mean value is for work motivation with the score of 4.21.

Table 3

Reliability Analysis for Work from Home and Job Performance

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
• Work from home	7	0.795
• Work Motivation	8	0.710
• Job Performance	7	0.993

As presented in Table 4 above, the Cronbach's Alpha values for work from home as a independent variable is 0.795. The figures indicate that the measures had acceptable and good values of Cronbach's Alpha. This is also supported by the Cronbach's Alpha for job performance as dependent variable that is 0.993. Meanwhile work motivation as mediator variable is 0.710. According to Nunnally (1978) the minimum acceptable reliability is set at .60. Reliability less than .60 is considered as poor, those in .70 ranges are acceptable and those over .80 is good (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019).

Table 4

Results of Regression Analysis with Job Performance as the Dependent Variable

Independent variable	Without mediator		With mediator		Remarks
	Standardized Values	Beta	Standardized Values	Beta	
WFH	.315**		.247*		Full mediation effect
Mediator (Work Motivation)			.233*		Mediator
R	.464		.507		
R squared	.215		.257		
R squared change	.215		.041		
F change	9.876		3.963		
Significant F change	.000		.050		
Durbin Watson			1.799		

Table 4.17 shows the finding for Regression Analysis with job performance as the dependent variable. The $R^2 = .215$ or 21.5% indicates that 21.5% of the variance of the regression model has been explained by the independent variables without mediator with job performance as the dependent variable. The F change value is significant ($F = 9.876, p = 0.00$).

The $R^2 = .257$ or 25.7 % indicates that 25.7% of the variance of the regression model has been explained by the independent variables with mediator with job performance as the dependent variable. The significance F change value ($F = 3.963, p = 0.05$). The Durbin Watson value 1.799 and still within the acceptance range.

Looking at the individual contribution of independent variables in explaining job performance as the dependent variable with work motivation as mediator, work from home ($\beta = .247, p < 0.01$) is found to be significant predictors. Pertaining to the mediation role of work motivation, both variables are found to fully mediate the relationships. It can be concluded that, work motivation is a mediator for work from home as the independent variable and job performance as the dependent variable and the related hypotheses are supported.

Discussion

Based on findings, the individual contribution of independent variables in explaining job performance as the dependent variable without work motivation as mediator, work from home ($\beta = .247, p < 0.01$) are found to be significant predictors. Both variables are found to be full mediation effect.

Meanwhile, at the individual contribution of independent variables in explaining job performance as the dependent variable with work motivation as mediator, work from home ($\beta = .247, p < 0.01$) is found to be significant predictor. Both variables are found to be full mediation. In this study, work motivation can be accepted as mediator for job performance as the dependent variable. The study found that working from home had a significant and beneficial impact on workplace motivation. The positive and significant connection suggests that working from home increases employee job motivation. Governments must support choices for working remotely to increase employee job performance. This outcome supports the findings of prior investigations by Irawanto et al (2021) that found a substantial correlation between the two variables.

The investigation's findings demonstrated that working remotely had a significant, positive effect on productivity. These results are consistent with prior research by Zamani et al (2021), which shown that encouraging work-from-home policies is one method to improve the workplace and that greater levels of employee motivation improve performance. Employee performance must be closely monitored by employers. The researcher also found that during COVID-19, academics are eager to work remotely. Positive preparation and experiences are essential for online education to be acceptable, gratifying, and productive for academics working remotely. Additionally, research has shown that academicians who work from home are content with their surroundings and do not have any detrimental consequences on their ability to execute their jobs.

The findings of this study suggest that work motivation completely mediates the effect of working from home on job performance. When firms and other stakeholders want to boost job performance by allowing people to work from home, it is vital to take work motivation into account. This outcome is consistent with past research that found that work motivation played a significant moderating effect in the relationship between work from home and job performance.

Conclusion

As a result of this study, the body of information addressing how working from home impacts job performance has greatly grown. WFH has a big impact on how driven people are to work. The amount of knowledge about the effects of working from home on job performance has been greatly expanded by this study. In contrast to other studies, the current study found that remote work increased employee motivation. Companies could adjust to this predicament by evaluating an employee's performance on their ability to do their assigned tasks rather than their outward appearance and availability for conversation. Employees may also benefit from improving their job-related abilities. Governments and corporate organisations are recommended to promote and control any work-from-home programme that helps both employees and businesses.

The study's limitations present new opportunities for future research. Since this is a cross sectional study, the longitudinal study could be used to explain the findings of the study. The sample of this study was comprised of university academics in East Coast, for future, effects of WFH on West Coast could be investigated. Future research might explore on the moderating variables that might have significant impact toward the practise of work from home toward employee job performance such as coping strategies, organizational support, employee's self-efficacy or resilience. Moreover, future study may focus on the effect of WFH into a positive effect on academics' performance and their mental, physical, and social wellbeing.

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