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Working From Home: Malaysian Perception

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Abstract
The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 as a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. A week later, due to the expansion of COVID-19 pandemic, the Malaysian government has implemented a Total Lockdown starting on March 18, 2020. Employees from private and public sectors had to work from their own domicile, hence, the term Work/Working From Home (WFH) being used. Millions of people are affected by this new working arrangement; it changed the work norms. Some are able to adjust to this new working environment while others have problems to adapt it. The objective of this research is to look at Malaysian employees' motivation and perception regarding WFH through Alderfer's motivation theory (1969) from which the elements are used to scaffold the work from home variables advanced by (Abdullah et al., 2020). This quantitative survey was distributed to 299 respondents. The questionnaire is divided into four sections with 37 questions: Section A (Demographic Profile), Section B (Flexibility), Section C (Work-life Balance) and Section D (Work Performance). Findings revealed that a majority of the respondents are in favor of WFH due to, firstly, ensured presence of personal Internet connection for work purposes, and secondly, its direct implications in cutting personal expenses and time spent in traffic. However, in exchange, utility expenses have been proven to increase. Working from home also does not imply lesser time to complete a given task which is a consequence of a less conducive working condition experienced by the employees. Feedback regarding the perception of Malaysian employees towards the concept of WFH could be sought through this study.
Keywords: Work From Home, COVID-19, Alderfer's Work Motivation Theory

Introduction
Background of Study
As a result of numerous cases happening worldwide, it was officially reported by World Health Organization on 11 March 2020 (World Health Organization, 2020) that COVID-19 was a pandemic, many countries have taken the decision to either have a Total or Partial Lockdown in order to curb the surge of this pandemic. The Malaysian government took the decision to implement the Total Lockdown known as the Movement Control Order (MCO) starting on

March 18, 2020. As such, employees from the private as well as from the public sector were asked, by their relative employers, to work from their own home.

Under the National Recovery Plan (NRP), there are different stages of Working From Home implemented in Malaysia namely during the Movement Control Order (March 2020 to December 2021) and later changed to the Conditional Movement Control Order and Recovery Movement Control Order where certain restrictions have been alleviated in 2020 and 2021. During these different stages, different institutions and companies have come up with different guidelines accordingly for the WFH rules and regulations. Due to this new norm of working, this research would like to point out about the perception of Malaysians that have undergone the new norm of working which is Working From Home.

Statement of Problem

When we talk about WFH several problems arise. Is it effective? Does it bring benefits and to whom? What are the costs of choosing WFH for a long period? WFH has been a free choice or it has been something imposed by the current circumstances? What are the positive and negative elements of WFH? What are the changes that WFH has brought? These are the main problems that must be studied and analysed in order to reach a final conclusion. It is a very important topic because WFH has become now the norm adopted by many companies from all over the world that involves millions of people.

WFH is not something new that was born during the pandemic era because even before it, some categories of workers (those who had a specific and deep skill with IT technology and working in specific sectors, like marketing, software creators, data analysers) used WFH as a normal way to work. But of course, during the pandemic, it because a necessity for millions of workers to avoid close contacts in the offices.

The present research targeted Malaysian working people of different ethnicity, income, age, field of work, background education and, through a survey, these people were asked questions about WFH.

Of course, past studies have been already conducted in this research area to understand the effectiveness of WFH method, the positive and negative elements that it carries along and the impact that it had on many people employed in many different fields.

In this research field, there have already been studies in the past that have highlighted both the positive and negative sides of remote working.

A very recent study published in March 2021 (Aczel et al., 2021) made a precise list of the positive aspects of remote working. They are 1) saving time and money when traveling from home to the office and vice versa; 2) the control of your own time; 3) greater autonomy in choosing the hours to dedicate to work; 4) a more comfortable environment; 5) the possibility of always being present and fulfilling one's duties within the family; 6) a substantial saving on meals and clothing; and 7) greater freedom in general.

The work carried out away from the office has assumed great importance after the outbreak of the pandemic when this practice became necessary for health reasons in order to prevent the aggravation of infections. But even before this catastrophic event, remote work was still practiced above all by those categories of people who are usually called "Millennials" because they are used to working via computers. (Deloitte Global, 2021).

Another important research that has highlighted the positive aspects of WFH has been published last year Courtney, 2021). In addition to the points already mentioned above (from 1 to 7), this research mentions another one: a happier, healthier work life because WFH gives

more time for physical activity, the ability to eat healthier and less exposure to other illnesses. In addition, remote work tends to make the worker happier as there is less stress of arriving at the office on time every day and the daily confrontation with other colleagues. Another positive element that WFH offers is to drastically reduce conflicts within the office with the boss and avoid having to endure odors of various kinds that, may be, you do not like. Furthermore WFH allows you to: 1) take care of body's health better and the time saved in travel (from home to the office and vice versa) can be dedicated to sport activities; 2) maintain emotional well-being because flexible work arrangements allow for individuals to live out their lives in a more valued direction, whether that means having quiet time in the morning to enjoy a peaceful cup of coffee or tea, taking a midday break to meditate, or going for a short walk; 3) increase time with family members. From spending more time with one's children, to properly being able to create and facilitate a routine that suits the needs of one's family, flexible work ultimately warrants more opportunities for more quality family time. Making a conscious choice to spend more time in the home and less time in the office adds value and a sense of purpose to one's life, further increasing feelings of fulfillment and happiness (Hering, 2022).

WFH can lead to better relationships with one's sweetheart and potentially a better life. One survey conducted on more than 650 working parents showed that:

89% think having a job with work flexibility would help them be a more attentive spouse/partner/significant other.

52% say flexible work options would increase the amount of time they have for date nights.

50% say flexible work would improve their sex lives in some way.

Only 19% said flexible work is unrelated to improving romantic relationships (Hering, 2017).

After mentioning the positive elements that all the workers found in WFH, the negative ones also must be recalled. Anyway, before going it is interesting to notice this thing. While all the workers who got the opportunity to express an opinion recognized the positive elements in WFH, not everyone agreed on the negative elements. Only some workers spoke about the negative elements and, in many cases, not the majority of them. WFH has negative elements for some workers.

The quality of work can be compromised because of the isolation and it is not easy to have a constant relationship with your own colleagues (Fonner, 2012).

The number of hours dedicated to work is far greater than that of office hours (Felstead, 2017).

If, at home, there are always small children, your work's concentration might be greatly diminished (McCloskey, 2003).

Non-physical presence and direct daily contact with the boss can lead to the fear of not having a brilliant and rapid career (Cooper, 2002). Each worker must bear the expenses to set up a real office within the home that allows to work peacefully and effectively (Richardson, 2013). There could be an overall lack of ideas, probably due to the fact that there is no possibility of exchanging ideas with other people in the office. There is no certain boundary between work and free time. There can be numerous and frequent distractions at home. (McCrindle, 2013). As already mentioned above, WFH has been extended, not by free choice, to many sectors due to the pandemic that is still ongoing. So, very often the same concept of WFH is immediately associated with COVID-19 and all those negative consequences it has produced. One very important consequence is the depression that has affected many workers who, although luckier than others because they were able to keep their jobs, were forced to accept the WFH. This disease has led, in many people, to an increase in performance anxiety and that

is the fear of not knowing how to do one's job satisfactorily, of not knowing if and for how long to be able to count on the work itself, of not doing enough to satisfy their employer, to sink into poverty, to become useless or otherwise replaceable. In many workers WFH has created a strong emotional distress because it is a new, imposed, traumatic event that carries dysfunctional stress. The fragility, uncertainty and forced social isolation have produced physiological and social changes (Walton, 2021) such as the reduction of physical activity, changes in nutrition, exposure to sunlight, reduction of interpersonal relationships and reduced acquisition of social skills. These factors can lead to the development of anxiety and depression, reinforced by external negative stimuli such as alarmism often generated by some media. (Nicolàs, 2021).

Hence, this study is done to investigate employees' work motivation in working from home context. Specifically, this study is done to answer the following questions:

    1.1.1   How does work from home provide existence?
    1.1.2   How does work from home provide relatedness?
    1.1.3   How does work from home provide growth

Literature Review

Introduction

Relative to the pandemic these past few years, the term of working from home (WFH) is predominantly being used in all domains. However, the concept itself dates back long before COVID-19 lockdowns in management fields, in particular with the advancement of satellite technologies. Frameworks, theories, definitions and questions regarding the advantages and disadvantages have been, since then, researched and analyzed. Be that as it may, remote working, in our history, had never been implemented on a really big-scale level or at a national level, as one could observe since the pandemic. This phenomenon changes the intricacies of the concept as a whole. As such, an overview of the concept's literature that could relate pre- and peri-COVID-19 is necessary.

Benefits of WFH

Nowadays, with the majority of physical organizations adopting to a virtual structure, remote working is partly inevitable. Bearing the circumstance, organizations are striving to ensure good performance from their employees. Staples et al (1999) affirm that management efforts to improve employee's remote work self-efficacy can be beneficial to the organization as it "is positively associated with both higher perceived levels of performance and more positive work attitudes" (p. 772). The self-efficacy theory which stems from Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986) provides insights on how a person – in our case a remote worker – can execute a particular behavior pattern based on the four major sources of information (Bandura, 1977): performance accomplishments (i.e. past experience), vicarious experience (i.e. modelling by others), social persuasion (i.e. coaching and evaluative feedback) and physiological and emotional states (e.g. anxiety). Since it has been a while that all employees turned to working from home, they have acquired sufficient experience on how to operationalize their job characteristics. This ensues to a positive result as "work experience and training were also found to be positively related to self-efficacy" (Staples et al., 1999, p. 773).

Hence, working from home could still be advantageous to the organization if serious internal efforts are put into action. A study from Bloom et al (2015) also consolidates this premise as

they "found a highly significant 13% increase in employee performance from WFH" (p. 212) as the chosen company, Ctrip, implemented a favorable condition for their employees to work from home. To a certain extension of this premise, trusting the organization's intentions and their strategies to improve work has also a direct effect on the employee's self-efficacy and behavior. Trust in organization is considered as an environmental boundary condition or a mediator between the two components "such that self-efficacy [is] more positively related to job satisfaction, task performance and OCBs when trust in organization [is] high" (Ozyilmaz et al., 2017, pp. 15-17).

Furthermore, from the industrial economics' optic, a study from White (2018) which applied the agency theory in the problem of allowing working from home, found that "firms are able to reduce costs by employing individuals willing to work from home" (p.24). In microeconomics, the agency theory determines the calculation of incentives to allocate to agents (e.g. employees). Basing on the principal-agent model of Ross (1973), the model put forth by White (2018) predicts variance in wages amongst those working in the office and those working from home. According to the author, a decrease in monitoring costs results in the aforementioned variance. In addition, the reduction could also be explained by the cut of costs concluded when the firms are not required to provide office space and furniture to their workers (Peck, 2015). As a consequence, and a result of long-duration lockdowns, we could notice certain companies opt or offer choices to their employees whether to continue working from home permanently or intermittently (International Labour Organization, 2020).

As a result, taking into account work characteristics for virtual work is indeed one of the elements required to implement a favorable condition when working from home. A study on work design from Wang et al. (2021) suggests four work characteristics that will affect employee's work effectiveness and well-being when working from home: social support, job autonomy, monitoring and workload. The study, adopting the approach of considering virtual work as a context rather than a variable, concluded that while social support and job autonomy can facilitate employees in dealing with the problems faced during virtual work, workload and monitoring increase work-home interferences, thus affecting negatively worker's well-being.

Difficultids for WFH
On the other hand, there are also inconveniences in working remotely. Nowadays, in this period of post-COVID-19, researchers in management and work psychology fields try to identify, due to the considerable changes in the researches' settings, all aspects of working from home, i.e., its advantages and disadvantages. As such, in a recent study conducted by Rodrigues et al (2022), it is found that there are several difficulties faced by team managers when dealing with their team members. The 3 key problems that are highlighted are the work-life balance at home, the collaborators' motivation and the supervision of team members.

Long before the pandemic, on a European scale, a study from Polkowska (2016) has been done to investigate, among the selected European countries, which one poses most difficulties in achieving work-life balance. Adapting Korpi's classification of selected countries with an addition of Poland in the list, the study analyses two aspects of work-life balance which are the labor market position of families and public policy for families and children. The findings of the study shows that Poland has the highest level of difficulties in reconciling the

work and family spheres due to the fact that the country has low level of employment flexibility and a low percentage of formal childcare arrangements for children under age of 2 years old.

Theory of Work Motivation

Alderfer's (1969) ERG theory suggests that there are **three groups of core needs**: existence (E), relatedness (R), and growth (G)—hence the acronym ERG. The basic needs at the workplace is the need for existence. People want to know that their presence matters to the workplace. Next, when the existence needs are met, employees want to have a sense of relatedness when they work. They need to feel that what they are doing (asked to do) is related to what they know and need in future. The highest need is growth needs. Employees need to feel that they are given the opportunity to grow as they work.
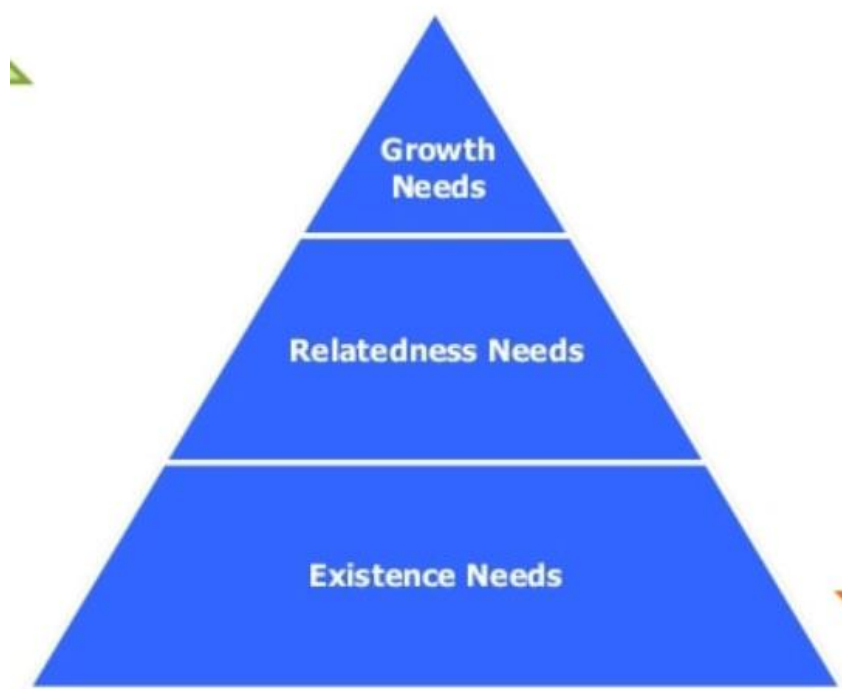

Figure1: Theory of Work Motivation (Source: Alderfer (1969)

Past Studies

Past Studies on Work from Home

Many studies, have been done, before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, to investigate regarding the advantages and disadvantages of WFH. According to Salmah (2016), among others, motivation to work decreases due to the fact that one gets easily distracted with other things or commitments while working at home that thus making their work less productive. Other than that, some technical issues such as bad internet connection is also considered as a disadvantage. These two disadvantages are also shared by Wu and Chen (2020) "When there is a heavy workload experienced by employees when working from home, their job productivity will decrease and the reason for this is due to technical issues that they face". The technical issues include lack of appropriate hardware.

There have been many past studies on WFH. One of them is the research done by (Ipsen et al., 2021). This research investigated the advantages and disadvantages of WFH during the COVID-19 pandemic as experienced by the 5748 correspondents who are professional and managerial workers from 29 European countries. A survey of 23 questions in six sections was distributed to these correspondents. Among the disadvantages found in this research is the decrease of productivity due to the lack of focus on job when working alone and lack of physical equipment needed to carry out the necessary task at home. This study could be a basis for organizations to look into the advantages and disadvantages for their employees when WFH.

Another research done by Aczel et al (2021) regarding the benefits and challenges of WFH by a group of researchers. A survey was sent to each 704 respondents through the Qualtrics Mailer service. Other than the background information, the survey covers questions regarding efficiency of research work, comparing working from home to working in the office, actual and ideal time spent working from home and the feasibility of working more from home. One of the disadvantages is that there is a decrease in the work efficiency for almost half of these researchers. From this study, research institutions would be able to decide on the WFH policy by taking into account the advantages and disadvantages for researches to WFH.

Among the many researches about the benefits of the WFH, we decided to evaluate two of them: one done much before the pandemic era when WFH was something extraordinary that involved a very limited number of companies and workers (Garg et al., 2015) and the second one during the COVID 19 time when WFH became the norm for sanitary reasons (Ipsen et al., 2021). The first one conducted an interview with only 48 people from a single company, while the second sent a survey to more than five thousand people, mostly professionals, working in different EU countries.

Among the many benefits of WFH for employees and for employers too, the majority of people who were interviewed responded that the main two are the following: freedom and flexibility and cost saving. Employees that WFH can freely choose when and how to work. Everyone is free to choose the time to dedicate to his/her work without having the obligation to follow the office timetable. It is easier to do the job and, at the same time, to take care of our personal needs (personal medical appointments, sending the children to school or sport activities, helping our elders). WHF does not require us to ask special permission anytime we have something important to do related to our private life.

Because not everybody is the same, some people are more active during daytime, while others at nigh time. The possibility to choose when and where to work makes the employees very relaxed and they do not even feel they have someone above them (the one that is common called "the boss"). People finally are able to live in the way they want. The second main positive element is the cost saving. WFH definitely allows each employee to save a lot of money in many ways. The most important include travel costs, parking fees, restaurant bills, smart clothes, birthday presents for colleagues, and childcare expenses. Because employees work at home, there is no need to hire someone to watch the children at home. The WFH's economic benefits are also for employers: they can save on rent, utilities (water, electricity, Wi-Fi, security guards, air conditioners), building maintenance, cleaning, provision

of a coffee shop or restaurant, equipment, furniture. They can hire talented people even if these live in other countries and, therefore, there is no need to pay for their relocation.

WFH has been used also for teaching foreign languages in many universities in the world. There have been many studies in the past to analyze the advantages of distance learning to teach/study foreign languages.

One interesting research by Grosu-Rădulescul and Stan (2018) was made before the pandemic took place when studying a foreign language online was not the norm and not compulsory. The respondents to the survey were 101 students (aged 18-24 years old) from different Rumanian universities. According to this research there are some successful blended learning strategies in learning/teaching methods in the field of foreign languages. Younger students seem to appreciate the online way more compared to the classic face to face class because there is more freedom. They can choose the time to study, can review one lesson more than once, and have access to many people's voices. All the students who were interviewed know very well the tools available to study a foreign language, even if not many used them regularly. Learning a foreign language online can be effective for some of them, but not for all. It is much easier to study a foreign language online if it uses the alphabet rather than those with special characters, like Mandarin, Japanese or Korean. What level of skill can be reached when a foreign language is taught online? According to this research, learning a foreign language online is fine for the beginner level, but not really for the advanced one. It is good to improve the listening skill online because many different voices from native speakers can be listened to, but much less for writing and grammar skill. One condition is absolutely a must if a student wants to reach positive results: the self-determination and concentration. Another study, by Martyushev et al (2020), was conducted when learning on line was not anymore an option or a choice but something compulsory. All worldwide universities had to turn to distance learning method because of the pandemic. 928 students and 76 teachers were asked to answer a survey and the results were that, under the guidance of the teachers, online tools have a positive effects on the formation and development of written and communication skills when studying a foreign language. Because learning online became the norm, both students and teachers acquired the necessary skill on how to use the internet and other IT tools to teach and study foreign languages within a few weeks. There are many advantages to studying a foreign language online. For students, they include much more freedom, cheaper costs, access to extra material besides the one offered by the teachers, wider integration among classmates and with other students of different countries. For teachers, they get much more materials to show during the online class, extra time to prepare each lesson, and save on costs as well. The researchers investigated if the synchronous (where people are able to communicate in real time and a prompt answer are expected) and asynchronous (where people have the time to think before replying, making comments or express personal opinions) communication tools were both effective in the process of learning a foreign language and acquire the relevant skills in term of efficiency, convenience, quality and safety. An overwhelming positive response was given, by students and teachers, for the last three, but slightly less than the 50% of the respondents answered in the same way regarding the efficiency.

Conceptual Framework

This study's framework is rooted from the basic needs at the workplace by (Alderfer, 1969). The work from home variables by Abdullah, et al (2020) are used to relate fill in the framework's template to show how working from home can be fulfilling for the employees. The basic needs at the workplace is Existence and this is portrayed through the workers' sense of flexibility. Next, the need for Relatedness can be fulfilled through their (the employees) work-life balance. Finally, the need for Growth can be portrayed through their perception of work performance.
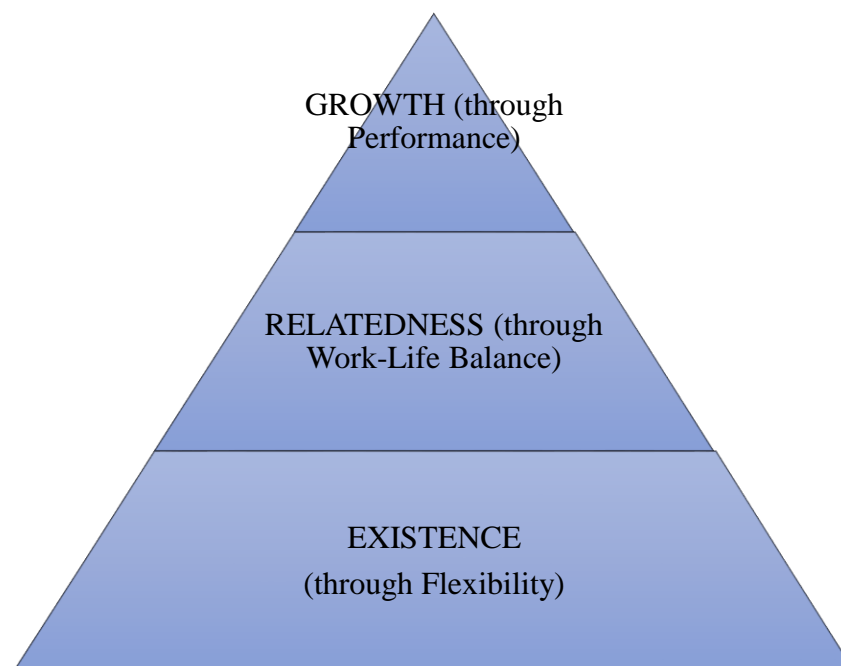

Figure 2-Conceptual Framework of the Study- Needs for Work from Home

Methodology

This quantitative research is done to investigate the employees' work motivation in work from home context. The participants were employees who are working from home during the pandemic in 2021. The sections in the instrument are rooted from Alderfer's (1969) work motivation theory. The elements are then used to scaffold the work from home variables by Abdullah et al (2020) as shown in Table 1. The instrument utilized is a survey with 4 sections; section A has 7 items regarding demographic profile, section B has 10 items for existence, section C has 10 items regarding relatedness, and section D has 10 items on growth.

Table 1
Distribution of items in the survey

SECTION	BRONFENBRENNER'S ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY (Alderfer, 1969)	WORK FROM HOME VARIABLES (Abdullah et al., 2020)	NO OF ITEMS
B	EXISTENCE	Flexibility	10
C	RELATEDNESS	Work-Life Balance	10
D	GROWTH	Performance	10
			TOTAL: 30

Table 2
Reliability of survey

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.902	30

Table 2 indicates the reliability of survey. The analysis presents a Cronbach alpha of 0.902 which proves a good reliability of the instrument chosen. Further analysis using SPSS is done to relate the findings in answering the research questions for this study.

Findings
Findings for Demographic Profile
SECTION A-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Q1 Gender

1	Male	44%
2	Female	56%

Based on the number of respondents who answered the questionnaire, the difference between male and female respondents is not exceedingly substantial. Hence, it would give opportunity to a more equitable analysis.

Q2 Age Group

1	18 to 29 years old	19%
2	30 to 39 years old	33%
3	40 to 49 years old	16%
4	41-59 years old	19%
5	60 and above	13%

The majority of the respondents are aged 30 to 39 years old which would most probably indicate that they have already had adequate years of professional experience and are not unduly technology illiterate. On the other hand, the least number of respondents is aged 60 and above who may already have been accustomed to a certain working disposition.

Q3 Level of Education

1	Diploma	13%
2	Degree	26%
3	Master	29%
4	Phd	22%

Most of the respondents have an academic qualification higher than diploma. The highest percentage for the level of education is Master's level. This could suggest that most of the

respondents are not labor workers and most likely are acclimated to an indoor workplace setting.

Q4 Ethnicity

1	Malay	17%
2	Chinese	33%
3	Indian	37%
4	Others	13%

While Indian ethnicity hold the highest number in terms of respondents, the Other ethnicity has the lowest. It should be mentioned that in the latter ethnicity category, it includes those who are non-Bumiputera (other than Chinese and Indian) and foreign nationalities (i.e., foreign workers).

Q5 Marital Status

1	Married	45%
2	Single	55#

The larger part of the respondents is single which strongly suggests that they are living alone thus having lesser direct social support than those who are married. This could predict a lesser work-family conflicts during office days.

Q6 Household Income

1	Less than RM2500	14%
2	RM2500-RM5000	31%
3	RM5001-10000	32%
4	More than 10000	23%

This particular indicator is quite similar to the indicator Q3 level of education in terms of parity between the categories. This shows that there may be a correlation between the two indicators. In terms of result, most of the respondents earns between RM2501 to RM1000 with a small difference between the salary class RM2501-RM5000 and RM5001 to 10000.

Q 7 Profession

1	Education	24%
2	Business	27%
3	Professionals (non-education sector)	26%
4	Others	23%

The respondents' profession is relatively uniform where the statistics came in as slightly proportionate. As a result, the findings would englobe point of views of employees from professions that are "befitting" for remote working and those that would face much different problems.

Findings for Existence (through Flexibility)
SECTION B- FLEXIBILITY (F)

STATEMENT	Mean
FQ 1 I take less time to complete my task when I work from home	**3**
FQ 2 I cherish not having to spend time commuting to work on daily basis	**4**
FQ 3 I am able to save on commuting, vehicle, food and clothing expenses while working from home	**4.6**
FQ 4 My utility expenses have increased	**4.6**
FQ 5 I can immediately get to work upon waking up every day while working from home.	**4.3**
FQ 6 I am comfortable to do my work anytime	**3.9**
RQ 7 I can focus my work by managing my own schedule	**4**
FQ 8 I am able to enjoy a healthier life style	**3.9**
FQ 9 I face less stress doing some work tasks at home	**3.4**
FQ 10 My work productivity increases with less stress while working from home	**3.4**

As far as time is concerned, a majority of respondents do not feel that less time is taken to complete a task. However, the majority are happy about not having to commute to the workplace and that they are comfortable to work at any time by not restricting themselves with the normal office hours while some are able to straight away start working after getting up without having to get dress into proper working attire. Only a minority of respondents do not prefer to work at flexible working hours. In terms of monetary benefit, a high majority of the respondents are able to save money on vehicle, food and clothing. However, some saw an increase on their utility bills. Moreover, a majority of respondents agree that they can focus on their work and as such feel that their productivity increases while WFH. At the same time, they also feel that their stress level decreases with the new working norm.

Findings for Relatedness (through Work-Life Balance)

SECTION C- WORK-LIFE BALANCE (WLB)

STATEMENT	Mean
WLBQ1 I can manage my work responsibilities alongside my personal and family needs	3.9
WLBQ 2 I prefer flexibility for my work as I can take time off during workdays without loss of pay.	4.3
WLBQ 3 The flexibility offered to my current job is ideal for me.	4.1
WLBQ 4 I find having an office space at home helped improve my job satisfaction	4.2
WLBQ 5 I find working from home beneficial for me as I am able to simultaneously attend to my family needs	4.2
WLBQ 6 I found working from home more conducive than working in a normal office condition	3.6
WLBQ 7 I no longer have to face traffic jams to and from work every day	4.5
WLBQ 8 I no longer have to travel to work, therefore I am able to spend more time on the task at hand	4.3
WLBQ 9 I feel healthy and have a better well-being when working from home	3.8
WLBQ 10 I am able to take care of myself and others better while working from home	4

The present research was conducted through a survey sent to Malaysian working people, aged between 18 and 70, with different income, different ethnic background and different fields of work (education, private sector, self-employed, business). Two hundred and ninety-nine people responded.

About work-life balance, the most important thing, according to the survey, was the fact that WFH allows you to save a lot of time commuting to and from work. 72% of the respondents (the majority) answered: "I no longer have to face traffic jams to and from work every day". Considering the heavy traffic on Malaysian roads, especially in the morning hours and after 5 pm, WFH definitely helps to save a minimum of two hours every day. The time saved can be effectively used in other fruitful ways. People can start working in the morning from home in a very relaxed way, instead of arriving at the office already tired and stressed because of the traffic on the roads. This mental and physical status not only makes the workers happier but also contributes to giving the best working performance from home. Even if the question of the survey asked only about the traffic that can be avoided by WFH, the answers given were also influenced by another aspect. WFH allows to save a lot of time because there is no need to drive or to take public transport for going to work but also money. Expenses for petrol, toll, and parking are saved in this way and workers are able to have more money in their pockets in the long term. The less important fact about work-life balance, according to the respondents, seems to be that while WHF is more conducive than working at the office, this choice was taken by a small minority of the people who took part in this survey. Less than 50% of the participants chose option number five that says, "I found working from home more

conducive than working in a normal office condition". According to Malaysian working people, WFH is more favourable than WFO but it is not the main factor of importance. This shows that Malaysian offices, in general, still provide a good environment to work and, probably, without the recent pandemic, WFH would not have become so popular and appreciated in Malaysia. Now we are approaching towards an endemic situation and life seems to be back to "normal" even if slowly. What will happen to WFH for Malaysian people? Will it stay? Will it be cancelled? It's quite difficult to make assumptions right now but "there may be no going back to the five-day week in the office, according to a survey of workers in 25 countries" (Horobinz, 2021). WFH will continue to be used because "both employees and managers found working from home during the pandemic was positive for performance and well-being". Most probably, also in Malaysia, WFH will continue.

Findings for Growth (through Work Performance)
SECTION D-WORK PERFORMANCE (WP)

STATEMENT	Mean
WPQ1 I feel my superior understands my challenges while working from home	3.7
WPQ2 My employer has high trust in employees working from home	3.8
WPQ3 I feel that working from home does not impact my career progression	3.8
WPQ4 My employer provides ergonomic chair for employees working from home	2.5
WPQ5 I have a comfortable workstation to perform my work at home	3.7
WPQ6 My employer is concerned about employees' mental and physical health when they work from home	3.3
WPQ7 I am able to connect efficiently from home using my own broadband connection	4
WPQ8 My employer educates employee on cybersecurity threats and the importance of data protection	3.8
WPQ9 I am willing to continue to work from home even when the norms get back to normal	4
WPQ10 WFH allows me to attend to more webinars and trainings recommended by my employer, thus increasing my IT knowledge	2.5

The result presents, theoretically, that the employer understands the employees' working condition and the employees' health and that, ironically, there is a lack of employer's engagement in ensuring the employees' work materials and general IT knowledge. Furthermore, the table also shows that the majority of the respondents are willing to continue working from home since they do not experience major problem in connecting efficiently with their own broadband connection.

Conclusion
Summary of Findings and Discussion
There are some people who think that WFH is a new concept that came about due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In reality, according to Vyas and Butakhieo (2020), this particular

concept of WFH is not entirely a new concept. Although it has been around since 1973 but it is known under different terms such as remote work, flexible work, telework, telecommuting and e-working. However, the concept of WFH seems not to be very dominant before the COVID-19 pandemic. The total lockdowns, in order to reduce social contact, during the pandemic is regarded as the pushing factor that leads to the concept of WFH being accepted and practiced by many institutions. As such, this study looks into the Malaysians' perception regarding this new norm of working known as WFH.

According to the findings, the result shows that employees are somehow able to manage their work responsibilities – although it does not take lesser time to complete – alongside their personal and family needs. This implies that most employees working from home do not face work-family conflicts. Indeed, they also agree that they are able to focus on their work by managing their own schedule. This premise speculates that that acquiring a sense of liberation in terms of managing their own work responsibilities, it implies that they could de facto arrange their time accordingly. This conclusion opposes the results of studies from (Gunasekara et al., 2022; Gold and Mustafa, 2013). Moreover, this speculation could be supported by the fact that the stress noticed by the workers while accomplishing their work characteristics is indeed low, according to the findings in this study. The cause of stress may not originate from working but simply from executing their own schedule.

On the other hand, the respondents agreed the positive consequence with regard to financial aspect of home-work transportation. This is predominantly true as remote working, especially during the pandemic, signifies lesser usage of transportation for work purposes, thus lesser time spent in traffic jams. A study from Loo and Huang (2022) also validates this statement. However, a study from Gorjifard and Crawford (2021) reveals that working from home leads to personal costs such as establishing and maintaining a workstation at home. This financial downside of working from home also goes in parallel with our findings pertaining the increase of utility bills during working from home. One of the disadvantages shared by the respondents of this survey and the survey of Ipsen et al (2021) is the lack of physical equipment that is essential to successfully carry out the necessary task at home. It is up to the employee to set up their own workstation since the respondents of this study agreed that they did not acquire sufficient workstation equipment such as an ergonomic chair from the employer. It may also be one of the reasons why the respondents of this study agree that their working condition is less conducive, as comfortable it may be, than in their workplace office, apart from experiencing non-work interruptions (Leroy et al., 2021). While certain employers are mindful of their employees' health and technology literacy, they disregard the need to provide to their employees' materials for an optimum working condition. Taking into account the organization's attitude on work materials provision, employees still manage to have a decent workstation where they could work productively.

Moreover, the majority of respondents agreed that they have better Internet connection when working at home. This suggests that most respondents are comfortable to do their remote working in the comfort of their home. It is also possible that only a handful of respondents spend their time working in public places as it is incongruous to work from "home" in restaurants or cafés. In terms of relational aspect, a relatively high number of respondents notice less pressure exerted by their superior nor by their employer as all parties

tend to be more comprehensive, as circumstance would suggest, towards each other during the pandemic. This leads to a feeling of secure of their career progression.

In contrast to the survey made by Ipsen et al (2021); Wu and Chen (2021); Purwanto et al (2020) this current study shows that there is – even though it is not that significant – a positive relationship between working from home and productivity and focus. This affirmation is also in line with some other surveys (Dutcher, 2012; Grant et al., 2013).

Although there is disturbance from family members, inadequate hardware, lack of physical communication with other colleagues that leads to social isolation and also due to lack of office documents, etc., a vast majority of respondents are in favour of continuing working from home even after COVID-19 pandemic is subdued.

Implications and Suggestions for Future Research
WFH can be improved and it ought to be a win-win situation for both employees and employers. For example, employers should help employees to set up a comfortable working space at home with adequate support on hardware and maintenance as well as appropriate trainings while employees should take extra precaution concerning cybersecurity and data protection.

Through this study, after applying the conceptual framework of the 3 areas of needs for working from home, employers could determine the elements needed to be implemented when working from home and they could also plan the prerequisites and equipment for this type of work arrangement. During the first series of lock downs that occurred globally, employers were unprepared in facing the difficulties and hurdles of working from home. Ever since then, employers all over world have learned and coped with those obstacles and some begun to consider this working arrangement as definite while others prefer to revert to the traditional working habits. Albeit the decisions, the elements originated from working from home will continue to be taken into consideration so as to be prepared for any eventuality in the future. Through this study, after applying the conceptual framework of the 3 areas of needs for working from home, employers could determine the elements needed to be implemented when working from home and they could also plan the prerequisites and equipment for this type of work arrangement. During the first series of lock downs that occurred globally, employers were unprepared in facing the difficulties and hurdles of working from home. Ever since then, employers all over world have learned and coped with those obstacles and some begun to consider this working arrangement as definite while others prefer to revert to the traditional working habits. Albeit the decisions, the elements originated from working from home will continue to be taken into consideration so as to be prepared for any eventuality in the future.

This results in the urgency for future research; rather than having a general overview regarding WFH, it should concentrate into more specific domains such as Education, Maintenance, Banks, Tourism etc. in order to determine what kind of guidelines, policies and working arrangements are best suited for both employers and employees in these different sectors. Perhaps there would be a need to review the existing labor regulations too so that it could cater the changes that took place during this new norm of working, for example, insurance covered at the office should be extended to home as well.

Unable to really determine the demarcation line between job and family might lead to overwork and job dissatisfaction. There should be a study on how to measure the time spent on work as opposed to the time spent on family while working at home.

A thorough research should be done in order to determine on which sectors could or should continue WFH and which sectors are better to revert back to work from their previous premises. For education, for instance, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the tertiary education has been moving towards blended learning whereby the time spent on physical Face to Face classes have been lessen throughout the past few semesters before the COVID-19. On the other hand, for tourism, people might still prefer a physical visit rather than a virtual tourism. So, WFH will not be a good idea in tourism industry, except if it involves promotions, advertisements and bookings.

Future policy decisions and future working models ought to create a more conducive working environment for both workers and management teams. The current form of the new norm of working policy and guideline could be enhanced and rectified in order to provide job satisfaction for all.

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