

# The Relationship Between Physical, Social, And Personal Factors and Job Satisfaction Among Work From Home Administrative And Diplomatic Officers

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i12/20360> DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i12/20360

**Published Date:** 25 December 2023

## Abstract

The public sector must consider civil servants' job satisfaction when working from home (WFH), in order to perform high-quality services. Appropriate physical, social and personal factors are needed to improve job satisfaction for employees who are working from home. This study aims to determine the relationship between physical, social, and personal factors with job satisfaction. A cross-sectional design method was used to employ a quantitative approach via self-administered questionnaire with 140 randomly selected respondents who were civil servants in Malaysia, ranked at middle-management. Results showcased significant relationship between physical, social and personal factors with job satisfaction. Further results showed that physical and social factors positively and significantly correlated with job satisfaction. There was no significant relationship between personal factors and job satisfaction. The findings of this study could serve as a guide and reference to the organizational management to improve job satisfaction of their employees who work from home.

**Keywords:** Civil Servants, Job Satisfaction, Physical Factor, Personal Factor, Social Factor, Work-From-Home

## Introduction

The Malaysian government has enforced Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and guidelines during the Movement Control Orders implementation to allow the private and public sector to continue operations (National Security Council (NSC) & Ministry of Health Malaysia (MOH), 2020). Therefore, in order to comply with the SOP set by the government and allow organizations to continue operations during the MCOs, employers were required to

implement rotation among employees. Some employees were in the office and others worked from home (NSC & MOH, 2020). The pandemic COVID-19 has caused drastic changes in civil servants' lifestyle and workstyle (Li, J. et al., 2020). The work from home (WFH) initiative has been implemented by the public sector to enforce social distancing and to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Such initiative limits workers' exposures to the customers (Afrianty, 2022; Feng & Savani, 2020).

Despite the fact that some countries believe that work from home cannot be adopted by public sector since officials need to be present in the office to ensure the continuity of service delivery (Siddharta & Malika, 2016), the Malaysian government believes that the initiative enables public sector to continuously operate and provide services to customers even during the MCOs (Public Service Department (PSD), 2020; NSC & MOH, 2020).

### **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is an important aspect in public sector (Saat et al., 2021). Additionally, the primary element influencing how efficiently an organization operates is job satisfaction (Bulińska -Stangrecka & Bagieńska, 2021). A pleasant emotional state or a strong emotion as a result of one's job evaluation or work experience is what Locke (1976) defined as job satisfaction. The degree of employee contentment with their work can also be used as a definition of job satisfaction (Niebuhr et al., 2022). Furthermore, based on a number of characteristics as a whole, job satisfaction also serves as a proxy for how people feel about their jobs and working conditions (Adiguzel et al., 2020; Bhattarai, 2020).

It is apparent from the preceding definitions of job satisfaction that the employee and his or her thoughts towards the job are the primary concern of job satisfaction. Employees' satisfaction is a key for an organization's success because it serves as a driving force for success (Bulińska -Stangrecka & Bagieńska, 2021). Job satisfaction is directly connected to individual values, personality, and mental health, as well as organisational performance. Excellent job satisfaction will lead to high work performance (Bellman & Hubler, 2020). Thus, it is important for managers and workers to look into employees' job satisfaction seriously.

Although job satisfaction has been researched extensively since the early 1900s (Boone, 2021) it is still a significant necessity to be studied, particularly in the COVID-19 pandemic context, where the implementation of the lockdown affects employees' emotions and mental health (Bulińska-Stangrecka & Bagieńska, 2021). The degree of job satisfaction is significantly influenced by an employee's capacity to maintain good emotions while minimizing the negative emotions during work from home (Madrid et al., 2020).

### **Problem Statement**

Most civil servants struggled with challenges related to job satisfaction (Omar, N. W. et al., 2004). Civil servants often expressed concerns regarding career advancement, appreciation, recognition, excessive working hours, extra workload, work pressure, and work environment whenever discussing issues concerning job satisfaction (Omar, N. W. et al., 2004). Organizations must pay close attention to job satisfaction since it influences employee behaviour and feelings, which in turn affects work and organisational performance (Mihat, et al., 2020). Many previous research has demonstrated that high job satisfaction will lead to high work performance (Othman et al., 2018; Lutz & Olaf, 2020). This is due to the fact that having high-performing employees is essential for an organization's success in achieving its vision, mission, and objectives.

Job satisfaction must be taken into consideration when working from home is set up during the COVID-19 pandemic so that employees may continue to provide customers with high-quality and efficient services, especially during the MCOs (Afrianty, et al., 2022). Ahmad (2021) asserted that the introduction of work from home presents issues for job satisfaction since civil servants struggled to continue productivity and high-quality service delivery during work from home. The Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Services (CUEPACS) also insisted that civil servants should not compromise with productivity during the work from home. Even the United Nation Development Program (UNDP) in a report entitled "How We Worked from Home from the WFH experience in response to the COVID-19 global health crisis in Malaysia- August 2020" also suggested that employers should monitor employee productivity during WFH throughout the MCOs period to ensure that employees' job satisfaction can be achieved through work from home (UNDP, 2020).

A study by Jostell and Hemlin (2018) has shown that work from home and job satisfaction were significantly correlated. They discovered that WFH has reduced job satisfaction among employees. According to the 2020 Workforce Happiness Index (CNBC & SurveyMonkey, 2020), 57% more employees who have worked from home were satisfied with their jobs than those who worked in offices during the COVID-19 pandemic. The report by Owl Lab (2019) State of Remote Work notes that work from home is associated with increased job satisfaction.

However, after months of working from home, employees become stressed and struggling to manage and balance work and personal obligations for so long, resulting in reduction of job satisfaction level (Laker, 2020). Therefore, the ultimate purpose of this research is to study the level of job satisfaction, and its relationship with physical, social and personal factors.

Job satisfaction is also found to deteriorate if physical factors such as the need for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) equipment, work space, internet and office equipment while at home are not perfect or disrupted when working from home (Wang, 2021). According to the UNDP study (2020), the public sector only offers 40% of equipment and technical support compared to 75% of employees at multinational companies and 55% of employees at local corporations. Support for ICT and office equipment is important. As many as 61% of work from home employees who received equipment support have exhibited a 42% boost in performance and productivity, according to UNDP (2020).

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, employees could always interact with colleagues, went out to lunch during breaks, chatted while drinking in stores, and participated in a range of recreational activities at the office (Bhattarai, 2020). According to a study by Niebuhr et al. (2022), social interaction at work has a significant impact on job satisfaction. Social support should therefore be taken into consideration because it directly affected how satisfied workers are with their jobs (International Labor Organization, 2020). However, because employees were unable to participate in social activities as a result of the government's enforcement of social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic, the level of satisfaction deteriorated (Bhattarai, 2020). Hence, this study will determine the influence of social factor on job satisfaction.

Work from home during the pandemic is challenging for majority of the workforce (Bhumika, 2020), regardless of whether they live alone or with their family because they still have to take care of household chores. According to Bhumika (2020), female employees experienced greater emotional exhaustion as a result of the difficulties and requirements of juggling commitments with work. They experienced two major challenges: (i) the fear of being laid off

due to the economic crisis as a result of movement control and lockdown, and (ii) the demand to manage balance between work and family affairs flawlessly.

Besides, a place's culture can also influence how fairly a husband-and-wife conduct house chores (Bhumika, 2020). For instance, women in India manage the home and the children to a great extent despite the fact majority of the women there do not work full-time as housewives. This is because men are generally less involved in household affairs (Bhumika, 2020; Chowdhury, 2020). These are among the personal factors that have been proven to have significant influence on job satisfaction. Therefore, this study is to identify the influence of personal factor on employees' job satisfaction who are working from home.

## Method

### Participants

This study involved 140 civil servants serving in Putrajaya. Approximately 48 respondents (34.3%) were male, and 92 respondents (65.7%) were female. In terms of grade, they were categorized as middle-management employees. In relation to marital status, majority were married (72.9%), 20% were single, followed by 5.27% were divorced and 1.4% were widowed. In terms of number of children below the age of 15, 52.1% of them have either one, two or three children. Meanwhile, 24.3% reported having either four or five children. In addition to that, 3.6% have more than 5 children, and 20% have no children below 15 years old who stayed at home.

### Data Collection and Measures

The data collection for this quantitative, cross-sectional study involved using online questionnaire. This approach is faster and easier for respondents to access the questionnaire and to help increase the response rate.

The physical factor consisted three dimensions: the *physical work space at home* (Xiao et al., 2021) ( $\alpha=.66$ ); *use of office equipment and technology* (Taylor & Howcroft, 2021; Demirdjian; 2018) ( $\alpha=.67$ ); and *working hours and rest hours* (Taylor & Howcroft, 2021) ( $\alpha=.79$ ). The social factor consisted five dimensions, which are *the need to socialize* (Golden et al., 2008) ( $\alpha=.84$ ), *work-life balance* (Gigi & Sangeetha, 2020) ( $\alpha=.71$ ), *leadership* (Taylor & Howcroft, 2021) ( $\alpha=.67$ ), *autonomy* (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006) ( $\alpha=.95$ ), and *teamwork* (Bulińska-Stangrecka & Bagieńska, 2021) ( $\alpha=.92$ ). The personal factor include matters related to the *role of officers and spouses in household affairs and child care* (Rodríguez-Rivero et al., 2020) ( $\alpha=.85$ ). Responses were needed to provide feedback on the statements in this section based on a 5-point Likert scale (0= not applicable, 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= not sure, 4= agree and 5= strongly agree).

Job satisfaction (JS) was measured using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) Short Form Vocational Psychology Research University of Minnesota Copyright (1997) to measure intrinsic satisfaction and extrinsic satisfaction. It uses a 5-point Likert scale (0= not applicable, 1= very dissatisfied, 2= dissatisfied, 3= unsure, 4= satisfied and 5= very satisfied) with high reliability ( $\alpha=.95$ ).

## Results and Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to identify the relationship between physical, social and personal factors with job satisfaction involving civil servants who were working from home. The findings in Table 1 indicated that majority of the respondents showcased moderate to high levels of physical factors.

Table 1:

*Level of PhF, SF, PF and JS*

Level	N	%	Mean	SD
<b>Physical Factors (PhF)</b>			<b>3.79</b>	<b>.48</b>
Low (1.00-2.00)	-	-		
Moderate Low (2.01-3.00)	7	5.0		
Moderate High (3.01-4.00)	83	59.3		
High (4.01-5.00)	50	35.7		
<b>Social Factors (SF)</b>			<b>3.46</b>	<b>.54</b>
Low (1.00-2.00)	-	-		
Moderate Low (2.01-3.00)	3	2.1		
Moderate High (3.01-4.00)	70	50		
High (4.01-5.00)	67	47.9		
<b>Personal Factors (PF)</b>			<b>2.87</b>	<b>1.15</b>
Low (1.00-2.00)	26	18.6		
Moderate Low (2.01-3.00)	44	31.4		
Moderate High (3.01-4.00)	48	34.3		
High (4.01-5.00)	22	15.7		
<b>Job Satisfaction (JS)</b>			<b>4.12</b>	<b>.50</b>
Low (1.00-2.00)	-	-		
Moderate Low (2.01-3.00)	5	3.6		
Moderate High (3.01-4.00)	59	42.1		
High (4.01-5.00)	76	54.3		

The results showed that the respondents were aware of the importance of suitable workspace for their productivity, health, and well-being. Majority of them have a dedicated room or area at home that functioned as workspace, have organized the workspaces according to their needs. They also worked in various places or spaces at home according to their comfort, and shared the area with their family members who were working from home as well.

In this study, the findings revealed that majority of the respondents show moderate to high levels in social factors. They noticed working from home have restricted their socializing activities that were usually done while working in the office, such as chatting with colleagues during lunch breaks at restaurants, celebrating office parties and so on. They also realised that prolonged WFH causes increased isolation. Therefore, it is advisable that managers develop plans to implement online social support programmes during working from home, such as motivational talks, casual group discussion sessions, counselling assistance, and sending virtual birthday wishes. This is to ensure that employees' emotions are not negatively affected and that they do not feel lonely, isolated, or alienated from co-workers while working from home.

The findings of the study show that the implementation of work from home to some extent created some difficulty for the managers to monitor and motivate their employees, which can affect job satisfaction. Because of social distancing, the organisational management must consider new strategies for supervisors to steer and monitor employees. The respondents agreed that periodic recognition of contributions and accomplishments are necessary to boost their morale and job satisfaction. Therefore, supervisors need to have appropriate



monitoring mechanisms to ensure high job satisfaction to guarantee better work performance.

Further findings also revealed that 50% of the respondents demonstrate moderate to high level of personal factor. As for job satisfaction, the findings indicated that 96.4% respondents experienced moderate to high levels of job satisfaction during work from home.

Meanwhile, the result in Table 2 illustrated the relationship between physical, social and personal factors with job satisfaction. The analysis showed a significant relationship between physical and job satisfaction, ( $r(138)=.326, \rho=.01$ ), indicating that participants need to be supported by a comfortable work space and sufficient equipment at home.

Table 2:

*Correlation coefficient analysis of the relationship between PhF, SF, PF and JS*

	Job Satisfaction (JS)	
	<i>r</i>	<i>ρ</i>
Physical Factors (PhF)	.326**	.000
Social Factors (SF)	.708**	.000
Personal Factors (PF)	-.023	.786

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

In terms of time management, the significant relationship between the sub-factor of working time and rest time management with job satisfaction showed that employees were satisfied because they were given the flexibility to control and determine their own work and rest time. Such flexibility can affect the level of job satisfaction (Diab-Bahman & Al-Enzi, 2020; Kapoor et al., 2021; Levanon et al., 2021; Prithivi & Thilagaraj, 2020; Purwanto et al., 2020; Sahni, 2020). Therefore, this sub-factor needs to be paid attention to by supervisors because employees' job satisfaction level deteriorated for those who overwork while working from home (Bao et al., 2018; Bellman & Hubler, 2020; Bhattarai, 2020; Kazekami, 2019). Supervisors need to take into account the challenges that employees encounter during work from home by preparing a work schedule and setting a reasonable dateline so that the employees could plan their schedule accordingly (Bellman & Hubler, 2020; Mungkasa, O., 2020).

Overall, the significant relationship between social factors and job satisfaction, and this finding was in line with the findings by Bulińska-Stangrecka and Bagieńska (2021). The analysis also showed that there was a significant relationship between social factors and job satisfaction ( $r(138)=.708, \rho=.01$ ). Employees are less satisfied because during working from home, they could not have social activities with colleagues. It caused the increases of isolation and subsequently lower the job satisfaction.

This study also shows that there is a relationship between sub-factors leadership and effective communication with JS because employees need regular feedback from supervisors during WFH. Therefore, supervisors must have virtual leadership competencies so that they do not face difficulties in monitoring employees during WFH. After putting in a lot of effort to finish a task, employees will feel satisfied and appreciated if supervisor give the feedback.

The findings of this study on the significant relationship between well-being and job satisfaction among the employees showed that well-being is a factor that needs to be paid

attention to when it comes to employees who are working from home. The imbalance between life and work could cause job dissatisfaction among employees. Supervisors need to be sensitive to the dynamics of well-being because according to Bellman and Hubler (2020), employees who show a high level of job satisfaction during the initial stages of work from home implementation, are likely to experience a decline in job satisfaction due to too long hours of working from home.

The next finding is that there was no significant relationship between personal factors and job satisfaction ( $r(138) = -.023, p=.01$ ). This means that personal factors such as gender, the role of household management and child care did not contribute towards job satisfaction level of the employees. This finding is in line with the findings of a study by Jain et al. (2021) and Schiemann et al. (2021) who stated no significant difference in the level of JS between male and female workers because they both play the role of managing household affairs and children during working from home.

### **Conclusion**

This study has proven that there was a relationship between physical, social and personal factors with job satisfaction while working from home. Supervisors and employees need to ensure that their contributing factors were at an appropriate level because they could affect the employees' level of job satisfaction. There is no doubt that the organizational management should undertake the responsibility in monitoring the operations of their employees who work from home. The physical and social factors significantly ensure that work from home should be effectively managed as they affect the job satisfaction level of the employees. This study's results serve as a guide to formulate new organizational policies and instruments in ensuring the job satisfaction of employees.

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