



## IMPACT OF ‘WORK FROM HOME’ ON EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY: WITH REFERENCE TO THE SRI LANKAN WORK COMMUNITY

*J. Hapugoda\*, A. Fernando, C. Mahakumbura*

*The Open University of Sri Lanka*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

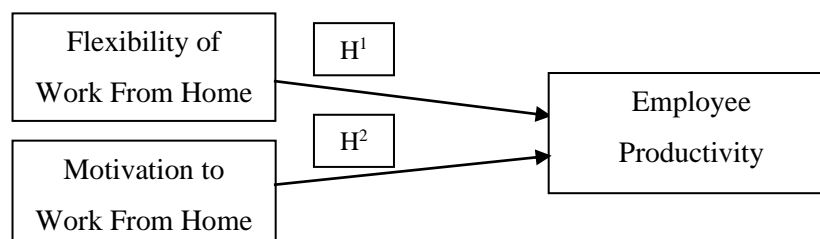
With the breakout of COVID-19 pandemic, health guidelines and protocols were introduced by the authorities expecting the strict adherence by the public. Consequently, employees had to stay at home to minimize non-essential travel, and practice good hygiene in order to slow the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 (Baker, 2020). Hence, it has moved millions of employees around the world from workplace to their homes (Raišienė et al, 2020) which is the scenario even in the Sri Lankan context.

Although Work From Home (WFH) is a novel concept introduced in Sri Lanka due to the pandemic, it has gained momentum in a lot of countries all over the world with the number of WFH employees increasing every year and expected to double each year, (Raišienė et al, 2020) owing to its numerous benefits. Even if it was practiced during the critical phases of the pandemic, a reluctance to continue the practice can be observed during phases with minimal level of risk. However, adopting to WFH has made an organization more agile, crisis ready and enjoy much more benefits such as cost savings. WFH has been facilitated by the advancement of Information and Communication technology whereby employees are able to work across time, space, and organizational boundaries (Raišienė et al, 2020) which reflects the Flexibility of WFH. Owing to the experiencing of numerous benefits, WFH has now become a dream of many people, especially for the current millennial generation (Purwanto et al., 2020) which drives their Motivation to WFH. Further to that, WFH can lead to higher Employee Productivity (EP) as suggested by (Fujii, 2020).

In order to validate the above drawn associations in the Sri Lankan context, authors have set the following objectives for the current study. Thus, the main objective is to develop a model which assesses the impact of Flexibility of Work From Home and Motivation to Work From Home on Employee Productivity. The secondary objectives include, 1) assessing the perceived practicability of WFH; 2) assessing the perceived level of agreement on flexibility, motivation, and EP related factors of WFH; and 3) identifying the perceived benefits of WFH to the employees and organizations.

### 2. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted by employing a quantitative approach in which the data were collected by an online survey for a period of three months from February to April 2021 through a structured questionnaire which was designed based on literature. The sample consisted of 144 respondents which were drawn on convenience. The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS 23.0. The conceptual framework developed based on literature is as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

Accordingly, the researchers have established the following hypotheses.



H1: There is a significant association between Flexibility of Work from Home and Employee Productivity.

H2: There is a significant association between Motivation to Work from Home and Employee Productivity.

In order to measure the concepts identified, a questionnaire comprising 3 statements on Flexibility, 10 statements on Motivation, and 3 statements on Employment Productivity was distributed. The respondents were asked for their level of agreement on a five-point Likert scale. Referred sources for the operationalization of the variables are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Operationalization of the variables**

Variable	Element	Source
Flexibility	While working from home, I'm able to choose "when" I should engage in work-related tasks	Hill et al., (2008)
	While working from home, I'm able to choose "where" I should engage in work-related tasks	
	While working from home, I'm able to choose "for how long" I should engage in work-related tasks	
Motivation	While working from home, it is possible for me to independently organize work	Raišiene et al., (2020)
	While working from home, it is possible for me to work individually	
	While working from home, it is possible for me to balance work and personal life	
	While working from home, it is possible for me to save time on travelling	
	While working from home, it is possible for me to save cost on travelling	
	While working from home, it is possible for me to save energy on travelling	
	While working from home, it is possible for me to limit unnecessary interactions	
	While working from home, it is possible for me to avoid formal dress code and appearance-related requirements at the workplace	
	While working from home, it is possible for me to better keep up with a preferred life style	
	While working from home, it is possible for me to get necessary facilities from organizations and relevant authorities	
Employee Productivity	While working from home, I try new ways to improve productivity for the most part	Riordan and Shore (1997) in Feng & Savani, (2020)
	While working from home, I produce high-quality work for the most part	
	While working from home, I work efficiently for the most part	



### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 SAMPLE PROFILE

The profile of the sample considered for the study is depicted in figure 2. When the sample was analyzed, it was noted that majority of the respondents were in between 20 - 30 years of age (55%), and the percentage of females in the age range is 68. Employment wise, they are employed in private sector (59.7%), engaged in full time work (91.7%), and it was also found that no field work is required for the employment (54.2%).

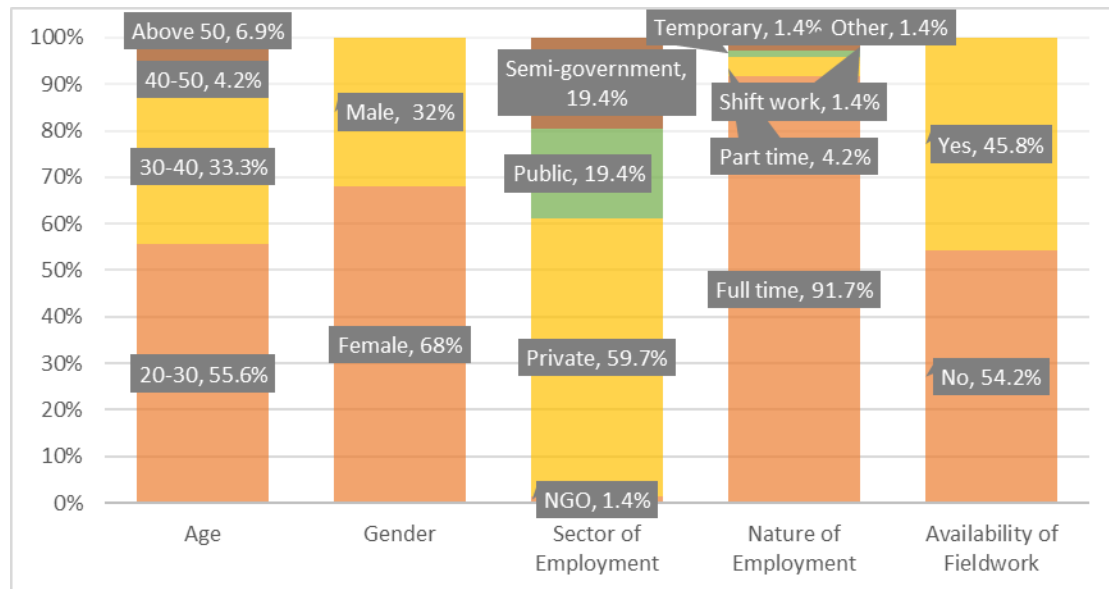


Figure 2: Sample Profile

#### 3.2 DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS – WORK FROM HOME AND EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY

Researchers have analyzed perceived practicability, flexibility, motivation and employee productivity related to WFH.

According to Table 2, though the employees perceive that WFH suits their job (Mean = 3.708), it was well evident from the analysis that companies practice WFH (Mean = 3.069), however not up to their fullest potential. Hence, a gap could be observed which demands the attention of the companies towards the possibilities of expanding their scope in WFH practices.

Table 2: Perceived Practicability of WFH

Factor	Mean	Std. Deviation
Extent to which employees think "work from home" suits their job	3.708	1.1437
Extent to which company practice work from home	3.069	1.1546



Further, the respondents’ perceived level of agreement on both flexibility related factors of WFH and motivation related factors of WFH have accounted for above-average mean values, while showing a higher level of agreement on Employee Productivity in WFH environment which was evident from the mean values above 3.

### 3.3 ASSOCIATION BETWEEN WORK FROM HOME AND EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY

The analysis was proceeded to the next stage in which the researchers used correlation and regression analysis to test the hypotheses, to answer the research questions and ultimately achieve the research objectives, as shown in Table 3. Spearman’s correlation was used to derive the coefficient of correlation to observe the associations between identified variables and hypothesis were tested using the simple regression analysis. The results suggested that there is a moderate positive relationship between flexibility of WFH and EP which was statistically significant at 5 percent level of significance. Though the relationship between motivation to WFH and EP was evident to be moderate and positive at the same significance level (5 percent), it was slightly stronger than the previous association. However, both the hypotheses were supported by data.

**Table 3: Correlation Analysis**

Association	Correlation coefficient	Regression coefficient	Sig	Supported/ Not supported
Flexibility of WFH and EP	0.441	0.434	.000	Supported
Motivation to WFH and EP	0.651	0.701	.000	Supported

### 3.4 PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF WORK FROM HOME FOR EMPLOYEES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Respondents have highlighted certain benefits of WFH to themselves which emphasize the underlying reasons for the results of the above quantitative analysis. Such benefits include increase of family time, freedom, relaxation, flexibility in managing work, work productivity, personal safety, and work-life balance of employees. Moreover, it leads to decrease of stress, travelling cost, travelling time, expenses on office attire, and unnecessary social distractions of the employees while the savings especially in terms of time, energy and cost can be invested productively in physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of the employees. These findings were also endorsed by the studies conducted by Ambikapathy & Ali (2020) and Dockery & Bawa (2020).

Respondents further perceived that organizations also can enjoy certain benefits from practising WFH, such as savings from overhead costs for utilities (electricity, telephone, water, space, parking, maintenance, office transport modes, stationery, and other utilities), while ensuring the safety of employees, improving their work productivity and enhancing employee job satisfaction. The above findings on benefits for both employees and organizations were supported by a study conducted by Church (2015).



#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results revealed that both the “Flexibility of Work from Home” and “Motivation to Work from Home” have a positive impact on “Employee Productivity”, thus validating the viability of WFH concept in the Sri Lankan context. Authors have contributed to the existing literature by extending the previous studies conducted in other countries to the Sri Lankan setting.

The findings facilitate the decision-making process of organizations by emphasizing the perceived benefits of WFH and its impact on EP. Therefore, organizations can consider adopting WFH as employees perceive that WFH suits their job to a greater extent. Hence, necessary procedures should be implemented for a smooth shift of working culture from traditional setting to a contemporary setting by taking the employee perceptions into consideration, which was also suggested by Hill et al. (2008).

The current study employed convenience sampling technique, which can be considered the main limitation. This can be overcome by utilizing a probability sampling technique in future research. Authors also propose to assess the effect of WFH on job stress and job satisfaction as extended research of the current study. Moreover, the costs incurred by both employees and organizations in WFH arrangement can be explored further in future studies. As put forward by Alipour et al. (2021), the WFH is more suitable for employees with higher level of computer usage. Since the current study encompasses a broader scope considering all the industries, the authors suggest a future study by narrowing down the scope only to the employees with higher level of computer usage.

#### REFERENCES

- Alipour, J. V., Fadinger, H., & Schymik, J. (2021). My home is my castle – The benefits of working from home during a pandemic crisis. *Journal of Public Economics*, 196. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2021.104373>
- Ambikapathy, M., & Ali, A. (2020). Impact and Challenges Towards Employees Work From Home during COVID-19 (MCO Period). *International Journal of Social Science Research*, 2(4), 97–107. <http://myjms.mohe.gov.my/index.php/ijssr>
- Baker, M. G. (2020). *Who cannot work from home? Characterizing occupations facing increased risk during the COVID-19 pandemic using 2018 BLS data.*
- Church, N. F. (2015). Gauging Perceived Benefits from Working From Home as a Job Benefit. *International Journal of Business and Economic Development*, 3(3), 81–89.
- Dockery, M., & Bawa, S. (2020). *Working from home in the COVID-19 lockdown* (Issue May). [https://bcec.edu.au/assets/2020/05/BCEC-COVID19-Brief-4\\_Working-from-home.pdf](https://bcec.edu.au/assets/2020/05/BCEC-COVID19-Brief-4_Working-from-home.pdf)
- Fujii, K. (2020). Workplace Motivation : Addressing Telework as a Mechanism for Maintaining Employee Productivity by Thesis Advisor. In *University Honors Theses.*
- Feng, Z., & Savani, K. (2020). Covid-19 created a gender gap in perceived work productivity and job satisfaction: implications for dual-career parents working from home. *Gender in Management*, 1754–2413. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-07-2020-0202>
- Fujii, K. (2020). Workplace Motivation : Addressing Telework as a Mechanism for Maintaining Employee Productivity by Thesis Advisor. In *University Honors Theses.*
- Hill, E. J., Grzywacz, J. G., Blanchard, V. L., Matz-Costa, C., Shulkin, S., & Pitt-Catsouphes,



M. (2008). Defining and conceptualizing workplace flexibility. *Community, Work and Family*, 11(2), 149–163. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13668800802024678>

Raišiene, A. G., Rapuano, V., Varkulevičiute, K., & Stachová, K. (2020). Working from home- Who is happy? A survey of Lithuania's employees during the COVID-19 quarantine period. *Sustainability*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12135332>

Purwanto, A., Asbari, M., Fahlevi, M., Mufid, A., Agistiawati, E., Cahyono, Y., & Suryani, P. (2020). Impact of Work From Home (WFH) on Indonesian Teachers Performance During the Covid-19 Pandemic : An Exploratory Study. *International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology*, 29(5), 6235–6244.

### **ABBREVIATIONS**

WFH - Work From Home

EP - Employee Productivity