

# The Effects of Work from Home on Job Performance: Mediating Role of Employee Work Motivation

Muhammad Ammar Haidar Ishak, Ayu Kamareenna Abdullah Thani, Nik Mohd Faris Nik Min, Siti Rosnita Sakarji

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kelantan, Malaysia

Corresponding Author Email: ayukamareenna@uitm.edu.my

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## Abstract

Work from home policies are being used widely because they are one of the best strategies to prevent workplace physical contact and to stop the spread of COVID-19. Working from home adds a new level of stress to the already difficult pandemic for both companies and individuals. Both beneficial and detrimental effects of working from home have been documented by several research. Working from home has emerged as a new way to do business, pandemic or no. With employees working from home, certain industries cannot function effectively. Many people are discovering successful home-based business models. 169 lecturers from east coast of Peninsular of Malaysia are examined to determine their reason for working from home. A survey is the instrument utilised. The results show an intriguing effect on employee motivation for those who work from home. Employees who worked from home were more motivated, which enhanced job performance.

**Keywords:** Work from Home, Work Motivation, Job Performance

## Introduction

The new coronavirus (COVID-19), a pandemic sweeping the globe, has challenged society in previously unknown ways, pushing individuals to re-evaluate a wide range of behaviours, from work to pleasure, to fundamental travel and everyday duties. This has had an influence not just on individuals, but also on countries as a whole, putting a variety of economic sectors to a halt. While there was much anticipation and several warnings, particularly from those in public health, the difficulty persisted as a significant shift that needed preparation, training, and facilitation. While society psychologically prepared, the magnitude and solution remained unfathomable and are a major issue. COVID-19 is a novel virus that has been circulating in humans since December 2019. It is a member of the coronavirus family, which was responsible for the 2002 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome outbreak in South East Asia and the 2012 Middle East Respiratory Syndrome outbreak (Tabassum & Sarker, 2021). The recognised major route of transmission is now through respiratory droplets, and so it is thought to spread through close contact with other people.

At the moment, the only instruments available to control viral spread are adequate mask use, the implementation of social distancing measures, and the practise of basic hand cleanliness (Sutarto et al., 2021). On January 31, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) designated the COVID-19 outbreak a worldwide health emergency. The virus has spread swiftly since then.

The virus has spread widely over the world, with over 60 million confirmed cases and over 1.4 million confirmed deaths as of November 26, 2020, and the figure has been steadily climbing (Islam & Aziza, 2022). As the coronavirus spreads, various governments throughout the world have enforced and reimposed tight lockdowns, including the closure of non-essential enterprises and the prohibition of non-essential meetings, to protect hospitals from being swamped by COVID-19. Many of their peers have pushed their countrymen to spend as much time as possible at home and adopt social distance in order to reduce face-to-face encounters with others. Authorities and organisers of large gathering events are being asked to conduct a risk assessment for their activities in the context of the pandemic in order to safeguard people from damage. For example, the WHO has created a risk assessment tool for stakeholders to use in determining the safety of any upcoming public gatherings. Risk Evaluation, Risk Mitigation, and Risk Communication are the three pillars of this tool's evaluation (Sultana et al., 2021). Once the information is entered into these categories, it is immediately entered into a Decision Matrix, which compares the entire risk score (from 0 to 5) to the total mitigation score (percent) and categorises the overall risk of transmission and spread from very low to very high. Employers should also do a coronavirus-specific risk assessment of the workplace, taking into consideration each individual, to establish the safety of their on-site staff.

Due to the development of COVID-19, many public organisations, including Public Higher Institution in Malaysia, have policies allowing workers to work from home, as evidenced by the Public Service Department's published form letter with work-from-home rules (Hashim & Muhammad, 2021). That will undoubtedly have an effect on management across every aspect of the business' operations (Andriyanty et al., 2021). The WFH policy will prevail on the side of mankind. However, this will make organisational complexity for the individual and the business on the side of job supervision.

Furthermore, there has been little research on this issue from a Malaysian standpoint, particularly among lecturers. This study aims to examine the impact of working from home on job performance and determine how it influences employee performance using work motivation as a mediating variable. The new research method will be extremely useful to business practitioners, notably the Malaysian government, which wants to evaluate the performance of its work-from-home policy during the epidemic. It may also be used to assist governments and businesses in deciding whether to favour work-from-home policies or explore other alternatives.

### **Research Objectives**

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

1. To investigate the effect of work from home on job performance among lecturers in east coast of Peninsular of Malaysia.
2. To investigate the mediating role of work motivation in influencing the relationship between work from home and job performance among lecturers in east coast of Peninsular of Malaysia.

### **Literature Review**

### **Job Performance**

The three main factors that affect organisational performance are the individual, the organisational environment, and the job demand (Sultana et al., 2021). The first aspect is individuality, which encompasses the employees' goals, principles, knowledge, nature, competences, career path, preferences, and hobbies. The second factor to take into account is the organisational environment, which encompasses the culture and climate, structure and procedures, industrial maturity, organisational strategic position, core competences, and the broader context. The third factor is work demand, which entails the responsibilities, tasks, and responsibilities of each employee in the firm.

Combining individual variables, the environment, and the roles and responsibilities carried out by human resources, including leaders in an organisation, can result in the best performance (best fit). Values, qualities, style, and expertise backed by the organisational environment can drive a leader's role in accomplishing duties and activities intended to achieve the greatest organisational performance (Sultana et al., 2021). The effectiveness of an organisation may be improved by having a trained and informed personnel. This validates the hypothesis of the study. In this study, work motivation is employed as a personal predictor of job performance. As work-from-home workers had already been hired before the policy's introduction, employment expectations were not thought to match the framework of this research.

Telecommuters have the freedom to alter and personalise their working environment, which can enhance their productivity. They spend less time and money on work since they can work from home. Additionally, it promotes a sense of independence in workers, which uplifts their mood and affects how well they perform at work (Marbun & Purba, 2021). More motivated workers are those who telecommute more regularly than those who do so infrequently. Because of this, it can enhance their performance (Nuur et al., 2021).

By raising motivation for both personal and organisational goals, it is a potential tool for enhancing employee performance. Employee motivation is a significant role in boosting productivity and work efficiency, which are commonly acknowledged as qualities of effective job performance (Purwanto et al., 2020). Work motivation has been hypothesised to positively affect job performance by Sultana et al (2021); Zamani et al (2021) who previously performed study on the impact of work environment and work motivation on performance. Additionally, he suggested that job happiness dampens the impact of work environment and motivation on job performance. Organizational objectives are more likely to be accomplished when personnel are strongly motivated to perform their jobs. Organizations should thus pay great attention to it.

### **Work from Home**

WFH approach, which is used to contain the Covid-19 outbreak, has a wide range of unintended consequences. According to the Linh (2021), working from anywhere may provide many individuals an advantage, both employees and businesswomen. The ability to minimise time and increase efficiency is one benefit of work-life balance. These factors have the power to provide engaging employment possibilities, retain top talent, and even boost economic growth in rural places. Due to a lack of working amenities like computers and communication tools at home, working from home has a detrimental influence on performance. They came to the conclusion that working from home was impossible without home office space. Workers in factories are compelled to take breaks sometimes, and WFH is not possible since

the company has not set up any work support infrastructure for remote work (Rozman et al., 2021).

Recent research by Wiradendi (2021) indicates, giving employees more control over their work schedules improves business performance without raising workplace stress levels or tiredness levels. Employee motivation is increased by the extent of their control over their working hours. As a result, it enhances the employee's performance. The efficient use of human resources through WFH modifies current workplace behaviour. The shift alone ought to maintain the drive for office job. Because of this, it requires organisational support and workspaces that enable workers to work from home.

Based on a research finding in Australia in 2020, a WFH policy is a wise choice made by businesses and organisations to ensure comfort and protect all workers from stress and the development of Covid-19. The strategy aims to uphold orderly workplace conduct and inspire workers to perform to the best of their abilities while protecting their privacy and dignity (Awit & Marticio, 2022). Management may make an attempt to sustain employee motivation by protecting their right to privacy and dignity. Research on how work-from-home regulations affect employee behaviour and attitudes toward their employers and coworkers will be important in the future, according to the Harvard Business School working paper team. Performance of the worker will be impacted by WFH. Generally speaking, WFH can assist businesses in keeping their employees owing to the opportunity to change schedules and offer more flexible working hours.

Several studies demonstrate the various effects, including how employees' performance improves, how they exert more effort, and how it lowers workplace stress levels. According to Zamani et al (2021), productivity from WFH alters how businesses or organisations operate to gain a long-term edge over WFH. A business or organisation must adjust to human resource management in this revolutionary period where technology has advanced so quickly. If so, there will be a tipping point for the businesses or organisations, including any smaller ones inside or a traditional organisation (failure). WFH has emerged as one of many causes for businesses to adopt new behaviour, which is prompted by pressure on energy prices (which is more typically caused by high transportation costs), a living expense, and a need for investment (Apthioman & Pramono, 2021). Effective resource allocation is necessary for human resource management in a business or organisation.

### **Work Motivation**

Productivity and personal life are two factors that drive more employees to work from home. Because they may save traffic and transportation expenses when working remotely, employees are more productive. They can even live in a less expensive area, like a suburb, even though it is far from their company. Additionally, they have time during work hours to manage personal concerns, enabling them to achieve greater levels of personal fulfilment (Khan et al., 2021).

Individual behaviour is significantly influenced by motivation. Starting and maintaining a behaviour have a relationship with motivation. Understanding a person's motivation will help you better understand what drives them and how they behave. The workforce benefits from having motivated employees who work hard to achieve the company's objectives. The employees' personal motivation is one of the most crucial factors in preventative efforts (Sultana et al., 2021). Self-determination has an impact on the employees' motivation for their jobs. Participants have more enjoyment and find the encounter more desirable as a result.

An innate incentive that aids in learning and mastering new knowledge and abilities might be characterised as personal challenge. Employee motivation is largely determined by both work and employee characteristics. If a person, for instance, finds their profession exciting and has strong morals, they will be sufficiently intrinsically motivated to perform well. Internal motivation is necessary if you want to have a significant impression on someone. The more one's sentiments of fulfilment, the more driven one is to succeed. Thus, it can be concluded that employees work motivation is closely related to job performance.

Based on the literature review above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1. Work from home has a positive and significant effect on Work Motivation

H2. Work 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 Work from home on Job Performance

## Method

This research is quantitative. The data was gathered from 169 respondents using a questionnaire consisting of lecturers in east coast of Peninsular Malaysia. According to company policies, respondents were accidentally chosen and doing their duty through WFH, right after the government announcement to implement the PSBB policy (large-scale social restrictions) in March 2020. The demographic information about the respondents is found in Section A of the questionnaires, while questions about working from home are found in Section B. Section C contains questions about job performance and motivation. Each variable was evaluated on a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) (Bougie&Sekaran, 2019 )

## Data Analysis

The data were keyed in by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 26.0. This study employed regression analysis to answer the research questions.

## Analysis and Discussion

Table 1

*Number of Questionnaires Obtained*

Number of questionnaire distributed	Number of questionnaire returned	Percentage returned (%)	Number of valid questionnaire	Percentage valid (%)
185	169	91	169	100.0

Based on table 1 above, the total number of responded questionnaires is 169 which contributed to the respond rate is 91%. Every questionnaire has been checked, and there are no missing values among the 169 returned surveys. Basically, on analysis of demographic profiles of the respondents, 81.6% of them are female and 18.4% are male. The majority of the respondents are age between 41 to 50 years old (47.4%). Among them, 90.8% of are married.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics for Work from home*

Variables	Mean	SD
Work from home	4.38	.38
Work motivation	4.91	.39
Job performance	4.15	.35

Descriptive analysis was performed on the variables in this study. As presented in Table 2 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 4.15 and 4.91. Standard deviation values range from .35 to .39. The highest mean value is for work motivation with the score of 4.91 and the lowest mean value is for job performance with the score of 4.15.

Table 3

*Reliability Analysis for Work from Home and Job Performance*

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
• Work from home	7	0.865
• Work Motivation	8	0.930
• Job Performance	7	0.766

As presented in Table 3 above, the Cronbach's Alpha values for work from home as an independent variable is 0.865. 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 0.766. Meanwhile work motivation as mediator variable is 0.930. 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*

	With mediator	
Independent variable	Standardized Beta Values	Remarks
Work from home	.193	Full mediation effect
Mediator (work motivation)	.498*	Mediator
R	.521	
R squared	.391	
R squared change	.057	
F change	5.598	
Significant F change	.021	
Durbin Watson	1.476	

The  $R^2 = .391$  or 39.1 %, indicating that 39.1% of the variance of the regression model has been explained by the independent variables with mediator with organization commitment as the dependent variable. The significance F change value ( $F = 5.598$ ,  $p = .021$ ). The Durbin Watson value 1.476 and still within the acceptance range. Work motivation has full mediation effect on the relationship between work from home and job performance. It can be concluded that, work motivation is a mediator for the link between work from home and job performance as the dependent variable and the hypothesis is supported.

**Discussion**

Working from home has a considerable and advantageous effect on job motivation, according to the study. Working from home boosts employee job motivation, according to the favourable and substantial association. To boost employee engagement, governments must encourage work-from-home options. This result validates earlier studies by Andrianty et al (2021) that discovered a significant association between the two variables.

Results of the investigation showed that working remotely has a large, beneficial impact on work performance. These findings are in line with earlier study by Zamani et al (2021), which showed that supporting work-from-home policies is one way to enhance the working environment and that higher levels of employee motivation boost performance. Employers must pay close attention to employee performance. Additionally, the researcher discovered that professors are highly happy to work remotely during COVID-19. For online education to be accepted, satisfying, and effective for professors working remotely, favourable preparation and experiences are crucial. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that lecturers who work from home do not have any negative effects on their job performance and are happy and at ease in their surroundings.

The results of this study indicate that the impact of working from home on job performance is totally mediated by work motivation. It is crucial to take work motivation into account when companies and other stakeholders desire to increase job performance by enabling workers to work from home. This result is in line with other studies that discovered a substantial mediating role for work motivation in the association between work from home and job performance.

## **Conclusion**

The corpus of knowledge regarding how working from home affects job performance has significantly increased as a result of this research. WFH significantly affects how motivated employees are to work. This study has significantly added to the body of information concerning the consequences of working from home on job performance. Unlike previous studies, the new study discovered that working from home enhanced employee motivation. Companies might adapt to this situation by assessing employees' success based on job accomplishment rather than visible presence and communication availability. It can also assist employees enhance their specific job-related skills. Officials, such as business organizations and governments, are advised to encourage and regulate any work-from-home programme that benefits both employees and organisations. This study contributes to job performance research in the context of education fields. It reflects the current situation and helps future curricular planning and development to provide better environment as to boost employee's motivation and their job performance. The findings attempt to close the gap in demographic context as study is designed to have better understanding on employee motivation and their influence upon job performance in Malaysian servicing organizations. It also will enrich the existing body of knowledge pertaining to the job performance field especially the one that is related to work from home as new norm practice after COVID-19 pandemic as not much has been known or researched into by researchers particularly in Malaysia and generally around the world.

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