

Work From Home (WFH) Experience: A Case of M Telecommunications Company in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the factors influencing the implementation of Work from Home (WFH) and its impacts on employees at M Telecommunications Company in Kuala Lumpur. Data were collected using a qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews with five informants based on the data saturation principle, which provided in-depth insights into employee experiences. The findings show that WFH was primarily implemented in response to social factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and government policies. The research further reveals imperative social and psychological impacts of WFH. Socially, WFH has altered organizational culture, enhanced work-life balance, cost, physical health, and enabled greater engagement with cultural and religious practices, time with family, while also presenting challenges like technological disruptions, job satisfaction, income, and shifts in productivity. Psychologically, employees experienced loneliness, stress, motivation, alongside the issue of mental health. This study offers practical recommendations for organizations to enhance WFH policies and contributes to the broader understanding of remote work's implications for employee well-being and organizational effectiveness.

Keywords: Work from Home, COVID-19, telework, employee well-being, remote work challenges.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has catalysed a global shift in work dynamics, with organizations across various sectors adopting work-from-home (WFH) practices to ensure operational continuity. The telecommunications sector, including M Telecommunications Company in Kuala Lumpur, is a prime example of this transition, balancing operational demands with compliance to government-mandated restrictions. The shift to WFH has profoundly impacted employer-employee interactions, organizational operations, and employee well-being, necessitating deeper exploration and analysis.

WFH practices offer potential benefits such as increased flexibility, reduced commuting stress, and improved work-life balance. However, these benefits are accompanied by challenges like communication barriers, technology infrastructure limitations, social isolation, and balancing household responsibilities with professional demands. Studies, including those by Ambikapathy and Ali (2020) and Suratkon and Azlan (2021), highlight technical issues, organizational belonging concerns, and psychological stress as significant hurdles in WFH adoption.

Despite its growing prevalence, WFH practices remain understudied in specific contexts, particularly in Malaysia's telecommunications sector. With the Malaysian government allowing telecommunication services to operate under strict regulations during the pandemic, companies like M Telecommunications Company face unique challenges and opportunities in optimizing WFH practices. This study addresses gaps in understanding the lived experiences of employees working remotely, emphasizing attitudes, challenges, and the effectiveness of organizational support mechanisms.

Existing literature underscores the dual impact of WFH, offering both advantages and drawbacks. For instance, Bolisani et al. (2020) discuss the emotional and logistical challenges of remote work, while Shamsi et al. (2021) highlight the positive influence of digital technologies on workplace well-being. However, research specific to Malaysia's WFH policies, which lack comprehensive labor law coverage (Wahab et al., 2022), remains sparse.

This study is crucial for academics, policymakers, and practitioners in designing effective WFH policies that address technical, social, and psychological challenges. By examining the WFH experiences of employees at M Telecommunications Company, this research contributes valuable insights into optimizing remote work practices, improving employee well-being, and enhancing organizational productivity in the rapidly evolving work environment.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the research are listed as follows:

1. To analyze factors leading to WFH implementation at M Telecommunications Company in Kuala Lumpur.
2. To explore the impacts of WFH experienced by employees at M Telecommunications Company in Kuala Lumpur.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Work from Home (WFH)

Work From Home (WFH) refers to work practices using information and communication technologies (ICT) from locations other than the primary office (Putri & Amran, 2021). Introduced in the 1970s as telework or telecommuting, WFH became prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic, enabling employees to work remotely with flexibility and better work-life balance (Irawanto et al., 2021; Wahab et al., 2022). In Malaysia, WFH relies on stable internet, power, and suitable spaces, but gaps in digital infrastructure limit its adoption as a standard practice despite its importance for productivity during the pandemic (Nasrudin et al., 2022; Rahmat et al., 2022). While developed countries like the U.S. and Australia excel in WFH due to advanced technology, other regions like Indonesia emphasize work-life balance, and Hong Kong implements strict rules for accountability (Awada et al., 2021; Wolor et al., 2020; Chu et al., 2022).

Factors of Work from Home (WFH) Implementation

Social Factors

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly reshaped workplace practices, with government-imposed restrictions and the closure of specific economic sectors driving the widespread adoption of Work from Home (WFH) arrangements (Wahab et al., 2022). WFH became essential to sustain employment and maintain vital business operations during movement control orders (MCO) and physical distancing measures (Bick et al., 2020). While these measures saved jobs and allowed businesses to continue functioning, they also disrupted employees' routines and impacted work-life balance (Putri & Amran, 2021). In Malaysia, the MCO, implemented on March 18, 2020, mandated remote work for most employees, and even after restrictions eased, many companies opted for full or hybrid WFH models (Rahmat et al., 2022). Studies indicate that WFH practices during the pandemic influenced job satisfaction, work-life balance, and productivity, with businesses adapting to meet customer needs remotely despite challenges (Dockery & Bawa, 2020; Rahmat et al., 2022).

Government Policy

Government policies have played a critical role in implementing WFH arrangements. In Malaysia, Rahim et al.

(2018) highlighted the need for comprehensive WFH policies in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), emphasizing guidelines on flexible working hours and human resource matters. However, existing policies lack provisions for infrastructure, data security, personal development plans, and monitoring mechanisms. Similarly, Wahab et al. (2022) examined legal frameworks such as the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) 1994, stressing the importance of policies addressing safety, health, fixed working hours, and rest periods to ensure employee well-being during WFH. Globally, Yang et al. (2021) found that hybrid and mixed-mode remote work policies, like those adopted by Microsoft, can influence team dynamics, necessitating conscious efforts to minimize the impact on non-remote workers. Beland et al. (2023) revealed that government interventions during COVID-19 mandated WFH for many industries, though the ease of implementation varied across sectors, with high-tech companies adapting quickly due to existing infrastructure and policies. These studies underscore the need for inclusive WFH policies to address diverse challenges effectively.

Impacts of Work from Home (WFH) Implementation

Social Impacts

Changes of Organizational Culture

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed organizational culture in Malaysia, shifting from traditional office-based work to telecommuting as part of the new normal (Wahab et al., 2022). This shift challenges conventional organizational practices as employees work remotely from locations like branch offices or customer meeting places, far from primary offices (Mendrika et al., 2021). However, contrary to concerns about reduced productivity, Ambikapathy and Ali (2020) found that employee commitment led to significant productivity gains, regardless of whether employees worked from home or in the office. These findings highlight the evolving nature of organizational culture and the adaptability of employees in remote work settings.

Productivity

WFH impacts employee productivity in various ways. Challenges such as reduced knowledge exchange, constant online connectivity, and insufficient social interaction can lower productivity and strain employee relationships (Bolisani et al., 2020; Nasrudin et al., 2022). Gender-specific effects on productivity are also observed, where traditional housework roles may hinder women's productivity, while increased participation by men in household tasks could offset these effects (Awada et al., 2021). Despite these challenges, WFH benefits employers by enhancing productivity, morale, retention, and reducing operating costs (Mahmud et al., 2020; Ambikapathy & Ali, 2020). Effective workplace policies addressing issues like family-work conflict, social isolation, and distracting environments, alongside promoting job autonomy and self-leadership, can foster better WFH engagement and well-being (Awada et al., 2021; Galanti et al., 2021). These findings emphasize the need for balanced strategies to optimize productivity and employee satisfaction in remote work settings.

Information Technology Issues

Negative WFH experiences are often linked to caregiving responsibilities and technology-related issues (Hoffman et al., 2020). Without organizational investment in technology, employees may struggle with communication tools and maintaining relationships, which can reduce productivity (Bolisani et al., 2020). To improve WFH experiences, employers should tailor work patterns to support work-life balance, employee performance, and well-being (Awada et al., 2021). Studies in Malaysia and Indonesia highlight challenges such as difficulty in demonstrating work ethic, lack of visible progress, and technology issues, which can affect performance evaluations (Mahmud et al., 2020; Susilo, 2020). Additionally, WFH employees may face issues like poor internet connectivity or increased costs for online access, which can disrupt productivity (Nasrudin et al., 2022; Vyas, 2022).

Cost

The implementation of WFH has a significant impact on costs for both organizations and employees. Many organizations have introduced remote work systems, aiming to reduce operating costs by cutting down on office space, utility costs, and office maintenance (Xiao et al., 2021; Nasrudin et al., 2022). Studies suggest that WFH can lead to energy savings and reduced office space requirements, as hotdesking eliminates the need to heat and cool offices as much (Hook et al., 2020). Employees also benefit from savings, particularly on petrol costs and commuting time, which can increase productivity and positively impact household economic strategies (Ambikapathy & Ali, 2020; Nasrudin et al., 2022). Overall, WFH can result in cost savings for both employers and employees through reduced commuting, office space, and utility costs.

Work-life Balance

WFH can have mixed effects on employees' work-life balance, with some finding it difficult to manage, while others benefit from greater flexibility. While some employees may feel more stressed or work longer hours (Ambikapathy & Ali, 2020), others experience increased satisfaction and better work-life balance, particularly due to flexible schedules (Putri & Amran, 2021). However, distractions at home can impact work-life balance, especially for those with families or those living in less ideal environments (Nasrudin et al., 2022). In contrast, a study by Irawanto et al. (2021) in Indonesia found that WFH offers more autonomy and job satisfaction, particularly for female workers who can better manage family and work responsibilities.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is closely linked to employees' work experiences and emotional states (Irawanto et al., 2021). WFH can lead to positive job satisfaction, especially when employees achieve productivity goals (Ambikapathy & Ali, 2020). However, it can also make it challenging to separate work and family life, potentially leading to difficulties in balancing the two (Putri & Amran, 2021). Nevertheless, clear boundaries and routines can help employees maintain a harmonious balance between work and personal life, contributing to greater job satisfaction (Ambikapathy & Ali, 2020).

Physical Health

WFH can have varying effects on employees' physical health. A study by Hishamudin et al. (2024) in Malaysia highlighted how women's physical health changed with WFH during the COVID-19 pandemic, with some experiencing weight loss due to psychological stress, while others gained weight due to irregular eating habits and lack of traditional work setups. Allen et al. (2015) also noted that WFH reduces physical movement since employees no longer commute or move around in an office environment. However, the time saved can be used for physical activities, and WFH can promote healthier eating habits as employees may have access to better food options at home than in the office.

Cultural and Religious Practices

The implementation of WFH can impact cultural and religious practices. Firdaus and Mohamad (2021) found that employees in Malaysia used religiosity as a coping mechanism during the challenges of WFH, with one participant noting that a strong relationship with the Creator provided peace of mind during stressful situations. Additionally, Apergis et al. (2024) examined the effects of stress and WFH on spirituality and religious practices, finding that spirituality positively correlated with religion, with WFH benefiting individuals' spiritual needs. However, while spirituality and prayer were common, in-person religious service attendance, which helps reduce stress, was less frequent. This suggests that religiosity and spirituality are intertwined with the WFH experience, affecting both personal well-being and work-life balance.

Time With Family

WFH significantly impacts the time employees spend with their families. According to Bolisani et al. (2020), WFH allows employees to gather with family members at home, fostering stronger psychological relationships and family dynamics. It also provides greater flexibility for employees to manage family matters while

balancing work tasks, contributing to a harmonious family environment (Irawanto et al., 2021). This flexibility, supported by positive employee-employer relationships, employee behaviour, and technology, is highly valued, as it promotes a balanced and fulfilling work-life experience (Rahim et al., 2018).

Income

Imam et al. (2023) studied the impact of WFH on Indonesian employees' earnings during the COVID-19

pandemics, revealing mixed results. While telecommuting can lead to lower income due to decreased productivity and the blending of work and home activities, it can also increase earnings in some cases. Employees who work longer hours from home may experience higher wages. However, the research highlights that companies with telecommuting policies often see decreased revenue, and factors like digitalization and socio-demographic characteristics, particularly among young people and city residents, affect income outcomes. Additionally, skills improvement through training can increase workers' earning potential during the pandemic.

Psychological Impacts

Loneliness

The COVID-19 pandemic and government-imposed social distancing measures have highlighted the challenges of remote work, leading to feelings of loneliness and isolation, particularly for workers living alone or with few social connections outside of work (Wolor et al., 2020). The absence of regular in-person communication with colleagues, supervisors, and managers during WFH contributes to this sense of isolation, making it harder to manage both work and non-work tasks effectively compared to an office environment (Hima wan et al., 2022; Susilo, 2020).

Stress

WFH arrangements can have both positive and negative effects on employee stress. On one hand, WFH can reduce stress by promoting a healthier work-life balance and providing employees with more control over their schedules, leading to better well-being (Chu et al., 2022; Xiao et al., 2021). On the other hand, WFH can also increase stress due to social isolation, reduced communication with colleagues, and difficulties in knowledge sharing, which may disrupt productivity and lead to chronic stress, anxiety, and depression (Bolisani et al., 2020; Irawanto et al., 2021). Employees may also struggle with balancing work and personal lives, causing emotional challenges that negatively affect productivity and well-being (Wolor et al., 2020; Suratkon & Azlan, 2021; Dubey & Tripathi, 2020).

Motivation

The implementation of WFH can lead to decreased motivation among employees, as the lack of a traditional work environment and limited informal interaction with colleagues can make them feel disconnected and uninspired (Ambikapathy & Ali, 2020; Suratkon & Azlan, 2021). The absence of visibility and effective communication with coworkers can further hinder employees' ability to collaborate and receive necessary support, leading to feelings of inadequacy and demotivation (Ambikapathy & Ali, 2020).

Mental Health

WFH can negatively impact employees' mental health. Research by Awada et al. (2021) and Oakman et al. (2020) indicates that emotional exhaustion and cognitive stress increase for WFH employees, especially due to greater overtime and reduced social support. Additionally, inadequate work environments and lack of emotional support can impair work performance (Nasrudin et al., 2022). A study by Xiao et al. (2021) found that WFH during the pandemic led to a decline in physical and mental well-being, influenced by reduced physical activity, disrupted eating habits, communication challenges, and distractions at home. These factors, including poor workstation setups, highlighted the importance of environmental quality in supporting employee well-being during remote work.

Theories

Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theory explains stress as the result of resource loss or the threat of it, emphasizing that losses outweigh gains in impact. In WFH settings, resource losses like reduced social interaction or work-life balance can lead to stress, while gains such as social support or coping strategies help build resilience. The theory underscores conserving resources and seeking gains to mitigate stress and improve well-being in remote work environments.

Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) Theory

According to Demerouti et al. (2001) Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) theory, employee well-being by balancing job demands (aspects requiring effort and causing stress) and job resources (aspects supporting goals and growth). In WFH settings, increased demands like isolation and blurred work-life boundaries can lead to burnout, but resources like flexibility, reduced commute, and virtual support systems can mitigate these effects. The JD-R model emphasizes fostering sufficient resources to counter demands, creating a healthier and more engaged workforce in remote work environments.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research method to explore the Work-From-Home (WFH) experiences at M Company in Kuala Lumpur. Qualitative research is well-suited for understanding human behavior, motivation, and experiences in depth (Ahmad et al., 2019). The qualitative approach provides detailed insights that quantitative data cannot, making it ideal for exploring personal perspectives. Data was collected through semi-structured and in-depth face-to-face interviews, which align with Hammarberg et al. (2016) who emphasize the value of such methods for gaining insights into attitudes, beliefs, and personal experiences. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the WFH experience.

Population and Sample

This study adopted a qualitative research design using a case study to explore the Work-From-Home (WFH) experiences of employees at M Company in Kuala Lumpur. The population consisted of 30 employees who had experience with WFH, and five informants were purposively selected for the study. The sample included three male and two female employees, representing both managerial and frontline roles. The purposive sampling technique was used to ensure that informants with relevant and informative experiences related to WFH were chosen to provide in-depth insights (Staller, 2021). Additionally, snowball sampling was employed to expand the sample by allowing informants to recommend other participants with similar experiences. This method helped enhance the richness of the data and was particularly useful when identifying hard-to-reach individuals (Etikan et al., 2015; Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). The informants' demographic backgrounds, as shown in Table 1, are as follows.

Table 1: Demographic Backgrounds of the Informants

Informants	Angel	Ayu	Ikhmal	Khai	Putra
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male
Age	24	29	28	22	31
Place of Origin	Negeri Sembilan	Kuala Lumpur	Selangor	Selangor	Selangor
Ethnic Group	Chinese	Malay	Malay	Malay	Malay
Religion	Buddhism	Islam	Islam	Islam	Islam
Education	Diploma	Diploma	Diploma	Malaysian Certificate of Education	Malaysian Certificate of Education
Position	Customer Care Consultant	Customer Service Consultant	Customer Relations Unit	Customer Care Consultant	Executive of Customer Service
Period of Service	3 years	6 years	2 years	4 years	10 years

Table 1 presents detailed information about five informants - Angel, Ayu, Ikhmal, Khairudin and Putra - highlighting various aspects such as their gender, age, place of origin, ethnic group, religion, level of education, position and year of service. All of them came from a similar work location, which is at M Company, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Their positions and job scopes are different from one another. Angel, a 24-year-old Chinese and Buddhist female from Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, holds a diploma and works as a customer care consultant with 3 years of experience. The second informant, Ayu is a 29-year-old female of Malay ethnicity and a Muslim from Kuala Lumpur with diploma qualification and has 6 years of experience as a customer care consultant like Angel. Angel and Ayu have the same job scope, i.e., to promote and sell products to customers, specifically in business department relations. The third informant named Ikhmal is a 28-year-old male from Selangor who is Malay and Muslim. He has diploma certification and works in the customer relations unit for two 2-year periods of service. His job scope is answering customer calls and solving customer issues relating to M Company's products and services. The fourth informant, Khairudin is a 22-year-old Malay Muslim male from Selangor with a Malaysian Certificate of Education who works as a customer care consultant and has 4 years of experience. His job scope is to promote and sell products to customers. Finally, the fifth informant, Putra is a 31-year-old male of Malay ethnicity and Muslim with 10 years of experience as the executive of customer service and holds a Malaysian Certificate of Education. His job is to oversee each of his subordinates and ensure operations run smoothly.

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol for this study was developed to align with the research objectives and was structured into three parts to ensure comprehensive data collection. Part I focuses on gathering demographic information from the informants, including their name, gender, age, ethnic group, religion, job position, and years of service. Part II explores the factors that led to the transition to WFH at M Company, specifically investigating why the company adopted this working arrangement. Part III examines the various impacts of WFH on employees, covering aspects such as organizational culture, work-life balance, religious and cultural impacts, productivity, IT issues, costs, job satisfaction, physical health, family time, income, loneliness, stress, motivation, and mental health. The interview protocol was crafted to be clear and straightforward, piloted to ensure its effectiveness, and verified by an expert for relevance and clarity (Majid, 2020; Malmqvist, 2019; Ng, 2018). The protocol was designed to answer the research objectives through thematic analysis, focusing on the experiences and impacts of WFH on employees.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection for this study involved semi-structured, in-depth interviews to explore employees' experiences with WFH. The process began with the researcher obtaining approval from the retail manager and inviting employees from various departments to participate using purposive sampling. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality. In the consent form, the researcher included a line informing participants that they could withdraw from the study at the data collection point (Lobe et al., 2020). The interviews were conducted face-to-face, with each session lasting around 40 minutes, and were audio-recorded for transcription purposes. Before the interviews, participants were provided with an information sheet and consent form. Additionally, the researcher reviewed company policies, internal reports, and surveys related to WFH to better understand the organization's context. The data collected was securely stored and analysed for further insights.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves describing, categorizing, and relating phenomena to the researcher's concepts (Graue, 2015). When analysing the qualitative data, several steps were taken to gain meaningful insights into the employees' experience. First, the interview transcripts were carefully reviewed and coded. Then, the researcher organized these codes into broader themes using thematic analysis techniques. Throughout this process, qualitative data analysis software, i.e., NVivo, facilitated the coding process. NVivo 12 enables the researcher to structure and examine the data, providing a quick and straightforward alternative to the paper-based systems once relied on for analysing extensive datasets by the researcher (Edlund & McDougall, 2019). Additionally, the researcher adhered to strict ethical guidelines until the end of the data

analysis process, including ensuring the confidentiality of the informants and the accuracy of the data to maintain the integrity of the research findings. Finally, the insights gained from the data analysis became the basis for informing organizational strategies, policies, and practices related to WFH arrangements at M Company in Kuala Lumpur.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Analysis of the Work from Home (WFH) implementation at M Company in Kuala Lumpur

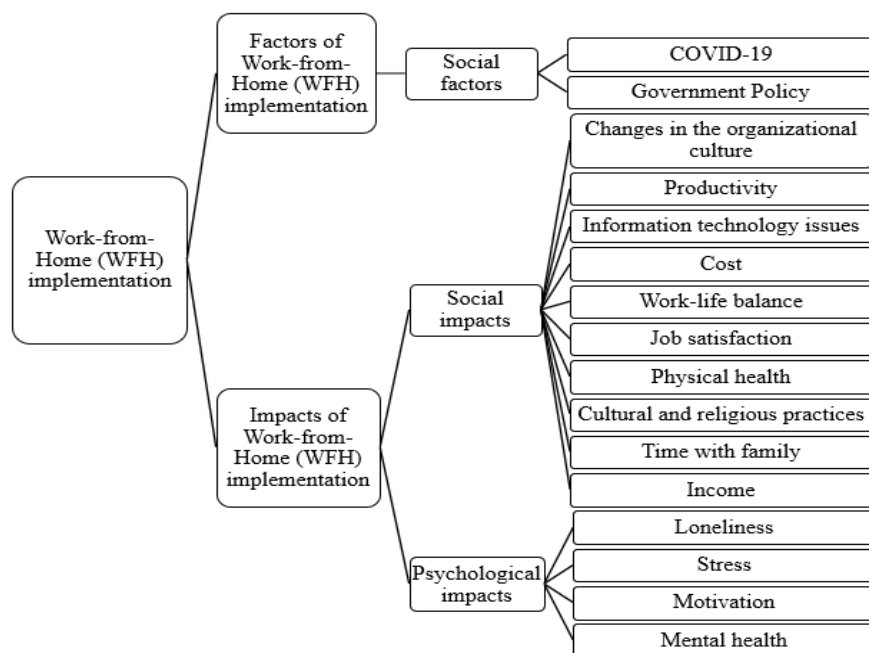


Figure 1: Work From Home (WFH) Implementation

As Figure 1 indicates, the first discussion will cover WFH's factors, including social factors, i.e., COVID-19 and government policy. Meanwhile, the second section will cover WFH's social and psychological impacts on the employees and the organization at M Telecommunications Company in Kuala Lumpur. The social impacts are changes in organizational culture, work-life balance, religious impacts, cultural impacts, productivity, information technology issues, cost, job satisfaction, physical health, time with family and income. The psychological impacts include loneliness, stress, motivation, and mental health. All these elements will be thoroughly discussed in the following paragraphs.

Factors of Work from Home (WFH) Implementation

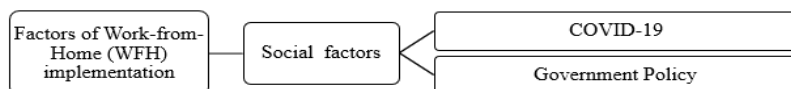


Figure 2: Factors of Work from Home (WFH) Implementation

As Figure 2 indicates, social factors, including COVID-19 and government policy, were the only reasons WFH was implemented at M Telecommunications Company in Kuala Lumpur based on the data gained from the informants,

Social Factors

COVID-19

Under the theme of social factors, there are two sub-themes categorized under it: COVID-19 and government

policy. The informants clearly stated that WFH was implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This relates to the study by Dubey and Tripathi (2020), which stated that the majority of businesses have been attempting to adopt the WFH strategy due to the lockdown forcing individuals to remain indoors.

Based on the interviews, Ikhmal clearly stated that WFH was implemented due to pandemic COVID-19 as follows:

“My personal opinion would be that the work from home was implemented only due to COVID. If COVID never happened, then it would never have been implemented.” (Informant Ikhmal).

Government Policy

Additionally, Ayu also highlights that WFH are flexibility given by the government during COVID-19. This is reflected in her narrative as following:

“It is like working in flexibility that the government has set for all employees that practice WFH.” (Informant Ayu)

Impacts of Work from Home (WFH) Implementation

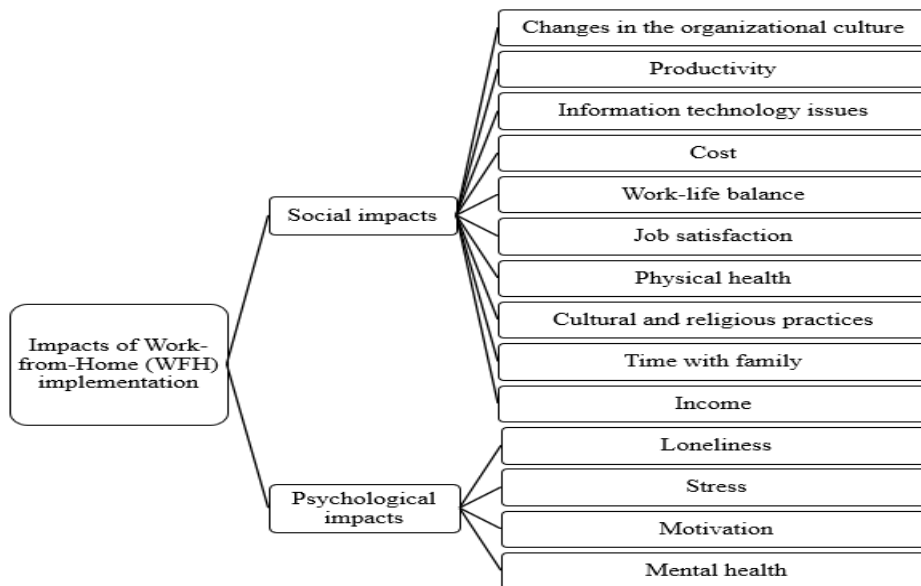


Figure 3: Impacts of Work from Home (WFH) Implementation

Figure 3 shows the impacts of work from home divided into two which are social impacts and psychological impacts. Social impacts in this research included changes of organizational culture, work-life balance, religious impacts, cultural impacts, productivity, information technology issues, cost, job satisfaction, physical health, time with family and income. Psychological impacts in this research included loneliness, stress, motivation, and mental health.

Social Impacts

Changes of Organizational Culture

Based on the interview, the informants explained the impact of implementing WFH on employees and the organization at M Company in Kuala Lumpur.

An informant, Angel, describes how organizational culture changes in company meetings.

“Before this, we did not have Zoom and Teams meetings, so when there were meetings to attend, we would always have to go to the headquarters (HQ) office. But now, after we started WFH, there are these Zoom and

Teams tools for us, so we often do meetings through Teams instead of going to the office because it is more comfortable. So, the meeting still exists but only online.” (Informant Angel)

Productivity

An informant named Angel feels productive while practising WFH. She shared that she enjoys it because it allows her more time to catch up on pending tasks other than work in the office.

“I enjoy WFH practice. It feels like I have more time to catch up on things, like all the pending things I have wanted to settle. In the office, there is always the constant demand to focus on service and attend to customers, which makes it hard to settle the pending tasks.” (Informant Angel)

Information Technology Issues

Ayu agreed that when the internet faces disruptions, be it a sudden outage or a slowdown, it poses major difficulties in accomplishing tasks effectively. This ongoing interruption postpones specific tasks and lengthens the entire workday.

“Yes, when the internet suddenly cuts out or slows down, it affects everything. Searching for something becomes a hassle, takes longer, and the work slows down. If we are in the middle of a Teams meeting and the connection drops, we have to restart, which adds even more time. That is why I said it makes us work longer than expected.” (Informant Ayu)

Cost

The informants believed that WFH had impacted both individual and operational costs. For individuals, all informants have saved a lot of money, and thus, this has a positive impact on them.

Ikhmal acknowledged that WFH has saved his money and enabled him to speed up his financial planning, which can help him achieve his financial objectives more quickly than when he was working at the office.

“Yeah, in terms of cost, it saved a lot. I would say that if going to the office would at least make me spend RM500 and RM600, then WFH would make me save that much. This will speed up any financial planning that I have. So if I have a target, then it could reach half the amount or duration it was when I was working at the office.” (Informant Ikhmal)

Regarding operational cost, all informants provided varying perspectives to one another. Operational costs can have both positive and negative impacts.

Angel expressed her view that companies invest significant funds in providing their employees with WFH equipment so that their employees can perform their tasks effectively.

“There is more spending on devices. For example, if someone already has an iPad but it is outdated or limited, the company needs to buy new ones for everyone so they have the right tools for the job. So, the company ends up spending more on devices and staff support. This means that the company provides the necessary equipment, including the devices and even the internet, rather than us using our own.” (Informant Angel)

Work-life Balance

Angel stated that WFH helps her concentrate on her work and finish it effectively, and she believes that it provides an improved work-life balance.

“WFH made me focus on work so that it can be finished quickly. After that, I can do other things. However, the time is not fixed if we work at the office. We must follow the crowd and might be doing overtime.” (Informant Angel)

Job Satisfaction

Informant Khai expressed that the standard sales process is challenging since potential customers are hesitant to interact or provide information, which complicates his ability to close sales when he works from home. It is evident that not all jobs are suitable for WFH practices because they require direct communication with the teams and customers.

“Since I am in the sales department, it has become a bit challenging to make online sales because there are many online scammers. It is harder to build trust and connect with potential customers because they are more cautious when they receive calls.” (Informant Khai)

Physical Health

Khai thinks the flexibility to exercise and enjoy physical activities at home has made it easier for him to stay healthy.

“WFH keeps me more energized. I usually go to some training sessions, and I enjoy running. I have the time to stay active and have fun with it. I think it is actually quite convenient and works well for me.” (Informant Khai)

Cultural and Religious Practices

Regarding cultural practices, informant Ikhmal agrees that WFH has a positive impact because he can gather during any festive season.

“WFH has allowed me to engage more with my cultural practices, especially during festive seasons, so I can participate in family gatherings more easily, which enhances my connection to my culture.” (Informant Ikhmal)

Ikhmal also agrees that the freedom that comes with WFH has made it easier for him to prioritize and manage his religious practices.

“WFH has made it easier for me to include my religious practices into my daily routine so I can take time for prayers without the concern of office hours.” (Informant Ikhmal)

Time With Family

Ikhmal acknowledges that even though WFH provides an opportunity to spend more time with his family, he feels that the time available is insufficient to fully connect with his loved ones.

“I did say that WFH would allow me to spend more time with my family, especially when the working hours nowadays are 8 to 9 hours per week, taking 8 hours per day, 8 hours of sleep and left with another 8 hours of spending time with your family and it will not be enough because during the 8 hours of spending time with your family would also be used to prepare for work.” (Informant Ikhmal)

Income

Angel stated that the lack of face-to-face interaction with potential customers in a physical office setting would highly impact her ability to make sales and earn a commission.

“WFH has impacted our income. Since we are in customer service and rely on sales from walk-in customers, we have less chance to do sales when fewer customers come in. Then, our commission will be affected. Attracting customers when you are not physically in the office is much harder. So, WFH is a challenge for our earnings.” (Informant Angel)

Psychological Impacts

Loneliness

Ikhmal shared a balanced perspective on his experience with WFH. He also feels lonely while WFH.

“Overall, my feelings about WFH are a mix of positive and negative. While I appreciate the flexibility and the time saved from committing, I sometimes feel lonely and disconnected from my colleagues, which can affect my mood.” (Informant Ikhmal)

Stress

Informant Khai expressed frustration with a superior who doubts his productivity when practicing WFH due to the lack of direct supervision.

“There is just that stressful part when your manager does not believe you are working because they cannot see you face-to-face. If my sales are low, they might think I am just sitting at home and not putting in the effort.” (Informant Khai)

Motivation

Khai aims to provide the same level of service and satisfaction to each customer he engages with while doing WFH. Customer satisfaction not only meets his work responsibilities but also energizes his personal drive to thrive.

“My motivation comes from the experience of helping customers. When I practice WFH, I talk to a customer and explain everything clearly, and they end up happy. So that makes me want to do more. I want to keep making customers happy, not just one, but every customer I interact with.” (Informant Khai)

Mental Health

Angel highlighted how practicing WFH, which allows her autonomy over her schedule, can contribute to personal well-being and a more organized lifestyle.

“It does not affect my mental well-being because I like to follow my schedule. I enjoy controlling my day by deciding when to eat, work, exercise, etc. This flexibility allows me to set my own pace, and I appreciate being able to organize my time the way I want.” (Informant Angel)

DISCUSSIONS

Objective 1: To analyze factors that lead to Work from Home (WFH) implementation at M Telecommunications Company in Kuala Lumpur.

The first objective was to understand better the factors contributing to implementing WFH at M Telecommunications Company. The findings from this study provide compelling evidence that the implementation of WFH at M Telecommunications Company was primarily driven by social factors, notably the COVID-19 pandemic and related government policies. For instance, Wahab et al. (2022) emphasized that government-imposed movement restrictions and the closure of economic sectors have significantly contributed to the rise of workplace flexibility, particularly WFH. The findings from this study revealed that the first experience with WFH during the pandemic was generally manageable. At the same time, it was also noted that WFH would not have been implemented without the influence of COVID-19.

These findings align with the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, which emphasizes the need to protect and conserve resources during times of crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic created significant threats to resources such as employee health, organizational stability, and operational continuity. In response, M Telecommunications Company adopted WFH to safeguard these resources. This approach reflects Hobfoll's

(1989) principle that individuals and organizations are motivated to conserve resources in the face of potential loss.

The study also aligns with the observations of Rahman et al. (2020), who highlighted that mobility restrictions and distancing requirements led organizations to adopt WFH. The findings further indicated that it reduced exposure risks to COVID-19 while enabling business continuity. Similarly, Dubey and Tripathi (2020) highlighted how lockdowns forced businesses to adopt WFH, a sentiment mirrored by all informants. These findings validate the theoretical premise that external crises, such as pandemics, drive organizations to adopt flexible work arrangements to ensure operational resilience.

Objective 2: To explore the impacts of Work from Home (WFH) experienced by employees at M Telecommunications Company in Kuala Lumpur.

The second objective is to explore the impacts of WFH on employees at M Telecommunications Company in Kuala Lumpur. Its discussion is based on two main themes, i.e., social impacts and psychological impacts. The findings reveal key themes that provide deeper insights into the consequences of WFH and its implications for employees and organizations.

WFH has significantly altered organizational culture, with virtual tools such as Zoom and Teams replacing traditional face-to-face interactions. While these tools-maintained communication, the absence of in-person interactions impacted team cohesion and collaboration. This reflects existing literature, such as Wahab et al. (2022) and Mendrika et al. (2021), which discuss how remote work disrupts traditional workplace norms. The findings also align with Susilo (2020), who highlighted the challenges of maintaining team dynamics in a remote setting. These findings relate to Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) Theory, which posits that diminished social resources, such as face-to-face communication, can heighten the strain caused by increased job demands.

The findings suggest mixed outcomes regarding productivity. While some employees experienced enhanced focus and the ability to complete pending tasks due to fewer office distractions, others faced challenges, such as diminished team collaboration and technological barriers. These outcomes align with Mahmud et al. (2020), who noted that WFH can simultaneously boost productivity for some employees while presenting obstacles for others, such as limited interaction with colleagues. In the context of COR theory, the ability to enhance focus and manage tasks represents a gain in personal resources, while technological barriers and reduced collaboration signify resource losses that can amplify stress.

Apart from that, technological disruptions were a significant barrier, with unstable internet connections and delayed IT support affecting work efficiency. These findings support Bolisani et al. (2020), who emphasized the critical role of IT infrastructure in ensuring seamless remote operations. Reliable technology was highlighted as a fundamental requirement for effective WFH implementation. This challenge can also be interpreted through the JD-R framework, as inadequate technological resources exacerbate job demands, increasing strain on employees. However, organizations faced increased operational costs due to investments in remote work equipment. These findings align with Hook et al. (2020) and Xiao et al. (2021), who highlighted the dual financial effects of WFH, i.e., employee cost savings and additional expenditures for employers.

Furthermore, WFH provided greater flexibility for employees to balance professional and personal commitments, with improved time management cited as a key benefit. However, distractions and blurred boundaries between work and home life were also noted that impact productivity and focus. This reflects Irawanto et al. (2021), who emphasized the dual nature of WFH's impact on work-life balance, depending on individual circumstances and organizational policies. According to COR theory, the ability to manage time effectively can be seen as a resource gain that contributes to resilience, while blurred boundaries represent a threat to personal resources, such as mental clarity and well-being.

The findings reveal varied levels of job satisfaction among employees. While some appreciated the flexibility and autonomy of WFH, others faced challenges, such as reduced interpersonal communication and difficulties

engaging with customers. This aligns with Ambikapathy and Ali (2020), who found that job satisfaction in WFH settings depends on employees' ability to adapt to new work environments. The JD-R theory reinforces this by emphasizing the critical role of job resources in sustaining satisfaction and engagement amidst heightened job demands.

In addition, WFH had contrasting effects on employees' physical health. Some reported reduced activity levels and weight gain due to limited movement, while others used the flexibility of WFH to adopt healthier lifestyles. These findings are consistent with those of Allen et al. (2015), who noted that WFH can have positive and negative health outcomes based on individual habits.

WFH positively influenced employees' engagement in cultural and religious practices, such as participating in family traditions and observing prayer routines. These findings align with Firdaus and Mohamad (2021), who emphasized the role of WFH in facilitating cultural and religious needs, particularly during significant periods.

The findings reveal that WFH allowed employees more time with their families, providing flexibility to manage family responsibilities alongside work. However, the quantity and quality of this time were sometimes insufficient, as balancing work tasks with family obligations remained challenging. This aligns with Bolisani et al. (2020), who noted that WFH fosters a harmonious family environment by allowing employees to remain physically present. Yet, Irawanto et al. (2021) argued that without clear boundaries, employees may struggle to dedicate meaningful time to family. The findings emphasize that while WFH supports better family integration, organizations must encourage employees to establish boundaries to ensure a healthy balance.

Other than that, feelings of loneliness were prominent among employees, particularly for those who lacked regular social interactions outside of work. This aligns with Wolor et al. (2020), who noted that the absence of physical interaction in WFH settings can exacerbate loneliness. While electronic communication provides some connection, it often lacks the depth of in-person exchanges. This finding suggests that organizations should implement strategies such as virtual social events or mentorship programs to address employee isolation and foster inclusivity.

Moreover, the findings indicate that WFH resulted in mixed stress levels. On one hand, employees benefited from reduced commuting and greater control over their schedules, which aligned with Xiao et al. (2021). On the other hand, constant connectivity, unclear boundaries, and increased workloads led to heightened stress, as noted by Irawanto et al. (2021). Technological disruptions also compounded stress levels, consistent with Bolisani et al. (2020). Organizations should provide training on time management and establish clear expectations to help employees manage stress effectively.

Motivation among employees varied, with some finding WFH empowering due to increased autonomy, while others struggled with a lack of recognition and visibility. This aligns findings by Ambikapathy and Ali (2020), who highlighted that reduced workplace interactions can demotivate employees. The findings suggest that organizations should maintain regular performance feedback and recognition mechanisms, even in remote settings, to sustain employee motivation.

Lastly, the findings reveal both positive and negative impacts of WFH on mental health. While some employees appreciated the autonomy and flexibility, others reported emotional exhaustion and feelings of detachment. This aligns with Awada et al. (2021), who found that inadequate social support in WFH settings contributes to cognitive stress and emotional fatigue. Addressing mental health requires organizations to promote wellness initiatives, such as counselling services and peer support groups, to create a more supportive work environment. These findings underscore the relevance of both COR and JD-R theories that emphasize the need to conserve resources and enhance support systems to mitigate the adverse effects of WFH.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Limitations

This study has several limitations, including a narrow scope, as it focuses on only one organization. The in-

person interview process required managerial approval and scheduling, which sometimes caused delays, leading to extended interview sessions for some informants. Additionally, informants were selected by the organization, which may have resulted in more generic responses rather than in-depth insights. Limited familiarity with the research topic among some informants also required further clarification, complicating the data collection process. The restricted time for interviews further hindered the ability to obtain more detailed information.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Organization

The extensive implementation of WFH setups has changed the workplace, presenting advantages and difficulties. As remote work increasingly becomes a key aspect of organizational functions, organizations must intentionally improve the WFH experience for their employees. To enhance the WFH experience, organizations should establish clear, flexible remote work policies that define work hours, communication expectations, and performance metrics, while accommodating individual needs. Investing in necessary technological resources such as reliable laptops, fast internet, and secure collaboration tools is crucial for boosting productivity. Additionally, fostering transparent communication from leadership will help keep employees informed and engaged. The study's findings suggest that a comprehensive approach can increase the acceptance of WFH arrangements among employees.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research could broaden the scope by including data from other countries, as WFH policies are global in nature. To ensure more comprehensive results, future studies should involve a larger number of informants and explore companies with greater workforce diversity. Engaging with informants during breaks may yield more thoughtful responses. Additionally, comparing both employee and employer perspectives on WFH policies could reveal correlations and offer deeper insights into the impact of these policies. Such research would further contribute to the expanding body of literature on remote work.

CONCLUSION

The research findings highlight the social factors driving the adoption of WFH. The study also explores the impacts of WFH on employees, revealing both social and psychological effects. Socially, WFH has brought significant changes to organizational culture, work-life balance, and time spent with family, while culturally, it has influenced how employees navigate religious and traditional practices in remote work settings. Psychologically, employees experienced shifts in job satisfaction, productivity levels, and physical health, with many highlighting challenges tied to information technology and income adjustments. Despite these challenges, the WFH arrangement has also created opportunities for cost savings and greater flexibility in managing personal and professional lives.

This study achieves its objectives by analysing the factors that led to WFH implementation and exploring its varied impacts on employees. By addressing these critical issues, this study highlights the uniqueness of examining WFH through multiple perspectives, encompassing cultural, social, and psychological dimensions.

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