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Satisfaction in Work-from-Home Arrangements and Employee Engagement during COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The transition to Work from Home (WFH) arrangements during the COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted employee engagement within the academic sector, necessitating a study to explore this dynamic. This research aimed to assess the relationship between employee satisfaction with WFH conditions and their overall engagement levels, focusing on various factors such as work-life balance and work productivity. The study employed a survey methodology, collecting data from 100 employees who have adapted to WFH due to pandemic restrictions. The results indicated very high satisfaction with WFH arrangements, particularly in terms of work productivity and work-life balance, suggesting that remote work can effectively support both professional performance and personal well-being. Furthermore, the analysis revealed a strong positive correlation between the satisfaction derived from WFH conditions and the level of employee engagement,

emphasizing the critical role of effective remote work management in maintaining and enhancing employee output and morale. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on remote work implications by highlighting key areas that organizations should focus on to foster a productive and engaged remote workforce. These findings provide valuable insights for policymakers and educational leaders aiming to refine remote work strategies to enhance employee engagement during and beyond the pandemic era.

Keywords: *work-from-home scheme, job satisfaction, employee engagement, work-from-home employees, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic precipitated unprecedented disruptions in workplace dynamics, compelling organizations worldwide to rapidly adapt to new operational norms. Among these adaptations, the Work from Home (WFH) model emerged as a dominant strategy to ensure continuity in business and education sectors amidst global lockdowns (Jenkins & Smith, 2021; Leal-Filho et al., 2022). This shift was not merely logistical but also cultural, requiring a fundamental reevaluation of how work is organized, monitored, and evaluated (McCallon, 2023). In academic settings, this shift has been particularly complex, affecting not just administrative staff but also faculty and students (Hobeck, 2023), thereby altering the core delivery of education.

Globally, the impact of WFH has been mixed, influenced by the nature of the job, sector-specific challenges, and regional economic contexts. According to the

International Labour Organization (ILO), approximately 93% of the world's workforce was living in countries with workplace closures at the peak of the first wave in 2020. While some sectors such as information technology and financial services transitioned relatively smoothly to WFH (e.g., Lyons & Kass-Hanna, 2022; Vogel & Yeo, 2021), others, notably hospitality and tourism, faced significant hurdles (Ghosh & Mondal, 2022). These discrepancies highlight the varied effectiveness of WFH policies, which are not universally viable but depend greatly on the nature of the work and the preparedness of the organization to support remote operations.

Within the academic sector, the shift to remote work has introduced specific challenges in maintaining employee engagement and productivity. The sudden absence of a physical campus environment has diluted the traditional dynamics of academic engagement, which are typically bolstered by face-to-face interactions and a vibrant campus life (Lee, Lee & Jung, 2023). This change raises concerns about the potential erosion of community and culture, aspects of academic life that are vital for both staff and student well-being and productivity. Moreover, the lack of direct supervision and the newness of digital teaching tools have further complicated the roles of academic staff, potentially impacting their performance and job satisfaction (Szromek & Wolniak, 2020).

Despite the global scale of WFH implementation, detailed studies focusing on its impacts within the academic sector during the pandemic are scant. The rapid shift has left many institutions navigating uncharted waters without a clear understanding of the long-term implications of such a drastic change in work environment. This research gap underscores the need for comprehensive studies that evaluate the specific

impacts of WFH on employee engagement and performance in academia. By exploring these areas, the study aims to provide insights that could inform future policies and practices, ensuring educational institutions are better prepared for similar disruptions in the future.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the relationship of satisfaction on work-from-home arrangements and employee engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. How satisfied are the employees in work-from-home arrangements in terms of:
    1.1 work-life balance; and
    1.2 work productivity?
2. What is the level of employee engagement in terms of:
    2.1 leadership;
    2.2 communication;
    2.3 reward and recognition; and
    2.4 accountability and performance?
3. Is there a significant relationship between satisfaction on work-from-home and employee engagement?
4. Does satisfaction on work-from-home significantly influence employee engagement?

METHOD

Respondents. The study focuses on a group of respondents comprised of employees who have transitioned to working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These

individuals offer a unique perspective on the adaptation processes and the challenges faced during this unprecedented shift in work environment. A total of 100 employees were purposively selected based on their direct experience with the work-from-home model, which is critical for understanding the real-time implications of this new work setting on employee performance and engagement.

Purposive sampling was chosen as the primary method to target individuals who specifically meet the criteria of having adapted to a WFH setup due to the pandemic. This method is particularly suitable given the logistical challenges and the need for in-depth analysis of experiences from a defined group of individuals (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). To expand the reach and depth of the respondent pool, snowball sampling was also employed. This technique is valuable in identifying potential participants in hard-to-reach populations who possess specific characteristics necessary for the study (Sadler et al., 2010). In this case, it allows for the recruitment of individuals who have experienced significant changes in their work environment due to the pandemic, leveraging networks of colleagues who share similar work conditions.

The inclusion criteria for participants in this study are employees who have been working from home for at least six months, ensuring that they have adequate exposure to the dynamics of remote work. Exclusion criteria include employees who have not worked from home or have done so for less than six months, as their experience might not provide sufficient insights into the long-term effects and adaptation strategies related to WFH. Additionally, participants who choose to withdraw from the study at any point will be allowed to do so without any consequences, ensuring ethical

compliance and respect for personal choice in research participation.

Instruments. The study used survey questionnaire in the form of a rating scale. The first part included specific questions about satisfaction on work-from-home arrangements, which consisted two indicators: work-life balance and work productivity. Furthermore, the scale used is a four-point Likert-type with choices ranging from very high to very low. The level of responses was then classified and analyzed as follows:

Range of Means	Descriptive Level	Interpretation
3.26-4.00	very high	Respondents are highly satisfied with the work-from-home arrangements, indicating a strong positive perception of their effectiveness.
2.51-3.25	high	Respondents are satisfied with the work-from-home arrangements, suggesting that they meet or exceed expectations in terms of effectiveness.
1.76-2.50	low	Respondents show low satisfaction with the work-from-home arrangements, indicating that these settings do not fully meet their expectations or needs.
1.00-1.75	very low	Respondents are very dissatisfied with the work-from-home arrangements, suggesting significant shortcomings in how these setups meet their needs or impact their work life.

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of questions on work engagement of employees, which has four indicators: leadership, communication, reward and recognition, and accountability and performance.

Furthermore, the scale used is a four-point Likert-type with choices ranging from very high to very low. The level of responses was then classified and analyzed as follows:

Range of Means	Descriptive Level	Interpretation
3.26-4.00	very high	Respondents demonstrate a very high level of engagement when working from home, indicating that these arrangements highly motivate and involve them in their work tasks.
2.51-3.25	high	Respondents show a high level of engagement, suggesting that work-from-home arrangements are effective in keeping them actively involved and interested in their work responsibilities.
1.76-2.50	low	Respondents report low engagement levels, indicating that work-from-home arrangements may be less conducive to keeping them motivated and focused on their job tasks.
1.00-1.75	very low	Respondents exhibit very low levels of work engagement, suggesting significant challenges with work-from-home arrangements that may hinder their ability to stay committed and connected to their work duties.

Design and Procedure. A correlational research design was used in this study. The correlational design examines the connections between the variables and may go in either a positive or negative direction (Bhandari, 2022). This design is appropriate since the study aims to explore the relationship between employees' satisfaction on work-from-

home scheme and their engagement at work.

The research process began with the team securing formal permissions from the Dean and the program head of the Business Administration Department, alongside obtaining informed consent from the participants. This ensured transparency and compliance with ethical standards, setting a foundation of trust and respect for participant rights. Following this initial setup, the researchers acquired ethical clearance from the research ethics committee. This certification was crucial for confirming that the study adhered to ethical guidelines and the Data Privacy Act, emphasizing the study's commitment to protecting participant rights and ensuring data privacy.

Data collection utilized a statistically validated questionnaire administered through Google Forms. The survey was specifically targeted to the relevant demographic by sharing it in an official Facebook Messenger group chat for employees working from home. This method facilitated efficient and direct data collection from the intended respondents. As responses were collected, the researchers meticulously monitored and managed the incoming data to maintain strict confidentiality of personal information. This careful handling of data ensured that personal details remained secure while allowing the researchers to systematically analyze the responses to derive insightful conclusions from the study. In the analysis of the data, weighted mean was used to describe the variables, Pearson's r was used to assess if the two variables are correlated, and linear regression analysis was used to determine if satisfaction on work-from-home significantly influence overall employee engagement. Analyses were performed using IBM-SPSS version 22.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 provides a comprehensive demographic breakdown of the 99 respondents who participated in this study. The majority of the participants were within the 20-25 age group, representing 82.8% (n = 82) of the sample, indicating that younger employees predominate in the work-from-home setting. The subsequent age groups showed a progressive decrease in representation, with 8.1% (n = 8) within the 26-30 age group, 4.0% (n = 4) within the 31-35 age group, 2.0% (n = 2) each for the 41-45 and 46-50 age groups, and the smallest group, 36-40, comprising only 1.0% (n = 1) of the respondents.

Table 1. *Distribution of respondents*

Category	Subcategory	f	%
Age	20-25	82	82.8%
	26-30	8	8.1%
	31-35	4	4.0%
	36-40	1	1.0%
	41-45	2	2.0%
	46-50	2	2.0%
Sex	Male	43	43.4%
	Female	56	56.6%

Regarding gender distribution, females constituted a majority of the sample, comprising 56.6% (n = 56) of respondents, compared to males who made up 43.4% (n = 43). This gender distribution underscores a predominance of female respondents in the work-from-home demographic.

The study's analysis on the level of work-from-home employees, as presented in Table 2, indicated an overall mean

score of 3.58 (SD = 0.4104), classified as 'very high'. This suggests that the respondents perceive a significant positive impact of the work-from-home arrangement on their engagement levels. The standard deviation highlights a uniform agreement across responses, demonstrating homogeneity in the participants' perceptions.

Table 2. *Level of work-from-home satisfaction among employees*

Variables	Mean	SD	Description
work life balance	3.301	.3869	very high
work productivity	3.463	.4339	very high
Overall	3.382	.4104	very high

In particular, *work productivity* recorded the highest mean rating of 3.463 (SD = 0.4339), falling within the 'very high' description. This indicates that participants feel highly productive while engaged in their home-based work environments. Following closely, *work-life balance* showed a mean rating of 3.301 (SD = 0.3869), also categorized as 'very high'. These standard deviations suggest a tight clustering of responses around the mean, confirming consistency in the participants' opinions.

The specifics of *work productivity* included facets such as managing work timely, collaborating through virtual meetings, active participation in work meetings, and embracing challenging tasks, with mean scores ranging from 3.39 to 3.49. This outcome supports the findings of Soelistya et al. (2021), who identified work discipline and good motivation as key factors enhancing employee productivity. On the other hand, *work-life balance* also scored prominently, with detailed responses regarding comfort at home,

satisfaction with time spent with family, prioritization of family over work, participation in recreational activities, and balancing work tasks with family time, with mean scores ranging from 3.07 to 3.48. This reflects Nippert-Eng (2008) perspective that work and family, as separate spheres, can significantly influence each other through physical, temporal, and psychological boundaries. These results emphasize the importance of managing work-life balance effectively in remote work settings, crucial for maintaining both productivity and personal well-being.

Table 3 presents a comprehensive overview of employee engagement levels among work-from-home employees, with an overall mean of 3.389 (SD = .435), categorized as very high. This suggests that employees consistently perceive a strong influence of work-from-home arrangements on their engagement levels. Among the indicators assessed, *accountability and performance* registered the highest mean of 3.469 (SD = .507), indicating a very high level of influence. Specific items under this indicator, such as employees feeling their work contributes significantly to company goals (mean=3.55) and receiving continuous feedback (mean=3.44), reflect this strong engagement. This aligns with theories posited by Dubnick and Frederickson (2011) and Parida and Kumar (2006), which emphasize the preventive role of accountability measures against performance degradation.

Communication also scored highly on the engagement scale, with a mean of 3.366 (SD=0.395), underlining its critical role in employee engagement. Employees reported very high agreement with statements assessing effective communication practices, such as attentively listening (mean=3.60) and believing in the power

Table 3. *Level of work-from-home satisfaction among employees*

Variables	Mean	SD	Description
leadership	3.360	.408	very high
communication	3.366	.395	very high
rewards and recognition	3.362	.433	very high
accountability and performance	3.469	.507	very high
Overall	3.389	.435	very high

of verbal communication to convey messages (mean=3.31). These findings support the dialogic theories of communication within organizations as discussed by Macnamara (2018), highlighting the reciprocal nature of speaking and listening in effective organizational communication.

The *rewards and recognition* indicator similarly exhibited a very high engagement level, with a mean of 3.362 (SD=0.433). Employees expressed a strong sense of motivation and satisfaction with recognition practices, notably appreciating awards (mean=3.57) and feeling well-compensated (mean=3.33). These results are corroborated by the research of Shonubi et al. (2016), which found a positive correlation between well-structured recognition programs and both employee performance and job satisfaction.

Finally, *leadership* was also rated very highly, with a mean of 3.360 (SD=0.408). Employees felt effectively managed and supported by leadership, particularly in handling detailed work (mean=3.41) and responding to requests and concerns (mean=3.41). The significance of leadership in enhancing employee engagement is supported by Mesterova et al. (2015) and Butler, Kwantes, and Boglarsky (2014), who link

leadership qualities like intelligence and self-awareness to organizational effectiveness and employee satisfaction. This highlights the multifaceted role of leadership in fostering an environment conducive to high employee engagement.

Table 4 presents the results of a Pearson correlation analysis which indicates a significant positive relationship between work-from-home (WFH) arrangements and employee engagement during the pandemic, with a correlation coefficient of .689 ($p < .01$). This strong and significant correlation suggests that as the extent of work-from-home increases, so does the level of employee engagement. The findings underscore the importance of WFH as a positive correlate on engagement levels among employees navigating the challenges of the pandemic.

Table 4. *Pearson correlation between satisfaction on work-from-Home (WFH) and employee engagement*

Variable	Correlation with Employee Engagement	Strength	Sig. (2-tailed)
Satisfaction with WFH	.689	Strong	< .01

Note: $p < .01$ indicates a significant relationship at the 99% confidence level.

The correlation strength, described as strong, highlights the robust association between these variables. The significance value of 0.000 further confirms the reliability of this relationship even at the 99% confidence level, indicating that the observed association is not due to random chance but is a meaningful relationship within the data. This aligns with De-la-Calle-Durán and Rodríguez-Sánchez (2021), who noted that organizations that integration of WFH policies usually do so, aiming in enhancing employee engagement.

This can be observed when companies design remote work policies to ensure they are effectively fostering engagement and productivity among their workforce during and even after the pandemic.

Table 5 details the regression analysis conducted to assess the influence of work-from-home factors on employee engagement during the pandemic. The regression coefficients reveal that work productivity (B = .612, p = .001) and work-life balance (B = .189, p = .019) significantly predict employee engagement. The model's R-squared value of .514 suggests that approximately 51.4% of the variability in employee engagement can be explained by these predictors, indicating a strong model fit. The adjusted R-squared value of .504 closely aligns with the R-squared, confirming the model's reliability. These results highlight the critical role of satisfaction at work influencing quality of work-life, aligning with Murcia and Cuevas (2018), who found that job satisfaction, apart from transformational leadership, increases quality of work-life among certified public accountants.

Table 5. *Regression coefficients assessing work from home impact on employee engagement*

Variables in the Model	B	SE	B	t	p	VIF
(Constant)	1.022	.253		4.031	.001	
work-life balance	.178	.075	.189	2.379	.019*	1.248
work productivity	.514	.067	.612	7.701	.001*	1.248

Model Summary:
R = .717, R^2 = .514, DW = 1.884, F = 19.064, p-value = <.001

The regression analysis provides a nuanced understanding of the impacts that work-from-home factors,

particularly work-life balance and work productivity, have on employee engagement. Notably, the significant constant term (B=1.022, p=.001) underscores a foundational level of engagement inherent to the respondents, irrespective of the variability in work-life balance and work productivity. This foundational engagement may stem from inherent job satisfaction or organizational loyalty that exists regardless of specific working conditions.

Work-life balance exhibited a positive but modest influence on employee engagement (B=0.178, p=.019), suggesting that enhancements in balancing professional and personal life contribute to elevating employee engagement, albeit to a lesser extent than work productivity. This finding is congruent with Alegre and Pasamar's (2018) assertion that the integration of technology in managing both work and personal tasks offers new pathways for innovation, ultimately enriching employee experience and engagement.

Work productivity demonstrated a stronger and more significant impact on employee engagement (B=0.514, p<.001), highlighting its crucial role in driving engagement levels. This supports Bakker's (2011) perspective that high work discipline and motivation are pivotal for boosting productivity, which in turn enhances overall engagement. Employees who perceive themselves as productive are likely to experience higher job satisfaction and engagement, resonating with the idea that productive environments foster reduced workplace distractions and more meaningful use of work time.

Overall, these insights align with the findings of Grant et al. (2019) and Purwanto et al. (2020), who noted that remote work policies that prioritize flexibility significantly contribute to enhanced employee engagement. The ability to

manage work and personal life effectively within the confines of one's home environment appears not only to sustain but also to elevate engagement levels, suggesting that the future of work may well benefit from incorporating these flexible work arrangements more permanently.

Moreover, the acceptable multicollinearity levels (VIF=1.248 for both predictors) confirm the reliability of these regression estimates, ensuring that the observed relationships are robust and not unduly influenced by interdependencies among the predictors. This analytical rigor substantiates the critical role these factors play, especially in the unique context of work-from-home settings necessitated by the pandemic.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the significant influence that work-from-home arrangements have on employee engagement. Employees reported very high levels of satisfaction with both work productivity and work-life balance, indicating that remote work settings are effectively supporting their professional and personal needs. Work productivity stood out as a particularly strong aspect of the work-from-home experience, with employees feeling highly capable and productive in their roles. This suggests that when properly managed, home-based work environments can foster an atmosphere where employees not only meet but potentially exceed their usual performance levels.

Furthermore, the data revealed that work-life balance is also highly valued by employees, reflecting the importance of flexible schedules and the ability to integrate work with

personal life seamlessly. This balance is crucial for maintaining employee well-being and satisfaction, which are directly tied to sustained engagement and productivity. The positive reception of work-life balance initiatives indicates that employees appreciate the efforts made by organizations to accommodate their needs in a holistic manner.

Finally, leadership and communication were also identified as key drivers of employee engagement in remote settings. Effective leadership that adapts to the demands of remote management and maintains open lines of communication is essential for ensuring that employees feel supported and valued. The study highlights the need for leaders to be proactive in fostering a supportive culture and maintaining engagement through regular feedback and recognition.

Recommendations

Based on the positive impacts of work-life balance and work productivity on employee engagement in remote settings, organizations should adopt flexible scheduling and support mechanisms. Implementing flexible work hours, compressed workweeks, or job-sharing arrangements can help employees manage work and personal responsibilities more effectively. Additionally, providing ergonomic resources for home offices and ensuring employees have access to necessary technological tools and training will enhance productivity.

To maintain robust communication, managers should conduct regular virtual check-ins and ensure organizational transparency by openly sharing updates and changes. Recognition and rewards should be adapted to remote contexts, such as through virtual awards ceremonies or

performance-based bonuses, to ensure remote workers feel valued and seen. Ensuring remote work does not impede career growth, by facilitating virtual training and equal opportunities for advancement, is also crucial.

Organizations are encouraged to regularly survey employee engagement and satisfaction, developing comprehensive remote work policies that include mental health support and stress management programs. By continually adapting these policies based on employee feedback and changing conditions, companies can create a supportive and productive remote work environment that boosts both employee satisfaction and organizational performance.

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