Does Working from Home Affect Work-Life Balance? A Look into the Factors that Affect Work-Life Balance

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Abstract— The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered major social, political, and economic ramifications around the world. Amidst social mobility measures imposed to combat the spread of the virus, this pandemic was a major challenge for people in meeting their daily needs and demands of employers. These transformed work habits, moving from physical to a virtual setting, which had mixed effects on employees' lives. The objective of this research was to determine which factors affect the most regrading work-life during the working from the home period. A research gap exists as a result of the lack of studies on this subject in the Sri Lankan context. This study collected data from 270 respondents who were working from home through an online self-developed questionnaire. A factor analysis model was used for data analysis. Both the working and non-working environment factors were identified as having substantial effects during the working from the home period. The unique outcomes associated with working environment factors (Working days during working from home and working time), non-working environment factors (Gender and number of children), and work-life balance factors (Depression and distress and future psychological problems), make it explicit that employers need to concentrate on providing proper prerequisites to maximize the productivity during work from home period to improve employees' quality of life. Employers need to pay particular attention to female workers with children, skilled workers, and others who can adapt to virtual platforms. It is recommended that employers should revamp their attendance policies and produce family-friendly flexible schedules and policies. Further, conducting training programs, providing facilities to enhance employee engagement, and build strong and transparent communication channels by supporting a healthy work environment with various activities are also recommended.

I. INTRODUCTION

Employees are the key asset that can influence a company's success and efficiency. As such, it is critical to optimise the capacity and efficiency of people management by proactively identifying and solving staff matters. From a strategic perspective, working from home is critical for both the company and its workers. Human beings play multiple roles; they are members of their communities and as employees, contribute to the services of organisations. People prefer to adjust their job schedules so that they can devote sufficient time to daily activities to achieve work-life balance.

In the contemporary world, no one can predict the timing and the magnitude of the next crisis, which burst with radical challenges. The coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic which developed to a pandemic within a short time, is by far the most recent economic shock on the global economy as well as the severe hit on the country's economy. The pandemic massively disrupted the region's activities, as it did the entire world. COVID-19 has had an adverse influence on the majority of the community adversely affecting their day to day lives, at the time of writing this paper.

Just about every company was forced to shut down, either fully or partially, and some permanently. As retail markets collapsed, operating income avenues shrunk, businesses were forced to trim downsize and operate with fewer resources and facilities. This condition caused difficulties for companies to stay afloat and survive. Mobility restrictions imposed hindered operating in the physical conventional work environment. As for coping mechanisms for business continuity, certain large corporations and some already with technology-driven processes, resumed their activities in a digital environment. To better deal with this situation, such companies

shifted a significant portion of their vital processes and activities- from a manual system to a virtual platform. Organisations adopted digital equipment by offering various forms of appropriate resources for remote working, also known as work from home (WFH).

Thorstensson (2020) points out some of the criteria cause mixed outcomes on employee productivity when working from home, while the impact of other factors is dependent on employees' traits and attitudes as well as conditions. To investigate the relationship between the work-family interface, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction research studies were conducted. Accordingly, findings revealed that the components associated with the work interface influenced life satisfaction, job satisfaction, and work engagement directly and indirectly (de simone et al., 2013).

Noteworthy that new business options, goods, service markets etc., emerged and developed through e-commerce throughout this period, further proving the effectiveness of online virtual platforms. Telework and virtual offices are solely described as the use of telecommunications technology in business (Mokhtarian, 1991). In 2014, Jenny Sok (2014) conducted a study using a factor model and identified that majority of the variation in positive work-home interaction and strain-based negative work-home interference was explained by a strong environment. Flexible work home solutions fully moderated the associations between a collaborative climate and positive and strain-based negative work home interfering.

Flexible work home solutions fully moderated the associations between a collaborative climate and positive and strain-based negative work home interfering (Rupietta, 2016). As a result, in addition to the COVID-19 crisis, as noted previously, certain organisations commonly adopted WFH in Sri Lanka. Many reasons were in favour of WFH as it had beneficial and detrimental effects on individuals' lifestyles, relying on their home situation. The pandemic can be assumed as a recent occurrence and virtual offices too. This short period means that research evidence is also limited and empirical gaps are likely in this subject. Employees in virtual offices have limited attention in research. Unlike in a physical office, confidence and effective discussions among staff at all levels are essential for work to be productive in a virtual office setting. During a pandemic of this nature, communication is paramount. On the other side, those with the

appropriate infrastructure for a virtual platform, as well as organisations which provide such resources, may manage this or a similar incident rather than it being a major problem. On the work-life balance, the virtual office environment involves some benefits as well as drawbacks. Even so, research indicates that virtual office platforms also have benefits and disadvantages on WFH; these aspects have had a major impact on those families whose working environment transformed as a result of the modern virtual work processes. However, there are discrepancies in certain findings. The current research focusses on the effect of the virtual office platform on work-life balance in Sri Lanka.

However, neither of these studies precisely considered the following characteristics that influence work-life balance while working from home. Especially in the context of Sri Lanka, there is no record of a comprehensive study or link to measure the primary components that influence work-life balance. The current study is unusual in that it examines both the attributes and the determined main variables in a combined scenario. As noted previously, there is a limited body of literature concerning this subject area and no contribution according to our knowledge and information available from the local community. The primary goal of this research is that findings, through systematic analysis and utilising various analytical methodologies, pave the way for new insights results to contribute to the research gaps listed above.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Data

The main purpose of this article is to identify the main factors which affect work-life balance during working from the home period. The quantitative approach was used for this study. Data gathered from people who work from home (WFH) during this Covid-19 pandemic situation through a random sampling method. This sampling technique aided in the collection of non-biased data and collected data using the online platform (via email and social media). Kandy and Colombo districts were selected for the study with 270 participants, where employees were keen to continue working from home during this pandemic period. When preparing the Likert scale self-developed questionnaire, researchers identified the main factors that affect work from home and family-life balance. Researchers classified the work from home variable, into two major sections as the working environment (homeworking

space, number of persons in the house, working days, responsibility and time duration) and non-working environment (gender and number of children). Work-life balance is also segregated into 09 factors to cover all aspects for a comprehensive approach.

B. Methodology

Descriptive statistics (measures of central inclination, measures of dispersion, and frequencies of individual levels) testing the reliability among identified factors and principal components based factor analysis model (de simone et al., 2013; Jenny Sok, 2014) used to achieve the study aim to find out the factors which affect the work from home period. This research study involves data reduction and analysis methodology that helps us understand various outcome correlations as the product of one or more underlying explanations, or factors. The method entails data reduction since it helps represent a set of variables with a fewer variables. Gender represented different levels of duty and responsibilities in their homes and workplaces. As a result, the study gathered sufficient information to comprehend the behaviour of participants in the study.

III. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The conceptual structure is critical to define the areas and variables covered in a deductive reasoning study. The researcher used two independent variables in this study: the working environment and the non-working environment to determine the factors that affect working from home period, hence the dependent variable was work-life balance. Following previous literature, the following conceptual model was presented.
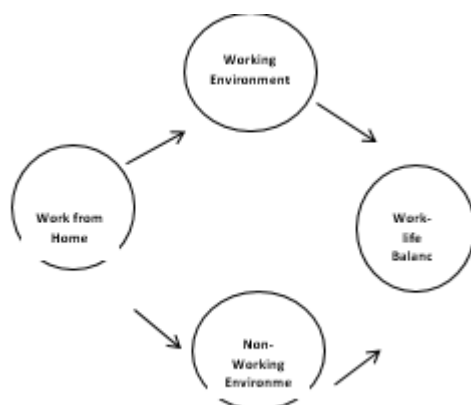

Figure 1. Conceptual framework
Source: Authors' illustrations

To achieve the study objective of determining which factors affect during working from home period, descriptive statistics (measures of central tendency, measures of dispersion, and frequencies of individual levels) were used. For employees' families and workplaces, gender represented different levels of duty and responsibilities. As a whole, the author was able to gain insights into the behavior of the respondents (total 270 no's). In addition, Factor analysis is a statistical method to describe variability between associated variables in terms of a smaller number of unobserved variables known as factors. For example, it's likely that changes in six observed variables are primarily due to changes in two unobserved variables. Table 1 also provides a general overview of the demographic profile of respondents.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics table

Demographic and Work from home Characteristics		(%)
Age	20-25 Years	12.6
	26 – 30 years	39.3
	31 – 40 years	37.8
	41 – 50 years	10.4
Gender	Male	48.1
	Female	51.9
Education Level	GCE A/L	3.3
	Diploma	14.1
	Degree	51.5
	Under Graduate	27.4
	Post Graduate	3.7
Monthly Income	Below 50,000	8.5
	50,000 – 100,000	62.6
	100,000 – 150,000	24.8
	Above 150,000	4.1
Civil status	Single	43.3
	Married	56.7
If married, does the spouse do a job	Yes	43.7
	No	30.0
	Not answered	26.3
No's of children	Yes	48.1
	No	25.6
	Not answered	26.3
Working platform	Virtual office platform	39.6
	Traditional office platform	0
	Both platforms	60.4
virtual office hours longer	Yes, most of the time	46.3
	No, Never	5.6

than your regular working hours	Yes, rarely	48.1
Working on weekends	Yes, most of the time No, Never Yes, rarely	48.9 4.8 46.3
Spending worth time with family	Yes No Sometimes	83.3 1.9 14.8
Total (N) =270		**100.0**

Source: Authors' calculations

The males accounted for 48.1% of the 270 respondents, whereas the females accounted for 51.9%. Based on the current results, the majority of people between the ages of 26 and 30 are between the ages of 26 and 30, with 37.8% being between the ages of 26 and 30. In addition, 51.5% of the participants in the study were with a university degree.

Mohajan (2017) suggest that Cronbach's alpha values range from 0 to 1, with a value greater than 0.7 considered an appropriate level of data reliability. Reliability was checked in this study and results indicate that Cronbach's alpha was 0.852, implying high internal consistence of the data. This enables a generation of consistent data. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was 0.770 in the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) result, as shown in Table 3, which is considered suitable.
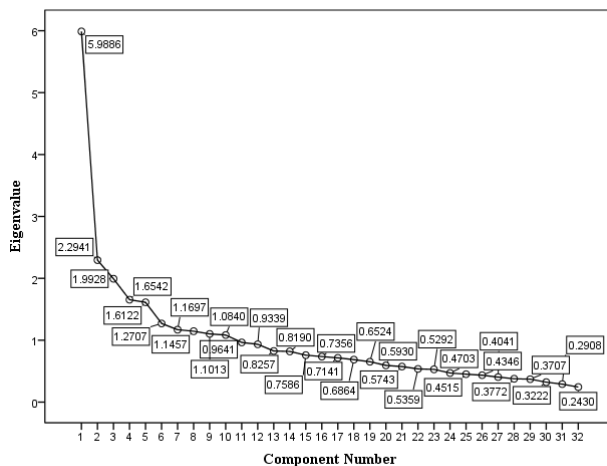

Figure 2. Screen plot
Source: Authors' illustrations

Table 2. Factor scores of the factor analysis

Rotated Component Matrix^a

Component

	1	2	3
A9	0.753		
A11	0.723		
A13	0.478		
A15	0.434		
A17	0.431		
A18	0.618		
B1		0.758	
B2		0.564	
B3		0.722	
B5		0.661	
C1			0.694
C4			0.547
C6			0.729
C9			0.733

Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis
Rotation Method: varimax with Kaiser Normalization
a. Rotation converged in 19 iterations.

Note : A9= Usually, I do not exceed the normal working hours even during work from the home period; A11= I spend the weekend with my family even I have all facilities to work from home during the weekend ; A13= Now I can take more responsibility for my family due to the working from home; A15= I can adjust any family requirement as I wish due to the working from home; A17= The amount of time spent for working for home may have a positive effect on my family life; A18= The time spent working from home is less compared to the traditional office; B1= Gender has an impact on working platforms(Virtual office and traditional platform); B2= There is an impact on working from home and the work-life balance according to gender; B3= The number of children in the family mainly affects the work-life balance; B5= The number of children in the family mainly affects the work-life balance; C1= There is an impact of working from home on family satisfaction; C4= For me, social undermining can happen if I move to the working from home; C6= There is an impact on depression and distress due to working from home; C9= Working from home may lead to psychological problems in the future

Source: Authors' calculations

Figure 2 shows the findings of the Principal Component-based Factor Analysis performed with SPSS. First 10 components are over 1 eigenvalues. A

single factor was found to account for 60.354% of the overall variance in the 10 factors. The factor loadings for more than 06 items are higher than the 0.3 thresholds. As a result, the construct validity of the conversation is justified.

Table 2 includes an explanation of 13 variables in the rotating Component Matrix used in the analysis. (Factors not selected with an absolute value below 0.40). The analysis yielded three components (Factor 1 =Working Environment Factor- A9, A11, A13, A15, A17, and A18), Factor 2=Non-Working Environment Factor -B1, B2, B3, and B5), and Factor 3=Work-Life Balance Factors -C1, C4, C6, and C9). The findings under Factor 1 revealed that working days and time duration factors have the greatest impact on work-life balance throughout the work environment. Similarly, non-working environment factors revealed both gender and the number of children in the family had an impact on family life when working from home. Moreover, the first element identified by the investigation (family satisfaction, social undermining, depression and distress, and psychological disorders) is mostly afflicted by working from home.

As per Table 2, factor 1 explained 18.714 and is the best factor with the highest percentage. Moreover, factor 2 explained with 7.169 percentages, and finally, factor 3 with 6.227 percentages covered total of 32.111 percentages.

Factor 1 is commonly loaded with working environment factors. This factor 6 group attributes are related to working environment towards work-life balance. Assurance with working days during working from home has the highest loading factors (loading 0.753 and 0.723), followed by the time duration during working from home (loading 0.618 and 0.431) and responsibility through working from the home period (loading 0.478 and 0.434). As per the prior theoretical experimental data, these factors mainly affect work-life balance when in working from home situations. The findings are in line with those of previous studies. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) are of the view that factors like working days, time duration allocated for working from home, and several people in the house can influence to restore work-life balance. According to Fischlmayr and Kollinger (2010), occupational conflict (while working from home) with the family has a larger effect on the well-being of the expatriate's family.

Factor 2 mainly associate with a non-working environment consisting of 4 main factors. The highest loading factor is associated with gender (Loading 0.758 and 0.564). The factor called no of children shows the loading of 0.722 and 0.661. These outputs are in line with research conducted in 1992. To evaluate work-life conflict and perceived quality of life discovered that the living level was inversely linked to all indicators of work-not-work conflict (Rice, Frone, & McFarlin, 1992). The findings revealed that non-work factors, mainly gender and children have a strong influence on the conventional workplace, while work factors have a stronger influence on the quality of life. Even though several pieces of research suggest that gender and the number of children available affect virtual performances. Another study in Singapore found that the majority of female computer professionals in Singapore choose to telework only 1-3 days a week, and only when necessary, such as when they have small children (Yap & Tng, 1990). No gender disparities in family interfering with job duties because the amount of time spent on the family affects the degree to which women face conflict. Men spend more time working than women, and the amount of time women devote to their own families in contrast to men (relatively lower than men) is the primary cause of gender issues in work-family responsibilities (Calvo-Salguero, Salinas, & Aguilar-Luzón, 2011).

Factor 3 mainly covers work-life balance factors. The highest loading factors indicated that work from home mainly affects depression and distress and future psychological problems (loading 0.733 and 0.729). Results comply with past studies. A study affirms that if workers are overstrained with job duties, they are also obsessed with the same issue during leisure time, and they cannot maintain a work-life balance (Bellmann & Hübler, 2020). Moreover, results indicated with the loading of 0.694 working from home must affect family satisfaction. Work from home that interrupts domestic life seems to have an adverse influence on both job and life satisfaction. The sum of the direct and indirect effects indicates a significant and negative relationship with life satisfaction between works interfering with family (Adams, King, & King, 1996).

The objective of this article is to identify factors that affect work-life in Sri Lanka during working from home time. Many types of research have been conducted on this subject as well. Analysis of data depicted that the working environment (working days, responsibility, and time duration) along with non-working environment factors (gender and

children) have the greatest impact on the work-life balance (family satisfaction, social undermining, depression, and distress and psychological problems).

Although a variety of models are being used to examine diverse facets of working from home and their effect on work-life balance, only a few empirical research in the context of Sri Lanka has been conducted. Apart from that, the working home platform was restricted in the Sri Lankan working climate (pre-pandemic) until the pandemic forced companies to revise their traditional work habits to remain afloat. With the resultant economic fallout and the uncertainties posing threats to job security, the rapid expansion of the gig economy is noteworthy. In light of the above, this study provides a benchmark to determine the main factors that affect work-life while working from home. Work-life balance is mainly affected by work from home and this can be mainly classified into working and non-working conditions, according to the study's quantitative findings. It is important to consider both work place and non-work place factors when determining the effect of working from home platforms on employee work-life balance.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the results, working from home has a significant effect on work-life balance. Both the management and the staff must carefully consider factors when dealing with issues concerning working from home. This Sri Lankan case will reveal unique aspects to minimise the negative effects of teleworking. Findings show that non-working environment factors and working environment have a significant impact on working from home, particularly in developing economies such as Sri Lanka. As mentioned earlier, the gig economy is rapidly expanding, and its income levels are generally strong. Furthermore, the virtual platform has allowed more female employees to enter the workforce through teleworking, as well as for those who have been temporarily away from the workforce (due to marriage, raising children, household commitments etc.) to return. To maintain growth and revival of the Sri Lankan economy, virtual networks and teleworking need considering from a strategic perspective rather than just a fast fix.

In future studies, broadening the reach of the analysis to include factors related to these will help uncover insights specific to Sri Lanka and better discuss the problems in this field. Apart from this, management must ensure that all employees are equipped with the minimum of tools (tech devices such as laptops, internet access, etc.), a decent work atmosphere (such as space, free of noise and interruptions at home, etc.), and a 'family friendly' culture to reap the benefits of work from remote working.

Since findings represent an organisation's attempts to assist employees in juggling work and family commitments while enhancing job satisfaction and satisfying organisational involvement, working from home can be referred to as a family-responsive programme. Employers also noticed a significant increase in the number of female workers including skilled workers in the virtual platform. Flexible work structures must be considered to meet better demands from the non-work domain. Working from home platform is a flexible work structure that allows people to manage work and non-work responsibilities (for employees), as well as an appropriate option that can help businesses recruit and retain valuable workers (for employers). Working remotely has many advantages, especially if the challenges of enforcing such a work arrangement are duly examined. Working from home has considerable potential for helping companies deal with the contemporary human resource issues of employee retention and recruitment in tight labour markets.

The attitude and policies of the working from home affect the personal lives of their workers as well as their productivity. Employees tend to be more effective if they feel their employer trusts and cares for them. Especially if employers provide them with adequate resources on planning, project management, and support to timely execute their duties. Working from home saves time, money, energy or exhaustion on transportation between work and home, thereby increases employee productivity. Nevertheless, apart from these, the management must ensure that staff has the bare minimum conditions as well reasonable working and non-working environment to work from home.

However, major limitations are organisational cultures, authority and red tapes, and rigid processes considered as mandatory for some firms (specially highly regulatory sectors like the banking sector) in firms. For managers who enjoy power zones within the physical work environment with the lack of know-how on online processes, thus, a sudden shift to virtual office can pose threats to them. Besides,

trust-based culture, transparency, strong communication channels and employee recognition cannot be built overnight.

Despite the limitations of the report, the author has addressed critical and often neglected concerns concerning main factors which impact family life while working from the home platform. In addition, to define the consequences of work-life balance, the research demonstrated the importance of comprehending working environment and non-working environment of work-life balance.

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