

Does Work from Home Increase Employee Job Satisfaction? Evidence from Information Communication Technology Industry in Sri Lanka

M.M.F Rusdha¹ and W.A Edirisooriya²

¹Faculty of Management, Department of Human Resource Management, University of Peradeniya, SRI LANKA

²Lecturer, Faculty of Management, Department of Human Resource Management, University of Peradeniya, Sri LANKA

¹Corresponding Author: rusdhamawroof@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The corporate world was undergoing a phase of digital transformation over recent past years which led to adopt the work from home practice in different industry contexts and this practice had been accelerated due to the COVID-19 outbreak. To obtain the optimum outcome from employees, it is the major responsibility of the organizations to ensure that they are satisfied enough with the new work settings since employee job satisfaction is one of the significant elements of an effective workforce. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to examine the impact of work from home on employee job satisfaction in Information Communication Industry (ICT) industry in Sri Lanka. Using the survey strategy, responses were collected through questionnaires from 384 employees from the ICT industry in Sri Lanka. The findings of this study concluded that there is a positive impact of work from home on employee job satisfaction in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka as work from home gives more freedom, autonomy, and work-life balance. Further, it identified that the ICT organizations in Sri Lanka use a high level of work home practice and their employees' job satisfaction level is also relatively high. The theoretical contribution of this study is that it extends the employee job satisfaction literature by empirically testing and validating the work from home in a new context. Also, the findings of this research are useful for all the practitioners to increase employee job satisfaction by developing flexible and unique work from home practices. Accordingly, work from home could be used as a strong motivational strategy in the ICT industry as well as in other contexts.

Keywords-- Work from Home, Employee Job Satisfaction, Information Communication Industry

I. INTRODUCTION

The successful performance of an organization largely depends upon the quality of its human resources. It is the central element for the success of a business and it can be considered as the heart of an organization. Lorincova, *et al.* (2018) stated that to improve business efficiency, competitiveness, success and to ensure sustainability, it is commonly agreed that the focus needs to be on satisfying the needs of employees by providing them with better working conditions. To create a committed and competent workforce, there is a growing interest in job satisfaction in organizations. Employee job satisfaction determines organizational performance,

rather than organizational performance determining employee job satisfaction. (Bakotic, 2016). According to Gallup (2019), the disengaged employees are 15% less profitable and 18% less productive when compared with those who are satisfied with their jobs. According to a study published at BMC family practice (2019), stated that turnover intentions were strongly related to workplace stress and job satisfaction.

In the modern era, technological innovation, economic growth, and overall human wellbeing are intricately linked. According to Hendricks (2014), technology is making it easier to work anywhere and everywhere in the world as long as one is connected to the internet. This is the main reason why scholars have focused more on work from home policy.

Nowadays, due to the busier work environment with the rise of dual-career families and women's employment, the work-life imbalance is becoming a burning issue in society. (Tasnim, 2017). As a solution, most organizations are adopting work from home policy. Though the global had witnessed a solid digital transformation over the recent past, it was the COVID-19 outbreak which has accelerated to this standard. Zweig, *et al.* (2021) stated that governments across the world have imposed varying levels of public health measures including movement restrictions, nationwide curfews, travel bans to tackle the pandemic. Since these measures have a major impact on national economies and global trade, work from home is attractive alternative at least for the duration of the pandemic. (ILO, 2020). Shareena and Shahid (2020) stated that it has led to a large number of employees globally bound to work remotely. Hence, understanding changes and adjustments of organizational policies, structure, and work design become more significant and they can be altered to enhance the level of employee job satisfaction. Therefore, it is the major responsibility of the organizations to ensure that their employees are satisfied enough to new work settings.

Research Problem

In the 21st century, the success and growth of businesses are largely determined by the efficient use of modern technology. This is the main reason why scholars have focused more on work from home policy nowadays. Over the past 30 years, the proportion of work from home has increased from 2.3% in 1980 to 10.3% in 2011. (Gower, 2013). The number of employees working from

home in the UK has increased over the past ten years which has raised to 1.5 million (Ellis, 2016).

With the Covid-19, UNDP (2020), stated that the COVID – 19 started as a health crisis but has become the greatest global humanitarian crisis since World War 2. Therefore, to respond to this immediate situation, organizations required their employees to work from home. It was an option only for a few employees but pandemic left it as the only viable option for organizations to survive. (Singh, 2020). For example, in 2020 approximately 5.6 million people worked mainly from home in the UK. (Clark, 2021).

Before the pandemic, discussions on the future of work-life balance were unclear and often questioned. But Covid-19 forced a decision upon people and with the world having quickly, many businesses opted to try work from home. (Vyas and Butakhieo, 2020). According to Krasulja *et al.* (2015), flexibility, trust, the balance of work and family and multi-tasking of the workforce are factors to be studied since the event of the work from home concept becomes wide and contributes to utilizing human resources effectively. According to Davidescu, *et al.* (2020), work environment and working conditions are very important to increase overall employee job satisfaction.

The COVID -19 has caused drastic changes in many industries and ICT is major among them (Market Data Forecast, 2020). The ICT industry should ensure its survival to enable other industries to survive during the crisis as well as in the competitive corporate world. Hatayama, Viollaz, and Winkler (2020) stated that sectors such as ICT, professional services, and finance are more amenable to working from home. Similarly, the work from home concept is more familiar with ICT and financial services (ILO forum, 2016).

In the Sri Lankan context, the ICT workforce has increased from 82,854 in 2014 to 146,089 in 2019. (IT-BPM workforce survey, 2019). Also, export earnings reached approximately \$900 million in 2019 and target \$5 billion in 2022 from the ICT industry. (IT-BPM workforce survey, 2019). Therefore, the ICT industry in Sri Lanka is one of the possible industries in which remote works including work from home can be implemented due to its nature and capabilities (Perera, 2016). Since the ICT companies are highly employing their employees under the work from home policy (department of labor, Sri Lanka, 2020) led the researcher to investigate the job satisfaction level of those employees on this new concept of work from home.

Since work from home is becoming common, research is needed to examine the impact of new types of work schedules and arrangements of working from home policy on employee attitude, behavior, and job satisfaction (Kane, 2014). There are different arguments regarding the relationship between remote work and job satisfaction due to the conflicting findings. (Shall, 2019). Although the use of work from the home policy has been increasing steadily in practice, Grant (2021) argued that

researches regarding employee job satisfaction are lacking among the population of individuals who were asked to work from home due to global crisis. In response to these gaps, the purpose of the current study was to identify how work from home impacts employee job satisfaction in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka.

Therefore, the use of work from the home policy has been increasing steadily in practice, little rigorous empirical research has examined the impact of work from home on job satisfaction and they provided contradictory conclusions. On the other hand, the impact of work from home on employee job satisfaction has been discussed in different industries in some other countries like Europe, America, Africa, and Canada, but it is hard to generalize to the ICT industry in Sri Lanka due to contextual issues. Therefore, this study is aiming to examine the impact of work from home on employee job satisfaction in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka

Research Questions

1. Does work from home impact employee job satisfaction in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka?
2. What is the level of work from home practices in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka?

A systematic attempt is made to answer the above questions by having objectives of the study consistent with those questions as follows,

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the impacts of work from home on employee job satisfaction in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka.
2. To examine the level of work from home practices in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The emergence of flexible work arrangements is becoming popular in the competitive corporate world. Robertson and Mosier (2020) stated that the COVID- 19 pandemic has caused a change in work systems across the globe. It increases the number of people who are working remotely from their homes due to quarantines, restrictions on movements and gatherings. It piqued the interest of scholars to investigate whether these job designs were beneficial to employees and organizations. Working from home is the result of modern technology where employees can start their work according to their convenience which resulted in increased credibility. (Richardson and Writer, 2017). Over the years, working from home had developed as a way of working that can be used as part of an agile working program. It provides the opportunity for employees to work from home. Tabussam and Rahman (2013), defined work from home as the growth of technology and its uses increases the fragmenting of work tasks and the workday, blurring the boundary between work and personal life. It is a way to encourage the join of professional life into personal life. Work from home is when employees are allowed to work from a conventional location other than physically

attending to the site by using advanced technology. (Uresha, 2020).

Reddy and Kannamany (2018) defined it as a conceptualized process where an employee can perform his assigned responsibilities from the comfort of the home. It provides flexibility in working hours to the employee with ease to accomplish the assigned jobs of the employer in the comfort of his home. A work practice that involves members of an organization substituting a portion of their typical work hours to work away from a central workplace, principally from home using technology to interact with others as needed. (Allen *et al.*, 2015).

Job satisfaction of employees relates to the expectations of an employee on the job, the degree of happiness derived from the conditions of service. (Idiegbeyan *et al.*, 2019). According to Tomazevic and Sellijak (2014), it is defined based on its relationship with the factors. Such as general wellbeing, work stress, autonomy, home-work interference, and working conditions. It is an affective or emotional response that employee has toward their job; it is a response to an employee's expected job outcomes as compared to actual job outcomes. (Mawhinney, 2011).

Further, it is commonly defined as the level of contentment an individual is with their job. (Smith *et al.*, 2018). Also, it is defined as the fulfillment of work-life balance and adequate functioning of work and home in conjunction with minimal role conflict. (Felstead and Henseke, 2017). Similarly, it can be considered as a relative psychological feeling and understanding of an individual which could change over the period based on various influencing factors like physical, financial, technological, social, and psychological. (Bhattarai, 2020). Munir and Khatoun (2015) stated that job satisfaction is a degree to which one's important needs for health, security, nourishment, affiliation, esteem, and so on are fulfilled on the job or as a result of the job.

With the technological evolution, many types of research studies have been carried out to determine the relationship between work from home practice and employee job satisfaction in various contexts. Allowing employees to work from home leads to an increase in employee autonomy as employees get more control over their workplace and time. The extent to which work from home is associated with beneficial outcomes may depend on the level of scheduling flexibility. (Golden and Veiga, 2014). According to Mergener and Mansfeld (2021), employees who are working from home experience high autonomy that may positively affect their job satisfaction.

Further, the rewards of greater work-life balance and job flexibility associated with working remotely contribute to job satisfaction. (Grant, 2021). The possibility to take care of children and other family members is a valuable resource for employees who are working from home and leads to perceived advantages of telework and job satisfaction. (Nakrosiene *et al.*, 2019).

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, worksites and premises are closed as a precautionary measure or as a result of the government directive, organizations may be able to implement work from home arrangements to achieve continuity of services and maintain productivity. (ILO, 2020). Grant (2021) stated that continued employment during COVID-19 due to remote work may also contribute to participants' job satisfaction. Probably, individuals who wish to fulfill their work obligations under any circumstances may be less stressed because of the work from home possibility. Therefore, it can be considered as an important resource that can increase job satisfaction. (Nakrosiene *et al.*, 2019).

Therefore, when employees are working from home, they get more time planning skills, work scheduling latitude, autonomy, able to take care of family members, ability to balance work-life conflict, and maintain the continuity of the job even during sickness like the current COVID-19 pandemic. Further, working from home enables employees to save travel expenses. Consequently, these factors of work from home lead to telecommuting outcomes including job satisfaction. (Nakrosiene *et al.*, 2019).

According to Job Characteristics Model (JCM), the extent that a job possesses five core dimensions such as skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback lead employees to experience psychological states as the meaningfulness of work, responsibility of outcomes of work and knowledge of the result of activities. These in turn said to impact the job satisfaction of employees and additionally it provides a method for job redesigning that is intended to increase the satisfaction of employees within the job (Hackman and Oldham, 1980). It is widely used as a theory to study how particular job characteristics concerning its core dimensions impact job outcomes, mainly including job satisfaction. During working from home, employees can experience more meaningfulness in jobs that require different techniques and communication skills, and abilities and increase employee autonomy as employees get more control over their workplace and time. Employees have been given increasing autonomy to work from home. (Johannsen, 2020).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework visually explains the overall relationship between work from home and employee job satisfaction.

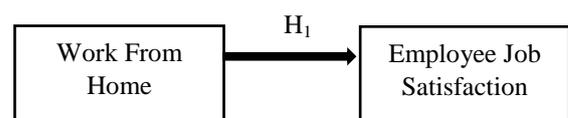


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Hypotheses

Based on the empirical findings following hypothesis is formulated.

$H_1 =$ Work from home positively impacts employee job satisfaction.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out as a quantitative study since the intention of the researcher was to identify the impact of work from home on employee job satisfaction through descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. Further, data were collected only at one point in time from the sample, it was considered as a cross-sectional study. It was an explanatory study because the researcher tried to explain the relationship between work from home and employee job satisfaction. Since the researcher developed a conceptual framework and test hypotheses, this study was also considered as a deductive approach.

A survey strategy was used to collect data through self-developed questionnaires. As the representative sample, 384 employees were selected by using a simple random sampling technique (Morgan and Krejcie, 1970) from 146,089 employees in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka (ICT-BPM survey, 2019). Also, the sample represents every level of employees including top-level, Middle level, and bottom level.

In this study, primary data was gathered by distributing questionnaires to the identified sample. The questionnaire of this study consisted of three sections as section (A), section (B), and section (C). Questions related to work from home (Independent variable) were included under section(A), questions related to employee job satisfaction (Dependent variable) were included under section (B) and the questions on respondents' demographic factors were included under section (C).

Measures

Work from home was measured with the scale of Nakrosiene *et al.* (2019). It consisted of 10 items. Responses were given on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree. Employee job satisfaction was measured with the scale of the short form of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire. (Weiss *et al.*, 1967). It included 20 items based on two dimensions such as internal job satisfaction and external job satisfaction. Responses were given on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1= Very Dissatisfied to 5= Very Satisfied. The demographic section of the questionnaire included gender, age, marital status, level of education, and level of position.

For this study, the researcher distributed soft copies of questionnaires by creating Google forms using Google Online Survey, and links of the questionnaires were sent to respondents via e-mail. After data was gathered through questionnaires, all the preliminary activities were done. The normality of the data was confirmed using Skewness and Kurtosis, reliability of the

data was measured using Cronbach's Alpha test and linearity was checked. The regression analysis was conducted to test the hypotheses. For data analysis, the researcher used both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics to analyze data with the support of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 26 version.

IV. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Descriptive analysis was carried out to portray the demographic profile of the respondents by using charts, identifying the level of work from home practices in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka, and the level of job satisfaction of employees in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka. According to below Table 1, it is visible that the overall responses on work from home and employee job satisfaction were more towards agreeing with the given statements.

Table 1: Mean Value of the Variables

Variables	Mean
Work From Home	4.05
Employee Job Satisfaction	3.53

(Source: Survey Data, 2021)

Further, the findings showed that the reliability tests for the variables were at a satisfactory level and the instruments used in this study met the reliability assumptions since the Cronbach's Alpha value of both work from home (Independent variable) and employee job satisfaction (Dependent variable) were greater than 0.7.

Table 2: Reliability scores for variables

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items
Work From Home	0.922	10
Employee Job Satisfaction	0.756	20

(Source: Survey Data, 2021)

The filled questionnaires had no missing values which can make a significant effect on final results. Also, the skewness and kurtosis values fall within the accepted range, thus it can be concluded that the data for all the variables were normally distributed. Based on the results, the strength of the variables is in the acceptable range.

Table 3: Skewness and Kurtosis values

Variables	Skewness	Kurtosis
Work From Home	-2.253	3.923
Employee Job Satisfaction	0.127	0.616

(Source: Survey Data, 2021)

Hypotheses Testing

The study proceeded with the analysis of correlation and regression for the variables concerned. Pearson correlation coefficient value (r) between work from home and employee job satisfaction in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka was 0.341, which indicated a moderate level positive relationship between the two variables. Also, the Sig. value (P-Value) of the relationship was 0.000 which was less than 0.01 level. This is confirmed that the correlation between work from home and employee job satisfaction is significant. Therefore, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis. Further, the alternative hypothesis was accepted (H1) since it stated that work from home positively impacts employee job satisfaction.

Table 4: Correlation between Work from home and Employee Job Satisfaction

	WFH	EJS
Work from Home Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 374	0.341** 0.000 374
Employee Job Satisfaction Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	0.341** 0.000 374	1 374

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2tailed). (Source: Survey Data, 2021)

According to the model summary Table 5, the multiple correlation coefficient values (R-value) is 0.460. Here, the R square value was 0.211. This explained that the work from home as a whole collectively accounts only for 21.1% of the variance in employee job satisfaction among the employees in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	St. Error of the estimate
1	0.460 ^a	0.211	0.194	0.48329

(Source: Survey Data, 2021)

Based on the ANOVA Table 6, the Sig. Value is 0.000 (P-value is less than 0.01) and F value is 12.225. It shows the goodness of fit. This indicated that work from home significantly predicts employee job satisfaction.

Table 6: ANOVA Table of Regression

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	22.844	8	2.855	12.225	.000 ^b
Residual	85.254	365	.234		
Total	108.097	373			

Dependent Variable: Employee_Job_Satisfaction (Source: Survey Data, 2021)

The result of the regression analysis was shown that work from home as a whole predicts employee job satisfaction at positively a significant level ($\beta = 0.341$, $P = 0.000$). Thus, the alternative hypothesis (H1) of this study was accepted.

Table 7: Coefficient Table of Regression

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	2.737	0.116		23.582	0.000
WFH	0.181	0.026	0.341	6.992	0.000

Dependent Variable: Employee_Job_Satisfaction (Source: Survey Data, 2021)

V. DISCUSSION

Based on the descriptive analysis of this study, employees in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka agreed that they involve highly in working from home from their respective organizations. As a whole this indicates that the statements related to work from home were observed positively. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is an increasing trend in work from home practices in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka especially, during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Also, there is a high level of employees' satisfaction with their jobs during work from home in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka since the employees are more familiar with technology usages, moderate level of ICT infrastructure facilities, for example, availability of desktop or laptop computer at household was 23% in 2019 and average computer literacy rate (30.8%).

Concerning the findings of the present study, the researcher found that there is a moderate level positive correlation (0.341, Sig 0.000) between work from home and employee job satisfaction in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka. This indicated that the employees

who have been assigned to work from home tend to exhibit satisfaction with their jobs. This concluded that the work from home practices impact employee job satisfaction positively in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka. Further, the regression analysis result of this study shows that work from home as a whole positively predicts employee job satisfaction at a significant level among the employees in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka.

With these findings, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative hypothesis ($H_1 = \text{Work from home positively impacts employee job satisfaction}$). Further, it supported to achieve the objective of this study “*To investigate the impact of work from home on employee job satisfaction in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka*” by answering the research question “*Does work from home impact employee job satisfaction in ICT industry on Sri Lanka?*” By proving the first hypothesis; the researcher concluded that work from home positively impacts employee job satisfaction. The researcher has explained to justify the hypothesis by providing direct and indirect arguments which support the findings of this study. One of the most influential reasons for preferring work from home is the flexible work scheduling options. It enables employees to satisfy with their jobs. The findings are consistent with Ajay (2020), employees will satisfy to work from home as it allows them to care for their families while increasing their efficiency on the job. Since it impacts positively on employee well-being due to greater autonomy over where to work and how to organize, leading to an enhanced work-life balance. The finding is also confirmed with the view of Nijp *et al.* (2012) as having control over starting and ending time of work offers employees the possibility to align work with private responsibilities and preferences.

Also, the findings can be related to working in virtual settings and reporting a high level of satisfaction due to increased flexibility and autonomy (Sardeshmukh and Sharma, 2012). Further, the researcher was able to prove that these findings were supported by the studies of Grant (2021), Uresha, (2020), Baert *et al.* (2020), and Schall (2019).

Therefore, the overall findings of this study support the Job Characteristics Model since it argues that employees can experience more autonomy over the workplace and working time during work from home, increasing employee job satisfaction.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

As a suggestion, the organization may review their facilities to ensure that the employees have the correct facilities in place to allow employees to work from home. Technology is the main factor that employees consider to be their main challenge. Organizations need to ensure that the IT infrastructure supports the working arrangements that are to be implemented with secure network connections. Secured

connectivity is needed for work from home employees to have data protection and preserve confidential data transmission safety over a network will help to increase employee satisfaction with their jobs.

Organizations could look at inducing mentoring or any other training programs whereby employees who currently work from home can share their experiences of how they manage their time and workload effectively. It will allow them to get an insight on how to best manage their time and working environment at home. Employees should be advised regarding ergonomics to maintain physical and mental health. Providing training on how to properly set up and adjust one’s workstation at home to obtain various comfortable computing postures and how to vary postures throughout the day is essential

Since working from home can feel isolated due to a lack of face-to-face communication, team development strategies can be introduced. Routine face-to-face formal and informal meetings should be organized for all team members. This will ensure that all employees are kept up to date with work tasks, project general information that they might need to know

Management of the organization should always consider the personal motivation, working environment of the employees and should ensure that there is a strong mechanism on the ground to monitor the activities of the employees. Although work from home exists in other industries, the ICT industry is unique in its business delivery model, they can develop a well-defined strategy for work from home, such as availability, performance, data security, business ethics peer relationship, etc.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The trend of working from home is rapidly increasing in today’s digital era, where limitless access to information and communication availability is everywhere. With the recent COVID-19 pandemic that struck around the globe, to lessen the burden on the economy and to keep the productive operations being continued to the extent possible, most of the developed and developing countries are involved in working from home. Also, overall employees were happy with working from home and they were supporting their feelings, emphasizing the fact that a lot of people lost their job due to the pandemic crisis and they still have the opportunity of doing the job from home. Sri Lanka as a developing country emerged as a powerful player, supported by the ongoing liberalization of the ICT industry and growth of BPO services. The organic growth of the ICT industry is benefitting other industries as well. Especially, by enabling others to work from home. Therefore, it is crystal clear that the ICT industry is more amenable to working from home.

The fundamental purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of work from home on employee job satisfaction in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka. Researchers discovered that work from home impacts

employee job satisfaction positively at a moderate level in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka and identified that work from home is a positive predictor of employee job satisfaction. The impact of work from home on employee job satisfaction has been widely discussed in multiple countries but there are only a few pieces of evidence available from the Sri Lankan context and especially in the ICT industry. Also, the previous studies have given contradictory conclusions regarding the impact of work from home on employee job satisfaction. Therefore, the implications of this study give further directions towards generating more contextual and empirical evidence about work from home and employee job satisfaction. In conclusion, this study proposed that work from home positively impacts employee job satisfaction in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka.

ABBREVIATIONS

WFH	Work From Home
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
ICTA	Information Communication Technology Agency
BPM	Business Process Management
HRM	Human Resource Management
HR	Human Resource
JCM	Job Characteristics Model
STST	Socio-Technical System Theory
ILO	International Labor Organization
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
TVET	Technical Vocational Education And Training
APA	American Psychological Association

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