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MBM (DEFENCE & SECURITY)

UPNM 2021

**Factors Influencing Productivity in Working
from Home in a Selected Multinational Firm**

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**MASTER OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
(DEFENCE AND SECURITY)**

**NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY OF
MALAYSIA**

2020

**Factors Influencing Productivity in Working from
Home in a Selected Multinational Firm**

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Thesis submitted to Centre for Graduate Studies, National Defence University
of Malaysia, in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master in
Business Management (Defence and Security)

MARCH 2021

ABSTRACT

Working from home is no exception from having its own sets of challenges and setbacks. The work environment of an employee who works from home plays a critical role in their work productivity. The main objective of this research is to examine factors affecting productivity when working from home among employees in a selected pharmaceutical multinational corporation in Kuala Lumpur. The research method selected for this study is quantitative in which non-experimental correlational research design is applied to identify the relationships between home responsibilities, work itself, work space and facilities, family support and technology with work productivity when working from home. The total population in this selected Multinational Firm is 1600 employees, however, only 403 respondents are selected as sample size. Data for study was collected through questionnaire surveys distributed to respondents via Google forms. Out of 403 questionnaires distributed, only 119 valid and usable responses were received and analysed. The validity and reliability of the instrument was validated in terms of its Cronbach alpha consistency measure, normality testing as well as content and construct validity. Data collected were analysed using SPSS software version 25.0 in which univariate descriptive analysis, bivariate Pearson Correlation Analysis and multivariate Multiple Linear Regression Analysis were performed to obtain the results and to answer the research objectives. Throughout the study, ethical research conduct is being adhered to.

The findings of this study showed that employees in the selected Multinational Firm agreed that the level of work productivity is high when they work from home. This is because, the nature and amount of work when working from home is good and adequate. The employees reported that their work space and facilities are appropriate and available. In addition, they reported that having family support and understanding whilst working from home is crucial. And finally, they have good technology system and support when working from home. In addition, this study found that employees' nature of work, work space and facilities, family support and technology all has a significant positive relationship with work productivity. And among all these factors, it is found that the nature of work itself and the amount of workload given to employees to complete when working from home contributes the most to work productivity. This study contributes to the body of knowledge by expanding the literature on working from home among employees in a selected multinational pharmaceutical firm in Malaysia. Managers in the Multinational Firm can identify the critical nature of work itself and level of employees' workload and the strong relationship with work productivity and provide better work from home practices and policies. Further studies using mix research method for all pharmaceutical firms in Malaysia is recommended.

ABSTRAK

Bekerja dari rumah tidak terkecuali daripada mempunyai cabaran dan kemunduran tersendiri. Persekitaran kerja seorang pekerja yang bekerja dari rumah memainkan peranan penting dalam produktiviti kerja mereka. Objektif utama penyelidikan ini adalah untuk mengkaji faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi produktiviti ketika bekerja dari rumah di kalangan pekerja di sebuah syarikat multinasional farmasi terpilih di Kuala Lumpur. Kaedah penyelidikan yang dipilih untuk kajian ini adalah kuantitatif di mana reka bentuk penyelidikan korelasi bukan eksperimental diterapkan untuk mengenal pasti hubungan antara tanggungjawab di rumah, kerja sendiri, ruang dan kemudahan kerja, sokongan keluarga dan teknologi dengan produktiviti kerja ketika bekerja dari rumah. Jumlah populasi di syarikat multinasional terpilih ini adalah 1600 pekerja, namun hanya 403 responden yang dipilih sebagai ukuran sampel. Data untuk kajian dikumpulkan melalui borang soal selidik yang diedarkan kepada responden menggunakan aplikasi borang Google. Dari 403 borang kaji selidik yang diedarkan, hanya 119 respons yang sah dan boleh digunakan untuk analisa. Kesahan dan kebolehpercayaan instrumen itu disahkan dari segi ukuran konsistensi alpha Cronbach, pengujian normaliti serta kesahan kandungan dan konstruk. Data yang dikumpulkan dianalisa menggunakan perisian SPSS versi 25.0 di mana analisa deskriptif univariat, analisa Korelasi Pearson bivariate dan analisa Regresi Linier Berganda multivariat dilakukan untuk mendapatkan hasil dan menjawab objektif kajian. Sepanjang kajian dijalankan, etika penyelidikan dipatuhi.

Hasil dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa pekerja di firma multinasional terpilih bersetuju bahawa tahap produktiviti kerja adalah tinggi ketika mereka bekerja dari rumah. Ini kerana, sifat dan jumlah pekerjaan ketika bekerja dari rumah adalah baik dan mencukupi. Pekerja melaporkan bahawa ruang dan kemudahan kerja mereka sesuai dan tersedia. Di samping itu, mereka melaporkan bahawa mempunyai sokongan dan pemahaman keluarga semasa bekerja dari rumah sangat penting. Dan akhirnya, mereka mempunyai sistem teknologi dan sokongan yang baik ketika bekerja dari rumah. Di samping itu, kajian ini mendapati bahawa sifat kerja, ruang dan kemudahan kerja, sokongan keluarga dan teknologi semuanya mempunyai hubungan positif dan signifikan dengan produktiviti kerja. Dan di antara kesemua faktor ini, didapati bahawa sifat kerja itu sendiri dan jumlah beban kerja yang diberikan kepada pekerja untuk diselesaikan ketika bekerja dari rumah memberikan sumbangan yang paling besar terhadap produktiviti kerja. Kajian ini menyumbang kepada ilmu pengetahuan dengan mengembangkan literatur mengenai bekerja dari rumah di kalangan pekerja di sebuah firma farmasi multinasional terpilih di Malaysia. Pengurus di syarikat multinasional dapat mengenal pasti sifat kritikal kerja itu sendiri serta tahap beban kerja pekerjaan. Pengurus juga boleh mengurus amalan kerja serta membuat penambahan baik polisi bekerja dari rumah. Kajian lebih lanjut menggunakan kaedah penyelidikan campuran untuk semua firma farmasi di Malaysia adalah disyorkan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

وبركاته هلاور حمة عليكم السالم

Praise be to Allah, for His favour
Endless blessings and peace for the beloved noble, the Prophet Muhammad SAW
And his family and companions, as well as to all the
Following his struggle for God

This research paper could not have been made possible without the grace of Allah the Almighty. First and foremost, I am expressing with deep of thankfulness and gratitude to my supervisor **Lt. Kol. Dr. Inderjit Singh a/l Tara Singh (Retired)** as mentor. He is a great supervisor shown by the act of facilitating this research through meticulous scrutiny, advising, encouragement and understanding throughout the research periods. It is a great honour to have been given the opportunity to gain a valuable lesson learn and experiences from **Lt. Kol. Dr. Inderjit**.

Nevertheless, I must express profound gratitude to my parents **Lt. Kol. Ridzuan Baba (Retired) & Prof. Dr. Haslinda Abdullah**, siblings and friends, for their constant encouragement throughout my study period. My 2 handsome and adorable sons **Muhammad Harraz and Muhammad Harriz** who were tolerant and had sacrificed valuable family time during my absence for completing this research. Despite the challenges. The research had definitely given better understanding towards the commitment one has on education, in which I hope to have been aspiring to them.

Lastly, a special thank you note for my loving wife **Junaidah Bidin** who has been there at my side throughout this journey and patiently taken care of our 2 sons while I was studying. Only Allah can repay your kind and loving actions. May all of you receive blessing from Allah S.W.T.

وبركاته هور حمة عليكم السالم الهداية التوفيقو باهلل

APPROVAL

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Organisations around the world are facing a major challenge in adapting to the technological, economic, social and environmental changes (Osborne and Brown, 2005). With the advancement and expectation of digital and internet of things (IoT) work environment, more and more organisations are implementing working from home. The availability of advanced technology, the ability to transfer data and a speedy network have made working from home more convenient for both the employees and employers. Moreover, there is an increase of dual-career couple in the workplace and the demands to have a work-life balance is in the increase among both male and female employees. Hence, the trend of working from home has been adopted by many organisations around the globe. In addition, with the recent COVID-19 pandemic that affects the whole world, working from home is becoming the latest trend and a compulsory arrangement for everyone. Working from home has become the new normal for employees globally.

Working from home is basically means doing office tasks at an employee personal home and it doesn't require commuting into an office. Therefore, with the absence of daily commuting into the office can have many advantages to the employee. Work productivity is one of the main reason to implement working from home by employers.

With the reduced in time spent in commuting to work, employees are able to have more time focusing on their work or a given project. Moreover, employees can also get projects completed faster and with fewer mistakes. Thus, an increase in work productivity is expected of an employee (Raghuram, Wiesenfeld and Garud, 2000; Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Perez, Martinez - Sanchez, and de Luis Carnicer, 2003).

Nevertheless, work productivity during working from cannot be compromised. Employees have to have the same amount of work productivity working from home as in the office (Baruch, 2000; Baker, Gayle and John, 2007; Bloom, 2014). Work productivity is paramount despite the slack in many factors such as technology which is the main contributor towards working from home effectively (Montreuil and Lippel, 2003; Belzunegui-Eraso and Erro-Garces, 2020). It is also said that the nature of the work itself can determine the level of work productivity. However, work itself can varies vastly between different types of jobs and the nature of the job (Khandan, Zamir and Maghsoudipour, 2012). In addition, family support, work space and facilities are also suggested to have a critical influence towards work productivity when working from home ((Bouziri, Smith, Descatha, Dab and Jean, 2020; Ferguson, Zivnuska and Whitten, 2012; Jain and Nair, 2017). Nevertheless, these factors are critical factors that can have significant impact on the level of work productivity.

1.2 Background of Study

The whole world was shocked with the news in which a new virus officially named SARS-CoV-2 was identified and infecting the community at Wuhan, China in December, 2019. From Wuhan, China, this SARS virus has spread to other countries

and Malaysia is no exception. The respiratory virus was present in our society in January and the Government of Malaysia implemented the first Movement Control Order (MCO) in March 2020. And with this MCO, the way businesses are operated has changed. All employees are required to stay home and work from home as all sectors of the workforce and economy are closed down except for very critical essential services. This has a dramatic change in the way people work and the way businesses are operating.

This selected Multinational Firm is a multinational firm headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, USA. And it has 160 subsidiaries worldwide with 107,000 employees currently serving these countries. Malaysia is its distribution centre with 1600 employees in its Malaysian centre. It's a globally diversified healthcare company with four main product divisions, hence the word diversified healthcare company came along. The four divisions are Pharmaceuticals, Nutrition, Diagnostics and Medical Devices.

Since the pandemic has affected the whole world, this selected pharmaceutical company is not exempted. Even though, prior to the MCO, some employees do work from home occasionally when the need arises, but during the compulsory MCO, all employees are to work from work for the duration stipulated by the government. And since then, up to now, the whole nation and firms have been on constant alert on an on and off MCO and working from home work practices.

1.3 Problem Statement

Working from home has been a topic that were always discussed or demanded by employees especially the ones working in the private sector. Basically, employees claimed that they can maintain the same productivity and commitment or even more while working from home rather than working in the office. Bloom, Liang, Roberts, Ying, (2015) found that employees that work from home are happier and less likely to quit but also more productive comparing to their colleagues who work in the office. Indeed, working from home should be an interesting, free from stress and employees should have high productivity (Bloom, Liang, Roberts, Ying, 2015). In addition, employees who work from home should have the support and cooperation from family members as it can have a high negative impact on work productivity (Crosbie and Moore, 2004). Moreover, in this digital and advance technological era, technology efficiency is the main factor that should ease and make working from home possible (Graaf and Rietveld 2007).

Nevertheless, working from home is no exception from having its own sets of challenges and setbacks. The work environment of an employee who works from home plays a critical role in their work productivity. Work environment such as work space and facilities, a stress-free environment from home responsibilities or the ability to balance between home responsibilities and work itself affects the employee overall motivation and work productivity (Massoudi & Aldin Hamdi, 2017; Briner, 2000). According to Clark (2000) employees are found to have a challenging time in balancing their home responsibilities such as caring for their elderly, children and house chores. Indeed, these responsibilities can affect employees work productivity, hence, family

support, cooperation and understanding is critical in this part of working from home. In addition, the nature of the work itself and the level of work load can be stressful and this can affect productivity (Mirchandani, 2000; Crosbie and Moore, 2004; Marsh and Musson, 2008). Also, with the current pandemic situation, everyone is required to work from home, but the work space and facilities are not ergonomically conducive for working from home. It was found that employees are working from their couch and are ergonomically unhealthy (Bain and Taylor, 2000; Golden, 2007). Finally, is the issue of technology, despite the advancement in technology, technology and internet connection is still a major setback in working from home (Sullivan, 2003; Messenger and Gschwind, 2016).

Indeed, working from home can either increase or decrease employees' productivity. According to Bloom, Liang, Roberts, Ying (2015) working from home can increase employees' productivity by 15% from the usual working from the office as time consumed in commuting is reduced. However, working from home can also have a detrimental effect on employees psychological being and mental health (Grant, Wallace and Spurgeon, 2015).

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to identify critical factors affecting work productivity and to develop a model for working from home for a selected Multinational Firm.

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to examine factors affecting productivity when working from home among employees in a selected pharmaceutical multinational corporation in Kuala Lumpur.

1. To determine the level of working from home factors, i.e. home responsibilities, work itself, work space and facilities, family support, technology and work productivity among employees in a selected Pharmaceutical MNC.
2. To determine the relationship between home responsibilities, work itself, work space and facilities, family support and technology with work productivity among employees in a selected Pharmaceutical MNC.
3. To determine the most significant contributing factor affecting work productivity among employees in a selected Pharmaceutical MNC.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions have been developed

1. What is the level of home responsibilities, work itself, work space and facilities, family support, technology, and work productivity among employees in a selected Pharmaceutical MNC?
2. What is the relationship between home responsibilities, work itself, work space and facilities, family support and technology with work productivity among employees in a selected Pharmaceutical MNC?

3. What is the most significant contributing factor affecting work productivity among employees in a selected Pharmaceutical MNC?

1.6 Scope of Study

The scope of this study focuses on working from home factors such as home responsibilities, work itself, work space and facilities, family support and cooperation, and technology affecting work productivity. This research study employed quantitative method in which questionnaire survey will be distributed to all employees in a selected Multinational (MNC) Pharmaceutical firm located in Kuala Lumpur.

1.7 Significant of Study

Since this study focuses on working from home in a selected MNC who practices working from home even before the Pandemic until today, this research is important to fill up the gaps in literature in this specific area. Moreover, this research may provide a guidance to the employers in improving the work productivity of employees when working from home. This research can also contribute to researchers and scholars' awareness of continued exploration of this topic so that the companies and organizations would have the chance to comprehend the topic by reading the publication of the researchers and scholars.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

Working from home: Working from home refers to an employee who works full time from their house or their place of residence rather than from the office. An the employee is working their normal working hours in the vicinity of their home

Work productivity: Work productivity refers to the effective and efficient use of all available resources to meet pre-set targets or outcomes by the employee of the employer.

Home responsibilities: Home responsibilities refers to responsibilities such as caring for the elderly, the sick, children, house chores and other family related responsibilities.

Work Itself: Work itself refers to the general context and nature of the job and its level of workload.

Work space and facilities: Work space is space allocated in which a person can work comfortably as in an office. And the work space should have facilities such as ergonomic chairs and tables, computers, printers and all the necessary equipments and peripherals for working.

Family support and cooperation: Family support and cooperation refers to family's understanding and ability to cooperate with the employee while working from home premises.

Technology: Technology in the context of this research refers to the availability or accessibility to good internet connection as well as the availability of latest technological equipment for the purpose of making working from home effective.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Literature review is a critical part of a research process as it helps to assess and identify other studies that has been conducted in the area of working from home. It also helps in the discussion of working from home in the present state by understanding previous related studies. Therefore, this chapter will discuss previous studies related to working from home or sometimes called telecommuting. Theories related and underpinning this study is also reviewed and discussed. Subsequently, this chapter also presents the theoretical framework and related supporting evidence in developing the hypotheses.

2.2 Related Theories

Theory refers to a group of tested general propositions, which are generally regarded as correct that can be used as basis or principles for explanation (Abend, 2008; Haslinda, 2019). There are several theories that can explain work productivity and employee motivation at the workplace. These theories include Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory and Herzberg's Two-Factor theory.

2.2.1 The Sociotechnical Systems Theory

Sociotechnical Systems Theory (STS) was started by Trist, Bamforth and Emery in the World War II era. The concept of sociotechnical systems was based on their work with workers in the English coal mines. In this context, sociotechnical refers to the integration of people and technical aspects or organisational structure and processes. Sociotechnical systems theory also refers to the interaction of people's behaviour and our complex organisational infrastructure. Hence, in this context, the importance of people or employees' interaction or joint optimization with technology is emphasized (Emery and Trist, 1969).

The sociotechnical systems theory consists of four main elements, which are the organisational structure and work design, personal subsystem and technical subsystem and external environment. In this context, the organisational structures and work design consists of the formal decision-making processes, the degree of standardization of the organisational structures and work design and the complexity of the work system itself (Belanger, et al 2013; Bednar and Welch, 2020)

In addition, the personnel subsystem refers to the characteristics of the workforce, employee motivation and attitude towards work and their level of professionalism in performing work tasks and responsibilities (Belanger, et al 2013). It was also argued that employees have a preference and motivation to work from home, having the right attitudes towards their work while working from home and have the preferences of working independently from home or working in a team with others as well as the issue