

e-Proceeding

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WORKING FROM HOME (WFH): A NEW WAY OF WORKING IN POST COVID-19 ERA

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Abstract

Working from Home (WFH) is a new way of working. It is based on information and communication technologies which are rapidly replacing the old method of working. It was started at the beginning of 2020, because of the World Pandemic Issue, Covid-19. Since the 1st case of Coronavirus on 25 January 2020, until today, the pandemic transforms and acts as a catalyst for change in urban development and lifestyle. Thus, Covid-19 has changed the landscape of development in Malaysia and globally by disrupting the economic ecosystem. WFH provides an opportunity and steps to implement physical distancing within achieving sustainable and resilient growth within pandemic Covid-19. This new way of working has managed to reduce the problem of vehicles, the rapid growth of the commercial area in cities. The rapid growth of residential development in the urban fringe has caused the CBD to function as the employment centre. It is forcing the workers to generate trips to their office. The purpose of this study is to determine the overall WFH concept as a new way of working. Content analysis was used to identify the contributing factors that influence WFH. One of the main factors is efficiency in working which has been identified as significant in contributing to WFH behaviour. Traffic congestion, travel expenses and related costs such as car park, fuel and maintenance costs had been reduced. From the analysis, all the factors have been listed to contribute a new conceptual framework of Working from Home. The study has found that the acceptance of WFH will become a new way of working in this pandemic and improve sustainable development and resilience.

Keywords: *working from home; covid-19; environment; working pattern*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), a novel pneumonia disease originating in Wuhan, was confirmed by the World Health Organization on January 12, 2020 before becoming an outbreak in all countries. The first wave of infection in Malaysia started on 24 January 2020, with the identification of 22 cases, of which 12 had travel histories to the affected countries and regions. Eight cases were close contacts and two were from a humanitarian mission. There were 11 days with no cases, from 16 to 26 February 2020. The second wave began on 27 February 2020 and is still ongoing (World Health Organization, April 2020). Up till 24th of September, there are a total of 10, 576 cases with 133 death cases (Covid-19 Outbreak Live Updates, 24 September 2020). Figure 1 below shows the current data of cases for Covid-19 in Malaysia. On 18 March 2020, the Prime Minister announced Restriction of Movement Order which was implemented under The Prevention & Control of Infectious Diseases ACT 1988 & The Police ACT 1967. The movement of persons and mass gatherings including religious, sports, social and cultural activity were not allowed. All places of worship must be closed and activities including the Muslim Friday prayer were halted. All business premises except supermarkets, public markets, sundry and convenience shops must close. Other than that, the operation of nurseries, government and private schools, public and private higher education institutions as well as skills training centers must be closed. Malaysians were prohibited from going overseas. Those returning from overseas must undergo a medical examination and self-quarantine for 14 days. The operation of non-essential public and private premises were

enforced to close. (Prime Minister Office, 2020a) Most of the citizens were not allowed to go to the office. Restriction of Movement Order with Condition was then announced by the Prime Minister on 4 May 2020. Some of the economic sectors were allowed to start their business with conditions during this period (Ruzki, Idris, Ibrahim, Parzi, Ibrahim & Muzamir, 2020) These announcements relieved most of the citizens that were affected with economic problems. On 7 June 2020, the Prime Minister announced the Rehabilitation of Restriction of Movement Order. During this period, almost all activities, education, religion, business, economic sector and so on were re-operated in stages with full compliance with the SOP (Prime Minister Office, 2020b). From March 2020, Malaysia has to embrace the new norm in terms of working, shopping, worship, recreational and other activities. Some businesses take good precaution by allowing their employees to work from home (WFH). Apart from all, everyone has to remember that the pandemic is still not over. Everyone has to comply with the SOP. Everyone has to avoid the 3C which are Crowded Place, Confined Space and Closed Conversation.

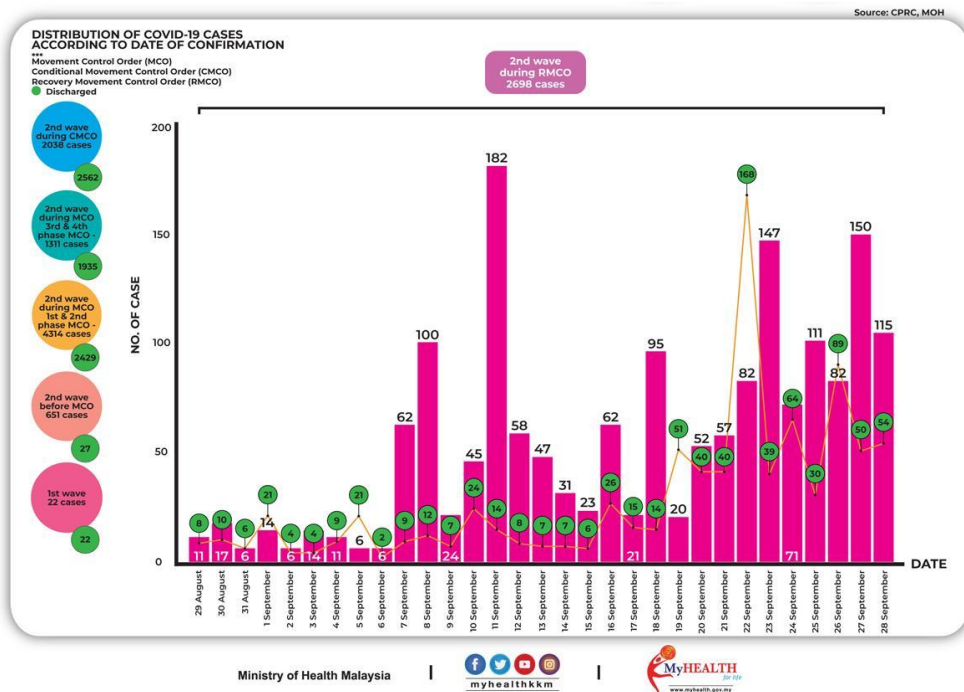


Figure 1: Number of Covid-19 cases in Malaysia.

Source: CPRC, MOH (2020)

From this situation of pandemic and new way of working, the goal of this study was to carry out an employee tendency towards working from home in overcoming Covid 19 pandemic. The objectives are listed below;

1. To identify the factors that influence employees to work from home.
2. To identify the effects of working from home on employees

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Effects of Working From Home

Working from home will become an increasingly popular way of lives. John Naisbitt describes major forces that are shaping what life will be like in the future. From this situation of

nature and to decrease the impact of Pandemic Covid-19, there are six directions as indications of working from home.

2.1.1 Increasingly in Economic Information Based

People earn their living from managing information, selling ideas and providing services. This type of work nature doesn't need a factory, shop space and large office. It offers a cost effective way of working and a rewarding way of living.

2.1.2 Advance and Continuous Technology

With more sophisticated tools, media and gadgets, it is becoming easier to work from home. With the aid of technological advances, people will seek to preserve the "humanness" in their lives. People and individuals will be using technology to create more opportunities for working from home. It will strengthen family and neighbourhood ties and become more relaxed and human lifestyles.

2.1.3 Less Space, More Productives.

The idea "bigger is better" becoming less popular and people more adopting "less is more". The demand on housing spaces, local level and facilities will increase rather than national level. Focusing for neighbourhood facilities rather than urban wide services, for buying handmade or house made products rather than mass products. The business with small scale is becoming more established instead of large depersonalized ones.

2.1.4 Self Dependent for Well Being

Workers are coming to rely on themselves instead of looking to the government or large organisations. It is more to "Do it yourself" efforts and replacing a dependence on traditional authority and company. People tend to decide "I want to do it my way". This emerging independent character is behind the scenario of home business, accountants, surprising productivity. It is, thus, predicted that as work from home continues, there will be more people who will see working from home as a way to take command of their career and economic future.

2.1.5 People Determination of Working

Work from home can develop the determination for workers especially because of flexible spaces in home, and less dependent on the office situation. Time becomes more flexible as the dead lines working in the office hour period are no longer the focus. Productivity and output become more effective because of motivation by personal spaces in the comfort of their home. Reducing and saving the cost of office operation means less job retention. Finally, there will be more work life balance as more time is spent with personal spots, family members and neighbours.

2.1.6 10 Tips WFH

Workers and people with motivation to implement WFH will following 10 tips from Figure 1 below;

The right equipment	10 TIPS WORKING FROM HOME	Flexibility time wisely
Designate a space for work		Track your progress
Set a working hours		Avoid distractions
Get some structure in place		Take accountability
Communicate using technology		Take a breaks

Figure 1: 10 Tips working from home

Source: Paul and E. Sarah (1985)

2.2 Influencing Factors of Working From Home

Influencing factors are expected to be able to attract many employees to implement working from home. The level of readiness and inclination is associated with certain factors in addressing the Covid-19 pandemic issue by reducing meetings and close contact between employees in the office. Factors identified were traffic congestion, views on air pollution, timing of congestion encountered. Next most important is the cost burden faced by employers and employees.

2.2.1 Traffic Congestion Factor

The problem of traffic congestion is an increasingly complex problem in the city. It is due to the increasing number of private vehicles as a result of various factors such as increased surplus income (disposable income), positive developments in the car industry and so on. High levels of vehicle ownership and traffic stimulus factors encourage workers to drive to work resulting in congestion as well as affecting employee productivity due to fatigue and air pollution. Air pollution is identified as an indirect effect of traffic congestion. The increase in the number of vehicles resulted in increasing emissions due to contaminants from vehicles. the more the number of trip generators the more pollutants are released (Minnesota, 2010). Based on Malaysia's Number of Motor Vehicle: Annual: Johor data, vehicles in Johor was reported at 3,638,857.000 units in 2017. This records an increase from the previous number of 3,580,441.000 units for 2016. In Pulau Pinang, the data was reported at 2,673,907.000 units in 2017. This records an increase from the previous number of 2,634,338.000 units for 2016 (Global Database's Malaysia – Motor Vehicles Registration). According to Road Transport Department (JPJ) data, there are now 31.2 million units of motor vehicles registered in Malaysia until 31st December 2019. The total includes cars, commercial vehicles and motorcycles. This is 3.02 million units up from the mid-2017 figures released by the Malaysia Automotive Association (MAA), which recorded 28.18 million registrations, representing an average increase of around 1.2 million new vehicles annually in the past two and half years. The latest data translates to just over 11 million new registrations in the 2010-2019 period, or an average of 1.1 million units per year for the decade. High traffic congestion encourages workers who generate daily trips to accept working from home as a work alternative and to escape from traffic congestion. It shows the initial assumption that the level of employee acceptance of working from home is influenced by traffic congestion.

2.2.2 Air Pollution Factor

Studies by the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States, the Minnesota Pollution Control agency and INRETS in France prove the impact of private vehicles on air pollution. In Malaysia, since 2015, the source of air pollution from motor vehicles has recorded a percentage of up to 70% compared to other sources (DOE, 2017), as shown in Figure 2.

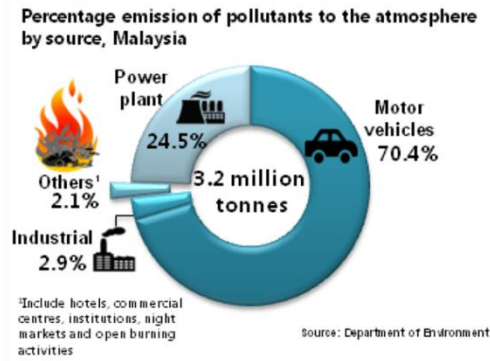


Figure 2: Percentage emission of pollutants

Source: Department of Environment (2017)

Changes in urban mobility have also resulted in an increase in pollution. This is because in the city, the travel rate is short; therefore, the vehicle does not reach the average operating temperature of the engine for fuel combustion to be considered perfect and internal combustion complete, causing high emissions of contaminants. Urban development also results in the generation of long daily work trips as well as higher pollution and directly affect the health of the urban population such as respiratory problems, asthma, skin cancer (Zaini Ujang, 2000). Working from home can reduce the generation of trips to work either 1 to 3 days a week. This means that reducing the trip of a vehicle is equivalent to reducing 19.2 grams of NO content in the air. With an average amount of contaminants from vehicles of 6.4 grams per day, a trip reduction of 3 days a week can reduce the release of contaminants 44.8 grams per week or 2,150 grams per year. (DOE, 2018).

2.2.3 Congestion Time Factor

The increasing number of vehicles causes traffic congestion. This situation affects congestion time. Congestion time refers to the time wasted faced by road drivers. The higher the congestion rate encounters, the more congested the road situation. It is also a driving factor in the implementation of working from home because of the burden of time loss. Significant levels of this situation indicate that the congestion time factor experienced causes employees to change to a new way of working, more flexible and effective time.

2.2.4 Cost Dependent Factor

The cost of liability is a burden to employees who own a vehicle and generate daily trips. These costs are based on the direct cost components (fuel), parking costs, congestion costs (fuel costs) and maintenance costs. In addition, health care costs are the same as accident costs. Refer Table 1.

Table 1: Cost Dependent Factor

Cost Dependent	Implementation	Data estimation
Parking Cost	Employees provide a small expense for daily parking. Close to office or public transport.	Cost RM2.00/hour x 8 hour RM16 per day
Petrol Cost	Spending petrol using private vehicles to work	Cost RM1.70/liter Average RM400 per month
Maintenance Cost	cost per year from vehicle trip generation. (automobile costs, title, operating costs, insurance coverage costs, road taxes	Cost RM4000+ per year

Source: World Resource Institute (2010)

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology has been separated and classified by level of stages. There are three stages in conducting the study: Stage one is focusing on establishing the literature review. The comprehensive literature review focuses on studies related to working from home which are also related to Covid-19 pandemic. The other review is to identify the determinant factors that affect and enhance working from home. Stage two in this research is to develop a research methodological design. From the effect factors listed influencing factors on working from home were developed. The findings from this factor review were determined from the journal papers that embraced studies related to the new era of working after post Covid-19.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Working from home is a new way of working to avoid and reduce contact from this pandemic. It helps the employees to balance and differentiate their office work with their routine work. The study also added that work from home saves time, increases the productivity, finishes the targets on time and also helps the employees to give time for their personal life. Go (2016) stated the focus on major failures and the dark side of working from home and the cultural differences faced during webinars by the employees. Work from home creates a big gap in communication between superior and subordinates. A new study of homeworking found that mobile workers and partial home workers performance is higher to a some extent and they are highly satisfied and engaged with their jobs than any of other workers. Workers will perform best when they achieve good work life balance and are less stressed. All mobile workers and home workers miss informal interaction and emotional support from their co-workers more frequently than partial home workers. Richardson and Writer (2017) stated that work from home is the result of modern technology, which resulted in the increased credibility i.e. increased usage of the internet for web conferencing, voice mail, fax which makes work easier and simpler. The positive side of work from home is that the employees can start their work according to their convenience.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

This study sets out to identify and explore factors and indicators for employees working from home and in addition to this to see whether this has any impact upon employees' work life balance. This research was successfully compiled through content analysis by gathering a wide range of information from previous research with the aim of two objectives, as outlined in the 'literature section". Based on this, various findings were presented which supported the discussion regarding working from home in terms of effectiveness, motivation and performance of workers. This section will provide a summary of the findings presented.

This research was carried out due to the fact that there was a current gap surrounding working from home and reducing the impact of pandemic Covid-19 in Malaysia. This gap being present as current literature surrounding this topic commented on how working from home was such a positive factor for employees and how this way of working was available due to the global issue of Covid-19. However, the gap presented to the researcher was that there was no indication throughout previous studies as to the impact that working from home has on the overall motivation and performance levels. A further insight for future research needed to be gained to see whether motivation and performance levels of those working from home were higher and if so, especially during the post Covid-19 era.

Overall, it is clear to see from this research that there is positivity surrounding working from home in general. It was evident from this study that overall, effects and factors were considerably higher for employees that work from home as they felt they were able to power through their workload in order to complete tasks and get the job done. Working from home has allowed people to be more motivated to complete work activities so that they can spend quality time with their families, which they would not be able to do if they were working in the office. Working from home allowed them to have a more positive work life balance due to being

more productive, having higher levels of motivation which in turn suggested that they were happier, more engaged and had higher levels of job satisfaction.

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Setuju.

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