

Conceptualising Factors Influencing Employee Performance from a Work-From-Home Context: Public Sector Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to conceptualise factors influencing employee performance within a work-from-home (WFH) context in Malaysia's public sector. Drawing on the Job Demands-Resources (JDR) model, it conceptualises work attitude, superior support, home workplace suitability, technology usage, and family support as psychological, organisational, physical, technological, and social resources supporting WFH performance. The study proposed that all five factors positively influenced WFH employee performance. Home workplace suitability demonstrated the largest effect, followed by work attitude, highlighting the importance of an enabling work environment and employee readiness. Technology usage and family support showed smaller positive effects, while superior support recorded the smallest effect. Thus, public sector organisations should adopt an integrated WFH strategy that strengthens employee readiness while providing appropriate physical, technological, organisational, and social support. The study extends the JDR model to the public sector WFH context by demonstrating that employee performance reflects a multidimensional resource ecosystem rather than individual capability alone. The findings provide evidence for developing sustainable, productive, and employee-supportive WFH policies.

Keywords: Employee performance, family support, superior support, technology usage, work attitude, work from-home, home workplace suitability, Public Sector, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia, an upper middle-income country, has successfully transitioned from an agricultural and commodity-based economy to a highly diversified one. The 12th Malaysian Plan aims for a prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable nation, with the public sector playing a critical role in policy implementation and societal well-being (Baa & Chattoraj, 2022; Matsieli & Sooryamoorthy, 2022). High job performance among public sector employees is essential, particularly during crises. Moreover, flexible work arrangements (FWAs) initiatives have emerged as a response to changing employment trends driven by digital technology, demographic shifts, and evolving economic structures. The gig and sharing economies are gaining traction as viable business models, ensuring talent retention and high work performance (Ahmad Nawawi et al., 2023). In Malaysia, 26% of the labor force engages in gig work full-time (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2022). The rise of Generation Y and Z in the workforce has introduced diverse expectations, favoring flexibility over the conventional 9-to-5 work model (Brough et al., 2023). Digital advancements further accelerate the adoption of FWAs (Bresciani et al., 2021; Yusaini et al., 2023).

FWAs provide spatial (location-based) and temporal (time-based) flexibility, allowing employees to balance work and personal commitments while maintaining performance (Jiang et al., 2023). Work-from-home (WFH), a key FWA, enhances autonomy, reduces commuting, and improves work-life balance (Clarke & Holdworth, 2017; Abdul Wahab et al., 2024). Organizations benefit from cost savings and talent attraction, with McKinsey (2020) reporting a 30% reduction in office space needs. FWAs are more common in industrialized nations and private sectors. By the late 20th century, 27% of U.S. full-time employees had experienced FWAs, with half telecommuting (Jiang et al., 2023). The U.S. public sector adopted remote work

in the 1970s, with 160,000 federal employees working remotely by 2002 (Joice, 2000). However, in Malaysia, FWA implementation in the public sector remains uncertain due to rigid bureaucratic structures and stringent productivity metrics. Understanding WFH performance factors could support effective adoption.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly altered work environments, accelerating the adoption of WFH in public sector organizations to ensure business continuity. While this shift safeguarded employees, it also highlighted factors influencing employee performance in remote settings. The pandemic-induced WFH model has led to reconsideration of traditional workplace norms, with uncertainties about whether organizations will revert to pre-pandemic structures (Alexander et al., 2021; Kossek et al., 2021). Work attitude plays a critical role in motivation and task commitment within conventional office settings (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2024; Tan et al., 2023). Similarly, superior support is vital for employee excellence (Imam et al., 2023). However, WFH conditions may alter these dynamics, potentially weakening the relationship between work attitude, superior support, and performance. Additionally, WFH during COVID-19 was not a voluntary choice for many employees (Ibrahim et al., 2023), which could further influence these relationships. Home workplace suitability and technology availability are crucial factors affecting remote job performance. A well-equipped home office supports efficiency, whereas inadequate resources may hinder productivity (Arata et al., 2023). Unlike traditional office spaces where necessary tools and facilities are provided, home environments vary in their ability to support professional work (Al Mohamed et al., 2024; Ekpanyaskul et al., 2023). Exploring these factors is essential in assessing WFH effectiveness. Furthermore, integrating work into home life can either promote work-life balance or disrupt personal routines. Family support may serve as a mitigating factor, enabling employees to maintain high performance while working from home (García-Salirrosas et al., 2023; Pujol-Cols et al., 2024). Improved work-life balance has been shown to enhance job motivation and engagement, which significantly boosts job performance, particularly among married employees in foreign direct investment (FDI) enterprises (Nguyen et al., 2024). Investigating this aspect could provide further insights into its role in enhancing employee performance under FWAs.

Therefore, this study aims to conceptualise and examine the factors influencing employee performance within a WFH context in Malaysia's public sector. Drawing on the Job Demands-Resources (JDR) model, the study proposes that effective WFH performance is shaped by the availability of resources that enable employees to manage the demands associated with working beyond conventional organisational boundaries. Specifically, the framework incorporates five key determinants: work attitude, superior support, home workplace suitability, technology usage, and family support, representing psychological, organisational, physical, technological, and social dimensions of remote working. The JDR model suggests that adequate resources can mitigate excessive job demands, reduce exhaustion and cynicism, and sustain employee motivation and performance (Bakker et al., 2023). Rather than viewing WFH performance solely as an individual responsibility, the proposed framework recognises that performance emerges from the alignment between employee readiness and a supportive work ecosystem. Accordingly, examining these interconnected dimensions provides a more comprehensive understanding of how public sector organisations can create sustainable WFH arrangements that enhance employee well-being, productivity, and overall work performance (Ferreira & Gomes, 2023). Outcomes of this study will contribute to human resource management policies, providing strategies to improve public sector performance through FWAs. Public sector organizations can leverage these insights to implement effective WFH practices, ensuring employees receive the necessary resources and support. Additionally, top management can develop strategies to enhance employee motivation and performance, thereby increasing organizational competitiveness. Ultimately, this research will help establish sustainable FWAs in Malaysia's public sector, fostering a more adaptable and efficient workforce.

LITERATURE REVIEW: THE CONCEPTUALISATION OF FACTORS INFLUENCING EMPLOYEE WORK PERFORMANCE FROM A WORK-FROM-HOME CONTEXT

Work Attitude and Employee Performance

Rismayadi (2024) stated that performance measures individual, group, or organizational outcomes that are in line with goals. High employee performance contributes to goal achievement through qualitative and

quantitative efforts (Ramos-Villagrasa et al., 2019) and is shaped by work behavior, structured effort, and a supportive environment (Hamouche & Parent-Lamarche, 2023). Attitude refers to an individual's tendency to respond to situations based on their psychological state, influencing opinions and biases (Mohd et al., 2024; Wendell et al., 2022). Work attitude, a learned predisposition, determines how employees consistently behave toward tasks (Ajzen, 2018; Owusu et al., 2024). It represents an employee's effort in performing activities to achieve results (Nugroho & Wahjoedi, 2023). Past studies confirm that work attitude significantly influences employee performance (Abun et al., 2021; Berta et al., 2018; Moore & Lucas, 2021; Yanti et al., 2020), highlighting its crucial role in workplace success. Hence, it is posited that, *work attitude positively influences WFH employee performance*

Superior Support and Employee Performance

Superiors refer to management, whose support includes attitudes, behaviors, and policies that facilitate WFH practices. From the JDR model perspective, superior support is a key job resource that helps employees perform their roles and mitigates excessive job demands that could harm performance (Chow & Cheak, 2023). It is also described as motivation, feedback, and resource provision and serves as an informal support system (Yang & Islam, 2020). Superior support enhances work-life balance (Selim & Kee, 2023) and positively influences job satisfaction (Chow & Cheak, 2023). Employees who feel supported experience higher job satisfaction, better quality of life, and improved performance (Barbieri et al., 2021). Moreover, social support from superiors can reduce employee emotional exhaustion, which is particularly significant for women, as emotional exhaustion has been shown to play a key role in turnover intentions (Lee & Jung, 2015). However, discrepancies in how managerial behavior is perceived can hinder support effectiveness. For example, women managers may view themselves as laissez-faire, while subordinates perceive them as autocratic—leading to significant differences in performance evaluations and highlighting the need for clearer communication and aligned expectations (Pioquinto, 2016). Hence, the following proposition is proposed: *Superior support positively influences WFH employee performance*

Home Workplace Suitability and Employee Performance

Homes often lack the physical and social resources needed for effective work performance (Abiddin et al., 2022). Employees unaccustomed to WFH may struggle with inadequate space, equipment, and materials (Rudolph et al., 2021). Many end up working in shared spaces like kitchen or dining tables without designated work areas. To maintain work-life balance, physical and conceptual barriers are necessary, especially for habitual WFH (Aropah et al., 2020). A well-equipped home workspace positively influences employee well-being and performance (Camacho & Barrios, 2022; Jackson et al., 2024). Empirical evidence confirms that home workplace suitability significantly impacts employee performance (Muller et al., 2022; Niebuhr et al., 2022). Therefore, the study conceptualized that, *home workplace suitability positively influences WFH employee performance*

Technology Usage and Employee Performance

Information and communication technology (ICT) integrates computer and telecommunication technologies, including hardware, software, and networks (Sriyaningsih et al., 2022). ICT is essential for WFH, enabling tasks via computers and online communication. However, it is also important to note that technology poses challenges for WFH employees. Disruptions in online platforms and internet connections hinder work efficiency (Drouin et al., 2020; Nathan et al., 2021). Additionally, employees must be proficient in digital tools (Deole et al., 2023). Empirical studies confirm that technology significantly drives employee performance (Kamdjoug et al., 2023; Sriyaningsih et al., 2022). Supporting this, Setiawan et al. (2025) found that technology affordance not only boosts work-life balance and job performance among Indonesian remote workers but also plays a mediating role—positively influencing in-role performance through work-life balance, though not significantly affecting innovative performance. This highlights the nuanced impact of technology on different dimensions of employee outcomes in remote work settings which leads to the proposition, *technology usage positively influences WFH employee performance*

Family Support and Employee Performance

Family is the basic social unit shaping economic, demographic, and cultural systems which includes parents, siblings, spouses, children, and others in the household (Chavan et al., 2021; Dousin et al., 2022). Family provides social support, helping employees work effectively from home (Foy et al., 2019; Vuong et al., 2022). According to the JDR model, family support acts as a job resource that enhances work performance (Banik et al., 2021; Camilleri, 2021). Empirical studies confirm that family support plays a crucial role in ensuring employees' work performance (Banik et al., 2021; Chavan et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2019; Zainal et al., 2020), thus it is conceptualized as *family support positively influences WFH employee performance*.

Figure 1 shows the proposed conceptualization of factors influencing employees' work performance, which include work attitude, superior support, home workplace suitability, technology usage and family support.

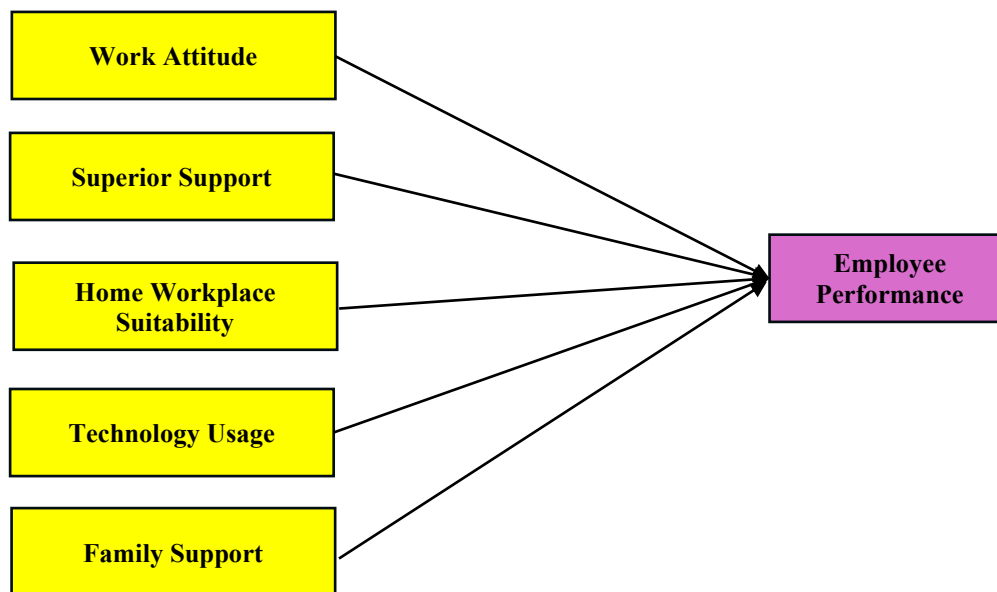


Figure 1. Conceptualisation of factors influencing employee work performance

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The conceptualisation of employee performance within a work-from-home (WFH) context requires a broader perspective than that applied to conventional office-based work. This is particularly relevant in the public sector, where established bureaucratic structures, formal work procedures, and stringent productivity expectations may create challenges for flexible working arrangements. Although WFH offers greater autonomy, reduced commuting, and improved flexibility, its effectiveness ultimately depends on whether employees possess sufficient personal and contextual resources to perform effectively outside the conventional workplace. Grounded in the Job Demands-Resources (JDR) model, this study conceptualises employee performance as being influenced by five interrelated dimensions: work attitude, superior support, home workplace suitability, technology usage, and family support. These factors represent psychological, organisational, physical, technological, and social resources that can enable employees to respond effectively to the demands of remote working. Work attitude represents an important internal resource because employees working remotely may have greater responsibility for self-regulation, motivation, and task commitment. However, positive attitudes alone may be insufficient when organisational and environmental conditions do not adequately support WFH.

In this regard, superior support becomes particularly important. Managerial motivation, feedback, communication, and resource provision can compensate for reduced face-to-face supervision and facilitate employees' ability to fulfil their responsibilities remotely. Similarly, home workplace suitability and technology usage represent essential enabling conditions. An inadequate workspace, insufficient equipment,

unstable connectivity, or limited proficiency with digital tools may constrain performance regardless of employees' motivation or commitment. Importantly, WFH also shifts work into the personal domain, making family support a distinctive resource compared with conventional office settings. Supportive family environments can help employees manage competing work and household responsibilities and sustain effective performance. Overall, the framework demonstrates that WFH performance should not be viewed solely as an individual responsibility. Rather, it emerges from the alignment between employee readiness and supportive organisational, technological, physical, and family environments. This multidimensional perspective is particularly valuable for the public sector because sustainable WFH arrangements require not merely policy flexibility, but an integrated support system that enables employees to remain productive while working beyond traditional organisational boundaries.

In conclusion, employee performance in a WFH context is shaped by the interaction of individual, organisational, technological, physical, and social resources. Work attitude, superior support, home workplace suitability, technology usage, and family support collectively provide the conditions necessary for effective remote working. Therefore, sustainable WFH practices in the public sector require an integrated approach that balances employee readiness with adequate organisational and environmental support.

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