
A descriptive cross-sectional study on the motivation of work-from-home office workers in the National Capital Region

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Abstract

Introduction The landscape of work has changed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic as more companies shifted from face-to-face to the work-from-home (WFH) setup. This change has affected several aspects of human life especially the motivation to WFH. The study aimed to determine the motivation of WFH among office workers in the National Capital Region (NCR) from March 2020 to February 2022.

Methods Using a descriptive cross-sectional study design, an online survey of WFH office workers around the NCR, Philippines was conducted. A 26-item questionnaire on motivation covering dimensions of availability (flexibility), safety (work-life balance), and meaningfulness (work performance) was used. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 24.

Results A total of 252 respondents were included in the study, with a majority identifying as females aged 21 to 30, never married, and college graduates. Additionally, respondents reported having one to five years of work experience and were employed in professional/technical/managerial fields. Regarding the impact of remote work, the findings indicated that most individuals who worked from home (WFH) felt motivated by this setup due to its positive effects on availability, time and cost savings from reduced commuting, and the flexibility it provided for managing their schedules according to personal preferences. Furthermore, in terms of safety and conducive work environment, WFH office workers expressed agreement that the remote work setup contributed to a favorable work environment, leading to increased job satisfaction. This setup allowed them to effectively balance work responsibilities with personal and family commitments. The study also revealed that WFH office workers perceived a sense of meaningfulness in their work, as they felt trusted and valued by their employers. This sentiment contributed to their overall well-being, both physically and mentally.

Conclusion Work-from-home office workers are generally always motivated in terms of availability (flexibility), safety (work-life balance) and meaningfulness (work performance).

Key words: work-from-home, motivation, office workers, flexibility, work-life-balance, and work performance

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The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to exert pressure on businesses and the economy. Public and private institutions have been forced to adapt to WFH arrangements to safeguard the health of their employees, reduce virus transmission while continuing to provide services and goods to the public. Teleworking, telecommuting, or better known as WFH, “is a flexible work arrangement that affords employees the ability to periodically, regularly, or exclusively perform work for their employers from home or another remote location that is equipped with the appropriate computer-based technology to

transfer work to the central organization.”¹ Due to the uncertainty on when the COVID-19 pandemic will end, WFH has become the new normal.²

Prior to the pandemic, WFH was not widely practiced on a full-time scale.² It was often associated with positive impacts such as reduced transportation costs and flexible working hours, but recent studies showed that people under the WFH setup during the pandemic had more negative than positive experiences. A study revealed that the shift to remote work (WFH) during the pandemic resulted in heightened work-life conflict. Workers reported increased challenges in managing both work-related and family-related issues, leading to strained relationships that ultimately affected their job performance.¹ The situation was exacerbated by extended working hours, which were often attributed to issues such as unreliable internet connectivity, subsequently leading to reduced efficiency and potential role overload.¹

As a consequence of these mounting negative effects and work-related stressors within the WFH framework, workers experienced a decline in efficiency and productivity, consequently leading to decreased motivation and lowered morale. This finding resonates with the observations made by a study which underscored the importance of worker engagement as a catalyst for motivation in their work.¹ They proposed that engagement emanates from three core factors: availability (flexibility), safety (work-life balance), and the sense of meaningfulness (work performance).¹

The general objective of this study was to determine the motivation of work from home among office workers in the NCR from March 2020 to February 2022 by using Perception of Work-From-Home Survey in terms of availability (flexibility), safety (work-life balance), and meaningfulness (work performance).¹ The cross-sectional data obtained could propel the framework for contextualizing work motivation among WFH office workers in the Philippine setting.

Methods

This research utilized a descriptive cross-sectional design to determine the work motivation of office workers on three dimensions: availability (flexibility), safety (work-life balance), and meaningfulness (work performance).

An online survey employing convenience sampling was conducted, involving 252 individuals engaged

in remote work (WFH) within the National Capital Region (NCR). The survey was distributed through Facebook and the Facebook Messenger app. Data collection spanned from August 23 to October 19, 2022, encompassing a total duration of 57 days. The survey tool remained accessible to respondents at all times, allowing them to participate at their convenience. On average, each participant took around 30 minutes to complete the survey.

The survey targeted WFH office workers residing and working in the National Capital Region (NCR). Eligible participants fell within the age range of 21 to 60, and they were required to be both residents and office workers in the NCR. Inclusion criteria encompassed individuals whose employers transitioned to a WFH arrangement at the onset of lockdown measures, spanning from March 2020 to February 2022. Notably, individuals engaged in hybrid work setups and those with less than six months of WFH experience were excluded from the study. Work motivation is defined as the feeling of work engagement of employees wherein engagement stems from availability (flexibility), safety (work-life balance), and the feeling of meaningfulness (work performance).² Availability (flexibility) is defined as the employee's feeling of being physically and mentally able to harness his/her maximum potential at the job.^{2,3,4} It is the total score derived from a 9-item 5-point Likert scale with higher scores indicating a highly flexible individual. Safety (work-life balance) is the employee's feeling of being comfortable to show his/her real self at the job without being reprimanded and without facing negative consequences.^{2,3,4} It is the total score derived from a 10 item 5-point Likert scale with higher scores indicating a good work-life balance. Meaningfulness (work performance) is how an employee finds his/her work meaningful for the company.^{2,3,4} It is the total score derived from a 7 item 5-point Likert scale with higher scores indicating how meaningful the employee finds his/her work.

The survey tool adopted was Zamani, et al.'s Perception of Work-From-Home Survey on Motivation of Office Workers on three dimensions: availability (flexibility), safety (work-life balance) and meaningfulness (work productivity) with 10 items for each dimension.² Content validity was conducted by a panel of 10 experts consisting of a psychometrician, anthropologist, sociologist, human resource manager, industrial/labor relations

expert, statistician, psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, abnormal psychology professor, and an occupational health practitioner. Items with a CVI of 0.59 were accepted, 0.5 were revised, and <0.5 were rejected.⁵ One item from the availability domain (CVI = 0.3) and three items from the meaningfulness domain (CVI = 0.1, 0.2, and 0.4) were omitted from the tool. Two items in the meaningful domain with CVI = 0.5 were revised as these were not applicable in the Philippine setting. Items for revision were amended by the psychometrician.

The final number of items in the content validated tool was 26 with 9 items for availability, 10 items for safety and 7 items for meaningfulness. A pre-testing phase was carried out involving 30 participants, following the methodology outlined in a previous study by Perneger, et al.⁶ The internal consistency was calculated, resulting in a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.934. Codes were assigned to the variables in the socio-demographic profile as well as answers for each domain. The three domains of the study have a Likert scoring of 1 for "Never", 2 for "Rarely", 3 for "Sometimes", 4 for "Very Often" and 5 for "Always."

SPSS version 24 was used for the analysis of the encoded responses. Descriptive statistics used were mean with standard deviation for quantitative variables and counts with proportions for qualitative variables. The proportion of the predominant Likert scale response for each item was obtained. The distribution of the dimensions of motivation according to demographic and work-related variables was presented in tables.

The study was approved by the UERM Ethics Review Committee with ERC Code 1260/C/2022/070.

Results

Of the 252 respondents in the study, majority were female (63.1%), aged 21-30 (75.8%), never married (77.8%), and college graduates (93.7%) (Table 1).

Most of the respondents have worked for 1 to 5 years (65.5%) and hold professional, technical, or managerial positions (73.8%) (Table 2).

Table 3 shows most of the office workers preferred working from home due to less worries about the time and money spent on commuting. The more comfortable work environment also enabled them to work anytime and manage their own schedules with less stress. However, majority of respondents said it

Table 1. Socio-demographic profile of work from home office workers.

| Socio-Demographic Profile | Category | Frequency (%) |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| Sex | Male | 93 (36.9) |
| | Female | 159 (63.1) |
| Age Group (in years) | 21-30 | 191 (75.8) |
| | 31-40 | 41 (16.3) |
| | 41-60 | 20 (7.9) |
| Marital Status | Never Married | 196 (77.8) |
| | Married | 34 (13.5) |
| | Living Together | 18 (7.1) |
| | Divorced/Separated | 2 (0.8) |
| | Widowed | 2 (0.8) |
| Educational Attainment | Junior High School | 3 (1.2) |
| | Senior High School | 3 (1.2) |
| | College ^A | 236 (93.7) |
| | Postgraduate ^B | 10 (4.0) |

^A Bachelor's degree holders

^B Masters or Doctorate degree holders

Table 2. Work profile of work from home office workers.

| Work Profile | Category | Frequency (%) |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| Work Experience | 1-5 years | 165 (65.5) |
| | 6-10 years | 48 (19.0) |
| | >10 years | 39 (15.5) |
| Occupation | Professional/Technical/Managerial | 186 (73.8) |
| | Clerical | 16 (6.3) |
| | Sales and Services | 50 (19.8) |

was only "sometimes" that it took them less time to complete their WFH tasks.

Table 4 shows majority of office workers found the WFH setup a more conducive working environment. It provided job satisfaction because they could attend to their needs, as well as their family's needs while at work. They also had less worries regarding work hours since they no longer had to go through traffic, which could take time off their tasks.

Table 5 shows most of the respondents had a good relationship with their employer because their superior understood their challenges. Respondents said their employer was concerned about their mental and physical well-being and trusted them even while they worked by remote. A significant number also felt that the WFH setup affected their career.

Motivation of Work-from-home Office Workers in the National Capital Region

Table 3. Dimension of availability (flexibility) on motivation of work-from-home office workers.

| Item | Most predominant response in the scale | Interpretation | Frequency (%) |
|--|--|----------------|---------------|
| I take less time to complete my task when I work from home | 3 | Sometimes | 80 (31.7) |
| I cherish not having to spend time commuting to work on daily basis | 5 | Always | 201 (79.8) |
| I am able to save on commuting expenses while working from home | 5 | Always | 213 (84.5) |
| I can immediately get to work upon waking up every day while working from home | 5 | Always | 173 (68.7) |
| I am comfortable to do my work anytime | 5 | Always | 131 (52.0) |
| I can focus my work by managing my own schedule | 5 | Always | 130 (51.6) |
| I am able to enjoy a healthier lifestyle | 5 | Always | 97 (38.0) |
| I face less stress doing some work tasks at home | 5 | Always | 89 (35.3) |
| My work productivity increases with less stress while working from home | 4 | Very Often | 94 (34.6) |

Table 4. Dimension of safety (work-life balance) on motivation of work-from-home office workers.

| Item | Most predominant response in the scale | Interpretation | Frequency (%) |
|---|--|----------------|---------------|
| I can manage my work responsibilities alongside my personal and family needs | 4 | Very Often | 108 (42.9) |
| I cherish not having to spend time commuting to work on daily basis | 5 | Always | 148 (58.7) |
| The flexibility offered to my current job is ideal for me. | 5 | Always | 159 (63.1) |
| I find having an office space at home helped improve my job satisfaction | 5 | Always | 122 (48.4) |
| I find working from home beneficial for me as I am able to simultaneously attend to my family needs | 5 | Always | 133 (52.8) |
| I found working from home more conducive than working in a normal office condition | 5 | Always | 92 (36.5) |
| I no longer have to face traffic jams to and from work every day | 5 | Always | 221 (87.7) |
| I no longer have to travel to work, therefore I am able to spend more time on the task at hand | 5 | Always | 181 (71.8) |
| I feel healthy and have a better well-being when working from home | 5 | Always | 98 (38.9) |
| I am able to take care of myself and others better while working from home | 5 | Always | 121 (48.0) |

Table 5. Dimension of meaningfulness (work productivity) on motivation of work-from-home office workers.

| Item | Most predominant response in the scale | Interpretation | Frequency (%) |
|---|--|----------------|---------------|
| I feel my superior understands my challenges while working from home | 5 | Always | 103 (40.9) |
| My employer has high trust in employees working from home | 5 | Always | 149 (59.1) |
| I feel that working from home does not impact my career progression | 1 | Never | 95 (37.7) |
| My employer provides work supplies for employees working from home | 5 | Always | 104 (41.3) |
| I have a conducive area to do my work at home | 5 | Always | 126 (50.0) |
| My employer is concerned about employees' mental and physical health when they work from home | 5 | Always | 107 (42.5) |
| My employer educates employee on cybersecurity threats and the importance of data protection | 5 | Always | 147 (58.3) |

This study also looked into several items in the scale which had significant differences in responses across groups. Differences in motivation by age group, gender, marital status and years of work experience were compared. Table 6 shows that 31.4% (60 out of

191) of respondents aged 21-30 “very often” took less time to complete their tasks when working from home compared with the 26.8% (11 out of 41) among those in the 31-40 years group and 25% (5 out of 20) among those aged 41-60.

Table 7 shows that 29.3% (22 out of 75) of males who never married “very often” took less time to complete their tasks when working from home compared with the 36.4% (44 out of 121) of females who never married.

As seen in Table 8, 40% (2 out of 8) of married males compared with 38.7% (29 out of 75) of never married males said they “always” faced less stress while working at home. Conversely, 34.7% (42 out of 121) of never married females compared with 23.1% (6 out of 26) of married females “very often” faced less stress while working at home.

Table 9 shows that 41.8% (69 out of 165) of the respondents who have worked for one to five years “always” managed their work responsibilities alongside their personal and family needs compared with 35.4% (17 out of 48) of the respondents who have worked for six to 10 years, and 35.9% (14 out of 39) of the respondents who have worked for more than 10 years.

Discussion

Majority of the respondents showed high motivation and answered “always” to most items across the dimensions of availability (flexibility), safety (work life balance) and meaningfulness (work performance). Results concerning the availability (flexibility) dimension mirrored prior research.² The leading responses in this current study were as follows: 84.5% of participants consistently indicated “always able to save on commuting expenses while working from home”; 79.8% reported “always cherishing not having to spend time commuting”; and 68.7% responded “always immediately able to start work upon waking up.” These outcomes emphasized the substantial motivational impact of cost and time savings associated with commuting and preparation for work among WFH proponents.²

A research study focusing on private and government employees within the NCR and CALABARZON regions (comprising Cavite,

Table 6. Comparison by age groups on the item “I take less time to complete my task when I work from home”.

Item: I take less time to complete my task when I work from home

| Response to Item | Age Group | | | Total |
|------------------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 21-30 | 31-40 | 41-60 | |
| Never | 13 | 1 | 0 | 14 |
| Rarely | 25 | 3 | 4 | 32 |
| Sometimes | 56 | 17 | 7 | 80 |
| Very Often | 60 | 11 | 5 | 76 |
| Always | 37 | 9 | 4 | 50 |
| Total | 191 | 41 | 20 | 252 |

Table 7. Comparison between never married males and females on the item “I take less time to complete my task when I work from home”.

Item: I take less time to complete my task when I work from home

| Marital Status | Response to Question | Sex | | Total |
|----------------|----------------------|------|--------|-------|
| | | Male | Female | |
| Never Married | Never | 5 | 8 | 13 |
| | Rarely | 11 | 13 | 24 |
| | Sometimes | 23 | 35 | 58 |
| | Very Often | 22 | 44 | 66 |
| | Always | 14 | 21 | 35 |
| Total | | 75 | 121 | 196 |

Table 8. Comparison between never married and married males and females on the item “I face less stress doing some work tasks at home”.

| Item: I face less stress doing some work tasks at home | | | | |
|--|----------------------|------|--------|-------|
| Marital Status | Response to Question | Sex | | Total |
| | | Male | Female | |
| Never Married | Never | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| | Rarely | 6 | 14 | 20 |
| | Sometimes | 19 | 26 | 45 |
| | Very Often | 20 | 42 | 62 |
| | Always | 29 | 35 | 64 |
| Total | | 75 | 121 | 196 |
| Married | Never | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Rarely | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| | Sometimes | 3 | 8 | 11 |
| | Very Often | 2 | 6 | 8 |
| | Always | 2 | 11 | 13 |
| Total | | 8 | 26 | 34 |

Table 9. Comparison by work experience on the item “I can manage my work responsibilities alongside my personal and family needs”.

| Item: I can manage my work responsibilities alongside my personal and family needs | | | | |
|--|-----------------|------------|-----------|-------|
| Response to Question | Work Experience | | | Total |
| | 1-5 years | 6-10 years | >10 years | |
| Never | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Rarely | 4 | 0 | 2 | 6 |
| Sometimes | 29 | 5 | 4 | 38 |
| Very Often | 63 | 26 | 19 | 108 |
| Always | 69 | 17 | 14 | 100 |
| Total | 165 | 48 | 39 | 252 |

Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon) investigated the benefits of the WFH arrangement.⁷ Notably, 33.33% of participants from both sectors highlighted reduced expenses as a key advantage of the WFH setup. Furthermore, the study revealed that employees experienced lower stress levels due to the absence of commuting-related traffic when working remotely.⁷

In this study, the aspect of flexibility with the lowest rating of 31.7% was “taking less time to complete tasks in a WFH setup,” marking it as the least significant factor. This observation aligned with the findings reported in previous studies conducted by different researchers.^{3,7}

Upon breaking down the predominant response of “I take less time to complete my task when I work

from home,” differences were noted based on the socio-demographic profiles of respondents. In terms of age, 31.4% of respondents aged 21-30 said they “very often” took less time to accomplish WFH responsibilities compared with the 26.8% aged 31-40, and the 25% aged 41-60. This is similar to the results in another study, where younger workers were found to more likely to adapt in a technology-field environment such as a remote work setup compared with older workers.⁸ In terms of gender as well as marital status of respondents, 30.6% of males who never married “sometimes” take less time to accomplish work from home tasks compared with 29.3% of females who never married. This finding is similar to a study conducted in Germany where males were found to have more flexibility at work compared to females.⁹

Gender roles at home are at play, wherein women are expected to do more household chores compared to men, alongside the office work they need to do while at home. However, a study noted that 21% of females preferred to WFH compared with 18% of males. It could mean that females find it beneficial to work from home because they are able to juggle household chores and office work while at home.

In terms of having less stress while doing WFH tasks, 40% of married males versus 39% of never married males “always” faced less stress doing WFH tasks, while 23.1% of married females versus 34.7% of never married females “very often” face less stress doing WFH tasks. A higher proportion of males compared to females who were married while a higher proportion of females compared to males who were not married faced less stress when completing work tasks. Current findings are in line with the findings of a local study where females had more negative effects and lower work productivity from working at home compared to male counterparts.¹⁰ Similar findings were also noted in the study done abroad where women had to balance household chores with their occupation roles as dictated by societal norms.¹¹ Furthermore, married women faced the most stress among the four categories as traditional gender roles expected women to balance home making with work responsibilities while working at home.

Similar to a study conducted abroad, the findings regarding the dimension of safety (work-life balance) were generally positive; the most predominant response was ‘always’ for nine out of ten items.² The only exception was the item on managing work responsibilities alongside family and personal needs with 42.9% “very often” agreeing with this statement. Two studies done abroad found that working from home is especially difficult for employees with small children and interruptions by family members and home responsibilities can cause mismanagement of work responsibilities.^{12,13} This is in contrast to a local study which found that 56% of private and government employees in NCR and CALABARZON said they were efficient when they worked from home, only 22% said they were somewhat productive and 22% said they were not productive at all.⁷ The respondents said they were more effective when operating from home because they could combine their office duties with home responsibilities. These findings are similar to the results of a local study.⁷

Based on years of work experience, this study found that 41.8% of respondents with 1 to 5 years of work experience “always” managed work responsibilities alongside personal and family needs compared with 35.4% of those with six to 10 years’ work experience and 35.9% of those who worked for more than 10 years. One reason for this might be that people with fewer years of work experience tend to be younger and have fewer personal and family responsibilities. In this current study, individuals with greater years of work experience typically face increased work responsibilities, balancing them with personal and family demands. This contrasts with a study that discovered older employees tend to exhibit higher resilience than younger workers, primarily due to the former’s greater access to job resources such as job security and equipment.¹⁴

In terms of meaningfulness (work performance), all items had a generally favorable response in which respondents predominantly rated the items “always” except an item on working from home not affecting career development of employees. Thirty seven percent did not agree to this statement. The respondents worried about opportunities and room for growth in their career in a WFH setup. There were contrasting opinions on the impact of WFH on one’s career development. A WFH setup could have negative effects on one’s career as employees develop lack of dedication to their work because of the flexibility offered by this setup. This finding concurs with an earlier study done in the United States.¹⁵ However, the Canadian study found that WFH jobs offer higher salaries compared to face-to-face jobs which could motivate employees to switch to telecommuting.¹⁶

The similarities in responses of the Malaysian study by Zamani, et al. and this current study are proof that working from home is perceived to be beneficial to the quality of life of people across cultures in terms of saving time and money. However, working from home also poses disadvantages such as its possible negative impact on career development and distractions from family members while working.

Overall, the majority of respondents showed high motivation across the three dimensions: availability (flexibility), safety (work life balance), and meaningfulness (work performance). In terms of availability (flexibility), the majority of respondents preferred working from home because of money saved, decreased time for commuting, and the ease

of managing their own schedule resulting in a more comfortable working environment and less stress in doing the tasks at hand.

On safety (work-life balance), most of the respondents favored the WFH setup because of the conducive working environment, making them satisfied with their job. With the flexibility of time that WFH offers including time off work without loss of pay and less stress from traffic jams, the respondents were able to attend to their own needs and their families, giving them a sense of well-being.

Lastly, in terms of meaningfulness (work productivity), most of the respondents said their superiors trusted them, understood their challenges, and were concerned about their mental and physical health while working from home, thus fostering a good employer-employee relationship. However, a significant number of respondents also felt that working from home could affect their career development.

The study was conducted in an online setting. One challenge in online surveys is the genuineness of the answers provided by respondents. The inclusion criteria limited the potential respondents for this research as respondents were predominantly office workers who had worked for at least six months and were living in NCR. A significant number of potential respondents would have been workers who worked in other areas besides the office, workers who had worked from home for one to three months and workers outside NCR. The study also followed a specific timeline similar to that of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown that ensued. Because of this, the possibility of expanding the inclusion criteria was unlikely.

This study could serve as a baseline for looking at the motivation of other groups such as non-office-based workers who WFH and for exploring possible differences with such groups. This study can also be a springboard for further studies that correlate motivation with other organizational or industrial concerns such as work productivity, work performance, gender gap in working hours and earnings. Another interesting study would be how the motivation of WFM employees correlate with the number of children an employee has. There might be differences in the motivation of those without children compared with those with children specifically in the dimension of safety (work-life balance).

The findings of this study can also be used to improve the working conditions of employees in a WFH setup. Human resource practitioners and industrial relations specialists could consider the results of the study in their supervision of employees in a WFH setup. This is relevant since a lot of companies have adapted the WFH setup since the pandemic. The findings could also help policymakers pass laws to improve the welfare of employees in a WFH setup. Motivation is an important factor in the occupational health of WFH office workers. While physical health is important to reduce absences and improve work performance, mental health concerns should be prioritized as well.

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