

Factors Affecting Employees Performance in Connection with the Work from Home Requirements

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Abstract

Purpose: This study is the outcome of an investigation of factors that influence job performance when working from home among employees in private and public sectors from various industries in Malaysia. Since the Covid19 outbreak, the majority of businesses in the nation have implemented a policy allowing workers to work from home in an effort to both stop the virus's spread and maintain company continuity.

Design/methodology/approach: There were 153 respondents in total who were participating in this study and those respondents were working from home employees. Purposive sampling was employed as the sampling approach because it was intended for workers who have firsthand experience working from home.

Findings: This study identifies the organizational support, leadership, and work environment as the three main factors of employee performance. The correlation and regression analyses were used to examine the relationships and effects between these factors and employee performance. The study reveals that organizational support has no effect on employee performance, however the work environment and leadership variables have a considerable impact.

Practical implications: The study recommends that work environment is crucial to improving employee performance when implementing the work from home policy in all sectors.

Keyword: Covid 19, employee performance, work from home, work environment, leadership and organizational support.

1.0 Introduction

The global spread of the Covid-19 virus has affected society in various aspects of life, forcing individuals to reevaluate a wide range of activities, from work to leisure, basic travel and daily tasks. The pandemic had a negative impact not only on people's physical and psychological well-being, but also on the economy, putting various sectors to a halt. Most businesses were having a difficult time surviving during this unprecedented period, struggling to keep their businesses running and constantly looking for new ways to do so. To combat the widespread of the virus,

governments around the world have announced various social isolation strategies, such as maintaining an appropriate level of social distance, wearing of face masks, including encouraging organizations to allow employees to work from home (WFH).

WFH, which is also known as mobile working, telecommuting or teleworking, is a working arrangement in which employees can work from the comfort of their own homes without having to be present in the physical office. WFH is the new normal adopted by the organizations in order to ensure the survival and continuity of the company and at the same time trying to prevent the spreading of the virus at the workplace. It is an alternative working arrangement where employees perform their jobs from home while using information communication technologies (ICT) to communicate with coworkers and complete their work tasks (Sutarto et al., 2021). WFH encourages employees to have a better work-life balance, spend less time commuting to work, be more flexible in time management, have higher job satisfaction and lower work-related stress. On the other hand, WFH can also lead to several issues, including social isolation, loss of work motivation and a lack of face-to-face communication (Tavares, 2017).

Before the Covid-19 pandemic reached the entire world, only a small number of companies in Malaysia permitted their employees to work from home. Employees may be permitted to WFH on a case-by-case basis, perhaps because of child care or a long-term illness, or through the company's work-life balance programme, which gave employees the option of choosing any one day per week to WFH. However, following the epidemic, the majority of businesses have changed their working procedures and now encourage their staff to work remotely. This is most likely a result of government policy, which demanded that workplace headcounts be decreased physically to slow the spread of the virus and to reduce costs. Hence, it is crucial to understand the association of factors that motivates the employees to perform exceptionally well when working from home.

2.0 Work from Home Requirements

Most organizations did not have a formal policy for teleworking before the pandemic and most of them were not prepared to implement the new working arrangement for their employees. Since organizations never intended to go completely virtual, there are not enough policies in place, resources and management practices in place to deal with the such scenario (Jamal et al., 2021). Teleworking is not just a new way of working during pandemic but a new organizational form in which activities were no longer the same, integration issues become more complex, and management responsibilities need to be redefined.

Studies that focus on mandatory teleworking before the pandemic are limited as it is frequently offered to employees on a temporary or voluntary basis, however during and after the pandemic, most organizations have ordered majority of their workers to work from home. Hence, the unexpected and overall shift to telecommuting makes it important to determine the impact of such an arrangement on employees' performance. Previously, organizations focused more on aspects and collaboration strategies for virtual teams, while some focused on proper management of employee productivity, work-life balance and employees' well-being (Jamal et al., 2021). However, until now the impact of teleworking on employees' performance remains controversial, thus creating a research gap (Susilo, 2020). While teleworking has been adopted widely by many

countries in the world, Malaysia is adopting this working arrangement slowly, especially since the outbreak of the virus in 2020.

Before the pandemic, the concept of teleworking is still not well-adopted among organizations in Malaysia, due to limited technology infrastructure, lack of dedicated workspace and essential tools for employees to complete their job as well as the concern that comes with having to adapt to the new culture (Nurul Adilah Saludin, 2013). Although there has been some earlier research on virtual offices and telecommuting, a work from home policy during the COVID-19 crisis is not the same as telecommuting as before the pandemic. The most significant distinction is its restriction on work locations. As a result, they will be distracted by family concerns, this is due to lockdown affecting all family members, not just employees (Susilo, 2020).

3.0 Factors Influencing Employee Performance

Past research on teleworking has found that telework able to boost employee productivity as well as performance (Teh et al., 2013). This is due to employees are more flexible and having a better work-life balance and as such it boosts the employees' morale and having higher job satisfaction. According to Kowalski and Swanson (2005), management support, communication and trust are critical success factors in teleworking where management support includes organizational support, leadership and managed workspaces. Using work environment, leadership and organizational support as factors influencing employee performance, this study intends to examine the influence of working from home on job performance and answer how it affects employee performance.

3.1 Work Environment

One of the most important factors that affect the success of teleworking implementation is the work environment. Conducive and comfortable workspace will motivate employees in carrying out their daily tasks and playing an important role in boosting their performance level (Aropah et al., 2020). As such, this is a crucial factor that organizations should consider in strategizing their work from home policy for the employees, in addressing teleworking challenges.

3.1.1 Work Environment and Employee Performance

Previous research suggests that work environment positively affects telecommuting and it is deemed the most relevant literature for developing a hypothesis for this study (Mustafa & Gold, 2013). Working from home, according to researchers, can provide a more flexible work environment because employees have more control over their work schedule and workplace atmosphere (Baltes et al., 1999). Their preferences and wants can be met because they have their own flexibility to design their own work environment that fits their personality (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007).

Previous research also has demonstrated that the work environment has a positive impact on job performance. According to Muchtar (2017) employees can create better results if they work in a pleasurable, healthy, safe, and ideal setting. Moreover, the suitability of the working environment at home is one of the most critical telework aspects influencing

telework outcomes (Nakrošienė et al., 2019). Employees' emotions could be influenced by their work environment, which provides security and helps them to function optimally. Teleworkers who work from home demonstrate that workers desire a decent work environment at home that is similar to that of a physical office, including privacy, good lighting, and enough equipment (Ng, 2016). Quantity of space, layout, ambient circumstances, and internet access are all physical workplace criteria for mobile knowledge workers (Ng, 2016). Preparing the conducive home environment, which includes setting up an atmosphere that is suitable to working, such as a designated workstation, sometimes with physical limits, is one of the solutions for overcoming telework problems, for example having designated workspace in a room with a door (Greer & Payne, 2014). As such, work environment factor should heavily be paid attention to when measuring employee performance while working from home. Hence, the following hypothesis was developed:

H1: Work environment significantly affects employee performance in connection with the work from home policy

3.2 Leadership

On the other hand, leadership is also an important aspect in managing employees to ensure that they are working efficiently and effectively (Agarwal, 2020). In working from home situations, leaders are facing challenges in establishing and implementing ground rules for the team members in ensuring effective communication and at the same time managing the members' performance (Cascio, 2000).

3.2.1 Leadership and Employee Performance

Leadership is a process through which a person can grow into a leader through a series of actions that allow them to influence those they lead in order to achieve organizational objectives (Aropah et al., 2020). Leadership is crucial since it usually allows employees to operate efficiently in businesses. Cascio (2000) states that the issue for leaders in virtual offices, such as telework or work from home, is to set and enforce ground rules for comprehensive communication and performance management systems.

For leaders, the most difficult aspect of implementing virtual working circumstances is communication. Leaders must learn how to manage email, phone, video conferencing, and virtual face-to-face communication in order to hold productive meetings with the team (Aropah et al., 2020). Another obstacle that leaders faced is to manage staff performance, which requires numerous actions, including defining, facilitating encouraging performance (Cascio, 2000). Physical and psychological distance have a negative influence on relationship quality in mobile work environments, according to Brunelle (2013), but the amount of transformational leadership can mitigate this relationship by lowering the negative impact. Organizations that plan to implement mobile work must be selective in who they hire to supervise their workers or employees. They must hire managers who are capable of transformational leadership, which means they must hire people who have

empathy, good listening skills, a vision, the ability to influence others, and the ability to inspire and share intellectual stimulation (Aropah et al., 2020).

Transformational leadership is a leadership style that motivates followers to do better than expected by modifying their morale, ideas, interests, and values, encouraging them to strive above their self-interest (Pieterse et al., 2009). Through their vision for the future, transformational leaders may revolutionize organizations, and by articulating their vision, they can encourage workers to take responsibility for accomplishing that vision (Kim, 2014). As a result, it is necessary to analyze if the leadership aspect influencing and impacting employee performance when teleworking. This is due to when work from home policy is in place, it will indirectly impacting the relationship between managers and employees due to the physical and psychological distance, however it can be controlled through the level of transformational leadership (Brunelle, 2013). Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

H2: Leadership significantly affects employee performance in connection with the work from home policy

3.3 Organizational Support

The other factor to be considered as critical factor that influencing productivity of employees during teleworking is organizational support. Job security, job satisfaction, work flexibility, organizational commitment, and management support have all been identified as important factors in teleworking productivity (Aropah et al., 2020). Support in terms of providing necessary training to employees, support related to the use of technology, and having necessary collaboration tools for employees to perform their tasks efficiently are some of the forms of organizational support that are important in ensuring the success of teleworking implementation (Baker et al., 2006). As such, this might be a crucial determinant in influencing employee performance while working from home.

3.3.1 Organizational Support and Employee Performance

Individual and organizational characteristics, according to Aboelmaged and Mohamed (2012), are significant elements in determining teleworkers' perceived productivity. Job security, job satisfaction, work flexibility, organizational commitment, and management support have all been identified as important factors in teleworking productivity. The organization should supply and upgrade their key IT infrastructures, such as high-speed internet, as well as necessary training for both managers and employees, to ensure that the telework policy is implemented successfully (Valmohammadi, 2012).

Organizational support for teleworking, including technology use, and variables other than technology. Having sufficient IT support, which refers to assistance with technology-related problems and inquiries from the telecommuting employee, as well as proper telecommuting technology, is part of the usage of technology (Baker et al., 2006). According to Noor & Shahrom (2021), the use of social media technology to communicate

and discuss work related matters among employees enable organizations and their employees to achieve better job performance. Hence, training for work from home employees, which includes instruction in technology and platform use, for managers and employees, and the provision of financial support for telecommuter expenses are all aspects of technology-related support. These expenditures are typically associated with the purchase or maintenance of telecommuting technology. Other factors including their manager's trust while they work from home and are unable to be observed directly by the manager, human resource department support for telecommuting, and prior planning for the organization's telecommuting system (Aropah et al., 2020).

Furthermore, organizational commitment is linked to significant factors such as increased working efficacy, reduced job turnover, and increased satisfaction at both the organizational and professional levels (Elias, 2006). According to related research, higher levels of employee commitment led to higher levels of satisfaction and motivation, as well as a lower likelihood of quitting the company (Nanzushi, 2015). As such, this is one of the crucial factors that should be evaluated whether it is impacting employee performance when working from home. This is because when employees are not physically present in the office, they are physically and mentally distant from their superordinate. Having sufficient organizational support while working from home could be an important determinant in influencing the employee's motivation and productivity level, and thus their performance. This factor should be monitored closely in order to identify whether the current support provided for the employees is sufficient or not from the perspectives of the employees. Thus, the following hypothesis was designed:

H3: Organizational support significantly affects employee performance in connection with the work from home policy

4.0 Conceptual Framework

The new study approach will greatly benefit business practitioners, particularly the Malaysia government, which seeks to assess the success of its work from home policy. It can also be used to help governments and businesses determine whether to encourage work from home rules or look for other options. Furthermore, few research have been done on this problem from a Malaysia perspective, particularly from the viewpoint of employees.

Through the studies on workers that are working from home, it will be possible to learn more about whether allowing employees to work from home has a positive or negative impact on their performance, as well as help organization to re-strategize their current strategy of managing employees that are work from home. Furthermore, it will be fascinating to see if there are any concerns with people working from home, and whether these issues can be overcome, or if they act as a full barrier for this organization.

This study was conducted by using the framework (Figure 1) which shows the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables. Figure below illustrates the relationship

of three independent variables; work environment, organizational support and leadership and a dependent variable; employee performance. The conceptual framework adapted in this study is based on a study conducted by Vina Da'watul Aropah, Ma'mun Sarma & I Made Sumertajaya (2020). This study was conducted to investigate the significance of each factor to employee performance when working from home.

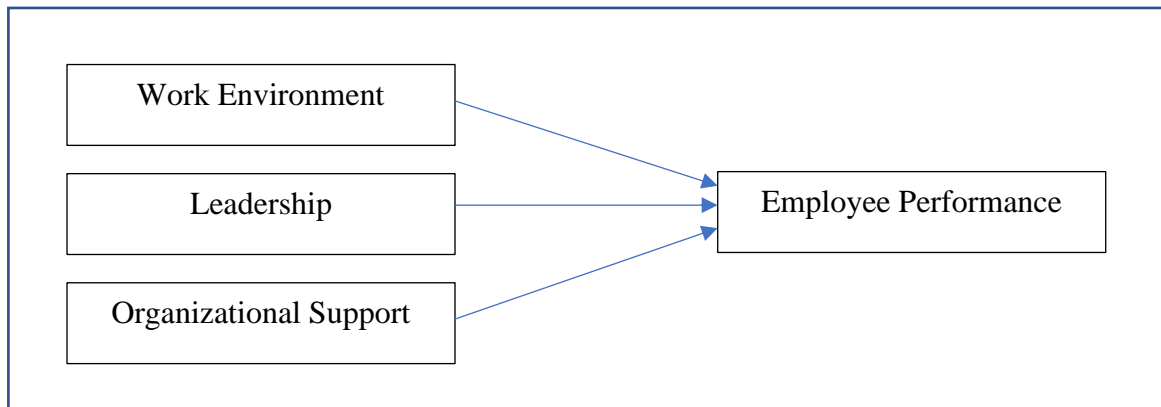


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Adapted From Vina Da'watul Aropah, Ma'mun Sarma & I Made Sumertajaya (2020)

5.0 Methodology

An employee's performance is defined as the quantity and quality of work completed while carrying out his responsibilities and most managers believe that high performance entails completing tasks successfully (Aropah et al., 2020). Individual task outcomes, behaviors, and attributes are three popular criteria for evaluating employee performance, where task outcomes are evaluated based on task quality and quantity, behaviors are in term of actions of employees such as tardiness at work and traits which indicates a good and positive attitude such as dependability (Stephen P Robbins, 2017).

The sample frame in this study was employees from private and public organizations that were practicing WFH. Respondents must answer a specific question in the questionnaire about whether or not they were practicing WFH in order for the results of the analysis to be correctly analyzed and measured. Respondents who do not work from home was eliminated from the sample. In this study, the target population was employees in Malaysia that are working from home. However, due to a lack of resources to examine the entire population of Malaysia, researchers were only able to collect data from a sample of Malaysians who work from home, regardless of their geographic location, that are working in private and public organizations. Purposive sampling was used since this study was designed for employees that are having direct experience working from home as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The total responses that research managed to collect were 153, thus the target of total sample was achieved (researcher should aim for 77 according to G*Power Analysis)

6.0 Results and Data Analysis

From 153 respondents, majority of respondents were female respondents which made up of 59% of total sample, which equal to total of 90 and a balance of 41% is male respondents, 63 of them. The majority of the respondents were in the age group of 50 and above which made up of 34.6% of total respondents. Followed by the range of 20-29 years old respondents which is 31.4%, age 40-49 years old made up of 22.9% and age 30-39-years old respondents made up of 11.1% of total respondents. The majority of respondents (70.6%, 108 respondents) possessed bachelor's degree and followed by master's degree (13.1%, 20 respondents) and diploma (7.8%, 12 respondents), whereby respondents with level of education of SPM/STPM and Doctorate Degree are 4.6% (7 respondents) and 3.9% (6 respondents) respectively. 79.1% respondents are married, 19.6% are single and 1.3% respondents are divorcee. 69% of respondents are working in the private sector whereas the remaining 48 respondents are working in the public sector.

Respondents profile according to their current organization industry is shown in Table 1. 18.3% of respondents are working in Financial or Banking Institution, which constitutes of 28 of total respondents. 17% of respondents are working in Education and 15.7% work in Construction or Manufacturing sector. Most of respondents working in other industries stated in answer options.

Table 1: Industry Related to Current Organization Respondents Working In

Industry Related to Current Organization	Frequency	Percentage %
Retail	8	5.2
Information Technology (IT) or Telecommunication	16	10.5
Media Communication or Creative Production	9	5.9
Financial or Banking Institution	28	18.3
Construction or Manufacturing	24	15.7
Education	26	17.0
Health or Medical	2	1.3
Hospitality (F&B, Travel or Tourism)	4	2.6
Others	36	23.5
Total	153	100

The majority of respondents (87%) worked from home due to instruction by their management. 9% of respondents working from home as they prefer to do so, 5% said they have been working from home even before the pandemic and only 1% working from home due to health condition. 49.3% of total respondents have 1-2 total of children, 33.1% do not have children, 15.5% have 3-4 children and 2.1% have 5 children or above.

Table 2: Skewness and Kurtosis

Variables	Skewness	Kurtosis
Work Environment	-0.249	-0.433
Leadership	-0.677	0.198
Organizational Support	-0.556	0.736
Employee Performance	-0.503	0.583

Data are assumed normally distributed since the skewness and kurtosis in the range of -3 to +3 for each variable, according to George & Mallery (2010), this is acceptable in order to prove normal distribution. For work environment, the value of skewness is -0.249 and value for kurtosis is -0.433, followed by leadership which the value for kurtosis is -0.677 and value for kurtosis is 0.198. For organizational support the value of skewness is -0.556 and value of kurtosis is 0.736. Dependent variable which is employee performance, skewness show value of -0.503 and kurtosis of 0.583.

The result of Cronbach's Alpha for each independent variable and dependent variable is shown in Table 3. Based on the result, Cronbach's Alpha for all variables is between 0.763 to 0.959 which indicates all variables are acceptable. The highest alpha is 0.959 which is for leadership and lowest is 0.763 which is work environment. The result for employee performance is also very high data reliability, which is 0.929.

Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha scores for independent and dependent variables

Items	n of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Work Environment	10	0.763
Leadership	15	0.959
Organizational Support	14	0.826
Employee Performance	15	0.929

Independent variables of factors influencing employee performance have been grouped into three dimensions which are work environment, leadership and organizational support. Work environment has the highest mean score among other variables (M=3.7719) and high average standard deviation (SD=0.6599). This shows that average respondents have high performance due to the work environment. The result also shows that leadership has high score and standard deviation (M=3.7673, SD=0.86842) while organizational support has average score (M=3.5901, SD= 0.86842). Table 4 shows the result of correlation analysis between all the independent variables and dependent variables. Pearson Correlation results show that there is positive

relationships between work environment, leadership, organizational support towards the dependent variable which is employee performance.

Table 4: Result of correlation Analysis Between Factors Influencing Employee Performance and Employee Performance

Variable	Correlations			
	WE	TL	OS	EP
Work Environment (WE)	1			
Transformational Leadership (TL)	.525**	1		
Organizational Support (OS)	.494**	.764**	1	
Employee Performance (EP)	.584**	.583**	.475**	1
	153	153	153	153

** Correlation is significant at table 0.01 level (2-tailed)

6.1 Hypothesis Analysis and Findings

Result of findings are depicted in Table 5, which show the regression model is substantial with R^2 of 0.668, where all independent variables include work environment, leadership and organizational support explained 66.8% of the variance on the employee performance with significance of F value is 0.000. The overall of significant F of 0.000 showing that the overall model is fit. The Durbin-Watson value is 1.941 which in the range of 1.5 to 2 as one of the assumptions for bivariate and multivariate correlation analysis. From Table 5 below, it also shows that work environment and leadership significantly predict employee performance. Result found that work environment with beta value of ($\beta = 0.3386$, $p < 0.05$) and leadership of ($\beta = 0.392$, $p < 0.05$) has significant positive effects on employee performance. Whereby, organizational support does not significantly predict the employee performance of ($\beta = -0.015$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 5: Result of Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.962	0.303		3.176	0.002
Work Environment	0.420	0.079	0.386	5.311	0.000
Leadership	0.324	0.081	0.392	4.005	0.000
Organizational Support	-0.018	0.114	-0.015	-0.157	0.876
R					0.668
R Square					0.447
Adjusted R Square					0.436
F value					40.097
Sig. F Change					0.000
Durbin-Watson					1.941

H1: Work environment significantly affects employee performance in connection with the work from home policy

Based on result of regression analysis in Table 5, work environment ($\beta=0.386$, $p<0.05$) shows significant relationship on employee performance. It can be concluded that 38.6% of the work environment influences employee performance while they are practicing working from home. Therefore, the analysis findings indicated that work environment significantly contributes as a factor influencing the employee performance.

This finding was supported by a study conducted by Vina Da'watul Aropah (2020) and Susilo (2020), where positive and significant relationship indicates that work environment will facilitate employee to increase the performance. Hence, in order to increase employee performance, it is crucial for policymakers in organizations to further improve work environments and pay attention to the importance of this factor. The positive effect of work environment towards employee performance is further supported by previous study of Nanzushi (2015), where the author stated that work environment play an important role in positively influencing the employee performance. According to the study, employees' performance would be boosted by comfortable furniture, a quiet work environment that is free from external disturbance, and a large workspace with adequate lighting. This result is also consistent with Sander et al., (2019) that found out that work environment aspects must be adequate so that employees are not stressed while performing their duties. Stress will affect the employee performance which result to they will not performing their job to the expected standards. Preparing a work environment at home that is conducive to teleworkers working comfortably, such as having a separate workplace, is one way to overcome the challenges of working from home (Aropah et al., 2020). Jayaweera (2015) reveal that having a good work environment will increase employees' motivation and subsequently affect their performance, in his study carried on in the hotel industry.

H2: Leadership significantly affects employee performance in connection with the work from home policy

From the analysis, it shows that leadership ($\beta=0.392$, $p<0.05$) has significant relationship on employee performance. It can be concluded that 39.2% of leadership factors influence employee performance while they are practicing working from home during the pandemic. Therefore, the analysis findings indicated that leadership significantly contributes as a factor influencing employee performance. Result above showed that leadership has positive and significant effect towards employee performance while working from home and this is in line with result of study conducted by Vina Da'watul Aropah (2020), whereby the management support at all levels in the organization, particularly support from senior management, is important. A study conducted by Cascio (2000) stated that managers have significant challenges in implementing virtual working circumstances such as working from home, as such they must be able to assess staff performance and provide support to their employees in order to motivate their employee and consequently increase the employee performance. From the study conducted by Pirzada (2020), it also concludes that leadership is a core element of organizations in enhancing employee performance.

H3: Organizational support significantly affects employee performance in connection with the work from home policy

The findings show that organization support ($\beta= -0.015$, $p>0.05$) do not have significant relationship on employee performance. The analysis findings indicated that leadership does not significantly contribute as a factor influencing employee performance. This finding was supported by a study conducted by Vina Da'watul Aropah (2020) where the research showed that organizational support has a negative relationship on employee performance which means that it does not affect employee performance when working from home. However, this is contradicting with research carried out by Baker (2006) and Abou-Moghli (2015) where they found that role of organization is one of the critical factors that affect the performance among the employees that are working remotely.

Table 6: Summary of Hypothesis Results

Hypothesis	Result
H1: Work environment significantly affects employee performance in connection with the work from home policy	Supported ($\beta=0.386$, $p<0.05$) Positive and significant relationship
H2: Leadership significantly affects employee performance in connection with the work from home policy	Supported ($\beta=0.392$, $p<0.05$) Positive and significant relationship
H3: Organizational support significantly affects employee performance in connection with the work from home policy	Not Supported ($\beta= -0.015$, $p>0.05$) Negative and no significant relationship

Table 6 show the summary of hypothesis results. From the analysis, it was found that leadership is the most influencing factor that affecting employee performance with the highest beta value ($\beta=0.392$, $p<0.05$). result shows significant positive effect on employee performance and significantly predict the performance. This result is in line with findings of research conducted by Diamantidis & Chatzoglou (2019) where they underline the crucial roles of management support in determining employee performance. If there is a lack of management support, it will negatively impact the performance among the employees and will result in low job performance.

7.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

In order to increase employee performance, transformational leadership plays a crucial role in adopting the work-from-home policy. Organizations must continue to provide direction to the leaders, despite the fact that it is well recognized that leadership has an impact on employee performance. Organizations also need to look into ways to improve leaders' capacities and managerial competence through training and self-development, coaching, or other assignments, particularly to improve communication skills, self- and others' competence growth, and the ability to adapt and promote change. This is critical in order for effective leadership to be able to manage work-from-home activities and mitigate negative consequences.

Organizational support has a negative connection with employee performance, according to results derived. This research finding is intriguing, and management should pay attention to what employees require from organizational support. Other than that, management need to know whether their current organizational support is good enough for employees when they work from home, this includes the usage of technology, support related to technology, and other non-technological elements. Management must engage in discussion activities to determine what employees require in order to execute the work-from-home policy. Monitoring, evaluation, and discussion findings can be utilized to give organizational assistance to employees.

In the context of implementing the work from home policy, the work environment plays an essential role in boosting employee performance. According to the findings, the work environment variable plays a significant role in implementing working from home. Due to this, management should give clear direction and advice to employees how to keep a pleasant working atmosphere at home. Sufficient space and good layout, such dedicated room at home for working that is away from the busy area, having good lighting and sufficient work equipment. This is to help employees function better at home.

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