

## **Investigating the Personal Factors that Impact University Faculty Members' Satisfaction towards Work From Home (WFH) Strategy**

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### **Abstract:**

**Purpose:** This study aims to investigate the personal factors that impact university faculty members' satisfaction towards work from home (WFH) strategy. Based on the literature review, a proposed conceptual framework was developed, which contained three independent variables (need for interaction, expectations, and expertise) and one dependent variable (WFH satisfaction).

**Methods:** A conclusive descriptive research design was implemented as well as a cross-sectional design. The study used a questionnaire to collect data and was distributed online. The questionnaire was simply formulated and was developed in two languages, English and Arabic. The questionnaire contained scales that were taken from prior studies. The researcher used the SPSS 20.0® (Statistical Package for Social Science) program to perform the quantitative analysis. The population under study is faculty members of private universities in Egypt. A convenience sampling technique was used.

**Results:** Based on the analysis, hypothesis one is supported, there is a relationship between need for interaction and work from home satisfaction; hypothesis two is supported, there is a relationship between expectation and work from home satisfaction; and hypothesis three is not supported, there is no relationship between expertise and work from home satisfaction.

**Conclusion:** This study contributed academically by filling in the academic gap in the literature, pinpointing the concept of WFH, and identifying the personal factors that encourage individuals to partake in the strategy of educational institutions.

**Key words:** Expectation, Expertise, Need for interaction, Online Education, Satisfaction, Work from Home

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### **I. Introduction**

Since the early 1980s, Alvin Toffler published the prominent book "*The third wave*." In the book, the author explored the concept of electronic cottage, the idea of virtual work fascinated both managers and workers against long, fixed and inflexible workdays. In early 90s, some businesses applied the concept and allowed selected employees to work from home (Kraut, 1989). However, it was not until recent years after much of the conjectures deceased down, that actual virtual work became popular among organizations (Raghuram et al., 2001).

Work from home (WFH) is a term used to refer to a variety of remote working practices. Sullivan (2003) asserts that working from home must be defined according to the nature of each project, considering that its nature varies according to transport, information and communication technologies, the place of work, the proportion of work, decentralized and contractual arrangements. A research identified the following main categories of salaried teleworkers: workers connected to the home (Home-Based Telecommuting), satellite workers (Satellite Office), workers in a neighborhood center or telecentre (Neighborhood Work Center) and mobile workers (Mobile Work) (Kurland and Bailey, 1999).

Tremblay (2002) mentioned that "*concentration is an important advantage of working from home*" and that "*87.5% of teleworkers consider the best benefit of working from home is the greater concentration*" (p.164). Other research found and proved that the more often employees work from home, the greater is the provided work effort (Repietta and Beckmann, 2016). During the time of COVID-19 era, WFH seems like an essential strategy for organizations. WFH was deemed significant especially in educational institutions. During the global panic, research indicated that educators have forced themselves to adapt to online learning systems and WFH option in a very short time (Korkmaz and Toraman, 2020). Hoq (2020) discussed the concept of e-learning, and that many educators held positive opinion. Research further indicated that employees have both

positive and negative perspectives related to this work strategy, which can impact their level of their satisfaction (Adedoyin and Soykan, 2020). Accordingly, this study aims to investigate the personal factors that impact university faculty members' satisfaction towards work from home (WFH) strategy.

## **II. Literature review**

Through a vast review of the relevant literature on WFH, Fan (2010) noticed that the amount of empirical research focusing on home offices is limited. The research concluded that home workspace design must meet the needs and wants of teleworkers who require their WFH conditions to be similar to those of conventional offices (Fan Ng, 2010). WFH is a concept that allows employees to make their home their office of work engagement. According to ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service in UK), this strategies allows individuals to develop less boundaries between their home and their work, which appears effective and meets their work targets; vast majority (78%) of individuals who work at least 20% of their working hours from home, do it in a room specifically designed for that purpose (Beauregard et al., 2013).

### **2.1 Work from Home (WFH) Advantages and Disadvantages**

*"Flexibility in the organization of work, the possibility of better reconciling family and employment as well as the economy in terms of expenditure were considered as important or very important advantages by 67.8%, 65.2% and 63 respectively"* (Tremblay, 2002, p.166). Research show that saving of transport time as well as independence and freedom are highly appreciated by the teleworkers (Beauregard et al., 2013). The autonomy in the way of performing the work, the possibility of reconciling employment and personal activities, the fact of having more time to do other things for yourself as well as the opportunity to get ahead of the job at hand are counted to be factor of satisfaction. Other researchers observed that appropriateness of the place of work in an individual's home was found to be significant. WFH reports greater efficiency and quality of work; it is linked to less time in interacting with colleagues, to appropriate working place at home, and to the option of taking care of family members while working (Nakrosiene et al., 2019).

In early study, when technology was not as advanced as today, Kurland, and Bailey (1999), did not see any downside to working from home. Minor disadvantages exist, but it is only a minority of them who would experience difficulties since 97% of part-time and full-time teleworkers say they are satisfied. Among these, a small number of home-workers in full-time workers may feel dissatisfied (4%) with WFH. However, as technology advanced and distractions increased, WFH might allow employees to be unfocused, leading employees not to prefer to work from home (Shareena and Shahid, 2020).

Some disadvantages found in WFH were reported on research. For example, there are professional inconveniences affecting family or personal life. The first "most important" drawbacks are professional isolation; it was considered as a significant or very significant disadvantage for 14.3% of the participants. The second most important disadvantage is the interference of work in personal life (12.5%). Next, in order of importance, the decrease in social relations with work colleagues (11.6%), and longer hours worked (10.7%). In proportions of 9.8%, 9.1%, 8.1% and 7.1%, the participants considered the lack of career advancement opportunities, the lack of time or the disadvantages to be significant or very significant. Feeling of running out of time, having to work alone, and their reduced influence in the office. Finally, the lack of training opportunities (5.4%), stress in general (5.4%), limited access to company resources (3.6%) and, finally, the lack of professional development opportunities (2.7%) are less of a disadvantage (Tremblay et al., 2013).

Many research though found strong preference towards WFH. Dockery and Bawa (2014) found that that the possibility to work some hours from home is considered a positive job attitude by employees that provide them with a greater flexibility to balance their work commitments as well as personal ones. Rupiotta and Beckmann (2016) explained that WFH had a direct positive effect on the work effort of employees. Moreover, it was found that the more often employees work from home, the greater is the provided work effort. (Repietta and Beckmann, 2016). Current research investigated people's WRH experience in comparison to working in traditional offices, finding that disposition of individuals to work from home is mainly due to the presence of children, a more comfortable space, quiet environment as well as a good internet connectivity (Shareena and Shahid, 2020).

Four themes dominated the literature on effective management of homeworkers: trust, performance management, communication, and training (Beauregard et al., 2013). According to Shareena and Shahid (2020), line managers are communicating more often, with more face-to-face interactions, with their office-based staff than with their homeworking employees. A substantial number of managers acknowledge that managing homeworkers is more difficult than managing office workers, but only one-third agree that it would be easier to manage homeworkers if they spent more time in the office (Beauregard et al., 2013).

## **2.2 Work from Home (WFH) During the COVID-19 Era**

During the time of COVID-19 era, WFH seems like an essential strategy for organizations. Within the study of Korkmaz and Toraman (2020), individuals working partially from home and mobile workers are most probable to be flexible when their work requires them to take from their personal time; these people tend to integrate their work and personal lives, instead of keeping them distant (Nakrosiene et al., 2019). Marimuthu and Vasudevan (2020) revealed the psychological effects on individuals who were obligated to work from home during the Covid19 pandemic in Malaysia. Accordingly, there is a clear need to develop strategies to get over the psychological impact obstacles of WFH during a pandemic or a crisis.

## **2.3 Work from Home (WFH) Educational Institutions**

Korkmaz and Toraman (2020) explored in their research study with 1016 educators that educators have forced themselves to adapt to online learning systems and WFH option in a very short time. Hoq (2020) discussed the concept of e-learning, and how it can solve the disruptions in education sector during the COVID-19 pandemic, verifying instructors' preference towards diverse features of e-learning. Many current researches showed that educators held positive opinion. Nevertheless, Korkmaz and Toraman (2020) explained that several problems in teaching practices are faced; it was found that essential measures must be taken in education against a potential outbreak in the future with recommendations for educational policy makers for "systemising" the WFH.

Current studies discussed new measures that should be taken by universities to move completely to online education (Hoq, 2020). Adedoyin and Soykan (2020), researched the development of crisis-response methods for universities, as well as faculty members and students. Their study identified the challenges and opportunities of online learning. Their research illustrated that online learning may be more sustainable in the situation where the proposed instructional activities adapt to current technologies in order to face the new challenges of the future in the digital era.

## **2.4 Work from Home (WFH) Egyptian Educational Institutions**

Concerning Technology usage when working from home in Egyptian universities, various researches showed the evolution of systems in HE in terms of online learning and the development of e-learning tools on both faculties and students (El-Alfy et al., 2016). A study conducted in a private university in Egypt, showed that using an open platform to deliver e-content with options for implementing various e-learning modules has greatly affected the effectiveness of online teaching by having positive effects on students' comprehension and faculty staff expertise in technology (Al-Seoud et al, 2013). Another study by Eraki et al. (2011) measured the expectations of students and academic staff about technology usage in learning and the related strategies in tourism education in an Egyptian university. Their research indicated that faculty members and students had positive perception of e-learning applications. Concerning this point, the study of El-Alfy et al. observed that women home-workers in the field of education are more likely to raise technological problems, including the slowness of computer and telephone systems as an occasional source of dissatisfaction (2016).

The Egyptian universities attitude towards eLearning is not different from other faculties' nationalities. A comparative study analysis of two different situations both within higher education contexts: Egypt, being a developing country; in comparison to the United Kingdom, UK being the developed country, analyzed the technological elements affecting university students and staff's intention of e-learning system usage and perceived satisfaction considering the platform's support, interactivity, response E-learning support, usage ease as well as its usefulness were found to be the most important factors (Abbas et al., 2016).

Among the drawbacks, the case study noted that the absence of colleagues and the lack of interaction would be more raised among home-workers, and then would come the interference of work in personal life (Tremblay, 2001). Adedoyin and Soykan (2020) showed that it is possible that WFH interferes with family life. But it has been noted that these problems only arise at the start of the introduction of WFH and that they fade when home-workers succeed in establishing operating rules with the family (Tremblay et al., 2013).

Other researchers comparing two private universities in different countries investigated interaction between humans and behavioral intentions of e-learning adaptation: Egypt and the United Arab of Emirates. The study explored the importance of instructors' being ready for technology, in shaping their perception, behavioural intentions, and preferences when it comes to human interaction (El Alfy et al., 2016). Their data analysis showed no remarkable differences between instructors within both universities as for technology readiness and expertise. Their results also suggested evidence for the relationship between instructors' technology, attitude, and behavioral intentions to accept e-learning technologies. Their research found that individuals who prefer human interaction are equally important in Egypt and UAE with a great potential to influence an instructor's behavioural intentions to adopt and accept e-learning technologies. The study results provided incentive insights to managers and decision makers in higher education as on the base and function of

the relationship between their variables, that could improve the ability of educational institutions to start introducing and accepting e-learning technologies.

Based on the literature review related to WFH, especially in the educational institutions, employees have both positive and negative perspectives related to this work strategy, which can impact their level of satisfaction towards WFH. According to the literature, the current research developed a proposed conceptual framework (figure 1) in order to further investigate the topic. Based on the framework, three hypotheses emerged. (H1) There is a relationship between need for interaction and work from home satisfaction, (H2) There is a relationship between expectation and work from home satisfaction, and (H3) There is a relationship between expertise and work from home satisfaction.

### **Figure 1: The Proposed Conceptual Framework**

### **III. Methods**

In this research, a conclusive descriptive research design was implemented as it was considered suitable to collect the primary data and answer the research objectives as well as a cross-sectional design. The study used a questionnaire to collect data. The questionnaire was distributed online by the researcher due to the pandemic, which required people to be isolated and practice social distancing. The questionnaire was simply formulated and was developed in two languages, English and Arabic. The researcher used the SPSS 20.0@ (Statistical Package for Social Science) program to perform the quantitative analysis. The population under study is faculty members of private universities in Egypt. A convenience sampling technique was used. Both male and female Faculty members are part of the sample.

#### **3.1 Scale of Measurement**

In this study, there are three independent variables (need for interaction, expectations, and expertise) and one dependent variable (WFH satisfaction). The scales that measure each variable were adapted from various sources: Dabholkar 1996, 1994; French and Raven, (1959) and Grewal et al., (1998). The reliability analysis was also performed and all scales were reliable.

The variable scale "*Need for interaction*" is composed of 3 item, and is a 5-point scale to rate agreement with each statement. The scale includes Strongly Agree (1), Agree (2), Neutral (3), Disagree (4) and Strongly Disagree (5). The items included: Human contact in education makes the process enjoyable, I like interacting with people during work and It bothers me to use a machine when I could talk to a person instead.

The variable scale "*Performance Expectations*" is composed of a 4 item, 5-point likert scale also measuring agreement. The items include: I expected Working from home to be easy; I expected working from home to be efficient; I expected working from home to result in more errors; I expected working from home to be unreliable.

The variable scale measuring "*Expertise*" is composed of a 4-item scale. The items were: I consider myself skilled in online teaching, I consider myself knowledgeable in online teaching, I consider myself proficient in online teaching, I consider myself qualified in online teaching.

The variable scale "*Working from home satisfaction*" is composed of 4 items, working from home creates a distance between me and my students; Working from home makes me feel alone; Working from home enables me to communicate information in an easy way and Working from home gives me confidence.

### **IV. Research Findings**

The *frequency analysis* was conducted to describe the profile of the respondents in the study. According to the frequency analysis, 56.5 % of the respondents were female and 43.5% of them were male respondents. The respondents came from various age categories. 13.5% of the respondents aged from 18 to 24, 35.8% from 25 to 34 years old, 22.6% from 35 to 44, 17.7% from 45 to 54, 10.3 % aged 55 and above. The respondents held different job positions. The largest group of respondents were Assistant Lecturers who accounted for 32.2% of the sample and Professors with 22.3%, Then Graduate Teaching Assistants with 21.9 %, followed by Lecturers 14.2% and Finally, 9.4% were Assistant professors. Concerning the Marital status, 22.9% of the respondents were single, 68.4% of them were Married, followed by 7.1% Divorced or Separated and 1.6% of them were widowed. For the number of children, 32.2% had none, 20.3% had one child, 35.5% for two children and 11.9% More than two children.

For hypotheses testing, *correlational analysis* was performed. According to the Pearson correlation coefficient, for the relationship between Need for interaction and WFH satisfaction, the coefficient was -0.290\*\*. This number means that there is a significant relationship (\*\*: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level). The relationship is negative and weak. This result indicate that when Need for interaction increases in value, WFH satisfaction will decrease, and when Need for interaction decreases in value, WFH satisfaction will increase.

According to the Pearson correlation coefficient, for the relationship between Expectation and WFH satisfaction, the coefficient was 0.401\*\*. This number means that there is a significant relationship. This relationship is positive and moderate. This result indicates that when Expectations increases in value, WFH satisfaction will increase as well, and when Expectations decreases in value, WFH satisfaction will decrease.

According to the Pearson correlation coefficient, for the relationship between Expectation and WFH satisfaction, the coefficient was 0.094. This number means that there is no significant relationship. The following table (table 1) illustrates the results of the hypothesis testing from the Pearson correlation coefficient.

**Table 1: Hypothesis testing: Correlation Analysis**

In this study, the *multiple regression* was also conducted. The researcher conducted the Anova. The ANOVA shows if the model makes sense. The results show that the contribution of Need for interaction, Expectations, and Expertise on Working from home shows a good fit (Sig. at .000). The R-square illustrates the percentage of how much the chosen variables impact the study. Need for interaction, Expectations, and Expertise account for 19.6% of the variance in WFH satisfaction (Adjusted R square at .196). As for the P-values and Beta Coefficients. The variables Need for interaction and Expectation were significant as their P-Values were less than 0.05 at 0.000. Expertise was found not significant. As for the standardized regression coefficients of the variables, ( $\beta = -0.221$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) regarding Need for interaction, ( $\beta = 0.331$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) regarding Expectation, and ( $\beta = 0.069$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) to Expertise. This gives way to the conclusion that only two of the variables were found to be in a relationship with WFH satisfaction.

## V. Conclusion

Since 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic changed many organization structure when it comes to operations (Adedoyin and Soykan, 2020). The concept of WFH allows employees to participate in remote working practices. Sullivan (2003) asserts that working from home must be defined according to the nature of each project, considering that its nature varies according to transport, information and communication technologies, the place of work, the proportion of work, decentralized and contractual arrangements. WFH contains both advantages and disadvantages. For example, WFH can promote a more modern conception of work, or translate a deep disinterest in the value of work (Sennett, 2000) in itself which is then sidelined.

Remote work is therefore in itself a flexible way of organizing work, but it itself lacks regulation, since the legal standards intended to govern it are few or incomplete when they exist. However, the work must be limited and be accomplished according to rituals that it is essential to respect in order to preserve the employee's satisfaction, performance and quality. Without these borders, there can be risks of deviance and loss of balance. WFH could therefore justify an increase in the control of employees, limit their margin of autonomy as much as possible and intensify their work (Edwards et al., 1998), which would contradict sometimes the reasons why remote working was introduced.

This study aims to investigate the personal factors that impact university faculty members' satisfaction towards work from home (WFH) strategy. Based on the literature review, a researcher developed a proposed conceptual framework was developed, which contained three independent variables (need for interaction, expectations, and expertise) and one dependent variable (WFH satisfaction). A conclusive descriptive research design was implemented as well as a cross-sectional design. The study used a questionnaire to collect data. The questionnaire was distributed online. The questionnaire was simply formulated and was developed in two languages, English and Arabic. The questionnaire contained scales that were taken from prior studies. The researcher used the SPSS 20.0@ (Statistical Package for Social Science) program to perform the quantitative analysis. The population under study is faculty members of private universities in Egypt. A convenience sampling technique was used.

Based on the research analysis, there is a relationship between need for interaction and work from home satisfaction; and there is a relationship between expectation and work from home satisfaction. This study shows that there is no relationship between expertise and work from home satisfaction. This study contributed academically by filling in the academic gap in the literature, pinpointing the concept of WFH, and identifying the personal factors that encourage individuals to partake in the strategy, specially in educational institutions.

This study contributed practically as well. Based on the outcomes of the research, several recommendations are made, which relate to identifying the personal factors that encourage individuals to partake in the strategy, specially in educational institutions. Some recommendations include:

- It may be necessary to consider establishing a WFH charter or policy in order to clarify the rights and duties of the parties concerned.
- It will be a good idea to compile and distribute a list of frequently asked questions, which can be consulted by individuals working from home for the first time.

- Consideration should be given to the possibility of offering training to future staff working from home in order to develop the required skills. A communication and preparation phase is needed to reassure the staff on how to WFH is effective and an efficient manner, achieving the organization mission and goals.
- It is necessary to establish eligibility criteria, which will include certain personal skills (eg. ability to work alone) in order to avoid any misunderstanding between accepted and refused home-worker. Candidates for WFH must meet pre-established criteria: nature of the position and employment, personal and behavioral characteristics.
- Leaders in the university should think about solutions to the minor factors contributing to the non-satisfaction of WFH, about the evaluation criteria of the performance quality and the method of distributing tasks between the staff members working from home in the university.

Likean research, this research faced several limitations that future research can adjust. For instance, when developing the proposed conceptual framework, only three independent variables were taken into consideration, neglecting other variables that might be deemed important. SO future research can add on to the model. This study was limited in assessing private universities. Future research can assess other categories of universities and other levels of education. This study focused on different faculty members in general. Future research can focus on specific groups of employees in universities, such as lecturers or management. This study was conducted in Egypt. Future research can test the model on other nations or do a comparison study with Egypt and another nations. This study was a purely quantitative study. Future research can conduct qualitative research approach to get the opinions, experiences, attitudes and explanations of faculty staff regarding WFH strategies.

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