Work from Home Challenges Faced by Private Sector Employees During Pandemic COVID-19: A Case of 'A' Property Company in Johor

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Abstract: Due to the spread of Covid-19 virus, public and private sectors had to implement work from home policy to carry out their jobs. Employees faced challenges during work from home policy and affect the employee performance. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the challenges faced by employees during the Covid-19 outbreak's work from home period, as well as the impact of such challenges on employee performance. This study employs qualitative methodology by interviewing seven purposive sample of respondents from 'A' Property Management Sdn Bhd private company in Johor Malaysia. The thematic analysis was used to analyze data. Research findings show that the most significant challenge respondents faced while working remotely was technological. A lack of knowledge on how to handle the virtual platforms and internet disruptions has a negative impact on respondents' work performance. This study is important to expand the knowledge of work from home challenges and their effect on employees' performance. Besides, it provides managerial implications to the company on how the managers would improve the work from home policy so that employees would still performing their very best at home.

Keywords: Work from home, Work performance, Challenges

1. Introduction

In 2019, the World Health Organization has confirmed Coronavirus disease as a global pandemic disease (Budi Setyawan & Lestari, 2020). This Coronavirus started in China and spread across the entire world very fast (Sundarasen *et al.*, 2020). According to Jiuna (2020), the coronavirus also known as Covid-19 affecting 222 countries with 211,152,731 confirmed positive cases and 4,422,700 deaths.

Corona virus infects the respiratory tract. Patient who was infected by corona virus experienced dyspnea, low blood oxygen saturation or failure of multiple organ in their body (Jiuna *et al.*, 2020).

Malaysian government took several actions and implemented new regulations to control this virus outbreak. Malaysian government implemented three different type of movement orders in different stage such as, Movement Control Order, Conditional Movement Control Order and Recovery Movement Control Order (Aw *et al.*, 2021). As of 20th August 2021, Malaysia reported a total of 1,513,024 COVID-19 cases and 13,713 deaths (Salim, 2021). The self-employed, employers, private employees, multinational company employees, Government linked company employees economically affect by this Covid-19 outbreak (Lim, 2020). During this Covid-19 outbreak, government and private management sectors implement work from home policy to carry out their jobs. This research focus private sectors employees those carried out their work from home.

The employee's home is a base for work instead of working in office or coming to workplace for work known as work from home (Allen, 2010). According to Allen (2020), work from home is a policy where worker complete their jobs or responsibilities which assign by their employer from home by using information and communication technology. This work from home policy implemented by many organizations to reduce face to face contact as the same time employees can carry on their works without any problem. But employees faced some challenges during the period of work from home policy.

Work from home also known as remote work is the way of completing work related task from the home by employees A set of guidelines used by a company which is a set of rules on how employees can work remotely, instead of physically coming into the office known as work from home policy (Lopez, 2020). Initially work from home policy introduce to combine work space and living space so it can create a natural way to balance the life style and work cooperatively together for the good of all (Reynolds, 2017).

Working from home involves two different parties which are employer and employees. From this policy both parties will experience various benefits. By implementing work from home policy, employers can save money on conducting team building events, employer can switch team building events by using digital tools to conduct those events. When employer implement work from home policy they have wide range of choices on hiring the employees. There will be higher possibilities of hiring talented employees from overseas and this talent will help to improve the standard of the organization (Waida, 2020).

According to Ngeow (2020), employees save their energy and time by working from home; reduce the losing time on office commuting and reduce pressure the transport system. An employee also will lead balance life style and able to plan his or her time for family and work (Allen, 2010). There are different types of work from home policy, such as occasional work from home, regular work from home and permanent work from home. An occasional work from home policy is that, employees mainly will spend their working hour in work place, but from time to time agrees with their line manager to work from home

This work from home policy implemented by one of the private company name known as 'A' Property Management Sdn Bhd. There are 6 main services provides by the company such as security services, cleaning services, landscaping services, pest control, firefighting system and rubbish disposal services. The company consists of 80 employees. They have 3 branches in different states such as Kuala Lumpur, Melaka and Penang. This company implemented work from home policy during Movement Control Order for their administration department.

Even though work from home policy flexible for employees, there are equal challenges faced by employees to adapt and carry on work from home policy. The Indian Express news article stated that, the employees those work from home facing various challenges (Choudhury, 2020). Microsoft Work Trend Index conducted a survey among 6000 workers and reported that India has the second highest

percentage of employees those stress during work from home policy. About 41 percent of employees stated that lack of separation between work life and personal life. This effect their well-being and stress level increased. Besides that, 29 percent of employees confessed that their working span increase during this work from home period. Global data showed that, employees are attending more online meetings, answering more ad hoc calls, managing more incoming chats in the period of work from home.

Moreover, Skill Cast commission conducted a survey to identify the challenges faced by British employees during the period of work from home. The survey conducted on May 2020, among 1938 employees. From the survey, 84 percent of employees stated that they are facing challenges during the period of work from home. 45 percent of employees stated that self-motivation lack when they carried out their office work from home. 36 percent of employees stated that distraction become one of the challenge when they work from home. Other than that, 35 percent of employees confessed that they faced technology issue during the period of work from home. Technology issues like poor internet connection and other IT issues (Dodd, 2020).

In Malaysia during Movement Control Order, KPMG organization conducted survey regarding work from home among employees in Malaysia (Sammy, 2020). Total of 3,022 respondents participated the survey and respond to the survey. Out of 3,022 respondents, 69 percent of employees agree on continuing their work as a work from home mode. But about 64 percent from them admit that they facing challenges during the work from home. From the survey, three main challenges faced by employees during this work from home policy and these are categorized as: - 61 percent of employees faced network issues, 14 percent employees faced communication barriers and 10 percent of employees faced lack of technology readiness.

According to New Straits Time, Dr Nornin Abdullah stated that work from home policy will suitable for certain employees. Most of the time work from home policy will become challenge for employees. Because some of the employees will be more productive when they work in a team. Social connection between employees such as office chatter or going for lunch with working colleagues are key to good mental health. Other than that, boundaries between work and home is important for an employee's especially working mothers. Besides that, Professor Dr Rusdi Abd Rashid an associate psychiatrist in Universiti Malaya Specialist Centre, stated that work from home does not providing clear separation between work and home. During the work from home period, if employees are lack of support and information from employer and working colleagues it will be a biggest challenge to carry out the work (Murugesan, 2020). Therefore, there were an urge to carry out the study to explore the challenges that may affect the employee's performance. Specifically, the research objective of study is: To identify the challenges faced by employees during the Pandemic COVID-19 while work from home and their impacts on employee performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Malaysia's Economic Impact Due to Covid-19 Outbreak

The economic impact from Covid-19 outbreaks involves all the countries of the world and recovery is expected to take a long time. This part focus on the impact of labour market and business loss. Based on the report released by Social Security Organisation (Socso) stated that nearly 90,000 employees' losses their jobs due to Covid-19 outbreak (Chung, 2020). Mohammed Azman Aziz who known as CEO of Social Security Organisation stated that, organisation had received reports on 89,596 cases of job losses as of 22nd October 2020. Nearly 10,000 job losses case were reported to Social Security Organisation per month. Mohammed Azman Aziz stated that job loss cases are estimated to be more than 100,000 by the end of 2020 if the trend continues.

Manufacturing sector more affected by this outbreak with 20,492 (23%) job loss cases reported. Next was accommodation, food and beverage sector affected with total number of job loss cases were 13,053 (15%). The total number of job loss cases were 12,450 (14%) and reported by retail industry. According to the professional category, there we two major categories worst affected by economic change such as technician and managerial positions. The number of technician those losses the job was 17,240 (19%) and for managerial positions with 11,762 (13%) (Chung, 2020).

The Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers were conducted survey among Malaysia Manufactures to identify the impact on manufacturing enterprises, 419 companies were response to the survey. During the first and second face of movement control order, the medium-sized enterprises estimate losses 55.4 percent about 1 - 5 million ringgit. Besides that, 100,000 - 300,000 ringgit estimate losses by small-sized enterprises. About 1-5 million ringgit losses by large companies. The company loss comprised loss of sales, stock inventory and contractual penalties from suppliers and customers. 71 percent of respondents stated that they able to tolerate non operation hours for four weeks only (Lim, 2020). This survey shows the impact on labour market and company revenue in the period of Covid-19 outbreak.

2.2 Work from Home Policy

Working from home also known as remote work defined as an employee who complete their work or task given by their employer at home using information and communications technology (ICT). In other words, home is become a working space for employees to carried out their work related task (Allen, 2010). There are 3 type of work from home policy such as occasional home working, regular home working and permanent home working.

Occasional home working where employee work from home for a specific period to complete the work without any distraction around them. Regular home working where employee working period at home will be long compared to their working hours in the office. They will go to office for balance working hours. Regular home working suitable for employee those require little face to face contact with colleagues or client. Permanent home working is where employee spend 100 percent of the working time in home and complete their work without going office or company.

Work from home policy brings a lot of benefits for employees and employers. By carried out work from home, employee's travel time and energy will be save when they work in their home. Employees will able to improve their skills on balancing their work life and personal life. An employee will be able to spend more time with their family and stronger bonding can be form by this policy (Allen, 2010). Besides that, work from home policy allow employee to manage their own time without any distraction. Work from home policy create a great opportunity for disable people to work. Job satisfaction increase for employee when they carried out their company related work from home.

An employer also experiences a lots of benefits when they implement work from home policy in their company (Homeworking Guide, 2017). Money can be saved by implementing work from home policy in a company. When work from home policy implemented in a company, most of the employees will work in home. Small workspace needed in a company for carried out work, so less rent fees will be paid by employer. Employer able to recruit employees from various state and country, this will allow more talented people can work under their company. Employee's productivity will be increase when they work from home, high productivity will help the company to reach their company's objectives (Homeworking Guide, 2017).

2.2 Challenges of Work from Home Policy during Covid-19 Pandemic

As stated above, work from home policy brings a lot of benefits to the employers and employees. At the same time employees faced various difficulties to adapt and carried out work from their own work space. There are 4 major challenges which faced by employees during the work from home policy period. Such as, physical challenges, psychological challenges, technological challenges and financial

challenges. This section will explain about the four different challenges which faced by employees during work from home policy.
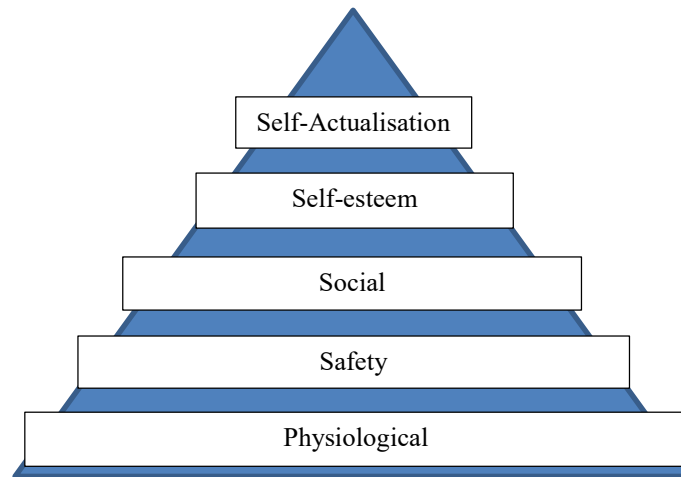
(a) Physical Challenges

There are several factors under physical challenge such as working environment, working hour, sitting position and equipment use by employee to carry out their work. Before the implementation of work from home policy, employees spend their working time inside a building (Kamarulzaman et al, 2011). Clerical operation will be carry out in a place where known as an office (Denyer, 1969). In other word, place where paper documentation and information, preserved the paper and information, used it for business known as office. General view of office building is a place of processing information and knowledge, filing, planning, designing, supervising, analysing, deciding and communicating of an organization. Effective work environment offers by the employer for their employee to carry out daily task in their office. To support employees, company offer ergonomic furniture such as chairs, standing desks and supportive keyboards. The employers provide ergonomic office furniture for their employee, which reduce pain, boosts productivity and improve employee wellness (The Benefits of Ergonomic Office Furniture, 2017). A comfortable sitting position will reduce the body pain and less distraction for employee. An employee spends more time in their place because they comfortable and less distraction experience by them during working hours.

During the work from home policy, home of employees become working environment for them. According to Davis et al (2020), home office ergonomic survey conducted among faculty and staff at the University of Cincinnati. The survey stated that, 42 percent of employees whereas not using proper ergonomic furniture while carrying out the office work at home. 27 percent of employees used their dining chair and 15 percent of employees used non chair such as couch or bed to carry out their office related work in the period of work from home policy (Davis *et al.*, 2020). This statistic shows that, during work from home period majority employees working environment was uncomfortable for them. According to Ward (2019), stated that employee's lack of proper equipment for conduct office work from their home. Employees suffer with back, neck and shoulder pain due to carried out office work without proper desk and chair. This situation create discomfort for employee and they could not work for long period as they work in their office environment. Working environment influence the performance of employee, comfortable working ergonomic promotes them to work for long period. As stated above, comfortable working environment boost employees' performance and they more productive when working in their office compared to work in their home.

(b) Psychological Challenges

Maslow's Hierarchy also known as Hierarchy of Needs which was created by Abraham Maslow, he stated that humans are motivated by five essential needs. The Maslow's Hierarchy in pyramid shape and consists five essential needs such as physiological, safety, social, self-esteem and self-actualization. The researcher will focus on 1 essential from the Maslow's Hierarchy which can related with the psychological challenges faced by employee during work from home (Dodd, 2020).

Figure 1: The Maslow's hierarchy
(Source: Dodd, 2020)

Figure 1 shows the Maslow's Hierarchy; psychological challenge can relate with social essential which placed at third place from the Maslow's Hierarchy. Social essential is referring to the need of emotional relationship drives human behavior. In general, social essential need satisfies by friendship, family, social groups, communities groups and religion organization. Social need important for an individual to avoid psychological problem such as loneliness, depression and anxiety (Cherry, 2020). In the context of workplace, social need can be satisfying by team works. Managers are assign employees to work in teams' departments or levels. This team or group work will boost the bonding of employees and one of the way to communication with other employees (Dodd, Skill Cast, 2020). Possibilities of social interaction during work from home is less among employees, this effect employee's mental health and productivity.

According to Felman (2020), an individual who able to cope with their stress, work productively and manage to contribute to something for their community known as mental health. A person level of mental health determines by several factors such multiple social, psychological and biological. Modifiable variables and non-modifiable factors are the two basic factors that influence human metals. Socioeconomic situations, occupation, a person's level of social involvement, education, and housing quality are all modifiable factors. Gender, age, and ethnicity are non-modifiable factors.

According to Sahni (2020), stated that employees feel more stress during working under work from home policy. This stressful situation formed when an employee handling multiple during the period of work from home such as office work and households. Dr. Norni who psychiatrist and addiction medicine specialist stated that employee facing a lot of mental stress when they carried their office work in their home. Before the implementation of work from home policy, employees have healthy social interaction with their working colleagues. They were able interact or discuss with their working colleagues about their works, able to spend lunch hours with their team mates and more. Social interaction is key to good mental health for an employee. Besides that, this new norm cut off employee's normal routine where they feel that they are isolated from social life. Some individual more productive when they work in a team compared to work in alone (Murugesan, 2020). This work from home policy create a situation where employees need to carry out their work alone, this situation might affect employee's performance towards their work.

Moreover, work from home policy creating unbalanced lifestyle for employee, where boundaries missing between work and home. According to (Ibarra *et al.*, 2020) stated that, work from home will increase work and family conflict. This conflict occurs because work from home lead to an expansion of work and increase the domestic burden on employees. Mainly working women will carry out more domestic responsibilities during their working hour in the house. Working mothers struggling on carry out office related work in home while taking care of their children. Because of Covid-19 outbreak

schools shut down, so employee's children around them during they carried out their work from home. Employees are need to work focus on their office related work and family related responsibilities in same time, this situation become major stress for employees during the period work from home policy (Murugesan, 2020). Stress negatively affect employee's performance, productivity and overall satisfaction towards their work (Anderson, 2020).

(c) Technological Challenges

An individual uses a set of knowledge, skills, experience and techniques to change the environment by creating tools, machines, products and services that meet their needs and desires known as technology. In this 21st century, technology playing important role to carry out business or company related work. In a workplace technology helps an organization to be more productive and, help to keep their account details more accurate. Besides that, company needs a healthy competition with their competitor to improve their products or service to the next level. Technology push a company to next level by advancing their system and machines. By using technology, company carried out online promotions and sales for their business to reach wide scale of consumer (Emma, 2019). Technology helps a company to be more creative and innovative on proposing new idea for their company's growth. Coordination level of an organization can be increased by using technological system and tools. Technology become the important factor for a company growth but this technology become challenge for employees during they carried out their work from home.

According to Roe (2020) stated that, technology disrupt employee's work during the work from home policy. Survey which conducted by Nexthink stated that 38 percent of employees facing issues with VPN access to critical software. At the same time 37 percent of employee had problem with their Wi-Fi connection and 35 percent of employees faced problem on using video conferencing apps. A business needs technology to compete with their competitor, bring out innovative ideas for the growth and carried out work effectively. During the work from home period, employee faced network issues and system disruptions which slow down the working process of them. Besides that, face to face meeting among employer and employees substituted with virtual meeting. Virtual meeting conducted through WebEx, Microsoft team and Skype in the period of work from home policy. Technology become challenge for employees when they attend virtual meeting, where they facing interruptions audio for video or sound-conferencing.

According to report Understanding Sound Experience 2020, 42 percent of respondents stated that they experiencing excessive background noise during the virtual meetings. 34 percent respondents stated that, they are stressing to repeat the same contents for their opponent due to sound interruptions (Understanding Sound Experiences 2020 report). This interruption lengthens the virtual meeting period, where an individual losing 29 minutes per week due to poor sound quality on voice calls. Average time which lost by an employee in a week is almost 3 days because of interruption which caused by technology. Not only lost time, but this technological interruption affects the performance of employee. Report which released by EPOS, stated that 31 percent of clients dissatisfied with this sound interruption during employee present the tender or project or business idea. 18 percent respondents stated that financial loss due to incorrectly undertaking a task by employees (Understanding Sound Experiences 2020 report, 2020).

(d) Financial Challenges

There are two main factors which creating financial challenges for employees during the work from home policy such as equipment expenses and utility expenses. Every company will provide basic equipment and resources for their employees to easier their job. According to (Keeling & Kallaus, 1995), a workspace efficient and cost saving when it fully occupied with office furniture, tools and equipment. Company machines and equipment are required by employees to full fill their responsibilities and activities which given by the employer. According to the survey which conducted

by Wakefield Research, states that office supplies important for employee productivity and research conducted among 1,000 full time U.S officers. Based on the survey, 94 percent of employees stated that they less productive when they not enough supplies during carried out their work in company (Organization, office supplies important for worker productivity, 2016). Before the implementation of work from home, employees are free to use company equipment such as printer, scanner, photocopier, faxing machine, stationary, storage equipment, software and more (Caki, 2020). After the implementation of work from home policy, as stated early employees work in their space during this period they are using their personal equipment and resources to carried out their work. The blurring lines between work and home were seen by employees as a major disadvantage of working from home. When working from home, many people complained about a lack of equipment and workspace (Chung, *et al.*, 2021).

According to Mustapa & Jaafar (2021), stated that the electric usage in residential area increase more than usual time during the implementation of work from home policy. Employees use their laptop or computer to carry out their office related works. At the same time, usage of air-conditioner or fan on house increase in employee's home. To create comfortable working environment, employee might work in their room with facility of air-condition or fan (Ho, 2020). According to the report released by Telekom Malaysia Bhd (TM), stated that the net profit of third financial quarter (30th September 2020) increase to 26 percent which is RM329.4 million from RM261.3 million a year earlier. Work from home policy one of the reason for this net profit growth during the Covid-19 pandemic. They also stated that subscribers for Unifi increase as 6.3 percent about 1.65 million, at the same time total broadband customer base stood at 2.26 million (Murugiah, 2020). This data shows that during the movement control order, majority of employees those work from home subscribe Unifi for internet connection. Some employees spend their own money to pay for equipment and utility expenses, but some employees financially not able to buy equipment and spend for utility. These financial obstacles negatively affect employees' performance during the work from home period.

3. Research Methodology

The researcher used the qualitative methods to achieve the objectives of the study. This is due to the characteristic of qualitative methods to acquire the insight about the phenomena in question and is flexible in the sense that it helps in identifying the missing part of unknown or partially known elements (Nassazi, 2013). Besides that, researcher aims to explore more about the challenges faced by employees during work from home and their effects on employee's work performance as it is a new norm and qualitative methodology is deemed as suitable compared to the quantitative method to explore more depth about this new work norm. Even though it is a time consume method, the data will be rich and can gain new knowledge from the research. Qualitative method help researcher to explore employee's personal experience and the challenges behind work from home. This method employs an interpritivism approach that emphasise the meaningful nature of people's character and participation in both social and cultural life. An interpretivism approach help researcher to focus on meaning and employ multiple methods in order to reflect different aspects of the issue.

This study employs purposive sampling. The aim of purposive sampling is to provide as much insight as possible into the event or phenomenon under research. Other than that, purposive sampling increases the credibility of results (Palinkas *et al.*, 2013). The advantage of purposive sampling is will be easier to generalize the data because all the respondents will have similar characteristic of the research (Levine & Stephan, 2014). For this study, the sampling are the staffs at the 'A' Property Management Sdn Bhd of Johor who work from home. The total number of respondents was seven.

A structured interview questions was prepared by researcher to collect the primary data. Structured Interviews questions will be useful for researcher to gather information from a few specific people

(Driscoll, 2011). The interview was conducted as a one to one individual interview session and the respondent were supervisor of 'A' Property Management Sdn Bhd (Johor Bahru Branch). Due to Covid-19 outbreak, the interview session was conducted through video call and interview lasted approximately 30-40 minutes. The aim of individual interview session is to explore more about employee's challenges and their effect on work performance. The interview question was open ended, by this respondent shared more about their personal experience and perspective about challenges of work from home during Covid-19 Pandemic.

In this study, the qualitative data analysis was conducted and involved several phases. First step was organizing data where researcher need to organize the collected data. The researcher refers back interview guide and differentiate between the actual question for the research and simply added question. When the researcher differentiates the actual and added questions, so they can find the important data which needed for the research. Data need to be organized and this will allow researcher to go through each topic with clear view. Researcher can be organizing the data by creating a chart.

Second step was finding and organizing ideas and concept. Each and every interviewee will have their own style on share their feelings, experienced and thoughts. The researcher was responsible on identify the inner meaning of interviewee words and perceptions. The researcher picks out the words or expressions which frequently used by the interviewees during the interview session. Once researcher identified the words or expression which frequently used by interviewee, then need to categorize or code it in a table form. Last step is ensuring reliability and validity in the data analysis and in the findings. Validation is cannot be done in separate stage, throughout the research process validation need to be focus and ensure. Same goes to reliability, researcher need to ensure consistency of reliability throughout interviewing, transcribing and analyzing the findings. Microsoft Office Software was used by researcher to transcribe and analyze the data.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Analysis on Demographic Background of Respondents

There are 7 interviewees those interviewed by the researcher, six of them are management department employees and one of the respondent maintenance technician. Those seven respondents were experience on work from home during Covid-19 outbreak as in Table below. This part has discussed about respondent's age, educational level, marital status, and household income, time frame of work from home and the advantages of work from home they experience during Covid-19 outbreak. The detail profiling of the respondents is as below:

Respondent

Respondent 1 was a male. He reported that he was between the ages of between 24 and 25. Respondent 1 was Hindu. He was completed his degree under Real Estate Management and marital status of respondent 1 was single. He reported that his household income was between RM 2000 to RM3500 and the household income same during work from home period. The time frame of work from home he experienced was 3 weeks during first phase of Movement Control Order. He reported that the advantages he experienced during work from home was he able to spend time with his family.

Respondent 2

Respondent 2 was a female and he reported that she was between the ages of between 23 and 24. Respondent 2 was Islam. She was completed her diploma under Marketing and marital status of respondent 2 was single. He reported that his household income was between RM 2000 to RM 2500 and the household income same during work from home period. The time frame of work from home

she experienced was 1 week during first phase of Movement Control Order. She reported that the advantages she experienced was she learn on doing work with the skill of multitasking during work from home.

Respondent 3

Respondent 3 was a female and she reported that she was between the ages of 35 and 36. Respondent 3 was Islam. Her highest education level was STPM and marital status of respondent 3 was married. She reported that her household income was between RM 2000 and the household income same during work from home period. The time frame of work from home she experienced was 2 weeks during first phase of Movement Control Order. She reported that the advantages she experienced during work from home was she able to spend time with her family.

Respondent 4

Respondent 4 was a female and she reported that she was between the ages of 30 and 32. Respondent 1 was Islam. Her highest education level was Diploma under Accountancy and marital status of respondent 4 was single. She reported that her household income was between RM 1800 and the household income same during work from home period. The time frame of work from home she experienced was 1 week during first phase of Movement Control Order. She reported that she faced difficulties more than advantages during work from home period.

Respondent 5

Respondent 5 was a female and she reported that she was between the ages of 25 and 26. Respondent 1 was Buddhist. Her highest education level was Degree under Technology Management and marital status of respondent 5 was single. She reported that her household income was between RM 3000 and the household income same during work from home period. The time frame of work from home she experienced was 1 months and 7 days during first phase of Movement Control Order. She reported that the advantages she experienced during work from home was she able to save travelling time to office.

Respondent 6

Respondent 6 was a female and she reported that she was between the ages of 27 and 28. Respondent 6 was Hindu. Her highest education level was Diploma under Business Management and marital status of respondent 6 was married. She reported that her household income was between RM 2500 and the household income same during work from home period. The time frame of work from home she experienced was 3 weeks during first phase of Movement Control Order. She reported that the advantages she experienced during work from home was she able to save time and money for travelling to office.

Respondent 7

Respondent 7 was a male and he reported that he was between the ages of 31 and 32. Respondent 7 was Hindu. His highest education level was PMR and marital status of respondent 5 was married. He reported that his household income was between RM 1800 and the household income same during work from home period. The time frame of work from home he experienced was 3 to 4 weeks during first phase of Movement Control Order. He reported that the advantages he experienced during work from home was he able to spend time with family.

In essence, there were 7 respondents, six of them who work as management department employees and one more respondent work as maintenance technician. Out of 7 respondents, 3 of them were Islam, 3 more respondents were Hindu and one last respondent was Buddhist. The similarity of the respondents was three of them completed Diploma, two of them completed Degree, one of them completed STPM and one more respondent completed PMR. Based on the interview data, household income of 4

respondents were RM 2000 and above, 3 more respondents receive RM1800. The advantages experienced by respondents during work from home were 3 of the respondents able to spend time with their family, two of the able to save travel time to work, one more respondent stated that she able to learn multitasking. One more respondents stated that, there is no advantages experienced by them during work from home period. Table 1 show the summary on demographic background of respondents.

Table 1: Summary of respondents' background

Respondents	Gender	Age	Religion	Highest Education Level	Household Income	WFH Duration
1	Male	(24-25)	Hindu	Bachelors of Real Estate Management	(RM 2000 - RM 3500)	3 weeks
2	Female	(23-24)	Islam	Diploma in Marketing	(RM 2000- RM 2500)	1 week
3	Female	(35-36)	Islam	STPM	RM2000	2 weeks
4	Female	(30-32)	Islam	Diploma in Accountancy	RM1800	1 week
5	Female	(25-26)	Buddhist	Bachelors of Technology Management	RM 3000	1 month 7 days
6	Female	(27-28)	Hindu	Diploma in Business Management	RM 1800	3 weeks
7	Male	(31-32)	Hindu	PMR	RM1800	3 – 4 weeks

4.2 Findings of Objective 1: To Identify the Challenges Faced by Employees during the Work from Home Period in Covid-19 Outbreak

(a) Physical Challenges

This part discusses about physical challenges experienced by employees during work from home period. Respondents do not have any physical challenges in relation to the facility at home, they feel comfortable and most of them work from their bedroom and living room as they said "*I was comfortable working in my room with my kids*" (R6). Some said that they utilize whatever facilities they have and it's sufficient and comfortable. Besides, all respondents admit that the working hour are flexible that do not pose them to any physical challenges, some said that they don't work for long hours, and they could rest. With regard to physical pain, four out of seven respondents confess that they are having pains such as dizziness and back pain as they said that "I really feel pain on my backbone" (R5).

When asked about whether or not the physical constraints while working from home affect their work performance, majority of respondents responded that it does not affect at all, because they claim that whenever they feel back pain, they will rest and continue after that. As the respondents said that,

"I will relax. I will set aside my laptop first. Then relax. After that I just continue back" (R2).
"Still able to manage it, when pain I take a break and continue" (R6)

(b) Psychological Challenges

This part discusses about psychological challenges experienced by employees during work from home period. Respondent's share their own experienced such as how they balance their work life and personal life during remote work and impact of remote work on their personal life. They also share their experience of them to carry out work without work colleagues and method use to connect with working colleague. Besides that, respondents also share about their distraction they faced during remote work and impact of psychological challenge during remote work.

According to the interview data, Respondent 1, 2, 3 and 4 were able to balance their work life and personal life during remote work by explaining their work routine to their family members, while Respondent 5, 6 and 7 replied that they balance their work and personal life during WFH by spending time with their family members after work as they mentioned that "*I will tell them this time until this I will work. So after that time can talk*" (R2). This has shown that all respondents were managed to have a work life balance when working from home and no psychological challenges they faced in this situation.

Nevertheless, working remotely has caused majority of the respondents to feel sad and difficult as they could not meet and communicate face to face with their working colleagues. They need people to communicate about work and also getting help for the technical part of the work. When being asked about this, they replied that, "*I am sad, when at home I just feel like, robot*" (R6) while Respondent 7 claimed that "*This is difficult because we have to go near there, without the help of other technicians*". This has affected their psychological stability while working from home. However, frequent interactions through Phone calls, WhatsApp call and messages with working colleagues to get information and data would reduce the feeling of loneliness while working unaccompanied.

Finally, out of 7 respondents, only 2 of them admitted that the psychological issues affect their work performance especially in relation to the family matters, of which they said that family members sometimes distract them while working, however, they were able to put the situation at ease when pure understanding requires from family members nevertheless the feel of guilty inside the respondents are still there. Besides that "*The understanding of my customer or client is my first distraction, Second one is family and the third one is the internet problem*". However, some of respondents who were not affected their work performance said that, working from home is the best and he enjoys it very much (R3) while others (R6) and (R7) said that that, when they receive the task through email, they will complete the task first before doing other things such as household chores and others.

(c) Technological Challenges

Majority of respondents (except R3 and R4) are facing technological challenges especially the internet connection problem. They had to use mobile data and home Wi-Fi but most of the times facing instability that affect the communication through online platform. Not only that the company does not provide any allowance on internet connection, all respondents claimed that they neither have experienced using online platform for meeting nor been trained for using the online platform before being asked to work from home. They mentioned that: "*The company did not conduct any training sessions to use the virtual meeting platform and I know nothing about it*" (R4). This has posed certain problems to the employees in handling the situation especially in learning on their own on how to set up the equipment and applications before they can be in the virtual meeting with the others. These challenges has caused to poor performance for the employees as it caused stress to some of them "*I have faced technological challenges, indeed stress*" (R2), moreover this situation ha cause to the delay in reporting to the superior as R7 mentioned that "*I want to send a work report and pictures to use the phone, it's difficult because of the line*".

(d) Financial Challenges

The majority of the other respondents do not face any challenges during remote work however findings revealed that, R1 and R7 have experienced financial challenges during work from home period. This is because R1 was spending more money on purchasing internet data to carry out office work from home, whereas R7 faced financial difficulties since he was a technician he spends money for travelling expenses when he needed to attend to emergency matters at the office. R1 and R2 claimed that "*Of course financial burden, spending more money for purchase mobile data*" (R1), "*Yeah, I have faced difficulties to buy work related stuff*" (R2). According to the interview data, all respondents stated that,

their work performance were not impacted by financial challenges. Even though R1 and R7 faced financial difficulties but they affirmed that it does not affect their performance.

5. Discussion

5.1 Discussion of Research Findings

The overall number of respondents in this study was seven, and each of them had prior experience working from home during the Covid-19 outbreak. According on data analysis, respondents faced four different challenges during their work from home period, including physical, psychological, technological, and financial challenges. Out of seven respondents, four of them suffered physical pain while working remotely. They were in physical agony as a result of the furnishings they utilized to do their jobs. To carry out their task, the majority of them used dining chairs, plastic chairs, and dining tables as furniture. The respondent's physical pain was one of the small challenges that made it difficult for them to complete their tasks. This claim is supported by Davis *et al.* (2020), who published an article about a home office ergonomic survey. According to the survey, 42% of employees do not have sufficient ergonomic furniture at home when working. Employees are bothered by this situation, and they are unable to work at home for long periods of time. The respondents in this study were in the same scenario, but the physical challenges had no effect on their work performance because they were able to take breaks due to flexible working hours.

Next challenge is psychological challenge which faced by respondent during remote work. Work from home, according to Ibarra, *et al.* (2020), may increase conflict between work and family; nevertheless, this statement contradicts researcher data analysis. According to the data analysis, respondents were able to balance the boundaries between family and office work from home. They are able to balance between family and work by explaining their remote work schedule to their family members. During their break times, they spend as much time as possible with their family members. As a result of this, they were able to reduce the conflict between work and family. According to Maslow's Hierarchy, a person's social needs are critical in preventing psychological issues such as loneliness, sadness, and anxiety (Cherry, 2020). Social needs can be met by coworkers in the workplace. Employees have less opportunities for social engagement while working from home, which has an impact on their mental health and productivity. However, this remark contradicts the findings of this study's data analysis, because the majority of respondents are unconcerned about being separated from their coworkers. Only three of the seven respondents are sad to be working apart from their coworkers. However, they were still able to connect with them via WhatsApp calls and messages. During the remote work period, the psychological challenge had no effect on the respondents' work performance.

Besides that, one of the challenge that respondents faced during the work from home is financial difficulties. According to a Wakefield Research survey, 94 percent of employees are less productive when they have not enough resources to do their jobs (Organization, office supplies important for worker productivity, 2016). However, the data analysis of this study contradicts with this statement because the respondents completely utilize their home resources to complete the work. The majority of respondents do not encounter any financial challenges in carrying out their tasks. Only two employees out of seven have financial difficulties on purchasing mobile data and work related equipment by technician.

The major challenge which faced by respondents during work from home period was technological challenge. According to the data analysis only one person has used a virtual meeting platform before remote work starts. Before the remote work began, the company did not provide any training to the respondents on how to use the virtual conference platform. Respondents had difficulty attending and conducting meetings with their coworkers and employers due to a lack of experience using a virtual meeting platform. As a result, their company will not be able to conduct an Annual General Meeting in

2020. This statement is supported by the report Understanding Sound Experience 2020, which claims that employees are facing internet outages, which lengthens the virtual meeting period, with an individual losing 29 minutes each week owing to poor virtual meeting quality. According to data analysis, five of the seven respondents had internet interruptions during their work from home period. During the remote work period, this internet outage has an effect on respondent's work performance. This statement supported by Nexthink Survey where stated that employees are having problems with VPN access to vital software, problems with their Wi-Fi connection, and employees are having trouble using video conferencing apps. Employees' working processes are slowed by network difficulties and system outages. According to the four challenges, the technological difficulties have the greatest impact on respondents' performance during the remote work period.

5.2 Implications of Study

The resource-based view is a paradigm that indicates that an organization's resources are a golden key to developing competitive advantages over its competitors. According to Resources based view is a model which shows that resources of an organization are a golden key for that organization to develop competitive advantages over its rivals. Tangible assets and intangible assets are divided into two under the Resource Based View theory, Employees are an intangible asset of the 'A' Property Company, according to this study. Intangible assets play a vital role in maintaining a competitive edge during remote work periods. 'A' Property Company need to utilize maximum intangible assets to sustain in competitive advantage. Employers must provide training and other activities to help employees improve their knowledge and abilities. As a result, they were able to fully contribute to their firm while working remotely without experiencing any obstacles.

The findings of this study indicate to a variety of practical applications that worthy for the future study. Employees confronted a significant technological problem while working remotely. Employees should be able to purchase internet using an unlimited data plan or an internet allowance provided by the employer. These employees are able to complete their tasks without interruption. The organisation should also conduct a training session on the work-from-home policy for all employees. They can give an overview of the work from home, virtual meeting platform kind and function. Employees will be able to work with a clear perspective of remote work and increase their work performance as a result of this. Employees' work performance is unaffected by psychological challenges. However, because employees are emotionally affected, this organisation should establish a separate counselling group for employees who are experiencing emotional issues. By these individuals were able to open up about their emotional issues while working from home. As a result, employees are better equipped to prevent despair, stress, and suicidal thoughts. Lastly, company can establish a new work-from-home policy to assist their employees. Attendance and availability standards, productivity indicators, equipment and technical assistance, compensation and benefits, and the physical environment are all important aspects of a work from home policy. Implementing a work-from-home policy can increase productivity, assist the organisation in meeting its goals, and save operating costs.

When an employer has a successful work from home policy, they are no longer confined to employing local talent, which means they have a far better chance of finding someone with the ideal talents, experience, and personality to fit best inside their company.

6. Conclusion

The objectives of this research was to identify the challenges faced by employees during the work from home period in Covid-19 outbreak. By conducting interview among employees those have experience on remote work, researcher found that the major challenge of employees is technological challenge. There were various ways which need to be fixed by the company to help their employees to overcome the technological challenge. Such as, training sessions, internet plans or internet allowance

for employees, by this they will able to overcome the technological challenge. Remote work policy will be more effective if employer and employee understand method of working. All the companies need research and emphasize more about remote work for future needs. Thus, the researcher suggested that future studies could combine both methods of data collection which are qualitative and quantitative. Questionnaire distribution are the example of quantitative data collection. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data can improve an evaluation by ensuring that the limitations of one type of data are balanced by strengths of each data collection. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data can improve an evaluation by ensuring that the limitations of one type of data are balanced by strengths of each data collection. This will ensure that the understanding is improved by integrating different ways of knowing. Last but not least, it would be interesting for future researchers to extend the investigation on the influence of industrial revolution 4.0 on remote work among Malaysia employees.

Acknowledgement

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