Does Working from Home Influence Motivational Level of Employees? The Analysis of Gender Differences in Turkey

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Abstract

Working from home has become "new normal" and great majority of employees have started to WFH (working from home), which has had profound effects on their personal and professional lifestyle. Taking into account the fact, this study aims to investigate the significant items affecting the motivational level of employees by considering the role of gender differences. In essence, this paper is proposed to understand that how the transforming of work form due to current circumstance, has impressed the various aspects of employees work-life. The sample of research includes 254 responders of diverse age, gender, educational situation, and their duration of employment working for different companies from all over Turkey. Data were collected through an online structured survey and the data were analyzed by descriptive statistic methods using probability sampling. The results illustrate that the overwhelming majority of respondents have started to work from home after the Coronavirus outbreak. Moreover, the findings of this study reveal the main reason behind the motivation on working home among remote employees but and the reasons, which have detrimental impacts on workforce desire to continue WFH. Surprisingly, participants are satisfied with the current trend of remote work altogether and they have also gravitated toward continuing work from home even after the Covid-19 pandemic period. Additionally, the other results of this research demonstrate that items such as the absence of social life, distraction by family members, self-organizing problems, time management, technological problems and productivity levels can have positive and negative impacts on WFH. Generally, by looking more into the details of findings, we can obviously distinguish the differences between results regarding gender categories.

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1. Introduction

The outbreak of Coronavirus mandating population to stay at home that for its part has significantly influenced mankind lifestyle. Amid the current exceptional circumstance, having a comprehensive understanding of the employees' demographic needs allows for the management of companies to evolve (Fujii, 2020). Due to this universal pandemic, since March-2020, the Turkish workforce has faced with novel work-life that undoubtedly neither employees nor employers had adequate experience to cope with. In this respect, this research seeks to study the impact of the Covid-19 global pandemic on workforce motivation in Turkey taking into account the gender differences' role. In essence, the study endeavor to address this question: In comparison to the males, the performance of females has been similarly affected by WFH (working from home)? In doing so, the research at hand investigates the items affecting employees' motivational level that due to radical and widespread transition of the workplace have been forced to work from home in Turkey. In conformity with this transformation, reviewing the literature can help us to have a comprehensive perception of the effect of working from home on employees' motivational level. In line with the research purposes, by using an online structured questionnaire we collected data from attendance working from home while an overwhelming majority of them have started WFH after this global pandemic. In the subsequent step, the respondents were classified into two groups (females and males) which enabled us to have a comparative analysis in terms of gender differences. Afterward, we present and discuss the result of the research considering items such as the absence of social life, distraction by family members, Self-organizing problems, time management, technological problems, and productivity levels separately for each category.

2. Literature review

Coronavirus has created a drastic change in personal and professional daily life all over the world. Amid coronavirus pandemic, remote work has been the only option for organizations to maintain their businesses. As a result, companies lead employees to have more remote work (Rani et al, 2020). In this respect, traditional work-life has been disintegrated by the mobilization of technology (Aczel et al., 2021).

As technological infrastructures have been developing over the last decades, positive and negative effects of telecommuting on employees can be obviously perceived. Although on the brighter side of the coin, positive consequences of telecommuting such as performance, job satisfaction of employees, the role of stress and lower work-family conflict are more considered but the harmed relationships with employees are a significant point that is often overlooked. However, working from home has had no generally detrimental impacts on the quality of employees' relationships (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, not only organizations

have been affected by new work situations, but it has also remarkable impact on the workforce and their family (Şener & Abunasser, 2020).

Despite the advantages of working from home, it is not free from drawbacks. The efficiency of WFH can be different in terms of region or gender. In practice, amid the covid-19 pandemic, the situation of families has been substantially changed. At first, glance working from home allowed employees to save time due to they have not been required to commute from home to their workplaces every day. On the other hand, in the pandemic era other members of the family are staying at home rather than the former as well (e.g. amid pandemic, because of schools shut kids have to spend their time at home than most). Therefore, to figure out the comprehensive effects of remote work on employees it is necessary to have an understanding of the wider picture (Bhattacharjee, 2020).

In light of the ongoing rapid development in remote work during the covid-19 pandemic period, monitoring the level of productivity will be essential. In essence, it is not remote from the truth that the nature of work has a profound impact on the level of productivity. Taking into account that workers are in a disparate level of skills, their level of productivity likely will be affected in terms of their skill's level. Considering the fact, working from home will have a different impact on employees' level of productivity according to their individual characteristics, behavior, and preferences (Kramer & Kramer, 2020).

As coronavirus pandemic has been sweeping the world, social distance, hand sanitizer policies, and lockdown the economy, collectively have had shaping effects on work structures. Despite WFH is not the best option for the majority of employees, most if not all workers interest in remote work, although in a different form. In doing so, it will be vital to prepare the fundamental required resources such as access to information, technological infrastructures, training, and a proper workplace. Although preparing the mentioned factors can help both employees and employers to deal more effectively with the current exceptional circumstance impacts. In a general manner, the continuation of WFH as a permanent and dominant work style in the future is a controversial theme that will be revealed post-pandemic, while remote work will not be an obligatory work form (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2020).

Nothing can alter the fact that motivation has been one of the dominating variables for its part on the performance of employees. Companies have a dire need to find out how they can preclude from depleting of employees motivation due to current changing circumstances amid the covid-19 pandemic (Christian et al., 2020). The work landscape transformation is a fact that cannot be gainsaid. Based on this premise, work structure has been starting to transition, while the remote work is one of the discriminating marks of this alteration. This fundamental transformation draws attention to the impacts of work from home on the workforce circumstances, particularly the motivational level of employees.

3. Research methodology

As a methodological research, a structured online survey was conducted and data were collected from 254 respondents from different companies and different age groups from all over Turkey. Data collection was initiated on March 4 and the investigation remained for 15 days. Data are analyzed by descriptive statistical methods using probability sampling.

The questions were addressing whether they have remote work or not and if they have started to remote work after coronavirus pandemic. Moreover, the survey included questions about experiences in remote working such as their motivational situation, level of productivity, results of their jobs. Participants are also asked about the reasons for demotivation and the biggest struggle they have faced during the remote work, what could give better quality for productivity and motivation in working from home. Additionally, they are asked whether they would like to continue remote work after covid-19 or not.

4. Results analysis

(Sullivan & Lewis, 2001) suggest that gender is one of the most significant issues that affect the experience of working from home.

To look more into details (Table 1), there are some differences in the answers to the questions according to gender.

Percentage analysis of the interviewees

Table 1

Categories of Analyses	Unit of Context	Total	Female	Male
			%	%
Motivation	Desire to continue WFH	63,0%	64,4	60,6
	Level of motivation	67,0%	67,6	66
	Not to waste time on the way	28,4%	25,7	33
	Personal Time	51.2%	53,8	46,8
	Work Life Balance	12.2%	11,3	13,8
	Comfort	8,3%	9,4	6,4
Effectiveness	Success in Task-Related Outcome	67,4%	66,9	68,1
Challenges of WFH	Absence of social life	41,7%	37,5	48,9
	Distraction by family members	35,8%	37,5	32,9
	Self-organizing and time management problems	16,6%	19,4	11,7
Productivity	Productivity levels	22,8%	25	19,1
	Technological problems	29,9%	31,3	27,7
	Time management.	35,0%	36,9	31,9

Motivation

Desire to continue working from home (WFH)

Throughout history, humanity has changed in all areas and has always found ways to adapt to this change. Change is a necessary process and just like people, business life also experiences constant change and innovation under different influences (Iverson, 1996). Remote work, which has been used more frequently in few decades and especially in some countries, is a result of the necessity of social needs and today's conditions. Although Working from home is the concept that we are familiar with in recent years, pandemics transform remote work as one of the basic needs and our "new normal". As mentioned in (Ntv, 2021), one of the most famous Turkish news agencies, the number of working from home in Turkey has reached a rate that never reached before. As a parallel to this information, 80,3% of the participants in our survey declare that they have started to remote work after the coronavirus pandemic. Even though working from home is something new for Turkish society; we can see that people are satisfied with the current trend of remote work. Results of the study indicate that the number of people who want to continue remote work after coronavirus is more than people who wouldn't like to continue remote work after coronavirus with 63%. It is clear that even if there are disadvantages in its implementation, people are satisfied with remote working life as a general. (Barrero et al, 2020) argue that even after the pandemic, working from home will be wide practice. Therefore, working from home should be discussed in all aspects and suitable solutions should be founded. As a method to balance the benefits and harms of working remotely, it can be switched to a dual system such as working from home for a few days after the pandemic. With such a method, the benefits of working from home have been utilized, and the effects on disadvantages are minimized. As it can be expected, the implementation of remote work varies from company to company. It is expected that large corporate firms will be able to cope better with the situation and their employees will be happier. Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that corporate companies may not pay attention to distinctions such as not paying attention to working hours or an increasing workload (Felstead & Jewson, 2002).

Gender differences in answers demonstrate that 64.4% of the women are in favor of continuing to work from home more than men after Covid-19 in Turkey. The reason for this is obviously that women spend more time at home with their children, rather than continuing their daily work. (Olson & Primps, 1984) argues that women are most likely to see the flexibility of childcare as a motivation for remote work.

(Huws et al, 1996) indicate that working from home provides great convenience for women. Women who can continue their working life due to the flexibility can also take care of their homes more comfortable and spare time for their children (Dooley, 1996).

Level of motivation

Results of the survey inform that the motivational levels of participants (67%) are remarkably high. Wheatley indicates that people who work from home tend to have a higher motivation rate, because of its many benefits (Wheatley,

2017). Those who can have more personal time for themselves, better work-life balance, comfort, and unnecessary waste of time on the way in remote work, are more likely to have more job motivation expectedly. With the pandemic, life conditions, in general, have become difficult and people have difficulties. (Kniffin et al., 2021)states that COVID-19 is both a global health crisis and an international economic threat. Despite all the current conditions, the facts that people feel motivated to do their work from home, even during the pandemic. This situation is a promising case for future home working arrangements. Gender differentiation according to motivational levels is not remarkable. Female (67,6%) and male (66%) participants have similar motivational levels. Although it is known that working remotely provides convenience to all people, it is expected that women's motivation will be higher because remote working is a practice that makes women's lives easier. In this aspect, ıt can be said that this result is unexpected.

Personal time

52% of the participants, who are the vast majority, argued that having more personal time is their biggest motivation in remote work. The ability to have personal time has been the distinguishing feature of the pandemic period of working from home. Employees, who were running in a continuous and intense working tempo, had the opportunity to see their surroundings by taking a sigh of relief during this period. Therefore, they were able to spend more time with their families, friends, or hobbies, and they were able to spare time for themselves. It is known that the human being is a social being and ıt is one of the basic needs to have a high-quality social life. The success of an employee is not only affected by work-life but also personal life which is independent of work life. Therefore, in the process of working from home, employees both had the opportunity to improve themselves and focus on their careers. A notable difference is found in the way female and male participants respond to option. It can be clearly seen that female participants (53,8%) indicate more to have personal time as their motivation than male participants (46,8%). Undoubtedly, one of the main reasons for this is that women have more difficulty in sparing personal time for them due to the current life order.

Not to waste time on the way

Not wasting time on the way to go is found as the second biggest motivator of remote work. The vast majority of people live in homes far from their workplaces and spends a significant amount of time on the road to get to their jobs. According to the media review conducted by (CNN Turk, 2017), an employee spent an average of 7,5 to 9 hours per week in traffic in Turkey. Living in a city with traffic problems is one of the important factors affecting your life. Findings of the article show that 28.4% of respondents point out not wasting time on the way to go as one of the great motivators because of traffic problems in big cities in Turkey. To look at the rate at which different genders choose this option, it can be clearly seen that not spending time on the road is a greater source of motivation for male participants (33%). According to the numbers announced by the (General

directorate of security, 2020) men have a much higher driving rate than women not only in the world but also in Turkey. This information supports why saving time on the road is more important for male participants.

Work life balance

Work-life balance is one of the important sources of motivation for the participants with 12.2%. According to (Delecta, 2011) wok life balance is satisfaction and good functioning in work life and personal life with a minimum conflict. Remote work provides people an opportunity to achieve a greater work-life balance. Long hours of work life destroy people's relation with home, family, and friends and it causes problems in business life and personal life. The stress–based conflict occurs when one of the roles of the individual at work or in the family causes stress on the individual and this stress affects the other roles of the individual (Delecta, 2011). A person who can allocate more time to home and family by working remotely can balance his work and personal life better. Some participants noted prolonged work hours between sources of demotivation. Based on this, one should be aware that there should be certain rules in working from home and ıt should be obeyed. (Kıcır, 2018)indicates that worked and non-worked hours should be precisely separated. Otherwise, even if working from home, there will be problems in providing a work-life balance because of uncertain work hours. A difference was found between men and women. It is observed that the proportion of men who choose work-life balance is higher than women.

Comfort

Additionally, participants indicate that having more comfort is one of the reasons for their motivation. (Staples, 2001) explains that working from decrease the stress and make an employee more comfortable. There is no doubt that remote work is more comfortable in anyways not only for the employee but also employers. Employers reduce many of his expenses in distance working life such as transportation charges and office bills etc. If ıt can be applicable in the right manner and high motivation and productivity, it is a much more comfortable way to do work.

To look more at gender difference, ıt can be seen that women participants (9,4%) choose the comfort option more. It is true that working from home indeed makes men's lives easier and more comfortable. However, it can be said that working from home makes women's life much easier and more comfortable.

Effectiveness

Success in Task-Related Outcome

67,4% of the participants declared that the result of their work while working from home is pretty good. It should be noticed that result of the work done is as important as the motivation level of the people. A person may indicate that his motivation is high, and this situation may not be reflected in his work. However,

this study shows that the motivation levels of the participants and the results of their work are compatible with each other. Moreover, looking at the results of the work done is very important in future home-working practices. The continuation of the quality of the work done makes the future widespread use of remote work even more feasible.

Challenges of WFH

Absence of social life
While working from home has its motivating sides, there are also undoubtedly some difficulties. When the participants were asked about these difficulties, the biggest negative side of working from home was identified as the lack of social life with 41,7%. Human is a social entity. In working life, people don't just go to work and earn money. At the same time, they become part of a social whole. They communicate and socialize with different people throughout the day. One of the biggest shortcomings of remote work life is that it cannot give people this satisfaction. Although people remain in communication with technological communication tools, none of them can replace face-to-face communication. (Brooks et al., 2020) argues that social distance causes some degree of harm to individuals' mental and physical health. In addition, (Kesling, 2020) argues that some practices such as video games and group work together can keep people sociable, even though telecommunication. To look more into gender differences in the answer to the absence of social life, there is a significant difference between females and males. Males (48,9%) gave much more importance to the absence of social life than female participants (37,5%).

Distraction by family members
Distraction by family members is the second important challenge in the survey results of remote work. 35,8% of the participants indicate distraction by family members as one of the biggest struggling of working from home. Although working from home has been popular in recent years in Turkey, the actual development appears after coronavirus. Companies and employees have been exposed to this unexpected development without much preparation. A good implementation of remote work requires a lot of infrastructure and preparation, including the home system and layout. People caught off guard have trouble focusing on work alongside members of their household. The lack of a separate study room in the houses, the lack of sufficient technological infrastructure, or the lack of distinction and understanding of the work discipline further strengthen these problems.

To look more into gender distribution, it is seen that women have more problems in this regard with 37,5%. (Kniffin et al., 2021) argues that work disruptions may be more severe for the woman in working from home. (Mann & Holdsworth, 2003) suggest that the domestic responsibilities of a woman make employment activities harder because of interruptions and distractions. While

continuing their responsibilities in the home, women trying to do their job remotely are distracted by their children, spouse, or family members.

Self-Organizing and Time management Problems

Working hours of office work are precisely certain. For this reason, it is relatively easy to organize work and home life. Most of the time management and self-organizing is done by the company for you to work. The results of the survey also show that self-organizing and time management is one of the problems in remote work with 16.6%. Organizing oneself and managing their time are skills that people need at every moment of their lives and must be developed. Various methods can be used when organizing them in working life from home to overcome the problem of self-organizing and time management. For example, it should be paid attention to the situations such as separating the hours worked and not work at home, having different clothes for working even at home, planning the work done beforehand. When we look at the gender distribution, it is seen that women have more difficulties in self-organization and time management in remote work in Turkey. (Powell & Craig, 2015) reported that maintaining lines between family and work in remote working can be challenging because of the domestic responsibilities of a woman. The main reason behind this is undoubtedly that in should have to organize more things at home in remote work life

Productivity

Productivity levels

Productivity in remote work is one of the issues that this study emphasizes. Findings show that more people stated that their productivity increased than those who said that they decreased. However, 60.2% of respondents, which are the most majority, announced that they have the same level of productivity. While the motivation of the majority of the participants was high, the majority stated that the productivity level was the same. It cannot be said that working from home increases or decreases productivity significantly. Gender distribution of the participants shows that the rate of female participants who argue that their productivity has increased is higher.

Time management

35% of the participant stated that they would be more productive if they have better time management. Time management is one of the problems that people who work from home need to deal with to increase motivational and productivity levels. The concept of time is one of the most important values of human beings. If time can be managed well, ıt sustains productivity. The most important way to use time effectively and efficiently is to manage time very well. In this context, managing or using time efficiently and effectively, by planning every hour, every minute in line with a specific goal and purpose means to use. Female participants think that time management affects productivity more than

men. One of the reasons for this is that women have too many things to manage time at home.

Technological Problems

According to the participants, one of the biggest factors affecting productivity in home-working life is technical problems with 29.9%. (Staples, 2001) indicates that technology is enabling the creation of virtual organizations and remote work practices; therefore, ıt is very important to use technology effectively by members of organizations. A person who has technological opportunities or has knowledge of usage will be much more efficient and useful in business life. Companies should provide the necessary support to their employees in remote working life. (Baker et al, 2007) argue that that the more technical support provided for WFH the more likely there will be a positive outcome. In addition, employees should be open to learning more about technology and attend more training. It is argued that more training related to WFH given to the employee will be associated with more positive WFH outcomes (Baker, et al, 2007). To look more into gender differences, it can be seen that there is a significant difference. Female participants underline the importance of technical problems affecting productivity in WFH.

6. Conclusion

After the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, the companies have been resorting to remote work. In doing so, the employees have been gravitated to WFH (working from home). In the light of this study findings, a substantial part of the employees from both gender groups is satisfied with the current trend of remote work, while an overwhelming majority of the respondents declare that they have started to remote work after the coronavirus pandemic. Despite stark differences that can be seen between the results of the two groups, attention needs to be paid to an equal level of motivation within both gender groups, as the findings reveal. However, in comparison to other items such as Work-Life Balance, not to waste time on the way, and comfort, having more personal time is the principal motivation for the vast majority of participants. Additionally, a majority of respondents declare that working from home has not significantly affected their productivity. It can be inferred that working from home neither positively nor negatively has impacted the productivity level of the workforce. Despite all the positive impressions of WFH, on the other side of the coin, the negative effects of remote work on employees' motivation levels. In line with the depth perception of findings, however the results for both genders are approximately close, but when it comes to the absence of social life factors, we can observe notable differences between gender groups. In essence, the absence of social life has had more detrimental effects on males than females. Future research requires a comprehensive study about the role of employees' attributes on motivation level in WFH. In this respect, it would be necessary to classify the participants in terms of their education level, age, skill levels, and employment duration. Afterward, the

effect of WFH on the motivational level according to the listed factors can be further explored.

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