

Establishing a Milestone in Knowledge Delivery by Examining How Academicians' Engagement in Their Job at a Private Higher Educational Institution in Malaysia Is Affected by Work from Home (WFH) Experience

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Abstract— Work from home has become a cliché since the advent of covid-19 worldwide. Since this practice is entirely new during the crisis of pandemic, it is crucial to explore this experience. Managing employees in a new norm of workstyle has unique challenges that needs attention. Employers are concerned about the engagement of their employees when they are working away from their usual workplace. As a result, work engagement is a crucial job attitude that must be evaluated to determine if remote workers maintain the same level of enthusiasm for their work. Without monitoring or surveillance, it is essential that staff remain engagement to executing their duties. This phenomenal study sought to investigate these occurrences among academics in Malaysia, with an emphasis on private universities in Klang Valley, in order to comprehend how lecturers' seek to adapt to the new paradigm of teaching and working from home. Based on the findings of a structured interview, it was determined that lecturers face work-family conflict, a loss of engagement and socialisation, and declining performance. Five eminent academicians from five different universities participated in the interview. The transcription provides coding and themes. Nonetheless, bade on the outcome, solution might be managed with job flexibility. This study appeared to support possibilities for flexible employment for academics with high work engagement.¹

Index Terms—work from home, work engagement, job attitude, work family conflict

I. Introduction

There is nothing better than having an employee who is fully committed, involved, satisfied with their work, and consistently motivated at work. These are the employees that companies appreciate and constantly wish to welcome for its employees. This is because an engaged employee is more likely to be a proficient worker with a positive organisational attitude toward their work. There was genuine support for theories including model of work characteristics and work engagement theory supports the employee performance.

We are going through an rapid technology infused era which gives a sudden shift in work culture (Pataki-Bittó & Kapusy, 2021). As such, employers seek employees that can be resilient in their approach to their work. Work practises changed as the worldwide pandemic crisis scenario occurred. Every organisation was consistently attempting to improve its competitive performance. According to extensive research, for many organisations, remote working methods were the only option during the period of COVID-19. The best ad hoc approach for organisations to continue their strategic business seems to be option of remote working. This new work norm also is expected to take milestone after the pandemic.

Malaysia was one of the several countries impacted by the unpredictable COVID-19 pandemic. With only 32.5 million people, managing the increasing number of cases that needed to be treated by our healthcare system wasn't an easy task to accomplish. The announcement of the movement control order has had an impact on numerous businesses, particularly tertiary education. The changes in the online delivery system has been very significance in teaching delivery(Kazemian & Grant, 2022) especially in higher educational institution. This is because there

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should not be any constraint in the knowledge delivery for the university students. Hence, online teaching has been imposed whilst remote working among academicians. The educational industry, being the foundation of building future graduates needs to make best decision towards teaching and manging students. Many higher learning institutions have been practising or plan to adopt work from home fully or partially. Universities are hoping this will not disrupt the teaching and learning quality among students.

Employees are compelled to make a sudden transition to remote working. (Adisa et al., 2021). Study on remote working experience during COVID-19 is important as perception of remote working constantly changing (Kazemian & Grant, 2022). Determining the risks and obstacles is therefore necessary, as is providing the necessary resources and support (Adisa et al., 2021). It should be understood that the work from home is actually a forced working style unlike before Covid-19(Chu et al., 2022). However, when employees were sent away to work from home, with the chaotic environment with full of anxiety, the question of managing personal and work like is an issue. Hence meeting organisational performance may become undermined. From organisational perspective, performance needed to upkeep and here employees are struggling with home issues and environmental global pandemic issues. The commitment of employees may slowly be discharged.

When the new norm of practice of work from home seen both the good and bad, many organisations decided to pursue on with such workstyle. Many organisations were looking into practicing in many alternative way either providing flexible work hours or telecommuting regardless whether there is pandemic or not. As for oirganisation the increasing labor workforce seemed to be finding this a alternative and benefit to employees. Nevertheless, this will be a future scenario with or without pandemic like COVID 19.

The study, hence, attempts to understand the ongoing work from home feasibility whilst having highest level of employee engagement. Factors like flexible working preferences, smart working practices, self-discipline and leadership can results in better remote working experience (Adekoya et al., 2022). Though the trend on work from home has been in trend since pandemic but these employees faces new norm challenges (Amano et al., 2021). Factors affecting work engagement of remote working employees is still unknown and its related to risks behaviour (Amano et al., 2021). Lower level employee engagement while working from caused by high anxiety while working from home (Khan, 2021) work family conflict especially among women (Anderson & Kelliher, 2020) strain and tension (Nadiv, 2021). Though technology plays a role better remote working , however work pressure and overload do lead (Matli, 2020) towards deviation in performance. The right model of work practice needs to be outlined before actually engaging employees to work from home.

In this study, the purpose is to explore if work from home practice can be an ongoing practice in future without disrupting the employee work engagement in future by analysing the current scenario. It is aimed to build an engaging remote work model for higher institutional best practices. As a result, it would have been beneficial to research the extent to which the pandemic posed a threat to employee productivity and well-being, as well as to determine the impact of remote work arrangements on the same outcomes (De Vincenzi et al., 2022).

It is imperative to find out if remote working is beneficial to work engagement (Adisa et al., 2021). There may be some obstacles during WFH is also linked to social isolation, lengthy workdays, and competing family and job obligations. (Adisa et al., 2021). Organizations must comprehend the new work ideals that will emerge during the epidemic, especially among the younger generations (Pataki-Bittó & Kapusy, 2021). The study aims to answer two research question; What is the experience of Work from home during covid-19 among lecturers'? and how engaged employees with their organization while working from home during covid-19?

II. Literature Review

Work Engagement

Job demand-resources (JD-R) theory is an occupational well-being used the factors predicting employee engagement (Nekula & Koob, 2021). As we can see in this theory the right resources need to be engaged to fulfil the job demand which eventually contribute to employee engagement at work. The imbalance creates strain to the

employee. As many academic scholars work engagement has been studied using the theory of work engagement. The theory very comprehensively covers the cognitive, emotional and physical bridging the connection between the personal and work (Khan, 2021). Conservation of Resource theory (COR) developed by Hobfoll, 1989, 2001) is stress based theory which identifies work-to-home conflict (Adisa et al., 2021). Creating a culture of health increases employee engagement (Nekula & Koob, 2021).

Academicians WFH experiences

Each individual whose job requires them to work from home has unique or shared feelings or experiences. However, depending on the industry to which one is connected, the situation can be different. Working from home appears to cause varying levels of pressures for men and women, with men often experiencing greater stress (Rikhi, Monika; Johar, 2021).

Challenges of work from home in accomplishing high work engagement

WFH is part of work-life balance support component (Pataki-Bittó & Kapusy, 2021) There are many factors affects the increase of work engagement when employee working from home. It is important to understand a health and positive work environment at home yields a positive outcome on work. Some of the challenges found among employees working remotely are lack of workplace connectivity (e.g. communication with supervisor), disturbed or lack of sleep hours and long working hours due to multitask (Amano et al., 2021). Some of other barriers on work engagement among academics is loss of knowledge, resisting engagement on the online platform, lack of organisational support and providing low quality content of delivery and lack of time (Kazemian & Grant, 2022). A recent study on the relationship between work engagement and remote working among British employees in mixed professions found that remote working during pandemics was associated with increased workloads, online presentism, employment insecurity, and a poor ability to adjust to changing work norms. (Adisa et al., 2021) The psychological health is negatively impacted by WFH. (Chu et al., 2022). As much as literature asserts that working from home increases positive well-being, one study found that a spill-over from work or home influences work engagement. (Zhang et al., 2020). This means any negative event happens in the evening affects the morning work. Thus, a decreased physical presence at the workplace can carry negative consequences (Minkus et al., 2022).

Aligning the pathway of Working from Home and Work engagement

It is found that organisation which have supportive work values on work life balance and health support is significant (Pataki-Bittó & Kapusy, 2021) It has been discovered that wellbeing is affected by organisational support, supervisor trust, and work-life balance, which in turn promotes productivity in non-work-related activities during the work hour (Chu et al., 2022). Engaging leadership positively associated with employee engagement (Mazzetti & Schaufeli, 2022). Working from home found to be exerting pressure in terms of affective and work family conflict affecting employee well-being (Darouei & Pluut, 2021). A sample of 200 respondents from a survey indicated that employee engagement at work and organisation identification at work are highest when employees work remotely, followed by the hybrid method (Uru et al., 2022). It would be imperative if instrumental and relational aligned in organisational change to support the work from home (De Vincenzi et al., 2022).

III. Methodology

Many of the past research on employee engagement have used quantitative methods (Agoi, 2015; Cuartero-Castañer et al., 2021; Sung et al., 2017). As a result, this study focused on understanding lecturers' experiences in WFH and engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic rather than attempting to support or refute predetermined hypotheses. Qualitative research is usually conducted because a problem or issue needs to be explored (Creswell, 2013). Exploration of a study is required because it is necessary to study a group or population, identify variables that are difficult to measure, or hear silenced voices (Creswell, 2013). A qualitative approach was deemed more appropriate for this study as it offered raw inputs to reveal the subjective experiences of lecturers from private universities in Malaysia. Therefore, this study employed a qualitative case study research approach to help discover the different meanings, experiences and suggestions engaging lecturers to work from home. Qualitative case study is used to search for meaning and understanding, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, as part of an inductive investigative strategy, with the result being richly descriptive

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The focus of the present study was to explore the lecturers' work from home experiences and work engagement towards organisation.

Sampling and Data collection

A purposive sampling method was used in this study. This study primarily aimed to interview people from the academic setting, targeting lecturers with more than five years of work experiences. Lecturers were interviewed from different private universities in Malaysia. The sampling for this study ended when no new information was coming from new participants and when there was evidence of saturation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend sampling until a point of saturation or redundancy is obtained. Interviews between 45 minutes to 100 minutes was conducted and audio recorded online via MS-Teams. Each interview began with an explanation of the audio-recording process and the reasons for its use, with a strong emphasis on confidentiality. According to Green and Thorogood (2018), ethical approval was not required because this study is not stressful for participants, there are no interventions, and participants participated voluntarily. Hence, a letter of informed consent was provided to be acknowledged and signed by each participant. The respondents were interviewed by using a semi-structured interview form which was developed based on the literature on remote working and employee engagement and consisted of open-ended questions that helped to frame the interviews and allowed probing for additional information (Miles & Humberman, 1994). The form consisted of two sections, first it included questions about demographic information and the second section included questions that were related to the lecturers' experiences of work from home and work engagement. Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed into verbatims.

IV. Data Analysis

All recorded audios were transcribed verbatim, and data were analysed using qualitative content analysis method, which is efficient for examining patterns in documents and considered as a method that increases the understanding a particular phenomenon, such as lecturers' WFH experiences and employee engagement in remote working. The data collection method in this study was through in-depth one-to-one interview. All 5 participants were locals working for at least 5 years at private universities in Malaysia. Open coding method was used first before defining categories, Atlas-ti was benefited when compiling, analysing and making connection between themes. The accuracy of various data sources from within the same method was examined by the process of triangulation. For triangulation cross-check information from different dimensions was utilised. There are four types of triangulations; (1) method triangulation; (2) data triangulation, (3) investigator triangulation and (4) theoretical triangulation (Hesse-biber & Leavy, 2006). For the purpose of this study, a multiple methods of data collection were utilised, such as personal interviews, non-participant observation, audio-visual materials and literature reviews. Finally, to establish trustworthiness this study applied Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria method: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Findings were verified by the member check the member check method of Lincoln and Guba (1985). Accordingly, a report including the results of the analyses was sent via e-mail to all participants, and they were asked to read the report and the analyses and answer whether the content of the report was accurate, and the quotation used in the report was congruent with what all the participants had reported. All the five participants accepted to participate in the member check process, and all commented positively.

V. Findings

Data were collected via semi-structured interview from five participants of various private universities in Klang Valley. The below segments were analysed based on two research questions.

Research Question 1: How is the experience of Work from home among lecturers during covid-19?

Based on the above research question, five themes were developed, namely work-family-conflict, convenient, technology support, self-directed learning and socialisation as denoted Table 1.

Theme 1: Work Family Conflict

Lecturer 1: as a woman we still that work and family is equally important for us. So...I think male is bit different because what is they are hook up with meeting they are there until is 12 o'clock but we, we have to make sure that the connection for the kids alright their

Lecturer 5: I...I yeah, there is a various stressful situation but nor arr...as I mention I so excited at the earlier part after few months I feel like is a very stressful working from home because as I mention arr...we need to deal with the many things and sometime we feel like your mind is not only focusing on things, you realize your responsibility will be increase so it's actually end up increasing the stress level.

Lecturer3 : In terms of work performance I will say yes I can do arr...better at home but arr...is actually not balancing my work life because I arr...I'm suddenly more concern on the work oriented person so what happen is when I get any email and everything I won't care worries the time so I try my best to respond as soon as possible, sometimes my husband will asking why you are working at 2 o'clock morning. Suddenly you receive the message or suddenly receive the email immediately open your laptop and respond and so my work performance was very good because they the company feel like a 'wow, ok this person can work any time and they will be respond to and so on', but definitely there is a disadvantages where...which is when have some argument at home with...with my family members because they feel like I'm living and I'm...I'm actually bringing my laptop everywhere so is not care about the family.

Lecturer 3: Because their workplace has a dual role of an employee and also you know, spouse err mother to the children, so I think they will be facing a difficult time.

Lecturer 3: '...I personally feel that during the work from home arrangement, it was more challenging for female staff than male staff. Because the dual role that female staff played, especially in an Asian community, if you know what i mean. It's only the mother who has got the-ah-ah-got who-who have got a-more responsibility, you know. That's why they are known as a home affairs minister. They take care of-take err they-they-they take care of things at home, right? ...'

Lecturer 5: '...But if I'm having classes also I attend a meeting, then a bit challenging for me. I had to go to dining table in the hall.'

Lecturer 3: Yes. It was during when I was working from home. I was very restless. My mind was very restless. So I used to go to bed, but I won't sleep. I knew I wouldn't ..

Respondents has indicated their well- being is affected to some extend. This means there is a work-family conflict in managing family and work life. Participants developed stress at home and working beyond office hours. These issues seemed to be prominent among those who are married with children. One male participant who is not married does not face any conflicting role. Based on the analysis, female seemed to have more stress than male academicians.

Theme 2: Convenient

Lecturer 1: arr...but over the period arr...you know we get so used to it ok...and the impact I can tell you that we become so comfortable with working from home because we were so used with all the system gadget tools that they given to us

Lecturer 2: '...I am glad ahhh..it terms of cost ...its saving...everyday facing the traffic hussle.'

Lecturer 4:...we don't know that availability of like for example with admins or with others lecturers.

Lecturer 4:...I can complete all the script and working some part of from my research paper like within a day, if I went to office if I work in the office it might takes like 2 or 3 days to complete all. So that's why I change my environment now, I'm right now working in the library because

Respondents find that they save time in traffic and money as do not have to travel and spend for fuel, comfortable working from home. However, it be should be understood that working from home, depends on the perception of personal and organisational factors (De Vincenzi et al., 2022).

Theme 3: Technology Support

Lecturer 1: ‘...you know the obstacle due to you know arr...due to the technologies, so I...I find that over the period of time I...I did manage to learn ok, I did manage to adapt the changes so I'm a bit comfortable using the latest technologies provided that I'm given all the training that is needed and how the access and how to use them. Yeah..’

Lecturer 4: ‘...Yup.... well perform and well focus if I can work from home...’

Lecturer 3: ‘...And that had a capacity you know, in terms of a limitation of the data, data plan...’

Some obstacles for respondents is the internet access, mainly on data plan. As for remote working, technology needs to be maintained to move towards productivity (Barabaschi et al., 2022).

Theme 4: Self-Directed Learning

Lecturer 1: ...yessss ..we have support...but but you know, the team not there, so no choice I learn most of the things on my own...or I call my colleagues

Respondent also feel many things have to learn on their own as no one to ask immediately. This indicates, participant has embraced self-directed learning.

Theme 5: Socialisation

Lecturer 2: ‘...Yeah, yes of course the social arr...social interaction part was not there ok and then was what I really miss ok because we always look forward meeting our colleagues at work but once all of the side actually dealing with work from home so is like something like isolated and we have to do things on our own even if you have something that you need to refer or you need to get some assistance sometimes is quite tough but when we doing...doing...I mean when we dealing with physical work I mean it become much easier because you meet your colleagues face to face you...you know you spend some time with them. So the stress that you had while probably while working or while at home is being release while you meeting your colleague but that was not the keys during the work from home so definitely there is a bit of stress and tension arr...you know..’

Lecture 1: sometimes...so stressful....errr...you know working like this

Respondents tend to have negative feelings while working alone without socialisation with colleagues. Respondent social learning is affected.

Overall, the analysis implies that though work from home is being welcome but it come with its price. Many impediments are there. This indicates academicians cannot permanently turn their job at home setting. Education is an industry where isolated work may not be entirely good in future. The conventional or mix mode should be applied considering the technology infusion in teaching and learning. It is evitable to understand that challenges or constraints faced by part participants can cause negative impact on their work engagement if this sustained.

Research Question 2: How engaged employees with their organization while working from home during covid-19?

Theme 1: Management support

Lecturer 2: So they...they say they giving you this flexibility is your time you need to have a work balance and so on but if you able to perform well, yes they will providing us some certificate and rewards and they always had encouraging us to participate in any competition or contest and win to get awards, there is on yes but otherwise they won't really ermm...recognized us on our contribution in how much we actually work from home, how much the our own facilities that we are using, that is no.

Lecturer 3: No support whatsoever. I don't think anyone even asks me how are you feeling? How-how challenging it is to manage staff? Err working remotely. I don't think even such questions were asked. I mean yes, we had dialog sessions with err the VC back then, AL dialog session but I don't know whether dialog session were effective or not.

Lecturer 3: You see, the sad part is I have err err err err a boss, who's very task-oriented. She's like-she will never ask me how are you doing Kumar? How are you feeling Kumar? How was it working from home? No. No such questions were asked. So that-she-the superior, my superior is very task-oriented. For her, it just work. So, she's not gonna ask you questions and how are you feeling, all that. No. It just work. So, I'm so used this kind of style.

Lecturer 5: We should have err frequent team building sessions, out days like 3 months once go for a team building session, right

Lecturer 4: the commitment, the positivity towards organization is always been there but when you have been working from home the scenario is different.

Participants indicate a mix situation when comes to management support. Working from home is expected to be treated as reward. On the other hand, another, participants indicate lack of empathy from the superior. Somehow, it indicates that lack of management support leads to skewed performance. Support given by organisation to have employee commitment and participation. Empathy can be an issues in the struggle. It is important engagement program developed among staff as respondent find that encourages participation. It is known as autonomy, motivation and objectives crucial to achieve the performance in remote working environment(Barabaschi et al., 2022).

Theme 2: Job Attitude and Motivation

Lecturer 1: Ok ok. Now of course first initially the motivation level was a bit down because you feel a bit stress, dealing with something that is totally new to you ok.

Lecturer 5: Arr...I will say it will be dropping it will be...moderating because yes we want to perform because arr...we are in the crisis time and if the..

Lecturer 2: I just wait to complete the task everything that event went successfully, the next day I went and throw my all my anger to my superior I tell them 'I'm done' I...I don't want to do this job anymore and I'm feeling to resign because I feel like it's not suppose be...be, it's suppose be a team

Lecturer 2: After some time you feel the early demotivate and demoralize. We won't find it difficult to wake up in the morning to start work, you know I mean? Because you feel at "Oh my God another day at home to work" you know I mean? That kind of feeling.

Lecturer 3: Yeah my performance may have deteriorated during err MCO when I stayed at home. But I think that is something common because it's a new environment for all of us. You cannot expect that level of performance, right. I mean that is a normal..

Lecturer 1: know arr...I mean 2 years arr...working from home. So I think over the period of...over the period the job satisfaction, motivation and performance did improve compare to the initial stage.

Having a positive work engagement creates a healthy and positive well-being (Uru et al., 2022). It is known as autonomy, motivation and objectives crucial to achieve the performance in remote working environment(Barabaschi et al., 2022). Adversely, having a positive work engagement creates a healthy and positive well-being (Uru et al., 2022)

Theme 3: Communication

Lecturer 3: There was a communication breakdown because you know lah, I mean if you

Also, organisation support in terms of communication is lacking though support from technicality is there. Respondent find their motivation and performance level drifting after some time. At times outburst can take place. Also communication can be challenges to keep the synergy among employees One thing is goals are shared and negotiated clearly, physical presence at office may not be an important criteria(Barabaschi et al., 2022)

Lecturer 2: I will encourage that this arr...remote working mode shouldn't be arr...fully implemented if first add some balancing. It means maybe we can have it 3 days working in the office and 2 days can be working from home because sometime we really need this working from home especially when there is emergency when you really arr

Based on the both research questions we can conclude that work from home or remote working is going to be a new norm of work life. At the same time positive work attitude need to be remains without any challenges. It is important to understand respondents, to some extend has been happy working from home but not entirely as this affects their performance, motivation and work engagement. As such, a balanced hybrid mode to be created after considering the conceptual framework created based on this research. Investing in communication among staff is needed to increae productivity (Barabaschi et al., 2022)

Research Question	Coding	Theme
How is the experience of Work from home among lecturers during covid-19?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stressful • Work family conflict • Less engagement with students and colleagues • Working environment inconducive • Technology learning pressure • Encourages informal learning and programmed learning • Men do not share family burden • Lack of socialization • Negative feeling • Unorganized and untimely work task • Flexibility and freedom of work • Cost saving • Management expectation to rwork ound the clock • Not available support for trouble shooting • Isolated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Family Conflict • Convenient • Technology Support • Self-Directed Learning • Socialisation
How engaged employees with their organization while working from home during covid-19?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation affected • Lack of productivity • No communication with colleagues and superiors • Job satisfaction affected • Performance affected • No recognition • Not feeling engaged • Trust by management • Lack of socialization • Lack of physical support • Non-availability of staff to communicate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management support • Job Attitude and Motivation • Communication

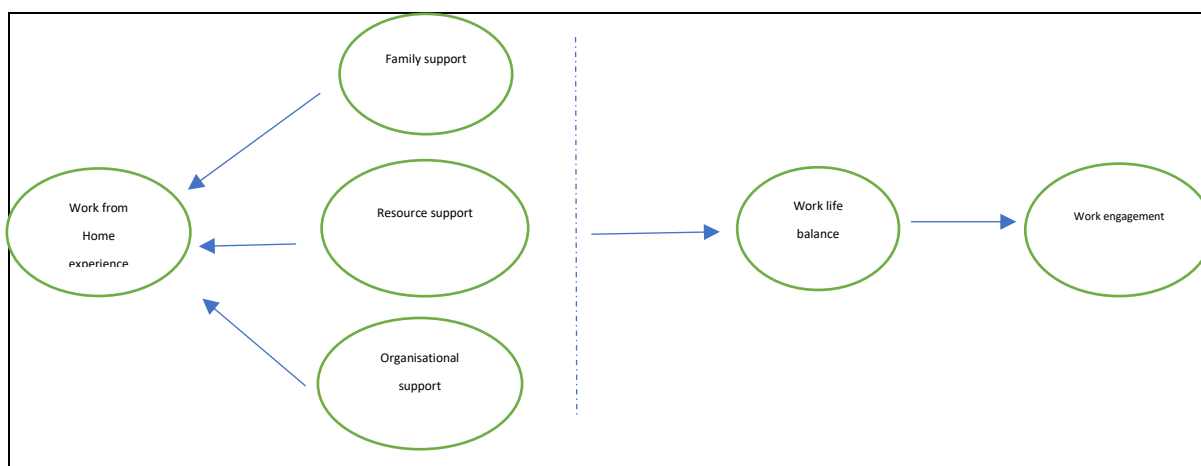
Table 1. Coding and Theme

V. Implication Conclusion And Recommendation

Clearly, this study indicates the potential of novel teaching methods. Despite the fact that universities offer open physical instruction, remote work is nevertheless prevalent. We note two aspects of the lecturer's job here. Universities that employ online distance education require lecturers to educate online and place them at home to work and instruct remotely. In fact, speakers are not assigned a certain seating location. They get to meet student at varies venues. The good news is that jobs have become more flexible and no longer require a 9-to-5 schedule. This, however, does not guarantee a high level of employment commitment to the organisation, as many lecturers are required to teach or work outside of formal working hours. This can interrupt their personal lives and negatively impact an employee's health. To achieve the organisational objective, the psychosocial well-being of employees must be taken seriously. (Chu et al., 2022). Employers must provide ongoing attention, care, and trust, particularly in remote work environments, to encourage employee engagement. Since this is anticipated to be the new academic way of life, institutions must rigorously enforce appropriate HR practises to maintain the positive work attitude of their employees.

Based on the findings of this study as illustrated in Figure 1, we may anticipate that a positive work-from-home experience requires organisation and family support along with resources support. This results in a healthy work-life balance and a happy psychological state. This finally results in positive job attitudes and work engagement. Nevertheless, this state can only be achieved through a combination of remote and in-office labour. Thus, this might boost employee commitment to the organisation. Higher learning organisation can design such type of benefit which can improve the new-technology based working style.. Having the right resources and work life balance attributes to positive cognitive, emotional and physical contribution towards work engagement. It is essential to redesign the work to accommodate hybrid work in order to achieve psychological and behavioural adjustments (Uru et al., 2022). This aligns with Kahn's (1990) theory of work engagement by ensuring the emotional, affective, and physical components necessary to achieve job engagement. It is recommended that remote and onsite working need to be supported(Barabaschi et al., 2022). Culture of health elements include senior leadership, health-related programmes, rules and procedures, supervisor and co-worker support, role modelling, mood, and values (Kwon, Marzec, & Edington, 2015). This is important in terms of organisational support.

Figure 1. Relating work from home and work engagement



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