Research Paper

Influence of Teleworking Acceptance on Employee’s Work Life in Malaysia’s ICT Sector

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Abstract

This research aims to study the influence of teleworking acceptance towards employee’s work life in Malaysia’s ICT sector. The receptive level of employee regarding teleworking is the dependent variable and the effects it has on work life balance, employee efficacy and empowerment are measured using independent variables which are: more family time, control over life, absenteeism, disruption while working, flexibility and satisfaction.

This study follows descriptive and explanatory research design. Empirical data is collected using questionnaire which comprise of 20 questions measured on Likert Scale. A sample of 116 teleworkers based in ICT sector in Cyberjaya, Malaysia were selected using non-probability sampling method. The results gathered were analyzed using SPSS Statistics version 23.0. Descriptive, Correlation and Frequency analysis is performed to analyze the data.

The study found that employees are receptive regarding teleworking arrangement. Concerns related to teleworking acceptance are found to be less significant. This research found teleworking allows teleworkers to have more family time, better control over life and work, reduces absenteeism, provides flexibility, and increases employee satisfaction. This study also finds relative disruption when engaged in telework.

Key Terms: Teleworking, Work life balance, Malaysia, ICT

1. Introduction

“Teleworking” is fast becoming popular working method due to globalization and availability of good ICT infrastructure. Ever evolving information technologies and the emergence of smart gadgets and virtual concept such as cloud computing further flourishes the current trend of teleworking which is independent of location, space, and time. It is growing rapidly in developing countries. Japan allocated a budget about 2.7 trillion yen (about $217, 63, 684, 000) for fiscal 2015 to incorporate work life balance in which introducing teleworking is part of the strategy (Astro Awani, 2016). In Malaysia, teleworking is still not widely recognized (Ng. C et. all, 2004) and growing at slow pace (Heng T.B et al., 2012). Teleworking is one of the arrangement that organization can offer for their employees for various reasons such as
providing a better work life balance, social cause (reducing greenhouse gas emissions), attracting more talent, staff retention and saving cost for both the employee and organization.

**Why we need teleworking?**

Acceptance of telecommuting in Malaysia is crucial to increase competitiveness in terms of labor flexibility and productivity in the era of globalization. This approach also will contribute to sustainable development for Malaysia which aligns with Malaysian Transformation Program (Heng T.B et al., 2012). Adopting teleworking practice in an organization is considered relevant to stay competitive in global market. Verbeke.A et al all stated teleworking has potential in economic, environmental, and social benefits to the employee and organization as well. (Verbeke.A et al., 2008).

**What is the issue?**

There are many multinational companies in Malaysia and they offer teleworking however it's not being accepted as official arrangement or as an attractive option to the management among Malaysians due to the lack of guidance and support. "Management resistance is by far the most frequently reported barrier to telework," (WorldAtWork, 2013). Grantham et al. (1991) conclude in his research stating obstructions to telecommuting are managerial in nature compared to other factors such as cost or technicalities. One of the reason is organizations are sceptical on employee's performance. On Feb 22 2013, Yahoo Chief Executive Officer Marissa Mayer announced phasing out telecommuting (Bloomberg, 2013) and then later, HP's CEO Meg Whitman announced similar decision on October 2013. One of the major reasons for this decision is identified as employee's work life and performance being affected (Huffingtonpost, 2013). They are big player in ICT sector and their decision somehow has influence on how other organization perceives teleworking and on its implementation. Other issues like effects of diversity at workplace on employee satisfaction and performance, which is predominant in Malaysia (Omkar and Josiah, 2015) could be nullified with implementation of teleworking.

Studies regarding telework are scarce as the concept of teleworking is regarded as new in Malaysia. As teleworking concept is in its infancy stage in Malaysia and many areas are still prescriptive; further exploration is needed based on current technological advancement to understand the influence of teleworking and identify the impact on employee's work life.

**Research aims**

The aim of this research is to identify how telework acceptance influences employees work life. The findings will encourage more companies to embrace teleworking as one of their standard working practice whenever suitable and create a better understanding related to teleworking effects on their employees. The findings also expected to serve as an insight for organization other than ICT sector to adapt teleworking by considering the benefits that comes with its acceptance.

**Research objectives**

1) To identify the receptive level of employee on teleworking in their organization.
2) To identify whether teleworking contributes in work life balance by allowing more family time.
3) To identify whether teleworking contributes in work life balance by allowing control over life.
4) To identify whether teleworking contributes in employee efficacy by reducing absenteeism.
5) To identify whether teleworking contributes in employee efficacy by reducing disruption related to working environment.
6) To identify whether teleworking contributes in employee empowerment by allowing flexibility.
7) To identify whether teleworkers are highly satisfied.

2. Literature Review

What is Teleworking

The term teleworking originated in the 1970s, first invented by Nilles (1975, 1994) to describe an option that allows employee to work outside of typical workplace. The emergence of "Cloud Based" work, made scholars to rethink of the term "Telework" and deemed it to be outdated to be referred for the option to work from “home” or “remote” or “mobile” or “virtual”. Teleworking is in the rapid evolution mode and undergoing constant change in term of technological as well as how it's being performed. Effects discussed in one publication often gets outdated and inapplicable in another which is a norm in any study related to ICT (Messenger and Gschwind, 2015). Taking that into consideration and New ICT related to "Virtual Office" which is still in infancy, the generic term Teleworking and teleworker is used for all nature of work which is performed out of the office as long they are office related throughout this article.

![Teleworker Trending by year](source from worldatwork.org)

Telework and Work Life Balance

Work life balance is usually policies that strive to strike a balance between work and home responsibilities (J Redmond, M Valiulis, E Drew, 2006). Most of the MNC and ICT companies usually needs 24/7 workforce to remain competitive in the global-market place (Nixon and Spector, 2014). Striking a good balance between work and personal life then becomes a challenge. The emergence of “Virtual Office”, which allows flexibility of time and location and the effects it has on work life balance is still ambiguous (Hill & Miller et. All, 1998). Hesse and Grantham (1991) in their research contended that many traditional organizations are at the edge of a transformation in which they are distributing themselves electronically to form "invisible organizations" and this will dramatically change the social psychology of work life dramatically. In this study, researcher will try to analyse on the work life balance from teleworkers standpoint and challenge the ambiguity related to work life balance when telework.

Telework and Efficacy

Self-efficacy is one's belief in the capability of performing a task (Bandura, 1977) and consistently found to be associated with work related performance in numerous studies (Staples, Hulland, and Higgins, 1998). Bloom, Liang, Roberts and Ying, (2014) conducted a research to identify uncertainty and sceptical view on teleworking especially on “shirking from home". Their research was first random experiment on some 16,000 employees working from home at NASDAQ-listed Chinese firm – Ctrip. They found an increase in employee performance who worked from home which includes fewer breaks, sick days, higher work satisfaction. Attrition rate for employees who are engaged in telework also reduced considerably. However,
this experiment limited the research to workers who are from call-centre which requires neither teamwork nor in-person face time. In case of productivity, IBM employees who participated in the alternative workplace programme reports that their productivity and effectiveness have increased (Apgar, 1998). American Express president and COO Kenneth I expressed that telework gives companies an edge in competitiveness and enables them to keep talented and highly motivated employees. Apgar (1998) stressed organization culture is a vital part in managing telework due to the factor that people are not physically there and suggest the managers to learn on the culture and help employees to balance the boundaries between work and home life. Other research reports benefits related to telework as higher organizational commitment, reduced employee absenteeism, increased levels of job satisfaction and reduced turnover rates among employees (Davis and Polonko 2001).

**Telework and Empowerment**

McGregor (1960) in his research argued employee's productivity can be increased if management’s approach changed to grant formal authority and opportunity to perform meaningful work. Tomaskovic-Devey & Risman (1993) stated that managerial goals and methods in managing telework are more inclined towards empowerment of employees and restricted to organizational regulations. Teleworking should be a work performed by virtual teams and proper support is needed to allow organization to adapt to the changes in the organization (Jackson et al., 2002). In their findings, they pointed out that there are no major complications to successfully adapt to telework, however recommended that organizations practice flexible organization structures to accommodate virtual team along with the availability of the capabilities and strong opinion on teleworking. Tomaskovic-Devey and Risman (1993) state that trust is a major influence or enabler factor for employees to telework. This era is where we see the start of borderless organization structures which has members working not with the person in the office next to each other but with physically distant co-workers tied together with electronic communication networks.

**Conceptual Framework**

Telework is an evolving phenomenon. Based on the review of exiting literatures and analyzing the frameworks, below Conceptual Framework is developed. The main factors that influences teleworker are categorized into Work Life, Efficiency and Empowerment and discussed in Figure 3.

![Conceptual Framework](image)

**Figure 2: Conceptual Framework – Influence of Telework Acceptance towards Work Life**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACTORS</th>
<th>Impact to Employee Work Life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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| WORK LIFE BALANCE (Di Martino et al., 1990) | ➢ Allow teleworkers to run errands or schedule appointments without losing a full day. (Heng T.B et al., 2012)  
  ➢ Employees saves the commuting time and could use it performing work for the company or personal life (Shamir & Salomon, 1985).  
  ➢ Employee able to take control of their lives, and find a balance between work and life (Sakamoto and Spinks, 2008). |
|EFFICACY (Sakamoto and Spinks, 2008) | ➢ Elevate employee’s performance level due to ability to perform even when on the move (Sakamoto and Spinks, 2008)  
  ➢ Decrease of attrition due no hassle in commuting to work (Hesse and Grantham, 1991)  
  ➢ Avoid disruptions that exist in office environment and allow employee to focus on task (Sproull & Kieslerr, 1991).  
  ➢ Allows talent pool regardless of Geographic, socioeconomic, and cultural diversity (Kurland and Bailey, 1999)  
  ➢ Reduce absenteeism (Davis and Polonko, 2001) |
| EMPOWERMENT Tomaskovic-Devey & Risman (1993) | ➢ Avoiding travelling issues; Still able to be in the job when issues related to family commitment (Bowen et al., 1992, Liden & Tewksbury, 1995)  
  ➢ Encourages employee’s participation by taking full responsibility and independent (Spreitzer,1995, Lawler. Et all, 1995), Hesse and Grantham, 1991)  
  ➢ Employee’s appreciation for flexibility given to attend to personal needs, family issues (Olson, 1987, Heng T.B et al., 2012) |

Figure 3: Factors that influence telework acceptance and its impact

### 3. Research Design and Methodology (important for research papers)

Teleworking is a phenomenon which happened and happening now and the acceptance of telework and how it influences towards organization and employees work life will be measured in this research. Hence, descriptive research considered suitable to be used as Research Design. Descriptive research is conclusive in nature, as opposed to exploratory; hence in this research; quantifiable information from targeted participant gathered and used to statistically conclude via data analysis. Primary data collection will be performed using quantitative approach and questionnaire is selected as a suitable method to gather data for this research.

**Questionnaire**

The questionnaire for this study consisted of total 20 questions that were developed based on main 3 independent variables and 1 dependent variable, each variable consists of two question to ensure the respondent able to provide feedback that is relevant to identify the
objective of the research. The questionnaire has both classification and target questions. It has demographic questions which consist of gender, job position, length of employment, commuting preferences, and target questions such as the concerns related to telework, and benefits that help to gather socio demographic characteristics. Questions related to perceived concerns are the only question which is negatively constructed. The second part of questions are related to factors identified in the framework which are employee's take on work life balance, quality life, family time, control over time, absenteeism, disruptions, extra work time benefits, flexible work schedule, and satisfaction. Since majority of the respondents preferred to remain anonymous identification question was kept voluntary not mandatory. The questionnaire was formatted in English language, kept simple and easy to answer with a Likert scale of 5 so that the response rate would be higher. Those are 1- strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Somewhat Agree, 4- Agree and 5- Strongly Agree.

**Development of the questionnaire for this research:**

The first section of the questionnaire is demographic questions to analyze type of respondents in term of the gender, position and role, commuting preferences and cost and teleworking preferences and concerns. Second section is designed to capture information on the benefits the teleworkers realized when they accept teleworking. The variables are categorized into 3 main categories for the dependent variables which each consist of 2 variables.

![Figure 4: Independent and Dependent variables](image)

**Target Respondents**

Data for this research will be collected using questionnaire which includes closed-ended and rating-scale questions which will be distributed among employees that work in Dell in Cyberjaya. Dell already have telework program called “Connected Workplace” in which 20 percent of its employees telecommute, work remotely, or have variable work times (eWeek, 2013). Dell Cyberjaya has about 600 employees and approximate of 200 employees who practices telework (routine or situational) and having formal or informal arrangement with their organization to telework will be selected to participate in the research. Due to time constraints and accessibility issues, only specific target population will be reached out in this research. The study is focussed on getting feedback from employee who are involved in teleworking hence selecting respondent from teleworking community would be most suitable. The respondents chosen are teleworkers based in Dell Cyberjaya. Probability sampling design will be used and the sampling method will be simple random sampling.

**Accessibility issues**

Some of the accessibility issues that may arise are to access to the employees to conduct the research. They may not be available physically in the office during office hours and limitation exists in face to face communication with the respondents. Also, permission from companies to conduct the research needed before approaching the employees directly for
feedback. Approval letter need to be obtained and ensure that the data collected is compliant with the company's policies to ensure privacy and confidentiality.

Data analysis plan

The data will be analysed using the Quantitative approach. SPSS will be used to assist in analysing the data collected during the research and to allow researcher to identify on how teleworking influences employees. Some of validation and analysis methods will be performed using techniques such as Reliability, Normality, and descriptive statistics. Further analysis of the data will be performed using frequency analysis.
4. **Results and Discussion (Important for research paper)**

To understand the teleworking influence from the teleworker’s perspective, participants who have accepted teleworking as their working methods both officially or unofficially and random or frequent basis were selected and invited to participate. Total of 150 questionnaires distributed and 116 responded (n = 116).

**More family time**

From the data analysis, 60.3% (31% strongly agree and 29.3% Agree) with the statement that telework allows more family time. From the earlier researches, it was found teleworking helps to reconcile with family responsibilities (Di Martino et al., 1990) and promote healthy work life balance (Shamir & Salomon, 1985). These factors along with factors such as ability to work from employee’s own home while being with family is to be considered as factors leading to the acceptance of teleworking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Control over life**

Below analysis shows that 69.3% employees agree that they have more control over life when telework which was also agreed by Sakamoto and Spinks (2008) in their research. It implies they get to spend doing work with an option to do it at a space of their own preference and at which they feel they are most productive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>41.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reduce absenteeism**

Analysis on absenteeism shows that 58.6% of teleworker agrees that teleworking has an impact on reducing absenteeism. This is score from the feedback Strongly Agree = 34.5% and Agree = 24.1%, while 15.5% states somewhat agree. The mean for less absenteeism variable is 3.58, shows greater value towards those who agree with absenteeism is reduced when telework and this agrees with previous discussion in literature review where its mentioned that teleworking reduces the number of leaves taken by teleworker (Di Martino et al., 1990). This also implies that worker can still resume their normal work from home in case of emergencies when they are prohibited to be physically present in office or when issues related to commuting arises. Another question to measure this factor is asked to the participants; the number of leave taken by teleworker while working (telework). It shows that 75.86% of employees did not take
any absent / emergency / medical leaves while they telework and only 23.28% took one or two
days leave while remaining 0.86% took more than 2 days leave. As the score represents positive
inclination towards the acceptance of less absenteeism when teleworking, it further strengthens
the claims that telework helps in reducing absenteeism.

Table 3: Data Analysis result - Teleworking reduces absenteeism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Participant Response</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5: Chart showing % of teleworkers absent or taking emergency / medical leave while telework.

Reducing Disruptions

Only 27.6% of teleworker agrees that there is less disruption when they are engaged in
teleworking. Researches state teleworking is associated with fewer disruptions and due to
fewer interruptions it improves their concentration towards work (Di Martino et al., 1990). The
findings showing only 8.6% strongly agree and 19% agree telework reduce disruption. 13.8%
somewhat agree and stayed neutral. 47.4% and 11.2% Disagreed and Strongly Disagreed
respectively. Some teleworkers who are performing work at home may get disrupted by family
members when they are working from home and this could one of the contributing factor.

Table 4: Data Analysis result - Teleworking reduces disruptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Participant Response</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Flexibility

Below data analysis shows that teleworkers are finding flexibly as the biggest and most beneficial attribute to teleworking. A huge number of responses agreed to this with the maximum percentage from overall which is **75.8% (53.4%-Strongly Agree and 22.4%-Agree)** and the **Mean=4.19**. The ability to work regardless location, and being able to cater for personal needs by accommodating work time accordingly to needs are some of the factors identified in flexibility variable by the previous researchers (Bowen et al., 1992), (Liden & Tewksbury, 1995), (Spreitzer,1995) and (Heng T.B et al., 2012). Findings show 15.5% somewhat agree and 6.9% Disagreed and 1.7% Strongly Disagreed for flexibility associated with teleworking benefits. The result from the data analyses proves that teleworkers inclination is towards majority agreeing that teleworking provides them with flexibility and as the most preferred option. Distribution of work over time and space proves to be one of the most significant influences teleworking has during this information revolution age (Hiltz et al., 1988). Flexibility that come from teleworking option has social and cultural implications and provide a greater scope in the way in much modern work is carried out nowadays.

<table>
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<th>Participant Response</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>53.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Higher satisfaction

Below data analysis shows that **66.3% (mean=3.78)** of respondent are highly satisfied with teleworking. A total of 28.4% strongly agreed and 37.9% agree that teleworking is linked to employee’s satisfaction. 20.7% says somewhat agree, 8.6% and 4.3% states disagree and strongly disagree. From the findings, the result is inclined to acceptance of higher satisfaction when telework. As discussed in the previous section and previous researches proofs that teleworkers are employees who are independent and satisfied (Olson, 1987). This implicates that teleworkers are mostly independent as they work in isolation and need to be responsible and involved in decision making which gives them authority depending on their position and nature of work which in turn gives them higher satisfaction and empowerment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Participant Response</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Conclusion

This research was conducted with the aim to identify influence of teleworking acceptance towards employees work life in Malaysian Teleworking community context. To
achieve the aim, variables related to work life identified, mainly focussing 3 categories which are Work Life Balance, Efficacy, and Empowerment. These variables were selected as teleworking always linked with work life balance. However, ensuring work life balance alone is not sufficient to support teleworking acceptance, hence employee’s efficacy and empowerment also deemed as crucial as they contribute to better performance and productivity. The manifestation of these 3 variables could justify the acceptance of teleworking among stakeholders. Finding the influence of telework on all these factors is significant in decision making related to whether to support teleworking or not. The study population was focussed on telesworkers and was conducted among employees who are currently engaged in teleworking in company Dell, based in Cyberjaya. This research is a descriptive research and data were collected using questionnaire from the target group of telesworkers. The analysis was performed using SPSS software.

The findings suggest that there are positive influences regarding teleworking acceptance towards employee work life balance, efficacy, and empowerment. The receptive level of teleworking in the organization is positive. Advanced ICT technologies and distributed work life allows teleworking to be accepted and practiced widely.

Research concludes employees are receptive regarding “telework” working method. Telework acceptance positively influences work life balance as it allows employee to have more family time and control over life. Family time is important as employee needs to fulfil family responsibilities as well and employee who are overworked and unable to balance the time for personal fulfilment will eventually worn out and become demotivated and affect their performance. Research conclude that teleworking allows employees to have work life balance. Teleworking also contributes to employee efficacy by reducing absenteeism. Research state absenteeism is viewed as habitual issue and contributes to inefficiency, low morale, and disengagement in work. Disruption while working can contribute to employees not being fully productive. Hence, research findings conclude that absenteeism is less among teleworker however there is no significance on teleworkers with less disruption. Contrary to research cited in support for less disruption, some studies have similar outcome as disruption exists in the form of the location or environment the teleworker choose to perform their work. Research conclude teleworking helps in reducing absenteeism, however other factors related to efficacy need to be measured in future to accurately associate teleworking with employee efficacy.

Teleworking acceptance contributes to employee’s empowerment by allowing flexibility. Teleworkers are always associated with being independent, has a certain degree of autonomy to get their responsibilities or tasks done. This is advantageous for organizations as it impacts employee’s productivity. From the findings, teleworkers feel they are empowered with the flexibility that comes with teleworking and increases their satisfaction. Researchers suggest that empowered and satisfied employees are productive, committed and stay longer in the company. Research concludes teleworking acceptance contributes to employee’s empowerment.

Based on the overall findings, it’s concluded that teleworking acceptance positively influences employee by providing greater work life balance, improving efficacy by reducing absenteeism and promote empowerment.

Reference


