

The Emergence of the Work from Home (WFH) Phenomenon during Covid-19 and Its Effect on the Information Technology Industry: A Review of Literature

Work from
Home

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has created profound disruptions in the global economy. Along with massive job losses, it has drastically changed traditional work arrangements. Lockdown procedures and social distancing policies have forced companies to redesign their business models to maintain sustainability. As a result, the work-from-home (WFH) concept has become a viable solution to boost employment and increase worker productivity. The information technology (IT) industry has quickly adopted the WFH concept since workers have greater access to the Internet and IT infrastructure, along with strong technical skills. This case study, therefore, reviews the effects of working from home on the Sri Lankan economy with a special emphasis on the IT industry. A case study was used under the qualitative approach by reviewing secondary sources, including research articles, newspapers, websites, annual reports, and other publications. Based on the results, this paper is convinced that although there are positive and negative consequences of the WFH concept on the economy, the majority of these consequences are positive. As well as it was evidenced that most IT companies in different countries have been widely successful while allowing their employees to work from home during the pandemic. They have been able to address customers' demands while strengthening the national economy. Further findings reveal that while the WFH concept poses challenges, it also offers many benefits to organizations. This paper provides suggestions to make WFH a more widespread model.

Keywords: WFH phenomenon, COVID-19 pandemic, Sri Lankan economy, Sri Lankan IT industry.



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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic created several vulnerabilities, especially in developing countries. It led to the worst economic downturn in recent memory and halted almost all economic activities in Sri Lanka (Robinson & Kengatharan, 2020; Wimalaweera, 2020). In addition to economies, the pandemic severely affected the labor market. Four hundred thirty-six million enterprises, including own-account workers and employers, were at high risk of disruption, and 68% of the global workforce lived in countries requiring workplace closure, which affected the earning capacity, income, and continuation of workers' livelihoods. Manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, accommodation, food services, and real estate and business activities were the worst hit by the pandemic in the world (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2020a). Unprecedented global employment losses (114 million jobs) were recorded in 2020 compared to 2019, and it was higher for women (5%) and young workers (8.7%) (ILO, 2021). Another adverse impact of the pandemic was the substantial loss of global working hours of 8.8% in 2020. It was four times greater than the working hour losses during the global financial crisis in 2009, which was primarily seen in lower-middle-income countries (ILO, 2021).

The World Health Organization (WHO) announced many steps to control the spread of this pandemic. Accordingly, Governments implemented different measures, including restrictions on movements, physical distancing, and closure of non-essential companies (ILO, 2020b). Those measures affected the work routines and cultures of the laborers (Central Bank of Sri Lanka [CBSL], 2020). Hence, Work from Home (WFH), roster systems, and flexible working hours were adopted to restrict the working performance in the usual working environment (CBSL, 2020). As a temporary or alternative solution for ensuring business continuity during the pandemic, many companies have since become accustomed to the concept of WFH (ILO, 2020b).

The WFH concept emerged as a model that can be used to continue the business process of companies. Although it was not a novel concept in the business world, it expanded massively during the pandemic (Mudalige & Edirisinghe, 2020). According to ILO (2020b), “*WFH is a working arrangement in which a worker fulfills the essential responsibilities of his/her job while remaining at home, using Information and Communication Technology (ICT).*” To continue services, maintain productivity, and ensure workers' job security, health, and safety, companies may be able to execute WFH arrangements if all premises in the entire company are closed for any reason (ILO, 2020b). Default place of work, work hours, parameters of WFH arrangements, performance expectations and objectives, remuneration, facilities and costs, welfare, health and safety, and other related aspects should be appropriately addressed when implementing the WFH concept (Mudalige & Edirisinghe, 2020). ILO estimates that 7.9% of the world's workforce (approximately 260 million workers) worked from home permanently before the pandemic (ILO, 2020a).

Further, ILO found that nearly 18% of workers are entitled to occupations suitable for WFH with the required infrastructure (ILO, 2020b). However, they emphasized that every occupation cannot be done at home. Workers must attend physically to the workplace in some

professions. As per the estimates, approximately one-sixth of the global and one-fourth of the advanced countries have occupations that can be done from home (ILO, 2020a).

The 8.6 million economically active population in Sri Lanka comprises 35.5% females and 64.5% males. Further, it consists of 3.5 million people in the private sector and 2.7 million own account workers (Wimalaweera, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic severely affected the Sri Lankan economy, labor market, and the world. Since 2020, the conventional lifestyle of people in society was changed unexpectedly due to the pandemic. (Mudalige & Edirisinghe, 2020). The Sri Lankan Government took proactive measures to control the pandemic on March 15, 2020. Closing borders for inbound passenger traffic, enforcing island-wide curfew and import restrictions and implementing WFH practices in both public and private sectors are some of those measures (Wimalaweera, 2020). Although the concept of WFH in Sri Lanka has been used in the past, it became prevalent during the pandemic. The success of this concept depends on many factors, such as commitment, shared responsibility, and mutual understanding between employee and employer (CBSL, 2020). Proactive measures for COVID-19, including the WFH concept, sped up the digital transformation of companies. The information technology industry specifically gained from the WFH concept (Elgohary & Abdelazyz, 2021). Rusdha & Edirisooriya (2021) stated that sectors like ICT, finance, and professional services are more flexible to WFH. According to the Information and Communication Technology Agency (ICTA) of Sri Lanka (2019), the ICT workforce grew from 82,854 in 2014 to 146,089 in 2019. In 2019, export earnings from the ICT industry reached approximately \$900 million and were targeted to earn \$5 billion by 2025. Hence, the ICT industry is one of the possible industries that can fully implement the concept of WFH.

A sufficient number of research (e.g., CBSL, 2020; ILO, 2020b; Mudalige & Edirisinghe, 2020; Nizath & Karunaratne, 2021; Rusdha & Edirisooriya, 2021; Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021) has been conducted to examine the WFH phenomenon emerged as a solution for the problems developed in the labor market during the pandemic and its impact on the economies in different countries. Thereby, limited research (e.g., Mudalige & Edirisinghe, 2020; Nizath & Karunaratne, 2021; Rusdha & Edirisooriya, 2021) has been focused on investigating the impact of the WFH concept on the different dimensions in Sri Lanka. However, there is a lack of research on studying the impact of the WFH concept on the Sri Lankan economy, with a special emphasis on the Sri Lankan IT industry. In order to compensate for this lack of research, the present study is conducted as a case review.

Purpose and Methodology

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the WFH phenomenon emerged as an attractive solution to continue the business process without any breakdown in both the private and public sectors in Sri Lanka. However, it was more successful in the ICT and financial sectors than in other industrial sectors. It had a beneficial impact on the Sri Lankan economy, despite the economic downturn related to the pandemic. Hence, the study focused on examining the emergence of the WFH phenomenon during COVID-19 and its effects on the Sri Lankan economy, with a special emphasis on the IT industry in Sri Lanka.

To achieve the research objective, an explanatory type of research was used as the study aims to investigate the impact of the WFH concept on the Sri Lankan economy. A case study was used under the qualitative research method by reviewing secondary sources to study the WFH phenomenon and its consequences on the Sri Lankan economy in detail, with particular reference to the IT industry. Research articles, websites, newspapers, annual reports, other reports, and local and foreign organization publications were used as secondary sources for collecting the required information for the study.

Empirical Review

Impact of COVID-19 on the Sri Lankan Economy

The COVID-19 pandemic originated in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 (Singh & Kumar, 2020). The WHO declared it a global pandemic on March 11, 2020, because it was widespread globally (Elgohary & Abdelazyz, 2021). The effects of the Coronavirus have hit the world hard, especially in developing countries, by declining exports and tourism, dropping remittances, and creating difficulties in accessing financial markets (Robinson & Kengatharan, 2020). The first local COVID-19 infected person was recorded in Sri Lanka on March 11, 2020 (Jayaratne, Arambepola & Prathapan, 2020). Since then, the Sri Lankan Government has implemented several preventive measures to avert the pandemic, including quarantine for all incoming passengers, imposing travel bans, implementing an island-wide curfew and social distancing measures, and stoppage of on-arrival visas and stoppage of all passenger flights to Sri Lanka (Hewage et al., 2020).

The pandemic devastated the Sri Lankan economy, highlighting the collapse of many sectors. According to Robinson & Kengatharan (2020), tourism is the backbone of the Sri Lankan economy and is the third-largest foreign exchange earner. The pandemic severely affected tourism due to the closing of airports and the lockdown of the country. Likewise, the apparel industry was also disrupted due to the shortage of raw materials (Robinson & Kengatharan, 2020). Roshana et al. (2020) revealed that China is the second most significant source of imports and tourist arrivals for Sri Lanka. However, the economic downturn of China because of the pandemic considerably impacted the Sri Lankan economy. In addition to China, Sri Lanka imports from India, Singapore, and European countries. Those countries were also severely affected because of the pandemic, which caused a delay in purchasing raw materials and reduced imports of goods and services. The Sri Lankan major export destinations are the USA, UK, and European countries. Due to the pandemic, export demand declined significantly from all those countries (Roshana et al., 2020).

Moreover, receiving remittances declined massively due to the termination of Sri Lankan employees in Middle East countries. During the pandemic, the exchange rate depreciated due to reduced tourism arrivals and reduced export earnings (Roshana et al., 2020). Ultimately, the pandemic changed people's living, working, learning, playing patterns, and enterprise and consumer behavior. Hence, online activities such as meetings, learning, and shopping emerged unprecedentedly from the pandemic (Elgohary & Abdelazyz, 2021).

The Economy with the Emergence of the WFH Concept

Amid the pandemic, millions worldwide faced an unprecedented change to WFH. As a result, some organizations found it difficult to maintain the productivity of their employees (Giurge & Bohns, 2020; Singh & Kumar, 2020). Nakrosiene, Bučiūnienė & Goštautaitė (2019) commented that WFH is doing all office work from home with an agreement between employees and employers that facilitates WFH. Nizath & Karunaratne (2021) defined WFH as performing job-related work at home rather than household and personal activities. They conducted a study on the impact of WFH on the work-life balance of gender roles in Sri Lanka. They found that WFH was one of the initiatives implemented to continue working while staying safe and resilient under a flexible working policy. Although WFH creates adverse effects such as job insecurity, isolation, long work hours, career harm, and co-worker resentment, it establishes several positive outcomes (Nizath & Karunaratne 2021).

According to CBSL (2020), executing the WFH concept benefits employees, employers, and the economy. From the employer's point of view, reduced staff expenses such as transport allowances and overtime, reduced operational expenses such as workspace and utility costs, reduced turnover, and improved employee satisfaction are the key benefits of WFH. From the employee's point of view, greater flexibility with working time and workplace, reduced commuting time and relevant expenses, better work-life balance, and fewer distractions are the key benefits of WFH. Adopting the WFH concept significantly increases efficiency by reducing the requirement of physical office spaces, time, and office administration costs such as phone, electricity, and infrastructure maintenance. According to Gartner's global research firm, Singh & Kumar (2020) found that 74% of Chief Financial Officers plan to move their human resources permanently to a work-from-home position. Female labor force participation has historically been meager in Sri Lanka. Arunatilake & Thilanka (2021); CBSL (2020) revealed that the WFH concept is an attractive solution for addressing this issue. Moreover, it helps promote economic growth by working as a mechanism to increase resource availability in the country. Through their study, Singh & Kumar (2020) also revealed that WFH policies lead to an increase of women in the workforce, especially married women with young babies.

Table 1. Positive and Negative Impact of the WFH Phenomenon

| Positive Impact | Author | Negative Impact | Author |
|--|---|---|---|
| Reduced staff expenses such as transport allowances and overtime | CBSL (2020); Mustajab et al. (2020); Purwanto et al. (2020) | Difficult to maintain the productivity of employees | Giurge & Bohns (2020); Jacobs (2017); Rockman & Pratt (2015); Singh & Kumar (2020); Taskin & Bridoux (2010) |
| Reduced operational expenses such as workspace and utility costs | CBSL (2020) | Increased job insecurity | Nizath & Karunaratne (2021) |
| Reduced turnover | CBSL (2020) | Increased isolation | Nizath & Karunaratne |

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| | | | (2021); Rockman & Pratt (2015); Taskin & Bridoux (2010) |
| Reduced requirement of physical office spaces, time, and office administration costs such as phone, electricity, and infrastructure maintenance, etc. | Behrens, Kichko & Thisse (2021); CBSL (2020); Kulatunga (2020) | Long working hours | Nizath & Karunaratne (2021) |
| Improved employee satisfaction | CBSL (2020); Rusdha & Edirisooriya (2021) | Career harm and co-worker resentment | Mustajab et al. (2020); Nizath & Karunaratne (2021) |
| Greater flexibility in relation to working time and workplace | CBSL (2020); Kulatunga (2020); Mustajab et al. (2020); Purwanto et al. (2020) | Loss of work motivation | Mustajab et al. (2020); Purwanto et al. (2020) |
| Ability to work with limited number of resources | Purwanto et al. (2020) | Additional expenses for electricity and internet facilities | Mustajab et al. (2020); Purwanto et al. (2020) |
| Reduced commuting time and relevant expenses | Behrens et al. (2021); CBSL (2020); Purwanto et al. (2020) | Data security problems | Purwanto et al. (2020) |
| Better work-life balance and fewer distractions | Behrens et al. (2021); CBSL (2020); Mustajab et al. (2020) | Multitasking | Mustajab et al. (2020) |
| Enhanced female labour force participation | Arunatilake & Thilanka (2021); Bonacini, Gallo & Scicchitano (2021); CBSL (2020); Singh & Kumar (2020) | Limited communication | Mustajab et al. (2020); Rockman & Pratt (2015); Taskin & Bridoux (2010) |
| Promoted economic growth by working as a mechanism to increase resource availability in the country | Arunatilake & Thilanka (2021); CBSL (2020) | | |
| Reduced emission of greenhouse gases | Behrens et al. (2021) | | |
| Increased average labour income | Bonacini et al. (2021) | | |
| Increased efficiency | CBSL (2020); Kulatunga (2020); Mustajab et al. (2020) | | |
| Ability to maintain the economic balance of the community in a stable manner | Purwanto et al. (2020) | | |
| Digital transformation | Savic (2020) | | |

Source: Developed by the author, 2022

Impact of the WFH on the IT Industry

According to Wattegama (2021), the ICT industry in Sri Lanka is primarily export-oriented and has become a profitable industry today. The Sri Lankan IT sector comprises more than 300 companies, including banking, communications, apparel and textiles, insurance and financial services, manufacturing, retail, media, transportation, healthcare, travel, and leisure. Further, Wattegama (2021) notes that Sri Lanka acts as an offshore development center for fortune 500 companies in the United Kingdom, the United States, Ireland, Sweden, and Australia, along with joint ventures in Norway, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Japan. The IT sector has grown with the expansion of Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPO) and BPO. Wickramasinghe & Kumara (2010) stated that the BPO industry offers jobs that did not exist in the country before and offers more significant opportunities and challenges for people management.

Elgohar & Abdelazyz (2021) conducted a comparative study regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the IT industry between Middle East countries and Egypt. They have gathered the required information from different secondary sources such as research, websites, and reports. It was revealed that technology and communication services became more paramount than ever before due to market changes caused by the pandemic. Singh & Kumar (2020) studied the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the working culture based on IT professionals in India. They employed a quantitative study with a descriptive survey and collected data by distributing a google form survey among randomly selected full-time working professionals in the IT industry in Bengaluru, India. They emphasized that the pandemic severely impacted India's IT industry due to the nationwide lockdown measure. It changed the working situation of employees unexpectedly to WFH. For example, Tata Consultancy Services, the most prominent IT employer in India, has deployed about 90% of its entire workforce to WFH, and even now, employers are willing to hire persons who can work from home using their own facilities (Chandrashekar & Pramanik, 2020). Rusdha & Edirisooriya (2021) studied how WFH increases employees' job satisfaction based on the ICT industry in Sri Lanka using randomly selected 384 employees from Sri Lankan ICT firms. They have carried out a survey strategy under the quantitative approach by collecting primary data through self-developed questionnaires. According to their study, employees in the ICT industry in Sri Lanka are more willing to WFH. Their satisfaction with WFH is higher because they are more familiar with the usage of technologies and have ICT infrastructure facilities at a significant level. They further affirmed that the ICT industry is more flexible to WFH.

Case Review and Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic has harmed all economies in the world. Of those, the economies of developing countries, including Sri Lanka, were the worst affected. They found it very difficult to cope with the aftermath of the outbreak. To save people's lives, Governments had to take more proactive measures such as lockdown, curfew, social distancing, and temporary closing places where people congregate, including schools, airports, ports, markets, public and private companies, etc. In addition, Governments introduced and expanded the WFH concept in

almost all countries. (Compared to European countries, Sri Lanka initially had limited familiarity with the WFH concept). Many European and economically developed countries could adopt the WFH concept because they are technologically advanced compared to other countries. Dingel and Neiman (2020) revealed that 37 percent of the jobs in the US could be done entirely from home. Chhabra & Pal (2021) stated that job searches for working from home in India have increased by over 442 percent while recording the highest proportion globally. According to a study conducted by Djankov & Panizza (2020), the proportion of employees working from home significantly varies with the country's income. This share is about 20 percent in underdeveloped countries and about 40 percent in developed countries. They further found that educational attainment, household wealth, and formal employment status are positively related to implementing the WFH concept. All these studies prove that the WFH phenomenon can be more easily implemented by economically developed and emerging countries than by other countries. However, the above literature testifies that this concept quickly emerged during the pandemic in all the countries, including Sri Lanka, as the only solution available for sustaining health care and economic growth.

Further, the literature implies that although there are several negative consequences of the WFH model, it creates many advantages for both employees and employers and the Sri Lankan economy. CBSL (2020); Kulatunga (2020) have testified to the positive impact of this concept. During the pandemic, Sri Lankan companies experienced numerous difficulties. Executing the WFH phenomenon was the best cost-effective method for all companies in Sri Lanka to recoup lost revenue, profit, and time.

Many researchers and organizations define the WFH phenomenon differently (Behrens et al., 2021; ILO, 2020b; Nakrosiene et al., 2019; Nizath & Karunaratne, 2021; Vithanage, 2020). According to their definitions, the WFH phenomenon occurs when employees complete all office tasks while remaining at home once or several days per week, with an agreement between employers and employees. Arunatilake & Thilanka (2021) indicated that three significant factors determine the practicality of the WFH concept. First is the job's nature and the ability to do office work from home. Second is the possibility of workers and management executing the WFH concept. Third, access to the internet and availability of IT infrastructure for all workers and businesses. Haridas, Rahul & Subha (2021) note that companies in the IT industry have a greater ability to adopt the WFH concept than other industries because workers in the IT industry are more familiar with working with IT equipment, and they can do their office work from anywhere. Hence, even during the lockdown periods, they could continue their services for clients as they found different kinds of technological solutions and innovations for the problems that occurred during the pandemic. The WFH concept also increases revenue, profit, efficiency, and employee satisfaction. The Board of Investment (BOI) of Sri Lanka (2021); Economynext (2020) emphasized that export earnings from the IT industry reached approximately \$900 million in 2019 and increased to approximately \$1000 million in 2020. Fitch solutions (2022) revealed in their Sri Lanka Information Technology report that during the pandemic in 2020, market dynamics in the IT sector remained buoyant due to the investments made in WFH solutions. However, companies outside of tech and BPO companies accrued massive losses and were severely affected by the pandemic due to the inability to continue the services provided. Workers in such companies have less knowledge of IT, and some work cannot be done from home but

must be completed in the office. Hence, most of the business activities of such companies were halted during the lockdown and curfew periods, and their business process essentially collapsed.

Arunathilake & Thilanka (2021) asserted this idea while highlighting WFH occupations. They have represented this information using the Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey data. Accordingly, Figure 01 shows the ability to WFH by major occupation category in Sri Lanka, and Figure 02 represents the ability to WFH by the level of education in Sri Lanka.

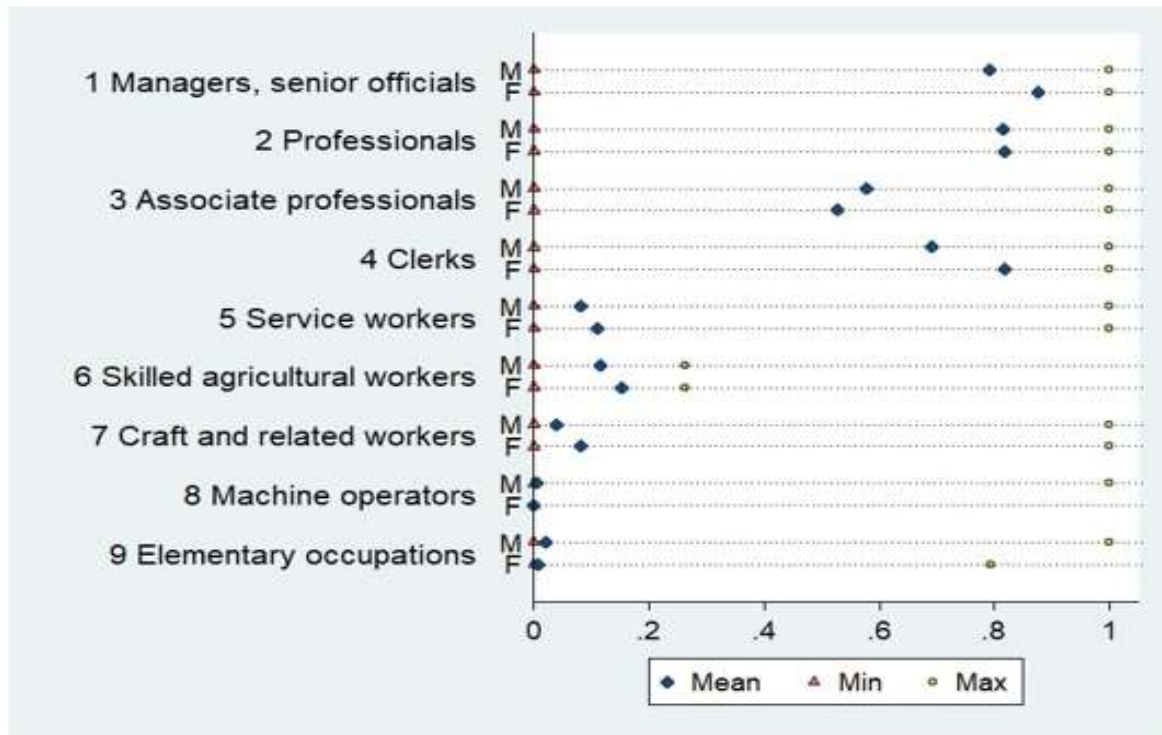


Figure 1. Ability to WFH by Major Occupation Category in Sri Lanka

Source: Arunathilake & Thilanka (2021)

As per Figure 01, females (F) are more willing to WFH than males (M) because they prefer to choose desk jobs. Further, the data illustrates that employees in the occupation categories that require a high level of skill, such as managers, senior officials, professionals, and associate professionals, have a more remarkable ability to WFH. In contrast, employees in low-skilled occupations, such as elementary workers, machine operators, and craft and related workers, have less ability to WFH. IT workers fall under the category of professionals, and the data implies that they are more willing to WFH than other categories except for managers and senior officials.

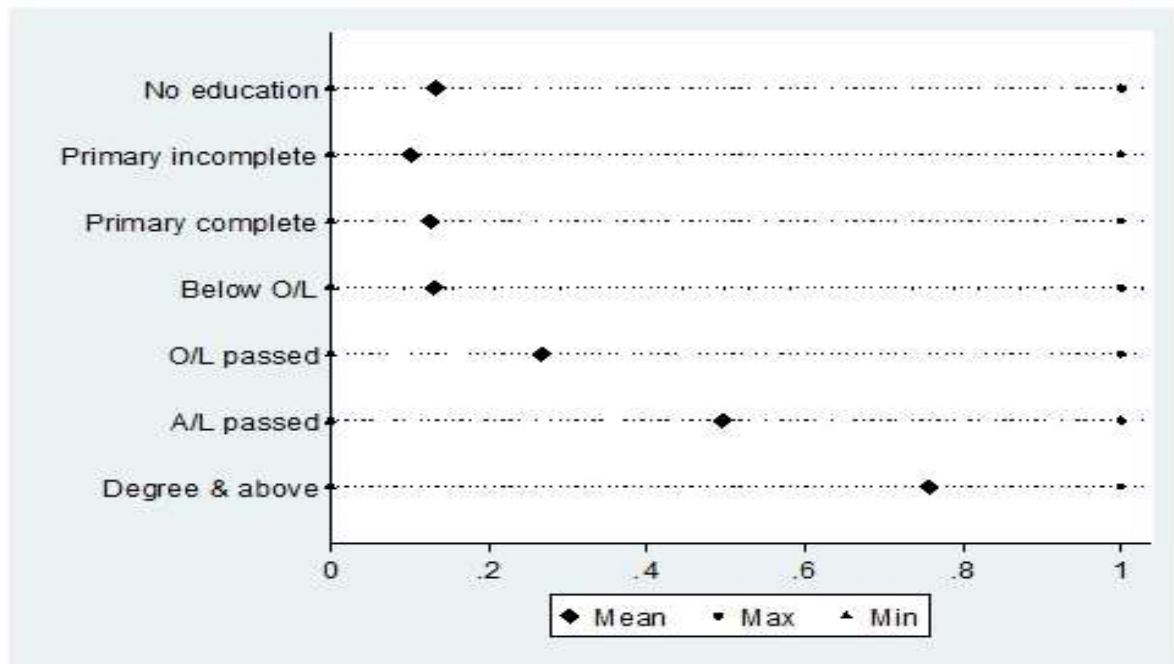


Figure 02: Ability to WFH by the Level of Education in Sri Lanka

Source: Arunathilake & Thilanka (2021)

Figure 02 illustrates that a higher proportion of workers with a high level of education can work from home, and workers with a low level of education have fewer opportunities to work from home. Eurostat (2021) reported that a higher proportion of ICT specialists have tertiary-level education qualifications. Hence, the IT industry is one of the industries that can fully implement the concept of WFH.

The Sri Lankan IT industry expects to earn US\$ 5 billion in revenue, generate 200,000 direct jobs, and establish 1,000 IT/BPM startups by 2025. Although many countries have suffered from the pandemic, Sri Lanka enjoys a higher revenue from BPO and the software industry, which supply skilled and low-cost services to foreign markets while working from home day and night. The United Nations (2021) also revealed that since the first wave of the pandemic, the demand for online shopping, cloud services, video conferencing, social networks, videos, and gaming increased, and companies providing such services showed significant growth in net income. This growth in the IT industry can benefit economies like Sri Lanka by creating more job opportunities in the IT sector and decreasing the unemployment rate, which showed a massive increase in 2020 in Sri Lanka. In addition, a higher export revenue earned from the IT industry can help the economy as it slowly recovers from the enormous financial crisis caused by the pandemic. Many studies emphasize that even after the pandemic, IT companies will not transition from the WFH concept; they will continue to have employees WFH in the future (Haridas et al., 2021). Finally, executing the WFH concept in the IT industry (and all other sectors) can positively impact the long-standing issue of lower female labour force participation in Sri Lanka. Many researchers have found that females have a higher preference for working from home than males. Therefore, a continuation of the business process in the ICT industry

through working from home is an attractive solution for the Sri Lankan economy as it recovers from the recession caused by the pandemic.

Conclusion

The concept of working from home has been around for some time in Western countries. With the onset of the COVID-pandemic, there has been an increase in the trend of its use in the world and even in Sri Lanka. This study examined the significant emergence of the WFH phenomenon during the COVID-19 pandemic and its use in the IT Industry. Further, the study was used to identify the impacts of the WFH concept on the Sri Lankan economy with reference to the Sri Lankan IT industry. An explanatory type of case study was conducted under the qualitative approach to achieve the study's objectives, reviewing many secondary sources such as newspapers, research articles, websites, annual reports, other reports, and publications of local and foreign organizations.

This study revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on the Sri Lankan economy. It significantly halted major economic activities due to many healthcare measures taken by the Sri Lankan Government to avert the pandemic. Such proactive measures led to a deterioration of the usual office workplace culture and employees' work routines. Hence, the WFH concept emerged as a brilliant, cost-effective solution for continuing the business process of different companies. This study further exposed that ICT, professional and financial services are more flexible to the WFH concept. The ICT industry has a tremendous advantage in executing the WFH model and continuing its services for clients because workers in that sector are more experienced in working with IT equipment and performing job-related tasks remotely.

Moreover, this study emphasized that despite minor disadvantages, implementing the WFH concept in IT and other industries has many advantages. Employees, employers, and the overall Sri Lankan economy can benefit from the WFH model. According to the findings, employers benefit from reduced staff expenses, reduced operational costs, reduced turnover, and improved employee satisfaction. Meanwhile, employees gain greater flexibility with working hours and location, reduced commuting time and relevant expenses, better work-life balance, and fewer distractions. Considering the benefits to the Sri Lankan economy, reducing unemployment, increasing female labor force participation, increasing export income, generating additional income sources, and digitalizing the economy are critical benefits of executing the WFH model. The study found that by implementing the WFH model, the IT industry positively impacts the Sri Lankan economy (e.g., export earnings from the IT industry increased from \$900 million in 2019 to \$1000 million in 2020).

This study concludes that the WFH concept is noteworthy and can be used to enhance the current economic situation in Sri Lanka by continuing the business process in all sectors. Currently, the ICT industry is the most flexible for this concept; however, it is recommended that the Government support firms financially to execute and improve access to the WFH model. Flexible working policies can be established to propagate this concept in every sector of the country by the Department of Labour. Management of companies should ensure access to high-quality ICT infrastructure and fast connectivity to promote WFH effectively. Further, to educate the public sector about this novel concept, workshops can be organized to teach workers how to

work effectively from home and become familiar with this new workplace culture. Finally, the Government should plan accordingly to ensure job security for employees working from home.

The present study emphasized studying the emergence of the WFH concept during COVID-19 and its effects on the Sri Lankan economy with special reference to the IT industry in Sri Lanka. The study only used a qualitative research approach by reviewing secondary sources and was limited to the Sri Lankan IT industry. It is recommended to conduct future research regarding the impact of the WFH phenomenon on the Sri Lankan economy with an emphasis on other sectors, such as the education and banking sectors and the IT industry. Furthermore, research can be done to make a comparison in the future to study whether working from home or working in an office environment, or a hybrid model of working is better for employees, employers as well as the country's economy by using the quantitative method and collecting data from Sri Lankan public and private institutions.

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