

Work from Home: Its Implications to the School Leaders' Productivity

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Abstract— *This study endeavored to determine the implications of work-from-home arrangement to the productivity of school leaders. It specifically, measures the participants' digital literacy, readiness and efficacy in performing their supervisory duties and responsibilities. It employed the Descriptive Research Design involving online survey and key informant interviews. The online mode of data collection was implemented to comply with the health protocols imposed by the government. Data were obtained from 100 survey participants and seven key informants. The findings revealed that school leaders showed proficiency in digital literacy, but with apparent deficiency in the use of technologies. Hence, work-from-home arrangement could be challenging for them since their ICT staff could not assist them. Also, not all have internet connectivity and digital devices at home. These factors influence their efficacy in instructional supervision, delivery of reports, and communication functions. Thus, the school leaders' productivity under the work-from-home arrangement is not optimized. There is then the need to review this policy to ensure that school leaders remain productive despite working at home. The delivery of basic education services cannot be undermined because school leaders are grappling with the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic. Appropriate structural and financial support must be extended to the school leaders to enhance their efficacy under the work-from-home arrangement.*

Keywords— *Work-from-home, instructional supervision, new normal.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Worldometer (2020) reported that around 36 million individuals were infected with COVID-19 with over a million who died. This made COVID-19 a pandemic and a global health crisis. The Philippine data revealed that 325,000 were infected and 6,000 died of the disease (Worldometer, 2020). This greatly affected the delivery of basic education in the country since the Department of Education (DepEd) has to comply with the health protocols imposed by the Philippine government. In fact, UNESCO (2020) estimated that more than 28 million students in the country were forced to stay at home to comply with the government's quarantine protocols. Given this situation, the DepEd initiated three learning approaches namely: the use of modules by the students, online education platform to support alternative modes of learning, and lesson delivery through television and radio (Magsambol, 2020). However, other Southeast Asian countries shared the same predicaments such as Indonesia, Vietnam, and Thailand. These countries also strategized to creatively respond to the pandemic and started to usher in a new era of education (Joaquin et. al, 2020).

Moreover, the Department of Education highly discouraged teaching and non-teaching personnel from physically reporting to schools amid the COVID-19 pandemic, even in low risk areas. This is in consonance to the DepEd Order 011, s. 2020

on the *Revised Guidelines on Alternative Work Arrangements* during the period of the State of National Emergency, which characterizes the Philippine government's response to COVID-19 pandemic. This directive allowed an output-oriented work arrangement that authorizes the personnel to produce outputs/results and accomplishments outside of the school or office.

Work-From-Home (WFH) is a concept where the employee can do his or her job from home. It gives flexible working hours to the employees and to perform their duties and responsibilities remotely. This set-up is made possible via appropriate technologies and gadgets. Due to the Coronavirus, many companies transitioned from the office to the WFH arrangement. WFH is currently known as an alternative way of working to minimize the risk of COVID -19 infection. However, WFH is not new and has been brought to the attention of several schools of thought for many years. The WFH concept was initially mentioned by Nilles (1988) dating back to 1973, known as "telecommuting" or "telework" (Messenger and Gschwind, 2016). WFH has been defined in various terms over the four decades, namely remote work, flexible workplace, telework, telecommuting, and e-working. These terms refer to the ability of employees to work in flexible workplaces, especially at home, by using technology to perform their duties and responsibilities (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007). According to Emmott (2016), flexible working has been introduced into organizations as a way for employees and employers to have flexibility within their job roles therefore allowing them to suit their personal needs. This type of flexible working arrangement can be defined as mobile working, allowing employees and employers to work elsewhere outside of the office for either all or part of their working week.

Effects of Work-from-home. The disruption of work life due to the COVID-19 pandemic enabled the schools to adopt work-from-home arrangement. This is made possible because of modern technology (Sethi and Saini, 2020). It is reported that WFH is beneficial to both employees and employers. In this set up employees are given opportunity to concentrate on their work because of reduced face to face contacts with employers and co-workers. However, supervision is also lessened that could greatly affect productivity (Warzel, 2020). Monitoring is critical to ensure that targets are met and this is hardly possible when working from home. Nevertheless, with this mode, employees are able to save time and money since they do not have to commute from home to work and vice versa (Felstead et. al., 2000).

On the contrary, Ward (2017) found out that WFH could also make employees feel lonely that affects their motivation

and performance. He added that working from home may not be a suitable way of working for all employees. They would need to be dedicated, self-driven and also focused in order to carry out their day to work. Additionally, Jizba and Kleiner (1990) outlined that employees would need to decide themselves whether their home environment provides them with the opportunity to carry out their daily jobs correctly/effectively and efficiently. Therefore, this option of working may work for some employees but not for others depending on their home environment.

Other beneficial effects of WFH for both employers and employees include: reduced commuting time, avoiding office politics, using less office space, increased motivation, improved gender diversity (e.g. women and careers), healthier workforces with less absenteeism and turnover, higher talent retention, job satisfaction, and better productivity (Mello, 2007; Robertson, Maynard, and McDevitt 2003). Studies indicated evidence for these benefits; for example, the research in the Greater Dublin Area by Caulfield (2015) found employees saving travel time. Some studies point out that telework can reduce turnover rate and increase employees' productivity, job engagement, and job performance (Collins, 2009; Delanoije and Verbruggen, 2020). Similarly, e-working can increase productivity, flexibility, job satisfaction, WLB, including reducing work-life conflict and commuting (Grant et al. 2019).

Objectives of the Study

This study endeavored to determine the implications of work-from-home arrangement to the productivity of school leaders. It specifically, measures the participants' digital literacy, readiness and efficacy in performing their supervisory duties and responsibilities.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study employed the Descriptive Research Design involving online survey and key informant interviews (KII). The online mode of data collection was implemented to comply with the health protocols imposed by the government. There were 100 survey participants and seven key informants. Table 1 shows the profile of survey participants and data show that 43.0% are principals, 30.0% are teacher-in-charge, and 27.0% are head teachers. Their years of service in their current position are distributed as follows: 37.0% are in the service for 10 years and above, 31.0% for 4 to 6 years, 20.0% are new in the position, and 12.0% serve for 7 to 9 years. More than half of the participants are between the ages 56 and above (33.0%) and 41 to 45 years old (30.0%).

The participants were purposively selected based on the following criteria: (1) they are willing to participate in the study as evidenced by their informed consent; (2) they are leading and managing schools as principals/head teachers/teachers-in-charge; (3) they are knowledgeable about the topic under consideration; (4) they are serving in the research locale which is the Department of Education Division of Misamis Oriental; and (5) they are under the work-from-home arrangement.

In the Philippines, there are several modalities of alternative work arrangements. The first is *compressed* that refers to a work arrangement whereby the employees' workweek is compressed

to four days each week. The second is *skeleton workforce* that refers to a work arrangement where a minimum number of employees is required to man the office to render service when full staffing is not possible. The third is *work-from-home* that refers to an output-oriented work arrangement that authorizes the worker to produce outputs/results and accomplishments outside of the office. The fourth is the *staggered working hours* that refers to a work arrangement applicable to offices/agencies that observe work shifting or flexible working time. For this purpose, staggered working hours refers to the existing 24/7 shifting schedule and the flexible working time schedule. The fifth is the *mix* that refers to work arrangements consisting of a combination of two or more of the above enumerated work arrangements. This study is limited to school leaders who are under the work-from-home arrangement.

TABLE 1. Profile of the Survey Participants

Profile	Frequency	Percent
Position		
Teacher-in-charge	30	30.0
Head Teacher	27	27.0
Principal	43	43.0
Total	100	100.0
Years in Service in Current Position		
1-3	20	20.0
4-6	31	31.0
7-9	12	12.0
10 and above	37	37.0
Total	100	100.0
Age		
36-40	12	12.0
41-45	30	30.0
46-50	13	13.0
51-55	12	12.0
56 and above	33	33.0
Total	100	100.0

Moreover, descriptive statistics such as the frequency and percent distributions and weighted means were used to treat the quantitative survey data while qualitative analysis for the key informant interview data.

III. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

On the Digital Literacy. The results in Table 2 revealed that the participants' digital literacy is rated good in terms of typing skills (\bar{x} =2.91), web search skills (\bar{x} =2.83), computer literacy (\bar{x} =2.86), internet literacy (\bar{x} =2.84), digital literacy and (\bar{x} =2.67). The findings imply that school leaders have high literacy in typing skills while the lowest literacy is in the ability to use digital technologies. There were even two participants who rated themselves as very poor in their ability to use digital technologies. During the key informant interviews, one participant shared that, "Even if there are trainings provided for us, I need more time to learn these digital technologies. When I am working at the office, I have a staff who is proficient in information and communications technology (ICT) who can assist me. However, when I am working at home I have to manage the tasks I need to perform by myself."

Another key informant revealed that, "digital technologies are updating so fast that we find it hard to catch up. The school division tends to avail of the benefits of digital technologies and would up embrace the changes. This really posed a challenge

for us as school leaders.” It can be inferred here that for those who can easily adapt to the fast-changing digital technologies, their productivity under the WFH arrangement can be boosted. However, for those who cannot, it is always possible that they will experience diminished productivity.

TABLE 2. Digital Literacy of the Participants

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Typing Skills	2.91	Good
Web Search Skills	2.83	Good
Computer Literacy (ability to use the computer)	2.86	Good
Internet Literacy (ability to use the internet)	2.84	Good
Digital Literacy (ability to use the digital technologies)	2.67	Good
Grand Weighted Mean	2.82	Good

Legend: 3.26-4.0 – Very Good; 2.51-3.25 – Good; 1.76-2.50 – Poor; 1.00 – 1.75 – Very Poor

On Readiness for Work-From-Home Arrangement. Table 3 presents the readiness of the participants for the Work-From-Home arrangement. Data show that majority have available workspace (92.0%) with multiple work devices (65.0%). Only 19.0% have personal computers and laptops while 16.0% have cellphones. Three key informants revealed that when internet connectivity is slow or not working, they would use the cellphones to communicate or attend meetings/trainings using mobile data. Also, 50.0% of the participants have internet connection at home, 24.0% use mobile data, while 26.0% use multiple internet connectivity.

Digital divide

TABLE 3. Readiness of the Participants for the Work-From-Home Arrangement

Readiness Indicators	Frequency	Percent
Availability of Workspace		
Yes	92	92.0
No	8	8.0
Total	100	100.0
Availability of Digital Devices		
Personal Computer/Laptop	19	19.0
Ipad/Tablet	0	0.0
Cellphone	16	16.0
Multiple Devices	65	65.0
Internet Connectivity		
Internet Connection at Home	50	50.0
Mobile Data	24	24.0
Multiple internet connectivity	26	26.0

A KII participant shared that, “Sometimes it is useless to subscribe to internet connection because of inadequate cell sites that led to prevailing concerns on dead spots, drop calls, and slow internet speed.” The rest of the key informants strongly agreed to this observation.

In the study of Raboy and Cimene (2019), most barangay offices of Cagayan de Oro City are in its earliest stage of information and communications technology integration. The city is in proximity with the research locale which is the province of Misamis Oriental, Philippines. The study concluded that good governance is effectively facilitated by competent peopleware, fully equipped hardware and software and provision of adequate budget.

On the Efficacy of Work-From-Home Arrangement. Table 4 displays the results of the efficacy of Work-From-Home arrangement. The results revealed that none of the participants rated themselves as effective in communication, delivery of reports, and instructional supervision when working from home. However, the highest rating is in communication (\bar{x} =3.12), closely followed by delivery of reports (\bar{x} =3.04), with instructional supervision as the lowest (\bar{x} =2.72). The participants rated the efficacy parameters as effective.

TABLE 4. Efficacy of Work-From-Home Arrangement

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Communication (dissemination of information to school heads or teachers)	3.12	Effective
Delivery of reports	3.04	Effective
Instructional supervision	2.72	Effective
Grand Weighted Mean	2.96	Effective

Legend: 3.26-4.0 – Very Effective; 2.51-3.25 – Effective; 1.76-2.50 – Ineffective; 1.00 – 1.75 – Very Ineffective

The findings imply the need to intensify the initiatives on providing webinars and online trainings that incorporate school heads retooling and reskilling. This is particularly in enhancing their supervisory and digital skills relevant to the implementation of alternative work arrangement. Proper scheduling of webinars must be in place so that there will be no multiple online activities that will occur making school leaders ineffective.

IV. CONCLUSION

The school leaders included in the study showed proficiency in digital literacy, but with apparent deficiency in the use of technologies. Hence, work-from-home arrangement could be challenging for them since their ICT staff could not assist them. Also, not all have internet connectivity and digital devices at home. These factors influence their efficacy in instructional supervision, delivery of reports, and communication functions. Thus, the school leaders’ productivity under the work-from-home arrangement is not optimized. There is then the need to review this policy to ensure that school leaders remain productive despite working at home. The delivery of basic education services cannot be undermined because school leaders are grappling with the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic. Appropriate structural and financial support must be extended to the school leaders to enhance their efficacy under the work-from-home arrangement.

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