The Effectiveness of Remote Working Enforcement During COVID-19 Pandemic

Evelyn Hartono[1], Fabian Chong Zhenhan[2], Femmie Cynthia[3], Chandra Husein[4]

[1]*Law, Faculty of Law, Universitas Tarumanagara*

[2] *Finance and Business, Faculty of Accounting, Tunku Abdul Rahman University College, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

[3] *Law, Faculty of Law, Universitas Tarumanagara*

[4] *Civil Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, Universitas Tarumanagara*

[1]∗ *theresiaevelynh@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

At present, the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic has made remote working a common alternative. However, a big question mark still hangs over the effectiveness of remote working. Therefore, based on structured and critical arguments, this paper aims to determine how effective the enforcement of remote working during Covid-19 pandemic is. This is done by weighing the pros and cons of remote working and its implementation during Covid-19 pandemic. In particular, this paper will discuss the effect of said enforcement on work-life balance and psychological well-being of individuals. The discussion on work-life balance focuses on the conflict between personal needs and professional demands, whereas psychological well-being emphasises on the emotional aspect of individuals. The *Revised Bloom's Taxonomy* thinking framework, consisting of six categories: *Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analysing, Evaluating,* and *Creating*, is used in the authors' thought process in order to further deepen and improve the quality of discussion in this paper.

Keywords: Work-life Balance, Psychological Well-being, Remote Working, COVID-19.

1. INTRODUCTION

The alarming discovery of a novel coronavirus "Covid-19" on 7 January 2020 in Wuhan City, China, has brought a huge change to the life of every individual all around the globe. Through such discovery, we have witnessed the extent of social and economic disruption caused, ranging from excessive stockpiling and panic buying to risking one's life in effort to ensure continuance of life. It is no secret that working is the only way to survive in this money-oriented society we live in. Yet, the Covid-19 pandemic did not only hinder the growth of many in the economic sector, but has also brought dramatic changes to the working world. In order to withstand such changes, the utilisation of technology and the process of adapting is extremely crucial. With the presence of advanced technology at our disposal, remote working was made possible, such that one is able to work from home. However, the enforcement of remote working serves as a double-edged sword, giving rise to not only advantages, but also disadvantages. Taking that into consideration, this paper aims to analyse the pros and cons of remote working, specifically during the Covid-19 pandemic, and hence, determine the extent of its effectiveness.

2. THINKING FRAMEWORK

In order to accomplish the above-mentioned purpose, the authors implemented *Revised Bloom's Taxonomy*. Named after Benjamin S. Bloom, the Associate Director of the Board of Examinations of the University of Chicago then, *Bloom's Taxonomy* was first released for publication in 1956 and was titled "*Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals. Handbook I: Cognitive Domain*". This very first version of *Bloom's Taxonomy* consisted of six categories: *Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis,* and *Evaluation*. [1] Subsequently, in 1999, revisions were made to *Bloom's Taxonomy* through the contributions of cognitive psychologists, curriculum theorists and instructional researchers, as well as testing and assessment specialists, establishing the *Revised Bloom's Taxonomy*. [2] The *Revised Bloom's Taxonomy* still consists of six categories, however defined in new terms, namely *Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analysing, Evaluating,* and *Creating*. Being the initial step, *Remembering* involves recognising and recalling applicable information from one's knowledge. *Remembering* is then followed by *Understanding*, which requires one to comprehend informative ideas through comparison, classification, inference, interpretation, explanation, summarisation, and exemplification. Through *Understanding*, one is then able to enforce an approach in particular circumstances, also known as *Applying*. Next,

Analysing is to distinguish, arrange, and assign information into its elements in order to ascertain the relevance of each element to the overall objective. Once relevance is determined, one can then weigh decisions according to requirements through *Evaluating*. Lastly, *Creating* combines elements to produce a logical and practical piece. [3] By applying *Revised Bloom's Taxonomy* in this paper, the authors seek to provide structured and critical arguments in discussing the pros and cons of remote working.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The enforcement of remote working greatly improves the work-life balance of an individual. The idea of work-life balance can be defined as the equilibrium point between personal needs and professional demands. [4] It is a belief regarding the ability of individuals to equally engage in work-related and non-work- related tasks in a satisfying way. [5] However, modern society has been observed to place more importance on work demands as compared to own needs. Such observation is proved further by the presence of a requirement of at least a specific amount of time at work with specific level of vigor on a weekly basis. [6] In addition to such requirement, there is also commuting to and fro between work and home, which altogether leads to physical and mental exhaustion. Not to mention how personal needs, especially family-related ones, are undeniably as important. The intensified tension caused by conflicting personal needs and professional demands thus creates an imbalance between work and life. [7] On the other hand, the implementation of remote working allows for more flexibility and relaxation due to the amount of time saved on commuting as well as the ability to work at the comfort of home. [8] Physical professional demands are thus less burdensome, allowing individuals to invest more time in their personal needs. For example, individuals become more able to attend to their own necessity or family obligations during the time they previously spent in traffic congestion on their way back home from work. Such is even more relevant in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, in which individuals are more inclined to stay at home due to the outside health risks. The allowance to work from home provides them with comfort and a sense of security, hence reducing emotional stress. In addition, increased work productivity is made possible through the enforcement of remote working. According to a worldwide survey conducted by Vodafone, out of 75% companies which have established remote working policies, 83% reported increased work productivity. [9] This proves that work productivity is not compromised, but instead, enhanced, and therefore contributing further to the improvement in work-life balance. Based on the above considerations, the authors are strongly convinced that the implementation of remote working during Covid-19 pandemic has the potential to create better work-life balance for individuals.

On the contrary, the enforcement of remote working can give rise to negative impacts on an individual's psychological well-being. Well- being is defined as growing as a person, feeling contented, and contributing to the society. [10] The psychological aspect of well-being is related to having a flourishing life, and is often categorised as an integration of possessing positive emotional conditions, such as joy, and functioning effectively. The nature of psychological well-being includes encouraging social connections, the ability to take control, and overall contentment with life. [11] In relation to psychological well-being, the fact that remote working is closely related to isolation can lead to lack of self-discipline, lack of ability to focus, and absence of decision-making processes. Furthermore, remote working causes little coincidental dialogues and peer evaluation, which are perhaps useful for solving problems and improving quality of work. [12] Other research reported harmful consequences on performance, such as reduced communication between colleagues, sharing of information, creativity, and teamwork. [13] Moreover, the very presence of Covid-19 pandemic has single handedly caused limitation of interactions in the society, and the implementation of remote working might add on to only worsen the situation. Considering all of the above, the authors believe that the implementation of remote working during Covid-19 pandemic does bring significant negative impacts to an individual's psychological well-being.

4. CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper has been to determine the extent as to how effective the enforcement of remote working during Covid-19 pandemic is, by critically analysing the pros and cons of remote working and its implementation during Covid-19 pandemic. Through various considerations discussed in this paper, the authors concluded that the enforcement of remote working during Covid-19 pandemic is effective to a large extent. While the authors acknowledge the presence of negative consequences, we are more inclined to believe that the positive outcomes from the enforcement of remote working during Covid-19 pandemic outweigh the negative consequences.

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