# Why Telecommuting Became Redundant During the COVID-19 Pandemic?

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*Author's contribution*

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*Original Research Article*

## ABSTRACT

This paper reveals the facts that necessitated telecommuting in the 'new normal' virtual work environment. This is a cross-sectional study with a sample of executive-level employees working in the banking sector. Data were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC). The findings reveal that the success of telecommuting during the COVID-19 pandemic depends on the nature of family responsibility, virtual work environment, virtual training, and self-management of the employees affected, while the work-life balance (WLB) is not significant. The decision-makers need to implement psychological training, skills-based training for managers, employees, and family members, and provide incentives to handle difficulties encountered in the pandemic situation. The present study proposes formulating a long-term policy that can successfully align with the new normal working conditions. This should encompass fundamental working rights under the virtual working environment, career development, and welfare of workers. To date, previous studies are based on the advantages of traditional telecommuting. However, this study considers employees' perception of telecommuting in the COVID-19 pandemic; thus, the study fills the empirical gap in the research on telecommuting in the new normal working condition.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the mid-1970s, when computer technology started widely, flexi-time working strategies became popular, and employees were gradually moving towards telecommuting [1]. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, telecommuting supported employees to work remotely and benefited employers and employees to reduce cost (Turetken et al., 2011), and increase employees' work satisfaction [2,3], reduce turnover [3] and increase productivity [1]. An employee can work from a coffee shop or home while traveling without interrupting the daily working schedule. It would help employees reduce work-family conflict and balance work-life, and teleworkers' job satisfaction is higher than those who worked in the office and have fewer work-life conflicts [4]. The millennial generation has more attention towards these trends. It would reduce traditional male-dominant office setup and have more freedom and an autonomous work environment [5,6,7,8].

The Covid-19 viral disease adversely affects people's health and has challenged organizational survival [9]. The COVID-19 aggravated a pandemic confirmed in March 2020, not very long from its initial outbreak in January 2020. This viral disease became the most influential disease for people [10]. The COVID-19 transformed the way people live, work, and behave. The social consequences of COVID-19 are likely to remain longer and outweigh those of health impacts [11,12].

When the virus developed into a contagious pandemic, mobility restrictions disrupted many businesses' operations. With limited options for business survival, most companies were forced to downsize operations, shut down their businesses, while some firms were permanently closed. With the rapid development of information technology, most organizations shifted to a virtual work setting faster with the suggestion of many national and international organizations, which is rather mandatory and feasible to continue for many years ahead WHO [13]. This radical transformation is a sudden shift from the conventional physical work setting to contemporary online work practices. Most organizations worldwide adapt to the 'virtual organizations' concept; online work is the new normal in organizational work cultures [14]. With schools closed and most of the areas under lockdown to curb the virus spread, social distancing barred people from physical

interactions and congregations as they used to be. Thus, this situation marks a sharp deviation from the regular lifestyle and the social element in people's lives.

Although it is acknowledged that remote working during the pandemic is essential, it is still hard to accept and adapt for many employees. Some of the employees emphasized that working from home has negatively affected their work-life balance (WLB). Unlike in an official work setting, working at home with family, especially children, is likely to cause disturbances, which is a challenge for many employees to perform authorized tasks productively. Many employees adjust their working hours to overcome this issue; for example, some prefer having meetings during the evening [15].

However, this new normal virtual working environment is redundant of all these traditional arguments of telecommuting benefits. Though this is an ideal situation to work in a virtual environment, there can be some issues of those old generations like generation X, who are not familiar with Information Technology (IT) literacy than millennials. Before the pandemic, female workers have had social support at home to handle cooking, laundering, taking care of children and other family members like children and elders [16]. However, with social distancing imposed in the pandemic situation, social supports were prevented at least temporarily [17]. Resultantly, employees themselves had to handle household chores while carrying out official duties. This scenario shows that juggling multiple roles that pressure employees and consequences are negative results for virtual work [18,19,20].

During the pandemic, stress, anxiety, frustration, and panic become major problems for employees handling work life and personal life. Employees feel the tension and face a conflict with multiple role juggling. Moreover, without consulting staff, a proper plan, and test runs, the virtual work environment has been implemented quickly without considering how employees balance their work with family obligations [21]. In addition, with the temporary closure of schools, the family obligations of mothers are increasingly on the rise compared to that of fathers; this situation aggravates stress among women employees [22]. In a similar light, compared to men, women bear a more significant quantum of family obligations because most children depend on their mother than their father [23,24]. Hence,

ensuring that children are engaged with online classrooms for effective e-learning is also piled upon mothers. This situation is much expected in households in cultures like Sri Lanka, where the perception is that household tasks are the responsibilities of women. This study focuses on why the telecommuting concept failed during this pandemic and determines the factors affecting the failures.

## 1.1 Literature Review

### 1.1.1 Success factors of virtual work environment

Implement a thriving virtual working environment under the new-normal situation, and it is required to pay attention to many factors. The family, social, and office environment under traditional telecommuting is entirely different from the new-normal situation. During the pandemic, social isolation, lack of infrastructure facilities, lockdown, and the life threat of the COVID-19 created a new environment. Thus, the employee and employer both need to identify the real cause behind the success of telecommuting under the new normal situation. The success of telecommuting depends on high-speed internet, selecting suitable software and other technologies, proper planning mechanisms, policies and guidelines, and budget. User satisfaction is a more important factor for implementing telecommuting system [15] (Ye, 2012).

### 1.1.2 Family responsibility

It is problematic for many women to juggle their roles to work and family back and forth because they mostly pay attention to family matters. Many families before the 1950s' followed the breadwinner model, whereby the father earns money, and the mother is responsible for taking care of the household, children, and elders [25]. However, with the male-breadwinner model replaced by the dual-breadwinner model, women started entering employment and are still forced to take responsibility for family [25]. As a result, it has become a challenge for many female workers. If female workers feel that the situation poses a threat to them, demands more than expected, or is challenging, it will lead to stress [23]. Unlike eustress that motivates people to a certain extent, excessive stress can result in poor health conditions like burnout, depression in the long run. Many previous studies revealed that parents, especially mothers, were stressed due

to the high home and work demands during the pandemic [26,27,28,29].

Those women in paid employment are liable for the housework and family care [30]. This dual responsibility leads to stress among employees, as work life and family life need to pay attention and prioritize equally [24,31]. Social life and working life negatively affect female workers [24, 32]. Further revealed no flexibility for employee leave policies in the private sector banks in Sri Lanka. Most women employees lost their jobs due to maternity leave in the private sector [33].

The childcare responsibility is more important than those of their career cause stress among women [34;35]. Many researchers found that mothers were less satisfied with their WLB due to more responsibility than fathers [26; 27, 28]. With changes in responsibilities and lifestyle patterns, the telecommuting success narrowed among female workers during the pandemic. As noted previously, the success of telecommuting is considered only if there is a trade-off between the work and the family, not a compromise of other responsibilities in the lives of female workers. However, telecommuting's success has weakened during the COVID-19 pandemic [36]. Thus, the first hypothesis is formulated as follows:

$H_1$: The higher the family responsibility, the weaker the success of telecommuting in the new-normal environment.

### 1.1.3 Supportive virtual working environment

Life satisfaction develops among employees when they have positive feelings over negative feelings [32]. Therefore, management can create a supportive environment that can assist employees to fulfill their responsibilities [16]. A virtual working environment is a feasible option during a pandemic situation where mobility is restricted. However, it is relatively new for most organizations and employees. If employees are ready to accept and have all required facilities at home, a virtual office arrangement will reap mutual benefits for both the employees and employers. However, during the pandemic period, employees were forced to transform and make a sudden shift to a virtual environment, a fact that it became a challenge to them. As a result, employees feel lonely while being prevented from usual physical interactions and lack communication with managers and peers, lacking main infrastructure facilities like WIFI,

laptops, or computers to execute their official duties. Therefore, a systematic approach (rather than ad hoc) is required to enable employees to shift from the physical office to the virtual office [37, 38, 30].

Further, employees find it challenging to manage work-family roles while working virtually. Insufficient facilities and sharing limited facilities at home (such as tech devices, internet, and laptops) among other family members create stress. Hence, the virtual work environment has become stressful rather than satisfying work in a remote setting. This study focuses on identifying the challenges and benefits of the virtual working environment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the second hypothesis is,

*H₂: The greater the supportive virtual working environment, the greater the success of telecommuting in the new-normal environment.*

### 1.1.4 Virtual training

Organizations can provide virtual training for employees in lockdown areas to be aware of and embrace new software and advanced technology. These approaches can assist employees to acquire skills to operate in an online and work IT-driven work environment confidently. Virtual training can be defined as providing knowledge by using the internet [39]. In addition, virtual learning can be designed for a short time on a selected specific topic to enhance the audience's skills [40]. Raghuram and Wiesenfeld [41] determined that work factors positively affect work-life conflict and virtual work environments. Thus, during the pandemic, training becomes essential for employees to successfully adapt to the virtual environment [38, 42, 43, 20]. Thus, the third hypothesis proposed is as follows:

*H₃: The greater the virtual training, the greater the success of telecommuting in the new-normal environment.*

### 1.1.5 Self-management

Quite a few researchers discovered that employees' self-management positively impacts their job performance in the remote working environment. Self-managed employees reportedly manage their life much more accessible and effective than those who do not. Employees' fulfillments lead to enhance their

morale, work satisfaction, and job performance. During pandemics, employees' daily self-management practices positively impact work at home [44, 45, 30]. Karim et al. [46] and Zoughaib et al. [47] suggested that work engagement positively impacts job performance. Another study revealed that there is a relationship between self-management and task-completing behavior. This study investigated self-management of academics and generalized that self-management skills can vary but directly impact employee performance. Various researchers have supported this idea through their research findings [45, 48, 49,50].

The balance between work and individual life is essential for every employee. To balance professional life and personal life, it is fundamental to manage time and set priorities appropriately. Many research studies proved how employees prioritize managing themselves [51,52]. For example, Raghuram and Wiesenfeld [41] revealed that self-efficacy and managing time moderate with the virtual work environment. Thus, hypothesis four is proposed.

*H₄: The greater the self-management, the greater the success of telecommuting in the new-normal environment.*

### 1.1.6 Work-life balance (WLB)

Work-life balance (WLB) refers to "*the ability of individuals to pursue their work and personal life successfully*" [53, 54]. Social life intervention with work is based on five factors: stress-related, marital-related, time-related, family intrusion, and dependent-related [55]. Only a few organizations, a few members of society, and families provide the support required for employees to overcome these issues [56]. It is worth noting that WLB is a challenge for many women employees than men [30] and changes with how each employee handles it and the time and place [57]. Some findings prove that WLB will lead to happiness and work achievement in the digital workplace [58, 59, 60,61].

Work-Life Conflict (WLC) is the other side of the coin WLB. An inability to balance work and family demands is a WLC [62]. Work pressure, performing multiple roles, work overload, interferences, etc., can lead to WLC among employees. Women employees face WLC rather than men due to role juggling and family commitment [63]. Multiple roles could cause stress among female workers and their

psychological well-being [64]. During the pandemic, most employees are forced to work at home and support their children for virtual learning. This situation has caused or instead aggravated WLC rather than WLB at the digital workplace. Thus, hypothesis five is formulated.

$H_5$:    *The greater the work-life balance, the greater the success of telecommuting in the new-normal environment.*

### 1.1.7 The research framework

The conceptual framework for this study shown in Fig. 1 hypothesized the relationship between variables tested empirically.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a cross-sectional study conducted from a survey during the period June 2020-February 2021. Employees who participated in the present study are executive-level employees in a private bank in Sri Lanka. The primary data were collected by conducting telephone, zoom interviews and through an online survey questionnaire.

The judgmental sampling technique has been used to select the sample items from the population. The sample consists of 384 employees selected based on Krejcie and Morgan's [65] formula. In fact, as calculated by Hejase & Hejase [66]:

$N = [Z^2.p.q] / e^2$. Where, Z=1.96 (95% statistical significance, p = q = .50 assuming equal gender attribute, and e=5% the desired level of precision, then N = 384 employees.

Out of the total collected questionnaires, two were discarded due to incorrect responses, and then the sample size was reduced to 382. Therefore, the response rate attained was 99.5% which is an excellent response.

### 2.1 Variables and Measures

Telecommuting in the new-normal environment is considered a dependent variable, and Family Responsibility, Supportive virtual working environment, Virtual Training, Self-management, and Work-Life Balance are considered independent variables. All variables are measured by the perception of the respondent by using 5 points Likert scale. The aggregate of the items in each variable use to test the relationship among items.

### 2.2 Data Analyses and Hypothesis Testing

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the respondent profile. Pearson's correlation analysis has been used to determine the relationship among variables, i.e., test the hypotheses.

To measure internal consistency and the normal distribution of the data, normality tests and Cronbach's alpha tests were conducted. The alpha values for each variable is over .7 indicate that the items are reliable enough to test the hypotheses [67]. The Skewness and Kurtosis tests were conducted to test the normality of data distribution and measure the tail shape of the data. If values are fallen in between +1 and -1, it is considered the normality of the data distribution [68]. Table 1 shows the values of the test. The negative skewness value indicates a left skewness.

### 2.3 Factor Analysis

Factor analysis was used to identify unobserved items. Before conducting the factor analysis, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) analyses were used to determine the sample adequacy, as shown in Table 2. The significant results of Bartlett's test of sphericity (p=0.000) are shown the data could be used to conduct factor analysis.

The purpose of factor analysis is to reduce many individual items into a fewer number of dimensions. The principal axis factoring extraction method was used to conduct the factor analysis. All the items with eigenvalues larger than one were extracted and retained, and the factor loading below 0.3 was removed. To extract independent factors for each independent variable, varimax rotation was selected. Accordingly, extracted factors for each variable are corresponding to the structure of measurement of the items.

### 2.4 Data Analysis and Interpretations

#### 2.4.1 Respondents Profile

The results of the descriptive analysis show the profile of the respondents. Accordingly, 87% are married, 64% are female workers, and 56% are less than 40 years old. Moreover, 96 percent are

mothers having two to three children. Sixty-five percent of those children are school age, and 23 percent are an infant. Twenty-three percent indicated that they live with their parents or adult family, and 86 percent of these women employees have working spouses, and others are having their own business.

Overall, these data highlighted that most employees are married women with school-age children and working spouses. This situation has a positive correlation with issues of work-life balance.

## 3. RESULTS

Family responsibility, supportive virtual work environment, virtual training, self-management of the employees, and work-life balance are used as independent variables to test whether these variables are significantly related to the success of telecommuting during the COVID-19 pandemic. All the hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC), as shown in Table 3, which was used to test the relationship between independent and dependent variables.
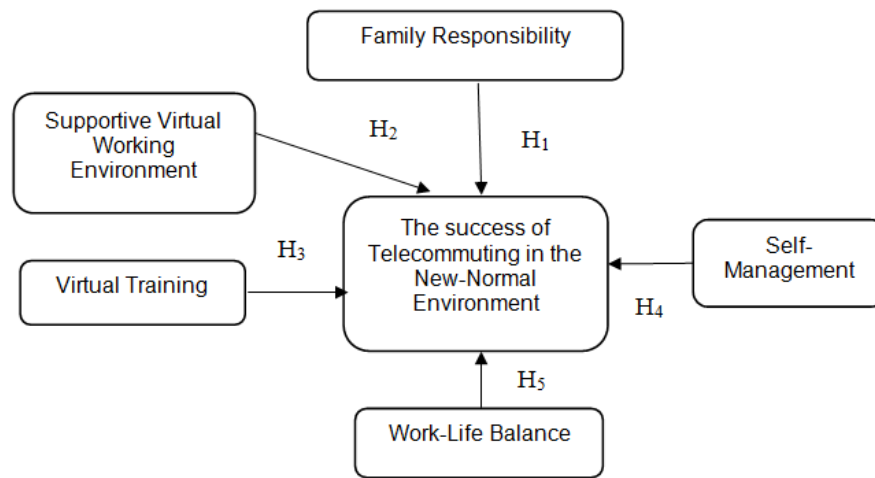


**Fig. 1. The hypothesized relationship between variables**

**Table 1. Kurtosis and Skewness**

| Variable | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---|---|---|
| Success of telecommuting | -.225 | .228 |
| Family Responsibility | -.254 | .399 |
| Supportive virtual working environment | -.031 | .456 |
| Virtual Training | -.331 | .398 |
| Self-management | -.360 | .123 |
| Work-Life Balance | -.035 | .473 |

*Source: Based on survey data*

**Table 2. Kaiser-meyer-Olkin (KMO) analysis**

| Variable | KMO measure of sampling adequacy | Bartlett's test of sphericity (Sig.) |
|---|---|---|
| Success of telecommuting | .925 | .000 |
| Family Responsibility | .854 | .000 |
| Supportive virtual working environment | .631 | .000 |
| Virtual Training | .731 | .000 |
| Self-management | .860 | .000 |
| Work-Life Balance | .935 | .000 |

*Source: Based on survey data*

**Table 3. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (PPMC)**

| Correlations | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Family Responsibility ($x_1$) | 1 | | | | | |
| 2. Supportive Virtual Working Environment ($x_2$) | -.111[*] | 1 | | | | |
| 3. Virtual Training ($x_3$) | .034 | .164[**] | 1 | | | |
| 4. Self-Management ($x_4$) | .123[**] | .235 | .233 | 1 | | |
| 5. Work-Life Balance ($x_5$) | -.456[*] | .087 | .187[**] | .643[*] | 1 | |
| 6. Success of Telecommuting (y) $r_{xy}$(cal) | -.967[**] | .593[**] | .660[*] | .146[**] | .567 | 1 |
| N | 384 | 384 | 384 | 384 | 384 | 384 |
| Degree of Freedom (df) =(N-2) | 382 | 382 | 382 | 382 | 382 | 382 |
| Critical Value $r_{xy}$(crit) = ± | .128[**] | . 128[**] | .098[*] | .128[**] | | |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). | | | | | | |
| *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). | | | | | | |

*Source: Based on Survey Data*

Family responsibility has a significant negative correlation (-.967), and virtual work environment (0.593) has a positive correlation with the success of telecommuting (p>0.01). All other values have a significant positive correlation with the dependent variable with positive coefficients like virtual training (.660) and self-management of the employees (.146) other than WLB (0.567), which has a statistically non-significant correlation (p>0.05).

*$H_1$: The higher the family responsibility, the weaker the success of telecommuting in the new-normal environment*

In hypothesis 01, family responsibility ($x_1$) is considered an independent variable, and telecommuting in the new-normal environment (y) is considered a dependent variable. The results shown in Table 3 indicated that family responsibility is the best predictor of the success of telecommuting in the new-normal environment with a -.967 $r_{xy}$(cal) coefficient value, which has a statistically significant negative correlation at a 99% confidence level. The corresponding $r_{xy}$(crit) is ±.128 with df 382. The $r_{xy}$(cal) of -.967 is greater than the $r_{xy}$(crit) of ±.128, proved the relationship between family responsibility and the success of telecommuting in the new normal environment. The negative $r_{xy}$(cal) value indicated a negative correlation between two variables and is statistically significant. The negative correlation indicated that if employees have greater family responsibility during the COVID-19 period, the success of adapting to telecommuting will become weaker. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

*$H_2$: The greater the supportive virtual working environment, the greater the success of telecommuting in the new-normal environment.*

The independent variable of hypothesis 02 is the supportive virtual working environment ($x_2$), while the success of telecommuting in the new-normal environment (y) is the dependent variable. The results show (Table 3) that a supportive virtual working environment is the best predictor of telecommuting success during the pandemic with a .593 $r_{xy}$(cal) coefficient value. The correlation value shows a significant positive correlation at a 99% confidence level. The corresponding $r_{xy}$(crit) is ±.128 with df 382. The $r_{xy}$(cal) of .593 is greater than the $r_{xy}$(crit) of ±.128, proved the relationship between a supportive virtual working environment and the success of telecommuting in the new normal environment. The positive $r_{xy}$(cal) value indicated that a statistically significant positive correlation between the two variables. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis, $H_2$, is accepted. The positive correlation indicated that if employees have management support during the COVID-19 period, adapting to telecommuting would become more outstanding.

*$H_3$: The greater the virtual training, the greater the success of telecommuting in the new-normal environment.*

The virtual training is considered an independent variable ($x_3$), and telecommuting in the new-normal environment (y) is a dependent variable. The summary of Table 3 shows that 0.660 $r_{xy}$(cal) coefficient value significant 95% confidence level. Thus, the virtual training has a prediction power of the dependent variable, the success of telecommuting in the new-normal environment. The related $r_{xy}$(crit) is ±.098 with

**Table 4. Hypotheses result summary**

| | Developed hypotheses | Relationship | Developed hypotheses |
|---|---|---|---|
| $H_1$: | The higher the family responsibility, the weaker the success of telecommuting in the new-normal environment | Strong Correlation | Supported |
| $H_2$: | The greater the supportive virtual working environment, the greater the success of telecommuting in the new-normal environment. | Moderate Correlation | Supported |
| $H_3$: | The greater the virtual training, the greater the success of telecommuting in the new-normal environment. | Moderate Correlation | Supported |
| $H_4$: | The greater the self-management, the greater the success of telecommuting in the new-normal environment. | Weak Correlation | Supported |
| $H_5$: | The greater the work-life balance, the greater the success of telecommuting in the new-normal environment. | No Correlation | Rejected |

df 382 proving that $r_{xy}$(cal) is significant to predict the independent variable and shows that these two variables have a moderate positive correlation. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, and $H_3$ is accepted. The finding of this study gives insights to managers if the organization can provide sufficient virtual training for the new-normal environment, the success of telecommuting in the new-normal environment will be enhanced.

*$H_4$: The greater the self-management, the greater the success of telecommuting in the new-normal environment.*

The study's findings show that managing their time to adjust to the new-normal environment is one of the responsibilities of the employees. For hypothesis 4, self-management is considered an independent variable ($x_4$), and the success of telecommuting in the new-normal environment (y) is considered the dependent variable. The Pearson correlation coefficient calculated value is .146 shows the relationship between two variables is positive and weak (Table 3). The corresponding $r_{xy}$ (crit) of ±.128 value proved that the relationship is statistically significant at a 99% confidence level. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, and alternative hypothesis $H_4$ is accepted.

$H_5$: *The greater the work-life balance, the greater the success of telecommuting in the new-normal environment.*

Hypothesis 5 tests the relationship between work-life balance (x) and greater success of telecommuting in the new-normal environment (y). The results of the Table 3 show that there is no statistical relationship between these two variables. Thus, the null hypothesis was accepted, and $H_5$ was rejected. The results indicated that work-life balance is not a strong predictor of telecommuting success in the new normal environment. The summary of the hypotheses testing are shown in Table 4.

## 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Most of the past research studies on telecommuting findings focused on how employees balance family life with work-life while working in a virtual work environment. The Covid-19 pandemic necessitated the 'new normal, which forced employees to work at home while paying attention to their domestic care and childcare responsibilities. This study focuses on how employees adjust to the new environment and distinguishes tasks carried out during the conventional telecommuting system and the new normal environment. Four independent variables, family responsibility, virtual work environment, virtual training, self-management, positively impact telecommuting in the new normal environment other than work-life balance.

The literature indicates that telecommuting offers employees a better working environment. However, during the pandemic, many challenges, such as family responsibility, virtual work environment, virtual training, and self-management of the employees, affect telecommuting, thereby reduced employees' full potential to adapt to the new normal work from

home concept. Based on the findings, this study concludes that family responsibility is the best predictor for the success of telecommuting in the new normal working environment, which reconfirms the results of previous studies [69,70,71,15].

In addition, the virtual work environment [15, 72, 73, 74], virtual training [75,74]; and self-management of the employees [15] also affect WLB [30, 23, 76] have provided supportive evidence for findings of this study. To eliminate conflict and stress from the virtual environment, decision-makers must adequately study the situation, identify the issues, and take proactive action to enhance employee performance and organizational well-being.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study reveal policy implications that can help mitigate issues of employees, especially those associated with telecommuting during the pandemic situation.

First, considering the responsibilities of the family responsibility, which is a direct predictor of the failure of telecommuting, managers need to implement psychological training for their employees to encourage and convince them how to balance their life events and work responsibilities [11]. Although many aspects of training in the psychological matter, managers need to ensure that staff is trained with real-life, hands-on parts and employees have the know-how to manage family responsibilities without having role conflict. Therefore, managers or decision-makers need to appoint suitable experts to achieve this objective and minimize the conflict arising at the work level due to family obligations.

Second, decision-makers need to train employees for new changes to eliminate conflict among work-life balance and adapt to the new environment. Employees need to acquire skills and responsibilities relevant to their new working environment, work at home, etc. Accordingly, policymakers must devise and arrange training programs enabling upskilling of employees by acquiring a hands-on approach regarding new skills and responsibilities as needed. This study found that employees need extended technical training on various degrees to enforce procedures in the virtual working environment, which previous researchers also supported [38, 30]. Appropriate training programs on the online

meeting, online record keeping, data security, privacy and confidentiality of information, work ethics, and proper guidelines and procedures to work in a remote environment are the most urgent training requirements for banking staff.

Third, comprehensive policy training for managers also requires urgent attention. As many different policies (including some revised) and procedures apply during the traditional working environment, employees might not apply these as is [20]. The validity of this is even higher in the new work setting where existing rules cannot be applied as they used to be. In addition, new policies and procedures are required for the new normal working environment. Employees, who need close supervision, need to monitor, or else employee confusion ambiguities might not be solved [23]. Thus, training programs for managers is essential to communicate with employees frequently and continuously. The managers and employees need to collaborate well to ensure the success of the training. Thus, decision-makers can arrange virtual training programs to eliminate employees' issues in a new normal working environment. This virtual training can reduce cost and reduce the possibility of confusion and enhance employee productivity.

Fourth, providing incentives for employees may enhance their satisfaction and motivation working during this virtual environment. Many employees have to spend out-of-pocket on official matters related to various internet data plans and IT equipment like computers (laptop or desktop) with all other required tools and software to work in a virtual environment [20; 23]. Therefore, the organization should also provide incentives to employees, such as technical assistance programs, virtual consultations, monthly allowances for internet plans, concessionary loans for those employees who prefer to purchase laptops, etc.

Fifth, developing a family counseling service. Psychosocial support is the need of the hour. It can strengthen groups of people in a society, rather than providing support to men or women alone. This way, there is much potential to reduce social isolation, which most employees face due to mobility restrictions and rules such as minimum staff at workplaces. Employers, peers and colleagues, family members, and close associates need to be essential elements of this overall training and support process.

Since there is no specific policy to overcome these issues, it is necessary to improve the existing laws and regulations to overcome these problems and formulate a long-term policy on new normal working conditions in the banking sector. This should encompass fundamental working rights under the virtual working environment, career development, and welfare of workers.

## FURTHER RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The scope of this study is limited to the banking sector in Sri Lanka. Thus, future researchers can strengthen this study by triangulation data by using qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews or focus group interviews. This study can be done with employees who are working in manufacturing organizations. This study focuses on telecommuting in the new normal environment and further strengthens the study by focusing on work-life conflict and work-family balance.

## CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, respondents' consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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