WORK NEVER AWAY FROM HOME: EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OF WORK AMONG HOME-BASED WORKERS

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ABSTRACT – Technology and globalization have led to the development of alternative forms of employment like telecommuting. In the Philippines, telecommuting is a less explored phenomenon in empirical research. The current study is a descriptive research design that explores the conceptions of work of fourteen home-based workers. Respondents completed an online survey questionnaire. Results have shown the prevailing themes of economic rewards and autonomy in their concepts of work. These themes emerged in work concept domains such as its definitions, components, meanings of work, advantages, disadvantages, comparison to traditional work set-up, and intentions to stay or leave their current home-based work. Other themes that form their conceptions of work include relatedness and competence. Recommendations offered lucrative and optimistic hopes of future programs and legislation to protect and promote the well-being of Filipino home-based workers.

Keywords: the concept of work, home-based work, telecommuting, economic value

INTRODUCTION

Information technology (IT) has made radical changes in the workplace. Gone are the days that work means an eight-hour physical presence in the workstation. Recent and upcoming information and communication technologies have allowed organizations to defy geographical and time zone limitations, thereby distributing work to employees across the globe (Venkatesh and Vitalari, 1992). Along with globalization, business giants and even small enterprises have ventured into alternative forms of employment to save labor costs. Notebooks, user-friendly software, information accesses (i.e., Internet), and electronic mails (email) have made telecommuting possible (Prystash, 1995).

Aside from the growing business process outsourcing (BPO) industry in the Asia Pacific Region (Tucker, Kao, & Verna, 2005), Filipinos are offered an employment alternative in the form of home-based work. Otherwise known as telecommuting, remote work, homework, virtual work, telework, or distributed work, home-based work is a job that occurs outside of a traditional office setting that utilizes telecommunications or computer technology (Lautsch & Kossel, 2011).

It combines the use of information and communication technologies centering on the concept of a flexible workplace (Di Martino & Wirth, 1990) and work time. Despite the increasing evidence of this form of work arrangement in the Philippines, attention and effort targeted to this emerging section have recently started. Illustratively, the Philippine Department of Labor and Employment issued Department Order No. 202, known as the Telecommuting Act (2019, March). The act is the sole legislation in the country that aims to regulate the home-based work arrangement in the private sectors. Similarly, there have been fewer studies in the local literature that explore the experiences of home-based workers.

The present study aims to describe how home-based workers conceptualize work. This conceptualization includes how telecommuters define work and its components. The study also seeks to know the importance that home-based workers attach to their work (the meaning of work). The present work would also like to know the advantages and disadvantages that home-based workers identify with this form of work arrangement. It also seeks to compare traditional and home-based jobs. Telecommuters' intentions to stay or leave their home-based work along with their reasons for these intentions wrap-up the research interests.

Answering these questions will facilitate a better understanding of the difference between traditional ways and home-based work. Consequently, these findings will pave the way to the development of better legislation and sector-relevant programs to protect telecommuters and their organizations.

Home-based Work and its Nature

Home-based work, also known as telework, remote work, distance work, telecommuting, to name a few, is used to cover for a wide variety of alternative forms of employment. Di Martino and Wirth (1990) summarized these situations as: (1) electronic homework - the most commonly practiced type of telecommuting where work is done at one's home with the used of new information and communication technologies relying entirely on range of skills, forms of organization, and links with the central employer; (2) satellite centers - these are individual entities within an enterprise but are situated in a different geographical location but are sustainably connected to the central organization through constant electronic communication; (3) neighborhood centers - these are units that are often situated near the homes of different users from various enterprises and/or self-employed entrepreneurs and that offer users with electronic facilities that can be used for range of purposes like tele-education, teleshopping, or leisure activities; (4) mobile work - referring to professionals with travel as central to their work and who use electronic communication facilities to network with their headquarters for access to electronic mail, data banks, and the likes.

This wide variety of situations where telecommuting applies can be overwhelming. But de Beer and Blanc's (1985) analysis of 50 definitions of telework suggested that there are three central concepts to this alternative form of employment. These are organization, location (to include differences in time zones, and technology), and technology. Thus, the authors suggested that telework is "work carried out in a location where remote from central offices or production facilities, the worker has no personal contact with co-workers there but is able to communicate with them using new technology" (p.81).

From this definition, telework can either be "online" or "off-line"; organized either individually or collectively; may constitute either all or part of the worker's job; and may be performed either by self-employed entrepreneurs or direct hires. More importantly, home-based workers are knowledge workers composed of professionals and managers that distinguishes them from employees of the cottage industry (Belanger, 1999).

The literature has suggested different factors why some workers opt for home-based work. These factors include physical environment like office space availability at home (Baruch, 2000; Yen, 2000); and commute from home to work (Mokhtarian & Salomon, 1997; Nilles, 1988; Sullivan, Mahmassani, & Yen, 1993). Other reasons relate to socio-familial factors to include time spent with family (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Baruch, 2001; Mannering & Mokhtarian, 1995; Mokhtarian & Salomon, 1994, 1996, 1997) and household circumstances like having children in the household (Huws et al., 1990; Kinsman, 1987). Experience with technologies (Huws, Korte, & Robinson, 1990; Kinsman, 1987) is also another cited reason for the said choice. But more recently, social influence has been shown to predict the decision to telecommute (e.g., Martinez-Sanchez et al., 2008; Paez & Scott, 2007; Scott, Dam, Paez, & Wilton, 2012).

These factors are well-studied in the context of Western samples. While some of these reasons may apply to the Filipino representatives, exploring the elements of home-based work arrangement choice may yield culturally different reasons. These variables then may be instrumental in developing more culturally fit programs to Filipino telecommuters.

The Concept of Work and the Meaning of Work

As traditionally defined, work refers to a group of tasks that employees should perform as a result of membership to an organization (Kabanoff, 1980). While this definition may apply to home-based work, the peculiarities in telecommuting may change the meanings we give to work.

For example, the meaning of work is a well-studied concept in the literature. It refers to the importance that employees place to work. Jung and Yoon (2016) suggested that the meaning of work is the foundation of self-realization. Dissecting this association would mean looking into the internal motives of employees to which the meaning of work interacts with, to impact job outcomes like performance (Hertzberg, 1966). As Steger, Dik, and Duffy (2012) put it, "Many people want work to be more than just a means to earn money or put in the time." This internal motive approach makes it equally vital to understand and compare what makes telecommuting tick for its workers as opposed to the traditional eight-hour-workplace-reporting employees.

Several researchers have also identified different dimensions of the meaning of work. For example, Steer and Porter (2001) have identified four aspects, namely, (1) reciprocity of exchange; (2) social functions; (3) a source of status or class; and (4) personal meaning. Harpaz and Fu (2002) proposed a six-dimension model. Their dimensions were (1) work centrality - degree of general importance that working has in a person's life at any given time (Dubin, Champoux, & Porter, 1975); (2) entitlement norms - set of normative assumptions developed about what one should expect from work and working (Harpaz and Fu, 2002); (3) economic orientation - economic benefits obtained through work; (4) interpersonal relations - focus on human relations formed with colleagues or supervisors through work; (5) expressive orientation - degree of fun, interest, or satisfaction which makes work attractive; (6) obligation norms - contributions expected from working (Harpaz and Fu, 2002). A more recent study of Cartwright and Holmes (2006) suggested three dimensions of the meaning of work. These included (1) work itself, (2) a sense of self, and (3) a sense of balance.

The Self Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 1985) also reduces these dimensions into what the proponents called nutriments. These nutriments include autonomy or self-organization and endorsement of one's behavior. Another of these nutriments is competence or the feeling of the effectiveness of one's capacities. Relatedness or the sense of belongingness wraps up the list of nutriments. These factors are universal psychological

needs. Their label as nutriments suits them as they are essential for psychological growth, integrity, and wellness. These nutriments are also. When not satisfied, the situation brings about problems of well-being and vitality in the person. This gap then triggers some form of action.

Furthermore, in one of SDT's mini theories, specifically, the Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CBT), the separation of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations is explained. The theory posits that external motivators (e.g., pay, praises) decrease the impact of the internal drives (e.g., enjoyment, challenge) for activities like work. However, in their mini theory of Organismic Integration, extrinsic motivators can become intrinsic through the process of internalization. Thus, economic rewards, like salary and benefits, can eventually become autonomous. Consequently, employees find more meaning into their work apart from the pay they are receiving.

These studies provide a rich framework for the meaning of work. However, there is an evident lack to look at these dimensions in the context of telecommuting.

Culture and Meaning of Work

Most of the studies of the meaning of work sampled Western workers. However, culture is a vital factor that influences people's social cognition, motivation, and behavior (Lehman, Chiu, & Schaller, 2004). Upon reviewing the local literature, no study explored Filipino workers' concept of work. However, some frameworks support the need to take an indigenized perspective. For example, Andres (1985) proposed an indigenization of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. In his model, familism replaces physiological needs. Andres explained this modification as the family serves as a defense against a hostile world, a source of basic necessities, an environment where one can be true to the self, and a driving force. Thus, the family is what motivates a Filipino employee to work.

Moreover, Marcus and Kitayama's (1991) seminal work on culture and the self further explains Filipinos' close-knit with their families and group affiliations. As part of a collectivist culture, Marcus and Kitayama suggest that Filipinos have an interdependent self, different from the independent self of most Westerners. The interdependent self favorably connects with the social context. The relationships in these specific circumstances become integrated into the person's identity. Early on, the father of Filipino Psychology, Dr. Virgilio Enriquez (1986), has initially characterized the Filipino psyche to be driven by the core value of 'kapwa'. The term roughly translates to being-with-others. To Enriquez, the 'kapwa' is a shared identity of the self and others, thereby implying unity of the self and others. When workers speak of their affinities to their colleagues, managers, and organization, they are practicing kapwa. In its higher-order form, kapwa translates to helping a colleague in need both in professional and personal life.

It is premature to think that these prevalent cultural-specific psychological processes box Filipinos to these realities. In a multi-cultural context like telework, this is not the case. In a more recent work of Morris, Chiu, & Liu (2015), they have suggested a new way of looking at culture through the polyculturalism lens. In this framework, people hold multiple cultural, mental maps that are comparable to applications. Encounters with specific cultures activate some apps, and others remain inactive in the background. Polyculturalism is essential in understanding phenomena like cultural conformity, assimilative responses, and many more. Amongst Filipino telecommuters, their means of reading cues of their managers and adapting to the global virtual business culture are examples of polyculturalism. This mechanism facilitates smooth work culture transitioning for Filipino home-based workers.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Home-Based Work

The known positive consequences of telecommuting are in two folds - for the organization and the workers. Company benefits include enterprise flexibility and cost savings (i.e., Judkins, West, & Drew, 1986); increased productivity (i.e., Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Clutterbuck, 1985; Bureau of National Affairs, 1989; Curson, 1986); reduced absenteeism (Kitou & Horvath, 2008); recruitment and retention of staffs as in the case of new mothers, senior employees nearing retirement, those from home-bound and depressed areas, and those searching for better places to live or work alternatives combining work and leisure; jobs for disabled (i.e., France Ministry of Labour, Employment and Vocational Training and the Ministry of Post, Telecommunications, and Space, 1984); development of the rural areas (i.e., Commission of the European Communities, 1989; Albrechtsen, 1988).

Among telecommuters, the advantages of home-based work include increased employee autonomy, mobility, reduced commuting time, various and simultaneous employment opportunities, improved work-time arrangements, and working time flexibility (Di Martino & Wirth, 1990). While telecommuters experience rigid work schedules, they also have the freedom to choose when and how long they wish to work (e.g., Pratt, 1984). Home-based workers may also enjoy the time made available by not having to commute, thereby avoiding traffic, wasted time, energy and transportation costs, and pollution (Di Martino & Wirth, 1990). In the past decades, experts also anticipate the reduction of the growing tensions between work and family life as attributable to telework (Baines & Gelder, 2003; Di Martino & Wirth, 1990; Tremblay, 2002).

On the contrary, the identified negative consequences of telecommuting include labor market inequalities, worsened employment conditions, lower pay and reduced benefits, and job security (Di Martino & Wirth, 1990). Di Martino and Wirth explained that the main reason behind the non-provision of benefits is the classification of home-based workers as self-employed or independent contractors. These workers receive payment for their specific service rendered or the number of outputs they produce. Similarly, work flexibility also accounts for the remuneration differences and other disadvantages. Organizations freely hire different types of telecommuters ranging from the typical, project, temporary, and part-time employees. This move is to cope with the fluctuations in the work and client demands. With globalization and technology, employers can now hire employees from other geographical locations. Meanwhile, telecommuting talents across the globe invest in communication technologies to join the emerging sector. The challenges come in this initial gadget purchase and when the country's Internet connection is not at par to first world country employers and clientele.

It is also undeniable that home-based workers work in a different time zone, on weekends, and prolonged periods to meet deadlines and demands. For example, in a survey conducted during the early beginnings of telecommuting in 1983, home-based workers in the United Kingdom reported working for an average of 22 hours and 40 minutes (Huws, 1984). In such a situation, Di Martino and Wirth (1990) suggested that telecommuters may experience non-payment of overtime work, and this practice can become a habit for employers. The difficulty of enforcing protective legislation on the working time of teleworkers makes the matter worse.

Home-based workers also face occupational health risks (Henke et al., 2016; Di Martino & Wirth, 1990). Common health problems include the development of cardiovascular diseases because of the sedentary nature of the work (e.g., Robertson, Maynard, & McDevitt, 2003) and eye-related problems resulting from the use of visual display units (VDUs).

Threats to psychological well-being are also common due to social isolation and demotivation (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). In the same survey reported by Huws (1984), 60 percent of the home-based workers identified isolation as the most significant disadvantage. Similarly, Hudson's Bay Company 1987 extensive survey revealed that the majority of the teleworkers miss the stimulation of exchanging ideas with colleagues. Social isolation is also a barrier to the decision to telecommute (e.g., Forester, 1989; Olson, 1988; Pratt, 1984; Wilton et al., 2001).

Negative cognitive responses such as anxiety and stress or otherwise known as "technostress" are also other identified disadvantages of home-based work (e.g., Brod 1984; Felstead, & Jewson, 2000). In terms of family life, studies have suggested that teleworking, more particularly, home-based work, runs the risk of invading the family life (Marayuma, Hopkinson, & James, 2009; Tremblay, Paquet, & Najem, 2006, Brod 1984; Felstead, & Jewson, 2000). In a more recent work of Leung and Zhang (2016), high technostress, and low flexibility, and increased permeability perceptions of work and family life were all associated with high family-work conflict.

Studies on telecommuting have furthered programs and legislation to protect and promote well-being among home-based workers. An example of this is the Homework Act (Heimarbeitsgesetz) of Germany. Also, house architectural designs for home-based workers became common. These designs involve the workplace in the abode to face outwards. This layout allows teleworkers access to more stimulating views and eventually diminish their feelings of isolation. For psychological reasons, these offices also need physical separation from the other parts of the home (i.e., closest to the front door to minimize visual or physical contact with the private areas of the house). Employment contracts in telecommuting also contained provisions of home inspections and specifications of safe home conditions and free from hazards. These legislations and ergonomics initiatives protect both the physical and psychological well-being of telecommuters. Despite these developments, challenges to adequate levels of safety and health protection remain due to difficulties in carrying out inspections, particularly the limited access of public inspectors to private homes.

In the Philippines, the implementation of the recently issued Telecommuting Act continues to puzzle the concerned labor sectors. Thus, the current research attempts to document the work concepts of Filipino home-based workers. This scholarly endeavor aims to expand the literature of work by exploring a non-conventional job set-up that also utilizes local data. Furthermore, the practical applications of the current study to telecommuters and their organizations are relevant to the current landscape of the labor force.

METHODOLOGY

Design

The current research utilizes a Descriptive Research Design. The present work aims to explore home-based workers' conceptualization of work and its components.

Participants

The researcher employed a convenient sampling design, particularly the snowball technique (i.e., referrals). A total of 14 home-based employees completed the online questionnaire.

The modal sex was female (92.86%). Respondents' ages ranged from 19 to 41. Most of the respondents were college graduates (71.40%). Two (14.30%) of the respondents were not able to finish their respective college degrees, while the other two home-based workers

finished law school and high school, respectively. In terms of place of origin, most of the respondents were from Cebu (71.40%). Two were from Davao while the remaining two were from General Santos City and Tacloban City.

Most of the respondents were single (71.40%). Three (21.40%) were married, and one (7.10%) was separated. They also perceived their socio-economic status as average. Most of them lived with their nuclear families (64.30%). Three (21.40%) were renting a place, and two (14.30%) owned their houses. In terms of domestic financial role, four (33.33%) out of the 12 respondents who lived with their nuclear families reported contributing to their families' expenses regularly. Only three (25.00%) of these home-based workers have their income for their disposal. Meanwhile, two (16.67%) reported contributing to their nuclear families' finances, but irregularly. On the other hand, all three married respondents reported sharing domestic financial responsibility with their spouses.

Data Gathering Tool

 Concept of work. The researcher utilized open-ended questions to explore respondents' ideas about work. These questions include their definition of work (How do you define work?) and what comprises it (Work comprises what for your?). The section also contains a separate item on the importance of the current home-based work for the respondents (What importance do you attach to your current home-based work?). Other questions pertain to the advantages (What are the things you like about your current home-based work?) and disadvantages (What are the things you dislike about current home-based work?) of telecommuting. The section also includes items comparing traditional and home-based jobs (How would you compare your work in the companies in the past and your current home-based work?). The open-ended questions wrapped up with an item asking respondents about their plans of leaving the said work with its corresponding reasons (Indicate your reasons for either planning to stay or leave your current home-based work.).

Job data. The researcher developed a short survey form comprising five open-ended questions to gather information about the respondents' job. The job data questions included respondents' job tenure, their entry process to telework, the nature of their home-based work, and their employment history before telecommuting.

Socio-demographic data. A personal information sheet also came with previous measures. The section contains open-ended questions, forced-choice questions, and a 5-point scale to measure different socio-demographic information. These include data for gender, age, highest educational attainment, place of origin, living arrangement, perceived socio-economic status, civil status, number of dependents, and domestic financial role.

The online questionnaire was pre-tested to the first five respondents of the research, and no adjustment was made provided that their comments and suggestions were favorable to the original version of the questionnaire.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering started with the identification of the participants who qualify with the selection criteria (i.e., a full-time home-based worker at the time of the data gathering). The researcher asked for the consent of the potential respondents to partake in the study.

The researcher then forwarded the link of the online survey form to respondents who gave their consent. Respondents completed the online survey at a convenient time. The online

form came with a database that contained the responses.

The researcher then sent a gratitude email to the respondents who completed the online survey.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The respondents' job tenure in their current home-based work ranged from three weeks to 84 months. Their introduction to their current home-based job was through a friend. The other ways include an online application (35.71%), referral (21.43%), active online application (21.43%), and something related to their previous jobs (21.43%). The nature of respondents' home-based work included customer service (28.57%), writing and data analysis (28.57%), and English as Second Language (ESL) teaching (21.43%). Other natures of work with only one respondent coming from each industry were real estate, virtual assistance, and technical jobs like creating promotional videos.

Respondents also reported the type of industry of their previous employment. Three (21.43%) of the respondents reported not having any work experience from another sector. Four (28.57%) came from the business process outsourcing (BPO) industry and three (21.43%) from the language and communication (e.g., ESL teaching) line of work. The other sectors that the respondents came from included hospitality, real estate, and health care.

With regards to respondents' concepts of work, their responses to the open-ended questions were carefully analyzed together with another expert. The researcher and the expert then came up with themes for the following areas, namely, the definition of work and its components, importance of home-based work, advantages and disadvantages of home-based work set-up, comparisons between traditional and home-based job, and their intentions to stay or leave, and reasons, telecommuting. The next sections discussed these themes.

Table 1. Themes on the Definitions and Components of Work (N =14)

Definition	Example Quote
economic value	"Work generates income." (R2, 29, married) "Something you would not be doing if you have money." (R10, 32, single) "is a service you provide to get money." (R13, 30, single)
doing a task	"Work is a task that you do in exchange for a monetary amount." (R4, 20, single) "Work is getting tasks done in exchange for monetary or material rewards" (R5, 21, single)
use of one's knowledge and skill	"Where we apply what we have learned (home, school, etc.) and skills attained to earn to provide financial needs. Work is not just for the financial aspect of life. It's also where we further our skills and add more to what we have learned. Meet and gain friends." (R11, 32, married)
Dimensions	**Example Quote**
work itself	"I'm not sure what this question means — but for me, work should have clear objectives, efficient processes in place, and transparency between workers and employers." (R3, 32, single) "Tasks, assignments, responsibilities, and rules that you have to follow in order to accomplish whatever that you are doing." (R4, 20, single)

Table 1. Themes on the Definitions and Components of Work (N =14) cont'd..

Dimensions	Example Quote
values	"Hard-work, patience, and being dedicated." (R9, 26, married) "In my current job, it comprises time, effort, patience, understanding, creativity." (R14, 19, single)
a sense of balance	"To earn effective work-life balance working at home." (R12, 41, single)
a sense of self	"delivery of and improvement of skills." (R8, 24, single)

An interesting, consistent theme in the respondents' definition of work is its economic value. While the task and the use of one's knowledge and skills appear to be terms associated with the meaning of work, the financial reward for such reciprocal exchange remains evident. This pattern comes without a surprise, as no one works for free. Salaries provide us with necessities and desires in life (Britt & Jex, 2014). For Filipinos, good-paying jobs benefit their families. Andres (1985) even proposed that familism is the foundation of the indigenized version of the hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943). As such, the Filipino value of familism plays a central role in one's work life. Consequently, a good-paying home-based work allows Filipinos to provide better living conditions to their families.

In the dimensions of the meaning of work, three areas apply to the respondents, consistent with the study of Cartwright and Holmes (2006). These dimensions cover the significant areas of an employee's work life. Regardless of the form, either traditional or home-based, employees take note of these three dimensions as sources of meaning in their work. The most prevalent of these factors is work itself, such as tasks, assignments, responsibilities, and the like. These are intrinsic motivators that allow one to satisfy the needs of competence and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 1985).

Meanwhile, the addition of values to the dimensions identified by Cartwright and Holmes (2006) suggests the positive valence expectancies that Filipinos commonly attached to work. Job holders take pride in their work. In the process of their work meaning-making, culturally endorsed value systems became salient. These values include hard work, dedication, and patience that Filipinos commonly associate to work and exemplary employees. Furthermore, local organizations also endorse these values as part of company cultures. The highly permeable nature of the interdependent selves of the Filipinos explains the integration of these values to their identities (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Coherently, the dimension "a sense of balance" also speaks of the collective nature of the Filipino home-based workers surveyed. More specifically, the life component of the balance refers to quality time with the family. Comparably, work-life balance (WLB) for individualist cultures pertains to the independent self, particularly on the accomplishment by and for the individual (Spector et al., 2007).

Table 2. Themes on the Importance of Home-Based Work (N =14)

Importance	Example Quote
economic value	"It (work) is my bread and butter, and because of my job, I can buy the things that I want." (R6, 30, single) "to sustain my daily needs" (R7, 32, separated) "Benefits of getting a good salary." (R12, 41, single)
professional growth	"More on the financial aspect and the fact that the work I am doing is not redundant. Our boss is thoughtful enough to provide training courses we can take to enhance or add to our skills and knowledge." (R11, 32, married) "I still plan on venturing into other companies, and so I consider my current job important because it somehow gives me insights as to how to work with certain people with difficult projects." (R14, 19, single)
work flexibility	"It gives me income even if I'm at home. I'm earning, and at the same time, I am able to attend to my kids and see their every milestone." (R2, 29, married) "time flexibility" (R4, 20, single)

The importance that the respondents placed on their home-based work mimics that of the meaning of work. The economic value remained a consistent theme encompassing the essence of home-based work. Transfer to a well-paying job, regardless of the work set-up, is an obvious move (Britt & Jex, 2014). Gerhart and Milkovich (1992) have found out that organizations paying talents more have better attraction strategies than their competitors. This phenomenon seems to work with the respondents on home-based arrangement. The majority (11 out of 14) of them left their respective former jobs and opted for a non-traditional set-up. Equally important to note is that the respondents' home-based works are their full time jobs. Thus, it is their primary source of income for themselves and their families.

The emergence of economic value as a new factor, contrary to Western literature, does not come as a surprise. Home-based works are jobs often outsourced by foreign employers to Filipino workers. This cross-country set-up comes with better pays compared to local employment. Data submitted by users of the employment website, Indeed.com (2019), shows that the average income for an entry position applicable to new graduates is Php 18, 974, every month. These figures are 11 percent better than the national wage average.

The respondents also valued the professional growth opportunities in their current home-based work. Using the SDT (Ryan & Deci, 1985, 2008), chances to acquire or improve knowledge and skills in the workplace correspond to one's competence need. Further, the theory suggests that competence allows the job holder to feel one's impact on his work outcomes and environment. In the remote work setting of telecommuting, an employee's competence is vital for productivity. Numerous opportunities for learning and development compensate for the absence of a readily available supervisor or manager (Cooper & Kurland, 2002). Moreover, the challenges that come with tasks and projects also lead to the sharpening of one's competency sets.

Consistent with Western literature (e.g., Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Barcuh, 2001; Mannering & Mokhtarian, 1995; Mokhtarian & Salomon, 1994, 1996, 1997; Huws et al., 1990; Kinsman, 1987), work flexibility, a factor commonly attached to home-based work, emerged as a value given to telecommuting. Work flexibility does not only refer to more time with family but also with working hours. The non-traditional set-up fits well for working parents (Ammons &

Markham, 2004) and for single employees who want control over their duty hours (Gurstein, 2001). In the SDT, the theme of work flexibility suggests the needs of autonomy and relatedness, at least for the Filipino respondents.

Table 3. Themes on the Advantages and Disadvantages of Work (N =14)

Advantages	Example Quote
work flexibility	"Hard-work, patience, and being dedicated." (R9, 26, married) "In my current job, it comprises time, effort, patience, under-standing, creativity." (R14, 19, single)
economic value	"To earn effective work-life balance working at home." (R12, 41, single)
autonomy	"delivery of and improvement of skills." (R8, 24, single)
Disadvantages	Example Quote
Internet connection prob-lems	"Though I don't always do this, what I don't like is when I call people from their country and pretend I'm just there and not in the Philippines. And slow internet connection in the country is not helping." (R2, 29, married) "When there is an electricity blackout or Internet connection problem that will interfere with my class." (R9, 26, married)
absence of the traditional employee benefits	"The only downside in freelancing is that we don't get the usual employee benefits. We have to pay for those things ourselves. Other than that, I don't really have any complaints." (R3, 32, single)
work overload	"Sometimes, we are overloaded with work." (R8, 24, single)
health concerns	"It promotes a very sedentary lifestyle which is unhealthy." (R10, 32, single)

Concerning the advantages of telecommuting, work flexibility, economic value, and autonomy emerged as themes. These themes were not only consistent with Western literature, mainly work flexibility (e.g., Di Martino & Wirth, 1990; Pratt, 1984) and autonomy (e.g., Ryan & Deci, 2008, 1985). The three themes surfaced in the domains of the meaning of work and the importance of telecommuting.

As explained in the previous section, these themes satisfy SDT's autonomy and relatedness needs. In particular, the respondents found themselves gaining control over both their professional and personal lives. In most traditional Filipino organizations, executives and owners hold the structure and process. Employees adhere to strict policies that often prioritize organizational productivity. With telecommuting, employers and clientele bring in their Western ways of management, emphasizing workers' independent selves and autonomy. As Filipino telecommuters experience other work structures and cultures, they become open to culturally deviant set-ups of successful work performance and company productivity. This exposure does not only create new work culture mental maps, but also activate existing schema (Morris, Chiu, & Liu, 2015). Likewise, the permissibility of work and family life also becomes more evident in telework. Job controls are often with the employees. The more salient forms of these controls include the opportunities to decide the time of work, location of workstation, and moments with family members. All of which are unlikely in traditional job structure.

A closer look at the theme of economic value deems necessary. It is likely that pay, an inherently extrinsic motivator, has become an intrinsic factor. The process of internalization

may have occurred. Salary is an instrument to achieve the three nutriments (i.e., autonomy, competency, and relatedness). Pay provides the respondents with both the basics and want in their family and social lives. High salaries also imply some level of workplace status and expertise. Given these intricacies of pay and the nutriments, the economic value becomes central to the telecommuting work experience of the respondents. This process explains why economic value remains a consistent theme across domains of the concept of work.

On the disadvantages of telecommuting, absence of the traditional employee benefits (e.g., Di Martino & Wirth, 1990), work overload (e.g., Huws, 1984), and health concerns (e.g., Henke et al., 2016; Robertson, Maynard, & McDevitt, 2003) appear consistent with the literature. In the absence of religious and strict implementation of the Telecommuting Act in the country, Di Martino and Wirth's explanations of self-employment, work flexibility, and the likelihood of employers' abusive practices hold in the telework arrangement of the respondents. More so, the usual benefits (e.g., government-mandated benefits) may have critical implications in the personal life of the respondents, such as housing loan and health coverage. These absences substantiate the act of acquiring these benefits through self-initiatives.

A country-specific problem on Internet connection also appears as a disadvantage of telework for the respondents. The Philippines placed 101st (i.e., fixed broadband) and 103rd (i.e., mobile) on Internet speed world rankings (The ASEAN Post Team, 2019). Singapore ranks 1st for fixed broadband and 8th for mobile connection. Neighboring countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Lao PDR have faster connections than in the country. With telework, global tourism, education, and other sectors' growing reliance on telecommunications infrastructure, there is a need for the Philippine government to expedite its plans to improve the Internet connection in the country.

Table 4. Themes on the Differences and Similarities Between Traditional and Home-Based Work (N =14)

Differences	Example Quote
home-based work is more relaxed	"home-based is more relaxed" (R5, 21, single) "less stressful" (R8, 24, single & R10, 32, single)
control over time	"Unlike corporate setting, working at home let you take control of your time." (R1, 35, single) "I am sincerely a happier person. I no longer wake up with feelings of dread. Perhaps it's because I feel a stronger sense of control over my time." (R3, 32, single)
social isolation	"The only difference I think is social interaction with co-workers on a day-to-day basis." (R2, 29, married) "I think the fact that I'm an introvert also plays a big role. When you work from home, you're not forced into social situations that deplete your energy. Plus, everyone is more efficient. They know they have to get straight to the point because the only means of communication is through email/chat/video call. No one wastes time on small talk." (R3, 32, single)
Similarities	Example Quote
work exhaustion	"same, physically, and mentally draining." (R7, 32, separated)

On the difference between traditional and home-based work, two of the three emerging themes signify a positive point of comparison. These contrasts are home-based work as being more relaxed and the control of one's work time. These two themes fall again under autonomy. As mentioned earlier, the autonomous nature of home-based work is a salient feature differentiated from the traditional work set-up. The degree of employee autonomy corresponds to the changing demands and development in the global community. These circumstances seem to strain teleworkers. But home-based work also frees its employees from several work-related stressors like public commute, traffic, pollution, transportation costs, shifting work schedules, etc. (Di Martino & Wirth, 1990; Pratt, 1984). Office politics, employee bullying, harassment, and other similar interpersonal issues in the workplace may also be reduced or minimized in telework.

Despite these seemingly positive comparative points, autonomy comes at a cost. Respondents also reported social isolation as a contrasting element between traditional and home-based work. Individual differences may explain adaptability to social isolation. But overall, the collective nature of Filipinos deems such a theme a salient area of difference. Furthermore, work is an instrument to satisfy the need for relatedness. Employees develop close relationships, not just with their co-workers but even to managers and customers. It is common for Filipino workers to invite colleagues to family life events. These interpersonal relations deepened into familial affinities like god parenting and wedding sponsors. The highly permeable nature of the interdependent self of those from the collective cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and the core value of 'kapwa' (Enriquez, 1986) amongst Filipinos explain the evident social knit, including that in the workplace.

Meanwhile, a similarity theme on work exhaustion emerged for both types of work set-ups. Regardless of form, work is a venue for job holders to take various roles. These roles may be conflicted (i.e., multiple roles). At the same time, others have overwhelming demands in them (i.e., workload). Additionally, interactions with stakeholders both inside and outside the organization also add to the pressure. With these elements put together, it creates a good recipe for work-related strain like 'technostress' (e.g., Brod 1984; Felstead, & Jewson, 2000) amongst home-based workers.

Table 5. Themes on the Reasons to Stay or Leave Home-Based Work (N =14)

Reasons for Intention to Stay	Example Quote
economic value	"Satisfying monetary reward…" (R1, 35, single) "You can also enjoy multiple streams of income since you are free to accept and work on more than one project." (R3, 32, single) "I am blessed working with my team, and having a good salary so why leave . . ." (R12, 41, single)
work flexibility	"It gives me a very reasonable income while being able to take care of kids." (R2, 29, married) "Aside from the obvious convenience in terms of meals, uniforms, and transportation, more importantly, is I can still get involved in my family's life." (R10, 32, single)
positive emotions	"I am happier and healthier." (R8, 24, single) "I am not planning to leave because I am happy, contented, and loyal to my home-based work." (R13, 30, single)

Table 5. Themes on the Reasons to Stay or Leave Home-Based Work (N =14) cont'd...

Reasons for Intention to Leave	Example Quote
career alignment	"I will leave my home-based work once I graduate college because this type of work is not aligned with the career that I want." (R4, 20, single) "work as a nurse again." (R7, 32, separated) "I have a dream job which cannot be compensated by my current job." (R14, 19, single)
more stable job	"I want to have a much more stable job." (R5, 21, single) "As of now, I'm enjoying it, but it's not really stable as working in government." (R6, 30, single)

Nine (64.29%) of the respondents expressed the intention to stay in their current home-based work. Two consistent emerging themes, namely, economic value and work flexibility, extend to explain respondents' choice to remain in their current telework. These results suggest that money drives people to work. At least for the surveyed teleworkers, "Money does not motivate people." is a misconception (e.g., Flannery, Hofrichter, & Platten, 1996; Lawler, 1990). Aside from its purchasing power, salary functions as a barometer of professional success and an employee's worth in the organization (Jex & Britt, 2008). Thus, the seemingly higher wage in home-based work functions both as an attraction and retention tool.

As mentioned earlier, pay for Filipino workers is also closely intertwined with their families. With the reported high salaries of the respondents, it may be challenging to find better-paying jobs or at least another home-based employer or client.

Work flexibility, on the other hand, still relates to the respondents' family. The family remains the driving force even to the telecommuting respondents. As one of the advantages mentioned, time with family while at work seems to draw in home-based workers. It is a flexible benefit that traditional work set-up commonly cannot afford. This finding then provides most organizations an idea to consider for reinventing their benefits package.

On the other hand, only five (35.71%) respondents had plans to leave their telecommuting work set-up. These respondents reported competence theme as the reason for their intention to leave their current home-based work. It is relevant to state that these respondents are starting on with their careers. Their home-based work may be a stepping-stone to their desired profession. Moreover, stability in one's work is another theme that emerged as a reason for leaving telework. As compared to traditional work set-ups that are covered both by legal and psychological contracts, some forms of home-based work (e.g., ESL teaching, project-based jobs) do not offer the security of tenure. Provided that work is vital for Filipinos, then the stability of one's source of income is essential for both one's and the family's sustenance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Misconceptions about home-based work ranged from it being informal, less stressful and exhausting, routinary, well-paid, illegal, unhealthy, suitability for mothers, social isolation, racist, and more. The current empirical work provides us validation of some of these perceptions and more importantly, a more realistic picture of this set-up. Overall, home-based workers' concept of work is similar to the themes cited in the literature. The needs for autonomy and relatedness consistently emerged across various domains of the concept of work. The economic value surfaced as a culture-specific theme that is still traceable both to

autonomy and relatedness needs.

Like any other kind of work, home-based workers do their jobs, remain in them, get strained, and experience challenges. The economic value is a consistent emerging theme that describes the work concept in most of its domains. This theme suggests that teleworkers do not solely work for themselves but also their families. Another family-related theme that surfaced is work flexibility. Teleworkers chose this type of work set-up not only to provide for their families monetarily but also to spend time with them. This form of work flexibility is well established in Western literature. The current work, on the other hand, offers local data support.

Autonomy also surfaced as an essential element in most domains of the concept of work for home-based workers. Given the absence of usual controls in most physical organizations, telework stresses the role of employee autonomy. Employees ought to practice self-sufficiency to deliver the expected work outcomes. This intrinsic factor serves as an internal work motivation, in which home-based employees exercise both in their professional and personal-familial lives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The current study is one of the few available empirical initiatives undertaken to capture the work experience of home-based workers in the local setting. It is the hope of the researcher that the present study will excite the interests of scholars to further literature on telecommuting with samples from the Philippines. In similar anticipation, indigenous models may emanate from the data to expand the literature of home-based work. Future researchers may also find interest in some areas covered in the present endeavor (e.g., work-life balance, social isolation, stress, non-provision of employee benefits, sedentary lifestyle, etc.).

On the practical implications, the government needs to prioritize the importance of pay for Filipino workers and their family needs. The government may ensure wages payment online and also regulate the compensation of Filipino teleworkers due to them. These efforts need to center on protecting the rights and competence of home-based workers. Alternatively, the government may also consider home-based work to overseas employment. Given the family-centered nature of Filipinos, work flexibility is an advantage that will appeal to members of the labor sector, especially those leaving the country for job opportunities. This known advantage and other similar benefits of telework make it imperative for more explicit legislation and stricter implementations. The non-regulation of telework in the country posits both national economic challenge (i.e., underground economy, non-payment of taxes) and potential physical and psychological threats to Filipino workers. This move may also mean the need for the Philippine labor law to adapt to the changing global employment conditions that anchor home-based work.

Industrial, Work, and Organizational (IWO) psychologists and human resources practitioners also need to take their advocate hats to ensure the better work conditions of home-based employees. The global labor market is undeniably fierce in terms of competition. As an emerging reality of technological advancement and globalization, traditional jobs may benefit from innovative employee programs that are initially suited for teleworkers. Thus, the necessity of flexible human resources practices. Remote work deems possible in some industries like education, customer service, retail, etc. and in some positions like human resources, accounting, training, etc. A strategic approach to the changing landscape of work and organizations becomes a necessary plan of action in the current times and the future.

The present pandemic has unexpectedly hastened the reality of home-based work. The recent situation also provided validation of some of the concerns in the current research. The most salient of which is the telecommunications infrastructure of the country. Another crucial area is mental health, resulting from social isolation. Ergonomics, a subfield of IWO Psychology, may offer ways to reduce well-being problems and preserve the work-life balance despite the physical proximity of these two aspects of an employee's life. Employee learning and development programs may also include workshops on workplace design, mental preparation for home-based work, well-being and mindfulness for remote work, and the like. IWO psychologists also need to look at the family and organizational dynamics. Both impacts preparedness and, perhaps, the effectiveness of home-based employment.

With the successful implementations of these suggestions, then workers, even those not into telecommuting, may reap the benefits of working never away from home.

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

The author attests to the sole authorship of the present research from its conceptualization, review of literature, data gathering, data analysis, and, finally, the writing of the manuscript.

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