

## Social Support, Self-Efficacy, and Well-Being of Employees Pursuing Work from Home: A Comparative Study Among Male and Female

Neha Kalia\*, Neha\*\* and O. P. Sharma\*\*\*

### Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we live and work. The study aimed to compare the social support, self-efficacy, and well-being of male and female employees pursuing work from home during COVID-19. 100 adults pursuing work from home between the ages of 22 to 35 were selected for the purpose. Psychological measures for data collection were sent via google forms. In order to analyze the data obtained and examine the relationships between variables, the means and standard deviations (SD) of all the variables under study were calculated for both males and females. The significant difference between male and female employees pursuing work from home among all variables was discovered using an independent t-test. Results showed that the Mean scores for females are higher than that of males among the Social Support variable and Self-efficacy, and Well-being variables mean scores of males were higher than females. The Standard deviation (S.D.) for females was low than that of males among variable Social Support while it was less among variables Self-efficacy and Well-being. There was a significant difference exists between male and female groups as the value of the dimensions of the social support test was, Significant other ( $t=2.73, p>0.01$ ) significant at 0.01, and t value of Family ( $t=2.72, p>0.01$ ), Friends ( $t=3.94, p>0.01$ ), MSPSS Total ( $t=3.56, p>0.01$ ), Self-efficacy ( $t=3.67, p>0.01$ ), and Well-being ( $t=3.7, p>0.01$ ). According to the results, it was concluded that there was a significant difference between male and female employees pursuing work-from-home among all variables.

**Keywords:** Social Support, Self-Efficacy, Well-Being, Work-from-home (WFH), COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a source of worry for the world for months, and its effects have continued into the new year. While some improvements are anticipated in 2021, mental health still needs to be addressed. Researchers are working to understand how the pandemic affects mental health as well as the dangers we are all exposed to at this time. The ability to adapt psychologically and socially is a critical factor in determining how someone reacts to a lockdown. People are struggling through major life changes due to the pandemic, including sickness, job loss, and general anxiety and fear. Regardless of their mental health before the pandemic and regardless of whether this stress showed up as anger, depression, or malaise, researchers discovered that the majority of people were negatively affected by the lockdown.

### Social Support

Social support is the comfort we receive from friends, family, co-workers, and others on a physical and emotional level. This is the sentiment that we are part of a group of people who value, care about, and appreciate us. Social support is crucial for mental health as well as physical health. High positive social support can increase people's resilience to stress, prevent trauma-related abnormalities, lessen the functional consequences of trauma-induced disorders like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and lower the medical problems caused by treatment and death.

The advantage of social support for mental and physical health was investigated in 1905 for the

first time by Dr. Joseph Pratt. He gathered tuberculosis (TB) patients to learn about hygiene in relation to their illnesses. Early proof of the effectiveness of psychological support in promoting physical health and healing was offered by this "support group." In addition to lessening stress's physical and psychological effects, receiving social support can improve immunity. It does not matter whether the support comes from a dependable group or a close friend. Whether it is a formal social network like a church board or a social club, or an informal network like a social group hanging out with friends, social networks offer a sense of community, safety, and belonging.

In contrast to research on burnout, social support, particularly that of friends and other significant people, is a leading indicator of burnout (Jacobs and Dodd, 2003). According to Noon and Blyton (2007), friends, close family members, and neighbors serve as resources for juggling life, family obligations, and successful careers. There is proof that social support and self-efficacy positively impact employees' well-being. Karademas (2006) found self-efficacy significantly correlated with job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion.

Employees' self-efficacy rises due to social support, which motivates them to work hard. Businesses must implement family-friendly policies so that staff members can balance their personal and professional lives and maintain positive relationships with their social networks. Additionally, it suggests that businesses should

\*Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, (Raj.) 302004. [nkkalia99@gmail.com](mailto:nkkalia99@gmail.com)

\*\*Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, (Raj.) 302004. [nbishnoi2001@gmail.com](mailto:nbishnoi2001@gmail.com)

\*\*\*Head & Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur (Raj.) 302004. [opbrd65@gmail.com](mailto:opbrd65@gmail.com)

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Neha Kalia, Department of Psychology, University of Rajasthan, JLN Marg, Jaipur, Rajasthan, 302004

boost workers' self-efficacy through policies and procedures like mentoring, training, transformation of all leadership, and constructive criticism (Azim&Faisal,2020).

Social support, according to research, impacts work-life balance. Social support also partially mediates the conflict between work-life balance and burnout. According to observations, women employees experience significantly higher levels so burnout than men employees, particularly given the possibility of working from home (Tugsal,2020).

#### **Social support at work.**

Workplace social support is influenced by a number of variables, such as social competence, reciprocal relationships, and commitment to one's job. People with higher social competencies typically get more emotional and practical support from their coworkers than people with lower social competencies do. However, numerous studies show that a person's support network typically consists of individuals other than his or her employer. These individuals include family members, spouses, etc.

In any case, the support received is positively predicted by work support. When social support is present, long work hours are related to physical health symptoms. Physical health usually suffers when a person works long hours without social support. On the other hand, people with a strong social support system are less likely to experience negative effects from prolonged working hours.

#### **Self-efficacy**

Bandura (1997) believes that one can achieve desired results through one's own actions. The vast majority of people are able to pinpoint the objectives, alterations, and tasks they wish to complete. Most people are aware that executing these plans and objectives is not an easy task. According to Bandura and others, self-efficacy is connected to a person's approach to objectives, tasks, and challenges.

Emotional self-efficacy, psychological well-being, and affect balance are all positively correlated. Psychological well-being, affect balance, emotional self-efficacy, and self-esteem all have a positive impact on happiness, self-esteem, and both (Dogan, Totan, & Sapmaz, 2013). According to Amanda Rees and Deanne Armstrong (2014), receiving social support is likely to help people in this population feel more positive about themselves and have more positive post-trauma reactions. Self-efficacy is also important for improving well-being in this population.

#### **Well-being**

Our mental and physical health is both crucial to our overall well-being. When we are in healthy mental health, we can work effectively, enjoy our free time, and actively engage in our

communities. It's imperative to note that happiness is NOT the absence of gloomy thoughts and emotions. We all experience trying and trying circumstances that make us feel a range of emotions, including anger, sadness, overwhelm, and everything in between. It's more important to comprehend and control those feelings.

People will still need others' company to feel and function at their best regardless of how much time they invest in enhancing their mental and emotional health. Humans are social beings with strong emotional needs for relationships and allies. We weren't designed to live in isolation, much less thrive. Our social brains yearn for companionship even when past experiences have made us shy and untrusting of others.

In a number of domains, there is a correlation between the physical environment and well-being. The most significant independent variables are fear of crime, neighborhood noises, the feeling of crowdedness in the house, and escape options like green spaces and community facilities, (Guite, Clark & Ackrill 2006). The lockdown had a very detrimental effect on people's mental behavior and general well-being. This was true of the increased workload, work-from-home requirements, and lower salaries. Even efficient and polite people acted erratically (Nath, 2020).

#### **Social support, self-efficacy, and the Covid-19 Lockdown.**

Work demand has a greater impact on employees' well-being than home demand, work interference, family, and family-work conflict. The business can lighten the load on its staff (Monica & Ghayathri, 2020). In order to protect one's physical and mental health, encouragement and support from other scan aid in the advancement of knowledge and information dissemination and boost one's sense of self-efficacy in the face of the novel coronavirus. (Wang, Feng, Zhang, Liu, Wang, & Li, 2020). A study found that levels of organizational support, peer support, social connectedness (outside of work), and work-to-family conflict all had a significant impact on the health outcomes of employees who WAH (work at home).

According to Oakman, Kinsman, Stuckey, Graham, and Weale (2020), women were generally less likely to have improved health outcomes when WAH. The implementation and relaxation of lockdown measures affect fatigue, and working-from-home mothers who lack access to childcare are particularly fatigued. Social support and job autonomy lessened some of these effects. Overall, the pandemic had a more significant negative impact on women's psychological health than men's (Meyer, Zill, Dilba, Gerlach & Schumann, 2021).

Due to COVID-19, women who were less physically active than those who were more active

had significantly lower scores for their mental health, as well as lower levels of social, emotional, and psychological well-being and significantly higher levels of generalized anxiety. Given the particular challenges that women face as a result of these restrictions, it is essential to encourage physical activity and foster a supportive environment in order to lessen any mental stress that women may be experiencing. It is advised that programs designed specifically for kids' physical activity include lifestyle physical activity (Nienhuis&Lesser,2020).

### Objective

To see the difference in social support, self-efficacy, and well-being among male employees and female employees pursuing work-from-home during Covid-19.

### Hypotheses

1. There is a significant difference in social support among work-from-home male employees and female employees.
2. There is a significant difference in self-efficacy among work-from-home male employees and female employees.
3. There is a significant difference in well-being among work-from-home male employees and female employees.

### Method

**Sample** The sample for the present study was comprised of 100 working adults aged 25 to 35 who work from home during the pandemic. 50 male and 50 female employees pursuing work from home from urban areas were selected for the purpose.

**Exclusion Criteria:** Physically handicapped people, those who have some psychological disorders, and rural people were excluded from the study.

**Inclusion Criteria:** Those who have jobs and working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic for the past 6 months, living in urban areas, and educated people living with their families were selected for the study.

### Design

To study the comparison between independent variables, the following statistics were used to analyze the obtained data. The mean and SD of all the variables under study were calculated for both males and females. The hypothesis of the present study assumed that there would be a significant difference between male and female employees pursuing work from home among all variables. This was tested using an independent t-test.

### Psychological Measures

1. *The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet et al., 1988)*  
Zimet et al. developed the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support in 1988. This measurement tool has 12 items that are divided into three subscales- support from

family, friends, and significant others, each of which has four items. Participants used a seven-point Like scale to grade each item, with 1 being strongly disagree to 7 being strongly agree. The coefficient alphas for the sub-scales range from .85 to .91 and test-retest correlations range from .75 to .85. The total score had a range of 12 to 84, with a possible maximum deviation as large as 12. Scores that are higher imply greater perceived social support.

2. *New general self-efficacy scale by Gilad Chen (2001)*

The New General Self-Efficacy scale was developed by organizational psychologist Gilad Chen and team (2001), to gauge people's perceptions of their capacity to perform in a range of various circumstances. It is an 8-item measure and each item is rated using a 5-point rating scale 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, and 5= strongly agree.

3. *The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS), Brown, & Janmohamed (2008)*

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale was developed by Brown and Janmohamed (2008) to make it possible to assess projects, programs, and policies aimed at enhancing mental well-being as well as to measure mental well-being in the general population. The 14-item WEMWBS scale is graded by adding the scores for each item on a 1 to 5 Likert scale. The scale has a minimum score of 14 and a maximum score of 70. In the UK, WEMWBS has been approved for use with individuals 16 years of age and older. Focus groups and samples from the general population as well as students were used for validation. The concept is made more approachable by the items' positive wordings and coverage of both feeling and functioning aspects of mental well-being. The scale has received extensive national and international use for project and program evaluation, monitoring, and research into the factors that influence mental health.

### Procedure

The study was conducted whereby the subjects were listed on the basis of criteria inclusion and exclusion of the study. After obtaining consent from the subjects, the psychological measures of the study were sent via Google Forms.

### Results Section –

#### *Descriptive Statistics*

In trying to study the actual study hypothesis, overall descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) were calculated for scores on each of the variables of interest for the sample consisting

**Table 1: Descriptive Analysis-Mean and Standard Deviation for Social Support, Self-efficacy, and Well-being among Male and Female Employees Pursuing Work-From-Home.**

Variable		N	Gender	M	St. Dev.	Total Mean	Total S.D.
MSPSS	Significant other	50	Male	21.34	6.36	Male 63.78	Male 17.13
		50	Female	24.14	3.44		
	Family	50	Male	21.2	6.51	Female 73.2	Female 7.45
		50	Female	23.72	3.94		
	Friends	50	Male	21.24	6.36		
		50	Female	25.34	3.76		
Self-efficacy		50	Male	35.4	4.3		
		50	Female	31.76	5.56		
Well-being		50	Male	61.26	7.64		
		50	Female	54.18	11.18		

of 100 employees pursuing work-from-home (50 male and 50 female).

Table 1 shows the descriptive analysis that is mean and standard deviation scores for social support, self-efficacy, and well-being among male and female work-from-home employees. The Mean scores for females (73.2) are high than that of males (63.78) among the Social Support variable and among Self-efficacy (male 35.4, female 31.7), and the Well-being (male 61.26, female 54.18) variables mean scores of males are higher than females. The Standard deviation (S.D.) for females is low than that of males among variables Social Support (17.13 male SD, 7.45 female SD) while it is high among variables Self-efficacy (4.3 male SD, 5.56 female SD) and Well-being (7.64 male SD, 11.18 female SD).

**Section-B**

Significant difference among Variables by applying t-test:

This section includes the results representing significant differences among variables of Social Support, Self-Efficacy, and Well-Being of male and female work-from-home employees.

**Table 2: Degree of freedom, t-scores, and significance level among all variables male and female.**

Variables		df	t-value
MSPSS*	Significant Other	98	2.73**
	Family	98	2.72**
	Friends	98	3.94**
	Total	98	3.56**
Self-efficacy		98	3.67**
Well-being		98	3.7**

\*Multi-dimensional scale of perceived social support

\*\*Significant at 0.01

Table 2 shows that there is a significant difference exists between these two independent groups as the t-value of *Significant other* is found to be (t=2.73, p>0.01) significant at 0.01, and t value of

*Family* (t=2.72, p>0.01), *Friends* (t=3.94, p>0.01), *MSPSS Total* (t=3.56, p>0.01), *Self-efficacy* (t=3.67, p>0.01), and *Well-being* (t=3.7, p>0.01).

**Discussion**

Employers were forced to immediately reorganize their workload to maintain business continuity after COVID-19 emerged unexpectedly and suddenly. There was no time for planning or analysis; under extreme time constraints, action was required immediately. Similar to the previous study, this one also sought to show how, to varying degrees, this circumstance affected the social support, self-efficacy, and well-being of work-from-home male employees compared to female employees. The existence of a sizable disparity between the social support, self-efficacy, and well-being of male and female employees was hypothesized.

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), which measures social support and refers to psychological and material resources provided by a social network to help people cope with stress, was used in the study to measure social support. The three subscales of MSPSS are viz. Significant other subscale, family subscale, and friend subscale. The highest score was 84 overall and 28 for each subscale. To evaluate gender differences in social support, a separate t-test was used to compare the variations between male and female responses to perceived social support.

The significant value is .01. As a result, we can conclude that there is a significant difference in how much social support male and female employees experience. Female employees have higher mean values than male employees. These results show that female employees perceive social support as higher than male employees. Results from subscales of the MSPSS show that on average, female employees perceive more social support from friends, family, and significant others than male employees. There are numerous reasons why this pattern might exist.

The observation that females typically express their emotions more openly provides one explanation. This may explain why they benefit from more diverse forms of social support than men, on the whole.

Socializing is another reason for our pattern of results. Because they have more opportunities to interact with people, women are said to be better at these skills. In comparison to men who spend more time working in the field or in offices, women have more opportunities to share their problems with family members and other social groups as a result of the amount of time they spend doing housework. This increases their chances of receiving support from society.

According to Bukhari and Afzal (2017), there are gender differences in how significant others are perceived to be in terms of social support. Rueger, Malecki, and Demaray (2008) say female employees perceive sources' support higher than male employees. Males spend more time resolving issues that may arise with their family's online office work, such as security and communication issues. As a result, they run the risk of becoming isolated, and the lack of interaction with those who provide social support makes them feel less supported by society than women who balance working at the office with taking care of the home and the kids. The findings showed that women perceived significantly more support from friends and family than men. This finding is consistent with previous research showing that women value friendship more than men do. (Cumsille and Epstein, 1994; Chun & MacDermid, 1997; Colarossi, 2001). Women reported feeling more supported than men. (Sharir et al., 2007).

According to Bandura (1977), Self-efficacy is the belief that a person can carry out the behaviors necessary to produce a specific performance attainment. Self-efficacy is the conviction that one can exert control over one's own motivation, behavior, and social environment.

People succeed and feel good about themselves when they have a strong sense of self-belief. High self-efficacy individuals view obstacles as a chance to learn rather than as threats to be avoided. These people recover more quickly from failure and are more likely to attribute failure to laziness. With the belief that they are in control of the situation, they approach potentially dangerous situations. On the other hand, those who lack self-efficacy view difficult tasks as personal threats and steer clear of them. They tend to concentrate more on their weaknesses than their strengths when faced with difficult tasks. It is typical for them to lose faith in their own abilities following a failure.

Studies showed a significant decline in the self-efficacy of people who work from home as a

result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Employee job performance and satisfaction are also significantly impacted by a crisis in self-efficacy in terms of managing uncertainty, taking action, and taking preventative measures. Compared to working in an office, women who work from home find it more challenging to manage household duties and responsibilities. Males also reported being less motivated at home than at work.

It is very likely that workers who work from home will experience stress during the current COVID-19 outbreak. Employees can prevent uncontrollable stress by implementing six strategies, including communication with family, communication at work, scheduling, and safety. To see news about the pandemic COVID-19 outbreak, while maintaining health, abiding by laws, and limiting it (Wolor, Sholatia, Ika, & Martono, 2020).

It was predicted that male and female employees would have significantly different self-efficacy levels. And it was measured using Gilad Chen's (2001) New General Self-Efficacy Scale, an 8-item tool for determining how much a person believes they can overcome obstacles to achieve their goals. On the self-efficacy scale, it was found that women's overall scores were lower than those of men. It suggests that there was a significant difference between male and female self-efficacy in the study's findings, with males reporting a higher level of "they can" attitude than females. The more strongly they feel they can succeed, the more diligently they will work to do so. The outcomes are consistent with the 2019 research paper by Sanamthong and Na-Nan. According to this, workplace support can significantly improve employee job performance by boosting self-efficacy.

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) is used to measure well-being, which is a beneficial outcome that has significance for individuals and society. Well-being tells us that people believe their lives are moving well. The overall scale has a maximum score of 70. According to the results, female employees scored higher than male employees. It suggests that the study's findings demonstrate a significant difference in men's and women's well-being, with women reporting higher well-being than men.

The well-being 't' value was 3.7. As a result, both males' and females' well-being was significantly impacted by the difference. The numerical value we obtain is 3.7, which the t-test indicates is significant at the 0.01 level. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that there is a significant disparity between men's and women's well-being. This study supports prior studies that found a statistically significant difference between male and female students in terms of psychological health (Akhter, 2015).

## Conclusion

The comparison of male and female employees pursuing work from home among Social Support, Self-Efficacy, and Well-Being discussed above supports our hypothesis that there is a significant difference between male and female employees pursuing work from home among all variables.

## Limitations and Ideas for Further Study.

Although the study's sample does not represent the entire working population, it demonstrates the evolution of home-based employment, especially in the business sector. The coronavirus pandemic has affected various professions differently, and results should be considered in the context of differing containment measures implemented by countries during the crisis, such as those affecting government service sectors, gastronomy, and medical professionals.

This research took place in India, so it's crucial to interpret results while considering cultural influences that may affect perceptions of social support, self-efficacy, and well-being. The degree of personal freedom both genders have in balancing work and home life could depend on societal context. Moreover, outcomes may vary among nations with diverse pandemic responses and digitalization levels. Consequently, different countries may experience a greater impact from the abrupt shift to remote work for both genders, surpassing what our data suggests.

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