Accessing the Impact of Physical Isolation on Job Satisfaction of Private

Sector University Academics in Sri Lanka during Covid - 19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Organizations have transformed into remote working or work from home idea any place conceivable due to Coronavirus sickness after the Sri Lankan government has declared a country wide curfew to reduce the spread of virus. Therefore, most of the universities in Sri Lanka have had to shift the majority of their learning activities online. The shift is challenging in that it requires both social and technological transformations that may somehow have been arranged out over an any longer period, however have been compelled to quickly actualize changes to accomplish the educational mission despite the disruption. This empirical study attempts to investigate how physical isolation in the workplace during the Covid 19 pandemic related to and its impact on job satisfaction of academics in private campuses in Sri Lanka. Mixed method pragmatism was used as the research design of the study. Data collection was conducted through self-administered questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Sample size is 100 and used convenient sampling technique to collect data. Data analysis was conducted by using correlation analysis, regression analysis, and triangulation. The study results revealed that physical isolation has a significant negative relationship and a negative impact on job satisfaction. The findings of the study conclude that physical isolation results in reduced job satisfaction of academic-related people in a remote setting and remote teaching during the nation nationwide curfew period. Also, it is recommended to provide careful attention to ensure the optimization of academics. Further, the study recommends the it important to identify competencies in the 21st century and revealing deficiencies in order to deliver online academic process smoothly in emergency situations to get adapted to the available technologies and to enhance the participation of academics throughout the process to face this challenge in a remote setting.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, Job satisfaction, Physical isolation, Remote setting

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INTRODUCTION

Serious intense respiratory disorder Covid 2 (SARS-CoV-2), prevalently known as COVID-19, was first distinguished in late December 2019 from Wuhan, China (Temsah et al., 2020) which spread at that point in excess of 200 nations (Shen et al., 2020) .The World Health Organization (WHO) quickly declared the circumstance as a worldwide pandemic on March 11, 2020 (Bloom, Liang, Roberts, & Ying, 2015; Kapasia et al., 2020). Coronavirus was proclaimed as a worldwide pandemic, general wellbeing, including emotional wellness, has become a danger. A huge number of individuals, including analysts, scholastic, corporate individual just as understudies, were constrained by the public governments to remain safe confining themselves or executing an entire or potentially halfway lockdown world (I. Cooper, Mondal, & Antonopoulos, 2020). The closing of workplaces in the entire world to maintain physical isolation is a remarkable attempt. (Galea, Merchant, and Lurie, 2020). Sri Lankan government established curfew all over the country beginning at 18:00 (local time) on Friday, twentieth March 2020. Furthermore, it was lifted on May 2020 which was essentially after 52 days. Many companies in Sri Lanka shifted to work from home concept after the Government of Sri Lanka declared a country wide curfew on twentieth March 2020 to relieve the spread of disease. This transformed the working landscape to a significant extent which uses to adopt to virual work setting.

Despite of the fact that employees' overall duties and tasks often remain the same, virtual work generally changes the workplace and the ways that employees engage within the workplace and interact with other members (Gibson & Gibbs, 2006). This results that virtual work modes that physically separate individuals from the workplace and its members sentiments the employees' feelings of belonging and organizational identification (Thatcher & Zhu, 2006; Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 2001), moreover their sense of status inside the workplace (C. D. Cooper & Kurland, 2002). Because of forcing lockdown, the actual admittance to the study hall has been limited.

 As per (Gallup, 2017) employees who work in a virual setting can encounter with performance of their job to be reduced.Problem with social and physical isolation is that the employees will perform less in their jobs. Accroding to (Bloom et al., 2015) home office applications is resilient functioning that can be used for organizations and it reults in increasing employees job performance. But any how they found employees performance is invisible as a result of increase feelings of lonliness and worries an employee can have because of virtual setting. In the reviewd literature scholars have suuggessted that when less face to face contact and teachnology subserviences can reduce the performce in the job (Gibson & Gibbs, 2006).   Workplaces which are designed with virtual work settings and contain no physical contact or visualize people will be a reason for decreased commitment, identification and job satisfaction. Furthermore, increased

social and physical isolation, has been identified in these institutes (Bartel, Wrzesniewski, &

Wiesenfeld, 2012). Previous studies and the results of the studies suggests that working in isolation has a negative impact (Arling & Subramani, 2011).

There's no specific literature, reviews, or articles that studied the effect of physical isolation on job satisfaction and no any study can be find in Sri Lankan context. Therefore, the current study address this empirical gap to gain knowledge of the impact of physical isolation upon the job satisfaction of employed people during the Covid-19 pandemic on acdemics in private sector campuses in Sri Lanka. Current study focused on two objectives. They are the the identification of the relationship between physical isolation on employees' job satisfaction, and analysis of the impact of physical isolation on employees' job satisfaction.

The remainder of the article has been developed using three procedures. First, a detailed investigation which is followed by a literature review and hypothesis has been provided. Then, the methodological approach which has been used in the study is clarified. Finally, the data analysis of the study is presented and conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is one of the precise components that impact different aspects of physical and mental of staff and more often influenced by internal and external factors (Yunus & Ishak, 2012). As a general rule, job satisfaction is a deepest inclination that distinct as an essential human need and assumed as one of the primary factors in human resources at the educational center(Mohammad, Quoquab Habib, & Alias, 2011). This has been characterized as a topic in human resources which is considerable and has lots of usage at university (Maharjan, 2012). Because of the significant role of job satisfaction and the effect it on a high level of staff performance, attention to the factors that influence job satisfaction is very fundamental.

Job satisfaction is described according to the different viewpoints of individuals. "Job satisfaction could be referred as a pleasure in an individual, in his/her work life" (Locke, 1976); employees' satisfaction can be due to the well maintained environment of the organization (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984); an outcome which could be measured as, agreeable and energetic circumstance appearing, by the evaluation of employees' job experience (Testa, 1999). The significance of the concept of job satisfaction can be visualized upon improving the organizations' productivity variables and personal needs rather than the process and structure of the organization. When the employees are satisfied due to the fulfillment of their needs, they will be more motivated to work. This results in a positive job satisfaction (Bluedorn, 1982). Furthermore, several studies have identified that self

efficacy and job satisfaction are related positively (Federici, 2013). Meaningfulness and self

efficacy of the occupation helps an employee to gain job satisfaction whenever the employees are not overloaded with work and their work is less ambiguous (Schermuly, Schermuly, & Meyer, 2011).

To understand job satisfaction, several studies has been conducted. Job satisfaction is co-related to the relationship between employees, absenteeism, the joy of life, leadership, retirement and mobbing (Staw, 1984).

Physical isolation

Physical isolation is maybe the fundamental challenge confronting with virtual employees, and it suggests decreases in the level of direct contact with job-related interaction partners as well as just as separation from the organization itself the manifestation of "out of sight, out of mind" (McCloskey & Igbaria, 2003). Physical isolation has caused highly alerted minds in individuals and they have observed for the organization of others as a response (Bowlby, 1973). In the tribal age, they punished errant members by isolating them physically and socially since group membership was highly required for continuance (Buss, 1996). This has not changed for many years and in modern times, employees perceive physical isolation or social isolation as a cause of stress and difficulty (House, 1981). This is because that group membership provides many advantages such as decreasing of anxiety, push people to more performance, and enables workers to reach goals quickly (Beehr, Jex, Stacy, & Murray, 2000).

Previous research work has been conducted on the impact of physical isolation and virual "work from home" (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). The advancement of technology now offers more options for employees to work from home without being at the same location as their co-workers (Hill, Miller, Weiner, & Colihan, 1998). Earlier research is steady with the idea that physical isolation could lead to professional and social isolation in virtual work settings (C. D. Cooper & Kurland, 2002; Gainey, Kelley, & Hill, 1999), yet few works have discovered no exact relation between work mode and perceived professional isolation (Golden, Veiga, & Dino, 2008). Examination of loneliness factor and comparing it with workplace isolation is important to differentiate between the two scenarios. Loneliness is described as a non enjoyable repulsive experience which a person undergoes emotionally when the network of social connections of an individual is inadequate(Shaver & Brennan, 1991). According to (Weiss, 1973) it is stated that loneliness is caused by being without required relationships(p. 17). Workplace isolation is very different and deviated from loneliness and it shows the employee's willingness to be engaged with colleagues and gain assistance and support during their commitments.

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Physical isolation and Job Satisfaction

Social contact of employees and connectedness of them to other people changes the feelings of isolation of employees' when they are at work (Harrington & Santiago, 2006; Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 1999; Wohlwill, 1974) states that "social isolation occurs due to the absence of a network of interaction with other people." Working distantly and being isolated due to physical distance, results in employee dissatisfaction(Morgan & Symon, 2002). Also, (Mercer, 1996) shows that one of the main impacts of loneliness an employee feels at the workplace is dissatisfaction about the job and deeper loneliness feelings among colleagues. According to(Orhan, Rijsman, & Van Dijk, 2016) people who have the most frequent face-to-face interaction has least social and physical isolation levels, while the highest isolation is experienced by people with high team and task virtuality (respondents categorized in High Team High Task). This group of people feels the least satisfaction and has the least self-performance. Also, (Orhan et al., 2016) study results proposes that increase in social isolation decreases job satisfaction.
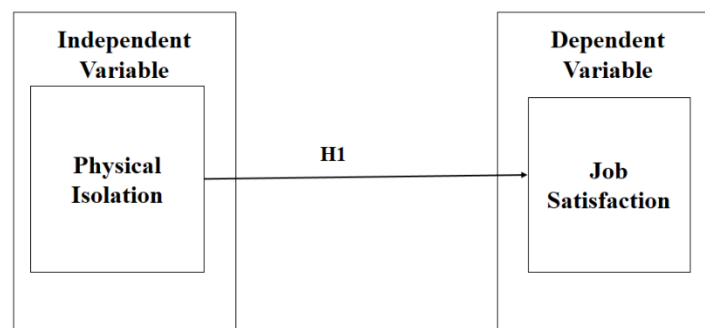
Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researchers Construction

Hypothesis Development

H1: There is a significant negative impact between physical isolation and job satisfaction

Face-to-face interactions may necessiate lunches, offhand water-cooler discussions, or periodic meetings, coming about in interpersonal contact that can strengthen connectedness and believe (Burtha & Connaughton, 2004; Kiesler & Cummings, 2002) and somewhat compensate for the anxiety and dissatisfaction stemming from professional isolation (C. D. Cooper & Kurland, 2002). Studies have appeared that indeed with critical utilize of electronic mail, face-to-face discussions are vital for common outlines. reference to be built up and kept up (Sarbaugh-Thompson &

Feldman, 1998; Zack, 1993). More frequent interaction can diminish misunderstandings and

upgrade exchanges, such that teleworkers who lock in in more face to-face intuitive are superior able to create shared connectinterpretations (Cramton, 2001, 2002). Hypothesis 1 will be tested.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design chosen for the current study is based on a mixed-method design. Qualitative method was used for depth analysis and validation of the findings obtained from the the quantitative method. The target study population of the study was academic-related people employed in universities that belong to the private sector in Sri Lanka. The study sample size is one hundred (100) academic-related people employed in universities that belong to the private sector in Sri Lanka. It consists of eighty (80) academics for the quantitative method and twenty (20) academics for the qualitative method. The sampling technique used for this was convenience sampling for both the quantitative and qualitative methods. Collected primary data is the main source of data used for the study. The researcher used self-administered questionnaires and semi-structured interviews for data collection. Data analysis methods were correlation coefficient analysis and simple linear regression analysis.

This study uses measures developed by Marshall et al. (2007) for Physical Isolation (Ex." I am isolated from others at work"." I often feel left out") and scored from (Strongly disagree to strongly agree). And Job satisfaction using measures developed by (Spector, 1985). Sample items include,(Ex. "I sometimes feel my job is meaningless"., "Communications seem good within this organization" and scored from ((Strongly disagree to strongly agree. Interview questions include (Ex. "Do you feel you are isolated from work when you work from home during nation wide curfew period"; "What are your feelings about being separated from others whom you work with, during nation wide curfew period",etc)

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Demographic Infromation

The study consists of 100 academics 23% aged between 18 and 28 years old, 30% aged between 29 and 35 years old, 25% aged between 36 and 50 years old and 22% aged above 50 years. Findings shows that more than half (65%) were female academics, and remaining 35% were male academics who participated in this study. Moreover 28% of respondents are having 28% of 0 to 5 years of experience, 32% having 6 to 10 years of experience, 25% having 11 to 15 years experience and 15% having more than 15 years of experience.

Objective 01: To identify the relationship between Physical isolation on Job Satisfaction

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Table 1:Correlation between physical isolation and job satisfaction

Dimension	Pearson correlation	P-Value
Physical Isolation	-0.724	0.000

Source: Based on data

Pearson correlation coeeficient analysis was run to determine the relationship betweentwo variables. Based on results of this study there was a strong, negative correlation between two variables, which was statistically significant ($r = $ -0.724, $p = .000$). These findings can be validated as follows,

[..]First expereinece to work on a virtual setting have engaged with online teaching while because of this covid 19 pandemic. Online teaching and learning concept practiced in some other countries but I don't have experience in Sri Lanka. I usually carry out my physical classes with group discussions, role plays, case studies,etc in addititon to my teaching. But because we missed the physical interation I faced many challenges in getting interacted with students and even with my collegues. I felt that it's very difficult to get adopted and not satisfied like we had usual classes before this pandemic"

[Respondent 12]

Objective 02: To analyze the impact of physical isolation on Job satisfaction.

Table 2: Model summary of simple linear regression analysis

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
0.724	0.524	0.519

Source: Based on data

This table provides the R and $R2$ values. The R value represents the simple correlation and is 0.724 . The $R2$ value indicates how much of the total variation in the dependent variable job satisfaction, can be explained by the independent variable physical isolation. In this study, 52.4% can be explained.

Table 3: Analysis of variance for multiple linear regression

Model	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	F	Significance
Regression	52.380	1	108.003	0.000
Residual	47.529	98		
Total	99.909	99		

Source: Based on data

This table indicates that the regression model predicts the dependent variable significantly

well.This indicates the statistical significance of the regression model that was run. Here, p is less than 0.05, and indicates that, overall, the regression model statistically significantly predicts the outcome variable.

Table 4: Coefficient summary of simple linear regression analysis

Predictor	ß coefficients	Standard error	T – value	P-value
Constant	5.714	0.314	18.206	0.000
Physical Isolation	-0.638	0.061	10.392	0.000

Source: Based on data

Job satisfaction is 5.714 when physical isolation remains zero this implied by Constant ß0. Statistically significant at a 0.05 level of significance (P = 0.000).

Also, independent variable (physical isolation) shows a negative beta coefficient. It shows every additional one unit increase in physical isolation , results to reduce job satisfaction by 0.638. Statistically significant at a 0.05 level of significance (P = 0.000). Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis (H1) was accepted. These findings can be validated as follows,

"I was worring about missing informal chats we normally have in the campus to discuss the problems related to our work . theres no body around me. I did my best to face this challenge by myself deliver every thing which I can do for students. But end of the day I feels like work I did was meaning less, theres' no any sence of getting satsfaction […]"

[Respondent 06]

[…]Yeah. During this pandemic each and every worker was isolated from their work settings in order to maintain this curfew period. Any how as academics we have to carry out our programs while facing any of the obstacle we get. But getting isolated for around one and half months time is it's too long because we have never expereineced this isolation earlier and doing work from home again it's a big challenge without usual work setting. I did many sacrifices to carry out and get adopted this situation but I don't think this work is getting appreciated from management[…]

[Respondent 04]

Based on the research findings, simple linear regression equation can be build up as follows;

$$Job\ Satisfaction = 5.714 - 0.638\ physical\ isolation + \varepsilon$$

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the results of the study, that concise conclusion can be made. A negative relationship

was identified between physical isolation and job satisfaction. The findings of ([Tabancali, 2016](#)) agree with the results of the study. A negative relationship can be identified between job satisfaction and the loneliness of employees.

Base on the findings the it suggests physical isolation will negatively impact for job satisfaction of academics. This agree with the scholars research findings of ([Tabancali, 2016](#)) and ([Orhan et al., 2016](#)) and remarks that social or physical isolation results in a decrease of satisfaction for the job, and suggests some information is lost in when they engage with communication if the missed physical interation with key individuals. Findings from quantitativeand qualitative method suggests that the including of training and development programs to virtual and remote work setting by the organization, facing work demands opportunities to face future pandemics.Also it should be done using improvement in technology and changing the normal work settings in a possible manner. Moreover, in the future if the employees are forced to face remote working due to possible challenges, they should be provided with good training to compensate with issues in communication. The skill sets required for the people facing virtual working should be provided with good social supporting so that they will identify the goals of the organization and meet those goals. Also, interpersonal trust should be developed among the people and competencies which is needed for online lecturing 21st century and deficiencies in order to manage the academic process smoothly in emergency situations.

It is recommended to carry out more studies to identify how workplace isolation (Ex. Infromational isolation) impacts on job satisfaction due to covid 19 pandemic as the current literature is surprisingly lacking. And to carry out a study with other sectors as because isolation exists every where. This study suffers some limitations. The current study is based on private sector campus, future researchers can research how it impact with government sector universities.This research carried out with job satisfaction only. Future researcher can carry out a study with other organizational outcomes and by using moderating effects.

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