

# Employee Engagement in the Home-Work Lifeworld

Olawunmi E. Eniola<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada

Correspondence: Olawunmi E. Eniola, E-mail: oeeniola2025@gmail.com. Tel: 1-306-541-4604

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## Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a rapid implementation of the work-from-home model. The struggles imposed by COVID-19 and the challenges of the work-from-home pose consequences for being either fully present and complete or fragmented when occupying an organizational role. This article summarizes existing knowledge on employee engagement under the work-from-home design. In addition, it provides new insights and coherent explanations on the development of engagement when employees are working from home. This article offers a conceptual framework regarding employee engagement and the work-from-home format, i.e., the home-work lifeworld matrix. The home-work lifeworld matrix describes and explains the processes or sequence of events while employees work from home. The home-work lifeworld matrix provides a basis for understanding the underlying constructs of engagement; body, time, space, and relations and their interconnectedness when employees work from home. The article proposes assessing engagement holistically by considering different facets of the body, time, space, and relations and specifies the implications for managing employees in home-based work.

**Keywords:** body, covid-19, employee engagement, relations, time, space, stress, work-family conflict, work-from-home, workstation

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 The Problem

The unprecedented and enormous disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a rapid digital reorientation of work (Oksa, Kaakinen, Savela, Hakanen, & Oksanen, 2021). The implementation of work-from-home increased dramatically due to the lockdown and physical distancing enforced in curtailing the transmission of COVID-19 (Rose & Brown, 2021). However, work-from-home, which has become the new norm, is challenging for employees and employers (Nguyen & Tran, 2021). The border between work and non-work roles has diminished. The boundary infringement has unparalleled consequences for fulfilling work and non-work roles (Allen, Merlo, Lawrence, Slutsky, & Gray, 2021). Family relationships have been extremely impacted and challenged (Mazzucchelli, Bosoni, & Medina, 2020). Home-based telework due to the COVID-19 pandemic both increased and worsened performance. 15% of 14,648 workers reported decreased work performance which is 3.6 times higher than those with enhanced performance (Wakaizumi, Yamada, Shimazu, & Tabuchi, 2021). The negative impacts of the work-from-home format surpassed its positive effects (Wong, Lau, & Chan, 2021).

### 1.2 Importance of the Problem

Employee engagement has been linked to customer satisfaction, financial success, Return on Assets, profits, and market value (Schneider, Macey, Barbera, & Martin, 2009), job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Saks, 2006), task performance (Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010), and reduction in turnover intentions (Babakus, Yavas, & Karatepe, 2017). Hence, a highly engaged workforce is essential for business growth and survival, especially in a swiftly changing economy like the present one enforced by COVID-19. However, the work-from-home imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic presented significant consequences for the management of work-from-home employees. The wellbeing of employees working from home decreased as loneliness heightened and the capacity to detach from work deteriorated during COVID-19 (Wood et al., 2021). Work-from-home caused work-family conflict and reduced performance and productivity (Nguyen & Tran, 2021). Work-from-home resulted in negative impacts such as ineffective communication and management practice and reduced work quality and efficiency (Wong et al., 2021). Work-from-home creates contradictory

consequences for the employee by increasing or decreasing engagement (De Klerk, Joubert, & Mosca, 2021).

Moreover, Schutz and Luckmann (1973) stated that individuals "inhabit different lifeworlds at different times of the day, such as the lived world of work and the lived world of home" (van Manen, 1990, p. 101). However, this assertion no longer holds because of the work-from-home due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The lived world of work and the lived world of the home have been merged. Employees occupy the lifeworld of home and work simultaneously during the day. Hence, the typical work environment has been redefined into the 'home-work lifeworld.'

### *1.3 Theoretical Framework for the Home-Work Lifeworld*

Employee engagement is a "cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed toward desired organizational outcomes" (Shuck & Wollard, 2010, p. 103). Similarly, authors have denoted engagement as a behavior (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Saks, 2006). According to Lewin (1943), behavior results from an individual's interaction with the environment. Hence, employee engagement is a product of the interactions between an employee working from home and the conditions/experience surrounding the home office under the COVID-19 crisis. In addition, Lewin (1943) stated that behavior is a consequence of the environment and the subjective discernment of the environment. Behavior theory specifies that environmental factors influence behavior, and the development and maintenance of behavior are dependent on stimuli (American Psychology Association [APA], n.d). Crotty (1998) indicated that isolating people from their experiences is impossible. Specifically, interpretivism entails analyzing people's subjective daily experiences.

COVID-19 is an environmental stimulus, and COVID-19 and the work-from-home format are subjective daily experiences. Working from home under the COVID-19 context generates a variety of personal behaviors, emotions, and feelings. Specifically, the COVID-19 pandemic and the work-from-home model make the employee experience a lifeworld. A lifeworld is the totality of physical surroundings and daily experiences that constitute an individual's world (Merriam-Webster, n.d). Moreover, Merleau-Ponty (1962) offered the fundamental structure of the lifeworld, corporeality, spatiality, temporality, and relationality. The four lifeworld features were employed in analyzing the engagement of employees working from home under the unflagging COVID-19 pandemic.

## **2. Method**

This study employed the guidelines stipulated by Torraco (2005) in integrating the extant literature about the work-from-home model and engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic. The database search included coronavirus research database, web of science, ABI Inform, NexisUni, Jstor, Proquest, and Google scholar. The search terms work-from-home and engagement, remote work and engagement, teleworking and engagement, COVID-19 and the workplace, and engagement generated publications that were reviewed. The abstracts of the publications were screened to evaluate their correspondence to the search criteria. A total of 90 publications were synthesized, and irrelevant articles were excluded from the review. Only 39 WFH and engagement publications that specified that the population studied worked from home were included. In addition, the analyzed literature consists of three articles covering COVID-19 and engagement, 16 publications about the work-from-home format, seven pre-COVID-19 engagement studies, and 25 publications about relevant theories and concepts. The analysis generated a conceptual model that delineated the home-work lifeworld constructs and their relationships.

## **3. Results**

### *3.1 Corporeality*

Corporeality relates to a physical material body or substantial property that is material or tangible (Merriam-Webster, n.d). People are generally bodily in the world (van Manen, 1990). In the context of employee engagement, corporeal properties are denoted by the indicators of psychological presence described by Kahn (1992). Some indicators give the observer the perception that someone is "home" in interpersonal and work situations (Kahn, 1992, p. 6). In the context of work performance, these indicators include physical presence, eye contact, the fullness of speech, and the spoken words that people employ in communicating with others. Kahn (1992) established that psychological presence is mainly demonstrated by physical presence and maintaining eye contact signifies that the person brought themselves to the interaction and held themselves there. In addition, well-timed non-verbal gestures and verbal behaviors indicate engagement in the conversation or task. The fullness of speech entails words and questions that signify cognitive presence, including emotions, varied tones, vocal inflections, and pitches according to the personal speech pattern.

Merleau-Ponty (1962) referred to the body as consciousness or perceiving subject. The body as a perceiving

subject entails using the mind, and the mind cannot be completely detached from the physical being. Kahn (1992) expounded on the body in relation to engagement by utilizing the concept of 'attention,' which involves fixing the mind on something, and 'integration,' which is tapping into a given situation or work by using different dimensions of oneself, i.e., physical, intellectual, and emotional, and going into work situation without being fragmented, emotionally detached or absent.

### 3.1.1 Corporeality and Engagement in the Home-Work Lifeworld

Kahn's thesis is still relevant in the times of COVID-19 work-from-home. The employee working from home is material, i.e., possesses qualities that give rise to individuality (physical presence and personal traits). In addition, the employee is sensible, i.e., perceives through the mind or senses. COVID-19 and the work-from-home influence employees' physical, intellectual, and emotional integration into work situations and tasks.

#### 3.1.1.1 Physical Presence

The work engagement of 400 Romanian teachers teleworking is affected by the lack of close communication in the physical vicinity, non-verbal behavior, and eye contact. The teachers' work engagement decreased because of the perception of low enthusiasm and feedback from the students (Obrad & Circa, 2021). During the COVID-19 lockdown in the UK, the employees working from home were physically present but not fully functioning, i.e., the switch to the online setup of working resulted in online presenteeism. The employees spent extensive time on digital platforms based on work, virtual meetings, the need to prove that they were genuinely working and not abandoning their duties, and the pressure to check and reply to work-related emails after working hours (Adisa, Ogbonnaya, & Adekoya, 2021).

Sleep quality accounts for a 1% variance in work engagement for 321 software professionals involved in compulsory home-based teleworking in Turkey (Tokdemir, 2022). Employees have reduced general physical wellbeing during work-from-home due to sedentary lifestyles or lack of physical activities such as standing, walking, etc. (Xiao, Becerik-Gerber, Des, Lucas, & Roll, 2021). Work-from-home employees, which constitute 39.9% of a population of 1,239 respondents, spent less time for physical activity and experienced extended continuous sedentary behavior during work than the non-work-from-home group (Fukushima et al., 2021). Administrative employees working from home in Italy suffered musculoskeletal problems due to the work chairs and tables. 41.2% stated low back pain, and 23.5% neck pain. In addition, the neck pain is exacerbated in half of the home-based employees (Moretti, Menna, Aulicino, Paoletta, Liguori, & Iolascon, 2020). Essentially, physical wellbeing is relevant for employee engagement.

#### 3.1.1.2 The Mind

Mental wellbeing is positively connected to the work engagement of IT practitioners during the enforced work-from-home (Tokdemir, 2022). COVID-19 agitated the mental wellbeing and, consequently, the engagement of civil servants teleworking from home in Nigeria (Azubuike & Godwin, 2021). A virtual workplace does not give the feeling of being in an office environment. Virtual work influences mental health levels, and mental health affects employee engagement (Yadav, 2020). In a study of 18 participants aged 50 years and above without COVID-19 infections, mental health and wellbeing were affected by lack of sleep, job insecurity, social isolation, technological issues due to COVID-19, and teleworking, and the mental wellbeing impacted the work engagement (Abbas & Zhiqiang, 2020). In contrast, employees who reported happiness, satisfaction, concentration, and fewer depressive symptoms during work-from-home in COVID-19 times were more engaged in their jobs (Bergefurt et al., 2022).

Based on a study of 499 health practitioners in Spain, out of which 117 work from home, health practitioners with low psychological distress had a high level of engagement. Comparably, psychological distress is high in practitioners with low engagement. Work-from-home accounts for low psychological distress because health professionals who had higher psychological distress worked not from home but in an environment with conflict, workload, and stress (Ruiz-Frutos et al., 2021). Psychological distress triggered by intolerance to uncertainties about COVID-19 and fear of COVID-19 prompted cyberloafing at work. Moreover, psychological distress hinders employees' psychological presence, including focusing on work tasks (Reizer, Galperin, Chavan, Behl, & Pereira, 2022).

Jelińska and Paradowski (2021) confirmed from a study of 1,500 instructors working remotely in 118 countries that 43% had low coping capacity due to inability to handle obstacles, cognitive capabilities, and individual appraisal of situations, which results in lower engagement.

#### 3.1.1.3 Stress

Remote work raised the stress level of 1,285 workers in Latin America during the COVID-19 lockdown. Even

though remote work is significantly and positively connected to engagement. Stress diminishes the positive impact of remote work on engagement (Sandoval-Reyes, Idrovo-Carlier, & Duque-Oliva, 2021). 55.12% out of 254 Canadian employees teleworking had increased stress due to COVID-19 (Parent-Lamarche, 2022). Job strain negatively impacts the work engagement of IT employees working from home (Tokdemir, 2022). The influence of stress on the productivity of work at home lecturers and teachers during COVID-19 was mediated by work engagement (Rahayu, Harisa, & Ari, 2020). Online presenteeism and remote work caused stress and anxiety, which decreased employees' engagement levels (Adisa et al., 2021).

High health insecurity, job insecurity, mobility restrictions, and loss of social networks caused anxiety and endless stress for the older generations, which prevented their complete work engagement during work from home (Abbas & Zhiqiang, 2020). Work engagement is considerably and negatively associated with emotional exhaustion during online teaching for teachers in colleges and universities in China (Huang, Yin, Jin, & Wang, 2022).

#### 3.1.1.4 Personal Traits

Personality traits such as extraversion and conscientiousness, naturally linked to pleasant results, caused detrimental consequences in 974 remote workers in the UK. Extroverted and conscientious employees have a reduced level of engagement (Evans, Meyers, Van De Calseyde, & Stavrova, 2021). Likewise, individual characteristics such as emotional intelligence or use of emotion have a positive connection with work engagement, according to data from 254 Canadian employees from 18 small and medium organizations teleworking during the second and third wave of COVID-19. The use of emotion is the capacity to direct one's emotion toward constructive purposes (Parent-Lamarche, 2022).

Self-efficacy is a personal resource that significantly moderates the relationship between family-work enrichment and work engagement for 478 academic faculty members working from home in India. Moreover, self-efficacy considerably intervenes in the association between family incivility through family-work enrichment and work engagement (Gopalan, Pattusamy, & Goodman, 2021). Work engagement increases the self-efficacy of 2,763 university teachers performing online teaching during COVID-19 in China (Huang et al., 2022). Self-efficacy and engagement are positively connected. However, during the lockdown period, self-efficacy and work engagement greatly decreased in 622 primary school teachers using the online platform to teach physical education in Italy (Gobbi, Bertollo, Colangelo, Carraro, & di Fronso, 2021).

Fajri and Haerudin (2022) suggested that autonomy and self-leadership activate engagement based on a study of 136 Indonesians performing work tasks from home. Job autonomy positively influenced employee engagement during obligatory teleworking for Swiss employees (Giauque, Renard, Cornu, & Emery, 2022).

Resilience leads to work engagement during online teaching from home for faculty members. Resilience develops through empowering leadership. Resilience is a personal resource that serves as a prerequisite for professional success during the COVID-19 pandemic because it promotes determination (Mehmood & Saeed, 2021). Active coping mediates the relationship between family incivility through family-work enrichment and work engagement (Gopalan et al., 2021). In addition, employees procrastinate or delay performing work tasks because of workplace cyber ostracism, and procrastination significantly impacts online work engagement (Yang, Murad, Mirza, Chaudhary, & Saeed, 2022).

In our physical or bodily presence, we concurrently disclose and conceal things about ourselves unconsciously despite ourselves (van Manen, 1990). Thus, employees' bodily presence while working from home is not necessarily deliberate but may be due to temporality, spatiality, and relationality.

#### 3.2 Temporality

Temporality is the way time is understood. In the traditional sense, temporality is the linear procession of the past, present, and future. Still, philosophically, temporality signifies the human's perception of time and the social organization of time (Le Poidevin, 2000; Keating, 2013). Lived time is the subjective time and the temporal way of existence in the world, which is neither the clock time nor the objective time (van Manen, 1990). Cherkun (2016) incorporated social senses in establishing temporality. Social temporality is internal time, a sequence, and a current event. Time is the discernable period during which an action, process, or condition occurs or persists. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic has ravaged the world for two years. COVID-19 is our present and our future. We are in the COVID-19 times. Cherkun (2016) stated that a social time-space path is symbolized by the stream of events that take place in the social space and move in social time. Thus, COVID-19 is a critical event in our social space. Our times are understood in terms of COVID-19 infections and transmissions, mortality, types of COVID-19 variants, disruption of lives and livelihoods, and transformation of

ways of being by COVID-19. In addition, events are enclosed in space and time. Events can emanate at any hierarchical level or environmental level and migrate up and down throughout the organization (Morgeson, Mitchell, & Liu, 2015). Thus, COVID-19 events sail throughout the home-work environment.

### 3.2.1 Temporality and Engagement in the Home-Work Lifeworld

#### 3.2.1.1 COVID-19 Events

COVID-19, which is an extreme event, spills over into the work environment and impacts the engagement of the German working population (Reinwald, Zimmermann, & Kunze, 2021). A higher intake of COVID-related news results in anxiety that decreases work engagement based on a two-month diary study of 281 employed Canadians (Andel, Arvan, & Shen, 2021). COVID-19 produced fear in civil servants, and the increased COVID-19 transmission impacted the engagement of civil servants working from home in Nigeria by 38.1% (Azubuike & Godwin, 2021). Intolerance to uncertainties about COVID-19 and fear of COVID-19 increased cyberloafing at work based on data from 322 employees in Israel. Intolerance to uncertainties about COVID-19 and fear of COVID-19 were harmful and resource-draining conditions that produced adverse behavioral consequences (Reizer et al., 2022).

In China and the United States studies, COVID-19-mortality salience harms job engagement by causing anxiety (Hu, He, & Zhou, 2020). Similarly, Zampetakis (2022) confirmed that the fear of COVID-19 indirectly impacted work engagement by making employees seek job resources such as feedback and advice, according to 320 diary records captured five days from 64 employees of public service organizations during the pandemic. Employees' approach to seeking job resources helped sustain work engagement despite the fear of COVID-19. The fear of COVID-19 is triggered by news about abrupt escalations of COVID-19 infection and mortality, contradictory data about the nature of the virus, and uncertainty regarding vaccine availability.

The work engagement of old age employees (50 years and above) working from home was impacted by COVID-19 pandemic events such as fears about job loss, food shortages, rising food prices due to supply shortages, the high mortality rate among older people, and scientific versus non-scientific preventative methods (Abbas & Zhiqiang, 2020). In addition, perceived threats such as the susceptibility to the disease, fear of being symptomless, anxiety that COVID-19 is a biological weapon, fear of community estrangement if infected, and search for homemade remedies against COVID-19 hindered the work engagement of the old age employees during the work from home (Abbas & Zhiqiang, 2020).

#### 3.2.1.2 Work Hours/Time

Work-from-home employees had increased work expectations, and the time expended at the home office workstation increased by 1.5 hours. Work-from-home makes employees work on weekends and take fewer breaks from work, which impacts physical health and consequently reduces employee engagement (Xiao et al., 2021). Based on a study of employees in the financial division in the Netherlands, work engagement diminished due to employees' need to create new work habits and the growing workload at the beginning of the involuntary telework (Syrek, Kühnel, Vahle-Hinz, & de Bloom, 2021).

The frequency of home-based telework during COVID-19 affects work engagement based on a study of 19,659 workers in Japan. The higher the number of teleworking days per week, the lower the engagement, e.g., teleworking for four days or more in a week account for low engagement than three days or less. This difference can be ascribed to factors such as psychological demands (Nagata et al., 2021).

Work-from-home has a negative relationship with time pressure. Time pressure has a positive relationship with work-family conflict for workers in the legal sector, academia, and information technology. Specifically, working from home reduces time pressure; however, the higher the time pressure when working from home, the higher the work-family conflict and subsequent reduction in work engagement (Darouei & Pluut, 2021).

### 3.3 Spatiality

Spatiality is the quality of space that includes standard dimensions, e.g., size, depth, height, and informal dimensions, e.g., openness and visibility (Ching, 2007). In this sense, openness is the extent of accessibility to knowledge, technology, and necessary resources, and visibility is the measure of distance at which an object or light can be perceived. At the same time, the phenomenological understanding of space and spatiality entails the perceived world, felt space, and lived space. Space is the universal power for the connection of things or the setting for the body to coexist with the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Spatiality is the world or landscape for human existence in which operations and activities are conducted (van Manen, 1990). A body inhabits space. A synchronized communication occurs between the body and the world or space (Liu, 2009). In addition, the characteristics of the lived space bestow a particular experience the quality of meaning. The type of space

individuals inhabits or coexist in impacts their feeling (van Manen, 1990).

In the COVID-19 context, the home-work lifeworld encompasses both the physical and lived space (experiential). There is a relation between the body and space. The home connects the employees to the business world or work. Employees have day-to-day experience working at home. The space in which the employee works has an impact on their wellbeing. There is constant communication between the employee, the home office or workstation dimensions, and workstation quality (acoustics, light, visibility, etc.). The shared space or the setting of co-existence for a home-based teleworker includes spouse, children, extended family members, roommates, etc. At the same time, work-from-home employees operate in cyberspace or virtual meeting spaces. They partake in a world of information through the internet. According to Techopedia (2020), cyberspace is an electronic medium for facilitating online communication or the virtual computer world. Cyberspace refers to communities in the digital realm or different types of virtual interfaces that create digital realities. Cyberspace is used for various activities: sharing information, interacting, swapping ideas, playing games, discussions, or social forums, conducting business, and creating intuitive media. Examples include an organization's intranet, online gaming, Facebook, Zoom, and Google.

### 3.3.1 Spatiality and Engagement in the Home-Work Lifeworld

#### 3.3.1.1 Physical Space

The quality of the indoor environment is an important indicator of employee engagement due to the increase in remote/hybrid work models because of COVID-19 (Surma, Nunes, Rook, & Loder, 2021). For instance, based on a study of 260 workers in Italian organizations, the quality of workstations is one of the determinants of high-quality telework. In turn, high-quality telecommuters experienced higher work engagement (Miglioretti et al., 2021).

Moretti et al. (2020) confirmed that the home workspace structural characteristics, i.e., chairs and worktables, are responsible for musculoskeletal problems. They found that 56.9% of the 51 respondents used the typical kitchen chair, of which 54.9% cannot be elevated. In addition, 54.9% had seats with a hollow back, out of which 70.6% had no height regulation, and 68.6% could not be inclined. In addition, most of the participants used a home table approximately 72cm in height, 39.2% used a kitchen table with a height of over 73.5 cm, while 86.3% of the tables lacked height adjustment. These features have implications for wellbeing and engagement. The physical environment directly and positively influences work engagement. Planning the physical spaces or environmental factors such as sound comfort, temperature, air quality, ergonomics, privacy, and layout increases work engagement (Duque, Costa, Dias, Pereira, Santos, & Ant nio, 2020).

Workstation suitability and workstation ergonomic suitability substantially contributed to employee stress levels when working from home during COVID-19, based on a study of 352 employees in various industries in the Philippines (Seva, Tejero, & Fadrilan-Camacho, 2021). Still, researchers have linked stress to depletion of engagement (Tokdemir, 2022; Abbas & Zhiqiang, 2020). Workstation suitability encompasses environmental and situational factors such as ambient noise, temperature, the brightness of the space, and privacy versus interruption from household occupants (Seva et al., 2021). Workstation ergonomic suitability includes possible regulation of workstation furniture or the positioning of computer accessories in relation to the body. Workstation ergonomic suitability significantly affects musculoskeletal symptoms. The body parts most affected by musculoskeletal problems are the lower back, neck, and shoulders (Seva et al., 2021). Similarly, increased work-from-home caused low back pain (LBP) among 4,227 Japanese desk workers during COVID-19 (Minoura, Ishimaru, Kokaze, & Tabuchi, 2021). Basically, the work environment influences work engagement in employees working from home during COVID-19 (Rahayu et al., 2020).

Home-based workers using small desks, having a high noise level, and without a dedicated workroom are prone to distractions (Bergefurt et al., 2022). Work-from-home employees were more distracted than in pre-pandemic times because of the workstation location in their homes. For instance, out of 988 employees working from home, 47.6% shared the workspace with others in their households, 50.3% had their workstation in a commonplace, e.g., living room, 16.7% used the couch, bed, and dining tables as workstations (Xiao et al., 2021). Essentially, distracting work environment ( $\beta = -0.18$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ) is negatively related to work engagement (Galanti et al., 2021, p. 429).

#### 3.3.1.2 Cyber Space

According to a focused group discussion by 32 HR leaders, technological support, i.e., access to a reliable private internet network and continuous internet connectivity for work-at-home employees, will help maintain engagement (Ramakumar & Priyadarshini, 2021). ICT awareness and competency are positively and highly

related to the engagement of 58 managers working virtually during the COVID-19 lockdown in Sri Lanka (Sirisena & Iddagoda, 2022).

Perceived digital competence substantially impacted 622 primary school teachers' work engagement in teaching physical education online; specifically, ICTs skills mastery is relevant for using ICTs in teaching and a positive mindset about online teaching (Gobbi et al., 2021). Employees showed a preference for some ICT modes of communication by the immediate supervisor over others. Emails, mobile phone calls, and WhatsApp messenger were favored over Skype and Viber because of the poor awareness and incompetency using these ICTs (Sirisena & Iddagoda, 2022). Likewise, technological readiness in using the internet, zoom, information management systems, and learning management systems has a highly significant positive impact on the engagement of 150 employees in the work-from-home format of the Sri Lankan technological campus (Manjaree & Perera, 2021).

Increased social media communication facilitates work engagement development based on a four-wave study in Finland (Oksa et al., 2021). Employees 50 years and above used the internet and social media to combat excessive false information about COVID-19, to stay connected to friends and families during WFH (e.g., through group chat and video calls), and to alleviate stress which in turn helped with their engagement with work (Abbas & Zhiqiang, 2020).

Home-based teleworking was challenging for civil servants in Nigeria because of the inadequate internet access, which has consequences on the level of engagement (Azubuike & Godwin, 2021). During the COVID-19 lockdown, old-age teleworking employees lacked access to high-speed internet and were inexperienced with technology, e.g., zoom, which caused mental exertion resulting in partial engagement with work (Abbas & Zhiqiang, 2020).

Workplace cyber ostracism substantially affected the work engagement of 303 employees working online in the private sector in Pakistan. Employees lacked a sense of belonging and felt unconnected, which inflicted suffering and distraction from the work roles, thus diminishing work engagement (Yang et al., 2022). Teleworking has negative impacts on work engagement. The negative association may be attributed to the compulsory nature of telework during the lockdown (Parent-Lamarche, 2022).

### *3.4 Relationality*

Relationality is how two or more people or things are connected. According to van Manen (1990), relationality is the lived relation individuals keep with others in the shared social space that connects them with others. People search for communal, social, and conversational relations. Humans are not input-output gadgets but are relational creatures seeking meaning in the world through non-verbal language, movement, and shared perception (Guenther, 2015). In the COVID-19 context, the home-work lifeworld is a web of interconnectedness and interrelationships. Employees share space with others in their households. The home front is the medium for conducting various relations, e.g., employee-employer relations, employee-colleagues and teams, employee-customers or clients, employee-family, and employee-pets. At the same time, employees share space with others in the digital world.

#### *3.4.1 Relationality and Engagement in the Home-Work Lifeworld*

##### *3.4.1.1 Employee-Leadership/Supervisor*

In a study of 58 managerial employees working from home in Sri Lanka, leadership and employee engagement are strongly and positively related. 96% of the engaged employees experienced excellent relationships with their direct supervisors during the COVID-19 pandemic (Sirisena & Iddagoda, 2022).

A satisfactory organizational communication climate reflected in the relationships and opportunity to communicate with the supervisor predicted a positive and moderate connection with employee engagement when working from home. 98% out of 58 Sri Lankans exhibited an elevated level of engagement due to the conducive communication climate (Sirisena & Iddagoda, 2022). In a public sector study in Switzerland, access to managers positively impacted work engagement during mandatory telework (Giauque et al., 2022). Trust in the supervisor and senior management when working remotely from home is also positively related to employee engagement (Sirisena & Iddagoda, 2022; Kumar et al., 2020; Manjaree & Perera, 2021).

Leadership effectiveness and strategies result in increased employee engagement during remote work. Empowering employees, i.e., giving employees liberty for job-related decisions, proved necessary for employee engagement during home-based telework (Manjaree & Perera, 2021). A study of 210 faculty members of private schools teaching online from home in Pakistan during the COVID-19 outbreak shows that empowering leadership is positively and directly connected to work engagement. Empowering leadership provides employees with the independence that facilitates positive experiences and emotions for nurturing resilience, which

eventually heightens work engagement (Mehmood & Saeed, 2021).

Organizational compassion, such as the supervisor's kindness, influences employee engagement, especially the vigor element of engagement based on data from 102 employees teleworking from home during COVID-19 in Uganda and Rwanda (Muzee, Kizza, & Mugabe, 2021). Contact by the organization leaders increased the work-from-home engagement of employees across India during COVID-19 (Chaudhary, Mohanty, & Malik, 2021). Supervisor support increases engagement levels by causing psychological contract fulfillment for 239 employees working from home in India (Karani & Mehta, 2021).

#### 3.4.1.2 Employee-Colleagues

Employees' consideration of others, i.e., compassion towards co-workers, is strongly related to work engagement during work from home in Rwanda and Uganda (Muzee et al., 2021). An increase in work engagement is due to perceived social support for employees when working from home in Finland (Oksa et al., 2021).

Teleworking limited social relationships and collaboration between colleagues and made it challenging to contact colleagues. Still, support from colleagues has positive effects on the employee engagement of 1,373 workers in a public administration organization (Giauque et al., 2022). Teleworking from home limited old age employees' access to peer support, e.g., no co-worker to help with technological issues (Abbas & Zhiqiang, 2020). Working remotely from home is associated with higher isolation and disconnection from the office environment, and it caused greater job disengagement based on a sample of 410 employees in Austria (Stranzl, Ruppel, & Einwiller, 2021). Work-from-home posed difficulties in bonding with team members because of limited interactions and collaboration and restricted access to consultation and creative ideas from co-workers, which invariably affect engagement (Yadav, 2020). Workplace cyber ostracism cum loneliness as a mediator exacerbated disengagement for remote employees in Pakistan's private sector. Workplace cyber ostracism made communication ineffective among employees and team members (Yang et al., 2022).

#### 3.4.1.3 Employee-Family

The forced telework supported work-life balance, which significantly and positively impacted the work engagement of public employees in Switzerland (Giauque et al., 2022). Comparably, with the strict lockdowns in 2020, remote work enhances engagement in 1,285 workers; however, remote work decreases work-life balance (Sandoval-Reyes et al., 2021).

Work-from-home causes less work-family conflict for 34 employees that participated in a daily survey for two consecutive weeks. However, increased work-family conflict decreases engagement (Darouei & Pluut, 2021). Work-family conflict and a disruptive work environment hinder engagement when working from home (Fajri & Haerudin, 2022). Work engagement dropped for Netherlands employees due to a reduction in work-non-work balance and complexities in accomplishing expectations and obligations from work and private life spheres (Syrek et al., 2021). Work-home interference occurs due to workplace ostracism, and work-home interference significantly affects employees' online work engagement. The interference prevented the employees from employing their full potential in their work tasks (Yang et al., 2022).

Family members impact the engagement of employees working from home even though work-from-home enables more access to family (Yadav, 2020). Employees living with children under 18 had lower remote work engagement and productivity levels than those living without children under 18 in a study of 171 Italian public servants during COVID-19 compulsory work from home (Toscano & Zappalà 2021). Similarly, remote work engagement decreases due to more children (Chaudhary et al., 2021).

Family incivility and family-work enrichment play essential roles in the work engagement of academics in India working remotely during COVID-19. Family incivility is disrespectful behaviors that contravene norms, and family-work enrichment occurs when family roles experiences enhance work roles. A high possibility of family conflict characterizes remote work. Thus, navigating both family incivility and work demands to maintain work engagement depends on active coping (Gopalan et al., 2021).

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Theoretical Implications

Concepts develop from blending current literature and evolving knowledge (Shepherd & Suddaby, 2017). Thus, based on the predominant patterns found in the work-from-home format during the COVID-19 pandemic, this article proposes that the home-work lifeworld is an environment or structure where engagement is either developed and maintained or repressed. Individuals working from home are part of the home-work structure, and there are intermediaries between the individuals and engagement.



According to Bryon and Thatcher (2016), an approach to building postulations involves appropriating from other fields, while Shepherd and Suddaby (2017) recognized using familiar words that closely depict the subject under observation. This article proposed that the home-work lifeworld is a matrix because a matrix is an environment in which something develops or originates. It is the mathematical description for a rectangular array of expressions (APA, n.d). In addition, the constructs of the home-work lifeworld matrix are condensed from empirical conclusions based on existing literature about work-from-home and engagement during COVID-19. The constructs are body, time, space, and relations based on everyday words.

Corley and Gioia (2011) stated that it is practically vital to provide the structure and organization of a phenomenon. Similarly, Whetten (1989) suggested that postulations contain relevant constructs and variables that explain a social phenomenon. In congruence with these assumptions, a combination of constructs and variables makeup engagement in the home-work lifeworld matrix. The properties or variables of the body construct include physical presence (fullness of speech, eye contact, gestures, sleep quality, and physical activities), the mind (mental wellbeing and low psychological distress), stress, and personal traits (self-efficacy, resilience, and self-leadership). The time variables include COVID-19 events such as infection rates, fear of COVID-19, threats from adverse incidents associated with COVID-19, time pressure, etc. The space variables are physical space (e.g., workstation) and cyberspace (e.g., technology platforms and technological competence), and the variables of relations include employee-employer relations, employee-supervisor relations, employee-colleague relations, and employee-family relations (work-family conflict).

Whetten (1989) indicated that statements of relationships among constructs facilitate the comprehension of a concept. The home-work lifeworld matrix describes the interrelation and interconnection among operating constructs and variables during the work-from-home in COVID-19 times. Hence, the configuration of the home-work lifeworld has the generic constructs: body, time, space, and relations. These elements form the basic structure underlying employee engagement in the home-work lifeworld. In the home-work lifeworld matrix, the employees or individuals (body) are part of the home-work structure because individuals cannot be separated from their experiences (Crotty, 1998). Individuals and their behavior can be understood through the environment because the environment influences how a person responds to the world (Tyler, 2020). Based on the gestalt figure-ground principle, the figure gets the most significant attention, and the ground forms the background (The Gale Encyclopedia of Psychology, 2016). The body in the home-work lifeworld is synonymous with the figure, which receives prominent attention and is enclosed within a network of conditions and processes in the background. The background is the situations, sequence of events, or conditions in the home-work lifeworld through which engagement develops or is inhibited. The background can also be referred to as 'intermediaries.' The intermediaries between the body (employees) and engagement are time, space, and relations. They are the conduits for feelings, emotions, perspectives, values, and experiences that trigger engagement or disengagement. The four elements undergo processes in the matrix, and employee engagement originates from this matrix. Work-from-home employee engagement is intimately interconnected to the body, time, space, and relations.

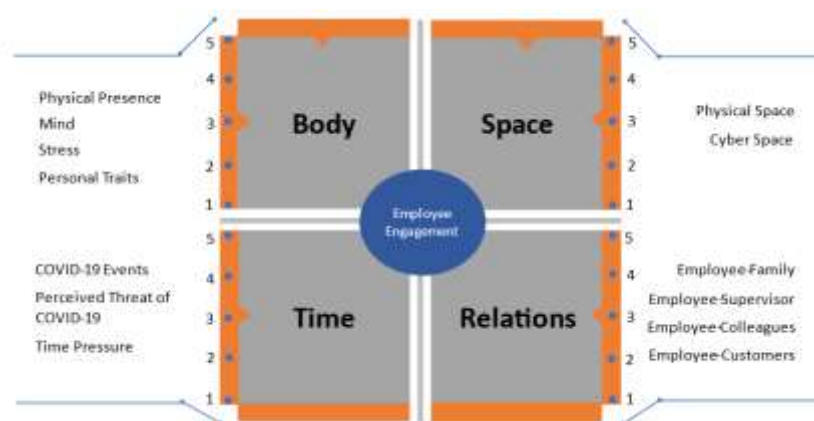


Figure 1. The home-work lifeworld

Bryon and Thatcher (2016) indicated that all notions have a set of underlying assumptions. There are underlying dynamics that justify constructs and their relationships (Whetten, 1989). Accordingly, the home-work lifeworld matrix properties have bounds that can be classified using a quality scale of 1-5. A bound is a confine, extent, or limit. The order theory indicates that things could be described as this is less than that or greater than that (Moez,

2019). Thus, the specific variables of the home-work lifeworld might be encountered in different extents due to unique contexts or conditions. The bounds of the home-work lifeworld produce diverse reactions on engagement. A lower bound of some properties in the body, space, and relations boxes will have harmful effects on engagement (the bounds in the body, space, and relations boxes are classified into 1=Poor; 2=Fair; 3=Good; 4=Very good; 5=Excellent). For example, a poor extent of employee-supervisor relations will harm employee engagement. In contrast, a lower bound in the time box will benefit engagement (the bounds in the time box are grouped into 0=None; 1=very low; 2=low; 3=medium; 4=high; and 5= very high). For example, an upper bound of fear of COVID-19 would be unfavorable to engagement. An upper bound of stress and poor employee-family relations (high work-family conflict) will be detrimental to engagement.

The level and presence or absence of engagement depend on the extent of the combined variables in the boxes (body, time, space, and relations). In addition, an individual working from home may experience a fluctuation in the elements of the home-work lifeworld matrix. The extents experienced by employees may vary from day to day, though some variables are constant in the configuration or remain stable for a period before undergoing transformation, e.g., workstation. The home-work lifeworld matrix illustrates the ideas and beliefs about the work-from-home format that could serve as valuable guides in dealing with the problems employees face when working from home. Figures one and A1 portray the home-work lifeworld matrix. The home-work lifeworld matrix contains a structure for understanding, assessing, and developing work-from-home engagement. The home-work lifeworld matrix showcases the four overarching elements that must be examined when employees work from home, i.e., body, time, space, and relations.

#### *4.2 Implications for Human Resource Management*

This study demonstrated that a holistic look into how engagement develops is necessary. Understanding the totality of a person's situation and coexisting facts will give the true picture of their behavior (Lewin, 1943). It is essential to consider everything about individuals and their environment to understand, predict, and change behavior, i.e., engagement. The home-work lifeworld framework helps understand which facet of the lifeworld to focus human resource interventions for developing and maintaining work-from-home employees' engagement. Moreover, improving employee engagement requires formulating policies, strategies, practices, and initiatives that encompass the complete aspects: body, time, space, and relations.

Furthermore, some of the most striking variables under the four constructs are stress, quality of workstation, employee-family relations, and time pressure. Thus, organizational practices are essential in managing these specific areas. Employees working from home are stressed; therefore, implementing regular practices that allow employees to unwind, such as participation in entertaining non-work activities, e.g., games and sports, might help relieve stress (Chu et al., 2022). In addition, behavioral and organizational health promotion measures that include stress management, sleep hygiene, resilience, and relaxation training will support employee wellbeing (Bernburg et al., 2021).

It is crucial to enlighten employees about the impact of the work chairs and tables in their home office and assist them in making necessary changes. An enabling environment where the layout and equipment support employees in developing individual capabilities and responding to organizational demands will facilitate engagement. Thus, managers are encouraged to collaborate with employees to diagnose and reorganize the home office environment to promote performance (Sigahi, Kawasaki, Bolis, & Morioka, 2021).

Respecting the off-work time and adhering to the business hours when scheduling tasks, meetings, events, and disseminating official information might alleviate the work-family conflict. The flexibility of telework makes interrupting another employee's off-work time rampant. Thus, it is essential to implement policies or guidelines regulating off-work time and business hours (Kerman, Korunka, & Tement, 2021). Finally, organizations can provide time management training and encourage behavioral tactics to develop effective work routines. Allen et al. (2021) indicated that behavioral tactics are valuable in creating and maintaining work-nonwork boundaries, e.g., setting up reminders and signals about work start and end times through technology or apps.

#### *4.3 Recommendations for Future Research*

The research about space and its relevance in employee engagement is still very scanty, specifically, ergonomics in the home-work environment in this era of work digitization. Ergonomics consists of the relationships between employees and components such as tools, equipment, and technologies (Sigahi et al., 2021). Therefore, this article emphasizes that ergonomics is an essential predictor of engagement because of the relevance of the home workspace in maintaining engagement. Thus, further investigation regarding how the home-work environment impacts engagement will help understand work-from-home engagement.

Furthermore, there is still a significant gap in understanding online presenteeism and employee engagement. Due to the prevalence of the work-from-home, it is crucial to explore the negative consequence of online presenteeism. This article speculates that online presenteeism is one of the ways the home-work boundary has been blurred. Online presenteeism increases time pressure and conflicts between work and home domains and prevents psychological detachment from work during off-job time. In addition, online presenteeism will hinder employees from fully functioning or being 'fully there.' Thus, this study declared that online presenteeism is the opposite of being 'fully there.' Kahn (1992) expounded on the experiential state of being fully there to include having the different dimensions of oneself, i.e., physical, intellectual, and emotional engrossed in work. Thus, it is essential to investigate how online presenteeism impacts physical, emotional, and intellectual integration into work.

#### 4.4 Limitation of Study

The home-work lifeworld matrix is derived from available publications on work-from-home and engagement during COVID-19. As the COVID-19 crisis is unflagging, more attention is devoted to studying COVID-19, work-from-home, and employee engagement. Thus, this review may not encompass all the determinants of work-from-home engagement.

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## Appendix A

### The Home-Work Lifeworld

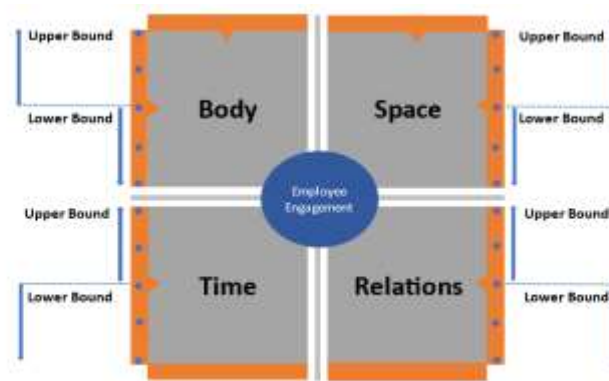


Figure A1. The home-work lifeworld with bounds

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