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NEWBIES VS. OLD-TIMERS: UNIVERSITY WORKERS' DIFFERENTIAL EXPERIENCES OF WORKING FROM HOME DURING COVID-19[1]

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INTRODUCTION

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 created havoc in Canada's post-secondary sector. All post-secondary institutions shut down on-campus and in-person activities, classes moved online and tens of thousands of post-secondary workers scrambled to work at home. The initial weeks and months of the COVID-19 measures were a period of stress for all post-secondary workers.

However, not all COVID-19 work-from-home experiences were equal for all post-secondary workers. For example, early studies are showing that women, and in particular those with dependent children, fared much worse in terms of productivity, stress, and work-life balance in the initial months of the COVID-19 measures (Andersen, Nielsen, Simone, Lewiss & Jagsi 2020; Squazzoni, Bravo, Grimaldo, Garcıa-Costa, Farjam & Mehmani 2020). We anticipate that a range of factors shape the specific experiences of post-secondary workers during the COVID-19 crisis.

One possible factor may be a worker's previous experience with working from home. It is expected that those who worked from home prior to the pandemic would have less need to adapt to COVID-19 measures. However, these measures also led to the closure of elementary and secondary schools and many workplaces. Even for experienced home-workers, the arrival of spouses and children in a previously solitary work "space" could be a disruptive force. Further, the relative autonomy gained by newcomers to working from home could offset the negative impacts of the disruptions. In other words, the dynamics of an abrupt and unexpected transition to work from home are complex and merit further study. This article examines how the COVID-19 working from home experience differed between two groups of university workers – those for whom working at home was new (newbies) and those who had previous experience working predominantly from home (old-timers).

In our analysis we employ Baruch and Nicholson's (1997) organization of the four determinants of successful WFH arrangements, including: the nature of the job, attributes of the worker, support of the employer, and domestic responsibilities. We divide the determinants into two groups: influences that are relatively unchanging regardless of context (nature of the job and attributes of the worker) and influences that are more

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context dependent (support of the employer and domestic responsibilities). The analysis aims to understand the different WFH job outcomes of old-timers and newbies by controlling for unchanging influences and then separately examining the strategies employed by home-workers within the context dependent influences.

FACTORS IN WORKING FROM HOME

Telework, or working from home (WFH), is a term broadly defined as work performed remotely using technology to facilitate communication and productivity (Bailey and Kurland 2002). WFH remains a minority working arrangement better suited for jobs with high levels of autonomy and reliance on technology (López-Igual and Rodríguez-Modroño 2020). WFH can be a satisfying productive work structure when workers feel they have adequate support from their employers in terms of equipment and supervision, as well as a way to balance the demands of home life while respecting boundaries of work activities in the shared space. Successful teleworkers have developed strategies to manage the home-work balance that function in tandem with organization policy and broader social supports. However, WFH does not work for everyone. Literature on WFH indicates several factors impact successful arrangement, where success is defined in terms of satisfaction and productivity, assessed by supervisor and by employee (Delanoeije and Verbruggen 2020; Nakrošienė, Bučiūnienė, and Goštautaitė 2019).

The factors leading to successful WFH can be understood using Baruch and Nicholson's (1997) conceptualization of the four realms of WFH. They identify four overlapping elements related to WFH; the qualities and attributes of the worker, the nature of the job being performed, organizational leadership and support, and interactions with home and family responsibilities. They argue all four realms must be present for WFH to succeed and disruption and/or absence of one of those dimensions can lead to decrease in job outcomes including satisfaction, productivity and stress. The value of this model is its recognition that the realms work as an inter-related system and attention must be paid to all four aspects. Recent COVID-era work has added a fifth realm of environmental factors including legal requirements and security concerns (Belzunegui-Eraso and Erro-Garcés 2020). Of particular importance in the COVID-19 experience are the presence of appropriate tools and equipment, and consistent contact with and support from a supervisor (Bhattacharya and Mittal 2020), both elements of Baruch and Nicholson's *organizational leadership and support* element.

The literature also points to the importance of domestic responsibilities, in particular the care of dependent children, on the success of WFH. Having children increases levels of work-family conflict and negatively impacts job outcomes and satisfaction of home-workers (Zhang et al. 2020). Given the gendered division of social reproductive labour (Verloo & Lonbardo, 2007; Fuller, 2018) in Canadian households, this finding extends to a gendered understanding of WFH and its negative impacts on female workers.

This theoretical framework suggests two possible divergent outcomes for university workers during COVID-19. First, for those new to WFH, the realms may or may not be adequately satisfied leading to varying success during the transition. One or more of the four realms could be out of alignment: the worker may not wish to work from home; the nature of the work does not translate well to a home environment; there may be a lack of organizational support, including equipment; and the home and family setting may not be conducive to successful WFH. The suddenness of the transition, for example, may not have allowed for appropriate analysis of factors or determination of need for supports. Academic workers have reported a lack of organizational support in transitioning to online learning as an important point of stress and a key factor in poor job outcomes (Brabazon 2021).

For those already working from home, we can assume the realms were satisfied, pre-COVID-19, initially suggesting a higher likelihood of continued success in a COVID context. However, it is possible that the disruption of established patterns, including the introduction of children or spouses in the space, could cause one or more of the realms, in particular the home-family realm, to fall out of alignment and result in lowered WFH effectiveness. Changes in the nature of the work performed (e.g., online classes) may also destabilize the WFH dynamic for this group of workers.

This study thus examines the four dimensions of WFH for new and accustomed homeworkers and tests the impact that these combined dimensions have on key job outcomes of satisfaction, stress, and productivity.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT

There are two dominant approaches to defining and understanding change in organizations: the steady adaptation of practices into sedimented routines versus the sudden shock. Benner and Tushman (2003) argue that much of the process-focused literature addresses incremental and planned change, applicable to stable institutions such as universities, but less helpful in understanding the sudden shock. The physical closure of Canadian university campuses in early 2020 clearly constitutes a sudden shock. An entire corpus of change management literature addresses the human resource, communication, and organization strategy perspectives on crises and sudden shocks. Substreams of the literature address the relationship of shocks to individual employment choices (Akkermans, Richardson, & Krainer, 2020; Lee & Mitchell, 1994) while Weick's work on sensemaking (1995; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005) highlights the ongoing interpretation we undertake as workers when faced with sudden changes in organization life; we reflect not only on events and reactions but also on the contexts in which these occur. Weber and Glynn (2006) bring the sensemaking activities of the individual into the institutional setting. The university as a stable environment encourages its employees to react and interact in predictable ways; the sudden shock of COVID-19 affected the whole higher education sector when most, if not all, onsite employees moved to homeworking, and so the response to the pandemic exerts a form of institutional context power over its members (Weber & Glynn, 2006). This notion of sameness and oneness was underscored by the media messaging in early 2020: "we're all in this together."

Was the shock and disruption of sudden WFH offset by workers' ability to adapt quickly to organization norms? Much of the literature in this domain is underpinned by the notion of employee command and control over resources in the face of change (Hite & McDonald, 2020). While university staff suddenly moved home in response to the pandemic, the work of the institution needed to continue, forcing a sudden change in routine for many employees. These significant changes included: academic staff learned to teach "remotely"; face to face service delivery for general and professional staff moved online, to phone and email; libraries posted physical collection resources to users; and research field work ground to a halt. Individuals and subgroups of employees may interpret these forced changes in different ways, depending on the resources available to them, with differing impacts on their stress and productivity as a result of the resources they command.

Time is also a key element of change, including the notice period before change occurs, the length of time disruption endures, and the period of aftermath and adjustment that follows. Individuals draw upon a range of resources to varying degrees throughout these time periods to successfully navigate their changed work circumstances, with little warning and great uncertainty as to duration, success in working from home during COVID-19 is in part a function of the resources that employees can access (Hite & McDonald, 2020). The adequacy of support resources already in place at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic could contribute to greater success in dealing with the sudden shock of the move to WFH. The temporal aspects of the availability of those resources and their perceived efficacy for the two groups of employees are examined in this study.

METHODOLOGY

This study is part of a larger project examining university workers' responses to COVID-19 prevention measures to understand the impact of WFH on job measures (productivity, satisfaction, etc.) and employee measures (gender, child-care, etc.)[2]. The larger study covers seven Australian and seven Canadian universities. To conduct our analysis, we make use of survey responses collected from employees of the seven universities in Canada.[3] To understand the experiences of employees working from home, an online survey was distributed to all employees at each institution between July and October 2020, approximately three to five months after the mandatory WFH order. At each institution the survey was open for four weeks, with two

[2] This research used data from the Covid-19 Homeworking University Staff Survey (CHUSS) project. We thank all of the international team members for their contributions to the dataset. https://www.griffith.edu.au/work-organisation-wellbeing/research/projects/covid-19-home-working-by-university-staff-survey.

[3] The seven Canadian universities include: Athabasca University, McMaster University, Ryerson University, University of Regina, University of Saskatchewan, Western University and York University.

reminders sent out. In March 2020, workplaces in Canada, including universities prohibited almost all in-person interaction to slow the spread of COVID-19: instructors scrambled to deliver classes remotely, research initiatives were either cancelled or continued only where the health protocols could be followed; staff and managers were also sent home to continue working, as best they could. By then, a consistent set of COVID-19 restrictions were in place across the country, including the closure of summer camps, daycare facilities, and in-person learning for elementary and secondary school children. Approximately 6,000 Canadian university employees responded to questions on pandemic related work experiences as well as a host of potential determinants such as child and elder care responsibilities, support from the university, and employee demographic information. Importantly, the survey measured the frequency of working from home before and during the pandemic.

Without discounting the importance of individual influences, previous research suggests that the WFH experiences of those forced off campus by the pandemic should vary from the experiences of those already working from home prior to the pandemic, who are likely to have established appropriate supports and home-life balance. There is little doubt that the pandemic has troubled all workers; however, we expect those who had previously predominately worked from home (i.e. old-timers) to have fared better. The logic behind this expectation is that successful previous experience with WFH serves as a predictor for continued success in the context of sudden change and disruption (caused by COVID-19). A successful WFH arrangement will have satisfied Baruch and Nicholson's four realms and should be more resilient at weathering disruption. The stability of the WFH arrangement for old-timers should then be reflected in more positive reports of work conditions, namely higher job satisfaction and productivity, and lower stress. To test this relationship, we devise three hypotheses: after controlling for other influences, compared to being new to WFH arrangements, an old-timer will have:

- H1: higher job satisfaction;
- H2: higher job productivity;
- H3: lower stress.

After testing the effect of being an old-timer, or new to WFH, on these three job outcomes, we then turn to better understanding what old-timer's do differently than workers who are new to the WFH arrangement. The second wave of analysis examines which elements of WFH arrangements are linked to satisfaction, productivity and stress. To investigate, we employ Baruch and Nicholson's (1997) organization of four determinants of successful WFH arrangements, including: the nature of the job, attributes of the worker, support of the employer, and domestic responsibilities.

In Table 1, the propensity to work from home before the pandemic is measured across an 11-point continuum from 'never worked from home' (0) to 'Always' (10). The same continuum is used to measure WFH activity during the pandemic.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Work from Home Status

	Before COVID			During COVID		
Work from home:	Freq.	%	Cum. %	Freq.	%	Cum. %
Never	2,890	48.4	48.4	202	3.4	3.4
1	1,303	21.8	70.2	44	.7	4.1
2	699	11.7	81.9	38	.6	4.7
3	218	3.7	85.6	27	.5	5.2
4	86	1.4	87.0	11	.2	5.4
About Half	351	5.9	92.9	146	2.4	7.8
6	70	1.2	94.1	23	.4	8.2
7	79	1.3	95.4	71	1.2	9.4
8	67	1.1	96.5	210	3.5	12.9
9	55	.9	97.4	482	8.1	21.0
Always	120	2.0	100	4,672	78.3	100
Total	5,938	100		5,926	100	

Respondents report working very little from home before the pandemic: almost half (48.4 percent) never worked from home and 33.5 percent worked from home with little frequency; all together this group makes up 81.9 percent of the sample. As expected, during the pandemic almost all respondents worked from home: either all the time (78.3 percent) or almost all the time (11.6 percent). Thus, the pandemic created two distinct groups of employees working from home: a minority that are simply continuing pre-pandemic WFH arrangements and those suddenly ordered off campus to establish a new workspace at home.

To facilitate the subsequent analysis, we create two dummy variables: 'Old-timers', respondents who worked from home before and during the pandemic (responded 8-10 both before and during the pandemic in Table 1); and 'Newbies', who worked mostly outside the home before the pandemic (responded 0-2) and transitioned to home-work during the pandemic (responded 8-10). The dummy variables capture a worker's WFH arrangement in the two time periods (before and during the pandemic) and facilitate an analysis of how these two distinct groups estimate job outcomes such as satisfaction, productivity and stress. The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2. Old-timers are a small group, making up only 4.2 percent of the sample, whereas the vast majority of the sample is considered WFH newbies (76.8 percent).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

	Full Sample N=5,559		Only Newbies N=4,280	Only Old-Timers N=222
Key Independent Variables	Mean	SD		
Old-Timer dummy	.04	.201	NA	NA
Newbie dummy	.77	.422	NA	NA
Dependent Variables			Mean	Mean
Job satisfaction (range: -2 to 2)	-.26	.752	-.25	-.24
Job productivity (range: -2 to 2)	.19	1.24	.29	0.0
Stress (range: -2 to 2)	.71	1.24	.61	.89
Control Variables (dummies)				
Have dependent child	.38	.484	.38	.31
Have dependent elder	.08	.272	.08	.11
Primary care provider	.13	.387	.13	.10
Have academic position	.29	.455	.18	.79
In a union	.60	.489	.58	.79
Work at Athabasca U.	.05	.217	.03	.44
Female	.75	.430	.88	.70
Visible minority	.10	.234	.09	.09
In a Permanent job	.75	.432	.80	.50

The necessary health protocols have created hardship for workers, and as expected, in general workers report a diminished level of job satisfaction. On a five-point scale asking respondents about changes associated with moving from pre-Covid to Covid working arrangements, where zero is 'stayed the same', a mean of -.27 is slightly below the middle and heading towards 'decreased a little'. Similarly, workers report higher levels of stress (.71), but interestingly, on average workers report a slight increase in job productivity (.19). All dependent measures were assessed as changes from pre-Covid to COVID working arrangements. The single-item measures are commonly used in workplace studies (for example see Irawanto et al. 2021) and have been validated in several meta-analyses published in the industrial organizational psychology literature, for instance see Wanous et al. (1997).

The remaining rows in Table 2 report the descriptive statistics for the control variables employed in the subsequent regression analysis. In keeping with Baruch and Nicholson's (1997) organization of the determinants of successful WFH arrangements, we control for a number of influences that are not under the control of the respondent, such as the nature of the job (academic or staff, permanence, etc.), and personal attributes (gender, dependents, etc.). Influences that do fall under the respondent's control, such as isolating in a private workspace, or permitting interruptions are investigated subsequently with cross-tabulations of old-timers/newbies and WFH strategies.

The nature of a worker's job is captured by controlling for academic employees (as opposed to staff and managers), permanency (job security), and the presence of a union. Of the respondents, 40 percent are academics, 75 percent are in a permanent position, and 60 percent belong to a union. Approximately five percent of respondents work for Canada's online university (Athabasca University - AU); while not all employees at AU work from home those that do may have WFH experiences which are potentially different due to accepting an online position and enjoying employer resources and support designed for a permanent, long-term WFH arrangement. The remainder of the respondents were from Canadian universities that operated primarily in person, and thus institutions are not analyzed individually.

Personal attributes, including gender, minority status, dependents, and primary care responsibilities are contemplated with dummy variables. Three quarters of the respondents are female, ten percent self-identify as a visible minority, 38 percent have at least one dependent child, 13 percent are a primary caregiver for children, and 8 percent care for a dependent elder.

To better comprehend a potential bias, the control variables are examined in two subsamples: only newbies and only old-timers. While the measures of child and elder care are similar, as are gender and minority status, the samples do differ in important ways regarding measures that describe the workplace. For instance, old-timers are more likely to be in an academic position, in a union and working for Canada's online university. They are, however, less likely to be in a permanent job. These important workplace distinctions are revisited later in the discussion.

In Table 3 the estimates of the job outcomes (satisfaction, productivity, and stress) are reported. The dummy coded variables 'Newbie' and 'Old-Timer' are entered in the first specification, and the control variables entered in Specification 2.

Table 3. Estimates on Job Satisfaction, Job Productivity, and Stress

	Job Satisfaction		Job Productivity		Stress	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Newbie dummy	.113	.036	.708***	.086	-.677***	-.281***
Old-timer dummy	.201	.228	.276*	.575***	-.410**	-.500***
Child dependent		-.079		-.346***		.381***
Elder dependent		.169		-.032		.252**
Primary Care		-.174*		-.245***		.387***
Academic position		.072		-1.347***		.973***
Union status		-.043		-.009		.026
Athabasca U.		.234		.013		-.229
Gender (Female)		-.052		.104*		.174**
Minority status		-.108		.152		-.116
Permanence		.611***		.319***		-.387***
Adjusted R^2	.001	.020	.024	.132	.021	.093
Chi Square	5.750	1,837.6***	22.6***	1,939.6***	42.4***	1,716.7***
N	5,253	5,058	5,343	5,140	5,231	5,035

Significant at the .001 (***), .01 (**), and .05 (*) level.

Interestingly, job satisfaction is not predicted by WFH status; neither being an old-timer or newbie affects satisfaction. However, job productivity is partly determined by WFH status. In the first specification only the newbie and old-timer dummies are regressed. Both are significant and are associated with increased productivity, but when the control variables are entered in Specification 2, only 'Old-timer' continues to estimate higher productivity. In other words, the positive association observed with newbies in the first specification is explained by other influences, such as having a dependent child, providing primary care, being female, and having a permanent job.

In addition to being more productive, old-timers are also associated with a lower measure of Stress. Even after the controls are estimated, the significant negative effect remains. Like all three dependent variables, 'Stress' is measured across a five-point scale; being an old-timer reduces strength half a point along the five-

point continuum, or a ten percent reduction which is not trivial. Note that the newbie dummy is also significant and negative, but the effect is almost half of the strength observed for old-timers.

We are now able to revisit the hypotheses. In Hypothesis 1, job satisfaction is predicted to be higher for old-timers compared to newbies. There is no evidence to support this proposition. In Hypothesis 2, greater job productivity is predicted for old-timers; here there is support. Similarly, Hypothesis 3 predicts a lower measure of stress for old-timers compared to newbies, which has support. Thus, old-timers are special; they are not any more or less satisfied with their job, but they do report greater productivity and less stress.

Before investigating what old-timers do differently, we consider other influences that predict the job outcomes. As expected, having a child dependent and being the primary care provider predicts diminished productivity and augments stress; an additional penalty (lower productivity and higher stress) is observed for being an academic (as opposed to a staff member or manager); being a female has an additional penalty for stress. Having a permanent position, and thus greater job security is associated with higher productivity and less stress. In other words, having children is associated with a penalty, an additional penalty is observed for being the primary care giver and for being an academic, and women are further penalized, whereas having a permanent job works in the opposite direction. These findings are in line with some of the early empirical work emerging from pandemic related workplace research (Deryugina, Shurchkov, & Stearns, 2021; Gabster et al., 2020; Peetz et al., 2021; Yildirim & Eslen-Ziya, 2020) and echo early results from the same dataset that explore the nature of the impact of COVID-19 specifically on research work (Peetz et.al. 2021).

In keeping with Baruch and Nicholson's (1997) framework identifying four groupings of determinants of successful WFH arrangements, we bifurcate the sample to investigate what strategies old-timers employ to allow for more positive job outcomes. Whereas the nature of the job and the attributes of the worker are estimated in the regression analysis above, the support of the employer and degree of domestic responsibilities are tested here. The latter group are influences that can vary according to context, for instance having a dependent child is different than the degree to which work is interrupted by domestic responsibilities; different levels of effort and consequences may be associated with asking/threatening/bribing children not to disturb compared with locking doors and donning headphones. Table 4 reports the cross tabulations of these influences to distinguish WFH strategies favoured by old-timers.

Table 4. Cross Tabulation of Strategies Used

Range: -2 to 2 (0 is neutral)	Entire Sample (5,559)	Newbies (4,267)	Old-timers (235)	T-test
Resources and Support				
Separate Space	.76	.74	1.38	7.25***
Good Equipment	.73	.70	1.29	7.72***
Adequate Support	.72	.78	1.04	1.92
Domestic Duties				
Interruptions from others	-1.85	-1.69	.52	7.61***
Interruptions from non-work responsibilities	1.05	1.05	.90	-1.54
Two tailed t-test. Significant at .001 (***).				

Two observations are worth noting. Old-timers report more satisfaction with the resources and support available to work from home. Presumably, over time they have designated a room in their home as a workspace and have acquired the necessary computers, printers, scanners, etc. to be productive. Secondly, old-timers report a higher frequency of disruptions from other family members in the house. As elementary and high schools, daycares, and spouses' workplaces closed and the entire family invaded the once solitary workspace of the old-timer, disruptions occurred. Conversely, it is possible that newbies found WFH arrangement provided greater solitude than an office setting, even with spouses and children underfoot.

DISCUSSION

When comparing the two groups of workers, initial analysis finds that workers new to WFH report higher levels of productivity and lower levels of stress than those who worked at home before. Job satisfaction was not significant for either group. This finding is contrary to expectations, which should have suggested experienced WFH workers would fare better. It reveals that the initial shock of moving work to home created initial benefits for some workers that resulted from the elimination of things like open office arrangements and daily commutes and possible increase in flexibility and autonomy. However, these results shift once we consider a range of other factors with experienced WFH workers reporting more positive outcomes. What to make of this result?

First, it highlights that successful WFH is dependent upon a range of factors and individual experiences related to sudden transition to WFH are varied. The speed at which the transition took place and the rare confluence of workers, spouses and children all moving home for work and school created a multi-level upheaval, beyond simply the change to the employment setting. Individual workers will have widely different experiences with this shift. Our findings suggest that, for the most part, workers managed the transition fairly well as most report neutral or positive experiences (Peetz et al., 2021), with the notable exception of those with caregiving responsibilities. This speaks to the resilience of university workers in a time of upheaval.

The results suggest previous experience with WFH is one of a number of factors determining reaction to COVID-19 measures. The most important variable is whether the worker has a dependent child (and dependent elder regarding stress) and is the primary caregiver of that dependent, which is a strong predictor of both lower productivity and higher stress. This finding is consistent with previous research which finds that caregiving responsibilities increases work-life interference and reduces the success of WFH (Thulin, Vilhelmson, & Johansson, 2019; Zhang et al., 2020). Interestingly, our study does not find a link between caregiving and gender, which our analysis is unable to explain.

Being an academic staff was also a significant factor in predicting response, with academics consistently reporting lower productivity and higher levels of stress compared to non-academic workers. Recent research has revealed that COVID-19 measures have had a negative impact on knowledge work and in particular knowledge work requiring sustained time and energy (Peetz et al., 2021). Our study appears to agree with those findings. The COVID-19 disruptions had a disproportionate impact on academic work, while administrative and managerial functions could continue with relatively less disruption. The specific impact on academics is a subject requiring further examination.

Overall, the findings suggest that both groups of workers experienced COVID-related changes to job dynamics but the nature of those disruptions differed. For so-called newbies, the transition to WFH itself was the disruption with the accompanying adjustments to work processes. The results suggest the negative aspects of the transition, including unfamiliarity with WFH and possible lack of organizational supports, are offset in some way by positive aspects. While our study did not explicitly examine dimensions of work control and autonomy, we can ascertain from open ended questions in the survey that many respondents experienced increased autonomy and flexibility due to WFH improved working conditions. The result is neutral impacts on satisfaction and productivity and some decrease in stress overall.

For so-called old-timers, there was less disruption in their work structures and processes. However, they reported a higher level of interruptions from family members, reflecting the arrival of spouses and/or children into the space/time normally reserved for work. The existing structures and support afforded old-timers, in the form of equipment and organizational support, were sufficient to overcome the negative impacts of the added intrusions, leading to improved productivity, reduced stress, and stable job satisfaction when other factors controlled.

For both groups the sudden COVID-19 measures triggered a need for change management. Both groups were required to cope with sudden change. Whether the experience was positive or negative was in large part determined by the alignment of elements in the home/family and job realms, as well as the organizational realm. As noted, children and childcare responsibilities seem particularly important in predicting the success of the transition for workers, regardless of their WFH experience.

Newbies experienced a range of outcomes, more dependent upon other factors than their new transition to WFH. This finding suggests the depth of change varied for newbies, sparking differential effects on productivity and satisfaction. For this group, the switch to WFH is not the most important aspect to understanding how they managed this sudden and unexpected change. To find clearer answers in this regard, a deeper examination into how the four realms aligned for each type of worker affected is needed.

In contrast, old-timers had pre-existing patterns and tools to mediate some of the impacts of the change, allowing them to achieve a degree of stability in the course of change. Having their own space and proper equipment aided in increased productivity and lowered stress. The challenge least likely to be overcome by these supports was interruptions by others in the household, which is a reflection of caregiver responsibilities.

We observe a common experience not immediately reflective of change management theory. For both groups stress reduced, satisfaction remained stable and productivity either remained the same or increased. The expected negative outcomes of sudden change do not appear present in this dataset.

The results suggest both groups of workers experienced positive aspects of WFH as demonstrated by their reporting of improved work-life balance and lower stress. For those who moved home during the pandemic, these perceived advantages were a new experience, resulting in relatively positive experience under difficult circumstances. Positive perceptions of home-work by both groups may be partially attributable to the nature of university work, much of which is more easily transplanted to home environment than other jobs in the economy.

LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Overall, the results of this study suggest previous experience with WFH mitigated some of the negative associations with a sudden shock, but could not overcome more foundational factors, such as caregiving and other factors. Prior experience with WFH is not the most important consideration when examining how university workers fared in the early months of the pandemic, but it does remind us of the need, even in an urgent situation, for appropriate organizational supports and a recognition of the differential challenges facing parents in such situations.

The results of this study re-enforce Baruch and Nicholson's (1997) contention that all four realms (the nature of the job, attributes of the worker, support of the employer and domestic demands) must be satisfied for WFH to succeed. Prior experience with WFH leads to greater durability in those four realms, but it is not sufficient to sustain them regardless of circumstance. Successful WFH is a complex dynamic, requiring regular re-evaluation and assessment to ensure the four realms remain in alignment. Sudden challenges such as COVID-19 can easily disrupt this balance, affecting even the most stable of WFH arrangements.

The study has some limitations. Its exclusive focus on university workers limits its generalizability to other industries and occupations given the unique nature of post-secondary employment. Second, the survey was restricted to self-reporting and thus no objective measures of productivity or stress were collected, creating the possibility of unreliability in the results. Further, the small number of workers found in the old-timers category restricted the degree to which the data for that group could be parsed for further analysis.

As indicated, the survey was conducted in the first six months of pandemic measuring post-secondary when workers were still struggling to manage change and adapt to new dynamics. Conducting a follow-up survey later during the pandemic restrictions would provide a useful longitudinal perspective on how workers manage change over the medium term. A follow up survey once workers return to campus could also reveal workers' reflections on their COVID-19 experiences in retrospect, which could be a valuable insight.

Finally, as with any study conducted during the pandemic, it is difficult to disentangle the psychological and physiological effects of the pandemic itself from any work-related impacts. The pervasive collective stress of the period must be taken into account in some fashion, however challenging that may be.

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