



University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Research Proposal

**The Study of Work-From-Home Job Motivation and Job Satisfaction during COVID-19:
A Case of ServiceOne Limited in Hong Kong**

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1. Introduction

Since early 2020, the epic COVID-19 crisis has caused a tremendous global health concern worldwide, leading to contracting business and economic chaos that are forcing organizations to scramble for emergency measures and utilize work-from-home (WFH) arrangements under this epochal circumstance (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garces, 2020). Palumbo, Manna and Cavallone (2020) found WFH through telecommuting could reduce attrition rate, stimulate morale, and improve commitment and performance of an organization. Contrariwise, WFH could deepen the burden of work stress due to the fuzziness of work and life that led to working alone, which could further cause unexpected psychological challenges (Abendroth & Renmann, 2018).

1.1 Research Background

Founded in 1998, ServiceOne Limited today is one of the major IT solution integrators in Hong Kong. Since the start of the pandemic, ServiceOne has been echoing the government's social distancing guideline and exercised WFH arrangements for offices and non-essential field operations at both offices in the city. With about 200 employees in Hong Kong, maintaining productive operations without impacting organization performance by working remotely has been a daunting task unfamiliar to the ServiceOne management team.

1.2 Importance of Study

The purpose of this study is to look behind and inside the minds of both management and employee populations, where possible gaps of understanding on job motivation and satisfaction could be empirically identified through a constructive survey, and communications could be transparently formed to anticipate emergent challenges under this volatile environment; thus, a solid mechanism to safeguard talent retention and business performance.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

This study uses ServiceOne as a focus to review and well understand job satisfaction and motivations effects during WFH, along with the research objectives:

- Factors identification that leads to job motivation and satisfaction while employees are working from home
- Conceptual model building to realize influences among different factors that affect job satisfaction and job motivation
- Recommendation provided to secure ServiceOne team's long-term talent retention strategy

1.4 Research Questions

Research questions that required an answer under WFH are:

- Does Management Trust induce Job Motivation?
- Does Human Resource Support affect Job Motivation?
- Does Collaboration & Communication influence Job Motivation?
- Does Job Motivation essentially impel Job Satisfaction?

1.5 Research Value and Contribution

There are several other indispensable benefits to conducting this research, where the outcomes produced from the study could:

- Offer a primary hands-on learning experience through this study
- Provide both ServiceOne management and employee teams to have the insight to secure a mutually beneficial strategy in promoting job motivations and satisfaction for the organization.
- Deliver a benchmark study for other businesses that utilize WFH approaches today, possibly facing the same challenges.

2. Literature Review

Through the literature reviews, this chapter serves as a foundation to appraise past research knowledge, uncover new research focuses, and develop a meaningful research concept for the study of ServiceOne.

2.1 Research Focus Areas: Explanation and Discussion of Variables

The understanding and clarification of research variables and their dependencies are critical for the creation of a research conceptual model, which plays a critical role in construct building where each variable has its integral function.

2.2. Management Trust

Without trust, the chance of conflict between employee and manager will rise, destroying the prior confidence built in the workplace (Messenger, 2017) before WFH. The importance is to realize the fact that management trust is mutual employees need to also develop the ability to form trust under challenging times (Makarius & Larson, 2017), to restore the motivation and bonding with the manager.

Further readings:

- Li, X., Voorneveld, M. and de Koster, R. (2022) 'Business transformation in an age of turbulence–Lessons learned from COVID-19', *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*.
- Mello, J.A. (2007) 'Managing Telework Programs Effectively', *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 19(4).
- Makarius, E. E. and Larson, B. Z. (2017) 'Changing the Perspective of Virtual Work: Building Virtual Intelligence at the Individual Level', *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 31(2), pp. 159–178.
- Lambert, E. G. et al. (2012) 'Examining the Relationship Between Supervisor and Management Trust and Job Burnout Among Correctional Staff', *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 39(7), pp. 938–957.

2.3 Human Resource Support

Managers who can influence and take advantage of HR support for the employees could greatly enhance employees' emotional commitment through psychological and physical safety while working at home during the pandemic (Lee, 2021). Wang et al. (2020) accentuated the need to maintain reasonable rewards during the COVID-19, and the demand for flexible work policies is critical to support motivations that can potentially lead to better retention.

Further readings:

- Avery, G.C., Baker, E. and Crawford, J. (2005) 'Employee outcomes when working from home: the influence of organizational, job, individual and household factors', *Conference Proceedings 2005, British Academy of Management*, p.1-20.
- Azar, A. and Azizi, M. (2022) 'Developments and Changes in Organization and Management Research in the Post-COVID-19 Era: A Foundationalist Approach', *Socioeconomic Dynamics of the COVID-19 Crisis: Global, Regional, and Local Perspectives*, pp. 101.
- Caligiuri, P. et al. (2020) 'International HRM insights for navigating the COVID-19 pandemic: Implications for future research and practice', *Journal of International Business Studies*.
- Rotich, K. J. (2015) 'History, evolution and development of human resource management: a contemporary perspective', *Global Journal of Human Resource Management*, 3(3), pp. 58-73.

2.4 Collaboration & Communication

Collaboration becomes even more important during the pandemic when WFH arrangement is widely exercised, where individuals are seriously insulated away from their peers and customers. Work is all about knowledge sharing among team members, and Maxwell (2009) concurred that communication efficacy is the doorway to producing motivated working relationships for success.

Further readings:

- Reissner, S. C., Pagan, V. and Smith, C. (2011) “‘Our iceberg is melting’: Story, metaphor and the management of organizational change’ *Culture and Organization*, 17(5), pp. 417–433.
- Padilla-Meléndez, A. and Del Aguila-Obra, A. R. (2007) ‘Analysis of Telework in the context of e-Collaboration’, *Encyclopedia of e-Collaboration*.
- Akkirman, A. D. and Harris, D. L. (2005) ‘Organizational communication satisfaction in the virtual workplace’, *Journal of Management Development*, 24(5), pp. 397–409.
- Slavkovic, M., Sretenovic, S. and Bugarcic, M. (2020) ‘Remote Working for Sustainability of Organization during the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Mediator-Moderator Role of Social Support’, *Sustainability*, Vol. 14, pp. 70.

2.5 Job Motivation

Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman (2017) discussed motivation as being one of the most elementary factors in swaying human behavior and organizational performance under a resource-based view. Being so critical to the heart of business operations, an individual’s level of commitment and satisfaction could decide the competitiveness and success of the organizational vision.

Further readings:

- Saraswathi, D. (2011) ‘A study on factors that motivate IT and non-IT sector employees: A comparison’, *International Journal of Research in Computer Application and Management*, 1 (2), pp. 72-77.
- Malik, M. E. and Naeem, B. (2013) ‘Towards understanding controversy on Herzberg theory of motivation’, *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 24(8), pp. 1031-1036.
- van Dorssen-Boog, P. et al. (2021) ‘Facilitating health care workers’ self-determination: The impact of a self-leadership intervention on work engagement, health, and performance’, *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 94(2), pp. 259-281.

- Dobre, O. I. (2013) 'Employee motivation and organizational performance', *Review of applied socio-economic research*, 5(1).

2.6 Job Satisfaction

Literature reviews from Friedman and Friedman (2011) concluded that WFH has a feasible repercussion for organizations to ruminate and implement a socially responsible agenda in assisting its employees to cope with work-life balance, which could dramatically improve employees' job motivation and loyalties to the business.

Further reading:

- Blackburn, J. J., Bunchm, J. C. and Haynes, J. C. (2017) 'Assessing the Relationship of Teacher Self-Efficacy, Job Satisfaction, and Perception of Work-Life Balance of Louisiana Agriculture Teachers', *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 58(1), pp. 14-35.
- Carnevale, J. B. and Hatak, I. (2020) 'Employee Adjustment and Well-Being in the Era of COVID-19: Implications for Human Resource Management', *Journal of Business Research*, May.
- Oyovwe Tinuoye, G. O., Omeluzor, S. U. and Akpojotor, L. O. (2016) 'Factors influencing job satisfaction of academic librarians in university libraries in Edo and Delta states, Nigeria', *The Electronic Library*, 34(6), pp. 985–996.
- Murad, M. M. I., Zayed, N. M. and Mukul, A. Z. A. (2013) 'A study on job satisfaction: focus on bankers of Bangladesh', *European Journal of Business and Management*, 5(17), 14-20.

2.7 Hypotheses

Table 2.7 illustrates the conceptualized hypotheses.

Table 2.7: ServiceOne Research Hypotheses

H1	There is a significant relationship between Management Trust and Job Motivation
H2	There is a significant relationship between Human Resource Support and Job Motivation
H3	There is a significant relationship between Collaboration & Communication and Job Motivation
H4	There is a significant relationship between Job Motivation and Job Satisfaction

Source: Constructed by Author

2.8 Summary

Through literature reviews, job satisfaction can be determined whether it is influenced by employee motivation, which is also a dependent variable itself that could be impelled significantly by

management trust, human resource support, and collaboration & communication during WFH; if managed adequately, it could produce sound talent retention strategies for ServiceOne.

Thus, the formulation of the research framework could be finally conceptualized in Figure 2.8 below.

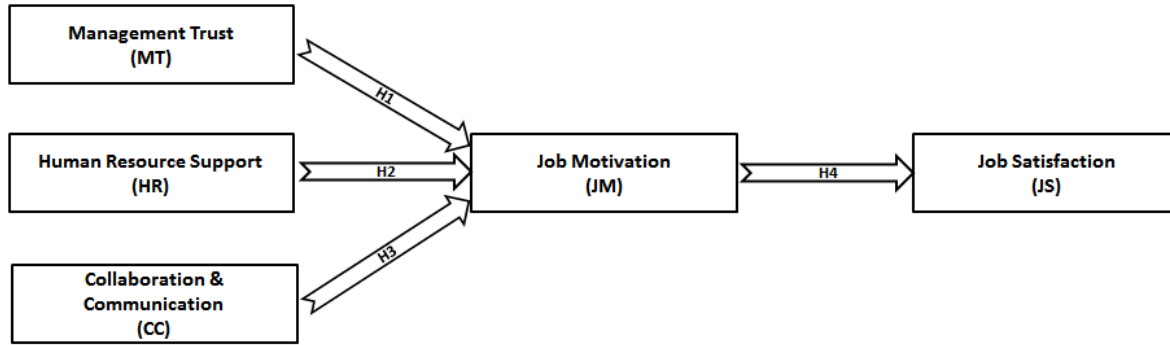


Figure 2.8: Research Conceptual Framework
Source: Constructed by Author

3. Research Methodology

Research methodology is vital in deploying research methods or techniques and the logic around the deployment so the research findings could be always validated (Kothari, 2020).

3.1 Research Method and Framework

This study will utilize both quantitative and qualitative approaches, plus a literature review, to triangulate the study for its completeness.

Thus, the actual quantitative and qualitative research methods for this study are illustrated in Table 3.1, to pragmatically assess the variable relations. SPSS processing is adopted for the data analyses and fact findings in understanding the challenges facing ServiceOne.

Table 3.1: Qualitative and Quantitative Objectives

Qualitative	Quantitative
- Literature reviews from journals and scholars - Definition of factor concepts - Focus group to understand the business situation	- Survey data from literature - Survey data from this study

Source: Constructed by Author

These primary data from the questionnaire are the linchpin to analyzing five variables conceptualized from literature reviews. Secondary data and sources, in this case, are information

and material collected through literature reviews, where factors are identified and conceptualized into the research model, with relationships being hypothesized and variable dependencies being established.

The research process, in Figure 3.1 below, provides researchers with a clear view of the mental process to guide the study procedures:

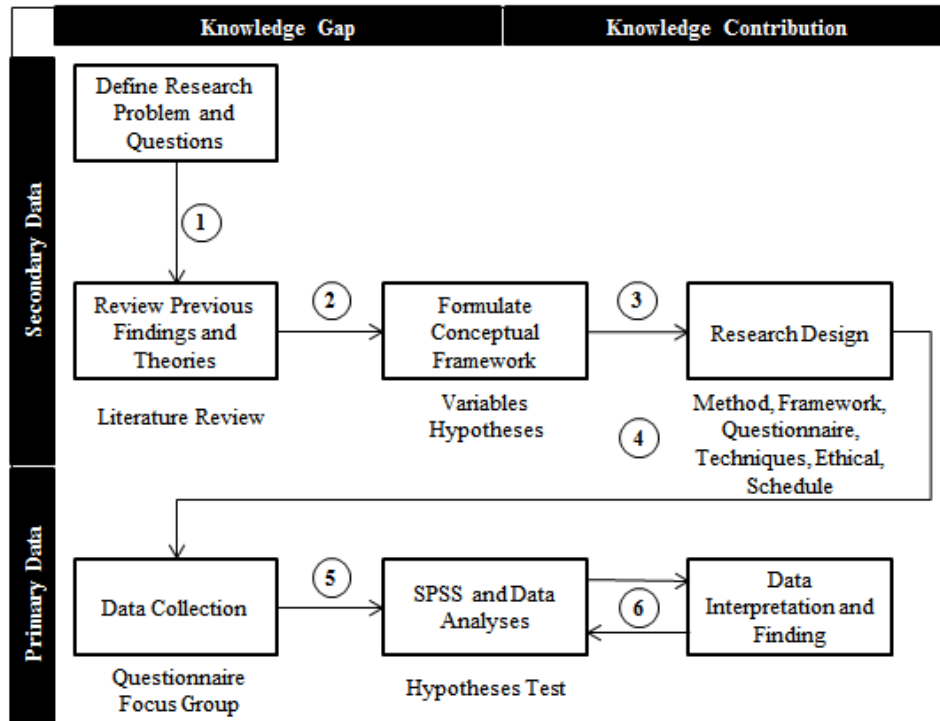


Figure 3.1: Research Process of ServiceOne
Source: Constructed by Author

3.2 Research Design

Research design is a blueprint to lay out the plan of how to define variables and hypotheses, how to collect data, how to analyze data, how to demonstrate the relevance to research questions, and how to convey the findings, which ensures the study is completed successfully.

Questionnaire Design

The Likert scale is comparatively the easiest method to contrast and launch for attitudinal-related scaling that aims for measuring attitudes. Since all five variables in the ServiceOne study case are eventually attitudinal oriented, the decision is to carefully construct the questionnaire statements

appropriately in thought and viewpoint searching from ServiceOne employees, including its management tiers that can fairly assess the feedback from all angles.

Population and Sampling Size

While ServiceOne has regional operations and branches in different countries of Asia Pacific, the focus of the study is obviously in Hong Kong. Logically, the study is to draw data from all 200 employees based in Hong Kong for the final sample population.

Sampling Method

Considering the time and manpower constraints of this study, the nonrandom/nonprobability method is adopted to quantitatively analyze the data collected. Considering the study is aiming for ServiceOne that the study subject is clear enough, convenience sampling is further deployed.

3.3 Relevant Methods for Data Analysis

The statistical techniques adopted are to further validate the degree of contribution independent variables posed on dependent variables hypothetically, via the IBM statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). The statistics derived from descriptive analysis can only describe the data a study compiled but is not able to aid the analysis of hypotheses (Kothari, 2020). Inferential statistics on the other hand focuses on the generalization from statistical analysis, which hypotheses could be statistically tested.

Reliability and Validity Test

Based on previous literature reviews, Drost (2011) explained perfectly both reliability and validity tests:

- The author further suggested that Cronbach's Alpha value set at 0.70 or above was sufficient to measure a hypothesized theory.
- The obvious demonstration of validity is the conceptual framework drawn from intensive literature reviews, where each variable factor's role and relations between them were corroborated with academic support from previous research.

Correlation Analysis

The correlation coefficient value ranges from 1- to 1, where is normally agreed that the correlation is regarded as strong if $r \geq 0.8$, moderate if $0.4 < r < 0.8$, and weak if $r \leq 0.4$.

Regression Analysis

For the research of ServiceOne, both multiple linear regression and simple linear regression models are to be employed, as highlighted in Figure 3.3.

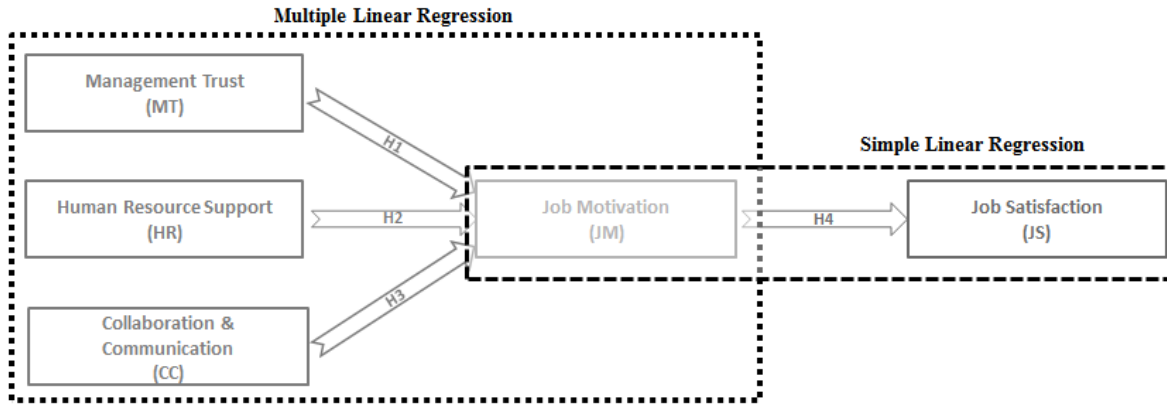


Figure 3.3: Regression Models
Source: Constructed by Author

3.4 Ethical Consideration

For this case study with ServiceOne, here is a list of ethical agendas to be transparently administrated:

- Both the employee and management teams are to be treated fairly and guided to avoid self-interest infliction on the others.
- Consent is being sought with ServiceOne and disclosed fully with the university, furnishing with PG2 ethical form.
- Both data owning and processing are strictly governed by the relevant laws; data are destroyed after 6 months from the dissertation submission date.

3.5 Research Schedule

The research must have a closely monitored project timeline with distinct milestones to measure the progress in Figure 3.4.

	Items	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November
1	Research workshop 1-3								
2	Research topic identification								
3	Supervisor selection								
4	Initial Literature review and information collection								
5	Drafting proposal								
6	SPSSworkshop 1								
7	Drafting chapter 1								
8	Literature review and information collection								
9	Drafting chapter 2								
10	SPSSworkshop 2								
11	Questionnaire design								
12	Questionnaire pre-test								
13	Questionnaire reliability assessment and refinement								
14	Questionnaire distribution								
15	Focus group interviews								
16	Drafting chapter 3								
17	Submitting proposal								
18	Data collection and processing by SPSS								
19	Drafting chapter 4								
20	Drafting chapter 5								
21	Dissertation review with supervisor								
22	Dissertation refinement								
23	Dissertation final submission								

Figure 3.4: Research Schedule
Source: Constructed by Author

Reference

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