The Effect of Long-Distance Leadership and Work from Home on the Employees' Performance of the Public Sector Workers in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and Sri Lanka's recent economic downturn, work-from-home (WFH) and long-distance leadership (LDL) have been widely adopted across sectors, raising concerns about their impact on employee performance. This study examines the effects of WFH and LDL on the performance of selected government employees in Sri Lanka using an explanatory sequential mixed-method approach. Quantitative data were collected via structured questionnaires from 197 government employees and analyzed using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews with seven public service employees and analyzed using thematic analysis. Quantitative findings show WFH and LDL positively impact employee performance, with WFH having a more significant influence. Qualitative results corroborate these findings, emphasizing the effectiveness of remote work in enhancing performance. The study suggests government departments should promote remote work environments and invest in robust WFH infrastructure to maximize employee performance, especially when remote work becomes essential.

Introduction

In 2020, global development was significantly disturbed by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a widespread economic collapse, and the loss of livelihoods for uncountable people. In 2020, the pandemic caused 93 million additional people to live in extreme poverty globally, reversing more than 40 years of progress in the fight against poverty (United Nations, 2021). The disruption of vital health services had resulted in a drop in vaccination rates for the first time in ten years, and other negative health effects (World Health Organization, 2021). Extended school closures are one of the largest human and economic disasters of our day, putting 24 million students worldwide from preschool to university at risk of not going back to school (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020). Like the rest of the world, Sri Lanka is facing the same issues (Asian Development Bank, 2022; World Bank, 2022).

As in many nations, Sri Lanka, which is dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic had a major negative impact on the economy including employment. The Ministry of Public Administration, Home Affairs, Provincial Councils, and Local Government in Sri Lanka had been appealed to all organizational leaders to take steps to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus by managing employees remotely and doing their jobs at home. This has been used in the COVID-19 pandemic to stop virus infection (Teodorovicz et al., 2021). The Ministry of Public Administration, Home Affairs, Provincial Councils, and Local Government in Sri Lanka had released a regulation to reduce the spread of the coronavirus. It had been used by both the public and private organizations, managed remotely by staff from each departments. Due to the extensive use of Work from Home (WFH) across many sectors, Sri Lanka has experienced a decrease in transport-related challenges, particularly those resulting from fuel shortages, despite a severe economic crisis (Perera & Silva, 2023. However, organizations had to quickly adjust to new work environments and procedures, and the deployment of a remote work system also affected workers' performance (Kumar & Singh, 2021). The regulation's applicability to WFH situations is influenced by the need to be prioritized tasks, lack of coordination, and disruptions to the situation and environment at home. This requires anticipating to overcome the challenges (Amask & Indriati, 2021).

WFH is a workplace concept where individuals can perform tasks from any location, particularly from home. It allows employees to work on their schedule, relax, and maintain balance in their lives. It presents unique challenges for businesses, organizations, and people, though there are benefits as well (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021). This allows them to balance their workload and maintain balance in their life (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021). To deal with it, including in terms of leadership, requires adjustment as well as adjustments in tactics and procedures. The leaders who ordinarily lead face-to-face must adapt this time, specifically to lead or govern their personnel digitally or from a distance. Employees using the WFH must continue to fulfill their duties and

obligations even when not in a working environment to increase performance outcomes. Long Distance Leadership (LDL) is the solution to the required leadership style since it forces leaders to alter it to adapt to the present working environment (Jonsson, 2016). The influence, impact, obligation, and burden placed on the leaders in guiding their people towards an organization's ultimate purpose remain similar although the leadership style has changed, even if it is performed remotely (Amask & Indriati, 2021).

The COVID-19 epidemic and the recent economic collapse in Sri Lanka, had made it necessary for WFH and LDL to be widely adopted across a variety of sectors. Although these actions had been helped organizations carry on in the face of difficult conditions, worries regarding the possible effects on worker performance are emerging. In particular, concerns about how well organizations could sustain consistency, morale, and productivity in a remote work environment have surfaced, underscoring the need for a more thorough comprehension of the effects of these changes on organizational success. Many scholars have studied WFH and LDL for other variables using various phenomena. Nevertheless, there is not enough evidence in the context of Sri Lanka particularly employees in the government sector. Therefore, this study aims to better understand how WFH and LDL affect employee performance of government employees, particularly in governmental sectors of Sri Lanka.

Literature Review

Work from Home (WFH): The practice of doing business or covering duties from home is referred to as remote working or WFH (Raisiene et al., 2020). The staff could be able to WFH or other locations instead of having to come into the office. While Mungkasa (2020) contends that WFH is not a novel concept in the world of work, it is a new way of performing work in addition to doing it at the office. Although it had been used in some organizations, in this instance it was only implemented after the pandemic condition occurred. According to Crosbie and Moore (2004) details how the majority of the work that was previously completed at the workplace is now completed for 20 hours a week by employees at home. When independent contractors or non-office workers perform their jobs from any location at any time, it's referred to as remote working. But office workers had also been forced to adopt this practice during the pandemic and subsequent crises, reviving the idea of WFH as a necessary adaptation to the evolving work environment. Employees in the public sector had also been significantly impacted by this transition, as they are now conducting routine tasks that were formerly completed in office settings from home or other remote locations (Charalampous et al., 2019; Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021).

WFH includes a number of elements that together affect how well this work is performed. These factors, which each contribute differently to the WFH experience, include technical, work-life balance, productivity, communication, organizational culture, economic, social, and legal aspects. The technology aspect was crucial since remote work

requires hardware, software, and dependable internet access (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). This component is further enhanced by digital literacy initiatives, which guarantee that workers can safely and effectively work from home (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The aspect of work-life balance deals with the difficulty of juggling personal and professional obligations at the same time. Employees could more successfully integrated work and life when WFH arrangements are flexible, but this requires strong boundary management to avoid role conflict (Nippert-Eng, 1996). Ignorance of these limits can result in stress and burnout, which negatively affects general health (Kahn et al., 1964).

The productivity component and self-control and time management abilities were intimately related. Clear goal-setting and efficient time management are necessary while working remotely because the emphasis is shifted from hours worked to results obtained (Blau, 1964). While more autonomy in WFH environments can promote motivation, it also necessitates more self-control (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Collaboration and communication were yet another essential component. According to Media Richness Theory, keeping things clear and cutting down on ambiguity in remote encounters requires the use of the appropriate communication tools (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Effective use of virtual communication platforms is necessary to maintain interpersonal interactions and guarantee smooth information flow. In order to build trust and accountability, leaders must modify their approaches to distant environments, according to the corporate culture and leadership dimension (Blau, 1964). Maintaining employee engagement and coordinating distant teams with business objectives need effective long-distance leadership (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Long Distance Leadership (LDL): The role of a leader in the workplace had changed, and the success of any organization depends on the leadership style of its members. According to Mintzberg (2010), genuine leaders engage with others with humility and consideration since they are genuinely committed to the work they are doing rather than doing it for personal benefit. Mullins (2000) asserts that a leader's management style and behavior toward their workforce are both indicators of their leadership style. Leadership style is one instance of cross-situational behavioral consistency. This expression sums up how a leader interacts with those who follow them. Several leadership theories are employed in the process of inspiring followers. Selecting and adjusting the appropriate leadership style is necessary to fit various kinds of organizations, situations, teams, and individuals. Because it increases the variety of tools available to you, it is advantageous to have a solid understanding of the various leadership styles. While the extensive literature on leadership (House et al., 2004; Howell & Costley, 2006; Javidan et al., 2006; Jogulu & Wood, 2006; Jogulu & Wood, 2007) discusses a range of leadership ideas, styles, and attributes. The leader's behavior is roughly reflected in the terminology style. It is the impact a leader has on others who follow them (Luthans & Davis, 1980). Over time, democratic leadership ideologies have evolved (Biddle, 2005; Johnson, 1995). Leaders employ a range of characteristics, abilities, behaviors, and traits to communicate with

their subordinates; these are referred to as their leadership style (Marturana & Gosling, 2008, Jeremy et al., 2012).

Long-distance leadership involves managing and leading teams that had been dispersed geographically. To overcome the challenges posed by distance, leaders often need to adapt traditional leadership approaches (Gibson, 2020). Many variables influence the effectiveness of long-distance leadership, and these variables impact the way leaders maintain team cohesion, productivity, and engagement (Avolio et al., 2014). Effective communication is crucial for long-distance leadership. Effective communicators understand their roles, are aware of important changes, and align with the organization's goals (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999). To ensure clear and consistent communication, leaders need to use a range of communication tools, including instant messaging, video conferencing, and collaboration platforms (Gibson, 2020). The premise that selecting the appropriate communication medium is crucial for explaining complicated information and lowering uncertainty is supported by media richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Other important dimensions include autonomy and trust. Leaders in remote work environments must have faith in their team members to carry out their responsibilities without direct oversight. Clear expectations, frequent feedback, and giving staff members the freedom to own their work are the foundations of this trust (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999).

According to the self-determination theory, workers who have a sense of autonomy are more intrinsically driven, which boosts their output and level of job satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Another important factor was technological proficiency since leaders and their teams use technology extensively for task completion and collaboration. It is imperative for leaders to guarantee that they and their team members get the requisite technological support and resources and that they are adept at utilizing digital tools (Avolio et al., 2014). Maintaining productivity and making sure everything runs well depend on one's ability to use and navigate technology. Lastly, cultural sensitivity plays a key role in long-distance leadership, particularly when managing teams in several nations or areas. Cultural variations could have a big impact on decision-making processes, communication styles, and team dynamics, therefore leaders need to aware of them and show respect for them (Hofstede, 2001). Comprehending these cultural subtleties enables leaders to cultivate an inclusive atmosphere where each team member has a sense of worth and comprehension.

Employee Performance: By comparing positions and ratios from one job to another, performance appraisal is a strategy for evaluating multiple tasks using formal and systematic procedures to establish work orders. Performance is the outcome of this evaluation, and it could serve as the foundation for a system of equitable compensation (Sinambela, 2018). Performance refers to the methods and outcomes that an individual, group, or organization uses to carry out their responsibilities. Because employee

performance includes work results that are compared to current norms, performance might have meant (Dessler, 2000). An employee's performance could also been taken the shape of the quality or quantity of work products they produce after completing duties in accordance with assigned obligations (Mangkunegara, 2002). Furthermore, performance could be defined as the overall outcome or degree of success of an individual over the course of a given length of time in completing a task in comparison to some mutually agreed-upon benchmarks, such as work standards, targets, or criteria (Rivai & Basri, 2005). Employee behavior and job performance are both referred to as employee performance. Here, behavior is referred to as the efficacy, quality, and efficiency of work.

Every organization usually sets performance targets for employees with the expectation that the organization will be able to deliver value to customers, reduce expenses, and function efficiently (Locke & Latham, 2002). Establishing performance standards is essential since individual performance can affect corporate performance (Armstrong, 2006). Several factors impact employee performance, including leadership, compensation, and organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Strong organizational commitment, compensation, and leadership may influence workers in this scenario. Both individual job performance and total job performance will be included, in accordance with different viewpoints on performance and job performance (Campbell et al., 1993). Every organization usually assigns employees performance goals with the expectation that the individual or group of individuals will perform at a higher level as a consequence. An individual's performance in comparison to the business's shows how synergistic relationships are essential to a company's survival. Poor performance from employees affects customer happiness, which would negatively be impactef sales, profitability, and brand reputation. Strong performance, nevertheless, can occasionally help the company consistently reach its aspirational objectives and successes (Heskett, Sasser, & Schlesinger, 1997).

Employee performance is a complex idea that has a big impact on how successful an organization will be. Comprehending the diverse aspects of worker performance is vital for proficiently overseeing and enhancing it. Task performance, contextual performance, adaptable performance, and unproductive work behavior are among the crucial dimensions. The efficiency with which workers do the primary duties and obligations listed in their job descriptions is referred to as task performance. This dimension, which is frequently the main focus of performance evaluations, is directly tied to the technical skills and knowledge needed to do a job (Campbell, 1990). Delivering value to consumers and accomplishing organizational goals require high task performance.

Hypotheses: Based on the theoretical background, develop the relationship between two independent variables and dependent variables with the support of literature and then present hypotheses. Many Authors (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2018; Hermina & Yosepha, 2019; Tuffaha, 2020) had recognized the positive relationship with the

measuring items of employee performance. Further, the relationship of employee performance had described with many other variables by using motivation, Empowerment innovation and creativity, productivity, adaptability, work discipline and productivity. Accordingly, when increase the time which spend to work from home, productive time is more useful to complete the work easily by saving time spent on the way to the office every day. Therefore, it is affected for the employee performance positively (Amask & Indriati, 2021). A quite negative relationship exists between leadership style and motivation (Hermina & Yosepha, 2019).

Many scholars (Amask & Indriati, 2021; Fitrian et al., 2021) are in an opinion that the relationship between motivation is positive. However, because of increasing the time period to work from home, many employees spend the time for their personal activities by reducing the commuting time (Teodorovicz et al., 2021). Though all duties are separated on the knowledge of workers, that reason is directly affected employee performance through the employee's productivity (Teodorovicz et al., 2021; Gibbs et al., 2021). Furthermore, a positive relationship exists between motivation with the job characteristics and long-distance leadership (Fitrian et al., 2021). Moreover, the relationship of work from home had been investigated with other variables by adopting knowledge workers, telecommuting, work hours, work time, and job characteristics. This study had used the below hypotheses according to check that theoretical relationship in the government sector.

H1: Work from Home has a positive impact on employee performance of workers in public departments in Sri Lanka.

LDL had been used with different phenomena but that variable had been used in few terms. Accordingly, long-distance leadership is indirectly affected the motivation to change the daily behavior and activities of the employees. Then, that impact would be depended on the directly affected of communication (Amask & Indriati, 2021). Moreover, Jonsson (2016) has suggested the definition of a virtual leader as "The official leader of a team that strives for creating structure and guiding behaviors towards fixed goals by using information and communication technologies". Further, Hermina & Yosepha (2019) had shown that leadership style has a significant effect on the employee performance. Moreover, Veliu et al. (2017) had also recognized that autocratic, democratic, and transformational leadership style positively affect for employee performance. This study used the below hypotheses according to check that theoretical relationship in the government sector.

H2: Long Distance Leadership has a positive impact on employee performance of workers in public departments in Sri Lanka.

Materials and Methods

This study created a theoretical framework by reviewing WFH, LDL, and employee performance, to examine how these factors been affected worker performance empirically in the context of public sector employees. Since the study attempts to explore practical realism, the study employs an explanatory sequential mixed method combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The government employees who are involved in WFH were considered as units of analysis. The study employed convenience sampling to contact employees who are doing WFH since there was no systematic sampling frame. Accordingly, the study collected data from 197 employees that were sufficient for the statistical analysis; the factor analysis used by the study (Smith & Johnson, 2022). The primary data were collected method for a structural questionnaire developed based on theoretical constructs. This study developed a questionnaire with 65 questions, divided into five sections. The first two sections focused on the socio-demographic profile and occupation profile, while the rest of the questions presented variables using the seven Likert scale. It included questions of main constructs, dependent variables, and two independent variables, and was designed in a form format to make it easier for respondents to understand.

WFH is measured using four key constructs: work environment, work management, digital technology, and internet access, and provision of data and information adopted by Wang et al. (2021). Three items were used to measure the work environment adopted by Smith & Jones (2020), four items were used to measure work management based on by Brown et al. (2019), five items were used to measure digital technology and internet access following Williams (2018), and four things were used to measure data and information provision adopted by Johnson & Lee, (2017). Three dimensions were used to measure long-distance leadership: Five items were used to evaluate autocratic leadership, according to Martin & Roberts (2019). Johnson (2020) outlines four items that had been used to measure Democratic leadership. A five-item Laissez-faire leadership assessment was based on Smith & Green (2018). Six constructs were used to measure employee performance: quantity, quality, independence, effectiveness, and work commitments. Each construct is measured using five items adopted by Thompson & Lee (2019) and Brown et al. (2020).

The study analyzed data using both descriptive and inferential analysis techniques. Hypotheses were tested with the support of Partial Least-Squire Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) employing Smart PLS version 4. The variables were measured, and the first-order analyses were evaluated. The constructs' validity was evaluated using convergent and discriminant validity. Indicator reliability and internal consistency reliability were used to measure reliability. If there was satisfactory reliability and validity, it was deemed appropriate to fit the final model (structural model). The

structural model evaluated the multicollinearity, importance of path coefficients, coefficients of determination, and R-squired.

In addition, qualitative data were gathered for an open-ended questionnaire having in-depth interviews with purposively selected seven public sector employees. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis forming codes, categories, and themes from narratives with the consultation of peer groups. The study ensured the trustworthiness of the whole qualitative process by considering credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The purpose of the qualitative approach is to validate the quantitative results.

Results and Discussion

The initial part of this section provides the results of the PLS-SEM, and then, discusses the results. The construct reliability and validity of the outer model were tested initially before testing the structural model. Indicator reliability, which are the factor loading and t statistics, internal consistency reliability, composite reliability, and Cronbach's alpha, were evaluated between items and constructs. As well, convergent validity (Average Variance of Extracted (AVE)), and discriminant validity were considered in evaluating the validity of constructs. According to the Table 1, all created outer loading values of each indicator are greater than 0.7. Therefore, it belongs in full swing the construct of employee performance, work from home, and long-distance leadership. Also, t statistics values of all constructs manifest that those values were greater than 2.58. It is meant that all constructs of the study accomplish the significance at a 99% significant level.

Table 01: Reliability and Validity of the Constructs

		Loading	T statistics	CR	α*	AVE
1.	**Employee Performance**			0.988	0.987	0.908
	I have got the duties in my capacity	0.903	46.794			
	I have got the duties by considering my skill level	0.968	103.392			
	I attend to my relevant duties on time	0.958	71.725			
	I used to complete my work on time.	0.981	302.66			
	I used to start my work as soon as getting the duty	0.962	202.847			
	I manage a record book regarding my duties to do	0.964	186.619			

	I used to get leave after informing the executive officer without disturbing the duty	0.957	184.063			
	I actively participate in group discussions and work meetings	0.938	59.321			
	I used to guide new workers beyond my job purview	0.914	53.193			
2.	**Work from Home**			**0.985**	**0.983**	**0.823**
	I spend all of my time at home during my work	0.846	32.586			
	I always communicate with other people remotely for my work	0.877	42.597			
	I work outside of the physical presence of my staff	0.854	33.991			
	I do not do any physical travel at all to start and finish my work	0.920	58.663			
	My workspace is fully shared with family members or other people who are not my colleagues	0.945	110.703			
	I have the freedom to personally arrange my workspace without the intervention of my company	0.933	80.103			
	My work success is heavily reliant on my internet connection	0.925	96.451			
	Executive officers or relevant officers give needed guidance by using technology like Zoom	0.948	104.359			
	Identifying issues regarding own duties by connecting the workers who have the same job responsibility through new technology methods like the WhatsApp group call	0.926	87.098			
	I use internet technology to do my work as much as possible	0.937	79.671			
	I attempt to fulfill my duties by avoiding internet barriers	0.901	45.004			

	Relevant duties are given through digital technologies like WhatsApp group	0.922	78.187			
	The organization communicates every new change that takes place.	0.885	40.498			
	I have regular contact with the organization	0.874	36.076			
3.	**Long Distance Leadership**			0.985	0.985	0.956
	Executive officers ask for employee ideas and input on upcoming plans and projects	0.976	320.229			
	Subject officers have the ability to participate in making decisions about their own subject	0.979	427.398			
	Executive officers always give the decision-making responsibility to the subject officers	0.977	337.001			
	Subject officers have the freedom to make their own decisions on what has to be done and how to do it	0.978	351.343			

α* = Cronbach's Alpha

Source: Developed by Author, 2024

In addition, when concerned about internal consistency reliability, it belongs to the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha. Both values have been evaluated under variable of the dependent and two independent variables. Table 1 further shows clearly that both values of all constructs were greater than the value of 0.7. It was declared that they are confirm internal consistency reliability. If the values of the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha for the related indicators were greater than 0.7, most of the times, it was accepted as recommended. In Table 1, as mentioned the convergent validity of all variables and average Variance of Exacted (AVE) values were greater than the value of 0.5. It was meant that the model of this study has convergent validity.

Table 02: Discriminant Validity

Contact	1	2	3
1. Employee Performance	0.908		
2. Work from Home	0.823	0.866	
3. Long Distance Leadership	0.856	0.792	0.869

Source: Developed by Author, 2024

Another test for testing the validity could be called the discriminant validity. According to the test, the square root of each latent variable was able to adopt regarding establishing the discriminate validity. Table number 2 shows the square roots of AVE under the variable of employee performance, work from home, and long-distance leadership are higher than the correlation values of other variables.

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values and tolerance values are adopted to recognize the multi-collinearity among variables. VIF values among the variables of WFH, LDL, and employee performance were less than 5. Therefore, it was clearly shown that there was no multi-collinearity effect among the variables. According to Figure 1, it is supported for identifying and explaining the inner model path coefficient size and significance. When concerned about that inner model, it was proposed that the variable of the WFH has the strongest effect on employee performance (0.701). As well, LDL has an effect of 0.182 value on the dependent variable.

Figure 01: Path Coefficient Graph of Factor Values
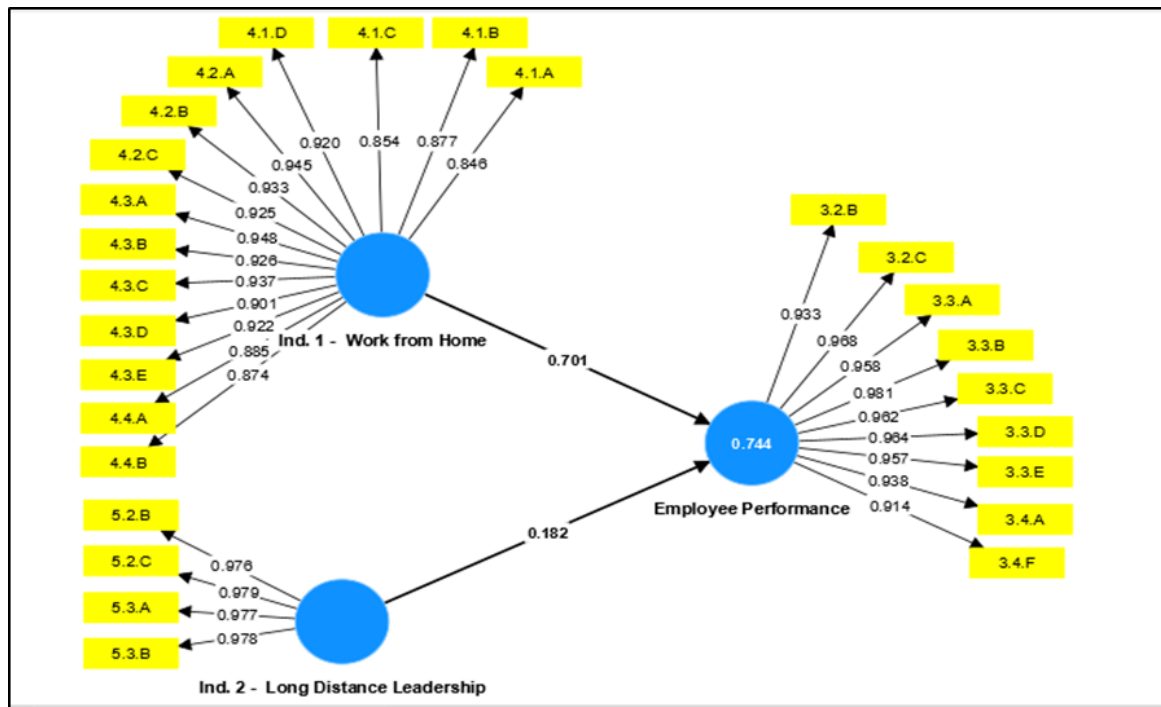
Source: Developed by Author, 2024

The significance of the path values had decided that the standardized path coefficient is greater than 0.1. In order to Figure 1, the 0.702 path value of WFH and 0.182 path value of LDL has exceeded the 0.1 and because of that, those variables are significance. Therefore, it could be able to identify clearly the significance variables of the model by adopting path coefficients and t statistics. Furthermore, those significances were also tested in the relationship among the dependent (Employee Performance), and independent variables (WFH and LDL).

Table 3: Path Coefficient and Significance among Variable

H	Relationship	Path Value	T- statistics	Decision
H1	Work from Home > Employee Performance	+0.702	7.616	Supported
H2	Long Distance Leadership > Employee Performance	+0.182	2.018	Supported

Source: Developed by Author, 2024

In Table 3, the path value decides the nature of the relationship and the t statistic value decides the significance. Two hypotheses were supported and correctly indicate the positive relationship by path values. R square value is adopted to identify how the dependent variable, which was the employee performance, is explained by the independent variables both WFH and LDL. That value is shown as the percentage variation and that value is named as the coefficient of determination. Accordingly, the R square of the related model for the dependent variable was 0.744. It can be explained as the employee performance was clearly described by the WFH and LDL of the value of 74.4%.

Discussions: Those findings are expected to be discussed by using the previous literature and related literature. Therefore, it would be able to give a better idea of how WFH and LDL, which were independent variables, affect the employees' performance of government organizations, which was the dependent variable in Sri Lanka.

The study's findings, which show that WFH significantly improves employees' performance in a government organization in Sri Lanka (β = +0.702), are in line with earlier research findings. The empirical data that shows a 70.2% increase in worker performance as a result of WFH is especially significant because it is consistent with worldwide patterns found in other research. For instance, Bloom et al. (2015) discovered that WFH increased productivity in a Chinese travel business by 13%, offering preliminary proof of the usefulness of remote work in improving worker performance. Additionally, the t-statistics value of 7.616, which is higher than the crucial value of 2.58, indicates that, with a 99% confidence level, the effect of WFH on employee performance is statistically significant. The results of past research that had demonstrated the significant advantages of remote work on employee outcomes are corroborated by this high degree of significance. For example, Felstead and Henseke (2017) found that in the UK, remote working is linked to improved levels of job satisfaction and overall performance, highlighting the findings' broad application to various locations and industries. In addition, when concerned about the relationship between WFH and employee performance, the scholars Amask and Indriati (2021), and Fitrian et al. (2021) had also indicated the same positive relationship.

According to the study by Tavares (2017), which further supports these findings, WFH offers employees more flexibility, which improves work-life balance and boosts performance as a result. This study supports the findings of Bailey and Kurland (2002), who discovered that telecommuting increases worker productivity and job satisfaction, especially in settings where digital infrastructure supports work-from-home policies. Despite these encouraging results, other research has pointed out possible drawbacks of WFH arrangements, including loneliness and a blurring of work-life boundaries (Golden, 2006). However, the study's overwhelmingly positive impact especially when considering Sri Lankan government employees indicates that, when managed properly, the

advantages of work-from-home work, such as greater autonomy and shorter commutes, outweigh any possible disadvantages.

One of the main themes that emerged from the qualitative inquiry was the significant boost in productivity attributed to not needing to travel and having fewer office interruptions. When working from home, participants noted being able to focus more intensively and finish tasks faster. They are consequently operating more effectively at work. The following views of participants confirmed that working from home has improved their job performance.

> "*I believe my performance has grown dramatically after starting working from home. I can concentrate better and complete more work when I don't have to travel to and from the office every day.*" (Participant 2).

> "*Without the daily travel and fewer office disturbances, I can focus more intensely and get more work done.*" (Participant 3).

> "*I can focus more intensely and get more work done without delay.*" (Participant 7).

Thus, employees in the public sector can work in silent, more controlled workplaces, which has a direct impact on enhanced job performance. Qualitative data also demonstrated that financial benefits are a major component in that the public sector workers reported significant cost savings on meals, travel, and dress, all of which improve job performance.

> "*For me, working from home has been financially beneficial. I can save a lot on traveling costs.*" (Participant 2).

> "*Working from home has been financially advantageous. I can significantly reduce my traveling expenses.*" (Participant 3).

> "*I save a lot on traveling, whether it's public transport fares or car maintenance.*" (Participant 5).

> "*This has noticeably increased my disposable income and improved my overall financial well-being.*" (Audient 7).

Thus, savings improve the financial well-being and disposable income of public service employees who are working from home. As a result, they are encouraged to work independently in work from home, which improves job performance. The study further examined the crucial theme of how flexibility in altering work and personal obligations lowers stress and improves work-life balance, both of which have a positive impact on

public sector workers' performance to execute their jobs more effectively. Participants explained that;

> *"The flexibility to manage work and personal life has greatly reduced my stress levels, making me more engaged during work hours."* (Participant 3).

> *"I have been able to lead a healthier life because I work from home. I can contribute effectively to my career and experience a reduction in stress by taking better care of my health."* (Participant 6).

Because of this flexibility, employees in the public sector were able to work at periods of high energy and modify their schedules to better accommodate personal obligations, which improves their mental and job performance as well. Better team dynamics had been created by advancements in remote communication systems, despite physical distance. Improved digital communication skills ensure that the teams work efficiently even when they are geographically separated. They can even help to sustain and occasionally improve the quality of collaborations. The participants noted that;

> *"Work from home has improved our team's communication. Because of our increased connectedness, we have performed better together as a whole."* (Participant 5).

> *"Work from home has improved our team's communication...this has enhanced our collaborative efforts and overall performance."* (Participant 7).

This thorough investigation highlights the wide range of significant effects of remote work, highlighting how it can result in workforces that are happier, healthier, and more productive, all of which boost worker performance.

A positive link is revealed by the results of Hypothesis 2, which looks at how LDL affects employee performance in particular government departments in Sri Lanka. This is demonstrated by a path coefficient value of +0.182. According to this research, there is a 0.182-unit correlation between a one-unit increase in LDL and an increase in employee performance. With a t-statistic value of 2.58, the relationship's statistical significance is confirmed, meaning that it is significant with 99% confidence. These results are consistent with related field research that has examined how distributed and distant leadership affects employee outcomes. For example, a 2019 study by Purvanova and Bono discovered that virtual leadership a type of LDL improves job satisfaction and team effectiveness. According to their research, leaders who manage remote teams need to use improved communication and trust-building techniques, which may contribute to LDL's efficacy. This supports the results of the present investigation, which show that

low-density lipoprotein (LDL) improves worker performance. Amask and Indriati (2021) have presented their consequences as similar result when compare with this study.

Similarly, Eisenberg, Post, and DiTomaso's (2019) study highlighted how efficient communication management and setting clear expectations could improve worker performance in remote leadership roles. These results are supported by the path coefficient of +0.182 in the current investigation, which indicates that performance gains could be quantified even with small increases in LDL.

Nonetheless, certain studies have pointed out drawbacks of low-density lipoprotein (LDL), like decreased interpersonal engagement and certain communication obstacles (Hoch & Kozlowski, 2014). Despite these obstacles, the statistically significant findings of the present study support the idea that LDL, when applied correctly, can enhance worker performance, especially in organized settings like government departments.

The enhanced performance topic emphasized the need for precise goal-setting and communication. Employees believe that these methods improve their ability to concentrate and execute well, which improves output. As stated by participants, for instance;

> *"I have noticed a greater emphasis on goal setting and clear communication with long-distance leadership. My performance has significantly improved as a result of this clarity, which has immediately improved my capacity for concentration and decision-making."* (Participant 3).

> *"Regular virtual meetings with my remote leader have helped address any issues promptly and kept my performance on track, showing how effective long-distance leadership can be in fostering employee performance."* (Participant 7).

Employee performance improves significantly when expectations are clear and open, as this makes it easier for them to match their efforts with those of the company. The importance of digital technologies in enabling real-time feedback is also mentioned by the participants. In addition to streamlining workflows, this technology enabling enables quick adjustments and modifications, which improve results and increase productivity. Remote managers who are using technology proactively make sure that staff members receive ongoing support and that their work meets the highest standards.

> *"Our remote leader is very proactive about using digital tools for real-time feedback, which has been instrumental in refining my work processes and improving my performance outcomes."* (Participant 2).

Giving autonomy to long-distance workers motivates them to take initiative, which develops a sense of accountability and improves performance. In a similar vein,

confidence in leadership fosters employee drive and confidence, both of which are essential for great performance in remote work environments.

> *"Because of the nature of long-distance leadership, a great deal of trust is placed in our ability to efficiently manage our processes. This faith has increased my self-assurance and inspired me to work harder."* (Participant 4).

Employees especially value the flexibility in work hours because it enables them to work when they are most productive. The capacity to adjust the schedule is crucial for maximizing output and pleasure.

> *"The flexibility in work hours, allowed by our long-distance leader, helps me work at my peak times, which has greatly improved my productivity and overall performance."* (Participant 5).

"Our leader's ability to effectively manage teams across different time zones has ensured that all team members are aligned and motivated, which has collectively enhanced our performance." (Participant 6).

Together, these themes paint a complete picture of how technology, trust, flexibility, and clear communication could all be used by long-distance leaders to improve job performance. This thorough review highlights the wide range of significant effects of remote work, with a particular focus on how it can result in happier, healthier, and more productive workforces a critical outcome for individual and organizational development in the fast-paced work environments of today. As a result, the qualitative results validate the quantitative findings.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to investigate how the employee performance in a few Sri Lankan government departments was affected by LDL and WFH. The study aimed to comprehend the individual and combined effects of these two critical factors LDL and WFH on employee performance by creating a thorough framework that incorporated them. The study developed particular hypotheses to be verified by empirical analysis to accomplish this. The study's findings demonstrated that WFH and LDL both had a favorable impact on workers' performance in Sri Lanka's public sector. The research indicates that WFH is positively correlated with enhanced employee performance. Qualitative results confirmed that remote work arrangements that offer flexibility and autonomy could greatly boost employees' performance. The study discovered that LDL, while to a lesser degree than WFH, also has a positive impact on employee performance in addition to WFH.

The results of the study make a substantial contribution to the body of literature by offering empirical evidence from the context of employees in government departments in Sri Lanka, an area in which there had not been much research on WFH and LDL. Further, the research employs an explanatory sequential mixed approach to verify the theoretical framework at the ground-level reality and contributes to the advancement of existing methodological literature.

Based on the findings of research study, several recommendations were made to improve workers' performance in Sri Lankan government departments by strategically implementing WFH practices and LDL. To facilitate WFH agreements, government departments ought to make investments in strong digital infrastructure. This entails giving staff members dependable internet connection, safe communication methods, and the software they need to work effectively from a distance. Employee productivity could be increased by fortifying the technological base, which will enhance the overall performance. Government departments should offer leadership development programmes with an emphasis on managing remote teams to optimize the advantages of LDL. It is possible to guarantee that workers who work from home are productive by implementing frequent performance evaluations that are customized for remote work situations. Performance evaluations and feedback systems should be modified to take into consideration the special opportunities and difficulties that come with working remotely.

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