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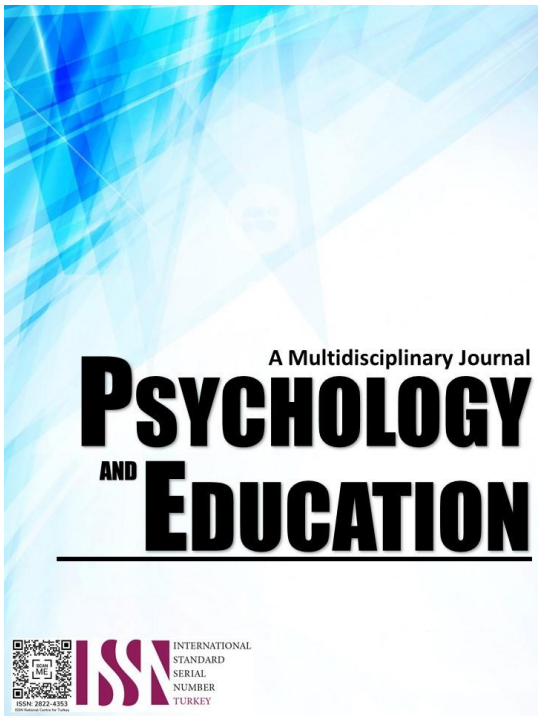

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Research Article

The Relationship Between COVID-19 Pandemic-Related Fear and Anxiety to Work-Related Quality of Life of Corporate Leaders in Metro Manila

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Abstract

One of the most frightening aspects of COVID-19 was the fact that it exacerbated existing social and economic inequalities for employees who, in addition to being in danger of severe COVID-19 cases, were also especially vulnerable to face adverse impacts in the workplace. For that reason, this research is conducted to examine the relationship between COVID-19 Pandemic-Related Fear and Anxiety to Work-Related Quality of Life (WRQoL) of Corporate Leaders in Metro Manila. The result of this study will give opportunities for organizations to address these dilemmas and be able to sustain and show concern for mid-level employees' WRQoL. The study was able to collate 194 responses from corporate leaders within Metro-Manila. The study was also correlational quantitative in nature and was able to employ a convenient sampling technique. The four variables in this study were measured within the context of Demographic Profile, Fear of COVID-19, Anxiety towards COVID-19, and WRQoL. The researchers' course of action in the methodology was by collating responses using a questionnaire answered through Google Forms. The questionnaire was modeled to three standardized tests namely Fear of COVID-19, Coronavirus Anxiety Scale, and Work-Related Quality of Life Scale. Subsequently, the researchers treated data with Pearson Correlation Coefficient. In conclusion, this study indicates that the Demographic Profile of the respondents does not have a significant relationship with the Fear of COVID-19, the Anxiety towards COVID-19, nor WRQoL. On the other hand, the WRQoL of Corporate Leaders has a positive correlation with the Fear of COVID-19 and the Anxiety towards COVID-19.

Keywords: *gender, anxiety, fear, managers, employees, COVID-19, leadership*

Introduction

The Coronavirus was first presented as a strain similar to SARS that was later on distinguished as a disease resulting from what was once called SARS-CoV-2 but is now called COVID-19 (WHO, n.d). It emerged first in Wuhan, China at the last part of 2019 and with its level of virality has quickly taken over the globe. As of December 10 of 2021, approximately 267 million reported infections and over 5 million casualties reported (WHO, 2021). On the other hand, the Philippines has reported, as of December 8, 2021, over 2 million cases and 49 thousand deaths (DOH, 2021). As a result of this, COVID-19 has been declared a public health crisis requiring worldwide attention as announced by the World Health Organization. That being the case, the world as we know it has come to a complete halt.

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a global health emergency and a recession that has alarmed people all across the world. Kshirsagar and colleagues (2020) estimate that as of early March, about 50% of in-person programs in North America had been postponed, compared to closer to 100% in Asia and Europe. This has forced businesses to adapt digitally and virtually because online platforms have developed and have been in demand before COVID-19 struck. In line with this, recent research has found out that COVID-19 layered the way people work, establishing a new standard (Meister, 2020) because of the worldwide lockdown the industries and companies were imposed to mandate to prevent the virus' spread. However, it is not without problems, which is why it has given rise to several fresh and important problems for both workers and companies everywhere. It was the lowest jobless rate since the start of the pandemic, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), which claimed that the unemployment rate rose to 8.1 percent in August 2021 from the previously reported 6.9 percent in July 2021. For instance, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021) in the United States, there were 16,9 million unemployed people in July, 9 of whom were unable to find employment as a result of their employer closing down or experiencing economic decline due to the epidemic. The researchers discovered as a society that no matter how much people try to control their lives, their surroundings, and their relationships, everything can be changed in an instant by a virus that doesn't care about their gender, age, nationality, or any other characteristic.

However, since the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, it has taken its hit on all sectors of the industry and has threatened physical wellbeing on a global scale. Thus, it is not far off that even the economy, in this case, the

corporate world suffered its impact from businesses closing to job losses all the while navigating the pandemic with fear and anxiety. Apart from other issues arising as mentioned about the negative effects of the pandemic adding to the existing issues within the internal affairs of the industry like harassment, underemployment, it is evident that discrimination in the workplace in terms of gender still persists and thus has negatively affected the general wellbeing and the work-related quality life of the employees (Kniffin, 2020). A survey conducted by Nania (2020) have shown that since February 2020, In contrast to 44 percent of non-LGBT individuals, 56 percent of LGBT individuals claimed that the coronavirus outbreak caused them or another adult in their family to lose their employment, be given the status of "leave of absence," or have their income or hours cut. Moreover, compared to 49 percent of non-LGBT individuals, three-fourths of LGBT individuals claim that stress and fear from the epidemic have negatively impacted their mental health. The United Nations Women also noted that, in addition to socioeconomic stressors like work and external stressors like food scarcity and family relationships, which have been key contributors to the rise in the negative wellbeing of women during COVID-19, experiences of violence or feelings of safety in their homes have also increased. On the other hand, amongst adults from 40 to 49 years old, men represent 69 percent and those aged 50 and above make up for 66 percent of COVID-19 deaths. Study showed that male sex is at risk for a severe COVID-19 for they do not produce as powerful immune responses like T cells and had a higher inflammatory proteins that results to the immune system attacking itself instead of the virus (Nania, 2020).

With that being said, all the mentioned data just proves that no matter what the issues are, be it on an employment standpoint, violence, or health, COVID-19 has impacted everyone and can undoubtedly conclude that mental wellbeing has been affected majorly. But with the growing concern for the impact of COVID-19 to everyone's wellbeing, work life for employees have been challenging. Ergo the Work-Related Quality of Life scale can be seen as important now as an assessment tool in times of COVID-19 since picture the employee's experience such that of their company policies, their character, their feelings of well being, and their real working conditions (Van Laar et al., 2007).

The goal of the scale of this study is to gauge the quality of life of corporate leaders as well as to identify the profile of the respondents according to their age, gender, tenure, and industry they belong to; determine the Fear of COVID-19, Anxiety towards COVID-19, and work related quality of life of the respondents; identify and describe the relationship of the sociodemographic profile of the respondents and between the fear and Anxiety towards COVID-19 and work related quality of life, and to determine the relationship of each variable namely the fear and Anxiety towards COVID-19 and work related quality of life.

Methodology

Research Design

The researchers utilized a Correlational research design which is a form of quantitative research. According to MacKenzie in 2013, the correlational method went about by discovering how the variables were related to each other. It dealt with understanding the relationship that was being encountered while also solving the problem itself. This method measured four variables in the study, and these were Demographic Profile, Fear of COVID-19, Coronavirus-Related Anxiety, and Work-Related Quality of Life.

Participants

Using convenience sampling technique, 194 Mid-level (supervisors or managers) employees from different industrial companies within Metro-Manila participated in the study. There were 116 corporate leaders who identified as Female while the other 56 of them were Male and the remaining 22 samples answered that they identify themselves as Non-binary.

Measures

The content of the survey questionnaire that was utilized was adapted from the 3 standardized questionnaires "Work-Related Quality of Life (WRQoL) Scale" (Van Laar et al., 2018), "Fear of COVID-19 Scale" (Silva et al., 2020), and "Coronavirus Anxiety Scale" (Pakpour et al., 2020). First, the Work-Related Quality of Life Scale (WRQoL) is a standardized scale that is utilized to measure employee satisfaction that provides essential information for planning interventions, monitoring workforce experience, and evaluating the effect of

organizational change. Using six psychological sub-factors, this test has 23 items that assess the participants' impressions of their Work-Related Quality of Life (WRQoL) in their workplace or organization (Easton & Van Laar, 2018.) The 6 factors that were used to develop the 23-item WRQol scale. The 24th item, "I am content with the overall quality of my working life," was included to gauge overall satisfaction with the standard of one's working life. Respondents were asked to rate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 meant they strongly disagreed and 5 meant they strongly agreed. In general, the internal consistency of the Work-Related Quality of life scale was excellent ($\alpha = 0.92$).

Second, The Fear of COVID-19 Scale comprises seven items and has strong psychometric properties. It was reliable and accurate in evaluating the Fear of COVID-19 among the population and will also help ease COVID-19 fears. A Likert scale was used to measure the Fear of COVID-19 scale, with higher scores indicating a stronger Fear of COVID-19. The Likert scale included five possible outcomes: "strongly disagree," "disagree," "neutral," "agree," and "strongly agree." The internal consistency obtained ($\alpha = 0.87$) indicates excellent reliability. The Fear of COVID-19 scale possible scoring for each question is 1, and the maximum score is 5. A total score could be calculated by adding up each item score ranging from 7 to 35. And lastly, the Coronavirus Anxiety Scale was a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, responses range from "not at all" to "rare, less than a day or two", "many days," "more than 7 days," and "almost every day for the last 2 weeks."The internal consistency was ($\alpha = .90$) and it shows that the CAS was a reliable and valid instrument. The scoring and interpretation of Coronavirus Anxiety Scale used a 5-point scale and the total scores greater than or equal to 9 indicates probable dysfunctional coronavirus-related anxiety. Increased scores on a specific item or a high overall scale score of nine or more may signify troublesome symptoms for the person, which may call for more testing or treatment.

Procedures

A written permission and communication letter were initially secured from the school. Thus, the researchers provided a Letter of Requests that allowed the researchers to Conduct a Research Study that involved data gathering outside the school premises signed by the Dean of the College of Arts, Sciences and Education. This also ensures that all the essential information in the instrument was checked and approved before the study was administered to the respondents. In organizing the raw gathered data the researchers used Google Sheets or Microsoft Excel in processing and employing the numerical value of the results of the questionnaires. IBM SPSS Statistics predictive analytics software will be used as a tool to assist in analyzing the data gathered. The researchers arrived at an interpretation based on the results of the statistical tests used.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of corporate leaders in Metro Manila in terms of their age, gender, tenure, and the industry that they are employed in. These profile characteristics then are subclassified in specific categories and numbers such that in Age: there are four namely leaders that fall under ages 18 years of age to 24, 25 years old to 35, 36 years old to 45 and 45 years old and above. In gender, there are three defined categories that corporate leaders can identify as, namely: Female, Male, and Non-binary. The tenure then was given six groups ranging from 0 months to 5 years, 6 years to 10 years, 11 years to 15 years, 16 years to 20 years, 21 years to 25 years and 26 to 30 years. Lastly, the Industry was categorized with 23 generalized and standardized fields such as Advertising, Agriculture, Arts, Automotive, Aviation, BPO, Business, Commerce, Communication, Construction, Education, Energy, Engineering, Finance, Food, Government, Manufacturing, Medical, Real Estate, Religious Sector, Security Services, Tourism and even N/A.

Table 1. *Demographic profile of the respondents*

Class	*Group*	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Age	18-24	76	39.2
	25-35	84	43.3
	36-45	20	10.3
	46+	14	7.2
	Total	194	100.0

Class	*Group*	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Gender	Female	116	59.8
	Male	56	28.9
	Non-binary	22	11.3
	Total	194	100.0

Class	*Group*	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Tenure	0-5	132	68.0
	6-10	37	19.1
	11-15	9	4.6
	16-20	8	4.1
	21-25	6	3.1
	26-30	2	1.0
	Total	194	100.0

Class	*Group*	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Industry	Advertising	2	1.0
	Agriculture	3	1.5
	Arts	1	.5
	Automotive	1	.5
	Aviation	3	1.5
	BPO	60	30.9
	Business	15	7.7
	Commerce	12	6.2
	Communication	1	.5
	Construction	4	2.1
	Education	20	10.3
	Energy	3	1.5
	Engineering	3	1.5
	Finance	10	5.2
	Food	10	5.2
	Government	3	1.5
	Manufacturing	2	1.0
	Medical	29	14.9
	N/A	5	2.6
	Real Estate	2	1.0
	Religious Sector	2	1.0
	Security Services	1	.5
	Tourism	2	1.0
	Total	194	100.0

In terms of the distribution and frequency of the sample on the subject of Age, there were 76 corporate leaders who were in the 18 years of age to 24 years of age bracket, 84 samples in the 25 years old to 35 age bracket, 20 corporate leaders making up the 36 to 45 years old bracket and 14 of them were grouped in the 46 years old and above age bracket with a total of 194 total samples of corporate leaders in Metro Manila. Moreover, the percentage that they make up is 39.2%, 43.2%, 10.3% and 7.2% respectively. With the 25-35 year old bracket being the highest age range of the sample both in frequency and percentage wise.

Meanwhile, the table shows that in terms of Gender, out of the 194 total respondents, there were 116 corporate leaders who identified as Female while the other 56 of them were Male and the remaining 22 samples answered that they identify themselves as Non-binary. Gathering a percentile of 59.8, 28.9, and 11.3 respectively, with Female being the high-frequency sample amongst the respondents.

On the other hand, with regards to the tenurity of the respondents there were 132 corporate leaders belonging in the 0-5 group, followed by 37 individuals who had 6-10 years of tenurity. Moreover, there were 9 samples who answered 11-15 years. In the bracket of 16-20 years of tenurity only 8 respondents answered and another 6 respondents answered the tenurity of 21-25 while only 2 of the respondents answered with the longest tenure, which is 26-30 years of service. Therefore, it can be concluded that most of the respondents were new to the organization or company and even their industry at the point they took the survey questionnaire. With that being said, the percentile of each category from 0-5 years of tenurity to 26-30 are 68.0, 19.1, 4.6, 4.1, 3.1 and 1.0 respectively.

Lastly, in the table, it also shows the frequency distribution of the respondents in terms of the Industry they are in with 2 of them in Advertising, 3 respondents in Agriculture, only 1 corporate leader employed in the Art sector as well as Automotive. Moreover, there were 3 corporate leaders in Aviation, while the biggest number of samples with 60 respondents were employed in the BPO industry. In the industry of Business and Commerce, there were 15 respondents and 12 respondents employed respectively. Furthermore, the industry of Communication only has 1 respondent while there were 4 mid-level employees in the Construction sector whereas there were 20 corporate leaders who were classified in the industry of Education. On the other hand, both the industry of Energy and Engineering garnered 3 numbers of samples employed in it and

Finance and Food both got a total of 10 corporate leaders in the industry. In addition to that the Government sector only has 3 total number of samples, Manufacturing only has 2 but the Medical industry got a total of 29 samples. However, since other factors may be in play, 5 respondents categorized themselves as N/A in terms of their industry. Apart from that, the remaining industries such as Real Estate, Religious Sector, Security Services, and Tourism garnered 2, 2, 1, and 2 respectively. The percentile being 30.9 which is the BPO for the highest number of respondents followed by 14.9 for the Medical sector and 1.0 percentile for the lowest number of respondents.

Table 2 . *Mean and Standard Deviation of the respondents on the Scales*

Variables	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*	*Interpretation*
Fear of COVID-19	20.7526	6.22552	High
Anxiety towards COVID-19	8.9536	4.64746	High
Work-Related Quality of Life	89.0309	15.62047	High

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistical analysis result of all the variables in the study—mean and standard deviation shows the characteristics and variation of the data and its statistical analysis result. In general, the result of the statistical analysis reveals a high interpretation for all the variables and only varies with the numerical result.

Based on the scales provided in Table 1, with a Mean of 20.7526 and a Standard Deviation of 6.22552, the Fear of COVID-19 variable result shows a high level of interpretation. This view is reinforced by Jain & Jha (2018), who draw the conclusion that the higher the score, the greater the respondents' dread of the novel coronavirus as it demonstrates their high level of anxiety toward COVID-19 while working in the midst of the pandemic, support this viewpoint.

In terms of the level of Anxiety towards the COVID-19 variable, the result suggests a high level of interpretation based on the specified scale, with a Mean of 8.9536 and Standard Deviation of 4.64746. In the midst of the pandemic and while at work, the respondents reported feeling a lot of worry around COVID-19. Eman, Omar, Ahmad, and Bryant (2021) found that 60% of their participants had extreme severe anxiety, with a mean of 20.37 and a standard deviation of 10.80, supporting this. The participant's life and career may be impacted if their anxiety around the COVID-19 is significant.

Meanwhile, in regards to Work-Related Quality of Life, the result shows a Mean of 89.0309 and Standard Deviation of 15.62047. The variable has a high level of interpretation in contrast to that Easton & Van Laar (2018) indicates that most scores on the higher range imply that the Work-Related Quality of Life is good and satisfying which merely suggests that the respondents are highly satisfied with their work during the pandemic.

Table 3. *Relationship between demographics and variables*

Profile	*Variables*	*Pearson Correlation*	*p – value*	*Interpretation*
Age	Fear of COVID-19	-.038	.599	Not Significant
	Anxiety towards COVID-19	.049	.495	Not Significant
	Work-Related Quality of Life	.194	.007	Significant
Gender	Fear of COVID-19	.001	.990	Not Significant
	Anxiety towards COVID-19	.206	.004	Significant
	Work-Related Quality of Life	-.111	.123	Not Significant
Tenure	Fear of COVID-19	.002	.983	Not Significant
	Anxiety towards COVID-19	.084	.245	Not Significant
	Work-Related Quality of Life	.093	.199	Not Significant

In table 3, a Pearson correlation coefficient was utilized to explore the relationship between demographics and variables. If the p-value is low ($p < 0.05$), it indicates your correlation is interpreted as significant.

Based on the scales presented in table 3, the results showed a -.038 Pearson Correlation with a p-value of for the variables age and fear of the COVID-19. 599. Therefore, no significant correlation was found. However, a 2020 study by Jain and Jha found that fear had a significant positive connection with age ($r = 0.223$). (p 0.05). According to the study, people's fear of COVID-19 increased with age.

Concerning Age and Anxiety toward COVID-19, the result confirms a .049 Pearson Correlation with a p-

value of .495. Hence, there is no significant relationship found. This is also corroborated by the research of Jain and Jha (2020), who discovered a negligible association between the two ($r = 0.120$; $p > 0.05$).

As to Age and Work-Related Quality of Life, results disclosed a .194 Pearson Correlation with a p-value of .007. As a result, Age is a significant predictor of Work-related quality of life. In support of this, Mcquaid (2020) asserted that younger workers concede that they do not feel appreciated or acknowledged at work and that their viewpoints are not heeded. Thus, there is a greater likelihood that they will experience disquietude at work.

Meanwhile, in the matter of Gender and Fear of COVID-19 variable, the result demonstrated a .001 Pearson Correlation with a p-value of .990. As a result, there was no significant relationship found. On the contrary of this, Broche-Pérez et al. (2020) revealed that participants' average COVID-19 fear was much higher in women than in men.

The outcome for gender and anxiety toward the COVID-19 shows a.206 Pearson Correlation with a p-value of.004. This reveals a significant link between gender and COVID-19 anxiety. Additionally, female participants in the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression than male participants, per the findings of Opankovic et al. (2021). As a result, gender significantly predicts anxiety regarding COVID-19.

Results implied a -.111 Pearson Correlation with a p-value of. 123 for Gender and Work-Related Quality of Life. Accordingly, there is no discernible connection between gender and the quality of life at work. In contrast to the findings of the Gender and Work-Related Quality of Life, there are also gender disparities in work satisfaction among the same age groups, with 62% of males aged 19–24 being satisfied at work compared to 59% of females aged 19–24. (Mcquaid, 2020).

Lastly, the correlation between Tenure and Fear of COVID-19 was.002 and the p-value was.983. As a result, there was no significant relationship found.In connection with Tenure and Anxiety towards COVID-19 variables, results indicated a .084 Pearson Correlation with a p-value of .245. Thus, no significant correlation was observed. The correlation between Tenure and Work-Related Quality of Life was.093 with a p-value of.199. As a result, Tenure is not a significant predictor of Work-Related Quality of Life. Contrariwise, according to Mcquaid in 2020, when correlated to younger employees, tenured employees have better ties with their line managers (84 % v 73 %). In comparison to the youngest workers, both middle-aged and older employees believe their employment is more worthwhile (35+ scored 77 %, while 19-34-year-olds scored 63 %).

Table 4. *Relationship between variables*

	Variables	*Pearson Correlation*	*p – value*	*Interpretation*
Fear of COVID-19	Anxiety towards COVID-19	.538	.000	Significant
	Work-Related Quality of Life	-.042	.561	Not Significant
Anxiety towards COVID-19	Fear of COVID-19	.538	.000	Significant
	Work-Related Quality of Life	-.227	.001	Significant
Work-Related Quality of Life	Fear of COVID-19	-.042	.561	Not Significant
	Anxiety towards COVID-19	-.227	.001	Significant

Table 4, with the goal to find the relation between the mentioned variables, the researchers employed a Pearson Correlation coefficient as well. If the p-value is low ($p < 0.05$), it indicates your correlation is interpreted as significant.

In terms of Fear of COVID-19 when correlated to Anxiety towards COVID-19 showed a p-value of 0.000 in which can be interpreted to have a significant relationship. This study suggests that when respondents' fear increases, so does their anxiety, resulting in what is known as a positive correlation. A meta-analysis by Simsir et al. (2021) found that fear of COVID-19 has a strong, positive association to anxiety, with the values of ES r= 0.55 (95% CI [0.48, 0.61]). This relationship has been demonstrated in 23 additional investigations. In addition, the definition of COVID-19 fear encompasses the psychological characteristics of a phobia, a type of anxiety disorder. This demonstrates the significance of the relationship between COVID-19 anxiety and fear.

Moreover, a p-value of.561 indicates that the correlation between respondents' fears about COVID-19 and Work-Related Quality of Life is not statistically significant. which is higher than the quantitative criterion that was set. However, the researchers infer from this result that when respondents' work-related quality of life declines, so does their fear of the COVID-19. Implying that when they are set to feel fear, their general satisfaction with their work as well as their internal attitude towards work becomes poor. In short, a negative correlation

was determined, with the condition in mind that when one rises the other decreases alternately. Therefore, Fear of COVID-19 may increase or decrease but it does not hold any significant relation to the Work-Quality of Life. In simple words, Fear may be high but it doesn't necessarily make the Work-Quality of life increase as well.

Conclusion

The researchers conclude, based on their findings, that the respondents experienced a high level of Fear of COVID-19 and Anxiety towards COVID-19. However, the respondents were quite pleased with their work performance despite the working circumstances. In terms of Gender and the respondent's Demographic Profile and Anxiety regarding COVID-19, the results indicate a significant correlation between the variables. The study shows that the majority of female participants exhibited higher degrees of despair, anxiety, and stress than male and non-binary individuals. Meanwhile, there was no discernible connection between COVID-19 Fear and the Demographic Profile. In addition, there was no connection between participants' ages and length of participation and their anxiety concerning the COVID-19.

As for Work-Related Quality of Life, the results suggest a strong relationship between Work-Related Quality of Life and the participants' age. On the other hand, no significant relationship was found between Work-Related Quality of Life and Gender and Tenure.

In accordance with the results, this study would provide awareness and knowledge to the corporate leaders, companies, mental health professionals and future researchers. For the Corporate Leaders, they should take the initiative in implementing regular mental well-being assessment that is accessible to all subordinates within the place of work. As regards to Companies, they are recommended that they provide a higher compensation wage regardless of the nature of their employees' work set-ups. Meanwhile, with the Mental Health Professionals, they should offer pro-bono mental health related services to those employees who are seeking help in this time of global pandemic. Lastly, it is proposed that Future Researchers utilize other variables that may impact Work-Related Quality of Life.

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