

# WORKING FROM HOME AND RESILIENCE AMONG WORKING PARENTS DURING COVID-19

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**Resilience in the workplace and community**



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## ABSTRACT

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, working from home (WFH) was introduced wherever it was possible around the world. For working parents (employees with at least one dependent child), it was not simply WFH, but it also included challenges related to a new way of learning from home for their children. The pandemic changed the way people worked in organisations; we've all had to adjust our daily routines to cope with it and we are still learning how to do so. The aim of this study was to investigate the experiences of working parents and examine the factors that contributed to their resilience while working from home during New Zealand's first lockdown in March–April 2020. Ten in-depth, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with working parents (having at least one school-aged child) drawn from sectors such as banking, education and professional services in the Wellington region. Data was analysed using a thematic analysis approach. Study results highlight that WFH was effective in enabling business continuity facilitated by virtual tools. However, participants reported high levels of stress as a result of uncertainty due to the pandemic and balancing work–family life, which had a negative impact on their performance and productivity. The key implication for organisations is to be mindful of the unique needs and challenges that working parents face when working from home. They need to nurture a culture of empathy while providing the right work set-up, including the use of virtual tools to connect and collaborate for WFH effectiveness. The study provides insight into the experiences of working parents and possible factors that contribute to resilience during a pandemic.

## KEYWORDS

Working parents, working from home, resilience, Covid-19, pandemic

## INTRODUCTION

The ongoing Covid-19 outbreak and subsequent lockdowns have rapidly altered how people work. In fact, the world of work as we knew it prior to the emergence of Covid-19 has turned upside down – we are changing where we sit to complete our tasks, how we conduct meetings, and set up routines to get things done. Working from home (WFH) was adopted on a large scale for the first time as an emergency response to the pandemic both in New Zealand and around the world. The first Covid-19 case was reported in New Zealand on 28 February, 2020. To stop the spread of Covid-19, the New Zealand Government implemented a four-tiered Alert Level system in March 2020. The country first moved to Alert Level 4 on March 25, 2020 (New Zealand Government, 2021) (see Appendix 1, Table 1 for a timeline on the first nationwide lockdown in New Zealand). At this level, people were asked to stay at home within their bubble (a family or house-sharing group), workplaces were closed and employees were encouraged to work from home, where possible.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Working from home pre- and post-pandemic**

WFH began in the United States in early the 1970s (Katz, 1987) and has been known by other names such as 'telework,' 'telecommuting,' 'remote working,' 'e-work' and 'virtual work' (Sullivan, 2003). It became more popular

as a result of developments in information technology, and firms who believe that it increases the healthy work–life balance by allowing employees to work flexible hours (Hilbrecht et al., 2013; Sia et al., 2004). During the Covid-19 lockdown period, WFH became the norm with employees carrying out their work duties from their homes with the use of technology (Choudhary & Jain, 2021). Stats NZ (2020) reported that more than 40% of employed people in New Zealand completed at least some of their work from home during Covid-19 Alert Levels 4 and 3 in April and May 2020 (see Appendix 1, Table 1: Timeline of alert levels during Covid-19 in New Zealand). This pandemic has reignited interest in WFH since millions of people have been compelled to isolate and stay in their bubbles in order to stop the virus from spreading. However, in addition to government-imposed lockdowns and other control techniques, the compulsory adoption of remote working was a major challenge for the workforce (Tokarchuk et al., 2021).

Research on the benefits of telework prior to the pandemic focused on finding outcomes that are important to both organisations and individuals, such as job satisfaction, performance, turnover intention, role stress, or perceived career prospects (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Greer & Payne, 2014). Gajendran and Harrison (2007) report that telework is positively associated with satisfaction – increased telecommuting leads to better work–life balance and positively affects job satisfaction. Martin and MacDonnell (2012) found a positive relationship between telework and work performance and productivity, and report that if telework is an option then commitment to an organisation is positive among younger participants in their study. Harris (2003) conducted a qualitative study on a team's and their line manager's WFH experiences over the course of one year. They concluded that people's perceptions of full-scale home-based working needs more investigation. Some researchers claim that removing the workplace from the main office to work remotely has detrimental consequences for employees. Employees may miss out on assistance from their co-workers due to a lack of face-to-face communication. Yusof and Rahmat (2020) contend that workplace communications help employees and employers form bonds. Their findings reveal that both verbal and non-verbal workplace communications had a significant part in ensuring seamless operations.

Kniffin et al. (2020) maintain that findings related to WFH prior to Covid-19 are difficult to generalise when discussing the forced nature of remote employment. The International Labour Organization (2020) reports some drawbacks of telework, such as extended working hours and increased work during nights and weekends, especially for employees who have children or dependents at home. Rimias (2021) concludes that individual (i.e., home/family and job-related) factors are important for the successful adjustment to telework during Covid-19, and a good telework environment is a significant component that leads to positive work outcomes.

## **Working parents and working from home**

The World Health Organization (WHO) designated the new coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak a pandemic on 11 March 2020, and many workers were forced to work from home, at least temporarily (Timberg et al., 2020). The closure of schools and childcare facilities forced many working parents to assume full-time responsibility for their children's care and their home learning, while also adjusting to a new 'smart working' lifestyle and daily structure. This increased the likelihood of parents experiencing personal distress, potentially jeopardising their own wellbeing and, as a result, the wellbeing of their children (Spinelli et al., 2020; Marchetti et al., 2020; Politzer, 2021; Ettman et al., 2020; Dang et al., 2020).

Many parents either chose to leave their jobs or were advised to take a break because it became difficult to juggle work and caring for their children during Covid-19 (Karpman et al., 2020; GlobeNewswire, 2021). Some working parents were concerned about their family's physical, mental and financial wellbeing; challenges related to their children's home schooling, resulting in social isolation from peers and teachers; and their ability to provide reassuring and age-appropriate information about Covid-19 to their children. Despite the challenges, the current situation of pandemic-induced WFH may have some advantages for working parents, such as the ability to spend more time with their family and children or reduced travel time (Spinelli et al., 2020).

## **Working parents, pandemic and resilience**

Bonanno and Mancini (2008) found that some people adapted to potentially stressful events by having mild or moderate reactions that do not interfere with their functional abilities. Some early research (Rutter, 1987; Werner & Smith, 1992) defines resilience as the ability to thrive in the face of adversity. Recent studies (Crowe et al., 2016; Shrivastava & Desousa, 2016) define resilience as an individual's ability to cope with stress, adapt to change, respond to adversity and seek help when needed. Scoloveno (2017) defines resilience as a dynamic process that is reliant on the interaction of internal and environmental risk and protective variables. According to Chen and Bonanno (2020), resilience is the ability of humans to sustain their psychological, social and physical wellbeing through the quality of their interactions with the environment.

North (2016) found that most people can be resilient and eventually recover to their prior level of functioning despite surviving trauma and poor psychological reactions. Horesh and Brown (2020) found differing effects of display of resilience in the context of Covid-19-in their study; many parents exhibited resilience in the face of obstacles connected with Covid-19, but for others, the prolonged lockdown and potential lack of support increased existing vulnerabilities and led to the onset of new stress-related diseases. Gruber et al. (2020) in fact found challenges to promoting resilience in the context of pandemic, as infection-prevention strategies hamper traditional mechanisms that promote psychological resilience.

Existing knowledge on WFH, telework or remote working has mostly been generated in the context of a voluntary (Harris, 2003; Greer & Payne, 2014; Gajendra & Harrison, 2007) or occasional (Martin & MacDonnell 2012; Golden & Veiga, 2008) work arrangement. The Covid-19 pandemic has posed new challenges to previously held notions of WFH, which is now seen to occur for extended periods of national lockdowns amidst heightened feelings of anxiety and stress. Additionally, there were unique sets of challenges for working parents that involved combining work and childcare with lack of available support systems. Nevertheless, there is now an opportunity to chart a new path for the world of work to address the changing demands of a flexible workforce and employees' expectations when working from home. Covid-19 and the flexible working arrangements put in place have sparked business conversations about the new ways of working and accommodating the requirements of people working from home, while also moving towards a more sustainable future (Choudhary & Jain, 2021). Organisations must embrace the diversity of experiences and ways of working to positively transform work practices in a post-Covid-19 world. WFH provided incredible flexibility to allow workers who struggled to participate in nine-to-five jobs, and broke down the barriers to include carers, parents, people with disability or who are geographically dispersed in the workforce (Couch et al., 2021). It is also seen that working parents face unique challenges working from home for extended periods, such as that posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the ability of organisations to examine and build resilience for this group of employees needs to be a prime consideration.

## **RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

This study focused on working parents, who had been working from home for at least half of the work week during the Covid-19 crisis. Working parents with school-aged children had to ensure that their children were in a safe learning setting while they were working from home. Working parents dealt with three key challenges during the pandemic: supporting their family financially; providing a healthy and safe environment; and supporting their children with home learning (Adams & Todd, 2020). The overall objective of the study was to investigate working parents' experiences and perceptions of WFH during the first lockdown in New Zealand in March–April 2020. The study aimed to explore the impact that WFH during lockdown had on the participants' relationships with employers or colleagues, work–life balance, job performance, and health and wellbeing. A further objective was to investigate perspectives for the future of WFH.

## METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative methodology, as we wanted to explore the experience, meaning and perspective of individuals from their own viewpoint (Hammerberg et al., 2016). Ten participants were selected using criterion/purposive sampling and a snowballing technique. Criterion sampling fostered the collection of comprehensive and detailed data from a relatively small sample size (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2010). Inclusion criteria were that participants had to be working parents from the knowledge industry who had worked from home during lockdown 2020, for more than half a week, and had one or more children. Six open-ended questions were designed to capture participants' thoughts about their experience of WFH during different alert levels in New Zealand. These questions related to feelings of connectedness with supervisors and co-workers, work-life balance, work performance, health and stress while working from home, and change of views toward WFH over the course of lockdown. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and a member-check was conducted with participants. Data were analysed using NVivo software supplemented with manual analysis, resulting in the emergence of key themes.

Researchers referred to Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide – a useful framework for conducting thematic analysis. The first stage involved getting familiar with the data through reading the transcripts and making notes. The transcripts were uploaded into NVivo software to initiate the process of coding – a process to capture something interesting about the data based on our research question, and resulting in a long list of codes across the data set. The codes were checked with coded data for correctness. The codes were then examined for patterns and organised into broader themes, again linking with the research question. In the next stage the existing themes were reviewed, refined and defined using clear names. The last stage was to write the thematic analyses.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 (see Appendix 2) provides demographic details of participants. Three key themes emerged in the analysis, including: 1) Connections and collaborations fostered through virtual tools; 2) Challenges of work-life balance amidst valuing WFH; 3) Appreciating and opting for flexibility of WFH. These are discussed under the following subheadings

### **Connections and collaborations fostered through virtual tools**

This theme noted the perspectives shared by the majority of participants, who stated that virtual tools enabled them to connect and collaborate with work colleagues, though there was a learning curve involved for most respondents.

Participants reported that the frequency of virtual team meetings and the level of connections increased during the Covid-induced lockdown in comparison to pre-Covid-19. In fact, technology not only enabled connecting about work matters but also connecting at a personal level. As it was a new way of working for most of the people, organisations realised that virtual catch-ups can be used to have informal chats to reduce pandemic-caused anxiety. Most of the participants agreed that these virtual catch-ups helped them to know each other better and keep the team connected, as illustrated in the two quotes below:

*[B]ecause our team is spread out anyway – we realised the significance of meeting together regularly so we set up a weekly Teams video call so all of us – 20–25 of us or how many could – would join that weekly call and we basically gave an update on how the work was going, how it was changing, either increasing or decreasing for people, how they were finding things at home, how things were on the family front for them. We connected more during Covid than we had prior .... It had a nice side effect of actually bringing people together quite significantly, just understanding each other's situations a little bit more. People would talk about "My husband's business has completely dried up" and they felt the challenges of that. We learnt a lot about each other. (Participant 10)*

*I think our team managed to feel really connected right throughout because we were talking to each other every day through Microsoft Teams. If I had a team member working on something and they had a question, they would just give me*

*a video call on Microsoft Teams, so we were regularly talking to each other about matters, and from an office managing-partner perspective we were also having a call each day with all the other office managing partners. Our CEO, HR team and our IT team were on that call every day talking about issues, how things were going. I think we were as connected as we could be. (Participant 6)*

Others expressed the steep learning curve associated with using technology on this scale. The sudden shift to WFH in response to Covid-19 required lot of adjustment and familiarity with the use of technology, which not everyone was prepared for, as illustrated in the two quotes below:

*People were still learning how to use the technology and there were so many people using [it]. It's quite hard when you've got 40 people on a call to try and have a productive meeting. It was a steep learning curve for us. (Participant 6)*

*We had a catch-up meeting every morning for 15 minutes, but after that I was left alone. I was shy to connect to them by Teams – suddenly we had to work with Teams, which I had never worked with before – and I know it took me a while. (Participant 5)*

It was evident from the interviews that formal or informal virtual catch-ups usually included a mix of video/ audio calls and text messaging. Some of these tactics were previously used in conjunction with face-to-face team communication. However, the Covid-19-induced lockdown made these the primary means of connecting with peers. The number of online meetings and catch-ups depended on the type of team, the size of the team, and the nature of the job. Wasson (2004) speculated that it is possible that employees may find it harder to stay engaged in long virtual meetings compared to in-person meetings. Some participants highlighted personality, individual factors and adequate working environment as the elements that determine whether WFH is easy or not.

## **Challenges of work–life balance amidst valuing working from home**

This theme highlights that work–life imbalance was reported by most respondents, and working with children during lockdown WFH adversely affected work performance and productivity. The imbalance also led to stress and had a negative impact on health. Many participants, however, valued the benefits of less travel time, more time with family and flexibility in scheduling work hours.

Participants reported that it was difficult to balance childcare and additional schooling responsibilities with full- and part-time work. This was because there were no clear boundaries, and they experienced constant interruptions from children while working, as expressed in the four quotes that follow:

*The trickiest thing was trying to manage all the schooling and work. (Participant 9)*

*I have my professional role with my work and responsibilities, and I have two kids and there are responsibilities from there as well. It wasn't like splitting my day, so I'll do my professional work for four hours then father mode for four hours. It wasn't like that, there are no boundaries. (Participant 8)*

*Like I said, I really struggled. I don't work full time, I work a 32-hour week and my husband is ... a full-time worker and at that time we had two young kids, my son was four and my daughter had just turned one from memory. So that was really tough because we had these children that require attention. (Participant 2)*

*Being in the same house as them they wanted to come in and check with me, or they just wanted to be around me, so I had sort of locked myself in a room – we've got a spare room, luckily – and was working from there. But there were constant interruptions throughout the whole time. I couldn't go an hour without being interrupted. (Participant 3)*

Participants experienced adverse effects on performance and productivity while working from home during lockdown period. Respondents highlighted that in addition to balancing job responsibilities in a new virtual world they had to cope with various chores such as providing child care and educational services to children at home, which affected their productivity negatively, as evident from the below quote:

*I always felt that, while I did the number of hours, my productivity was probably affected. (Participant 3)*

*For me, I was that much more inefficient because my mind was very rarely fully on the work, I was always keeping an eye on what the children were doing. (Participant 7)*

Some research has reported increased productivity due to the flexibility that comes with WFH, convenience of anytime anywhere work, and no distraction during WFH; hence working from home increased an employee's performance (Abdullah et al., 2020). In their meta-analysis of empirical research, Martin and MacDonnell (2012) found a positive relationship between telework and work performance and productivity. However, in the present study it was reported that the blurring of boundaries between work and home led to a decrease in productivity as employees were working long hours, while simultaneously managing children.

Participants also reported stress and health issues arising from pandemic-caused stress, balancing work and children, working long hours, and adjusting to pandemic-imposed WFH. For example:

*It was completely out the door. I was not in a good place physically, mentally or emotionally. I think I probably really struggled with anxiety and perhaps even a little bit of depression. All I can remember from that whole time was that it is something I don't want to do again, and if I had to do it again, I would do it differently, but coming out of it, my boss saw that I was affected. My stress levels were not good, my anxiety levels were not good .... Everything dropped and you just don't care, I guess. I really struggled and I felt that I struggled a lot more than my husband did. I think it had to do with the whole trying to balance the kids and work. (Participant 3)*

*During lockdown I was mentally quite stressed because of the insecurity of the changes of my job and the family surroundings, having a kid at home, and feeling sorry for him. Physically, we did do some bike rides and stuff like that so that was better. Emotionally I was stressed and that was relieved by getting different equipment, having the kid at school, and also the whole situation in the European summer got relaxed. I was relieved to know my family [was] fine. That eased a lot of the mental stress as well. (Participant 5)*

Parental stress is a negative psychological reaction to parental responsibilities: caring for children while simultaneously worrying about not having enough resources to meet their requirements was a heavy burden for parents (Crnic & Low, 2002; Holly et al., 2019). Spinelli et al. (2020) report that working parents were forced to take on full-time responsibility for their children's care and home education as schools and childcare centres closed due to the pandemic, while simultaneously adapting to a new 'smart working' lifestyle and daily structure. This situation increased the risk of personal discomfort among parents, potentially jeopardising their own wellbeing and, as a result, the wellbeing of their children. Although many parents will show resilience in the face of the challenges associated with Covid-19, for many others, the prolonged lockdown and lack of support will likely exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and contribute to the onset of new stress-related disorders (Horesh & Brown, 2020).

Participants appreciated the ease of WFH, and upsides such as reclaiming unproductive commute time, pursuing valued activities such as walks or yoga, being able to spend more quality time with family than otherwise possible. Also, the support received from employers was valued. These thoughts are illustrated in the two quotes below:

*I spent a lot of time with the family, which was good. The kids were home and work was very good in terms of "If you've got young kids at home you don't need to work a full day, just take it as you can." (Participant 4)*

*We obviously didn't have any travel time. You could just get up and have your breakfast, and then you're able to start working. You just walk down the hallway, sit at your desk, and start working. From that perspective it was nice. I got to spend more quality time with the family. It was important to go and have a walk and get outside so we'd go for a walk as a family which we wouldn't ordinarily do. (Participant 6)*

Studies by Troup and Rose (2014), Craig (2006), and Bianchi and Milkie (2010) found that WFH enabled working parents spend more than 40 hours per week with their children. The ability to work from home allowed participants

to schedule their work hours/days more freely or reduce their work hours to balance the demands of home and work life, as illustrated in the two quotes below:

*Normally I work four full days and have one day off, so what I had talked to my manager about was that I work six days, but five hours every day, and I split it into two-hour lots just to get the hours done, and once I had come to that agreement things were a lot more manageable, because I could look after the kids and my husband could do his work, and it was only a few hours. (Participant 2)*

*I was parenting, so I had 25 hours that I was working and I spread those hours over five days, which was generally about five hours a day, and I tried doing a couple of hours in the morning from 7–9am and then supporting my kids a little bit on and off, and then a couple of hours in the afternoon. (Participant 3)*

Hill et al. (2010) found that WFH and perceived schedule flexibility are generally related to less work–life conflict. The benefit of WFH is increased when combined with schedule flexibility and is beneficial both to individuals (in the form of reduced work–life conflict) and to business (in the form of capacity for longer work hours).

## **Appreciating and opting for flexibility of working from home**

This theme highlights the positive outlook for WFH, with more acceptability of WFH gained now and a way for business continuity in crisis situations; also hybrid working is now a preferred approach to work arrangements.

Participants reported that stigma associated with WFH has diminished after the pandemic, and it is acceptable to work from home if one is unwell. The reasons for this change could be the investments made by organisations to make WFH feasible for its employees, fear of mingling with a sick person, or the acceptance of this global experiment. Previously, people would come into office (even when sick) as presence in the office was considered important. These thoughts are illustrated in the below quote:

*I think it's more acceptable to work from home, definitely if you're not well. If I'm sick I don't go into the office, even if I've got a little tickle in my throat. That's acknowledged and accepted, and it's not something that is frowned upon. I think it's taken a lot to get to that space. Prior to Covid, people would come in. Even if you're not well you would still come in. But now it has been drilled into us if you're sick don't come in, and they are accepting of that. (Participant 2)*

Participants acknowledged that pandemic-induced WFH proved the capability of organisations to conduct work from home effectively, despite more flexibility and freedom translating into less organisational control. It was the first time WFH was tested on a large scale and participants felt more prepared for WFH in crisis situations in future. The below quote illustrates these ideas.

*I think I had concerns about people's ability to work remotely with more flexibility and freedom, but I was pleasantly surprised that we can still operate in a crisis situation, or under ordinary circumstances as well, from home. Not that I didn't know that, but it was something that wasn't tested on a large scale. If Wellington was hit by an earthquake or something like that, and we're not able to operate from the city here, then people should be able to work from their home and be able to make the system move. (Participant 1)*

Hybrid working was mainly identified as a future employment choice that allows a perfect mix of WFH and working in an office. WFH provides flexibility to manage work and family, and means that it's easier to combine work with other appointments or choice of scheduling one's day. Working from an office, on the other hand, helps to build social bonds, as illustrated in the quotes below:

*It has absolutely changed my view of working from home, seeing its benefits, seeing its downside – like connectedness – and I feel that a hybrid situation is working best where you've got times in the office and times working at home. (Participant 5)*

*I feel like this is about the right level for me, having one or two days a week at home. I do like getting out of the house and seeing people in person, so I think this is about right. (Participant 9)*



Employees also expressed that they liked to have the option of WFH, and also employers are encouraging this option for work teams. For instance:

*I always liked the idea of being able to do it, even though I didn't do it .... It's nice to have it there as a backup if I need it but I'm certainly not one of the people in the office who has a set day at home a week. (Participant 7)*

*I am encouraging my team to actually think about working from home, and as a group we have said that our team will work from the office on Mondays and Fridays, and between Tuesday and Thursday they can take two days off, working from home, so we're providing that option for the team as well. We're all about digital public service and we need to test that as well. (Participant 1)*

Businesses could operate as a hybrid model to have the best of both worlds (Bloom, 2021; Cook et al., 2020). Bloom et al. (2015) carried out a qualitative study on 249 call-centre employees and discovered that WFH offers more benefits than drawbacks, is valid, and is most effective if employees are given the option to select whether or not they prefer WFH.

### **A representation on nurturing resilience during a crisis situation through the interplay of six key factors**

Based on participants' responses, Figure 1 presents six key factors that contributed to working parents' resilience in juggling work and family during the crisis.

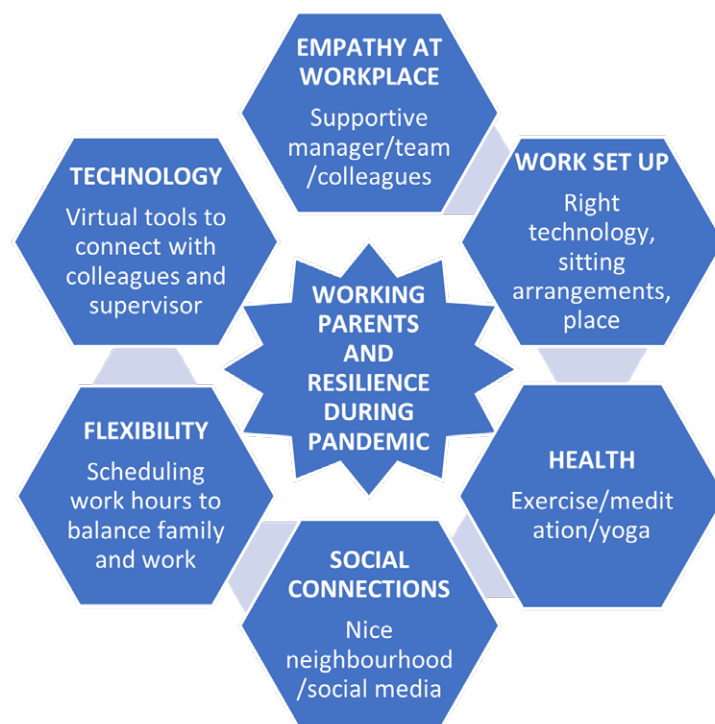


Figure 1. Working parents and resilience during the pandemic.

Empathy in the workplace: Empathetic approach by a manager was of paramount importance for WFH effectiveness during the pandemic-induced lockdown. Participants described how managers who helped with rescheduling work hours/days, reached out to assist to relieve employee stress, or altered productivity expectations, played a key role in creating a belief about the availability of support.

**Work set-up:** WFH is different from working in an office, so the right work set-up and physical space had an important role and were considered key to productive and effective WFH. This not only included the physical work set-up, but also psychological factors like having the right mindset and practices.

**Health:** WFH enabled more time to pursue activities such as exercise, meditation and yoga, which are known to have beneficial effects on health. Time saved from a lack of work commute was used for pursuing activities which aid health and wellbeing. The lockdown-induced a slowing down of life, which enabled more quality time with immediate family, having better nutrition, and pursuing shared valued activities that had positive effects on health.

**Social connections:** The background of pandemic-induced anxiety and uncertainty was stressful, but social connections helped to relieve some of this stress. The role of a supportive neighbourhood and engaging with community through in-person means and social media fostered social connections and overall wellbeing.

**Flexibility:** The flexibility in terms of rescheduling one's hours of work/work days, scaling down hours or rearranging work hours to fit with family demands was appreciated by the participants. It fostered the participants' inner strength and motivation to cope with the pandemic-induced anxiety and stress.

**Technology:** Regular virtual catch-ups with colleagues, supervisors and the wider office network, geared towards professional work and personal wellbeing, played a key role in connecting and collaborating during lockdown-induced WFH. Participants were able to adapt to the unique environment due to the availability of appropriate tools and the usage of technology.

## CONCLUSION

The Covid-19 pandemic imposed WFH for businesses around the world. This study explores the experiences and perceptions of a sample of working parents while working from home, and possible factors that contribute to resilience during a pandemic. A sense of belonging and team participation increased during the pandemic, and virtual catch-ups helped in keeping people connected, which reduced stress to some extent. However, the participants faced considerable challenges related to long work hours and blurring of work-life boundaries amidst the additional burden of childcare and schooling, against the backdrop of pandemic-related stress and anxiety. This impacted on their performance and productivity, especially in the initial period of lockdown. Participants also mentioned pandemic-related stress – managing work and children, working long hours, and adjusting to pandemic-imposed WFH as sources of stress and health difficulties.

Study results show that the participants – and, by implication, many working parents – appreciated the flexibility of WFH as a way to manage work and family demands, and they increasingly desire it as a future work option. Organisations can learn from the pandemic, and need to implement interventions that encourage resilience, particularly for employees who have dependents at home, and veer towards a hybrid model, combining face-to-face and virtual practice. There needs to be a shift in the research, focusing on understanding how to maximise the benefits of remote working, as the question of whether or not to implement telework is a topic of the past. The key implication for organisations is to be mindful of the unique needs and challenges that working parents face when working from home, and to nurture a culture of empathy while providing the right work set-up, including the use of virtual tools to connect and collaborate for WFH effectiveness. WFH brings flexibility in managing work and family; however, more research is needed to determine how to overcome challenges such as decreased productivity and high stress levels working parents experience when working from home.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

A timeline of alert level changes, dates of key events and the duration of the State of National Emergency. (A State of National Emergency was declared due to Covid-19. It was in force between 12:21pm on 25 March 2020 and 12:21pm on Wednesday 13 May 2020.)

TABLE 1. TIMELINE OF ALERT LEVELS DURING COVID-19 IN NEW ZEALAND. SOURCE: UNITE AGAINST COVID-19, 2020.

<b>History of the Covid-19 Alert System in NZ (First nationwide lockdown)</b>
<b>28 February 2020</b>
First Covid-19 case reported in New Zealand.
<b>14 March 2020</b>
The Government announces anyone entering New Zealand must self-isolate for 14 days, except those arriving from the Pacific.
<b>19 March 2020</b>
All indoor gatherings of more than 100 people are to be cancelled. Borders close to all but New Zealand citizens and permanent residents.
<b>21 March 2020</b>
The Government introduces the 4-tiered alert level system to help combat COVID-19. The Prime Minister announces that New Zealand is at Alert Level 2.
<b>23 March 2020</b>
At 1:30pm the Prime Minister announces New Zealand has moved to Alert Level 3, effective immediately. In 48 hours, New Zealand will move to Alert Level 4.
<b>25 March 2020</b>
At 11:59pm, New Zealand moves to Alert Level 4, and the entire nation goes into self-isolation. A State of National Emergency is declared at 12:21pm.
<b>29 March 2020</b>
New Zealand reports its first Covid-19-related death.
<b>31 March 2020</b>
The State of National Emergency is extended at 9:27am.
<b>20 April 2020</b>
The Prime Minister announces New Zealand will remain at Alert Level 4 for an additional 5 days. New Zealand will remain at Alert Level 3 for 2 weeks, before the status is reviewed.
<b>27 April 2020</b>
New Zealand moves to Alert Level 3 at 11:59pm.
<b>4 May 2020</b>
No new cases of Covid-19 are reported in New Zealand.
<b>11 May 2020</b>
The Prime Minister outlines the plan to move to Alert Level 2.
<b>13 May 2020</b>

New Zealand moves to Alert Level 2 at 11:59pm. The State of National Emergency expires at 12:21pm.
<b>8 June 2020</b>
The Ministry of Health reports that there are no more active cases of Covid-19 in New Zealand. At 11:59pm, New Zealand moves to Alert Level 1.

## Appendix 2

TABLE 2: PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS.

Participant ID	Gender	Age range	Role/ Position	Yrs. of experience (current org)	Total work experience	Lockdown bubble
P1	M	36-45	Manager	1yr	23yrs	Wife and two children (intermediate and high school)
P2	F	25-35	Finance business partner	10 yrs	11 yrs	Husband and two children (pre-school and primary)
P3	F	36-45	Instructional designer	2.5 years	20 years	Husband, two children (primary school)
P4	F	46-55	Design head	9 years	25 years	Husband and two children (primary and high school)
P5	F	46-55	HR co-ordinator	2.5 yrs	17 yrs	Husband, one child (primary school)
P6	M	36-45	Business partner	10 yrs	17 yrs	Wife and three children (pre-school, primary and intermediate)
P7	F	36-45	Sr. associate	2.5 yrs	10 yrs	Husband and two children (pre-school)
P8	M	36-45	Associate professor	5 yrs	16 yrs	Wife and two children (pre-school and intermediate)
P9	F	46-55	Practice manager	4 yrs	25 yrs	Husband, two children (primary school)
P10	F	36-45	Practice manager	2.5 yrs	12 yrs	Husband, three children (primary, intermediate and high school)