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A Post-Pandemic Critical Evaluation of Remote Working Influences on Affective Well-being, Work-life and Job Satisfaction.

Dr Joseph Brady
Marketing and Sales Lecturer, Researcher and Consultant, Amsterdam School of International Business, Netherlands.

Dr Garry Prentice
Psychology Lecturer, Dublin Business School, Dublin.

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Abstract

The advent of the Covid-19 pandemic forced many employees to work remotely from home, solidifying the use of digital processes as a normal way of working, and in this post-pandemic world, many employees continue to work from home (Silver, 2023). However, there have been few studies looking into the affective aspects of this new remote/ hybrid working normality. The Affective Events Theory (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996) has highlighted the importance of affective state in influencing employee job satisfaction and behaviour (Wegge et al., 2006), which is the focus of the current research. Participants were recruited anonymously through social media (N=128) and pseudo-anonymously through an online panel provider sample (N=112). The study implemented a correlational quantitative questionnaire design examining relationships based on the AET framework using questions pertaining to gender, age, children at home, years in job, area where home office is based, and rating of home internet connection alongside questions from pre-existing scales covering social atmosphere, personality dispositions, affective wellbeing, work-life balance, job satisfaction, and job search activities. The descriptive statistics indicate an overall mild impact from isolation and distractions from friends or other media, on average. The standard deviation indicated that some individuals experienced severe isolation and distractions while working from home. Perceptions of positive work inducements in relation to social atmosphere at work since the pandemic averaged around the same as before the pandemic but some rated social atmosphere experiences as lower. The path analysis results of the study indicate that the relationships chosen based on the AET model sufficiently cover the important relationships within the data, providing support for the utility of AET. Most notably, greater levels of isolation linked to poorer social atmosphere and affective well-being, with lower affective well-being linking to lower job satisfaction predicting more job searching behaviours in some cases. Greater emotional

stability lowered work-life imbalances and enhanced affective well-being. It is particularly important for individuals who manage virtual teams to consider the employee impact of remote working affect-related factors and this current study offers guidance on how to implement changes to deal with and alleviate these issues..

Keywords: Covid-19; New Remote/Hybrid Working Normality; Affective Events Theory; Path Analysis; Isolation; Social Atmosphere; Affective-Wellbeing; Work-Life Imbalance; Job Satisfaction.

Introduction

Even before the advent of the Coronavirus pandemic, virtual teams had already become an integral part of business working culture. Virtual teams (VT's) are comprised of individuals working in a geographically separated space, primarily using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (Lipnack and Stamps, 1997). Working virtually affords companies the ability to effectively have employees managing projects across disparate geographical locations, which can provide a myriad of benefits. Beneficial factors of this type of work include the ability to incorporate greater diversity of thought and culture, the potential for more effective work and the possibility for an organization to work within more complex and challenging project environments (Bhat, 2017). However, virtual work can also present certain challenges. Difficulties such as a potential lack of collaboration between team members, linguistic and cultural dispersion and feelings of isolation can disrupt effective collaboration (Morrison-Smith and Ruiz, 2020). The compilation of these issues can inhibit team effectiveness significantly, and thus at times, also limit the success of virtual work in comparison to teams working in the same location (Dubey, 2009). Despite this, due to the infusion of technology, and the socio-cultural attitude changes related to virtual work, the use of ICT as a working tool has become a necessity. Furthermore, with the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, most employees were forced to perform remote work, in effect solidifying the use of digital processes as a normal way of working (Garro-Abarca et al., 2021). Subsequently in this post- pandemic world, many companies have continued to allow employees to telework from home (Silver, 2023). While there has been a plethora of extant literature examining virtual work in the pandemic, there have been few studies looking into the affective aspects of this new normality. This study seeks to examine the impact of social atmosphere and affective well-being in the post-pandemic work environment, using the Affective Events Theory (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996) as a framework (See Figure 1.), with the aim to provide leaders effective tools to help improve outcomes in a modern and digitally dominated workplace.

Affective Events Theory (AET)

Previous research studies applying the AET (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996) have highlighted the importance of affective state in influencing employee job satisfaction and behaviour (Wegge et al., 2006). Significant problems can arise on occasions where there is a decline in affective well-being. That is, factors such as work environment features, work events and employee disposition can impact employee affective well-being, and ultimately can have an impact on judgement driven behaviours, work attitudes and affect driven behaviours (Wegge et al., 2006).

Furthermore, verbal promises made by company leaders to employees, which are often reciprocal and can change over time, can also create implicit expectations and thus psychological contracts (Rousseau, 2018). Breaches in such promises can result in increased stress for the employee, which can manifest itself in a myriad of different ways, such as physical and psychological problems and lack of concentration (Cheng, 2021). This can be further exacerbated in the virtual environment, given the limited contact and challenges for the development of trust between leadership and employees (Piccoli and Ives, 2003). Contrarily, when promises are kept, and psychological contracts are honoured, it can result in increased job satisfaction. trust and improved results (Conway and Briner, 2002). The Covid pandemic resulted in many organizations having to make rapid and drastic changes, which may have had a significant impact on employees through breaches of the psychological contract. Furthermore, as the workplace has changed to more hybrid state, and people are becoming more attuned to working outside of the office setting, there is the potential for exacerbation of this issue in the future. Therefore, leaders must consider this impact, as these breaches may not just reduce productivity, but can also impact the affective state of their team members.

Social Atmosphere in the Workplace

One of the challenges of virtual work is the fact that individuals must often work alone, and thus have limited face to face contact with leadership and colleagues. Research has demonstrated the importance of a good social atmosphere within the workplace. Many studies have examined the most effective methods to improve worker morale, productivity, and relationships through managing employee social atmosphere (Daniels et al., 2017). However, working outside of a social atmosphere can contribute to feelings of loneliness and separation from their associated teams, which in turn can negatively impact both the private and working lives of individuals (Erdil and Ertosun, 2011). A component of this phenomenon is related to overall psychological well-being, which can impact the overall mental state of individuals (O'Donnell et al., 2014). When an employee is led with methods promoting positive psychology (PS), such as stimulating achievement, motivation and employee creativity and knowledge, this can result in reduction of employee self-induced stress, and therefore an improved performance and greater individual and organizational results (Kour et al., 2019). Furthermore, positive experiences in teamwork, can elicit similar shared experiences with other members of the team (Walter and Bruch, 2008). Even

small, informal conversations in the office environment can enhance collaboration and promote higher job satisfaction (Markum, 2021). However, when working from a home office, implementing PS methods might be more challenging, as people receive less coaching, communicate with fewer colleagues, and have fewer individual meetings with their supervisors (Gibbs et al., 2021). Therefore, the difficulty arises of how to maintain a coherent and collaborative environment in the somewhat isolated working environment of virtual offices. One important aspect of this is the necessity to build trust, and to allow for employee psychological safety, which allows them to freely speak their mind without the fear of negative consequences (Zhang, et al., 2010). When an employee feels that their working environment allows them to speak freely, this can also contribute to practices of greater team sharing and communication (Zhang, et al., 2010).

Job Satisfaction, Work-Life Balance, and Job Turnover

Research has demonstrated a clear correlation between happy employees and productive work, both in the traditional work setting and the virtual environment (Bellet, et al., 2023; Oswald et al., 2015). Employee happiness can be defined as a cognitive and perceptual state in which people feel generally positive about their work (Benuyenah and Pandya, 2020). Affective mood states can also drive important behaviours in the workplace. Many factors can drive affective psychological well-being, including mood, employee contentment, motivational factors, and job security in work (Kundi et al., 2021). These feelings, in turn, can potentially drive behaviour and job satisfaction. Specifically, the pursuit of employee eudaimonic well-being (a focus on purpose or meaning in life) can have a greater impact than hedonic experiences (pleasure) on performance overall (Peiro, 2019). Job satisfaction can be driven by affective intentions and feedback within a current working role or job (Vroom, 1964). A positive attitude towards work would indicate positive job satisfaction. In the presence of positive job satisfaction, employees may have greater organizational commitment and higher motivation (Armstrong, 2006).

A critical question that has arisen during the pandemic is the impact that working remotely and at home has on work-life balance. Some research has demonstrated that teleworking can provide an opportunity for people to achieve greater flexibility in terms of both location and time of work (Coenen and Kok, 2014). However, in some cases, working from home can attribute to the perception of longer working hours, due to the lack of boundaries between an office and home, challenges in concentration due to distractions and greater stress overall (Crosbie and Moore, 2004). Poor work-life balance can result in negative psychological affective health, as well as declining work satisfaction (Gautam and Jain, 2018). Furthermore, lower work-life balance can contribute to a decrease in productivity and impact (Bartlett et al., 2021). Within the virtual workspace, being separated from the organization can create additional challenges related to work-life balance as the office is literally home, and this can also inhibit inclusion in company culture development (Goodman, 2021).

Finally, lower job satisfaction can have an impact not only on work performance, but also result in greater rates of attrition and turnover intention (Medina, 2012). Employees who are under performing in their job roles also tend to have a higher likelihood of quitting, while even good performers have been shown in one study to have a higher intention to quit (ITQ) (Zimmerman and Darnold, 2005). Whereas open communication of organizational change and fulfilment of psychological contract agreements have been shown to be negatively related to turnover intention (van den Heuvel et al., 2017). For organizational leaders, controlling these factors of job satisfaction, trust, employee ITQ and others can prove to be more difficult in the virtual setting. This current AET study seeks to provide a greater understanding of these issues for business leaders considering the new post-covid economy and virtual way of working. The current study examines work environment features, work events, dispositions effects on affective driven behaviours, reactions and work attributes, while also examining affective reactions and work attributes effects on judgement driven behaviours (See Figure 1).

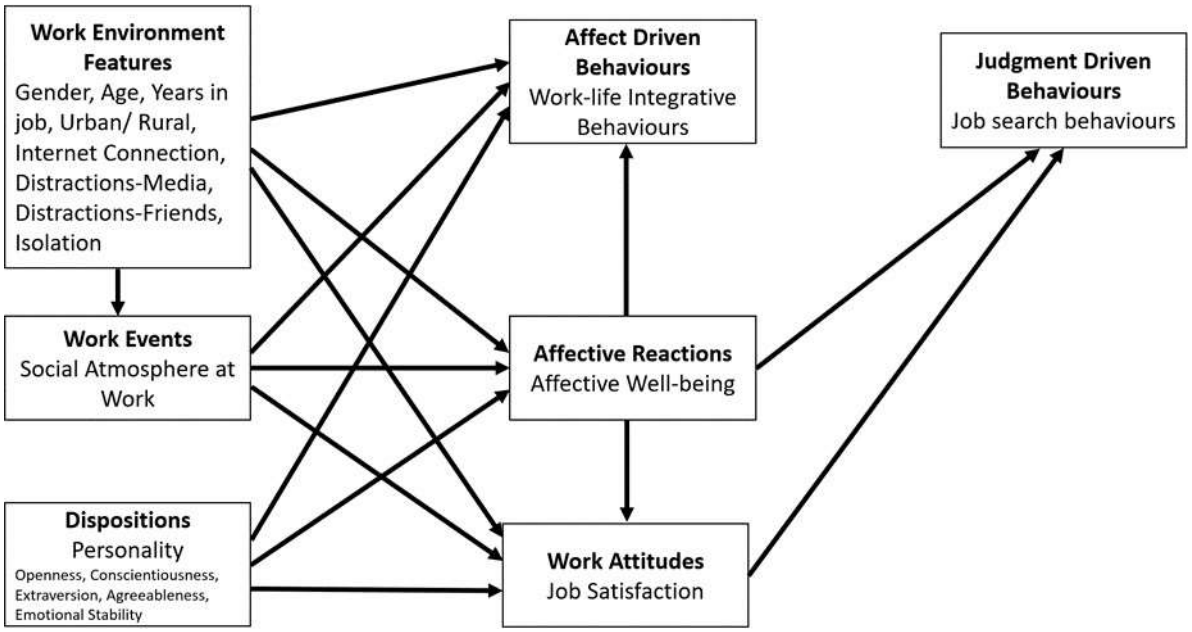

Figure 1. Path analysis model examining Affective Events Theory Relationships

Method

Sample and Procedure

Participants were recruited anonymously through social media (n=128) and pseudo-anonymously through an online panel provider sample (n=112), that had access to participant contact details but no access to survey responses. The panel provided

sample were invited to complete the survey for a small monetary incentive. Data collection took place between 21st December 2021 and 22nd February 2022. After removal of incomplete responses and those not working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, the final sample size was 205 (Social media n=106; Panel n=99). Table 1 shows most of the sample were female (57.6%), slightly over half the sample were under 40 years old (56.5%), slightly under half had at least one child (45.9%), half the sample been in their job for less than 5 years (50.8%), most were from an urban area of residence (78.0%) and the majority had good to excellent internet connections (85.3%).

Design

The study implemented a correlational design through application of a path analysis model (See Figure 1.) examining relationships based on the Affective Events Theory framework (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996). The participant selection process involved implementing quota sampling facilitated by an online panel provider and a combination of convenience and snowball sampling via social media. The criterion variables were Judgement Driven Behaviours: Job Search Behaviours and Affect Driven Behaviours: Work-life Integrative Behaviours. Variables playing the dual role of criterion and predictor were Affective Reactions: Affective Well-being, Work Attitudes: Job Satisfaction, and Work Events: Social Atmosphere. The predictor variables were Work Environment Features (Gender, Age, Years in Job, Urban/ Rural, Internet Connection, Distractions-Media, Distractions-Friends and Isolation) and Dispositions (Personality: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Emotional Stability).

Table 1. Sample Demographic Features

Demographic Features	Sample Frequency	Sample Percentage
Gender		
Female	118	57.6%
Male	86	42.0%
Prefer not to say	1	0.5%
Total	**205**	**100.0%**
Age		
18-24 years	12	5.9%
25-29 years	38	18.5%
30-34 years	42	20.5%
35-39 years	24	11.7%
40-44 years	25	12.2%
45-49 years	17	8.3%
50-54 years	19	9.3%
55-59 years	19	9.3%
60-64 years	8	3.9%
65+ years	1	0.5%
Total	**205**	**100.0%**
Children at home		

Yes	94	45.9%
No	111	54.1%
Total	**205**	**100.0%**
Job years		
0-2 years	59	28.8%
3-5 years	45	22.0%
6-8 years	31	15.1%
9-11 years	16	7.8%
12-14 years	9	4.4%
15-17 years	11	5.4%
18-20 years	7	3.4%
21+ years	27	13.2%
Total	**205**	**100.0%**
Area of residence		
Urban	160	78.0%
Rural	45	22.0%
Total	**205**	**100.0%**
Internet connection		
Very poor	2	1.0%
Poor	8	3.9%
Moderate	20	9.8%
Good	103	50.2%
Excellent	72	35.1%
Total	**205**	**100.0%**

Materials

After information about the study inclusion criteria filter and consent-related questions, work environment features were included at the beginning of the questionnaire. These questions pertained to gender, age , children at home, years in job , area where home office is based, and rating of home internet connection. Subsequently, questions from pre-existing scales then covered work events (Social Atmosphere), dispositions (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Emotional Stability), affective reactions (Affective Wellbeing), affect driven behaviours (Work-life Balance), work attitudes (Job Satisfaction), and judgement driven behaviour (Job Search).

Social Atmosphere (Vos, Buyens and Schalk, 2003)
The social atmosphere dimension of the Psychological Contract Content Dimensions Scale (Vos et al., 2003) was used in the current study, with a modified set of response options in relation to statement relating to enforced working from home. Factor analysis and reliability checks in the De Vos et al. (2003) study verify the measure's consistency and accuracy. The possible range of scores for the summed scale is 4-20 based on a 5-point Likert scale, with a higher score indicating higher levels of satisfaction with the positive work-related inducement of social atmosphere.

Dispositions – Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) (Gosling et al., 2003)

This brief 10-item Likert scale is conducive with use within a study not solely focused on personality, as other scales are required for coverage of other pertinent constructs included within the model framework.. Although not as reliable or valid as longer scales, the TIFI provides adequate convergence with other big-five scales, test-retest reliability, and predictive validity (Gosling et al., 2003). Each set of 2 items consists of a pair of trait options falling within the big five dimensions of openness, consciousness, extraversion, agreeableness and emotional stability. Each item ranged from 1 (Disagree Strongly) to 7 (Agree Strongly), with each dimension possible ranges being 2-14, higher scores indicating greater levels of openness, consciousness, extraversion, agreeableness and emotional stability.

Affective Wellbeing – Ten item version of Daniels measure of affective well-being (Russell and Daniels, 2018)
The original five-factor 30-item Likert scale covered items relating to Anxiety-Comfort (AC), Depression-Pleasure (DP), Bored-Enthusiastic (BE), Tiredness-Vigour (TV), and Angry-Placid (AP), which was then reduced to 10-items, 1 positively and 1 negatively valanced item covering each of the five dimensions. Recommendations from the Harris and Daniels (2005) validation study indicate that reducing the number of factors, even to a single factor, fits best with a summative instruction approach. The current study used the summative instruction approach with the statement 'How did/ do you feel during working from home?', suggesting that a single summative dimension of affective wellbeing is relevant. The possible range of scores for the summed scale is 10-60, with a higher score indicating greater levels of affective wellbeing.

Work-life Balance (Sexton et al., 2016)
The Sexton et al. (2016) Work-life climate Likert scale was used in the current study to assess the work-life balance of the sample. These 8 items relating to work-life balance study were deemed to be a novel and reliable by Sexton et al. (2016). Participants were asked to reflect on the past week and choose between the options: "Rarely or none of the time (less than 1 day)", "Some or a little of the time (1-2 days)", "Occasionally or a moderate amount of time (3-4 days)" or "All the time (5-7 days)". The possible range of scores for the summed scale is 8-32, with a higher score indicating more negative levels of work-life balance or greater work-life imbalance.
Job Satisfaction (Rode, 2004)
The two Likert items measuring job satisfaction in the current study were reported to have good test-retest reliability in the research conducted by Rode (2004). Each item ranged from 1 (Very Dissatisfied) to 5 (Very Satisfied), with the possible range being 2-10, higher scores indicating greater levels of job satisfaction.

Job Search Behaviour (Abubakar, Megeirhi and Shneikat, 2018)
The 10-item job search behaviour Likert scale used in the current study were from Abubakar et al.'s (2018) adoptation of the Blau (1994) measure. A Confirmatory Factor Analysis conducted by Abubakar et al. (2018) provided support for the dimensionality, convergent and discrimant validity for the constructs examined, including Job Search Behaviour. The instruction used at the start of this section of the questionnaire

indicated 'Please read all statements carefully and then select whether or not (yes or no) you exhibited this behaviour while working at home.' Each item ranged from 1 (No) to 2 (Yes), with the possible range being 10-20, higher scores indicating more job searching behaviour.

Results

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Path Analysis Model Variables

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max	Possible Range
Work environment					
Distractions-Media	2.74	1.24	1	5	1-5
Distractions-Friends	2.49	1.19	1	5	1-5
Isolation	2.96	1.33	1	5	1-5
Work Events					
Social Atmosphere	11.68	4.01	4	20	4-20
Dispositions					
Openness	10.08	2.40	3	14	2-14
Conscientiousness	10.94	2.54	4	14	2-14
Extraversion	8.86	2.88	2	14	2-14
Agreeableness	10.24	2.38	2	14	2-14
Emotional Stability	9.81	2.85	2	14	2-14
Affective Reactions					
Affective Wellbeing	42.07	10.31	11	60	10-60
Affect Driven Behaviours					
Work-life Imbalance	14.59	4.82	8	32	8-32
Work Attitudes					
Job Satisfaction	7.53	1.96	2	10	2-10
Judgment Driven Behaviour					
Job Search	13.68	3.70	10	20	10-20

The descriptive statistics indicate mild impact from media (M=2.74) and friends distractions (2.49), on average, for the sample (See Table 2.). Impact from isolation was also at a mild level, on average (M=2.95). Nonetheless, the Standard Deviation and Maximum score statistics suggest that some of the sample had problematically high distraction impacts from media (SD=1.24) and friends (SD=1.19), along with severe isolation (SD=1.33). Perceptions of positive work inducements in relation to social atmosphere at work since the pandemic averaged around the same as before the pandemic (M=11.68) but Standard Deviation (SD=4.01) and Minimum score statistics indicate some of the sample rated their social atmosphere experiences as lower during/ post the pandemic (Min=4). The overall average dispositions of the sample were moderate to moderately high in relation to openness (M=10.08), consciousness (M=10.94), extraversion (M=8.86), agreeableness (M=10.24) and emotional stability (M=9.81). Reported levels of positive affective well-being feelings while working from home ranged between not at all/ a little to very much. When

considering the possible range (10-60), average affective well-being levels were moderately high (M=42.07). Work-life imbalance was quite low on average within the sample (M=14.59), but the standard deviation (SD=4.82) and range of scores (Min=8, Max=32) would suggest some sample struggled with work-life imbalances. On average, job satisfaction levels were moderately high (M=7.53), with the standard deviation (SD=1.96) and range of scores (Min=2, Max=10) indicating the presence of lower levels of job satisfaction also. Job searching levels were quite low across the sample (M=13.68), but the standard deviation (SD=3.70) and maximum scores (Max=20) suggest some were more actively seeking new job opportunities.

Table 3. Path Analysis Model Standardized Coefficients and R-Square Values

	Social Atmosphere	Affective Wellbeing	Work-life	Job Satisfaction	Job Search
Work environment					
Gender	.05	-.10*	-.05	.16*	-
Age	-.00	.07	.01	-.15*	-
Child	-.04	.02	-.09	-.06	-
Years in Job	.01	.02	-.01	.00	-
Urban/ Rural	.03	.05	.03	.09	-
Internet Connection	.14	.04	-.14*	-.06	-
Distractions-Media	.07	-.05	-.24**	.05	-
Distractions-Friends	.05	-.03	.18*	-.05	-
Isolation	-.32***	-.56***	.06	.07	-
Work Events					
Social Atmosphere		.13**	.18**	.22**	-
Dispositions					
Openness		.06	.12	.09	-
Conscientiousness		.04	-.00	-.05	-
Extraversion		.00	-.08	.15*	-
Agreeableness		-.06	-.04	.12	-
Emotional Stability		.20***	-.16*	-.05	-
Affective Reactions					
Affective Wellbeing		-	-	.35***	-.17*
Affect Driven Behaviours					
Work-life Imbalance		-	-	-	-
Work Attitudes					
Job Satisfaction		-	-	-	-.15*
Judgment Driven Behaviour					
Job Search		-	-	-	-
Model Summary Statistics					
R-Square	.12**	.63***	.39***	.25***	.07*

**p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001*

The path analysis model (See Figure 1 and Table 3) examining Affective Events Theory Relationships showed a good fit to the raw data (χ^2= 35.89 [21, 205], p < .05; CFI = .96; RMSEA = .06), with no modifications required. Significant variance was

explained for the outcome variables of social atmosphere (R^2 = .12), affective well-being (R^2 = .63), work-life imbalance (R^2 = .39), job satisfaction (R^2 = .25) and job search (R^2 = .07), most notably with affective well-being having nearly two thirds of its variance explained by model variables. Amongst the relationships examined in the model level of isolation had a significant negative moderate association with social atmosphere (β = -.32, p < .001) and a significant negative strong association with affective well-being (β = -.56, p < .001), suggesting greater levels of isolation linked to poorer social atmosphere and affective well-being. In addition, affective well-being had a significant positive association with job satisfaction (β = .35, p < .001), suggesting greater levels of affective well-being links to better job satisfaction levels.

The rest of the statistically significant associations between variables had weak standardised coefficients below the .30 threshold. These weak significant associations varied from the lowest, β = -.10, p = .035 (gender and affective well- being), to the highest, β = -.24, p = .001 (Distraction-Media and work-life imbalance). Amongst these weak associations, the negative links between internet connection quality (β = -.14, p = .016), distraction from media (β = -.24, p = .001), and emotional stability with work-life imbalance (β = -.16, p = .019) suggest better internet connection and less distraction from friends associate with more work-life imbalance, while emotional stability lessens work-life imbalances, with a positive link between distraction from friends and work-life imbalance (β = .18, p = .015) suggesting more distraction from friends leads to more work-life imbalances. Although still weak in association, lower levels of affective well-being (β = -.17, p = .014) and job satisfaction (β = -.15, p = .031) significantly predict more job searching behaviours. Other weak statistically significant associations, suggest the positive influence of social atmosphere on affective well-being (β = .13, p = .004) and job satisfaction (β = .22, p
= .001), but also linking to more work-life imbalance (β = .18, p = .015), while males had greater levels of job satisfaction (β = .16, p = .015) and, conversely, females having greater levels of affective well-being (β = -.10, p = .035), with older individuals reporting lower levels of job satisfaction (β = -.15, p = .044). Finally, significant weak positive associations between the personality dispositions emotional stability and affective well-being (β = .20, p < .001), and extraversion with job satisfaction (β = .15, p = .034), suggest greater levels of emotional stability predict affective well-being while being more extraverted predicts greater job satisfaction.

Discussion

In the post-pandemic society, companies have increased their flexibility in allowing more employees to telework from home (Silver, 2023). A plethora of research

suggests that working in virtual teams can bring great benefit to an organization (Bhat, 2017). However, success does not come without challenges and virtual work can also present leaders with great difficulty as well (Morrison-Smith and Ruiz, 2020). This current study sought to uncover the impact of employee affective states on virtual workers with a focused examination of job satisfaction and behavioural factors. The basis of this aspect of the research was Weiss and Cropanzano's work on Affective Events Theory (1996). Furthermore, the current study sought to dig deeper into the impact of social atmosphere, or lack thereof, in virtual work and how working from home can influence positivity in the workplace. As isolation can be an important factor for individuals working from home, it was addressed in the research as well. In addition, the researchers sought to examine how the blend of work-life balance can influence these factors and further contribute to extant literature in this context.

The results of the study indicate that within the sampled cohort (N=205), there was an overall mild impact from isolation and distractions within the home workplace. In the context of this study, distractions were primarily defined as friends or other media. However, the standard deviation of the results indicated that some individuals experienced severe isolation and distractions while working from home. Furthermore, on average, perceptions of positive work inducements in relation to social atmosphere at work since the pandemic averaged around the same as before the pandemic but some rated their social atmosphere experiences as lower. The results also indicate that work-life imbalances were low within the cohort and job satisfaction levels were moderately high and thus overall, job searching levels were rather low. Nonetheless, again, standard deviation and maximum scores suggest that some individuals were actively seeking new work.

The path analysis results suggest that the relationships chosen based on the Affective Events Theory (AET) model (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996) stipulations sufficiently covered the important relationships within the data, while also explaining significant variation in variable scores, providing support for the utility of AET in this context. Most notably, greater levels of isolation linked to poorer social atmosphere and affective well-being, with lower affective well-being linking to lower job satisfaction predicting more job searching behaviours in some cases. In contrast within some of the weaker relationships in the model, higher levels of emotional stability lowered work-life imbalances and increased affective well-being. Thus, it would be important for organizational leaders of telecommuting/ remote workers to consider the impact of these factors on their employees.

Implications for Virtual Leaders

Through the examination of employee affective states and the implications of working in the virtual environment, this research highlights several important points for leaders of virtual teleworkers. Given the changes in workforce behaviour and the proliferation of virtual work in modern society following the recent global pandemic, there are some critical considerations that should be considered to facilitate the process of improving outcomes and maintain higher affective states for remote employees. To begin with, it is important to consider that while teleworking continues to become more normalized in the modern workplace, challenges can still exist on an individual level. Virtual leaders should not forget that as previous literature has demonstrated and as was further demonstrated in some cases in this research, isolation can still be a problem for some teleworkers (Morrison-Smith and Ruiz, 2020). Thus, virtual leaders should look for opportunities to limit isolation and achieve a binding team environment in which employees come to the realization that they are a part of something greater than themselves and are part of the overall team.

Leaders should also recognize the importance of employee affective states and the idea that positive psychology can impact job satisfaction in employees (Vroom, 1964). They should strive to build trust quickly and maintain their promises throughout the course of the project or span of employment. In this way they can foster greater engagement and positive job satisfaction through continual maintenance of their existing psychological contracts (Conway and Briner, 2002; Rosseau, 2004). Checking in with employees and promoting an environment which contributes to a positive social atmosphere, employee well-being and experiences, are important steps in improving job satisfaction. Content people make better workers, and this should be the appetition of those who strive for better outcomes. (Bellet et al., 2023; Oswald et al., 2015). Thus, by establishing and maintaining employee trust, working to suppress feelings of isolation and following through on promises, virtual leaders can make the new digital way of working more effective and create happier teams in the process.

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