

Abstract

The long-standing COVID-19 pandemic caused the transformation of traditional work settings into remote settings in several organizations in Sri Lankan contexts to mitigate the spread of the virus. Although novel settings offered flexibility over conventional notions of work, this introduced new challenges to individuals' work-life balance, which was maidenly experienced by the workforce of the Sri Lankan port industry.

What are employees' perceptions of remote work settings as an alternative arrangement? the constraints faced by remote workers? and the strategies used to balance work and life were the major research questions of the study. Accordingly, the researcher focused on exploring the perception of remote workers on work-life balance as an alternative arrangement and examining the strategies adopted by the remote workers to balance the remote work arrangement and life activities as the study's primary objectives. The current study followed a qualitative design to explore the very delicate human perceptions. The findings of the study explored real-life experiences of remote workers in Sri Lanka's port sector using in-depth interviews and thematic analysis.

By capturing the subjective narratives of participants, the study seeks to uncover coping mechanisms employed by individuals to mitigate these challenges. The findings revealed that a mixed system of remote work and normal office settings would be ideal for extended periods. Most of the female subjects had difficulty managing work and life balance compared to the male participants. As strategies, some worked during the morning and evening time accordingly, and some could help the household while working remotely, which was highly appreciated during a stressful situation, specifically in parental care and childcare. Remote workers use flex times, particularly morning hours, to complete office tasks and leave evening time for family activities.

Ultimately, this study contributes a nuanced understanding of the interplay between remote work and work-life balance, offering valuable insights for individuals navigating remote work arrangements and organizations crafting policies to support a harmonious integration of work and personal life in the evolving landscape of the modern workplace and employee well-being.

Keywords: Remote work, Work-life balance, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Sri Lanka, Port Industry