# The Sociocultural Barriers of Work-From-Home Arrangement Due to COVID-19 Pandemic in Asia: Implications and Future Implementation

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## Abstract

The rapidly escalating COVID-19 pandemic entails many unprecedented life circumstances, including in the way people work. The social distancing policy has forced companies to adopt work-from-home (WFH) arrangement to maintain business sustainability amidst both health and economic crises. While in many developed countries, WFH arrangement has been a common practice, this is not the case in some Asian countries, particularly in countries where high power distance emphasizing heightened supervision and punishment among workers are still a preferred managerial style, such as Indonesia, China, India, and Thailand. For companies with such a power-reliance managerial style, WFH could be seen as a threat towards productivity as face-to-face supervision cannot be performed. On the other hand, not all workers have a positive attitude and a sense of readiness towards implementing WFH and having involuntary WFH arrangement adds as a potential stressor on top of those caused by management demands and lack of trust. While acknowledging that WFH is considered as beyond an option in this pandemic period, this commentary paper aims to critically identify key barriers of WFH implementation in some Asian countries, particularly in autocratic societies, using both theoretical and contextual approach. The paper concludes by discussing recommendation for future studies and proposing strategic implications for companies and workers to effectively adopt WFH arrangement, especially in societies where WFH is still a new practice or is involuntarily held.

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