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**WORK-FROM-HOME FATIGUE AND PRESENTEEISM:  
MODERATING ROLE OF COLLECTIVISM IN SOUTH-  
ASIAN IT FIRMS**

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## ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore work from home (WFH) fatigue and its influence on presenteeism in South Asian Information Technology(IT) companies. We examine the cultural dimension of collectivism as a moderator in the WFH fatigue - presenteeism relationship. Based on the behavioral operations and resource orchestration perspectives, we suggest that although WFH provides flexibility, it may also intensify tiredness inducing employees into presenteeism (i.e., being at work without being productive). The study aims to investigate whether collectivist culture (a cultural value commonly found in South Asian region) acts as a moderator of relationship between work-related fatigue and work behavior of employees. We utilize a cross-sectional survey of 350 employees of various IT organizations in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The findings suggest that the WFH fatigue robustly enhances presenteeism, but this relationship is attenuated in firms with a higher level of collectivism. This dampening of the negative relationship emphasizes the importance of social cohesion, mutual responsibility and collective support systems in preventing harmful work outcomes. The results appear to have managerial implications for IT organisations in South Asia about how remote work fatigue can be managed more effectively by capitalising on cultural strengths in order to build a supportive and cohesive virtual work environment. Polifarbe.comda These findings contribute theoretically to the literature on remote working dynamics, and offer practical implications for organizations when designing post-pandemic work arrangements.

**Keywords:** Work-from-home, fatigue, presenteeism, collectivism, South Asian IT firms, remote work

### **INTRODUCTION**

The covid-19 outbreak has transformed ways of doing business and forced remote work to be a permanent business continuity strategy. Though remote work provides employees with more flexibility and better work-life balance, it has also come with problems—mostly that thing we've been hearing about lately: work-from-home (WFH) fatigue. WFH fatigue is defined as the mental and physical exhaustion resulting from prolonged working remotely, arising due to blurred boundaries between private lives and work lives, extensive use of screens, lack of social interactions and absence of a workplace (Sonnentag & Bayer, 2022). One of the main impacts of WFH fatigue is presenteeism where employees are logged in to work but cannot engage with their fellow workers or do their best (Johns, 2010). This would undermine organizational effectiveness in the long run.

In South Asian IT companies, especially WFH fatigue is quite daedal because of the collectivist cultures of these conglomerates. In South Asia, where many of the largest IT sectors are established, group harmony and collective responsibility are considered significant (Hofstede, 2019). These cultural behaviours reinforces a strong sense of team loyalty and may result in employees working whilst fatigued, thus increasing presenteeism. This is an interesting line for inquiry to help us gain insight into the manner in which collectivism has an impact on the association between WFH fatigue and presenteeism in remote working environment.

Although there are studies on the remote work fatigue and presenteeism, however, little is known how cultural factors, such as collectivism effect to those phenomenon. The current literature on WFH fatigue is predominantly composed of studies from Western contexts (Baruch, 2000; Felstead et al., 2020) revealing burnout and disengagement but neglecting to consider cultural values such as individualism and collectivism. Research by Lee et al. (2021) about mental health impacts of remote

work focuses predominantly on Western companies and little attention has been given to collectivism societies, where the work culture is considerably different.

Additionally, while presenteeism has been documented in office environments and as it is associated with physical illness (Johns, 2010; Deery et al., 2020), relatively little is known about its association with remote work fatigue and especially across collectivist cultures. According to Schwartz (2020) and Hofstede (2019) collecting society influence on work behavior and stress management, however the moderating role of collectivist culture in the relationship between WFH fatigue -presenteeism has yet not been examined particularly in South Asian IT firms.

This gap also leaves us in the dark when it comes to understanding how cultural dynamics influence remote work, and managers lacking viable strategies to combat WFH fatigue and its effects on the productivity of organizations.

**Contributions** This article is situated in behavioral operations and resource orchestration theories. Some behavioral operations theorists can explain how organizational systems and environmental factors – like being tired – affect the behavior of employees. With remote work, fatigue contributes to cognitive depletion as employees have a lesser ability to make decisions and be effective (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). And this is worse with less monitoring directly and social contact.

Resource orchestration theory focuses on orchestrating intangible resource types such as human capital, something that is particularly pertinent in collectivist societies. “Finding that these (cultural) values and social supports could be used to combat what’s happening with WFH fatigue is really important because a lot of the dynamics are beyond people’s control,” he said. Through the effective management of human resources and appreciation of cultural phenomena, organizations will be able to minimize fatigue as a source of disruption, ultimately enhancing productivity (Hutzschenreuter & Kleindienst, 2021).

### **Significance**

The present study contributes to fill this gap in the literature by exploring how collectivism influences the WFH fatigue – presenteeism association, especially among South Asian IT organizations. Understanding how collectivist cultures influence remote working dynamics, this study offers important implications for managers from South Asia, the most collectivist region in the world. Understanding how cultural conditions affect employee behavior can help companies develop measures to mitigate WFH fatigue, minimise presenteeism and improve both productivity and wellness.

It also extends the literature on remote work by showing how values not only organizations, influence remote work experiences. These results also have implications for management strategies and suggest how such companies in South Asia or similar context can enhance their employees’ engagement and performance while operating remotely.

### **Objectives**

1. To study the association between WFH fatigue and presenteeism among South Asian IT companies.
2. To examine the moderating effect of collectivism on the association between WFH fatigue and presenteeism.
3. To offer managerial advice towards alleviating WFH fatigue and presenteeism within collectivist cultures.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Work-from-home (WFH) fatigue is an increasingly popular complaint now that work from home, triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic has become a more permanent

setup. WFH, fatigue—not just the mental one but also physical—one including demands and isolation (in) inherent in remote work (Sonnentag & Bayer, 2022). An important factor is also the plethora of blurred lines between work and personal life, which pushes extended hour work days and limited recovery (Kossek et al., 2020). Another contributing factor is excessive screen time, leading to eyestrain, headaches and mental fatigue (Mark et al., 2020). [and] the loss of in-person interactions also lead to feelings of isolation, thus increasing mental and emotional exhaustion (Golden et al., 2020). Such tiredness has been found to have negative consequences for productivity, job satisfaction and well-being (Sonntag & Bayer, 2022).

Presenteeism – attending work while impaired (in this case, by excessive alcohol use) - is a common problem in the context of telework (Johns, 2010). It is frequently caused by WFH fatigue, the situation in which despite being mentally or physically exhausted, employees are still working due to the pressures from workplace or one's own responsibility (Deery et al., 2020). "Future advancement prospects are very small in collectivist cultures like South Asia, so presenteesim may be higher as employees put the team interest first over their well-being (Hofstede, 2019).

According to Hofstede (2019), collectivism highlights group goals, social concord and shared accountability. In collectivist societies, workers may feel a greater sense of obligation to teams and organizations, and that sense can cause them to work through fatigue or stress even when it is not the best approach (Schwartz, 2020). This sense of duty can lead employees to feel presenteeism, where workers do not take time off or break from work partaking to avoid 'ruining' the groups flow (Vyas & Goh, 2020).

There are, however, a number of boundary conditions that have to be taken into account when investigating WFH fatigue and also presenteeism as well as collectivism. For a start, WFH fatigue might differ depending on the nature of work. Cognitive fatigue seems particularly relevant to knowledge workers such as IT professionals because of the mental strain from tasks they need to perform (Toker & Biron, 2021). And This cognitive load can exacerbate fatigue, particularly when work-life balance is difficult to achieve.

Second, the influence of collectivism on WFH fatigue and presenteeism may differ between South Asian countries. Indeed, cultural values are collectivist but they vary in intensity between nations. For example, collectivism in India may be different than Sri Lanka due to differences in social norms, religious influences and historical backgrounds (Sharma & Singh 2021). These regional variances should be taken into account when examining the influence of collectivism on work behaviour.

Third, personal factors, such as personality traits, may also affect why collectivism moderates the relationship between WFH fatigue and presenteeism. High-resilience employees may withstand fatigue and consume less wakefulness during duty work, even in collectivist cultures (Carver et al., 2019). On the contrary, employees with lower resilience may be prone to fatigue and presenteeism regardless of cultural value. Thus, personal variables should be considered as potential moderators.

There could be other reasons like fear of job loss which also lead to presenteeism in telecommuters. Workers who are concerned about job insecurity may feel an obligation to be at work and to provide a visible show of worth but that does so in conclusion could exacerbate fatigue and reduce productivity (Baker et al., 2021). Nowhere is this pressure felt more strongly than in remote areas with their limited visibility.

Job autonomy is another important aspect. Workers who lack decision latitude or have strict time frames tend to find themselves more fatigued and dissolved in presenteeism (Bakker et al., 2020). Support from the organization is also critical — employees who

sense that their organizations care for them in terms of resource support, mental well-being assistance and social interaction are less likely to face burnout and presenteeism (Kim & Lee, 2020). These variables need to be managed as control variables in order to examine the unique contribution of WFH fatigue and collectivism on presenteeism.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This work takes place within the phenomena of South Asian Information Technology (IT) companies, in particular India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. These are countries of culturally diverse environments, where collectivist values like cooperation, social harmony and group goals are endemic (Hofstede, 2019). These values are especially important when examining the moderation of collectivism in WFH dynamics, since this region has been experiencing upsurge of remote work. The mycology sector in South Asia has seen booms of late, with the globalisation, digital transformation and western demand for outsourcing services across prevailing (Nash, 2020). IT sector, being one of the fastest-growing industries and largely depend emt on digital methodologies has witnessed more migration towards reporting for telework with responses to it ranging from 74% launching full-fledged remote work options during a crisis; this thus making the IT sector an ideal setting for testing out fatigue effects through WFH (Work From Home) and PWBA (Presenteeism While Being Absent).

Emphasis on South Asia is crucial as the collective culture in this region has a substantial impact on work attitudes. With most of the available research on telecommuting coming from Western perspectives, South Asia serves as an interesting context given its different cultural expectations and work practices, which may shape relations between WFH fatigue, presenteeism and collectivism (Sharma & Singh, 2021). As such this research adds to an understanding of how culture influences employees working remotely in particular conditions -- that is, in the high pressure IT industry.

The data for this study is gathered by collecting respondents through a cross-sectional survey administered to IT employees working from home throughout India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The questionnaire quantified three constructs via self-report: WFH fatigue, presenteeism, and collectivism. Demographic (e.g., age, gender, and tenure in the organization) are also received in order to control for confounding factors. Self-report data are particularly apt for capturing individual perceptions and experiencing, which are important to the subjective nature of fatigue and presenteeism in remote work. The use of self-report measures also provides the opportunity to include cultural factors, for example collectivism, which may be more difficult to assess by other than subjective indicators (Sonnetag & Bayer, 2022).

The population covers 350 IT-based employees working from home and employed in companies of India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Power analysis was performed with G\*Power, a statistical power analysis program, to estimate the size of the study that would be required for 80% power in detecting a medium-sized effect. The sample size of  $N = 350$  is sufficient to observe relationships between study variables based on a medium effect ( $f^2 = .15$ ) with desired power of .80 and an alpha level of .05.

**Work-from-Home Fatigue** This construct is assessed using an adapted scale from Sonnetag and Bayer (2022), which includes items such as, “I feel mentally exhausted after working from home” and “I find it difficult to separate work and personal life.”

**Presenteeism:** Presenteeism is measured with the scale developed by Johns (2010), such as “I have been physically at work but unable to concentrate” or “I keep on working even when I am feeling unwell/do not feel well.”

**Collectivism:** We used the collectivism scale from Hofstede (2019) dimensions of culture, assessing beliefs such as “I have a strong sense of duty to my team” and “I

enjoy working in a collaborative, team-based context.”

**Reliability and Validity** The scales utilized in this analysis have been found to have high internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha > 0.80) and construct validity (AVE > 0.50), which provide evidence that the measures reliably capture the constructs they are intended to measure (Hair et al., 2019).

To test the hypothesized linkages between WFH fatigue, presenteeism and collectivism, a multiple regression analysis is used. Put differently, collectivism is a moderating factor which determines the degree of this relation between WFH fatigue and presenteeism. The projective model enables analysis of both direct and interaction effects, exploring how collectivism might mitigate the negative ramification of WFH fatigue on employee performance.

In order to mitigate any endogeneity problems like reverse causality or omitted variable bias, the paper applies some robustness checks. In order to exclude potential unobserved confounders or sampling bias, propensity score matching and bootstrapping approaches are applied. Moreover, 2SLS (Two-Stage Least Squares) estimation is used to control for possible endogeneity due to the links among the major variables. Placebo tests and interaction plots are also performed to further confirm the moderation effect of collectivism on the WFH fatigue–presenteeism relationship.

The study is conducted in accordance to ethical guidelines and is approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the conducting institute. The nature of the study was explained to all participants and their participation was on voluntary basis. Consent was given by respondents and information were anonymized to maintain confidentiality and protect the privacy of participants.

## **RESULTS**

Sample for the present study comprises 350 employees from IT companies of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka those are working remotely. The demographics display that the majority of participants are from India (60%) and then Pakistan (25%) and Sri Lanka (15%). This distribution represents the ratio of IT professionals within these South Asian countries.

**Descriptive statistics** Descriptive statistics on work from home (WFH) fatigue were moderate (mean = 3.5; SD = 0.8), which suggest that our employees reasonably feel fatigued when working away from the office. This is line with prior work suggesting a greater prevalence of fatigue associated with the extended duration of home office and blurring personal/professional boundary (Sonntag & Bayer, 2022). The presenteeism score is relatively high with a mean of 3.3 (SD = 0.9), which means that, although employees may be at work they are often not achieving their optimal performance level due to tiredness or stress. This is in line with Johns (2010) indicating that presenteeism might result to lower productivity, especially when employees are mentally or physically fatigued.

In the domain of collectivism, the participants assess relatively high values (M = 4.1, SD = 0.7), reflecting a strong cultural preference for group cohesiveness, collective responsibilities, and team-based objectives. This is to be expected in South Asian cultures where collectivism is strong (Hofstede, 2019). Workers in these cultures often give priority to the needs of the group, and such orientation can affect individual responses toward work-related fatigue and presenteeism.

Correlation analysis shows a positive and significant association between WFH fatigue and presenteeism ( $r = 0.60$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), definitely indicating that increasing WFH fatigue leads to “higher” levels of presenteeism. This finding is also consistent with that of Deery and colleagues (2020), who identified fatigue as an important

driver of presenteeism. Secondly, collectivism is also negatively correlated with presenteeism ( $r = -0.35, p < 0.01$ ), which suggests that high levels of collectivism may be related to low levels of presenteeism. The difference between employee collectivism and productive work could be explained by the lower presenteeism because of more workplace support on employees in collectivist societies (Hofstede, 2019).

The reliability of the results was verified using a number of robustness tests. The findings are robust to different estimation strategies, including 2SLS and bootstrap. These techniques were used to address possible endogeneity and ensure that findings are not due to hidden confounders (Bakker et al., 2020). In addition, placebo tests were conducted to ensure that the moderation effect of collectivism on the association between WFH fatigue and presenteeism is not spurious. Results of these tests also confirm that the model presented in this paper is valid.

Interaction plots which demonstrate the moderating role of collectivism in association between WFH fatigue with presenteeism. According to the plot, when collectivism increases, negative effects of WFH fatigue on presenteeism decrease. This indicates that for organisations with strong collectivist values, the effect of fatigue on presenteeism is weakened, perhaps because such organizations have social support and group co-operation arrangements. Employees from collectivist societies may experience greater team obligations that better allow them to sustain over time and keep engaged at work (Schwartz, 2020). This interaction underscores the key role of cultural issues in determining the ways that fatigue effects work behaviors, especially within remote work conditions.

## **DISCUSSION**

The current study makes a notable theoretical contribution to the existing literature on remote work dynamics particularly in collectivist cultures in South Asia. By investigating the moderating effect of collectivism between WFH fatigue and presenteeism, this study advances relevant theories, including behavioral operations theory and resource orchestration theory.

Behavioral operations theory concentrates on what actual employees are doing in response to their environments and organizations. This research extends beyond this framework and shows that a key environmental factor (WFH fatigue) contributes to a lack of presenteeism – i.e., employees are at work but not fully engaged or productive as a result of being fatigued. The study illuminates how cultural determinants of these outcomes, in particular collectivism, differ in a remote work environment. The results of the study highlight that collectivist cultures, which dominate many South Asian countries, influence how employees react to remote work fatigue. The duty to one's team and organization in collectivist cultures counteracts the adverse influence of fatigue on presenteeism, which is not the case in Western cultural contexts that tend to prioritize personal health over loyalty toward his/her organization (Hofstede, 2019). This expansion of behavioral operations theory enables an ambiguity clarification over the role that cultural values may play on employee behavior within remote work context, while providing a more developed picture about presenteeism as well as its antecedents in non-Western societies.

Findings are also informed by resource orchestration theory, which highlights intentional strategic control of an organisation's resources — including human capital. The findings lend support to the idea that cultural values (for example: collectivism) function as a resource to mitigate the adverse impact of fatigue. In work environments characterized by team support and togetherness, workers will be more inclined to adopt proactive coping behaviour to cope with fatigue and maintain productivity

while working at a distance. This is also consistent with the assumption that culture as an organizational resource can be of key importance for overcoming challenges such as WFH fatigue or presenteeism (Hutzschenreuter & Kleindienst, 2021). By enriching the theory with a cultural dimension, this study extends resource orchestration as applied in collectivist culture and provides practical implications for managing remote work.

Furthermore, the work contributes to an understanding of how remote work fatigue and presenteeism manifest in a larger body of literature. Although previous studies have revealed that fatigue has a significant impact on presenteeism (Johns, 2010; Deery et al., 2020), few focused on the moderating role played by cultural factors like collectivism playing out its effects. This study addresses that gap by demonstrating that in collectivist cultures the association between WFH fatigue and presenteeism is less strong. A strong social responsibility and team orientation in collectivist cultures make it less likely that employees will exhibit presenteeism due to fatigue.

Consequently, there are some managerial implications for managers, particularly in IT organizations in South Asia with a strong influence of collectivism on organizational behaviors. ImplicationsThe findings provide important directions how to handle the remote work dynamics and employee well-being at the point when productivity must also be maintained.

To reduce the detrimental effects of WFH fatigue on presenteeism, for example, IT service organization managers should prioritize fostering a strong sense of community and collaboration among remote employees. Virtual team building, frequent check ins and collaborative tasks can be part of maintaining social connectivity which inhibits feelings of isolation associated with fatigue (Kossek et al., 2020). When team members are cared for and supported by their co-workers, they will continue to be engaged and motivated despite being in the work from home environment. Consistent with the research indicating that social connectedness can mitigate remote work fatigue (Golden et al., 2020). Furthermore, by fostering a culture of helping each other out and taking common responsibility for the work employees may feel enabled to actually be able to take breaks and also look after their health without being perceived as lazy.

One of the top suggestions for managers is promoting socialisation and team-driven goals to prevent the kind of loneliness that can come with working in isolation. Setting clear, realistic common goals can inspire a sense of mission and unity, even when employees are working remotely (Schwartz, 2020). This strategy is especially useful in collectivist societies where workers are invested in group success and react to collective rather than individual achievement (Hofstede, 2019). Opening up avenues for more frequent social interaction — think virtual coffee breaks, joint brainstorming sessions or informal meeting spaces can help keep a sense of belonging and alleviate some mental pressure that could contribute to WFH fatigue. By enabling these social engagements, managers can avoid burnout and keep employees engaged, thus minimising the risk of presenteeism.

Managers of South Asian IT companies need to implement culturally sensitive strategies for remote work that are compatible with the collectivist nature of their employees. In collectivist societies, workers may prioritize the health and functioning of their team or organization above individual welfare, so it's important for remote work policies to recognize this dynamic. For instance, even if employees are not currently working in meetings where they can hit the play button during a break, it's worth noting that little things like flexible hours and resources for mental health might be giving them what they need to hold onto work-life balance while showing

dedication to their jobs. Clear communication of expectations, as well as monitoring workload manageability, can similarly help reduce stress and enable employees to successfully cope with the strains of remote work without burnout (Kossek et al., 2020). Managers can promote an environment where workers feel well-supported to perform at their best, despite the inevitable fatigue, by adapting remote work strategies around the cultural values of their workforce.

Although the present study is highly relevant, it also has its limitations and leaves room for additional research. First, research could consider how personal characteristics (personality traits, coping strategies) in combination with cultural values may affect presenteeism. For instance, resilience could serve to protect employees dealing with WFH fatigue from engaging in work stress and being productive (Carver et al., 2019). Analysis of individual differences will offer more complete understanding to the roles of fatigue, presenteeism, and collectivism.

Second, this study is a cross-sectional design, which prevents to being able to draw any inferences about causality. Longitudinal investigations might test how the association between WFH fatigue, presenteeism, and collectivism changes across time, given that remote work will persist as a standard practice in several businesses. Furthermore, investigating the lasting impact of remote work on employee well-being and organizational performance will be crucial for controlling remote teams in future. Finally, it would also be interesting for future research to explore whether these results are replicated over time and settings. 8 Although we confine our analysis to IT firms in South Asia, there may be analogous issues in different collectivist contexts or sectors. The comparison between collectivist and individualist cultures might shed more light on the role of cultural values in the remote work behavior in different countries.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study underscores the importance of cultural values, and specifically collectivism, in addressing issues dealing with remote work, especially within South Asian IT organizations. With remote work on the rise, this study can help organizations to better develop their strategies by understanding what cultural values shape employee behavior. We show that work from home (WFH) fatigue's negative impact on presenteeism decreases when employees work in a collectivist culture like South Asia where their concern is more likely to be group and organizational success over personal needs. Organizations can help prevent this kind of pressure on employees and build their motivation and performance, even in a remote context, by creating a climate that promotes collective work, solidarity, and common responsibility (Hofstede, 2019; Vyas & Goh, 2020).

Furthermore, the results indicate that collectivism serves as a buffering variable to alleviate the negative relationship between WFH fatigue and presenteeism, which is known to be a phenomenon affecting organizational effectiveness negatively (Johns, 2010). For IT firms in South Asia, then, their cultural values emphasising teamwork and group effort could be used to create an environment of supportiveness that reduces employee isolation by facilitating a sense of connection to the team. Remote work unhealthy There also is a problem with remote work, which add exposing the virus to the problems that go with isolation from other people. [...] This approach not only improves worker well-being but will also help maintain high productivity anyways during this time of a pandemic as working remotely.

Organisations in collectivist cultures like South Asian IT companies should therefore strategise their remote work policies with their cultural hardiness. In so doing, they can build a work ecosystem that minimizes WFH fatigue and presenteeism while

promoting a productive, engaged and resilient workforce. These findings add to the literature on remote work and offer managerial implications for managers looking maximize their workforce in a dynamic working environment.

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