OCCUPATIONAL WELLNESS APPROACHES AMONG FAMILIES WHO TRANSITIONED THROUGH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract
The worldwide outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected various dimensions of human wellness. More so, the various protocols implemented to mitigate the spread of the pandemic had significant effects on the occupational wellness dimension. This study explored the occupational wellness challenges experienced by some families in Melbourne, Australia, during the COVID-19 pandemic and the strategies they used as they transitioned through the pandemic. The study framed three possible inductive themes aligned to the impact of COVID-19 on specific aspects of occupational wellness, pathways to the management of occupational wellness during COVID-19, and recommended future changes to occupational wellness by the sampled families in Melbourne, Australia. The study findings indicated that COVID-19 had both positive and negative effects on the occupational wellness of the families. The strategies of the families are worthy for consideration, for future approaches to deal with any pandemic. It is expected that the proper adoption of the proposed strategies to cope with occupational wellness will significantly contribute toward occupational wellness for individuals and families facing occupational wellness challenges, especially during pandemics.

Keywords: Occupational wellness, families, coping, COVID-19, employment

INTRODUCTION
The COVID-19 pandemic instigated much disruption, affecting almost every dimension of human wellness and existence (OECD 2020). In trying to halt the spread of the pandemic, governments implemented various measures such as lock downs, social distancing and hygiene protocols. Often, such confinement and protocols affected the wellness of individuals and families in varying degrees (UN 2020a; Welsh Government 2020). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2020) also noted that the marginalised and vulnerable, were severely affected by the pandemic, often leading to greater stress and anxiety. Additionally, studies have shown that intersecting identity factors such as race; gender; ethnicity; physical disability; socio-economic factors; and intellectual factors exacerbated the disproportionality of the effects of COVID-19 on humans (Queral-Basse 2020; OECD 2020).

This paper argues that underlying factors such as wellness are generally neglected or sometimes overlooked during pandemics (Dokov, Milkova and Stamenkov 2020). While wellness encompasses eight dimensions (physical, occupational, social, financial, intellectual, spiritual, emotional, environmental) according to the model of Swarbrick and Yudof (2015), this paper focuses only on occupational wellness. This paper examined how Australian families reconstructed their occupational wellness, as they transitioned through the COVID-19 pandemic.

WELLNESS AND FAMILIES

Wellness is often considered as the active pursuit of lifestyles; choices; and activities which are important for achieving holistic health (Global Wellness Institute n. d.). Relatedly, well-being implies a subjective condition, experiencing happiness or being in a state of well-being, while wellness on the other hand is aligned to a process of actively making choices that result in optimal health and well-being (Goodman et al. 2018). Further, well-being often refers to curing a sick patient or the treatment of an illness or, whereas 'wellness' alludes to moving toward optimal health with respect to all the wellness dimensions (Oliver et al. 2019). Wellness is also meant to be holistic and multidimensional in nature such as social, spiritual, intellectual, financial, physical, environmental, occupational, and emotional wellness (Swarbrick and Yudof 2015). Regular exercise, meditating and eating a balanced diet are some of the approaches to achieving wellness among individuals and families.

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the demand for wellness programmes among nations were on the rise. This growing demand was associated with factors such as higher income groups and an aging population wanting to achieve higher levels of wellness (Kourtit et al. 2021). Hence, there is growing awareness of the role of wellness in contributing to sustainability in various spheres of life, including improving occupational health (Ali-Knight and Ensor 2017).

Regarding family wellness, it is contended that family relationships foster interdependence within families over the trajectory of time, and are am imperative for wellness across the span of life (Umberson et al. 2015). According to TIS (2022); Thomas and Umberson (2017) and Suitor et al. (2017), families are crucial for the following reasons: Families lay the foundation for future relationships; families are a pillar of strength during challenging times; families promote a sense of belonging; families provide a source of encouragement and affection; and family relationships correlate with mental health. Thus, healthy families have stronger and more rewarding relationships; and potentially enjoy long, healthy and happy lives.

Different types of family relationships such as retirees, single parents couples, aborigines, same sex couples, and migrants accentuates the complexities underpinning family relationships, while also affecting the dynamics of wellness within families (Lee, Clarkson-Hendrix and Lee 2016). Thus, the nature of family relationships may potentially benefit or retard wellness among family members, as relationships provide a sense of meaning, purpose and resources which may influence wellness (Suitor et al. 2017). For example, the quality of social support provided by families (e.g., care, love and sympathy) may influence the occupational, emotional and physical wellness of family members. Additionally, family members may encourage positive affect to enhance occupational wellness. These core components of wellness help to regulate the behaviour of family members, while not compromising coping mechanisms to deal with wellness challenges (Suitor et al. 2017). To the contrary, poor relationships may weaken wellness across the different wellness dimensions. Thus, since wellness is a life-long process, there is a necessity to continuously manage and sustain wellness. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic affected family wellness in diverse ways. It affected family cohesiveness; gave rise to negative moods, anxiety, stress, loss of employment; and sometimes aggressive behaviour among others (Feinberg et al. 2021). Due to the unprecedented effects of the pandemic, families either perished if they could not cope, or garnered resources to reconstruct their wellness as they transitioned through COVID-19.

Therefore, this study focused on wellness through the lens of lifestyle behaviours of family members, health, and quality of life that promote the achievement of holistic and optimum wellness, but from the perspective of occupational wellness. Thus, the study endeavoured to specifically examine how occupational wellness was affected among families, and how they reconstructed such wellness as they transitioned through the pandemic, by making use of Swarbrick and Yudof's (2015) eight wellness dimensions. Nurturing such wellness can touch not only the occupational wellness of individuals within the family, but such wellness may also influence others beyond the family context.

WELLNESS AND COVID-19

Societies are part of nations, and families are part of societies. It is fundamentally important to pursue the wellness of families, since they constitute the foundation of societies and communities. Thus, continuously ensuring the collective wellness of families is vital, since it significantly affects various sectors in society. However, wellness is a life-long process with both positive and negative experiences. As such, at one time, a person may feel optimistic about life and healthy, but at other times highly emotional and depressed. During times of global pandemics like COVID-19, it is likely that people will be experience feelings of anxiety, stress and helplessness. Relatedly, research revealed that 41% of participants felt burnt out from dealing with challenges caused by COVID-19, while others felt anxious due to threats to their job security, benefits and pay (SHRM Covid-19 Research 2020). Further, the study by Waite and Creswell (2020) which identified top stressors such as work; children; and family and friend's well-being among during COVID-19, is further evidence of the impact COVID-19 had on wellness. Moreover, findings by the OECD (2020) survey indicated the negative psychological effects of quarantining and social distancing. This is further affirmed by studies in the United Kingdom States and the United Kingdom, with participants reporting anxiety, loneliness, and stress (Etheridge and Spanting 2020; McGinty et al. 2020; WHO 2020).

More specifically, many Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia who frequently travel between communities for funerals, offering condolences and grieving is a case in point (Australian Department of Health 2020a). They struggled to reconcile COVID-19 restrictions with their cultural and religious obligations of mourning during COVID-19 social distancing and lockdown impositions, which directly affected their wellness (Power et al. 2020). Additionally, vaccines to achieve herd immunity among people (70% of the population) may take time. Nevertheless, due to the variants in the virus, the vaccines did not guarantee 100% success rates (Lee 2020). Therefore, the approach of many governments to control the pandemic continue to be social distancing, quarantine isolation, and hand washing. However, when simultaneously implemented and prolonged, some of these measures may have negative effects on wellness, which can manifest in emotional and mental disorders. However, during pandemics such as COVID-19, access to in-person health care facilities, were globally given lesser attention, due to the focus on COVID-19 patients and limited health care facilities. Limited public health care facilities are under pressure to cope with the emergencies of COVID-19 patients, the primary priority worldwide. This calls for some coping mechanisms to diminish the hardship among Australians. Therefore, it is vital to explore alternative home-based mechanisms to reconstruct occupational wellness during this pandemic and subsequent ones, as a means of complementing other government and non government initiatives. Occupational, home based wellness mechanisms that promote resilience during pandemics are limited to date, thereby limiting the knowledge base on this human need. Thus, the study aimed to help create a more personal response to occupational wellness among Australian families to fill this gap.

OCCUPATIONAL WELLNESS

Occupational wellness encompasses participating in activities that provide meaning and purpose, especially from an employment perspective. The wellness of an employee is not only a matter of personal fitness, but also an organisational concern. Grounded in the universal human desire to have a good life and be well, people seek employment opportunities to realise this desire. Nevertheless, during COVID-19, this right to work and where to work was controlled, and the confinement indoors

created many challenges. In a study to describe occupational wellness priorities, some participants wanted to work part-time for wages, steeped in the desire to be well (Strout *et al*. 2018). A study by Sivris and Leka (2015) revealed that many employees considered stress management programmes as the favoured option (85%), followed by programmes on exercise and fitness (84%), education on health insurance (82%), seminars on disease management (80%), seminars on nutrition (70%), and seminars on smoking cessation (67%) being least appealing. These findings reaffirm the fundamental desire people attach to occupational wellness, which has been affected by COVID-19.

OCCUPATIONAL WELLNESS AND COVID-19

COVID-19 has introduced new and unique difficulties for occupational wellness (Thomason and Williams 2020). Whether people are restricted to working from home with family, companions, or flat mates, the pandemic has impacted occupational wellness (Binghamton University 2021). For example, the COVID-19 pandemic prompted extensive mental injury and self-destruction among medical services employees (HCW) (Mock 2020). Additionally, a survey of HCWs directed by the Public Health Agency of Canada in April 2020 showed that 47% of participants requested mental help, because of COVID-19 related variables (Mock 2020). Likewise, a study directed by the British Medical Association in April 2020 of HCWs showed that 44% of participants experienced burnout, nervousness, melancholy, or other psychological wellness conditions because of COVID-19 (Mock 2020). The question that arises is, how safe will the country be if the very people entrusted with the care of the society (medical services employees (HCW) are themselves in trouble occupationally? Therefore, occupational wellness is important to the society.

Further, unaddressed pressure and burnout can prompt melancholy, substance abuse, and self-destructive ideation (Lefebvre and Kaufmann 2017). A stable labour force is the foundation of a wellness framework. This is particularly applicable for wellness frameworks and occupational health experts who address the significance of preventing and relieving pressure, burnout, wretchedness, and self-destructive ideation in their labour force during pandemics. These mediations are fundamental for the prosperity and maintenance of the labour force (Lefebvre and Kaufmann 2017).

Additionally, in a study conducted by Singh *et al*. (2020) to assess the impact of the pandemic on mental health and wellness of the youth, it was revealed that depression, anxiety, and stress were negatively associated with occupational wellness. Thus, it may be inferred that if depression anxiety, and stress, and depression among youth is high, this will negatively affect their occupational wellness. This could mean that they may face challenges in attaining personal fulfilment from their jobs and academic pursuits; find it difficult to address work-life problems; and experience challenges in contributing to skills and knowledge development. This outcome underscores the importance of occupational wellness as a dependable factor on other issues, thus making it a multidimensional matter which must be given the necessary attention.

According to Como, Hambley and Domene (2021), employees worked from home during the pandemic without adequate organisational resources; training; work plans; This was complicated by the dynamics at home, COVID-19 related stress, reduced in-person contact; threats to traditional working ways; overworking; and collaboration challenges (Arora and Suri 2020). Additionally, Como *et al*. (2021) argued that being at home full-time with family, may lead to more caregiving duties, and less personal time to recuperate. The study by Gambhir (2020) also found that employees working from home experienced overworking; being unable to switch off; intensification; and higher work-home spill overs.

Como *et al*. (2021) argued that unplanned shifts to work remotely during the pandemic often did not consider whether employees had working spaces at home; and adequate equipment and technology. Often, the lack of space to work from home may hinder work-family boundaries; cause tension because of frequently switching between work and family roles; disruptions incurred on work

responsibilities by children and other dependents; and managing noise during meetings and phone calls. As such, Lunau *et al*. (2014) posited that a poor connection between work and non-work life is associated with lower mental well-being; higher levels of anxiety and depression.

Financial insecurity due to increased unemployment, loss of income because of the loss of family members during the pandemic; and economic decline, have been associated with poor wellness outcomes (Fisher *et al.* 2020). In Australia, the strain of the pandemic on Australian households was noticeable, as closure of businesses; wage reductions in the accommodation, food and entertainment sectors; decrease in availability of jobs emerged as financial insecurities (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2020).

Financial insecurity may trigger poor caregiving, food insecurity, increase in depressive and stress symptoms; domestic violence; and substance abuse (October *et al*. 2022). Low and Mounts (2022) argued that financial insecurity gives rise to stress and anxiety, when basic needs cannot be fulfilled. This may lead to feelings of distress, agitation, and even difficulty in relaxing, as families try to find solutions to their financial stress (Ellis, Dumas and Forbes 2020; Liu and Doan 2020). In the context of parenting, Low and Mounts (2022) posited that high levels of parenting stress may increase the risk of poor parenting behaviours; lack of willingness of children to seek support from their parents; parent-child conflict; and emotional detachment. Families become more vulnerable due to limited financial resources. More so, the study by Salameh *et al*. (2020) found that lower income groups experienced higher levels of anxiety and stress, due to fears about higher levels of decreased financial resources, poverty, unemployment, and uncertainty about access to medical services. Additionally, studies by Rajkumar (2020) and Ahorsu *et al*. (2022) found that females experienced higher levels of stress due to additional family responsibilities, employment insecurity; and being more prone to gender-based violence, which ultimately affected mental wellbeing.

According to Swarbrick and Yudof (2015), occupational wellness involves participating in activities that provide meaning and purpose, including employment. Therefore, anything that negatively affects this should be considered as a hindrance to occupational wellness. To this end, Swarbrick and Yudof (2015) maintain that occupational wellness should be able to make people productive on most days at work. People should always look forward to work in pursuit of both occupational and financial wellness, and they should confidently show that their job responsibilities are consistent with their values; they are satisfied with their balance of leisure time and work and leisure time; and their work accords them stimulation, motivation and personal satisfaction.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The nature of this qualitative research influenced the researcher to select an exploratory research design. A fundamental benefit of exploratory research is that it provides insights into problems and enquiries that were not well researched in different contexts (Babbie and Mouton 2001).

Sampling strategy used in the study

This study used non-probability sampling for the target population, whereby a convenience sampling strategy targeted families referred by a manager of a non-governmental organization, and within the reach of the researcher. In using non-probability sampling, the researcher ensured that the selection of the 12 families was based on typical representivity of Australian families comprising of Aborigines; single parent families; gay couples; childless couples; straight families; minority and majority groups; retirees; retirees; and opened to all races to ensure diversity and representivity. Furthermore, the 12 families, constituted a single household who interacted with each other in their respective social positions as parents, spouses, children, siblings, grandchildren, or a nuclear family living together as a unit. Since, the population of various types of families was too large to consider and examine, the researcher selected the families who were conveniently available to the researcher based on the

referrals (Taherdoost, 2016). The families interviewed in this study were represented as numbers (eg: Family 1), according to the order in which the families were interviewed.

Data collection and method of analysis
This study used a qualitative approach (interviews). The interviews were conducted by the researcher either face to face, or through Zoom Video calls. The interviews generated electronic data through voice recordings, which were saved for transcriptions and analysis. This helped to guide against data loss and guarantee quality and trustworthiness. Thereafter, the documents were imported to QSR NVivo 12 software for ease in conducting the analysis. The software presented the coded data as subthemes for the 5 themes identified from the interview guide, thus grouping the data into manageable themes and subthemes. Efforts were made to ensure that data were objectively compared, bearing in mind the focus of the study. This was in line with the recommendation of Spencer (2011), that "the 'craft' of qualitative research requires a balance between inductive forces-allowing the collected data to speak for itself, and deductive forces-structuring, ordering principles derived from theoretical models and concepts". More so, Saldaña (2021) posited that as a principle, a provisional list of codes should be determined beforehand (deductively) to harmonise with the study's conceptual framework. Thus, the themes for the study were determined deductively beforehand for purposes of data collection and analysis; while the subthemes were inductively identified.

QUALITATIVE STUDY ON OCCUPATIONAL WELLNESS
This study used the deductive approach whereby it pre-determined the themes and under each of five main themes, it had sub-themes. The narrative which follows is underpinned by a discussion of the following subthemes which emerged for occupational wellness under the 3 themes. The occupational wellness of the participants was explored under five categories, namely: The impact of COVID-19 on specific aspects of occupational wellness, the management of occupational wellness during COVID-19, and recommended changes to occupational wellness.

Table 1: Inductive themes and sub-themes for occupational wellness.

THEMES	SUBTHEMES
1. Impact of COVID-19 on specific aspects of occupational wellness (8 subthemes)	1. Continued employment 2. Working arrangement 3. Future job retention 4. Workload 5. Work interest 6. Job responsibilities and values 7. Balancing work and leisure 8. Personal satisfaction and stimulation activities
2. Pathways to management of occupational wellness during COVID-19 (6 subthemes)	1. Family connection 2. Maintaining a value system of responsibility 3. Work balance 4. Financial management and support 5. Collaborating and communicating with others 6. Wellness programmes
3. Recommended changes to occupational wellness (5 subthemes)	1. Career growth and self-development 2. Improve working environment 3. Collaboration and communicating with others 4. Budgeting and financial planning 5. Exercise

Source: Self-generated by the researcher

THEME 1: IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF OCCUPATIONAL WELLNESS

This theme explored the impact of COVID-19 on the occupational wellness of the family structure under eight specific areas (continued employment, remote work, future job retention, changes in workload, looking forward to work, job responsibilities and values, balancing work and leisure, personal satisfaction and stimulation).

Subtheme 1: Continued employment and work

- **Disrupted work**

One of the consequences of the pandemic on employees was that they were temporarily furloughed or laid off. Many of the participants disclosed that their work was disrupted by the pandemic. Participant representing family 1 noted that she could not continue with her private piano lessons.
I could not continue with the private piano lesson (Family 1).

Although the wife of the participant representing family 2 continued with her work, the husband revealed that there were some periods when he stopped work.
My wife continued to work, but there were periods when I did not work (Family 2).

A similar situation was uncovered from the statement by the participant representing family 4. It was stated that while the participant and another son kept their jobS, the other was temporarily unemployed.
My one son and I remained employed. The other son was temporarily unemployed (Family 4).

Participant representing family 7 shared the difficulty of visiting project sites which led to the suspension of the project. While he continued to work remotely, the wife was not fortunate as she terminated her contract to care for a sick member.
..... Hence, some of the projects were suspended at the inception of the COVID-19 pandemic.I attended meetings virtually and worked virtually with colleagues. My wife terminated her part-time employment to take care of our son (Family 7).

Although Family 6 continued with full-time employment, their side business was severely affected. This reflects some of the negative impacts of the pandemic and the associated lockdown on businesses.
We continued with full-time employment, but the part-time business was severely affected due to lockdown protocols (Family 6).

Family 9 shared a similar position as above with respect to the negative effect of COVID-19 on businesses by noting the following:
COVID-19 brought with it a loss of benefits and minimised opportunity for the opening of a new business (Family 9).

- **Reduced working hours**

While some of the participants acknowledged continuing to enjoy full-time employment, their overall family income was reduced. This was attributed to the reduction in working hours.
We did not become unemployed, but our income was reduced due to reduced working hours (Family 11).

- **Discontinued work**

For family 5 with 4 children, the impact appeared to be more. It was stated that the wife became unemployed as the business was shut down, while the husband was temporarily laid off without salary payment.

My wife became unemployed due to the shutting down of the business and I was forcing myself to stop going to work due to no salary payment. After lockdown, I was given a few classes to teach but at a reduced income. My wife started being a domestic cleaner 3 days a week (Family 5).

A similar negative effect on businesses and its associated impact on financial stability were uncovered from the statement by family 3.
Businesses lost clients and permanent steady income was no longer possible as customers were all financially unable to survive and steady income was something of the past (Family 3).

The above narratives suggest that while some of the participants interviewed remained employed, their income was no longer the same. Besides, it was uncovered that those with businesses suffered business closure, which further compromised their income.

- **No changes to employment situation**
Nevertheless, two of the families revealed that no changes occurred in their employment situation as they continued to work from home.
No changes… we were working from home (Family 10).
As pensioners, my parents were not affected. I continued to work, but online from home (Family 12).

Subtheme 2: Working arrangement
COVID-19 altered almost every aspect of our life and work. In response to the national and local containment policies, organisations encouraged their employees to work remotely at home to stay safe (Xiao *et al.* 2021). From the interview responses, it was uncovered that many of the participants worked remotely, while some engaged in both office and remote work. This is explained in the following narratives.

- **Online work**
According to Bouziri *et al.* (2020), organisations have strongly encouraged employees to telecommute where possible, as part of the broader response to the pandemic. Many of the participants interviewed supported this, which suggests that employees worked remotely as the "new normal".

COVID-19 introduced a new normal; we now resorted to remote online work/meetings. We adjusted to the dynamics of remote working, which we started to enjoy (Family 10).

I was also a postgraduate student; I have been working at home with the support of the institution, which has been supplying data for research (Family 5).

While WFH has some benefits to both the organisation and the employees as previously mentioned, it was also shown to come with negative effects. As such, in assessing the risks and benefits of online working in the context of COVID-19, it is vital to best preserve occupational wellness. Employees or employers could not have anticipated the sudden shift to online work, so the safety of the home working environment has not necessarily been ensured (Bouziri *et al.* 2020). This factor could have contributed to the conflicts some of the participants experienced with WFH.

For example, participants from families 6 and 9 noted that WFH disturbed the social arrangement at home.

Working from home was intensified. It disturbed the social arrangement at home between grandparents and the children. We were at home most of the time; schools went through periods of closure (Family 6).

Working from home became even more difficult in terms of the cost of data, increased costs for gas and electricity, and the disruption of family life in terms of space for all family members to work remotely (Family 9).

It also increased domestic chores and working hours as noted by family 7.
Yes, I did work remotely for over 9 months from home. I adapted, and then eventually began working overtime unknowingly. My wife had increased chores relating to my disabled son. The daughters attended online classes when schools were closed (Family 7).

The above narratives suggest that WFH conflicts may be attributed to overlapping responsibilities associated with looking after children and carrying out work responsibilities. Such overlapping responsibilities amplify social and mental risks associated with unstructured working time (Standen *et al.* 1999).

- **Blended work**

According to Van Yperen *et al.* (2014), blended working combines on-site and off-site working in an optimal way to improve employees' and organisations' outcomes. The onset of COVID-19 might have increased the need for a blended work model by the organisation. Some of the participants' positions on working both from home and in the office in a blended model substantiated this further.
I worked remotely from home, during the lockdown. But on certain occasions, I did go to the office (Family 12).

Limited occasions, for myself and my one son, as we worked from home on rotating shifts as per our employers' roster (Family 4).

- **Physical work**

Nonetheless, others continued with the conventional work practice. The responses showed that the nature of their work did not support either WFH or the blended model.
Not possible as we repair cars- unable to work from home (Family 3).
We could not work remotely from home due to the nature of our jobs (supermarket cashier and travel guide) (Family 11).

Subtheme 3: Future job retention
Unemployment was projected to reach nearly 10% in OECD countries by the end of 2020, up from 5.3% at year-end 2019, and to go as high as 12% should a second pandemic wave hit (OECD Employment Outlook 2020). While the report noted that a job recovery was not expected until after 2021, in some countries, however, employers used job retention programmes to cut hours, while allowing employees to keep their jobs and pay. As such, it may be assumed that it is likely that the full impact of the pandemic is yet to be felt. While this suggests unprecedented leaps in unemployment, it is anticipated that many employees will return to their jobs (or to new ones) as economies and activities pick up (OECD Employment Outlook 2020). Given this gloomy picture and hopeful expectations, it was essential to know from the perspectives of the participants the impact of COVID-19 on their future job retention. From the responses gathered, while many of the participants were confident that their jobs were secure, others expressed some degree of uncertainty.

- **Secure**

For those who were confident in retaining their jobs in the future, it was noted that the participants felt secured with permanent/stable jobs, despite the pandemic.

My job is unaffected by the pandemic- quite secure (Family 12).
My wife's job is permanent and secured. While I have a permanent job as a waiter, when there is a period of lockdown, then my shifts are affected (Family 2).

The participant representing family 6 attributed this to working as an essential worker.
We are in essential services and were able to work from home (Family 6).

- **Hope to continue after the pandemic**

Some of the participants were optimistic to return to work when the lockdown rules were eased. Families 1 and 8 who were retired couples, expressed hope of continuing with the part-time engagement after the pandemic.

I hope to continue in 2022, once the pandemic ceases in Melbourne (Family 1).
With all lockdown rules being removed, we hope to continue with tutoring part-time (Family 8).
Family 11 shared similar sentiments in returning to work after the COVID-19 restrictions were lifted.
Once all travel restrictions are lifted, my job as a travel guide will resume. My wife likewise, will continue with her normal workload (Family 11).

- **Hope to get a full-time lecturing**

Two of the participants expressed hope of getting full-time employment:
I am on a 2-year contract, so I hope to get into full-time lecturing. My wife is completing her degree and hopes to apply for better posts (Family 10).

Returning to work or remaining in my work in the future was a serious issue. This is because the school was unable to pay staff salaries. Once I graduate with my PhD I hope to get into full-time teaching/lecturing. My wife cannot afford to pay the rent for the business premises, and now is doing part-time work as a cleaner (Family 5).

- **Uncertain**

For those who owned businesses, it was revealed that there was uncertainty in the continued operation of the business. In the words of the participant representing family 3:
Uncertainty depends on how the business survives on a day-to-day basis. We were fortunate that we were not forced to totally shut down the business. We applied for business rescue grants and were successful (Family 3).

Added to the above, it appeared that certain occupations faced uncertainty regarding future job retention. This is reflected in the statement below.
The son who is a driver has some job uncertainty if COVID-19 persists (Family 4).

- **Business closure**

One of the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic is that it resulted in the closure of many businesses. This is further noted from the statement from family 9.
One member of the family was not able to reopen his business. He had to take 2 part-time jobs (Family 9).

Subtheme 4: Workload

The workload is a traditional job demand characterised by the need to work faster, provide quicker responses, perform multiple tasks, and accomplish several projects simultaneously (Ingusci *et al.* 2021). Ingusci *et al.* (2021) opined that the radical changes deriving from the COVID-19 emergency have heavily upset some of the most familiar routines of daily work life. From the interview discussions, it was found that while many of the participants interviewed complained of an increased workload; others noted that they experienced a reduced or normal workload during COVID-19.

- **Increase in workload**

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way most organisations conduct their work. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many employees were advised to work from home (WFH) full-time (Xiao *et*

al. 2021). From the interview discussions, it was uncovered that participants experienced an increase in workload when working from home. Participant representing family 12 for example, noted that workload increased due to the online meeting, queries and colleagues falling sick or dying from the virus.

It has increased, with more online meetings, queries, and staff being sick/ passing on (Family 12).
Participants from family 6 shared similar sentiments as above, that online queries increased during this period. In the participant's words:
Those with essential jobs were overloaded- more planning and staying online to address student queries. We tended to work longer hours compared to face-to-face teaching (Family 6).

According to the views of Ingusci *et al.* (2021), WFH individuals have been confronted with several difficulties to organise their own working time; for instance, spaces, devices, internet connection, and coffee breaks have been forcefully shared with the family, a test that may make it difficult to respect the boundaries between work and private life. This might have contributed to the participant from family 7 experiencing working long hours and late until night, potentially affecting family time.

Workload has significantly increased. I often find myself working till 10-11 pm every day. Apart from full-time employment-related work, family responsibilities increased like taking my mother for medical check-ups; my wife having to take care of our son full time, and more domestic chores as all of us were at home (Family 7).

Another factor that could have contributed to an increased workload is difficulty in adapting to the shift from face-to-face contact work to an online mode of work. The statements below support this.
The part-time classes decreased, so there was less tutoring. But we found we spend more time in the online classes (Family 8).

There were no changes in our workloads, but we seem to be working long hours with the same job responsibilities. Online teaching and community engagements are more hectic and time-consuming than physical/contact interactions (Family 10).

The increased workload experienced by participant from family 9 may be associated with the participant having multiple jobs. In the participant's words:
The workload became heavier, as one worked from home and the other had 2 part-time jobs. The 2 part-time jobs meant longer working hours (Family 9).

Participant from family 4 noted initially experiencing a heavier workload in the early days of WFH, but this changed with time. The perceived increase in workload may be associated with difficulties in adjusting to the new workstations. Xiao *et al.* (2021) who found that higher workloads and lack of knowledge in adjusting to workstations were associated with new physical issues can corroborate this.
The heavier workload in the early days but changed after +-6 months (Family 4).

- **Reduced workload**
WFH may have a profound benefit for both the organisation and the employee. For an employee, previous studies have reported that WFH saves daily commuting time and offers more flexibility for employees to take care of their families, allowing them to choose working times when most productive, and employees can also benefit from not being subjected to co-workers' distraction (Xiao *et al.* 2021; Tavares 2017). This study uncovered that some of the participants experienced reduced workloads.

Both of us had reduced workloads, because of our jobs (travel guide and fast food cashier) (Family 11).

Yes, as the amount of work that came in has reduced by 50%, staff were given reduced working hours. We also reduced the working hours per day (Family 3).

There was a reduced workload as I could not continue to go to school. Most works in relation to research studies were delayed. There were reduced workloads due to changes in our employment status (Family 5).

From the above narratives, it is evident that the reduced workload is associated with the nature of the work done by some of the participants. For example, those in the hospitality business may have experience-reduced workloads due to lockdown and reduction of tourist visits.

- **Normal workload**

Nevertheless, one of the interviewees revealed that the wife continued with her normal shifts. Hence, one could rightly assume that the workload remained consistent despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

My wife continued with her normal shifts, but there were additional days I stayed home because of a temporary closure of the restaurant (Family 2).

Subtheme 5: Work interest

In terms of the participants looking forward to working under the present conditions of the pandemic, many acknowledged enjoying their work and thus looked forward to working again. However, few others preferred WFH models.

- **Enjoyed the work**

Among the participant who noted enjoying the work they do, the following was extracted from their statements:

I do miss meeting children and adults who were my clients. But when they make telephonic enquires about anything, I do assist (Family 1).

We enjoy our jobs. Even though my son is a driver, and was temporarily unemployed, he still enjoyed going to work (Family 4).

We enjoy the part-time tutoring and when students call in for additional online classes we always are amenable (Family 8).

Despite the changes in working hours and perceived workload, some of the participants remained passionate about their jobs.

We enjoy our jobs, and despite the reduced working hours; we had job satisfaction (Family 11).
I am passionate about my job. Despite the changes in workload and the working space, I have organised and planned myself well around these changes so that I keep the momentum going without any anxiety and stress (Family 12).

We are passionate about our jobs, and enjoy going to work every day. It is important to be happy in what we do, and not take on jobs, which frustrate us, and are not in our line of interest (Family 2).

While the representative for the family enjoyed his work, the lack of clients created a sense of anxiety.
Daily looking forward to new work coming into the business to increase the steady income, but there were some days of being anxious about the unknown for work is not consistent as prior to COVID-19. We remained hopeful and optimistic (Family 3).

- **Preferred working from home**

For the participants representing family 10, WFH was advantageous and thus preferred this to physical work.

We enjoy our jobs, it motivates us to achieve our job responsibilities. Working from home saves us travel time, fuel costs, and preparing lunch packs—this relief gives us increased job satisfaction (Family 10).

Tavares (2017) maintains that WFH saves employees daily commuting time and offers more flexibility for employees to take care of their families. This view can be further supported by the participant representing family 7 who accentuated the following:
I enjoyed working from home, even though there were times that working hours extended beyond the normal working hours. Having the children around and being at home instead of travelling for 1 hour was pleasing (Family 9).

- **Stressful and frustrating**

According to Majumdar *et al.* (2020), extended hours of screen exposure due to full-time computer work can lead to fatigue, tiredness, headaches, and eye-related symptoms. From the interview narrative, some of the participants hinted that their work became stressful and tiring.

Work became very tiresome and stressful. Visits to sites were interrupted; projects were delayed, and increased online meetings were (Family 7).

While the participant representing family 6 acknowledged enjoying the work, working online however, caused some element of stress to the family.

We enjoy teaching, but there were times when the extra planning and organising did become frustrating. Working from home meant that we had to ensure minimal disturbance, especially during online classes and meetings. It did cause some stress and anxiety, especially when all 6 of us were online and internet connectivity was weak (Family 6).

Subtheme 6: Job responsibilities and values
While the changing nature of work due to COVID-19 containment measures has led to an increase in many employees WFH, it is critical to know if employees still maintained job responsibilities and occupational values. From the interviews, most of the participating families indicated that they continued to maintain the same job responsibilities and values while some did not.

Among those who continued to maintain the same job responsibilities and values, the following were indicated:
- **Continued offering support**
For instance, participant 1 notes that the family continued to offer support to the clients and check intermittently on their progress, which suggests values to work.

Even though I am no longer teaching, I offer telephonic support when my clients make any enquiries. I enjoy playing the piano; hence, my passion extends to being loyal to my clients, being available for non-face-to-face support, and checking with them intermittently on their progress (Family 1).

- **Values remained intact**
Participant from family 10 expressed a similar strong value system and responsibilities to work when he stated the following:

As a postdoctoral researcher, there is a code of conduct, the values and expectations did not change as a result of COVID-19. Neither did the changes invoked by COVID-19 impact our values such as performing well in our jobs, meeting deadlines, and attending meetings and did ensure that we remained committed (Family 10).

Equally, and resonating with the above commitment to work ethics and values, participant from family 11 was vehement that the value of work remained intact.

Our strong value system remained intact, despite our employment conditions being affected. The pandemic tested values like accountability, diligence, commitment and perseverance despite adversities (Family 11).

Participants from families 2, 3, 4 and 12 echoed the same sentiment as above.
Values cannot be impacted by a pandemic. The pandemic was a good test of how deeply imbued I am in my values. I continued with my job responsibilities as a committed and high-performing employee (Family 12).

We are committed individuals, who believe in hard work and doing our best in our jobs. Earning an income based on a strong work ethic informed by trust, honesty, loyalty and responsibility is what we live by (Family 2).

Job responsibilities have not changed as an owner of a business and the responsibilities remain my values were just tested during this difficult time of dealing with financial demands and ensuring the health and safety of staff and myself. We remained committed to our employees and ensured that they applied for grants due to their reduced working hours (Family 3).

Diligence, commitment, a strong work ethic, honesty and high standards of performance continued despite the challenges of the pandemic (Family 4).

The above narrative suggests a strong commitment to work. Despite some of the perceived challenges, the participants' dedication to work was highly evident. This is reflected in the statements below.

My values were challenged. Despite a lower salary from teaching fewer classes, I continued to do my best, as the children were my responsibility. I could not allow money to rule over my ethical conduct. I continued to show respect to the school principal even though he was arrogant and rude. Even though my wife did not enjoy being a cleaner, she appreciated the income to sustain our family. Therefore, fulfilling our responsibilities in our changed working environment was maintained (Family 5).

There were times we felt overwhelmed, but as teachers and parents, we had to be role modules to our students and children. We ensured that we met timelines, offered additional support to our children and students, and provided them with motivation and encouragement to embrace the new normal of working (Family 6).

We remained committed, supportive and helpful (Family 8).

The importance of strong value systems, dedication and commitment to work could greatly benefit the employee. Like the participant from family 9 said, without consistency in values, perhaps, one could lose control of life and become unemployed. Hence, one could rightly assume that strong value systems kept the participants' occupational wellness strong.

We ensured that our job responsibilities continued to be consistent with your values, or else we could lose control of our lives, become unemployed and lose a sense of direction. A strong value system should not be compromised in any domain of our lives (Family 9).

- **Struggled keeping to values**

Despite the fact that most of the participants expressed a strong value system and commitment to work, there was, however, evidence from some of the statements extracted from the interviews about the challenges faced maintaining job responsibilities and values when WFH.

I honestly started to struggle in this regard, but I see some inconsistencies such as punctuality and time management. But I try to fulfil job responsibilities such as attending all meetings, being committed to completing all reports, and drawing attention to some of my work-related challenges with my manager to avoid being labelled as incompetent (Family 7).

Subtheme 7: Balancing work and leisure

One of the central premises for organisations promoting WFH is that employees could achieve a better work-life balance by avoiding commuting and offering flexible work schedules. From the interview discussion, it was found that many of the working participants achieved work balance from WFH, while some experienced difficulties. With options for WFH, Xiao *et al*. (2021) noted that employees can take a break from their offices and focus on organising an individualised approach to their work-life balance that can promote a healthier lifestyle, a benefit for both physical and mental health (Xiao *et al.* 2021). This means that WFH could afford employees extra time to engage in leisure activities. Many of the participants noted that WFH afforded them extra time for leisure support in this position.
I have always ensured that care for my husband takes precedence over private tutoring. Now that I am not teaching, I do have extra time to spend with him and do other leisurely activities like baking and knitting (Family 1).

Participants from family 10 revealed that WFH afforded the family the opportunity to spend extra time together. According to participant from family 10, the family spent more social interaction time on cooking together and playing indoor games.

Staying and working from home meant that we spent more time together as a family, cooking together, watching the news, and playing music. We had to improvise by finding more indoor activities such as playing online games, board games and enjoying karaoke (Family 10).

On the other hand, three of the participating families noted experiencing limited leisure to balance work. One of the interviewees admitted that there was not much external leisure to pursue. This may be associated with working under lockdown.

There were not many external leisure activities to pursue. But simple leisurely activities like tea breaks with my parents on the patio, playing games before I retired to bed, and listening to music while I worked helped to break the monotony of all work and no leisure (Family 12).

For the participant representing family 6, whilst the family experienced leisure to some extent, the increase in workloads and other home activities affected the work balance.

We did experience moments of more work than leisure, because of increased workloads, managing the children at home, and increased domestic chores. But we tried new leisure activities at home like picnics in our garden; playing video games and watching movies (Family 6).

Participant from family 9 echoed a similar view by stating:
There was reduced leisure time as holding 2 part-time jobs was demanding. Even working from home entailed some extra-long working hours. However, we realised that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. With 2 children, we had to be practical and realistic to make time for leisure activities, which was also restrained in what we could do outdoors (Family 9).

From the above narratives, one can assume that extra work activities caused by holding two jobs; family commitments such as looking after children; meeting their needs; as well as associated lockdown tensions may have contributed to the limited leisure experiences of some of the participants. Nevertheless, three of the participants acknowledged that they succeeded in achieving a work balance. These are captured in the statements below.

We still succeeded in balancing both, even though there were times we worked beyond the official working hours (Family 4).

We were not overburdened with work… we maintained a work-life balance, especially as this is important for our grandchildren who rely on us for leisure activities (Family 8).

Our shifts sometimes meant that both of us are not at home when the children are home. But we ensure that at least one parent is home when the other is working. Weekends are dedicated to family time and leisure activities. We do not work at the weekends, to ensure that we are together as a family (Family 2).

While there are benefits to WFH, numerous negative aspects of full-time WFH have also been described in the literature. According to Messenger *et al.* (2017), a common area of concern in work-life boundaries is balancing work schedules around other family members, where, for some parents, worktime becomes 'porous'' as they might need to take care of household chores and run errands in between their work meetings. Some of the participants who expressed the difficulty faced in balancing work and leisure supported this view.

Sometimes it is not easy to balance work and leisure time when you have family responsibilities and your income is reduced. It requires efforts to set priorities concerning things to attend in short term and other to attend when it is convenient. Sometimes, it is constantly irritable combining both work and home. Now the focus is more on work, and it seems like a never-ending cycle. We try to relax or take a rest or even a short walk in the evening with the family (Family 5).

It was pretty difficult to achieve this at the initial stage of COVID-19, but I seem to be balancing work and leisure quite well at present as compared to this time last year. I try at the weekends to have leisure activities like barbeques and walking in the park as a family within the travel radius (Family 7).

From the narratives above, it appeared that while some of the participants were able to balance work and leisure, many others experienced difficulties achieving this. The recurring argument gathered from the thematic analysis was that the participants faced workload hurdles and family responsibilities, which made it difficult to achieve work balance. This is concerning when one considers the fact that extended hours of screen exposure due to full-time computer work can lead to fatigue, tiredness, headaches and eye-related symptoms (Majumdar *et al.* 2020). Nonetheless, a participant from family 3 appeared to be against excessive time for leisure which he described to be frustrating. This may be connected to the reduced workload from poor business patronage.

Leisure time became too much in COVID-19 as we have less work and more time, which became frustrating and unable to balance the free time with meaningful free time. But we continued to keep the business open, increased our marketing and remained committed to our employees. Despite the frustration of extra leisure time, we used the time to look at how the business can be improved, reorganised the inside of the workshop, did some cleaning up and revived our networks in the car industry to garner support (Family 3).

Subtheme 8: Personal satisfaction and stimulation activities

Dymecka *et al.* (2021) observed that the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the increase in fear and anxiety throughout society. The authors suggested that this may affect life satisfaction. From the narratives, it is evident that the pandemic created fear, stress and in some cases frustration. Given this situation and the importance of occupational wellness, it was needful to know how the participants and their families continued to maintain personal satisfaction and stimulation. It was uncovered from the interview transcripts analysed that many of the participants and their families engaged in stimulating and or satisfying activities. Among the stimulating activities uncovered from the interview include:

- **Listening to music videos**

Both my husband and I, listen to YouTube music videos, especially those involving the piano. My husband also enjoys listening to my clients playing the piano before the lockdown. We chat a lot about music and enjoy singing (Family 1).

The home space was more relaxing than the office environment. This was stimulating; as I could play my choice of music while I worked, and have short chats with my parents (Family 12).

- **Work from home**

We were given data/allowances to work from home; enjoying not having to dress/drive to work was stimulating, as we could start our day earlier and save on travel costs (Family 4).

- **Hope and optimism**

Speaking positively and keeping them focused on their goals did help. We always spoke with hope and optimism to keep ourselves and the family stimulated to continue working and living under restrictions (Family 6).

In terms of what kept the participants satisfied during the pandemic, some of the participants indicated the ability to work and earn income, while others expressed that having their family together, positive thinking, showing empathy to others and involvement in chats groups was satisfying to them.

- **Ability to work**

Being able to go to work, despite reduced working hours, provided me with motivation, as I enjoy my job and the work environment. Job satisfaction provided the impetus for being grateful under stressful conditions (Family 11).

Dress casually while working from home, avoid travelling to work- all of this provided personal satisfaction and stimulation (Family 12).

We are happy in our jobs, as we are passionate about our field of work. Being happy in our jobs ensures that we are motivated to go to work, do our best and remain happy as individuals and as a family (Family 2).

This is an individual choice, and a difficult situation calls for one to reflect and be creative. Still having incomes to sustain our family was personally satisfying (Family 9).

- **Having family together**

The routine tendency at home was satisfying. We accepted the restrictions accompanied by the pandemic and worked around them so that we did not become frustrated. Having our family together for such long periods for the first time was most satisfying (Family 10).

Having my parents around while I worked from home was personally satisfying. The home space was more relaxing than the office environment (Family 12).

- **Positive thinking**

As retirees, quality of life is important, and providing a healthy environment, which is motivating for our grandchildren, is our priority. We lost my daughter and son in an accident but have come to terms with it. Being positive, keeping active and having harmony at home gives us the impetus to move on, rather than wallow in misery and undue sorrow (Family 8).

Despite the closure of the business, we remained optimistic that we would open a new business in the future. The happy family we have provided us with a great sense of joy (Family 9).

- **Chat groups**

We had to perform activities, which were personally satisfying, and to keep our sanity, e.g. Talking to our work colleagues about their new normal workspaces; creating a work group chat to share humour and information (Family 4).

- **Empathy to others**

We concentrated on ensuring other people in your family and in business were satisfied first as they too suffered as a result of the impact of the virus either emotionally, mentally or financially. Showing empathy to others gave us a sense of personal satisfaction as so many people were worse off than us (Family 3).

THEME 2: PATHWAYS TO THE MANAGEMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL WELLNESS DURING COVID-19

The COVID-19 health crisis is an unprecedented shock which has transformed the lives of individuals and families around the globe. Its effects are likely to extend beyond the short term (OECD 2021). The severe health impacts have been matched by sharp declines in economic activity and upheavals in labour markets. While many employees continued to work through remote work arrangements, it was vital to understand how the participants managed and maintained their occupational wellness during this time. Responses from several participants suggest that they were keen on maintaining the value system of responsibility, and their connection to family was important for managing and maintaining their occupational wellness. Other responses revealed work balance; attending wellness programmes; financial management; and the use of government grants and savings. These are elaborated below.

Subtheme 1: Family connection

Family and work are commonly regarded as two of the most important intertwined domains in people's lives (Kirschi *et al.* 2019). Corroborating with this, three of the participants stressed the importance of family connections in maintaining and managing occupational wellness.

Spiritual family connection and worship and strong faith in God gave hope during trying times. Appreciate that we still had jobs and support from relief funding from the government (Family 11).
 Encouraging and motivating each other. Keeping conversations positive and light-hearted (Family 12).

Remained positive and motivated each other. Planning activities that kept us together and found means of ways to sustain the family business income (Family 3).

Subtheme 2: Maintaining a value system of responsibility

A strong value system and social responsibility were heralded as the key to maintaining and managing occupational wellness.

Maintaining our value system of being responsible, ensuring that we had jobs even though they did not pay well enough. Appreciating the fact that something is better than nothing at all. Believing that the occupational situation will improve (Family 5).

We continued with our role as parents and grandparents. We did not renege on our responsibilities. Whenever possible, we did online private tutoring. We kept our spirits high, by helping the grandchildren with their school assessments, sharing discussions on the pandemic; and being grateful that we can still work, be alive and safe (Family 8).

Remaining committed to my job. Keeping the 2 part-time jobs. Ensuring that we fulfilled our job obligations. A process of action and reflection on a continuous basis to look at opportunities to open a new business in the future (Family 9).

Subtheme 3: Work balance
Work balance is essential in avoiding overworking, stress and burnout. Two of the participants indicated that maintenance of work balance through leisure and family activities was crucial in managing their occupational wellness during the pandemic.

We were doing work that we found motivating and interesting. We tried to balance leisure with work. We worked in a way that fits our style (Family 4).

Would walk to the marketplaces and shops. We could also do morning and evening walks. Keeping to timelines. We developed a roster as a family, to ensure that we were aware of our daily timetables, meal breaks and chores. This helped to prevent burnout at the end of the day (Family 6).

Thus, the ability to achieve work balance might have contributed to an increase in some of the participants work productivity. As previously stated, WFH has numerous benefits including affording the employees to choose to work at times when they are most productive and avoiding distractions from co-workers. This, perhaps, could have contributed to the increase in productivity mentioned by the participant representing family 10.

As a researcher, I became more productive. My wife focussed on her job and her studies. Our children enjoyed online schooling during the lockdown. Our daily activities were meaningful and self-fulfilling (Family 10).

Subtheme 4: Financial management and support
Good financial management and availability of finance were crucial antidotes for relieving the stress and anxiety that comes with job losses and lack of income. This is supported by family 1 who illuminated the importance of finances in managing their occupational wellness.

Fortunately, we manage our finances well. The termination of the private tutoring did not affect us in a major way. Our children and grandchildren are always giving us money, which we save (Family 1).

Equally important, the financial assistance offered by the government was critical for some of the participants. This helped in maintaining and managing their occupational wellness.

Despite all the negativity and trauma associated with COVID-19, we continued to go to work when possible. As an essential worker, my wife's shifts remained unaffected. Even though I was affected by temporary unemployment, there were several grants offered by the government to help those who became temporarily unemployed. We also had savings but did not find the need to dip into them (Family 2).

Subtheme 5: Collaborating and communicating with others
Another important factor that helped some of the participants to manage and maintain their occupation wellness during the pandemic was that they collaborated and communicated with others.

Often communicating and collaborating with others. Sometimes working independently and with others. We made sure that we felt inspired and challenged. We also made sure that we felt good at the end of the day about the work we accomplished (Family 4).

Subtheme 6: Employee wellness programmes
According to Otuonye (2014), participating in employee wellness programmes yielded positive results and improved employee wellness, which, in turn, leads to improved employee performance. One of the participants supported this view by stating that the employee wellness programmes helped maintain and managed the family's occupational wellness during the pandemic.

Online meetings with colleagues focused on motivational talks and links to wellness programmes organised by my employer. I shared health tips with my family (Family 7).

THEME 3: RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO OCCUPATIONAL WELLNESS
This theme explored the views of the participants on occupational wellness for them and their families during the pandemic. While COVID-19 afforded families some benefits, it also negatively affected their occupational wellness in terms of unemployment, decreased working hours, and reduced income among others. This theme, therefore, explored from the perspective of the participants, the recommended changes to their occupational wellness. From the responses, most of the interviewees proposed self-development and career growth. Other major recommendations included improving the working environment; budgeting; corroborating and communication; and financial management. These are elaborated in the subthemes below.

Subtheme 1: Career growth and self-development
Most of the participants noted the need for career growth and self-development. It was uncovered from the participants that promotion at work, changes in their contracts, and learning vital skills such as IT were on their to-do lists. The participant representing family 10 hinted at the need to secure full-time employment and for the wife to gain a promotion in the company.

Find a full-time lecturing job and improve my profile as a researcher. My wife wants to complete her degree and apply for higher posts outside the company/promotion within the company. We immigrated to improve our lives; hence, we remain undeterred to continue aspiring to higher levels (Family 10).

Participant from family 2 echoed a similar view on the need for the wife to advance her career growth. *My wife would like to study to improve her qualification so that she can apply for a senior post. I would like to better my career prospects in the hospitality industry from being a waiter to probably opening a small takeaway (Family 2).*

Changing jobs was also hinted at by one of the participants.
Change my job, as the pandemic taught me that the hospitality/tourism industries were one of the worst hit sectors. My wife will also like to get into an administrative job (Family 11).

Furthermore, apart from career growth such as promotion and job change, some of the participants also noted personal development such as skills acquisition and improvement. These are captured in the excerpts below.

Keep ourselves motivated to work towards what we want such as a promotion. Increase our skills and knowledge to advance our occupational wellness goals. Assess the benefits and positiveness in our current situation, at home and at work and draw lessons from it (Family 4).

Seek out learning opportunities to develop new skills, utilise resources and time for new opportunities; explore all career options, and search for careers/employment that involves the activities we enjoy most, which provide the flexibility for a balanced life (Family 5).

Increasing my wife's IT skills to improve her employability (Family 7).
Expand on our IT skills to manage online tutoring better. Expand our tutoring classes (Family 8).
Another dimension to career growth and personal development was business development. These are reflected in the following two statements.

Look at new ways of enhancing our part-time business, such as creating a business premise at home (Family 6).

My mother cooks very good traditional meals and probably starts a small self-catering business once she feels much better (Family 7).

Subtheme 2: Improve working environment
Xiao *et al*. (2021) noted that the pandemic has created a new environment for considering both work and home life within the discussion of WFH (Xiao *et al.* 2021). While the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted areas of need for physical space in the home office environment, it is worth noting that employees had created dedicated work stations in their homes. More worrisome is that working in a location that is not designed for work can lead to unsatisfactory indoor environmental quality conditions, which according to Xiao *et al.* (2021), can have detrimental effects on both physical and mental well-being while at the same time, decreasing their overall work performance. In support of this, some of the participants stressed the need to improve the working environment.

Use the COVID-19 lessons to improve the working environment for my staff. Would like to have training workshops for staff- that focus on issues like adapting to new work environments, work-life balance, maintaining wellness during the crisis, and personal change management (Family 12).

Make sure that we work in a positive and less stressful environment, and that we are able to balance our jobs with the rest of our life (Family 5).
Another participant proposed a blended working model to improve the working environment. This could contribute to achieving a work balance.

Ideally, work some days from home and the rest at an office (Family 9).

Subtheme 3: Collaboration and communicating with others
As earlier stated, collaboration and communication with others were seen as a tool for maintaining and managing occupational wellness. This is also reiterated as a recommendation for occupational wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Change the mindset, communicating and collaborating with others. Look for something new than feel stuck in a business that you have no choice but to keep open as it is the only source of income (Family 3).

We will need to develop positive relationships/networks with people that we know, for example, networks, colleagues, and friends (Family 5).

Subtheme 4: Budgeting and financial planning
Budgeting and financial planning are essential to help households operating within their means. This could be vital in helping them manage unexpected challenges. One of the families interviewed

stressed the importance of budgeting and financial planning as a recommendation for occupational wellness.

I think revisiting our budget and setting timelines for our goals will help to give us more direction. I would also like to do more homework on our personal financial planning (Family 2).

Subtheme 5: Exercise
Finally, exercising was recommended as a way to improve occupational wellness. *Weekend long jogs; establish an in-door gym (Family 6).*

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
The effect of COVID-19 on the occupational wellness dimension within families transitioning through the COVID-19 pandemic and the nature of constraints experienced by families
Binghamton University (2021) highlighted that COVID-19 ushered in new challenges for occupational wellness. This emerged as generally true for the Australian families interviewed in the study. It was found that before COVID-19, there was strong evidence of occupational wellness within these families. Many of the participants owned their own businesses or were employed. However, the pandemic caused some of the family members to be unemployed, working reduced hours, and some had to close their businesses. This finding is commensurate with literature which showed that COVID-19 caused many employees to become jobless, due to businesses being forced to close (Tušl *et al.* 2021). Furthermore, those whose jobs involved project site visits experienced constraints visiting the sites. The consequence of this was the suspension of many projects. Equally concerning is that certain jobs such waiters, as drivers and tutors faced job uncertainty, which was due to COVID-19 protocols. Additionally, full time employment was also negatively impacted.

Furthermore, occupational wellness affects not only the wellness of employees and their families, but also the sustainability of economic and social development (Qi *et al.* 2020). It thus means that employees losing jobs or businesses closing affected income and financial stability among the interviewed families, which in turn affected the economic growth in Australian. As such, one could reasonably assume that the lack of guaranteeing occupational wellness in society may have negative effects on various sectors of society. While WFH helped to maintain occupational wellness to a certain extent (Thomason and William 2020), it did not appear to be the ideal result many participants expected. As an example, the COVID-19 pandemic prompted expanded mental injury and self-destruction among medical services employees (HCW) (Mock 2020), which may be attributable to the drastic changes in the workplace caused by the pandemic.

According to Ingusci *et al.* (2021), the drastic changes emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic drastically disrupted some of the common daily work life routines. For example, several employees were advised to work from home (WFH) full time during the pandemic (Xiao *et al.* 2021). WFH contributed to higher workloads for many of the participants interviewed. It was found that increased workloads was due to the online meetings, queries, colleagues falling sick or dying from the virus. More so, the unfavourable working conditions at home contributed to some of the participants working long hours in order to compensate for family time. The unstructured working time at home may have resulted from overlapping responsibilities associated with child- caring, added domestic chores, and work responsibilities. As such, overlapping responsibilities may amplify mental, emotional and social risks associated with unstructured working time (Standen *et al.* 1999).

Moreover, it was uncovered that WFH disrupted family arrangements at home. Some of the participants revealed that WFH became even more difficult in terms of the cost of data; disruption of family life; limited space for all family members to work remotely; and increased costs for gas and electricity. This is corroborated by Bouziri *et al.* 2020) who argued that employees WFH are confronted with multiple difficulties to organise their own working time, such as working spaces,

devices, internet connection, and coffee breaks. This may make it difficult to manage and respect the boundaries between personal life and work (Ingusci *et al.* 2021), as evidenced in some of the responses from the participants. The plausible explanation for this is that employees or employers could not have anticipated the sudden shift to online work, thus compromising the safety and health of the home working environment (Bouziri *et al.* 2020). This is further evidenced in the statement from some of the participants, claiming that WFH made work tiring and stressful for them. This may be connected to increased workloads and longer working time on the computer, which may have negative consequences on the individual's occupational wellness. This is supported by Majumdar *et al.* (2020) who posited that long hours of exposure to full-time computer work can lead to tiredness, fatigue, headaches and eye-related symptoms.

Additionally, working from home disrupted work-life balance due to experiencing overworking; being unable to switch off; work intensification; being forced to undertake household chores and perform errands in between work meetings and higher work-home spill overs (Gambhi 2020; Messenger *et al.* 2017). Working from home was also complicated by added parenting roles and responsibilities such as parents becoming unprepared teachers, dealing with frustrated children due to online learning; and new teaching and learning methodologies. (Jalongo 2021; Copeland *et al.* 2021; Degli Espinosa *et al.* 2020). Thus, the findings corroborate with research pointing to occupational wellness being impacted by the pandemic.

For example, the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected the families' occupational wellness as some of the family members became unemployed, and some had to shut down their businesses (Tušl *et al.* 2021). Furthermore, it was revealed that some of the families struggled to balance leisure and work due to increased workloads, online meetings, and unfavourable working conditions, particularly with families around. relatedly, it was argued by Messenger *et al.* (2017), that an area of concern in work-life boundaries is balancing work responsibilities with other family members around.

Despite the negative impacts on occupational wellness, some families maintained personal stimulation and satisfaction by listening to music during work; staying focused on their goals; enjoyed having their family around, balancing work with leisure; and adhering to their value systems and job responsibilities.

Occupational pathways of wellness created within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the holistic approaches used by families to support themselves and recommendations made by families
COVID-19 had an unprecedented impact on the occupational wellness of people across the globe . From an economic perspective, experts predicted its effects are likely to extend beyond the short term (OECD 2021). This is evidenced as the severe health impacts were matched by major global upheavals in labour markets and serious declines in economic activities. For individuals and their families, the pandemic negatively impacted their occupational wellness. This was informed by the recommendation for a change in jobs which are less sustainable during crisis situations like pandemics. Despite this, the findings from the study indicated that many of the participants were able to sustain and remain in control of their occupational wellness. This was achieved by finding a pathway to remain stimulated, motivated and committed to their work during social isolation caused by COVID-19. The findings revealed that maintaining the value system of responsibility and contact with their families were pivotal for maintaining and managing their occupational wellness. The findings suggested that most participants were able to maintain work balance through family and leisure activities, which was important for managing their occupational wellness during the pandemic. The probable reason for this is that family and work are closely intertwined and crucial in people's lives (Kirschi et al. 2019). This may have influenced the recommendation for sustaining contact and reconnecting with their families/relatives/former colleagues as a way of strengthening work-life balance.

Another key finding was that participating in wellness programmes organised by employers helped to maintain and manage the family's occupational wellness. This finding corroborates with Otuonye (2014), who stated that participating in employee wellness programmes yielded positive results and enhanced employee wellness. The study also revealed that working and collaborating with colleagues helped to maintain occupational wellness during the pandemic.

WFH was also important for achieving work balance as employees had more time to engage in leisure activities. This helped in improving work productivity as noted by the participants. The possible reason for this may be that employees could achieve a better work-life balance by avoiding commuting and having access to flexible work schedules. This is crucial in preventing undue stress and work burnout. Moreover, and concurring with Xiao et al. (2021), employees may contemplate taking breaks from their home office spaces, and focusing on organizing and implementing an personalized and viable approaches to their work-life balance, which may promote a healthier lifestyle, and be beneficial for mental and ocuupational health. Since the workplace is important for managing occupational wellness, the improvement of the working conditions of employees was a recommendation for managing occupational wellness. This may be attributed to the fact that most employees were not exposed previously to WFH; and may not have had designated working stations in their homes (Xiao et al. 2021). Such unfavourable indoor working conditions could have a negative effect on employees' mental and occupational wellness, which Xiao et al. (2021) argued could decrease their overall work performance.

Futhermore, Otuonye (2014) posited that participating in employee wellness programmes showed positive results and improved employee wellness, which may contribute to improved employee performance. The concern for work performance may be a potential reason organisations offered employee wellness programmes during COVID-19. The findings revealed that the wellness programmes helped to manage and maintain the family's occupational wellness. Furthermore, sound financial management was helpful in managing occupational wellness. Thus, financial planning were recommended to assist households to operate within their means. This is important in helping them manage unexpected challenges such as the loss of jobs and or employment opportunities. Collaborating and working with colleagues also helped to maintain occupational wellness during the pandemic, and thus was recommended by some of the participants as a way of managing occupational wellness. This is supported by who argued that occupational wellness could be achieved through a balance between time spent on leisure and work activities; having healthy relationships with co-workers, and addressing workplace stress. The need to manage workplace stress may also have informed the recommendation for exercising. This is also supported by empirical evidence where it is shown that physical activity promotes mental health (Kuye et al. 2022).

The previously discussed recommendations made by families regarding occupational wellness included:
- Budgeting and financial planning
- Exercise
- Career growth and self-development
- Improve working environment
- Collaboration and communicating with others

CONCLUSION
Families establish significant patterns of responsibility, preventive, hygiene and exercise; and they lay the foundation for patterns of lifestyle, self-worth, resilience, and the capacity to form wholesome, caring and healthy relationships (Thomas and Umberson 2017). More specifically, the COVID-19 pandemic compromised family wellness in various ways. It affected family cohesiveness; and caused stress, loss of employment, and emotional distress (Feinberg et al. 2021). Due to the unprecedented

nature of the pandemic, families either perished if they could not cope or secured resources to reconstruct their wellness as they transitioned through the pandemic.

Thus, it is important to highlight strategies to maintain occupational wellness within the family context, thereby allowing occupational wellness to flow within a family, while nurturing such wellness can touch not only the physical wellness of individuals within the family, but such wellness may also navigate toward helping others with physical wellness issues beyond the family context. The consensus emerging from the findings is that family structure and support were central in managing and maintaining wellness. This study will not only contribute to the growing research on the COVID-19 pandemic, by exploring the influence of COVID-19 on family physical wellness, but it will also contribute to the awareness and understanding of pandemics and their effect on family wellness. The study will also contribute, both locally and globally, in shaping strategies and policies to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic in relation to occupational wellness and ensure that family life is restored and preserved. Further, the research highlighted diverse holistic approaches to preserving and reconstructing family life. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that most of the participants created pathways of wellness to maintain and manage their wellness. Additionally, the need for wellness support programmes was recognised as an important contributor to maintaining wellness. The consensus emerging from the findings is that family structure and support were central in managing and maintaining wellness. Thus, a holistic family-centric wellness dimension framework was proposed as a strategy and intervention measure to improve the quality of family life toward reconstructing wellness during times of crisis, such as COVID-19.

This study will not only contribute to the escalating research on the COVID-19 pandemic, by exploring the impact of COVID-19 on family wellness, but it will also contribute to the awareness and understanding of pandemics and their effect on family wellness especially from a physical wellness perspective. The study will also contribute toward shaping strategies and policies to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic in relation to occupational wellness and ensure that family wellness is sustained. The study adds value to the body of knowledge on how individuals may manage wellness within the family system; and maintain wellness during crises not only in Australia but in other countries as well. Finally, the support structure provided by families has a major effect on how families reconstruct and maintain their wellness during pandemics. In summary, the findings of this study suggests that COVID-19 had a negative impact on occupational wellness dimensions theorised by Swarbrick and Yudof (2015). This directly caused some constraints on the normal life of the participants and their respective families.

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