Remote working – A boon or bane with regards to employee’s performance and job satisfaction


[1] Research Scholar, Business Administration, Annamalai University, Chidambaram – 608002.
[2] Professor & Head, Business Administration, Annamalai University, Chidambaram- 608002.

Abstract: Remote working became very popular during the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak and are advantageous in a variety of ways like Possibility to work anywhere, at any time, no travel time or costs, less demands on employees, low operating costs, more flexibility etc. The effects of remote working on employee productivity and performance, however, are not fully understood because research on the topic is scattered and conducted in different situations. Therefore, the goal of this study is to give a systematic review the productivity of employees who were working remotely since COVID-19 pandemic, as well as how remote working impacts their quality of life. Following an extensive literature search, a selection of 18 articles from different databases, including Scopus, Emerald, Google Scholar, and the Web of Science database from 2016 to 2023 were chosen. According to the literature review, there was a decline in employee productivity that might be attributed to working from home, which has both benefits and drawbacks for both employees and the company. The results also show that working from home is often not feasible in all cases because many types of job cannot be done remotely. This study suggests that individuals who are eager to use the remote working concept should increase their technology and information technology (IT) training and capacity-building for increased productivity and job satisfaction.

Keywords: Remote work, Employee performance, Job satisfaction, Information Technology

1. Introduction

Remote Working was once usually just an option as a unique arrangement to support families in particular situations. With the advancements in teleconferencing and telework technology, some companies now successfully run entirely remote working teams. During crisis, such as a natural disaster or an epidemic, remote work often offers special opportunity. As the epidemic spreads, remote work options gave employees the chance to maintain the public’s health and be a part of collaborative efforts. However, for a variety of reasons, lots of companies continue to oppose this work trend. Some company owners are concerned with their workers’ lack of productivity, while others might not have made the necessary investments in teleconferencing and telework technology to support remote workers. Although managing a remote workforce might be challenging, it is possible to make the switch smoothly towards remote working with the correct technology and dedicated workers. In the long run, it is critical to embrace workplace innovation because many employees are now demanding remote work options. By eliminating the need for costlier office space and giving employees the opportunity to choose their own schedules and work from wherever they would like, organisations can also save money by implementing a remote working policy which may result in a win-win circumstance.

Traditional onsite working environment

Traditional Work Spaces are the actual, private offices that businesses and corporations maintain. These are the private premises or company-owned buildings where the staff follows a routine and conducts business as usual (Widerszal-Bazyl and Żołnierczyk, 1995). Additionally, if a corporation or enterprises have numerous branches spread throughout various areas, traditional workspaces may have multiple physical locations(Michalchuk et al., 2022). Several departments or groups of an organisation are housed in these physical offices, where all work-related activities take place. All routine work, interactions between employees, meetings and appointments take place in conventional offices (Danielsson, 2016). Traditional offices create a productive environment because they typically reflect professionalism and an intense focus on work. As a result, it creates an opportunity for interaction and physical cooperation among employees and also aids in establishing motivation to work (Forooraghi et al., 2021). Offices frequently provide fully equipped cabins to employees so they may work
comfortably (Haapakangas et al., 2023). Everyone in the firm may concentrate on their work while maintaining their privacy.

**Transition from onsite to remote work**

Computer-related professions have had the fastest rise in remote employment, with commercial, financial, and management sectors observing significant development in this area. Due to the pandemic, there has been a considerable acceleration towards remote work over the past year (Wontorczyk and Rożnowski, 2022). Many workers have discovered the benefits of working remotely as employers have made the transition. A workplace makes a significant difference in how productive a company's employees are. Having a productive and effective workplace has a big impact on many things, providing workers more time to do other tasks (Wang et al., 2021). The shift from onsite to remote work enabled the employees and other groups to carry on and maintain their activities despite the terrible situation that the globe has locked itself into (Fan and Moen, 2023). People who work from home have more freedom during their daily working hours. Additionally, working from home allows individuals to maintain a healthy work-life balance while assisting organisations in completing duties and lowering the risk of stress (Sandoval-Reyes et al., 2021). Crosbie and Moore claim that the majority of salaried jobs are carried out at home. Working from home gives employees more time planning freedom, enabling a good work-life balance over the long term (Crosbie and Moore, 2004). On the other hand, the corporation improves from it by raising the productivity of the company. Because of swiftly developing technologies, many organisations now operate out of coworking facilities rather than traditional offices to suit their primarily remote workforce (Robelski et al., 2019).

**Current scenario of remote working**

The primary concern of most companies was loss of productivity while considering remote working. However, the pandemic outbreak demonstrated employees were able to operate independently (Van Zoonen et al., 2021). Prodo score - an employee productivity monitoring software had found that communication activities including emailing (up 57%), telephoning (up 230%), and chatting (up 9%) all increased during the pandemic, resulting in a 47% increase in employee's performance who were working remotely (Hickok and Maslej, 2023). Recent studies additionally show that the ability to work remotely boosts job satisfaction. According to Buffer's 2023 State of Remote Work study, 91% of respondents preferred working remotely, with flexibility being the top advantage (Buffer, 2023). Furthermore, in 2022, McKinsey conducted an online survey on the benefits of remote work with 25,000 employees from a variety of companies (McKinsey, 2022). The report found that the reason people look for new jobs, after better pay/hours and career chances, was to work in flexible environments. About 87% of respondents stated they would embrace the opportunity to work remotely if allowed.

**Merits of remote working** (Ipsen et al., 2021), (Ferrara et al., 2022)

1. **Flexibility and freedom in work schedules**

   The employee has greater flexibility in planning the schedules and it is advantageous in the fact that one is not required to work within certain hours; and is free to leave the office for a brief walk or to take a lunch break whenever one like.

2. **Saving time and money**

   This is undoubtedly one of the greatest benefits for many people. One doesn’t need to wake up earlier in the morning or spend more time getting to and from work, which saves money on petrol and tickets. Road conditions, congested roads, and probable delays are not a concern. **Efficiency and independence**

   Distractions by phone calls, conversations with coworkers, or the sound of a dozen people tapping on the keyboard are to a lesser extent in remote working. One can work uninterrupted in solitude, quiet, and most importantly, can have complete focus and independence.

3. **Better Work life balance**
Remote employment can be a wonderful alternative for those who need to look after a family member or child. For persons who frequently get sick and other health issues, remote work may enable them to carry out their responsibilities from home.

4. **Improved health and wellbeing**

Employees' health and happiness may increase as a result of remote employment. Employees have more influence over their workplace and can modify it to suit their own demands.

5. **Decreased absenteeism**

Organizations may retain staff and reduce absenteeism by allowing remote work. Consequently, employees are said to have less interest in search of employment elsewhere, encouraging a sense of commitment, dedication and loyalty.

6. **Increased employment opportunities**

Many people look for the control and flexibility that regular job environments frequently lack. With flexible scheduling, employers are now offering freelancing that better suit employees' social as well as private circumstances.

**Demerits of remote working** (Garavand et al., 2022), (Ingusci et al., 2023)

1. **Minimised Turnover**

Remote workers may feel positive about the leadership of the company when they don't feel micromanaged and think their boss trusts them. Even if employees are not looking for other employment, they tend to skip work impulsively.

2. **Isolation of employees**

Working remotely might make one feel lonely and isolated, especially if they live alone. Even if a person works from their own office in a real office building, they frequently mingle with other people and engaged in face-to-face social interactions.

3. **Household distractions**

At home, there are various distractions that can make it difficult for a worker to concentrate on their work. It is critical that workers have a designated workspace, access to childcare, and a schedule if they plan to continue working from home.

4. **High demand for meetings**

Once a company's personnel are dispersed throughout the country or the world, the management should have to monitor them in some manner as supervisors cannot check on their staff in case of remote work.

5. **Concerns about cyber security**

In remote working conditions, it is necessary for a company to maintain security. Certain measures like antivirus programs, firewalls, and VPN configurations or personal internet connections can expand a company's potential security gaps.

6. **Network trafficking**

Internet disruptions like low connections speed, buffering and bad audio and visual connections are frequent for those who live in congested regions where many other people also work from home, such as apartment buildings and heavily populated cities.

**Employee performance**

Performance refers to the accomplishment of an organization's goals using a minimal number of resources in contrast to an individual's goals. Efficiency and effectiveness are the two fundamental elements that define the performance of an employee (Abiddin et al., 2022a). For remote workers, the most crucial physical workplace requirements are the availability of workspace, space organisation, ambient circumstances, internet and Wi-Fi connectivity (Aropah et al., 2020). The effectiveness of remote work depends on managers' capacity to influence changes in workers' work habits as well as to successfully motivate and engage their workforce. (Myungjung Kwon, So Hee Jeon, 2020). Establishing a physical setting, which entails creating a work-friendly environment, is another method for dealing with challenges related to working from home which helps to maintain a harmonious relationship between their home and professional lives. (Adisa et al., 2021) The abrupt shift from
on-site to digital means of engagement during the global crisis resulted in job intensification, virtual presenteeism, job insecurity, and a lack of adaptation to new home-based work arrangements. (Meiryani et al., 2022).

**Job satisfaction**

One of the most common and reliable measures of overall wellness at work is satisfaction with the job, which measures how effectively employees' expectations are met by their work environment (Niebuhr et al., 2022). The perception of greater autonomy has favourable implications on workers' satisfaction with their jobs (Charalampous et al., 2019). A study on team virtuality, for instance, found that social isolation in both its physical and technological forms which negatively predicted job satisfaction among a representative group of workers from 33 different nations (Orhan et al., 2016). Given that remote workers and their coworkers encounter less frequently as a result of the distant working arrangements, it would have a negative effect on job satisfaction. (Bulińska-Stangrecka and Bagieńska, 2021). Because social isolation indicates the loss of social relationships, a crucial work resource that provides social support, social recognition, or the sharing of knowledge related to the workplace, there existed the same negative association among social isolation and remote work satisfaction (Buchanan and Bryman, 2009).

2. **Materials and methods**

The paper uses a review of previous studies to analyse the effects of the phenomena of working from home on employee's productivity and job satisfaction. Following an extensive literature search, a selection of 18 articles from different databases, including Scopus, Emerald, Google Scholar, and the Web of Science database from 2016 to 2023 were chosen. In this study, keywords like employee performance, job satisfaction and remote working were used for literature survey. Information collected from 18 scientific articles served as data sources for this study and are presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Author &amp; Year</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Study outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>(Buonomo et al., 2023)</td>
<td>To analyse the role of workplace culture and institutional support in the relationship between job demands and job satisfaction in remote workers.</td>
<td>Online questionnaire was distributed among participants aged 21 to 70</td>
<td>n=63</td>
<td>When remote workers perceive a strong sense of community within their work environment, it can act as a buffer against the potentially negative effects of high job demands on remote employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>(Prasad et al., 2023)</td>
<td>To study the effects of remote working and occupational stress on employee performance and job satisfaction.</td>
<td>Online survey among IT employees in Hyderabad</td>
<td>n=51</td>
<td>The study reported increased occupational stress due to remote working and influences job satisfaction and employee performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>(Hafishah et al., 2022)</td>
<td>To examine the impact of the remote working system on employee performance with employee motivation and employee engagement.</td>
<td>Survey method where the data was collected from a questionnaire distributed to respondents in a Bank, Indonesia</td>
<td>n=36</td>
<td>Remote work provides employees with flexible work arrangements, less committing, interpersonal relationships along between employees and managers when working remotely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>(Aslan et al., 2022)</td>
<td>To determine the differences in the perceived task performance of</td>
<td>Online survey limited to one call center to prevent the interference of</td>
<td>n=42</td>
<td>The employees who work from home full-time or on certain days of the week have better general task performance perception.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>employees working from home compared to those operating from their workplace.</td>
<td>other organizational variables such as management style, human resources practices and organizational culture.</td>
<td>compared to those who work only from the workplace. The work location has not been found to affect job satisfaction significantly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>To determine the effect of work-life balance on employee performance during remote work phenomenon.</td>
<td>Online questionnaire circulated among remote workers in Indonesia</td>
<td>n=19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>To explore how the relationship between remote work, work stress, and work–life developed during pandemic times in a Latin America</td>
<td>Questionnaire survey</td>
<td>n=12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>This study explores how remote working inhibits employee engagement</td>
<td>Data collected from semi-structured interviews with employees working from home during the Covid-19 lockdown</td>
<td>n=32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>To investigate the influence of internal marketing on job satisfaction, task performance, and counterproductive work behavior in Romania.</td>
<td>Questionnaire was filled out by Romanian residents</td>
<td>n=85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>To examine the personality factors of business school faculty members in job satisfaction and job performance.</td>
<td>Survey among academic staff in Pakistan</td>
<td>n=15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>To study the impact of work-life balance on job satisfaction, organizational commitment and work motivation</td>
<td>Descriptive survey among Employees in a computer spare parts distribution company</td>
<td>n=60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. (Abiddin et al., 2022)
6. (Sandoval-Reyes et al., 2021)
7. (Adisa et al., 2021)
8. (Nemteanu and Dabija, 2021)
9. (Tunio et al., 2021)
10. (Hutagalung et al., 2020)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Study Description</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Results/Implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Ambikapathy, M., and Ali, A. (2020)</td>
<td>To examine the influence of working from home and the difficulties that employees face during remote working</td>
<td>Survey: online questionnaires circulated among employees in Malaysia</td>
<td>n=57</td>
<td>Working from home has a favourable influence on cost and time savings, productivity, on-time completion of tasks and work-life balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Abdullah, N., et al (2020)</td>
<td>To determine the family value, increase in performance, isolation, disrupt the work-life balance</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>n=110</td>
<td>Working from home has more merits than problems, according to the majority of respondents, indicating that working from home is more convenient for employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>(Lilian M. De Menezes, 2016)</td>
<td>Focused on formal and informal arrangements to accommodate work-life preferences for increasing employee’s productivity</td>
<td>Survey data from employees in four large organizations with well-established flexible working policies</td>
<td>n=2617</td>
<td>Formal arrangements are found to be negatively associated with performance, but also a source of greater job satisfaction; informal remote working arrangements have positive effect on satisfaction and worker performance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Findings

The findings reveal that remote work may have both favourable and unfavourable effects on job depending on a variety of variables, including the nature of the work, employer and industry characteristics and home environments. Majority of the survey results reported that study respondents had a favourable effect with remote working, while few reported a negative effect. The results also demonstrate that working remotely has a variety of effects on employees' quality of work and how enjoyable their work experience is. Additionally, the authors demonstrated that low levels of remote workers could encounter more serious issues and show less productivity which might be attributed to the stress due to more job demands in remote work. Employees working remotely have traits that make it necessary for them to play multiple roles while performing their profession, including those of parent and kid as well as roles outside of their regular employment.

Many employees reported that they were unable to maintain a healthy balance or establish distinct boundaries between their personal and professional lives, making them susceptible to problems in their personal lives. On the other hand, Employees maintaining a healthy balance between their personal and professional lives feels satisfied at work, which increases their performance. It is significant to note that having childcare responsibilities is one of the main reasons why people feel overburdened by their workloads and, as a result, experience work-family conflict. The findings imply that human resource managers should develop support strategies that take into account the distinctive characteristics of their employees. Work-life balance and gender inequality are related because women are more likely than men to devote their time to family duties, which lowers productivity and decreases job satisfaction. Gender roles have been shown to have an effect on employee productivity in some studies. The findings of the study also demonstrated that women were more negatively impacted by employee productivity in remote working arrangements than males.

Some studies report that Women benefit from remote work since it makes domestic and family duties easier for them than for men. On the other hand, regardless of gender, found a positive correlation between productivity and perceived remote work productivity. Whether or if female workers have additional responsibilities, such as having dependent children, which may negatively effect their productivity owing to time competition, can be attributed to the discrepancy. As a result, the corporation must have a responsibility to develop work-life rules for employees, as these policies may have an effect on enhancing employee performance.
4. Implications

To ensure employees' performance and wellbeing, organisations and managers might first organise remote work practices based on the profiles that had been found in their workforce. Managers could provide support procedures and customised communication tools (such formal and informal networks) if they were aware of the various degrees of tolerance and sensitivity to job isolation. Inexperienced teleworkers or staff members who feel difficult to adapt to new technology would benefit more from the assistance tools when working remotely. Employees should be made aware of the impacts of working remotely and should be given flexible working schedules. On remote working platforms, skilled workers may also offer social and informational support through private chat rooms or other contact channels. Employee’s remote work arrangements must continue to be flexible, taking into account their personality types, the working environment at home (such as the presence of a spouse or children), and their comments on their experiences working remotely. Employer characteristics should be taken into account by managers to prevent escalating workplace inequality brought on by new organisational structures and digitalisation. Of course, notwithstanding the possibility that psychological variables may have an impact on the remote work experience, businesses must develop organisational strategies that take into account their unique circumstances.

5. Conclusion

The main advantage of onsite office job is that it can be beneficial to a person's mental health. In terms of mental health, having an established place of employment can aid workers in relaxing more readily after work. Leaving a physical workspace enables workers to step out of the work mindset and completely relish their time off, in contrast to remote work, which can occasionally combine work and home life too effectively while maintaining workers all day. The repercussion is a better work-life balance. In case of remote working, Organisations require integrated collaboration and the appropriate communication infrastructure because all employees work remotely. Employees who work on-site gain a lot because they may interact with team members directly. Workers frequently spend time and money travelling to the office under the full-time onsite arrangement whereas working from home cuts down on the time and expense of commuting every day. Instead of switching between conference rooms, it is far more efficient to attend meetings or talks from home. The nature of work has changed since the pandemic and it was reported that working from home is more productive than working in an office. Nowadays, Organisations are providing choices for in-office, hybrid, or remote work. In the end, it is crucial to make decisions in a manner that complies with employee's own priorities and fulfil their demands. The organisation of where people work in the future must consider both employee preferences and the nature of the job. Future studies are also required to better understand the factors that influence employees' preferences for workplaces in order to improve the performance level and job satisfaction.

Reference


