
REMOTE WORK SCENARIO DURING THE PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

Information technology advancements during the first two decades of the twenty-first century have enabled both big and small firms to adjust to the digitization and automation of their operations with resilience. Businesses were able to continue operating throughout the Covid-19 pandemic by creating and implementing the option of remote work for their employees, thanks to automation and digitization of work. The phrase "remote working" refers to working at any time from home or another location outside of an office. It includes the growing use of technology that allows employees to connect with their workplace and supports flexible work schedules. Even after the economy stabilized following many pandemic waves, businesses continued to offer remote work opportunities to employees. This paper intends to throw light on the concept of Remote Working and how this phenomenon is growing in the HR practices of Indian companies. The study recommended establishing small satellite offices in proximity to employees' residences is crucial for attracting and retaining skilled personnel in rural, economically disadvantaged regions.

Keywords: Remote work, Digitalization, Technology, Covid-19.

1. INTRODUCTION

A fully remote and automated virtual organization can now function from anywhere in the globe thanks to the widespread use of information and communication technology (ICT) in this century, particularly mobile phones and the Internet. Global spread of a new coronavirus known as "COVID-19" happened quite quickly between the close of 2019 and the start of 2020. People should stay indoors and avoid contact with others in order to stop the COVID19 virus from spreading. Subsequently, businesses adopt a virtual, totally digital, remote-working structure overnight. Prior to the COVID-19 epidemic, there had been rising interest in studying the effects of flexible work arrangements (Singh et al.,2023; Bala et al.,2015; Sharma et al.,2021; Mehta et al.,2022; Rehman et al., 2022) (Kurland, N. B., & Cooper, C. D. 2002), (Hodder, A., & Houghton, D. J. 2020)., (De Sio, S et al., 2021)., (Wang B et al., 2021). The rapid growth of communications technology and mobile devices has decreased the requirement to supply employment in a permanent workplace and produced beneficial circumstances. In addition, companies responded to employees' demands and preferences and the growing popularity of flexible work arrangements as a result of their realization of the potential benefits, such as lower costs and better economic outcomes. New business and work models have been widely adopted (Andriessen et al., 2005; Sharma et al.,2022; Bala et al.,2021; Banger et al.,2017) due to the effects of globalization and rising market competitiveness. The modifications brought about by COVID-19 have an effect on every industry. Companies need to modify their strategies to withstand the impact. Even so, one of the best ways to survive a crisis is to use technology. Every project's future success will be based on how rapidly it integrates new technologies. Thus, putting information technology projects into practice is essential. Remote working can be a successful and useful tactic for various roles in information technology initiatives. Many survey respondents indicated that they appreciated the benefits of working remotely, including the ability to focus on current tasks and a better work-life balance, and they expressed a desire to continue doing so. It was found that while about 27% of respondents had a negative opinion of the work-from-home experience, over 73% of respondents had a positive opinion of it. Moreover, while a small percentage of users tweeted out of fear, grief, rage, and disgust, over 60% of users expressed feelings of trust, excitement, and expectation for the work-from-home culture. We may conclude that the experience of working from home was positively viewed globally.

1.1 Defining: Remote Work, Telework, Work at home- and Home-based work

Although working from home and remote work are not new trends, the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly enhanced their popularity. This alternative might change how individuals organize their work and where it is done in the long run, among other things. Understanding the four distinct ideas of remote work, telework, work from home, and home-based work as well as how they relate to one another is crucial.

- Remote work can be described as situations where work is fully or partly carried out at an alternative worksite other than the default place of work.
- Telework is a subcategory of the broader concept of remote work and includes workers who use information and communications technology or landline telephones to carry out work remotely.

- Work at home, refers to work that takes place fully or partly within the worker's own residence, with the home serving as the physical location for all or some of the work.
- Home-based workers are defined in the resolution concerning statistics on work relationships as "workers whose main place of work is their own home."

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Prasad et al (2023) investigated the effects of remote working and occupational stress on the job satisfaction, motivation, and performance of employees. On the remote working subscales, a total of 513 responses were collected regarding the effect of employee self-proficiency, technology, teamwork, and occupational stress on the dependent variables of job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and performance. According to the findings, remote work is one of the primary causes of anxiety and employee tension. The primary causes are the lack of interaction with peers, the lack of routine entertainment during breaks, and work–family conflicts. Another observation is that the lack of peer–employee interaction demotivates employees because there is no competition between employees when they are remote workers.

Sengupta et al (2022) investigated the impact of pandemic-imposed remote work arrangements on Indian millennial employees. The information was gathered through in-depth interviews with Indian millennials employed in both the private and public sectors. As a consequence of the pandemic-mandated remote work arrangements, the findings indicate a form of work-life integration for the workers. This integration is the result of four distinct types of problems that have manifested themselves as four main themes and ten subthemes. This study uncovered four main themes: managerial issues, work issues, logistical issues, and psychological issues.

Dryselius et al (2021) discovered that teleworking affects motivation in the areas of lack of social interaction, informational transparency in the organisation, challenges to work-life balance, a shift in responsibility between managers and employees, difficulties reaching out for support, digital meetings, and perceptions of learning. The study concludes by providing managers and employees with lists of practical guidelines that can assist them in fostering motivation in the context of teleworking.

Menshikova (2020) observational of gestures and body language, which are lost online, are necessary for the human brain. Currently, tension is also brought on by the unease and worry over potential contamination with the virus Covid-19. Finding ways to lessen the current level of stress in people's professional lives is a problem that spans the globe. An example is the one applied in Dubai after the outbreak of the pandemic and which refers to general measures for the transfer of professional activity in a remote system for everyone or the granting of paid leave for situations where remote work was not possible or the leave without pay without losing their jobs or temporarily reducing their wages.

Haak-Saheem (2020) found remote work has put pressure on teams and friendships, which is why some companies have started to organize coffee breaks, welcome actions, meetings for informal information exchanges in the virtual environment using online applications and tools.

Goasduff (2020) conducted of remote work, all team members need certain digital skills. However, the skills needed for employees in the future are not limited to digital skills and the ability to decide to lead a team, to work to support colleagues, to interact and to present and support a topic with arguments. The members of a remote team must show creativity, ability to conceptualize and entrepreneurial spirit.

Flores (2019) examined the challenges of working remotely, including the organization's communication channels, the skills required for a remote employee, and the advantages of remote work for both employees and employers. This study found that email is a significant form of communication and that remote workers benefit from flexible work hours.

2.1 Pre-pandemic employee involvement and remote working

Kahn (1990) first used the phrase "employee engagement" to characterize the degree of people's physical, mental, and emotional presence at work. Positive organizational results have been linked to employee involvement, including greater creativity (Kwon and Kim 2020; Sharma et al., 2021; Mehta et al.,2022) decreased absenteeism, improved quality, and profitability (Gallup 2021; Bala et al.,2021). "HRD processes and practices are seen as important contributors to engagement, and [employee engagement] from an HRD perspective is receiving more attention,". It is crucial to take into account how outside variables affect employee engagement experiences and behaviors. However, remote working was becoming more popular prior to the pandemic (Kossek and Lautsch 2018), even if it was typically only employed by higher-paid employees (Desilver 2020; Wang et al., 2021; Bnger et al.,2017). Indeed, there were commonly held views that remote working was only suitable for certain types of jobs. There were differing opinions on the advantages of working from home prior to the epidemic. While some studies found that working from home improved performance (Valentin 2014; Allen, Golden, and Shockley 2015; Sharma et al., 2022), others discovered that working from home increased social and professional isolation, impeded knowledge sharing (Crandall and Gao 2005), and increased labour intensity (Kelliher and Anderson 2010; Felstead and Henseke 2017; Rehman et al.,2022). Furthermore, as home working

was mainly voluntary, previous research is biased as those engaging in remote working often had an interest in it (Kaduk et al. 2019; Singh et al.,2023).

2.2 Employee engagement and remote working during a pandemic

COR theory (Hobfoll, 2002) is an important theoretical framework for contextualizing the attitudinal and behavioral impacts of work- and nonwork-related stress factors. The fundamental premise is that individuals strive to retain, foster, and preserve valuable resources or anything perceived as being helpful in attaining desirable outcomes. Among these valuable resources are material (e.g., money, status, shelter, or physical environment), social (e.g., interpersonal support and mutual respect), and personal (e.g., positive self-regard and optimism) factors that improve well-being and promote a sense of meaning in life (Hobfoll et al., 2003; Bala et al.,2015). Working from home during the unique and unprecedented context of the Covid-19 pandemic is capable of depleting valuable social and personal resources, thereby compromising a person's ability to thrive and achieve desired outcomes. In the work context, social and personal resources entail having a sense of purpose and meaning in one's job, being able to build and nurture positive interpersonal collaborations with co-workers, feeling personally responsible for specific work-related tasks and outcomes, and having a network of individuals that a person can consult with for assistance in times of need. These resources enable individuals to gain new resources, bolster existing resource reservoirs, and ultimately achieve greater performance improvements (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Van Veldhoven et al., 2020; Sharma et al.,2021).

2.3 Managing Human Resources in the Post-COVID Era

With regard to how the pandemic is affecting companies, experts have stressed the need of worker adaptability and resilience in addition to the necessity for an acceleration of the transition to a new digital economy in light of the epidemic's effect (PWC, 2021). Digital and automation revolutions have been hastened as a result of the economic slump, resulting in widespread redeployment of workers across sectors (IMF, 2021). As businesses struggle to adjust to the post-pandemic climate, re-establishing organizational culture will be a primary responsibility for human resource departments. As a result, it is expected that the usage of hybrid working models, which mix remote and on-site labor, will expand in the future (PWC, 2021; Mehta et al.,2022). The majority of organizations is attempting to evaluate whether or not their existing operating techniques, in the past and will continue to serve them in the future (Deloitte, 2021; Banger et al.,2017).

3. CHALLENGES OF REMOTE WORKING

- Challenges with changing mindset and culture from office work to remote work .
- Limited digital skills and too many new tools to learn.
- Navigating uncertainty.
- Insufficient technical support, infrastructure, and digital tools due to old IT systems, strict cyber security measures and obstacles in procurement of new IT systems.
- Poor workstation ergonomics and preconditions of home offices.
- Lack of support in decision making and feedback on work progression

4. CONCLUSION

Whether full-time or hybrid, for many organizations remote work is here to stay. And as employees increasingly expect and demand flexibility and remote options, leaders will need to adapt to a new normal for managing remote teams. Luckily, with the right technology and employee engagement solutions, managing remote workers can be just as rewarding—and productive—as managing an in-house team.

Learn how to manage your remote teams and lead the way (remotely). Remote work is a proper strategy for organizations aiming to reduce costs, as it will allow them to hire in cheaper geographies while employees save travel expenses. Finally, remote work is also seen as a great way for workers to better organize their day to accomplish both work and personal affairs, which may increase worker motivation and productivity. According to the author, some companies just aren't cut out for remote employment. Distractions at work must be strictly regulated and kept to a minimum for everyone's sake. For uninterrupted, full-time employment, it is vital to assign workspaces adjacent to the employee's residence or to create a separate workspace within the employee's residence. To be as productive as possible while working from home, employees should also plan out their personal time. Household responsibilities should not fall only on one person's shoulders if both husband and wife, or more than one person in the family, work from home.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

According to previous studies, based on the nature of the occupation, remote work should be investigated wherever possible, even if it is not the employee's choice but a need to limit infection. When employees may work in small groups with colleagues from the same organization in a physical place close to their homes, stress is decreased and job

satisfaction is raised. The current situation necessitates the provision of remote workspaces, consistent peer communication, and effective protocols for returning to work. Establishing small satellite offices in proximity to employees' residences is crucial for attracting and retaining skilled personnel in suburban, rural, and economically disadvantaged regions. In the post-pandemic era, it is plausible that workplaces may adopt the deskless worker paradigm, whereby employees are not mandated to physically attend a central office, but rather perform their job functions remotely from their residences.

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