

Impact of Work from Home on Employee Work and Life

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Abstract: Work from Home has become an increasingly common working mode in the modern working environment. The COVID-19 pandemic moved a significant shift to working from home (WFH), and it has become the only option for many industries to keep their business running. This sudden shift makes us wonder whether home working is a positive or negative change. However, many studies have analyzed the economic benefits and productivity impacts of telecommuting. There is still a limited exploration of how it affects employees' quality of life, work-life balance, family relationships, and mental health. The research aims to examine the impact of home from work on employees' quality of life and its acceptance. First, I explored employees' acceptance of telecommuting and its possible implications for work-personal life balance. Then, I examined whether prolonged time spent with family in a home-based work environment strengthened parent-child and couple bonds or increased relationship friction and tension. Ultimately, this study assessed home-based work's positive and negative effects on employee mental health and identified key factors that may increase or decrease psychological stress. While the economic and productivity benefits of telecommuting have received extensive research attention, there is a gap in how it affects employee quality of life. This research provides novel and in-depth analyses in this area. It suggests strategies for companies, policymakers, and other stakeholders to meet employees' needs better and, in turn, enhance their job satisfaction and productivity. Given that home-based work is becoming an ongoing work pattern, a deeper understanding of its long-term impact on employees' quality of life will provide valuable insights for society to help them adapt more smoothly to this work pattern.

Keywords: Work from Home, work-life balance, productivity, mental health, relationship

1. Introduction

People's opinions about WFH during mandatory isolation are varied and complex. Some employees who were introduced to WFH for the first time have expressed concerns that remote work might hinder their career progression. Moreover, extended periods of working alone have raised fears of reduced social interactions, potentially leading to feelings of loneliness [1]. However, as telework gains momentum in the contemporary career landscape, many employees view telecommuting as a more flexible option that allows for a better balance between professional obligations and family responsibilities. They believe that this shift can bring tangible benefits, such as reducing daily commuting hours, providing more time for family interaction, and engaging in leisure activities [2].

Additionally, employees based in major metropolitan areas such as New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles see an added advantage of complete remote work, as it offers the potential to relocate to more affordable regions, often rural areas, thereby improving their living standards and overall comfort. Despite the many benefits of remote work, its impact on employees' overall quality of life remains subject to further exploration and analysis [3].

2. Literature Review

According to Bloom et al., A randomized controlled trial, called Evidence from a Chinese Experiment, aimed to determine how telework affects output. As part of the study, Chinese travel companies were randomly assigned to work from home or in an office for nine months. According to the survey, those who worked from home were approximately 13% more productive than those who worked in the office, and the turnover rate was 33% lower for home-based employees, especially for female employees. This shows that employees highly value the option of working from home. Moreover, the Job Satisfaction Survey shows that work-from-home employees have significantly higher levels of job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and work-life balance [4].

According to Cevat et al., based on data from 27 countries, this study explores the commute time savings employees experience when they telework and how they utilize that extra time. The results show that teleworking saves employees 72 minutes of commuting time daily. After adjusting for the percentage of people who work from home, this keeps about 2 hours per employee per week or 2.2% of a 46-hour workweek. This provides employees with more personal free time, of which 40% is spent on work, 34% on leisure, and 11% on family care. Further analysis of the data shows that male employees use 2.4 minutes more of their saved time at work than female employees, and employees with graduate degrees are also more inclined to invest their saved time at work. In addition, male and female employees with children under the age of 14 spent 11.4 minutes and 9 minutes of their reserved time per day on family caregiving, respectively, compared to employees without children, showing that telework provides employees with more opportunities to interact with their families, which in turn helps to strengthen parent-child relationships. In addition, the study suggests that reallocating time and energy that would otherwise be spent on commuting to work may have enhanced productivity. Together, telework provides employees of all backgrounds with more time options, increasing job satisfaction [5].

The study by Carlos et al. reveals that telework can potentially reduce employees' apathetic attitudes. This attitudinal reduction is attributed to employees' perceived social support, decision-making involvement, a strong sense of work autonomy, and a reduction in work-family conflict, consistent with earlier research findings. Further analysis suggests that the frequency of telework helps employees adapt on a cognitive and emotional level, thereby preventing exhaustion due to uncontrollable factors. However, for telework that requires continuous innovative solutions, the constant stress may lead to emotional disconnection and reduced employee well-being if employee resources are not managed well [6].

Jose et al. points out that teleworking provides increased labor market opportunities for groups with limited mobility, those living in remote or stay-at-home areas with limited job opportunities, and workers facing location constraints. However, this working mode can also lead to a blurring of the boundaries between work and personal life, increasing the number of hours employees work and leading to a rise in stress and fatigue. Regarding family relationships, telework presents a double impact. This working model provides employees more time with their families and increases flexibility in managing family responsibilities. However, the adverse effects are just as evident, especially when employees struggle to balance work and family life at home, which can exacerbate conflicts and tensions among family members. Additionally, the lack of face-to-face interaction with coworkers may increase feelings of isolation, especially significant for those employees who lack

social support. To summarize, while telework offers convenience for many, it can also negatively impact an individual's mental health, especially if they struggle with the assignment of duties and coping with life's stressors [7].

3. Hypothesis

This research begins with the hypothesis that working from home enhances work-life balance, family relationships, and mental health. This hypothesis is based on Cevat, who reported that employees who work from home often experience higher job satisfaction, more harmonious family relationships, and reduced anxiety and depression. This is partly because telework reduces commuting time by about 72 minutes daily and provides employees with more opportunities to spend time with their families. It also offers greater flexibility in working hours, making it easier for employees to balance work and life [5]. In summary, working from home may be a way to effectively enhance work-life balance, strengthen family relationships, and benefit mental health.

The second hypothesis of the study proposes that telework may have a potentially negative impact on employees' mental health. This hypothesis is supported by recent literature, particularly the findings of Carlos et al. and Jose et al. Although these studies suggest that working from home may enhance some dimensions of job satisfaction in the short term [6], in a long time, it may also lead to increased social isolation, blurring of work-life boundaries, and balancing of work and family responsibilities [7]. For example, reducing face-to-face coworker interactions may weaken an employee's social support network, a critical mental health component. In addition, as the boundaries between work and personal life fade, employees may find it difficult to "get away" from work, leading to a steady build-up of stress. While teleworking offers time flexibility for family life, it can also exacerbate conflict among family members, especially when weighing their respective responsibilities. Overall, if telework challenges are not managed appropriately, it can negatively impact the overall mental health of employees.

4. Data

To test my hypotheses, I cited multiple data sources. First, I used WFH Research and publicly available data to gather information about employees' acceptance of work-from-home and employment patterns [8]. In addition, I published my questionnaire using Sojump, a leading online questionnaire platform in China. Academics, researchers, and companies have widely adopted this platform for data collection and analysis. This questionnaire aims to understand the number of employees in telecommuting mode, their productivity, and their attitudes toward telecommuting. More specifically, I intend to delve into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on telecommuting employees while also considering factors such as workplace productivity, time management, and satisfaction and thus explore how these factors affect employees' work-life balance. In the final stage of my analysis, I will use regression analysis to validate my predictions. I will analyze the data using the R statistical program and use descriptive statistics and regression analysis to explore the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. This study delves into the impact of several variables on employee satisfaction, of which employee satisfaction is our dependent variable. Based on a questionnaire survey of 200 employees, I learned about the psychological stress of employees working remotely and included it as one of the key independent variables [9]. In addition, working hours, comfort of the working environment, and social interaction were also included as key independent variables. Using regression modeling, my aim is to quantify the predictive power of these independent variables on employee satisfaction, thus providing insights into the impact of telecommuting on employees. It is important to emphasize that while regression analysis can reveal correlations between variables, determining causality may require further research. To gain insight

into the multifaceted effects of telecommuting on employees, this study used R studio software to conduct linear and multiple regression analyses. In the preliminary model, I chose psychological stress as the only independent variable to explore its possible association with telecommuting. The core objective of this study is to verify whether telecommuting can improve employees' life comfort and thus help achieve a better work-life balance. Subsequently, I introduced three other independent variables, telework time, social interaction, and life comfort, to explore in depth the impact of these factors on employee productivity and life satisfaction. Considering these dimensions, the final model will be analyzed around the four independent variables: work time, psychological stress, social interaction, and life comfort. With the help of this comprehensive model, I expect to reveal the full spectrum of telecommuting impacts and provide strategic recommendations for management and implementation accordingly. To ensure the accuracy of the findings, I will analyze the regression equation coefficients in-depth and rigorously test the hypotheses using statistical methods such as t-tests and F-tests.

5. Results

The research conducted a multiple linear regression analysis to explore the relationship between telecommuting employee satisfaction and their work hours, social interactions, psychological impact, and life comfort (Table 1). Satisfaction, psychological implications, work hours, social interaction, and life comfort were rated by participants on a scale of 1 to 5. Linear regression modeling of the relationship between telecommuters' job satisfaction and their psychological impact after working from home revealed that psychological state ratings significantly predicted satisfaction.

Table 1: Full regression results of Employee satisfaction.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Employee Satisfaction	Employee Satisfaction	Employee Satisfaction	Employee Satisfaction
Working Time	0.473 (0.719)			
Comfort of the Working Environment		2.89** (0.004)		
Psychological Stress			5.093*** (8.27e-07)	
Social Interaction				1.753 (0.081)
Constant	13.377 *** ($<2e-16$)	5.606*** (6.85e-08)	5.655 *** (5.36e-08)	5.818*** (2.35e-08)
N	201	201	201	201
R ²	0.0029	0.4006	0.4773	0.3469

t statistics in parentheses; * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Specifically, for every one-unit increase in psychological state ratings (e.g., from "Disagree" to "Fair"), there was a corresponding positive change in telecommuters' satisfaction expectations (an increase of 0.33144 units). This finding is statistically significant with a t-value of 5.093 and a corresponding p-value of 8.27e-07, implying a positive correlation between psychological state and telecommuting satisfaction. A better mental state is associated with higher satisfaction. And there was a significant positive relationship between life comfort and employee satisfaction ($\beta = 0.18715$, $p = 0.00429$). Employee satisfaction is expected to increase by 0.18715 units when each unit increase in

life comfort score is observed, and other factors remain constant. Whereas social interaction had a positive relationship with employee satisfaction ($\beta = 0.09414$), this relationship was not significant until the 10% significance level ($p = 0.08116$). Notably, the relationship between working hours and employee satisfaction was insignificant ($\beta = 0.03857$, $p = 0.47322$). The overall explanatory power of the model was $R^2 = 0.6053$, indicating that the model explained 60.53% of the variance in the dependent variable. These findings suggest that employees working in comfortable living environments are more satisfied with their telework experience. The weaker relationship between social interaction and satisfaction may reflect employees' diversity of social needs. The non-significant relationship between work hours and satisfaction may imply that work hours are not a key determinant of satisfaction among telecommuting employees. Future research could further explore these relationships and examine other possible influences.

6. Conclusions and Discussion

In recent years, telecommuting has become a regular mode of work, profoundly affecting employees' lives and work. This study addresses its impact on employees' life balance in depth. The conclusion shows a positive relationship between life comfort and employee satisfaction, which aligns with Cevat's study, which argued that employees who work from home tend to have higher job satisfaction. Reduced commuting time brings employees more interaction with their families and promotes harmonious family relationship [5]. However, at the same time, while social interaction had a positive impact on employee satisfaction, its strength was weaker. This may imply that home-based employees may face social isolation, which may be exacerbated by telecommuting, as Carlos et al. describe [6]. Prolonged isolation or lack of interaction may have adverse effects on mental health. It is worth noting that there is no significant relationship between working hours and employee satisfaction, which implies that job satisfaction is more related to what, where, and how the work is done in telecommuting environments. Therefore, the impact of telecommuting on life balance is two-sided. On the one hand, it brings work-life balance; on the other hand, it brings the challenge of social isolation and unclear boundaries. Furthermore, future research and management should focus more on reducing the negative effects of telecommuting and helping employees achieve work-life harmony. With the rapid development of information and communications technology, telecommuting has become the preferred work mode for many organizations and employees. This model provides employees with unprecedented flexibility and helps them to harmonize their work and life better. However, at the same time, it also poses challenges such as social isolation, blurring of work-life boundaries, and maintaining productivity [10]. This study shows that employees are more satisfied with their work experience when working from home. Still, differences in their social needs result in the limited impact of social interactions on job satisfaction. Notably, the relationship between work hours and satisfaction was insignificant, implying that other factors may significantly impact on employee satisfaction. Considering this, companies and researchers in the future should delve deeper into how to create an environment that meets employees' work, psychological, and life needs to ensure that telecommuting maximizes value for all participants. As social acceptance of telecommuting rises, so does our understanding of its combined effects. This study explores the effects of telecommuting on employee satisfaction, psychological well-being, social interaction, and life comfort. While working from home improves work-life balance and family closeness, it may also create social isolation and blurring work-life boundaries. Home working hours were not directly related to employee satisfaction, but life comfort and psychological well-being were significantly and positively related to satisfaction. These findings suggest that companies need to consider various factors to safeguard employee happiness and productivity when implementing telecommuting. With the further development of telecommuting technology, a deeper understanding of its effects and strategic adjustments will determine the future success of enterprises and employees.

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