



IMPACT OF REMOTE WORK ON EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY – FACTORS IMPACTING PRODUCTIVITY IN REMOTE WORKING: STAKEHOLDERS' PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT:

In metropolitan areas, hectic and stressful lifestyles are often worsened by the challenges of commuting, leaving employees drained of energy both before and after work. The emergence and subsequent adoption of remote working has provided a viable solution to this issue. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 acted as a catalyst, accelerating the transition to remote jobs as businesses sought alternatives to mitigate productivity losses. Remote work allows employees the flexibility to work from various places, such as their residences or coworking spaces, instead of traditional office settings. This arrangement empowers individuals to balance their professional and individual lives more successfully by minimising travelling time and offering greater autonomy. Today, remote work has become a well-accepted strategy, employed in either complete or hybrid formats across various industries.



This paper aims to explore the factors and challenges influencing productivity from the perspectives of different stakeholders while working remotely and to identify industries and sectors that are conducive to remote working. The study is descriptive, drawing on secondary data collected from online resources, and presents a synthesis of findings from relevant literature on remote work's benefits, challenges, and industry applicability. The analysis highlights the evolving dynamics of work culture and its consequences for employees and organizations alike.

KEYWORDS: Remote working, Employee Productivity, Covid-19, Work From Home.

INTRODUCTION

In metros, life is hectic and stressful due to challenges of travelling, which is cumbersome as well as tiring. Many a times the employees are drained of their energy by the time they reach the office. Same is true while returning home. In the present days most of the organizations have adopted cultural paradigm shift of working from home or remote working. In fact, it is not a totally new concept. The practice began around 1970, with the advent of technology linking satellite offices with the headquarter. Internet technology helped us widening its scope from 1990 onwards. Covid 19 Pandemic has forced businesses to look for an alternative to loss of work in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the transition to remote work for white-collar workers around the world. The unforeseen change towards remote work brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant influence on how employees work and their well-being. That is when the concept of remote working thrived. Today

it is a well-accepted strategy to use either complete or partial remote working. Instead of travelling to the workplace each day to work from an assigned desk, remote staff can complete their projects and accomplish their targets and objectives wherever they like. Individuals have the freedom to discharge their duties from any place and plan their working days so that their professional and private lives can be enjoyed to their maximum potential and cohabit in non-conflicting manner.

Remote work is a flexible work planning that permits staff to work from a distant location, such as home or a coworking space, instead of a conventional office. It permits employees to work outside of a regular conventional office setting. The basic concept is that the work can be done from any place, as long as it is done well. Some people have the opportunity to work remotely either from home or a co-working space for the larger part of the working week, but have to shuttle to in-person discussions or consultations at the workplace once a week.

The rapid adoption of remote work has significantly altered traditional work structures. Organizations across industries have adopted remote or hybrid models to enhance employee satisfaction and maintain operational efficiency. However, the influence of remote work on output and efficiency remains a debated topic. This literature review aims to explore existing findings, compare different perspectives, and provide insights into the factors influencing productivity in remote work settings.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- i. What is the impact of remote working and employee productivity?
- ii. What are the factors and challenges impacting productivity from different stakeholders' point of view regarding working remotely?
- iii. Which industries benefit more because of working remotely?

Objectives:

- i. to study the impact of remote working on the employee productivity
- ii. to study the factors and challenges impacting productivity from different stakeholders' perspectives while working remotely
- iii. to identify the industries / sectors which support remote working

Hypothesis:

This being the descriptive study based on secondary literature, research hypothesis was formulated instead of statistical one (which is framed for quantitative data).

H₀: Remote working pattern does not impact the employee productivity.

H₁: Remote working pattern positively impacts the employee productivity.

Variables: The independent variable was remote working, and the dependent variable was the employee productivity. The other variables of the study were perspectives of (Employee, Employer, Family), Factors boosting productivity, Challenges affecting productivity, and different industries/sectors.

Related Literature: The literature on remote working is extensive. However, this article has presented nearly 25 studies which were conducted in different parts of the world. These were published in the period of last ten years, from 2015 to 2024. on the impact of remote working on some variables like perceptions of benefits and challenges from stakeholders' perspectives, and the industries which are amenable for remote working. The studies were collected from Google Scholar and organization websites.

METHODOLOGY:

This descriptive study was based on the literature review. The peer-reviewed articles, conference papers and published reports were downloaded from databases like Google Scholar, Scopus, ResearchGate, Academia and Web of Science. Keywords used in the search included "remote work productivity," "work-from-home efficiency," and "telecommuting performance." Studies from 2015 onward were considered to ensure relevance to contemporary work environments.

The studies were analysed with reference to different parameters. The analysis is presented as a summary drawn from the conclusions of these papers.

Data Analysis:

Objective No. 1: To study the impact of remote working on the employee productivity

Hypothesis: H_1 : Remote working pattern positively impacts the employee productivity.

The research papers identified for the present study were tabulated and analysed to see the overall impact of remote working on the employee productivity.

Table 1.1 below presents the analysis of 25 studies with reference to different parameters.

Table 1.1 Analysis of the studies

Author(s) & Year	Study Title	Research Methodology	Sample, Industry & Country	Findings on Productivity	Effect Size	Conclusion
Bloom, Liang, Roberts, & Ying (2015)	Does WFH work? Evidence from a Chinese experiment	Experimental	249 Employees, Call Centre, India	Employees have very positive perspective on WFH on productivity	N A	Positive impact
Church (2015)	Gauging perceived benefits from WFH as a job benefit	Primary (Survey) & Secondary research	84 employees & 9 Managers Multiple industries; USA	Employees have very positive perspective on WFH on productivity	N A	Positive impact
Elshaiekh, Hassan and Abdallah (2018)	The impacts of remote working on workers performance	Review Paper	Not Available	Employees have very positive perspective on WFH on productivity	N A	Positive impact
Jalagat, R. & Jalagat, A. (2019)	Rationalizing remote working concept & its implications on employee productivity	Analysis of Literature	17 Papers Oman	Enhanced Productivity. Social isolation, laziness, difficulties in prioritizing	N A	Mixed Results
Alghaithi & Sartawi (2020)	Improving remote employees' organisational productivity: practical guidelines for identifying & managing bottlenecks in today's world	Meta Analysis	200 Papers	Improved productivity	N A	Positive impact
Baudot and Kelly, (2020)	A survey of perceptions of remote work and work productivity in the United States during the covid-19 shutdown	Quantitative Survey Perception study	592 Respondents Crowdsourcing Website; USA	Perceive improvements in work productivity	N A	Positive impact
Boston Consulting Group (2020)	What 12,000 employees have to say about the future of remote work?	Quantitative Survey	12000 Respondents; Consulting; Global	Perceive improvements in work productivity	N A	Positive impact
Atoko (2021)	The impact of remote working on employee performance during Covid-19 pandemic	Secondary Research	18 Articles	Positively impacted the productivity	N A	Positive impact
Oleniuch (2021)	Employees' perception of the difficulties of WFH from the perspective of their experience on remote working	Quantitative Survey	1284 Employees from multiple sectors	Strong Positive Association between WFH & Benefits (Productivity)	N A	Positive impact
Galanti, Guidetti, Mazzei, Zappala, Toscano (2021)	WFH during the covid-19 outbreak: the impact on employees' remote work productivity engagement & stress	Quantitative Survey	209 Employees; Health; USA	Enhanced Productivity	N A	Positive impact
Chafi, Hultberg and Yams (2021)	Post-pandemic office work: perceived challenges & opportunities for a sustainable work environment	Two Qualitative Studies	53 Employees, Managers; Healthcare; Sweden	Improved Performance	N A	Positive Result
Rafieses, Bacason, Nisa, and Martir (2022)	Investigating the Impact of Remote Working on Employee Productivity and Work-life Balance	Quantitative Survey	96 Employees; Business Consulting; UAE	Strong Positive impact on productivity (Correlation)	N A	Positive impact
Bartik, Cullen, Glaeser, Luca, & Stanton (2023)	The Rise of Remote Work: Evidence on Productivity & Preferences from Firm & Worker Surveys (Working Paper 20-138)	Two Quantitative Surveys	Two Surveys 2545 (2020) & 2789 (2021) Employees; USA	Enhanced Productivity	N A	Positive impact
Kurdy, Malkawi & Rizwan (2023)	The impact of remote working on employee productivity during Covid-19 in the UAE	Quantitative Survey	110 Employees from multiple sectors; UAE	Improved productivity (SEM - Smart PLS technique)	N A	Positive impact
Koudagani and Thoti (2023)	The effects of working remotely on employee productivity and work-life balance	Bibliometric Analysis	955 Articles; Multiple areas; India	Positively impact employee productivity & work-life balance	N A	Positive impact
Sivaprakash & Venkatesh (2023)	The impact of remote work on employee productivity and well-being: a comparative study of pre & post covid-19 era	Mixed Methods; Quantitative survey & Qualitative interviews	Not mentioned	Improved productivity post Covid-19	N A	Positive impact
Gegerfelt and Sandström (2023)	How remote work affect employee productivity	Quantitative Survey	284 Employees; Multiple Sectors; Sweden	Enhanced Productivity	N A	Positive impact
Balu and Durai (2024)	The perception of employees on remote working and work outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic	Quantitative Survey	324 Employees; IT and ITes Employees; India	Enhanced Productivity (SEM - AMOS technique)	N A	Positive impact
Chmeis and Zeine (2024)	The effect of remote work on employee performance	Quantitative Survey	150 Employees; Multiple Sectors; Lebanon	Enhanced Productivity	N A	Positive impact
Thompson (2024)	The impact of remote work on employee productivity: a study of IT companies in Silicon valley	Quantitative Survey	150 Employees; IT; USA	Enhanced Productivity	N A	Positive impact
Mubashira & Suresh Kumar (2024)	The impact of remote work on employee productivity & satisfaction	Mixed Methods Research	Not Mentioned; Multiple Sectors; India	Enhanced Productivity (SEM - AMOS technique)	N A	Positive impact
Chaturvedi and Dhamija (2024)	Telecommuting intentions post-pandemic: a study of Indian pharma industry employees' job satisfaction & work-life balance	Quantitative Survey	260 Employees; Pharma; India	Enhanced Productivity (SEM - AMOS technique)	N A	Positive impact
Patil, Janani, Anand Kumar, Shobitha, Nagprakash (2024)	The impact of remote work on work-life balance and employee productivity	Review Article	Not mentioned	Certain factors leading to productivity were positively impacted while others did	N A	Mixed Results
Bhattacharya (2024)	A critical study on the work from home facility & its impact on employees' satisfaction & employees' performance in the service sector	Quantitative Study	653 Employees; Service Sector; India	Enhanced Productivity (SEM - AMOS technique)	N A	Positive impact
Pabilonia & Redmond (2024)	The rise in remote work since the pandemic and its impact on productivity	Quantitative Study, Secondary Data	62 Multiple Industries; USA	Enhanced Productivity	N A	Positive impact

Out of 25 studies, 23 show positive impact of remote working pattern on the employee productivity. Two studies show mixed results, and no study reported negative impact. This helps the researcher in rejecting the Null Hypothesis and retaining the Alternate Hypothesis.

Objective No. 2: To study the factors and challenges impacting productivity from different stakeholders' perspectives while working remotely

Mainly three stakeholders (Employee, Employer and Employee's Family) were considered for detailed analysis as they are more affected by remote working. All the conclusions are summarized as given below.

1. Stakeholders' perspective of Remote Working:

i. Employees:

The trend of employee perception toward remote working has evolved significantly, especially over the last few years. The results show mixed reaction to the concept of remote working. Employee perception of remote working varies widely based on personal preferences, work environments, and job roles. However, several common themes and trends have emerged as remote work has become more prevalent.

Factors Boosting Productivity:

Remote work allows employees offers more flexibility to manage their own time, leading to better focus during working hours which helps reduce distractions and improving focus. Work-Life Balance is improved as remote work enables better integration of personal and professional life. A healthier work-life balance leads to higher engagement and output. Moreover, the commute time is reduced. Eliminating the daily commute saves employees time and energy, which allows them to begin their workday with less stress resulting in higher productivity levels. It is cost saving too in terms of travel and professional attire. Employees working from home can customize their work environment that suits their personal needs, leading to higher comfort and focus. While remote work introduces new types of distractions, it often eliminates common office distractions such as frequent meetings, casual conversations, or noisy open-plan offices. Some employees report fewer interruptions at home which allows more focused work time. Many employees thrive with the greater autonomy that remote work provides. As they take ownership of their time, they often become more productive when working on tasks independently. The ability to work in comfortable settings and achieve a better work-life balance contributes to higher overall job satisfaction for many. Remote work helps them maintain a healthier lifestyle by enabling regular exercise, healthier eating, and reduced stress from commuting. The flexibility to manage their schedule also allows employees to focus on their mental health and well-being.

Challenges Impacting Productivity:

The lack of a physical separation between work and home can lead to overworking, burnout, or conversely, distractions from personal responsibilities. They find it difficult to "Switch Off" for the work due to blurring of work-life boundaries. Remote work relies heavily on digital communication tools, which may not always be as effective as face-to-face interaction. Miscommunication or delays in communication can hamper collaboration and slow down decision-making. Lack of social interaction with colleagues can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness, which may reduce motivation and affect mental well-being, impacting overall productivity. Employees may face challenges with technology, such as unreliable internet connections, lack of appropriate equipment, or inadequate IT support, all of which can reduce productivity. Not all employees have an ideal home environment for working. Variability in factors such as limited space, household distractions and a lack of a dedicated office space can negatively impact productivity. Remote work reduces opportunities for team bonding, spontaneous

collaboration, and informal brainstorming, which some employees feel is vital for innovation and creativity. Employees may fear that working remotely can hinder their career growth because they are less visible to managers and decision-makers, potentially leading to fewer opportunities for promotions or leadership roles. Building professional relationships remotely can be more challenging, as it lacks the casual, spontaneous interactions that often occur in an office environment. Many a times, family members, especially partners, may expect the remote worker to take on additional household tasks, assuming that working from home equates to having more time for chores. This can create an imbalance, especially if the remote worker is already managing a full workload. Children and other family members may struggle to understand that although the parent is home, they are still working, leading to confusion about roles and responsibilities within the household.

ii. Employers:

Employers' perceptions of remote working have evolved significantly, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced many organizations to quickly adopt remote work practices. Employers generally have mixed perceptions of remote work, balancing the benefits of increased flexibility and potential cost savings with concerns about productivity, collaboration, and company culture. Detailed look at how employers perceive remote work is presented below.

Factors Boosting Productivity:

Employers can save on expenses related to office space, utilities, maintenance, and office supplies. Some companies have eliminated physical offices. Remote work allows employers to hire talent from across the globe, expanding the talent pool and potentially reducing costs associated with hiring in expensive metropolitan areas, thus giving geographic flexibility in hiring. Many employers report that employees are more productive when working from home and are more focussed, without the distractions of offline office life. In some cases, employees working remotely have been seen to extend their working hours or work more efficiently, as commute time and stress is reduced. Employers recognize that remote work can improve employee satisfaction by offering flexibility, work-life balance, and autonomy. Happier employees tend to stay longer with the company, reducing turnover. Additionally, offering remote work is an attractive benefit that can help employers recruit top talent as flexibility has become a key factor in employee preferences. The ability to operate remotely has shown that businesses can remain resilient in times of crisis, thus ensuring business continuity. Many employers are keen to highlight the environmental benefits of remote work, such as reduced commuting and lower carbon footprints. This can align with broader sustainability goals and improve the company's public image.

Challenges Impacting Productivity:

Employers worry that remote work reduces spontaneous interactions and in-person brainstorming sessions, which can foster innovation. The absence of casual conversations and impromptu problem-solving is seen as a potential downside. Relying solely on digital communication tools can lead to miscommunication or delays in decision-making. Employers often feel that remote work makes it harder to communicate. While some employers see increased productivity, others are concerned about the difficulty of monitoring employees' work remotely. Some employers feel that without physical oversight, it is harder to manage team performance, leading to potential dips in productivity for employees who may struggle with remote work environments or distractions at home. Many employers view remote work as a threat to company culture. Without regular face-to-face interactions, team bonding, and shared experiences, employers worry that employees may feel less connected to the company and its values. It can be more challenging to onboard new employees remotely. Employers may find it difficult to integrate new hires into the company culture, ensure effective training, and foster a sense of belonging. Employers are increasingly aware of the potential

negative impact of remote work on employees' mental health. The lack of social interaction and increased isolation can lead to feelings of loneliness or burnout, which can eventually affect productivity and morale. Although remote work can improve work-life balance, employers recognize that it can also blur boundaries between personal and professional life, leading to overwork and burnout. Employers worry about increased cybersecurity risks associated with remote work. Employees working from home may not have the same level of IT security as they do in an office, increasing the risk of data breaches, phishing attacks, or other cyber threats. Companies handling sensitive information may face difficulties ensuring compliance with data protection laws and safeguarding confidential information in remote settings. There are concerns about unequal access to career advancement opportunities or visibility within the company for employees working in office and remotely. Employers are increasingly focused on establishing clear remote work policies related to working hours, data security, compensation, and employee expectations. Managing remote work across different countries or regions can create legal and HR complexities. Remote work raises concerns about taxes, particularly if employees are working from different states or countries. Employers must navigate tax laws, labor regulations, and compliance across various jurisdictions.

Employers' perceptions of remote work are mixed. While many recognize the potential benefits in terms of cost savings, flexibility, and increased employee satisfaction, there are significant concerns about managing productivity, fostering collaboration, and maintaining company culture. As businesses continue to adapt, many companies are experimenting with hybrid models, balancing the flexibility of remote work with the structure of in-person collaboration. The long-term success of remote work will depend on how well employers address these challenges and find solutions that work for both the organization and its employees.

iii. Family Members:

Family members' perspectives on remote working depends upon their own roles within the household, the dynamics of the family, and how remote work affects their day-to-day routines. While remote work can bring certain advantages to family life, it also presents challenges, especially in managing personal space, time, and responsibilities.

Factors Boosting Productivity:

One of the most frequently cited benefits of remote work for families is the opportunity to spend more time together. Parents can devote more time to family activities, household chores, and engaging their children. The flexible schedule that remote work allows parents to participate more freely in their children's activities. This availability allows for a smoother management of household needs, tasks, and caregiving responsibilities. It helps in keeping a closer eye on their children, ensuring that they stay on track with their schoolwork and health. Family members, especially children, may develop a greater understanding of what their parents do for work and how efficiently they balance tasks, deadlines, and meetings. Parents working from home may serve as role models for productive work habits, showing children the importance of focus, discipline, and managing responsibilities effectively. Younger children often benefit from having a parent at home, as it provides more opportunities for bonding and emotional support.

Challenges Impacting Productivity:

Young children may struggle to understand the time importance while the parent is working, leading to frequent interruptions. They may get frustrated as 'the parent is home but unavailable to engage with them during work hours. In families where managing remote office work and remote schooling happens simultaneously, children may feel the stress of balancing their own schoolwork while their parents are busy with professional tasks. Partners may feel that their home has become too crowded or that they lack personal time and space when their partner is working from home. If one

partner is working remotely while the other is not, there can be a mismatch in expectations about how household tasks and childcare are divided.

Family members' perspectives on remote working are varied and influenced by factors such as the family structure, available space, communication within the household, and the specific work demands of the remote worker. While many like the increased flexibility, time together, and ability to manage home-life tasks more easily; challenges regarding space, and work-life balance create stress.

Objective No. 3: To identify the industries / sectors which support remote working

Industry-Specific Variations in Remote Working

Certain industries by virtue of their nature of work are more amenable to remote working. Industries that rely on digital tools, communication, analysis, creative work, and flexibility of operations are generally more favourable to remote work. Use of technology and digital tools in sectors like finance, marketing, human resource, telemedicine, research, consulting, e-commerce, media, education, training lend themselves for remote work. However, where jobs involve physical tasks or requiring in-person interactions like manufacturing or healthcare in clinical settings may not be adaptable to remote work.

It is also observed that remote working mainly depends upon employee preference and the company support in providing appropriate technology for working remotely.

CONCLUSION:

This research highlights the complex relationship between remote work and productivity. Organizations must adopt tailored approaches, incorporating technology, clear performance metrics, and hybrid models to optimize results. Following conclusions are drawn from the analysis.

1. The effect of remote work on employee output is not uniformly seen. Individual and work-related aspects both, facilitate as well as hinder remote working. Remote work positively impact productivity under the right conditions, such as with the use of proper technology, clear leadership, and supportive structures; whereas challenges like isolation, technological issues, and blurred work-life boundaries reduce these benefits over time.
2. All the stakeholders look at the situation from a different lens. Their perspectives about remote working are diverse. Employers consider the factors from the business performance point of view, whereas the employees look at it from the perspectives of convenience and work-life balance. Family members' perspectives on remote working are varied and influenced by existing family conditions.
3. The study concludes that to optimize remote work productivity, organizations must enhance job satisfaction and work-life balance while effectively managing job stress. Furthermore, the study also found that the vast majority of workers prefer a hybrid work solution where 40-60% work is conducted remotely to utilize the benefits of both options.
4. Many employers are exploring hybrid work model, which combines in-office and remote work. Even the employees prefer hybrid model instead of 100% remote work. It blends the benefits of both the modes of working, and aims to balance the flexibility of remote work with the benefits of in-person collaboration, offering a potential solution to the productivity challenges associated with fully remote work. The long-term success of remote work will depend on how well employers address these challenges and find solutions that work for both the organization and its employees.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The study recommends that corporations should encash on remote working as a tactical plan to sustain profitability, and that depending upon the nature of job hybrid working can be adopted. In order to make hybrid model efficient, the company should provide the necessary technology

infrastructure to the employees for enhanced productivity. The organizations should make fair and just policies about remote working. The employees should be given training in efficient time and work management while working remotely. Future research should focus on **longitudinal studies** to assess productivity changes over time and industry-specific analyses to identify best practices.

LIMITATIONS:

The conclusions are drawn from a few research papers available online. Hence, the results have limited generalizability. The study has not considered the statistical aspects of the papers identified.

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