WORKING REMOTELY: EMPLOYEES BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT
This paper analyses research publications and reports that highlight the strengths and difficulties of employees working remotely. A great majority of employees around the world were already forced to work remotely due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Each and every sector of the economy was impacted by this pandemic. At this period, the concept of remote work became increasingly prevalent. Di Martino and Wirth (1990) defines remote working as "a flexible work arrangement whereby workers work in locations, remote from their central offices or production facilities, the worker has no personal contact with co-workers there, but is able to communicate with them using technology". The primary purpose of this study is to provide a survey of the literature with respect to the setting of remote working.
Keywords—Employees, pandemic, remote working, work from home

1. Introduction

Working from a remote location is not a new concept. The COVID-19 pandemic increased the popularity of remote work in 2019 and the beginning of 2020. Jack Nillies, a NASA engineer, is credited with being the first person to use the term "telecommuting" in the context of the evolution of remote work (1973). The term was first used in his book "The Telecommunications-Transportation Tradeoff". Telecommuting can be referred to by other names including telework, work-from-home (WFH), flexi place, teleconferencing, and remote office work [1]. Remote work is a mode of employment that promotes professionals to operate outside of the traditional office environment [2]. Remote work (also referred as telecommuting or work from home) is a flexible work arrangement that enables an employee to operate from a remote location outside of company facilities. Remote working provides employees greater time managing flexibility, resulting in a sustainable work-life balance. Employee perceptions of the incorporation and use of remote work have been influenced favourably or adversely by institutional elements such as co-worker's support, leadership style, job autonomy, etc. Both employees and companies may benefit from telework. Employees aspire to work from home due to the need for flexibility, the need for autonomy, the inconveniences of commuting, the scarcity of alternative employment opportunities, etc. In contrast, firms seek to facilitate telework in order to retain people in the global fight for talent, boost efficiency and organisational interest, and reduce indirect costs such as office space, parking etc. The COVID-19 pandemic presented a situation that had never been seen before for the development of remote work.

Objectives of the study

- To understand the concept of remote working
- To identify the benefits and challenges of employees working remotely

2. Literature Review

As a result of the corona virus outbreak, organizations from all over the globe have implemented remote work into their work culture. They are anticipated to go on doing so in the future. The COVID-19 pandemic has irrevocably altered the landscape of global information technology, and what was formerly referred to as "remote work" is now just "work." Telecommuting, teleworking, remote work, working from home and virtual work, are all terms for work done outside of the office. These words are often used differently and interchangeably in various studies [3]. Remote employees have greater

flexibility and freedom, which increases their drive and dedication. Compared to office employees, remote workers have less absenteeism and job turnover. To have confidence that employees will work productively and provide the intended results, management must create clear procedures and goals for remote work. Organizational commitment was strongly and positively correlated with flexible work arrangements. Additionally, flexible work arrangements were favourably and strongly connected to work-family conflict [4]. Remote employees put in more effort because they are more dedicated to the company, more excited about their work, and show better levels of job satisfaction [5]. Isolation, a blurring of the lines between work and family life, poor physical working conditions, and a decline in employee dedication and motivation are just some of the negative outcomes that have been linked to remote work [6], [3]. In the wake of COVID-19, businesses throughout the globe are looking to strike a new equilibrium by incorporating remote workers into their operations [7]. When working remotely, most companies make an effort to accommodate the needs of their female workers who also have family commitments. When workers are remote, they still need this extra care [8]. Employees in this new workplace must adjust to different environmental circumstances and encounter a blending of work and personal life [9]. Employees working remotely and who are able to strike a healthy balance between their personal and professional lives will experience greater levels of job satisfaction, which will ultimately translate into improved performance [10]. Employers should use technology tools like Zoom, Google Hangout, Microsoft Teams etc for frequent check-ins and face-to-face (live) connections with remote workers in order to maintain acceptable social support levels for those who work remotely. When switching from conventional to remote work, the job design must immediately match the requirements of five basic features, including skill diversity, task importance, task identity, autonomy and feedback [11]. Human resource professionals and line managers should play a pivotal role in advising, guiding, and adequately supporting remote team members by communicating frequently, not only on practical tasks but also about psychological issues related to how they balance remote work, work overload, stress, and home boundaries [12]. Organizational elements that favour or inhibit the successful utilisation of remote working may be intentionally reformed and planned in order to increase employee productivity and well-being [13]. After the conclusion of the COVID-19 pandemic, certain industries will continue to take advantage of the benefits of remote employment [9].

3. Discussion

Employees Benefits and Challenges

Employees who worked remotely for a greater number of days per week reported a higher level of satisfaction in their work compared to people that worked remotely for a shorter number of days in a week [14]. Job resources like training, economic assistance etc will aid remote employees in overcoming the difficulties inherent to remote work [15]. Social support serves as one of the most significant job resources for performing job functions. Loneliness may be resolved with the help of others. Employees who worked for a firm that offered online tools to encourage social connections among employees often felt less lonely [7]. During the lockdown period, employees had a favourable experience with working remotely. There are three primary benefits of remote work: work–life balance, increased job efficiency, and better work control [15]. The advantages for businesses included notably lower real estate costs, easier access to a broader talent pool, and less absenteeism, all of which may boost productivity and the commitment of remote employees [3], [6]. Employees have more alternatives about childcare, scheduling flexibility, commuting time, and even work attire [16].

Researcher found four significant issues in the context of remote work during the pandemic: procrastination, inefficient communication, loneliness and work-home interference. In general, these four obstacles have negative effects on the job performance and well-being of people. Employees believe that their work hours rise when working remotely which impacts their work-life balance [7]. Home office limitations, job insecurity, and insufficient equipment were the difficulties that remote workers encountered during the lockdown [15]. Workers reported investing 1.46 hours additional

time at a workstation than usual. Those who had school-age children, possessed an office desk had altered their work hours reported, working extra hours [17]. However, there are challenges unique to remote work, and certain workers, especially those caring for small children, elderly relatives, or other commitments, may struggle to maintain productivity while working from home [10]. Employees' impression of working remotely had an adverse impact on their emotional fatigue, indicating that employees feel mentally exhausted as a result of greater job intensity [12]. Working from home enhances emotions of loneliness and social isolation [18]. Remote work success is highly dependent on the role of the employee's immediate supervisor or manager. In this setting, the function of the immediate supervisor or manager is crucial. In businesses, the majority of cultural and organisational process stages are executed by employee supervisors [8].

CONCLUSION

Existing studies show that adopting a policy of remote working helps minimise work-family conflict [7]. Managers should strive to enhance employees' affective and normative commitment since it's linked to better outcomes like productivity, engagement, and happiness in the workplace. To effectively incorporate remote working, organisations need to concentrate on the way remote employees are managed, the communication flow inside the organisation, and the personality of the employee. Organizations should exert more effort to provide women with a more personalised and flexible work situation. The significant percentage of past study concentrated on circumstances where remote working was generally a short-term choice for certain workers under unusual circumstances; but, in the present, remote working would be a long-term alternative for the majority of the workforce [8].Working from home or another remote location offers a number of potential benefits to organisations, including significant cost savings, greater organisational performance, increased organisational commitment etc. Organizations need to provide their employees with modern devices and programmes that facilitate productive remote working. Employees who work remotely should be able to do their tasks to the best possible standard while not negatively impacting their families or the amount of personal time they have available to themselves.

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