

Examination of the Impact of Remote Working Conditions on Quality of Life


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ABSTRACT

Given the recent state of affairs, many organizations have adopted remote working conditions as a norm. Various challenges affecting quality of life are impacted by working from home. The aim of this literature review is to provide further insight into the impacts that working from home (WFH) had on the productivity and quality of life of workers across occupations. Review of the literature showed that autonomy has a significant impact upon work engagement, which in turn leads to a significant positive association on worker happiness. In addition to autonomy and work engagement, research indicates that the convenience of WFH also is positively associated with work engagement. Since remote working conditions are likely to remain, it is important for organizations to understand the impact of remote conditions on the quality of life of employees.

KEYWORDS

mental health, quality of life, social support, teleworking, working environment

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic caused numerous workplaces to adopt remote working conditions in many sectors. The effects of the sudden lockdown in previous literature have differed largely based on characteristics related to the workplace and the individual. The effects of remote working have been studied for some occupations, but the impact of remote working on worker productivity and quality of life across numerous sectors is still inconsistent. Transitioning from in-person work environments to remote ones has been one of the largest challenges associated with working from home (WFH). The presence of others in the household, such as children and partners, has impacted productivity during WFH. In response to the abrupt onset of the remote work environment, many WFH employees were forced to take on additional responsibilities in the household due to the disruption in childcare and education services during the initial stages of the pandemic (Aczel et al., 2021; Galanti et al., 2021; Tejero et al., 2021).

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WFH is viewed as a solution for many who are required to look after a dependent or for those seeking a stronger work-life balance in general (Aczel et al., 2021). However, the effect on employee productivity during WFH is in question due to the added distractions that may arise in the household (Aczel et al., 2021). The balance between work responsibilities and newfound familial responsibilities plays a role in staying productive during WFH (Tejero et al., 2021). A suitable work environment is critical to maintaining productivity in the remote work setting. Unlike the office, the home workspace may involve uncontrollable noise, loss of privacy, and comfort for some (Awada et al., 2021; Harker Martin & MacDonnell, 2012). These elements in the remote workplace may be able to be mitigated, but restrictions from WFH may prevent adjustments from being made. This is because sharing a remote workspace with others causes an individual to avoid making changes, which may impact productivity (Awada et al., 2021). Family-work conflict can arise from sharing workspaces, which likely impacts productivity in the WFH environment (Galanti et al., 2021; Farooq & Sultana, 2021).

This literature review provides further insight into the impacts that working from home (WFH) had on the productivity and quality of life of workers across occupations. The key components analyzed in this review are worker productivity and quality of life. For this study, productivity has been defined as “productivity as a combination of efficiency and effectiveness and everything that makes an organization function better” (Linna et al., 2010). Based on previous literature, three major areas of influence that affect productivity during WFH include the work environment, demographic impacts, and working conditions. The work environment consists of many factors of the WFH workspace, including the presence of others in the household, a suitable work environment, and work–family conflict. Demographic impact includes characteristics of certain demographic groups that may affect an individual’s ability to remain productive. Lastly, working conditions regarding the nature of the work being completed and existing conditions employees are exposed to daily influence overall satisfaction.

BACKGROUND

Transitioning from in-person work environments to remote ones has been one of the largest challenges associated with working from home (WFH). WFH has impacted the quality of life for many remote employees. For this study, quality of life was defined as an individual’s perception of health, comfort, and happiness experienced by an individual. The rapid transition to remote work during the pandemic has impacted social support for many people. Work–life balance has been found difficult to obtain because of the lack of face-to-face interaction (Shimura et al., 2021). Other studies have shown that the social support provided by family members and superiors can dampen the effect of stress and can help promote quality of work and life (Costa et al., 2022; Platts et al., 2022; Tejero et al., 2021). Childcare responsibilities and workload have also been found to impact stress (Simon et al., 2004). Previous literature has shown that negative effects on maintaining a work–life balance include prolonged time at work, having a nervous mood, spending too much time at work, risking obesity from easy access to food and drinking, social isolation, disruption in children’s education processes can impact stress (Birimoglu Okuyan & Begen, 2022).

Gender has also been noted as having an impact on the productivity of workers during WFH (Awada et al., 2021; Farooq & Sultana, 2021; Etheridge et al., 2020; Weitzer et al., 2021). This may have been due to women taking on additional burdens when remote working, such as helping with remote learning for kids. Previous research has shown that age also plays a role in productivity for remote workers (Awada et al., 2021). Salary was also shown to impact productivity during WFH (Awada et al., 2021; Etheridge et al., 2020). This may have been because people who earn more generally work in white-collar jobs, which are more conducive to remote working than blue-collar jobs. Other research has also shown that the industry someone worked in played a significant role in their productivity. This may be because, as mentioned earlier, some industries are better suited

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