


Chapter 4

Teleworking as an Emerging Strategy During COVID–19: Evidence From the United States

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ABSTRACT

The world is facing one of its hardest pandemics ever with COVID-19. It has been a very tough challenge since the pandemic urged radical changes and transformations in every aspect of life and especially in the work life. During the pandemic, teleworking has gained a vital role for sustaining the production of goods and services. Although teleworking has both positive and negative outcomes, it has been a life jacket for not only organizations but also for employees all around the world during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this chapter, the role of teleworking in the human resources during the pandemic, between May 2020 and January 2022, is evaluated monthly on the basis of analyzing the descriptive statistics of people teleworking or working at home for pay in the United States, by their specific characteristics grouped as age, gender, full-time/part time job status and occupations.

INTRODUCTION

For the first time, a pandemic has had such impacts on every aspect of the life in our modern society. The Covid-19 pandemic has had negative effects to a very wide spectrum from for example businesses (Donthu and Gustafsson), and especially small businesses (Humphries, Neilson and Ulyssea, 2020), international trade (Hayakawa and Mukunoki, 2021), local (Yang, Ning, Jiang, & He, 2021) and global logistics (Hohenstein, 2022), agriculture (Štreimikienė, Baležentis, Volkov, Ribašauskienė, Morkūnas, & Žičkienė, 2021), gross domestic products of countries (Korneta and Rostek, 2021), and to workplace (Carnevale and Hatak, 2020) and outdoor socialization (Xie, Luo, Furuya and Sun, 2020), and employee psychology (Lin, Shao, Li Guo and Zhan, 2021).

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Much has been written about the covid-19 pandemic and its effects on daily and business life as well as transformation of doing business into a new form. Besides other very important effects, one of the vital effects has been witnessed on the work life. When the covid-19 pandemic began, the business world all around the globe, tried to take cautions in order to protect people from getting infected with covid-19. Organizations have obeyed the rules and procedures set by the governments but at the same time they have had the responsibility to sustain production and distribution. At this point since workplaces closed for a while and most of the companies applied called fewer employees to offices than they did before the pandemic, new forms of work have been implemented. Among them remote work has been very popular since the beginning of the covid-19 pandemic due to its flexibility and benefits (Tursunbayeva, Di Lauro and Antonelli, 2022). The dominant way of remote working all around the world has been applied by teleworking (Bérastégui, 2021). During the covid-19 pandemic, teleworking has gained a vital role and been an emerging strategy to cope with the negative effects of this pandemic all around the world.

The primary goal of this chapter is to analyze the descriptive statistics of the teleworking employees and to reveal the position of teleworking compared to the total work force during the covid-19 pandemic. In order to reach this study aim, the United States was chosen as the sample research. The reason for selecting the United States to observe the effects of the pandemic on teleworking is that, United States was the only country when the research began, which measured teleworking or working at home for pay on various demographic criteria specifically due to the covid-19 pandemic. Throughout this chapter, firstly teleworking concept will be defined and discussed in the background section, and immediately afterwards, the scope of the research, the measures of teleworking in the United States and the analysis of teleworking in this country will be done. Consequently, future research directions covering teleworking during and post covid-19 will be given right before the conclusions.

BACKGROUND

Teleworking as an Alternative Form of Work

Teleworking is accepted as an alternative and a new form of work since the end of the twentieth century (Baruch, 2001). Teleworking can be defined as an alternative form of work which needs technological infrastructure in terms of information technologies and equipment enhancing employees to work from anywhere they are which opens a door to the virtual offices (Davenport and Pearlson, 1998). From the early contributions to our time, teleworking has been given important role in the literature by the researchers. So far scholars have linked teleworking to for example human resources functions (Pulido-Martos, Cortés-Denia and Lopez-Zafra, 2021), employee productivity (Hoornweg, Peters and Van der Heijden, 2016), employee health (Lunde et al., 2022), workplace flexibility and organizational performance (Sánchez, Pérez, de Luis Carnicer and Jiménez, 2007), role overload (Duxbury and Halinski, 2014), and even traffic and air pollution (Giovanis, 2018).

As the literature suggests, teleworking has both advantages and disadvantages in general. Among the disadvantages, there exist generally employees' having health problems for example sitting down longer hours, looking at the monitor or other electronic devices for longer time (Rodríguez-Nogueira et al., 2021). Besides, employees may suffer from some psychological problems due to their loneliness due to teleworking (Mann and Holdsworth, 2003). Also there is some trust problem with the employees and their organizations based on electronic surveillance (Doğru, 2021). Apart from these, work flexibility

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