

EXPLORING THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF REMOTE WORK: FROM FLEXIBILITY TO FATIGUE IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

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Abstract

Remote work in contemporary time is a double edge sword which offers flexibility on the cost of health. The rise of remote work in modern time, augmented by high-tech developments and global shifts in work culture, has changed the way individual's person engage their professional with personal lives. While offering time flexibility, independence, and reduced travelling stress, the remote work landscape also presents significant challenges to mental health. This paper explores the dual impact of remote work on mental well-being in contemporary times, focusing on both the advantages and disadvantages. It delves into issues such as social isolation, blurred work-life boundaries, stress, burnout, and the psychological effects of extended remote work. By examining recent trends and research, the paper highlights the risks of mental health stress while offering solutions, including organizational support, individual handling strategies, and mental health resources. Ultimately, this study emphasizes the need for a balanced approach to remote work that encourages well-being of an individual while maintaining productivity.

Keywords:

Stress, Emotions, Blur Boundaries, Onsite, Remote Worker

1. INTRODUCTION

After Covid-19, the increase of remote work has fundamentally changed the global workforce. Remote work has now become an important feature of modern employment. Offering flexibility, independence, and the elimination of daily commutes, it has been hailed as a progressive shift that allows employees to achieve better work-life balance and increased individual freedom. However, as remote work becomes the norm for many, its impact on emotional health has garnered increasing attention.

The impact of remote work refers to the various ways in which a person working from home or outside a central office affects individuals, family, organizations and society as a whole. This includes benefits, challenges, and changes to traditional work dynamics.

While the benefits of remote work are very clear, such as reduced stress from commuting and create personalized work atmospheres, it also presents a series of challenges to emotional well-being. The line between personal and professional life becomes increasingly blurred, leading to extended working hours and trouble in "switching off." Besides that, the absence of face-to-face communication can result in feelings of remoteness, loneliness, and a decline in social connection. The remoteness, along with the pressures of endless digital communication, can contribute to stress, strain, tension, and a diminished sense of job satisfaction.

This paper explores the emotional health consequences of remote work in the contemporary time, examining both the

positive and negative effect on the employee psychology. By understanding the challenges faced by remote workers and the impact on their health, officialdoms can take proactive measures to support their employees. This paper will also present strategies for mitigating the mental health risks connected with remote work, providing a framework for sustaining a healthy balance between professional responsibilities and personal health. Ultimately, this paper seeks to illuminate the relationship between mental health and remote work in modern time, offering insights into how individuals and establishments can adapt to create healthier, happier and more workable remote work environments.

1.1 REMOTE WORK BENEFITS AND PROBLEMS

Remote work has become increasingly popular due to advancements in technology, communication and the changing dynamics of the workplace. While it offers significant benefits, it also comes with its own set of challenges. The exploration of the benefits and the problems:

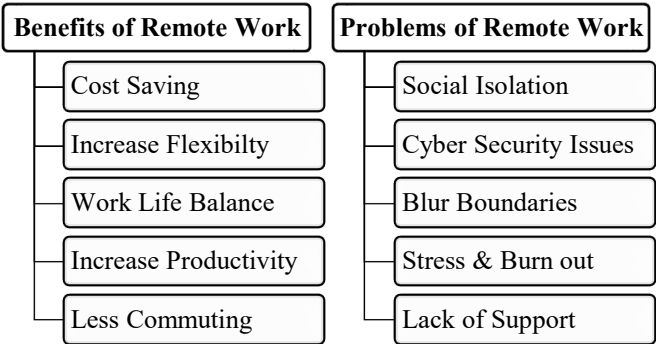


Fig.1. Remote Work – Benefits and Problem

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

One might feel that the Covid 19 is the beginning of remote working practice era, but the traces of remote working can be seen in Niles [7]. Remote work means that the employee will be doing his work from home with the help of online working tools. Study specifies that growing trend of computer usage and the increase in numbers of information industry organization can lead to telecommunications-augmented decentralization, which can be an important alternative to current patterns of organizational structure.

Milana [6] has studied Finland financial services employees. The study indicates that the employees were satisfied fully with the working pattern of Remote and they love to continue the same for future as well. They specify the benefits of Remote working with respect to concentration, work life balance and increase motivation along with the decreased social interaction and deteriorating working environment.

Mann et al. [5] explained the psychological and emotional effect of teleworking away from the physical office environment. Study suggests that some of the facts appear colorful like less travel, time flexibility, office disruptions but as we know the grass is always green on other side, this also got a few hidden spills such as stress, loneliness, frustration etc. Mann et al. [10] did a qualitative and interview-based study on the psychological effects on teleworkers mental, emotional and physical health with regard to the office-based workers. Study shows the negative effect of teleworking in terms of stress and detreating health. The study talks about the pro and cons of teleworkers. The main aim of the study is to investigate the psychological effects on workers due to teleworking on the level of mental and physical health.

Shine et al. [3] in her study explained that the hybrid working i.e. offline as well as online can give company and an employee, both a better production. Companies, can get benefitted by reducing their expenses in office spaces, maintenance, power supply and many other expenses where employee can also get benefit by reducing their travelling time and cost, spent enough time with family and employee etc. Al- Rfou, A. N. (2021) in his study [1] offers the suggestions for overcoming the challenges faced by the employees and the companies due to remote work. He suggests that companies should provide employers with suitable work environment along with the support which they need to work remotely. Al-Yafi et al. [2] studied the psychological trends of remote work practice among students pursuing Business, study indicates that working Remotely helped their students to increase productivity.

Pirdavani et al. [8] studied the decrease in the rate of traffic due to remote work. Study shows that the remote work policy contributed to reducing crashes by 2.6%, and by following the policy of telework the movement of transport can be regulated.

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

After Covid 19, most of the companies leaned heavily on Remote working for better production and usage of their resources, which lead to more studies with respect to challenges, stress, physical and mental health of employee. The current study deals with all these conditions with the help of following questions:

1. What is the comparative analysis of the occupational stress and health symptoms experienced by remote, hybrid and office-based workers.
2. Does the level of challenges in the remote work environment differ according to the respondent's gender in the context of emotional health.
3. How does worker experience moderate the relationship between remote working and employee performance?
4. What are the emotional implications of blurred boundaries between work and personal life for remote workers
5. What is the respondent's level of practice of working remotely on the ability to maintain social and professional connections.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 DATA SOURCE

The Secondary data for this study was sourced from Kaggle, an open platform for data science and machine learning. The dataset, titled "Impact of Remote Work on Mental Health" was accessed on 08-10-2024. It includes 5001 data with 5001 rows and 20 columns.

4.2 DATA PREPROCESSING

Following preprocessing steps were undertaken to ensure the dataset was suitable for analysis:

- **Data Cleaning:** Missing values, if any, were handled by deletion method and duplicate records were identified and removed to ensure data integrity.
- **Selection:** On basis of research objective, the relevant features were selected.

4.3 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The dataset was used strictly in compliance with Kaggle's terms of use and the data provider's licensing agreement. No personally identifiable information was included in the dataset, ensuring adherence to ethical research standards.

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data after processing was studied, analyzed and tabulated. Analysis of the data was done by the percentage technique and all the outcomes were presented in the form of tables and charts with the help of Microsoft Excel 2010.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data used in this study has an equal representation of genders:

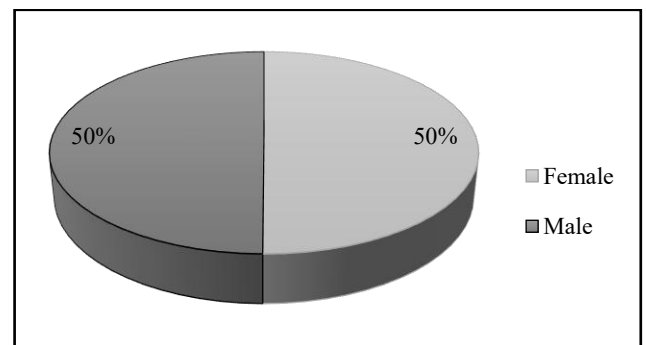


Fig.1. Graph showing the distribution of gender

The data analyzed for the study is categorized into three modes of workers: remote, hybrid and office-based. The distribution is as follows:

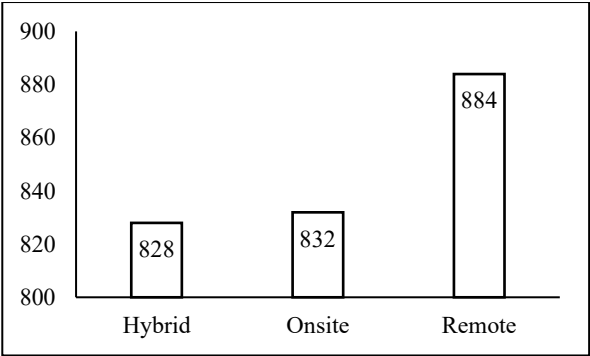


Fig.2. Graph showing the distribution of remote, hybrid and office-based workers.

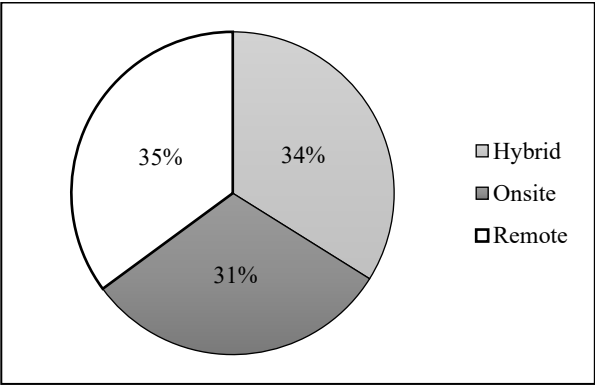


Fig.3. Graph showing occupational stress and health symptoms experienced by remote, hybrid and office-based workers

The data study shows that the occupational stress and health symptoms are common across all work modes, with small differences. Employers and employees must come together to overcome these challenges and promote a better work environment, irrespective of the working mode.

To understand the emotional health challenges faced by individuals on the basis of gender, we analyze the levels of anxiety, burnout, and depression experienced by males and females. The following graph outlines the findings:

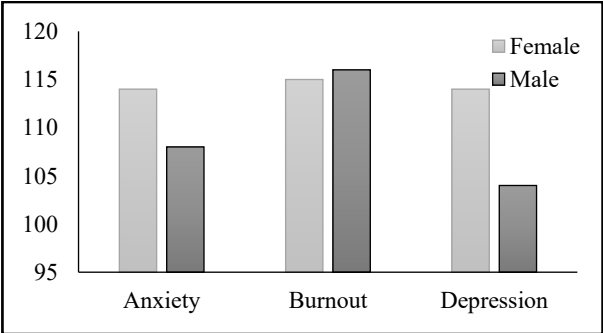


Fig.4. Graph showing anxiety, burnout, and depression levels by gender

Study shows that female workers face more anxiety and depression as compared to male worker.

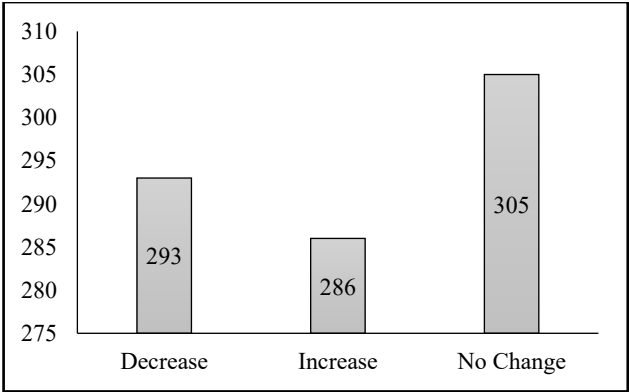


Fig.5. Graph showing the relationship between remote working and employee performance

Out of 884 workers, 293 reported a decrease in their productivity, while 305 stated that there was no change in their productivity.

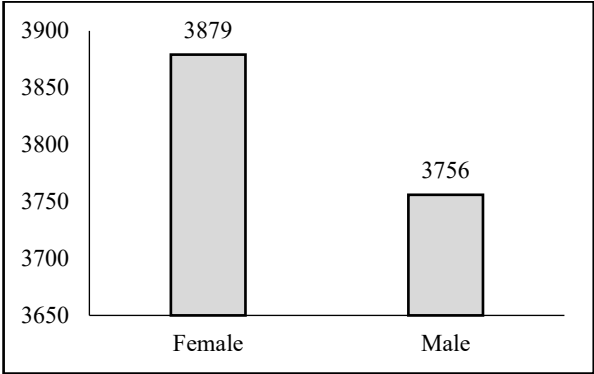


Fig.6. Graph showing the emotional impact of blurred work-life boundaries for remote workers by gender

Studies show that females are able to balance their lives in a remote working style much better than males.

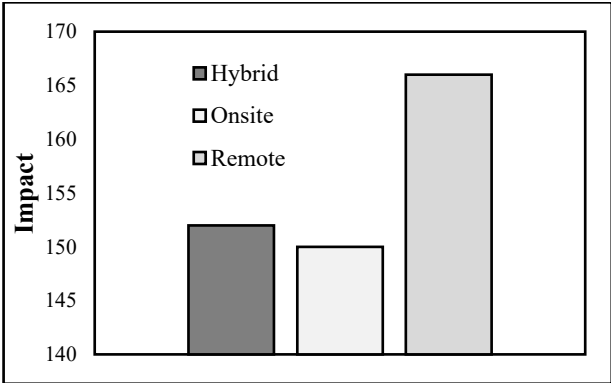


Fig.7. Graph showing the impact of remote work on maintaining social and professional connections

Studies show that remote workers experience more social isolation compared to hybrid and onsite workers.

6. CONCLUSION

With the advent of mobiles and computers, humans are becoming less social. It is very important for any idea or mass project work to become successful through team efforts in terms of thoughts and actions. Remote work causes difficulty in largely achieving this. Every individual feels his idea should be put forth and worked on, and there is a possibility of going in different directions rather than following the same path to achieve a goal. Therefore, Remote working will overall affect the performance and results of the company. It is always good to have a balance. To adopt a hybrid culture, where we gain the best of both Remote and Onsite working.

A hybrid model can combine the advantages of both Onsite and Remote working and maximize the productivity. Human interaction will achieve the necessary team work, and home environment provide the focus needed to complete an assignment. The right balance can be achieved of having personal connection, team interactions, required brainstorming for solving difficult tasks combined with individual focused efforts towards achieving the goal.

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