



THE FACTORS AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF WORK FROM HOME EMPLOYEES IN BPO INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory paper aimed to review various articles that explain the different factors affecting the performance of work from home employees in the BPO industry. Specifically, it aims to identify the research gap pertaining to affecting factors of employees on work from home set up. It reviewed articles published in online international journals from 2016 to 2021. The review focuses on the findings and conclusions of the articles reviewed. The paper revealed that several factors were affecting the performance of the employees in various ways. However, the literature reviewed showed that there were insufficient findings on the resiliency of the employee's performance on the different affecting factors they encountered at home as a workplace.

Keywords: Affecting factors, performance, work from home

INTRODUCTION

Working from home, an idea wherein the employee is able to do his/her task or job at home. It gives flexible hours for their staff or personnel to make their own job complete without difficulty. Work from home is helpful to balance the work-life of employees, and it also helps a company to make the work done. Nowadays, some employers offer the home as a place to work and also an alternative working setup for their employees.

Work from home as a contemporary work path permit through the internet and portability wherein regardless of actual site or location of an employee's job can be done. WFH is also known as telecommuting, teleworking or working remotely which helps the employee's work outside usually in home instead of working in a traditional office environment. It helps the employees maintain their productivity better while being together with their family or performing some of his/her personal tasks.

The criteria of evaluating employee performance are popular in three criteria, that are individual task outcomes, behaviours, and traits. Task outcomes should evaluate on outcomes such as quantity and quality, behaviour means evaluate the actions of employees in advisory or support positions such as promptness time in work and traits means having a good attitude such as being dependable (Robbins & Judge A, 2017).

Literature review, in essence, expands the researchers' understanding of the studies they opt to conduct. Reviewing various articles will help to identify the gaps in existing literature related to

the factors affecting the performance of work from home employees. More so, conducting this study will provide backbone for other studies that deal with similar topics.

DISCUSSION

Mattering Factors

Economic and Legal Factors

Who Can Work From Home? Even before the pandemic, a significant proportion of workers in a wide range of industries worked from home for some or all of their working hours. Previous research indicates that between 10 and 20 percent of workers typically performed at least some of their work from home – although that could be as little as bringing unfinished projects home, or responding to emails from home. A much smaller proportion of workers regularly perform all of their duties from home. Workers who have more autonomy and independence in their work, and who perform much or all of their work on a computer, have much more flexibility to shift locations. This largely (but not perfectly) overlaps with professional and managerial categories of work. Some lower paid positions (such as many clerical and administration jobs) are also highly capable of being performed from home. A small proportion of sales workers could do their jobs from home (in telesales and other location-flexible functions), and an even smaller proportion of technical and trades jobs (primarily in computer and information specialisations). Effectively no machine operators, drivers, and labourers can work from home, virtually by definition.

Earnings of Home Workers. Not all jobs that can be done from home are relatively well-compensated. Some lower-wage jobs (such as some call centre and routine clerical jobs) have been organised around home work for years. Employers have used these arrangements to facilitate low-wage work by workers (mostly women) who appreciate the flexibility of home work for balancing work and family responsibilities; employers also save costs for office set-up and equipment. For the most part, occupations which can more easily relocate to home work – and thus are more likely to continue working, rather than facing either stand-down or unemployment – generated higher incomes in the first place. (Clerical and administrative occupations are the exception to this rule: they are relatively able to work from home, but are paid relatively low earnings.) Other occupations, in contrast, are less location-flexible, and hence more likely to be experiencing unemployment and/or reductions in hours of work. And since they were less well-paid in the first place, those workers now have fewer personal resources to fall back on.

Income Support for Home Workers. The need for income support for home workers may seem less acute than for other types of jobs which are more likely to disappear as many workplaces shut down. Nevertheless, even people working from home will experience tremendous uncertainty and potential income losses as consumer spending contracts and businesses cut back on staffing and purchases:

- There may be many jobs which could be performed from home, but employers do not have the need for, or the revenue to support, that work due to steep declines in sales and production.
- Similarly, many people who could work from home will lose work entirely because their employers shut down or go out of business.
- Many home workers work as contractors, self-employed consultants, or “gig” workers, and hence may be experiencing a sharp contraction in their own business and revenues.

Their lack of income support – with consequent impacts on food, housing, and well-being – constitutes punishing and unfair treatment, as well as exacerbating the health risks to broader society.

Making Sure Home Work is Safe and Fair. In a climate of mass unemployment and pervasive insecurity, home work could become a ‘baptism by fire:’ whereby workers are compelled to ‘prove themselves’ more energetically than ever to their employers, in hopes of protecting their jobs in the turbulent months ahead. Some employers will take advantage of this sense of insecurity to intensify work and tighten discipline.

Shifting costs of business to the home. Some employers already encouraged staff to work remotely before the pandemic in order to reduce office infrastructure costs. By facilitating home or other remote work, they could reduce fixed costs of office space and equipment; these arrangements were promoted as being beneficial to workers as well (through reduced commuting time and expense, and greater flexibility in working hours). Establishing and operating their workplace is a major cost for most employers – including building and administration costs, equipment, utilities, amenities and more. These costs can be effectively transferred to employees working from home, but that would impose an unfair burden on home workers. Allowances for all employees required to perform some or all of their duties from home should be considered — designed to fairly reflect on-going work related costs (including space, data charges, utilities, and printing). Working from home may be preferable for some staff, due to reduced commuting time and expense, greater flexibility, and other benefits. On the other hand, much evidence also suggests that employee trust, cohesiveness, and mental health are strengthened by shared workspaces and interactions with colleagues.

Space, safety and ergonomic considerations. The assumption that workers have a spare room that can be readily converted into a home office, where they can work peacefully and productively, is far-fetched for most home workers. Even in an office setting, ergonomic and safety considerations are important when considering work that may be performed repetitively for extended periods of time. These considerations include:

- Safe seating, desk, and lighting arrangements
- Ergonomically safe equipment
- Safe electricity supply
- Safety in the immediate environment (from falls, trip hazards, and other potential dangers)

Other important safety and health considerations must also be taken into account. One of these is the social and family context for home work. Unfortunately, many families are sites of abuse and violence. Requiring people in unsafe families to work in those conditions may exacerbate the risks they face. The added financial and emotional strains associated with the pandemic, self-isolation, and lack of outside contact will only heighten the danger. Employers have a duty of care here, too: to provide workers with information, advocacy and legal support to better manage the stresses and risks of domestic and sexual abuse and violence while working at home, and to make appropriate adjustments to workloads and incomes as needed. Provision of paid leave from work for victims of domestic violence is especially important in this context.

Working hours and availability. This collocation of work and life will further blur the already-fuzzy line between working hours, and the rest of peoples’ time. Instead of simply scrapping employer obligations to record staff working hours (as some employers have demanded in the wake of the pandemic), businesses should simply allow staff to self-report their home working hours – already a standard practice in many firms which use timesheets.

Monitoring and surveillance. Productivity software is the most common tool for worker surveillance: tracking the time employees spend in various applications, monitoring social media, and other intrusive data collection. More nefarious forms of surveillance monitor the pace of keystrokes and scrolls to supposedly measure constant 'active engagement' with work. Employees will need strong assurances that their privacy is protected: in the workplace, but now also in their homes. The threat to privacy and dignity posed by employer digital surveillance is obviously accentuated when that surveillance can potentially intrude into our homes, via monitoring of computer use, smart phones, and other technologies. The misuse of these technologies is a long-run challenge to fair work that needs to be addressed through on-going research, regulation and legislation.

Caring labour and work/life balance. Rights to furlough should be granted in instances where workers have childcare responsibilities. Existing pay rates should be maintained where possible, supplemented with the government's wage subsidy. This would ensure working carers (predominantly women) do not suffer undue income penalties. It may spark a re-examination of the longstanding discrimination experienced by women workers with caring responsibilities, along with a new determination to create conditions more supportive of the redistribution of unpaid and caring labour in the home (including allowing fathers to become more active co-parents), other measures taken to support women's full participation in paid work – and achieve a healthier and more sustainable balance between work and family responsibilities.

Cultural Factors

Factors like ethics, moral values depended largely on the cultural dimensions of a country. Although without proper research and conclusive findings, it cannot be said that cultural factors had a role to play in this case; it was found in previously conducted research that national cultural dimensions could be considered as pivotal variables in justifying productivity (Abraham, 2019).

Demographic Factors

Demographic factors can be crucial in terms of measuring productivity. Ms. Siti Aisyah Tumin of Malaysia's Khazanah Research Institute thinks that work-from-home arrangements could potentially worsen inequality (The Straits Times, 2020). In Bangladesh, on average, an employed woman spent 22 hours weekly doing household chores, which is only 8 hours for an employed man (Labor Force Survey, 2016). This indicated that female productivity could have taken a hit working from home particularly when distraction was identified as the major reason for loss of productivity working from home. Globally there have been many counteracting studies on gender and productivity; while some suggested gender influences productivity, others nullified the statement. Neighboring countries like India are not holding back, almost 85 percent of IT staff in the country began working from home after the lockdown started. Moreover, Tata Consultancy Services, the largest IT employer of the country, has already indicated that about three-quarters of its nearly 500,000 employees will be working remotely by the end of 2025 (The Straits Times, 2020).

Benefits of Telecommuting

Telecommuting allows greater organizational flexibility and a better capacity to quickly respond to unexpected events. It allows for a more efficient usage of the organization's information system, particularly during non-office hours e.g. at night and on weekends (Hamilton, 2016). Furthermore, telecommuting reduces the constraints imposed by traditional work environments, increases the cohesion between work and family life, and makes the employees feel that their

organizations cared about them. Improved productivity and quality of work are associated with telecommuting. Others are lower levels of interference and interruptions, better work environment, the possibility of choosing more convenient working hours, more time spent working, and a stronger focus on achieving the required results rather than simply being physically present at work (Onyemaechi, U., Chinyere, U. P., & Emmanuel, U., 2018).

Positive and Negative Effect

Transformational Leadership. Leadership is a process where a person can become a leader through continuous activities so that it can influence who they lead in order to achieve organizational goals. Leadership is an important aspect as it usually enables the employees of the organizations to work efficiently and effectively (Agarwal, 2020). Transformational leaders can inspire followers to transcend their own self-interests and who are capable of having a profound and extraordinary effect on followers (Robbins & Judge A, 2017). Transformational leadership is the type of leadership that is most suitable for implementing a work from home policy (Aropah, V. D. W., & Sumertajaya, I. M., 2020).

Organizational Support. The role of individual and organizational factors are the critical factors that influence the recognized productivity of teleworkers. As a key to determine the productivity of teleworkers it comes out in satisfaction and security in jobs, ability to work flexibly, commitment of an organization and also a support from the management. Main support that organizations give is having or providing an reliable internet connection, set of computers including the required CPU, keyboard & mouse and IT assistance in case when there's a problem on technicality (Stephen Robbins & Timothy A. Judge, 2017). Organizational support has an inverse influence on employee performance. Leaders should pay attention to what employee's need from organizational support. Leaders and management should monitor and evaluate current organizational support and the results can be used as input to provide organizational support to employees. (Aropah, V. D. W., & Sumertajaya, I. M., 2020)

Work Environment. The work environment is included in a very important component for employees to carry out work activities. A conducive work environment is able to motivate employees to work and will have an impact on employee morale and performance. One of the most important telework factors impacting telework outcomes is suitability of the working place at home (Nakrošienė, Bučiūnienė, & Goštautaitė, 2019). The study showed that having an appropriate workplace such as having privacy, quality lighting, and adequate equipment helps the employees to do his/her job well. The work environment has a positive and significant impact on employee performance in situations of working from home. This shows that the work environment for employees who work at home is physically suitable so that employees feel conducive to work from home (Aropah, V. D. W., & Sumertajaya, I. M., 2020)

Gender and telecommuting among parents. Mothers with young children appear to highly value telecommuting and are more willing than childless women or men to accept lower wages in return for working from home (Mas & Pallais, 2017). Increased flexibility in work hours is associated with higher maternal employment, making it possible for some mothers to stay in jobs who would otherwise drop out (Goldin, 2014; Ishizuka & Musick, 2018). As a result, mothers prioritize their children more than doing their jobs during work hours whereas men may shift more of these gains to investments in work or tasks.

Mistrust. It is a daily occurrence at work. Being mistrusted by co-workers may affect employees' subsequent daily attitudes, behaviours, and performance. Perceptions of mistrust increased employees' emotional exhaustion, consequently leading to withdrawal from colleagues at work and having a conflict towards them. (Lanaj, K., Kim, P. H., Koopman, J., & Matta, F.

K.,2018). It usually happens in work from home set up since your superior doesn't see what you're doing, they think that you're not doing your job or task during work hours or you're doing anything else instead of performing the job assigned in your end.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The articles reviewed showed that there are different factors affecting the performance of work from home employees in the BPO industry. However, the literature reviewed shows insufficiency of studies on the resiliency of the employees on the different affecting factors on performance they encountered. The resiliency of employees in both academic and non-academic institutions is a very important subject matter of the study. Thus, it is recommended to conduct further studies on the other causes and effects of home as a workplace and to describe the resiliency of affecting factors of work from home employees, personnel, heads and officials in any type of organization.

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