



Transforming Remote Work Culture: Impact on Employee Productivity and Well-Being

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Abstract

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The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly accelerated the widespread adoption of remote work, fundamentally reshaping traditional workplace culture. This transformation has sparked critical discussions about its broader implications, particularly concerning employee productivity and well-being. This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the existing body of research on how remote work has altered workplace culture. The study focuses on identifying various factors that influence productivity and examines both the challenges and opportunities associated with employee well-being. By synthesizing findings from a wide range of empirical and conceptual studies, this paper offers a deep understanding of the complexities surrounding remote work practices. The findings reveal that while remote work can offer greater flexibility and potentially improve productivity for many employees, it can also lead to negative outcomes such as social isolation, increased risk of burnout, and difficulties in maintaining healthy work-life boundaries. The study concludes with significant implications for organizations striving to develop effective hybrid management strategies that promote productivity while supporting the overall well-being of a remote and distributed workforce.



1. Introduction

Globalization and technological advancements have drastically transformed the work landscape in recent decades. However, no catalyst has been stronger in accelerating the shift towards remote work than the COVID-19 pandemic that swept the world starting in early 2020. Social restrictions and lockdowns forced most organizations to transition from conventional in-office work models to fully or largely work-from-home arrangements. This sudden transformation, initially seen as a temporary response to the crisis, has now evolved into a new norm for many industry sectors. This fundamental shift is not just a change in physical location, but a profound cultural transformation, affecting how individuals interact, collaborate, and manage their work (Ivaldi et al., 2022).

Before the pandemic, remote work, or telecommuting, was an established practice but not widely adopted in many countries. Despite arguments about its potential benefits, such as increased flexibility and reduced operational costs, many organizations were reluctant to implement it due to concerns regarding supervision, communication, and its impact on company culture (Palumbo et al., 2022). However, the experience during the pandemic has proven that remote work can be implemented on a large scale, forcing organizations to adapt quickly and invest in the digital infrastructure to support it. This has opened the eyes of many company leaders to the feasibility and potential sustainability of this work model (Groves & Feyerherm, 2022).

However, the transition to remote work is not without its challenges. One of the main areas of concern is its impact on employee productivity. Do employees

become more productive due to reduced commuting time and increased focus, or does productivity decline due to home distractions, lack of direct interaction, and difficulty separating personal and professional life? The answer to this question is not simple and often varies depending on the individual, type of work, and organizational support (Otu et al., 2020). In addition to productivity, employee well-being is also a major concern. Remote work can offer greater autonomy, but it also has the potential to cause social isolation, burnout due to blurred lines between work and personal life, and challenges in maintaining mental health. Strong work culture in traditional offices is based on face-to-face interactions, unspoken norms, and collective identity. With the transition to remote work, these norms need to be redefined or adapted.

How can organizations maintain team cohesion, build trust, and foster a sense of belonging in a virtual environment. This demands changes in leadership styles, communication strategies, and collaboration tools (Akbari & Pratomo, 2021). This literature study aims to systematically review the existing literature on the transformation of remote work culture with a focus on its impact on employee productivity and well-being. We will explore various perspectives and findings from relevant research to understand the complexity of this phenomenon. The main objective of this study is to synthesize existing knowledge, identify research gaps, and provide practical implications for organizations and policymakers in facing the increasingly dominant era of remote work. By understanding how work culture adapts to remote settings and how it affects productivity and well-being, organizations can design more effective strategies to support their workforce in this

uncertain future. This research will be based on relevant scientific and available ensure the relevance and currency of the information presented.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Paradigm Shift in Work Culture

The transformation of work culture triggered by the adoption of remote work has been a subject of intense research in recent years, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic, traditional work culture generally centered on the physical office as a hub for interaction, collaboration, and company identity. Physical presence was often equated with commitment and productivity. However, remote work has broken this paradigm, forcing organizations to redefine what “work” means and how “culture” is built and maintained (Byrd, 2022). This shift requires organizations to develop a culture that is results-oriented rather than focused on working hours or physical presence. This means focusing on achieving goals, employee autonomy, and trust (Noble-Nkrumah et al., 2022).

Communication is at the heart of any work culture. In remote settings, communication becomes more structured and is often dominated by digital tools (e.g., video conferencing, instant messaging). This can increase information efficiency but also risks reducing non-verbal nuances and informal interactions crucial for building bonds and trust. In addition, leadership must also adapt. Leaders need to develop new skills to manage virtual teams, including the ability to communicate effectively through digital media, build trust without face-to-face interaction, and provide emotional support remotely (Dinh, 2021). A culture that

encourages transparency, constant feedback, and recognition of individual initiative becomes crucial in a remote environment.

2.2. Impact on Employee Productivity

The impact of remote work on productivity is a complex and often debated topic. Some studies show that remote work can increase productivity due to reduced commuting time, a more comfortable work environment, and flexibility in scheduling work (Franken et al., 2021). Employees may feel more empowered and motivated with greater autonomy over their work. In addition, the ability to avoid office distractions and focus on individual tasks can contribute to increased output. However, there is also evidence suggesting a decrease in productivity or at least challenges in maintaining it.

Home distractions (e.g., family members, household chores), difficulty in maintaining self-discipline, and lack of separation between personal and professional life can disrupt focus and efficiency (Galanti et al., 2021). Technical issues, unstable internet connections, and lack of adequate equipment can also hinder productivity. Furthermore, team collaboration may become more difficult and time-consuming in a virtual environment, especially for tasks requiring brainstorming or complex problem-solving directly (Verstegen et al., 2018). Productivity levels also highly depend on the type of work jobs requiring high concentration and individual tasks may be more suitable for remote work than highly collaborative jobs or those requiring physical access to specific equipment.

2.3. Implications for Employee Well-being

Employee well-being is a crucial aspect affected by remote work. On the one hand, remote work can improve well-being by offering greater flexibility, allowing employees to balance work demands with personal responsibilities (e.g., caring for children or elderly parents). This can reduce commute-related stress and increase job satisfaction (Palumbo et al., 2022). Greater autonomy in managing time and tasks can also increase a sense of control and reduce pressure (Clausen et al., 2022). However, on the other hand, remote work also carries significant risks to well-being. One of the biggest challenges is social isolation and lack of interaction with colleagues, which can lead to feelings of loneliness and depression.

Blurred lines between work and personal life can lead to employees working longer hours, feeling pressure to be always online, and experiencing burnout (Sexton et al., 2022). Difficulty in “switching off” work and transitioning to leisure time can disrupt sleep patterns and overall mental health. In addition, poor ergonomics at home, lack of physical or mental support from the company, and anxiety related to job security can also negatively impact well-being (Otu et al., 2022). Organizations need to be proactive in providing psychological support, encouraging healthy work boundaries, and creating opportunities for virtual social interaction to mitigate these risks.

3. Method

This study uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to identify, evaluate, and synthesize relevant research on the transformation of remote work

culture and its impact on employee productivity and well-being. This approach was chosen to ensure comprehensive literature coverage, minimize bias, and present an objective overview of the topic studied. This SLR process follows several general systematic stages. First, planning and formulation of research questions are carried out by establishing the main question: how does the transformation of remote work culture affect employee productivity and well-being. This question is then broken down into more specific sub-questions, such as significant changes in work culture due to the adoption of remote work, the influence of remote work on employee productivity levels, and the implications of remote work for employee physical and mental well-being.

The next stage is the literature search strategy, where Google Scholar is used as the main database due to its wide reach of scientific publications across disciplines such as management, organizational psychology, and sociology. Relevant keyword combinations in Indonesian and English are applied using Boolean operators (AND, OR) to broaden or narrow search results. Next, strict inclusion and exclusion criteria are set to ensure the relevance and quality of sources. Inclusion criteria include peer-reviewed scientific journals, articles discussing remote work related to work culture, productivity, and well-being, as well as empirical studies and SLRs that are fully accessible. Meanwhile, articles outside this year range, non-academic publications, and works that do not directly address the main topic are excluded.

The literature selection process is carried out manually through evaluation of titles and abstracts, followed by full reading of relevant articles. The obtained data is then extracted, including author identity, year, purpose, methodology, main results,

and conclusions. All data are analyzed thematically and synthesized narratively to identify patterns, similarities, differences, and gaps in the existing literature, in order to produce a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between remote work, work culture, productivity, and employee well-being.

4. Results

The transformation of remote work culture, significantly accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has created a complex and dynamic work landscape, with highly varied impacts on employee productivity and well-being. This change is not merely a shift in work location from office to home, but reflects a profound restructuring of how work is carried out, how work relationships are built and managed, and how employees experience their work environment as a whole. Studies in the literature show that remote work has become a catalyst for a paradigm shift in the contemporary world of work, especially in terms of technology use, expectations regarding work flexibility, and work-life balance.

Regarding productivity, the literature shows inconsistent or dualistic results. Some studies indicate a potential increase in productivity in remote work environments (Galanti et al., 2021). This particularly occurs in individuals or teams with high autonomy and who perform tasks that can be completed independently without direct reliance on intensive collaborative work. As an illustration, at a travel in China company showed that the implementation of remote work was able to increase productivity by 13%. This increase was driven by reduced break times and the elimination of the need for daily commuting to the workplace. This finding

indicates that remote work is not always synonymous with decreased performance; in some contexts, it can actually create significant efficiencies.

Furthermore, employees working from home often report increased levels of focus due to minimal distractions common in physical office environments, such as interruptions from colleagues or noise (Leroy et al., 2021). In addition, the flexibility to adjust the workspace and conditions according to personal preferences also supports increased comfort and concentration at work. Time and location flexibility also allows some employees to work during times they deem most productive which often does not coincide with standard 9-to-5 working hours. This is a big advantage, especially for individuals with different personal work rhythms. Not only that, from an organizational perspective, remote work offers significant cost-saving opportunities. Operational costs, such as electricity, water, office logistics, and even office space rent, can be substantially reduced. These savings can potentially be allocated for other strategic investments, such as procuring technology devices, online training, or other digital support that can increase overall productivity.

However, the other side of the literature also highlights a number of significant challenges to productivity in remote work systems (Franken et al., 2021). One of the main challenges is the blurring of boundaries between professional and personal life. Many employees report working longer hours when at home, but these extended working hours are not always proportional to increased work efficiency. Home conditions that are not always conducive to work, such as the presence of children, household chores, or lack of an ergonomic workspace, can disrupt workflow and decrease concentration. As stated by Galanti et al. (2021), various

domestic distractions are a major obstacle in maintaining optimal productivity in remote work settings.

In addition, teamwork and collaboration become another aspect facing major challenges. Virtual communication, although aided by technologies like Zoom, Slack, and Microsoft Teams, cannot always replace the spontaneity of direct office interactions. Collaboration requiring intensive idea exchange, brainstorming processes, and in-depth discussions becomes slower and less productive when carried out in a virtual space. This has the potential to hinder decision-making processes and slow down innovation, especially in projects involving multiple departments or requiring rapid coordination (Verstegen et al., 2018). Furthermore, the absence of direct supervision and clear office structures also raises concerns about accountability and motivation. Some employees may experience difficulty in managing time and maintaining work discipline without the routine or social encouragement from colleagues. Full reliance on technology also makes productivity highly vulnerable to technical problems, such as internet disruptions, inadequate devices, or unstable software, which can hinder smooth work.

In terms of well-being, the literature also presents a complex and dualistic picture. On the one hand, remote work provides much-needed flexibility for many employees to achieve a better work-life balance. The flexibility of time allows them to allocate more time for family, engage in recreational activities, pursue hobbies, or handle household affairs, which in turn contributes to reduced stress levels and increased overall life satisfaction (Palumbo et al., 2022). In addition, remote work also opens up more inclusive job access for individuals with mobility limitations,

chronic illnesses, or other special health conditions. A more personally controllable work environment also provides a high sense of autonomy, which can strengthen a sense of control over work and reduce psychological pressure (Clausen et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, various challenges to employee well-being are also frequently found in the context of remote work. One of the most pressing issues is the increased risk of social isolation. Lack of direct interaction with colleagues and managers often makes employees feel socially disconnected, experience loneliness, and in some cases experience significant declines in mental health. This is especially felt by individuals who previously heavily relied on social interaction at work for emotional support, validation, or even work motivation. Not infrequently, employees feel “always online” or must always be available at all times, which actually creates constant pressure and disrupts the work-life balance that was initially expected. Irregular working hours and a tendency to postpone breaks contribute to chronic fatigue or burnout, as noted in a study by (Sexton et al., 2022)

Physical health is also a concern in remote work. Many employees work in home environments not designed for work ergonomics, such as working at a dining table, sofa, or bed. Long periods of sitting without adequate breaks, lack of physical activity due to no longer having to move places, and the absence of daily routines such as walking to the office or taking the stairs, also affect overall physical condition. Anxiety about job security, ineffective communication from management, and lack of emotional support from superiors can also worsen stress and create psychological uncertainty. In many cases, managers lack the training or capacity to effectively provide emotional support to remote teams, thereby

exacerbating the sense of isolation and lack of support felt by team members (Dinh, 2021).

Findings from various studies indicate that work culture has fundamentally shifted to become more reliant on digital communication, trust-based division of responsibilities, and greater employee autonomy. Organizations that succeed in navigating this transformation are generally those that are adaptive, open to policy updates, and have mature change management strategies. They actively develop policies that support remote work, invest in adequate technological infrastructure for online collaboration, and train leaders to effectively manage virtual teams. Transparent, two-way, and continuous communication also becomes an essential component in building trust and maintaining employee morale.

Some companies have even begun to implement hybrid work models, combining office workdays with remote work. This model is seen as a compromise solution that seeks to balance the benefits of flexibility and efficiency of working from home with the need for social interaction, direct collaboration, and organizational culture attachment. However, the implementation of the hybrid model is also not without its challenges. Careful consideration is needed to avoid creating disparities between employees working from the office and those who continue to work from home. Potential information exclusivity, managerial preference for physically visible employees, or gaps in access to resources must be anticipated and minimized through fair and inclusive policies. In this context, company culture must evolve from one based on physical presence to a culture based on work results, digital collaboration, and active involvement of all team members

regardless of their work location. The main principles to be prioritized are trust, accountability, and results, not just supervision or presence.

5. Discussion

The findings from this literature study confirm that the transformation of remote work culture is a multifaceted phenomenon with complex and often contradictory impacts on employee productivity and well-being. This discussion will analyze the implications of these findings and identify areas for future research and practice. One key point that emerges is that productivity in remote work is not a universal constant. It largely depends on the individual, the type of work, and, most importantly, organizational support (Jolly et al., 2021). For tasks requiring high concentration and autonomy, productivity can increase due to reduced distractions and flexibility. However, for highly collaborative work or tasks requiring spontaneous interaction, productivity may be hampered without strong virtual collaboration strategies and a culture that supports open communication. This indicates the need for organizations not to adopt a “one-size-fits-all” approach but to develop more adaptive models, perhaps through hybrid work models tailored to the needs of teams and individuals.

Organizations need to invest in leadership training for managing remote teams, which includes skills in measuring performance based on results, not presence, and facilitating effective communication (Dinh, 2021). Regarding employee well-being, this is an area where negative impacts are often more prominent and require serious attention. While there are benefits of flexibility, the

risks of social isolation and burnout due to blurred lines between work and life are real threats (Sexton et al., 2022). This highlights the need for proactive interventions from organizations. Clear policies regarding working hours, encouraging leave, and promoting an “off-switch culture” are crucial to prevent burnout. In addition, organizations should facilitate opportunities for non-formal social interaction, both virtually and occasionally physically, to address isolation. Mental health support programs and access to counseling resources should also be an integral part of well-being strategies.

A culture that prioritizes empathy, open communication about personal challenges, and support from colleagues and managers can greatly help in maintaining the well-being of remote teams. A work culture that adapts to remote work must be based on trust, autonomy, and transparent communication. Organizations can no longer rely on physical presence as an indicator of performance or commitment. Instead, they must focus on results, empower employees, and create an environment where employees feel supported and connected, regardless of their physical location. This demands a fundamental shift in management mindset, from supervision to empowerment. The role of technology is also crucial; not just as a tool for communication, but as a cultural facilitator that enables effective collaboration and virtual community building.

6. Conclusion

The transformation towards a remote work culture, accelerated by recent global events, marks a significant paradigm shift in the world of work. This literature

study has shown that this change has complex impacts on employee productivity and well-being, with both benefits and challenges that need to be carefully managed. In terms of productivity, the flexibility and autonomy offered by remote work have the potential to increase efficiency for some employees, especially in tasks requiring high focus. However, challenges such as home distractions, difficulties in virtual collaboration, and the potential for overwork can also hinder output. Regarding well-being, remote work can improve work-life balance, but the risks of social isolation, burnout due to blurred boundaries, and lack of social and ergonomic support demand serious attention from organizations.

In conclusion, successful adaptation to a remote work culture highly depends on an organization's ability to develop holistic strategies. This includes investment in collaborative technology, leadership training to manage virtual teams with empathy and a focus on results, and the formulation of clear policies to support a healthy work-life balance. Company culture must shift from a focus on physical presence to a culture based on trust, autonomy, and transparent communication, ensuring every employee feels connected and supported. A hybrid work model may offer an optimal solution, balancing the flexibility of remote work with the benefits of face-to-face interaction. Managing this transition wisely will be key for organizations to maintain a productive, engaged, and well-off workforce in an evolving work era.

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