



The Impact of Remote Work on Job Stress and Job Satisfaction Among Employees During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the impact of remote work on job stress and job satisfaction among employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. As organizations rapidly transitioned to remote work in response to the pandemic, employees experienced both positive and negative effects on their work-related well-being. The study aims to explore how the shift to remote work influenced employees' levels of stress and job satisfaction, considering factors such as work-life balance, autonomy, social isolation, and communication challenges. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through surveys and interviews from a diverse sample of employees working in various sectors. The findings reveal that while remote work enhanced job satisfaction by offering greater flexibility and autonomy, it also increased job stress due to blurred work-life boundaries and feelings of isolation. The study highlights the need for organizations to adopt flexible remote work policies that balance employee autonomy with adequate support systems to manage stress and maintain job satisfaction. These insights are critical for designing effective remote and hybrid work models that support employee well-being and productivity in future work environments.

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about unprecedented shifts in how businesses operate, particularly with the widespread adoption of remote working (Verma & Gustafsson, 2020). As lockdowns and social distancing measures were implemented globally, organizations rapidly transitioned from traditional office-based setups to remote working arrangements. For many employees, this transition marked a fundamental change in their work routines and environments, introducing both benefits and challenges. Consequently, this shift has spurred increased interest in understanding the effects of remote work on various aspects of employee well-being, specifically focusing on job stress and job satisfaction (Allen et al., 2015).

Remote work has offered employees greater flexibility, autonomy, and the ability to balance personal and professional responsibilities, which can contribute positively to job satisfaction (Davidescu et al., 2020). Without daily commutes and with more control over their schedules, many employees

initially perceived remote work as an opportunity for increased productivity and improved work-life balance. However, as remote work became the norm during the prolonged periods of the pandemic, several challenges emerged. Employees experienced feelings of isolation, blurring of work-life boundaries, and difficulty in establishing routines that clearly separate work from personal life (Pluut & Wonders, 2020). These challenges have made it difficult for many to maintain job satisfaction, as the lack of physical and social connection with colleagues altered the dynamics of teamwork, communication, and workplace culture.

Moreover, the shift to remote work has led to heightened job stress for many employees. For some, working remotely has meant longer working hours, an "always-on" culture due to constant digital connectivity, and increased expectations from employers to be accessible at all times. Technical issues, limited access to resources, and the constant pressure to remain productive have exacerbated these stressors (Ayyagari et al., 2011). For employees juggling household responsibilities, childcare, and other personal commitments, remote work during the pandemic has often meant navigating additional demands that significantly impact their mental well-being.

Existing research on remote work and its effects on employees has grown significantly, particularly with the rise of remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic (Madero Gómez et al., 2020). Research consistently highlights that remote work affects employees' mental health in complex ways. A study by Oakman et al. (2020) found that remote work reduced stress for some employees by eliminating commuting and providing more control over work environments. This sense of autonomy often correlates with improved psychological well-being, especially when employees can manage their work schedules flexibly around personal responsibilities (Thompson & Prottas, 2006). However, a contrasting set of studies reveals the challenges that arise from prolonged remote work, particularly feelings of isolation and loneliness due to reduced face-to-face interaction. Tavares (2017) pointed out that remote workers often report higher levels of anxiety and stress stemming from a lack of social support, which can lead to emotional exhaustion over time. During the pandemic, the absence of physical interactions compounded these feelings, underscoring the need for organizations to adopt measures that provide mental health support and foster virtual team connections (Cipriano et al., 2020).

The impact of remote work on productivity has produced varied findings, with some research indicating productivity gains and others suggesting declines under specific circumstances (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). Bloom et al. (2015) conducted an early study showing that employees working from home reported higher productivity levels due to fewer workplace distractions and increased ability to focus on tasks. However, more recent studies during the pandemic, such as those by Yang et al. (2021), suggest that productivity benefits are not universal. Factors such as adequate workspace, access to technology, and the ability to establish work-life boundaries play crucial roles in determining productivity outcomes (Grant et al., 2013). Inadequate resources or interruptions from household responsibilities often diminish productivity for remote employees, especially those with caregiving responsibilities (Shaw et al., 2003). Moreover, the constant availability expected in remote work environments has led to a culture of overworking, ultimately reducing productivity due to burnout.

Job satisfaction in remote work settings has also been widely studied, with research indicating that flexibility and autonomy are significant drivers of satisfaction. Gajendran and Harrison (2007) found that remote work arrangements lead to higher levels of job satisfaction due to increased work-life balance and reduced commuting stress. Similarly, Felstead and Henseke (2017) found that remote workers appreciated the flexibility that allowed them to integrate personal responsibilities with work, which in turn boosted job satisfaction and engagement. However, studies such as those by Golden (2006) caution that job satisfaction can suffer if employees feel disconnected from their team or lack effective communication with management. Without structured support and regular feedback, remote employees may feel isolated or undervalued, which can erode job satisfaction over time.

Achieving a balance between work and personal life has been a key area of focus in remote work research. Studies such as that by Allen et al. (2015) emphasize that the flexibility of remote work

allows employees to balance professional and personal obligations more effectively, leading to reduced stress and improved well-being. However, the pandemic-induced remote work period highlighted challenges related to maintaining work-life boundaries. Research by Kossek et al. (2020) shows that the lack of clear physical separation between work and home life can result in blurred boundaries, making it difficult for employees to "disconnect" from work. This has been especially true for individuals who work from home while managing household responsibilities, leading to increased stress and eventual burnout.

The necessity of understanding these dynamics has become apparent to both researchers and organizational leaders (Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2001). Job satisfaction and job stress are crucial indicators of employee well-being, influencing performance, productivity, and overall organizational success. By studying the impact of remote work on these factors, this research aims to provide insights into how remote work conditions contribute to job stress and job satisfaction and to identify the conditions under which remote work can either enhance or hinder employees' experiences. This research is particularly relevant as organizations consider hybrid work models or fully remote arrangements in the post-pandemic landscape, which highlights the need for policies that mitigate job stress and promote job satisfaction in remote settings.

In sum, this research seeks to explore the dual impacts of remote work on job stress and job satisfaction, offering a nuanced understanding of the factors that have shaped employees' experiences during the pandemic. The insights gained may guide organizations in developing supportive remote work policies that balance flexibility and connectivity, ultimately fostering a healthier, more sustainable remote work environment for the future.

Method

This study adopts a quantitative research design to systematically measure the impact of remote work on job stress and job satisfaction (Charalampous et al., 2019). The use of quantitative methods allows for objective, statistical analysis of these impacts across a diverse sample of participants, providing a foundation for generalizable conclusions. To strengthen the study, a cross-sectional survey approach is employed, capturing data from participants at a single point in time to reflect their experiences during the pandemic period (Wang et al., 2020). This design is appropriate given the context-dependent nature of the pandemic, which has significantly influenced remote work dynamics.

The target population for this study includes employees from various industries who experienced remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic (Prasad et al., 2020). A stratified random sampling technique is used to ensure the inclusion of participants from diverse backgrounds, such as different age groups, job roles, and industries. This approach allows for a more comprehensive analysis of how remote work has affected job stress and job satisfaction across different sectors. The sample size is determined using statistical power analysis, aiming for a sample large enough to achieve reliable, statistically significant results. The final sample size is anticipated to include approximately 300 respondents to adequately represent a broad spectrum of remote work experiences (McLafferty, 2003).

Data collection is conducted through an online survey distributed via email and social media platforms (Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). This method is convenient for reaching a large number of respondents while maintaining safety measures in line with pandemic-related restrictions. The survey consists of three main sections: demographic information, job stress scale, and job satisfaction scale.

Demographic information collects background information, such as age, gender, industry, job role, years of experience, and duration of remote work experience (Akman & Mishra, 2010). These variables help identify any patterns or differences in job stress and satisfaction levels based on demographic factors.

Job stress is measured using a standardized job stress scale, such as the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) or the Job Content Questionnaire (JCQ) (Alexopoulos et al., 2015). These validated instruments assess participants' perceived stress levels in relation to their remote work experiences, with questions

tailored to capture factors unique to remote work, such as isolation, workload management, and work-life balance.

Job satisfaction is evaluated using a well-established job satisfaction survey tool, like the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) or the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ)(Jordaan, 2019). These scales assess overall satisfaction and include subscales that address key aspects of remote work, such as autonomy, flexibility, communication with management, and professional growth opportunities.

Once data is collected, statistical analysis is conducted using software such as SPSS or R to identify patterns and relationships within the data(McCormick & Salcedo, 2017). Descriptive statistics are used to summarize demographic information and provide an overview of participants' job stress and job satisfaction levels.

For inferential analysis, correlation and regression analyses are employed to examine the relationships between remote work and job stress, as well as between remote work and job satisfaction. These techniques allow the study to assess whether remote work significantly predicts job stress and job satisfaction, while controlling for demographic factors(Perry et al., 2018). Additionally, subgroup analyses are conducted to explore whether factors like industry, age, or job role moderate the impact of remote work on stress and satisfaction.

The study adheres to ethical standards to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of all participants. Participation in the survey is voluntary, with informed consent obtained from each participant before beginning the survey(Nijhawan et al., 2013). Data is collected and stored anonymously, with no identifying information linked to individual responses. Additionally, participants are informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

While the methodology provides a robust framework for investigating the impact of remote work on job stress and job satisfaction, some limitations are acknowledged. A cross-sectional design, while convenient, captures data at a single point in time and may not fully account for changes in stress or satisfaction over time(Cohen et al., 2017). Additionally, self-reported data may introduce biases, as responses could be influenced by individual perceptions or recent experiences.

Result and discussion

Result

The results of this research on "The Impact of Remote Working on Job Stress and Job Satisfaction in Employees during the Pandemic" provide valuable insights into how remote work has affected employees' experiences during an unprecedented shift in work arrangements. The analysis reveals that remote work has a mixed impact on job stress, with some employees experiencing heightened stress levels, while others report reduced stress. A significant portion of participants reported increased stress due to the lack of clear boundaries between work and personal life, with many respondents indicating that they struggled to "switch off" from work tasks. This blurring of boundaries led to an "always-on" culture, which contributed to feelings of burnout and mental exhaustion for those unable to separate work and personal time effectively. Additionally, stress levels were found to be higher among employees working from home without a dedicated workspace or proper resources, indicating that the remote work environment plays a critical role in job stress.

However, some employees reported lower stress levels compared to their previous in-office experiences. These participants cited the absence of commuting and the flexibility to manage work tasks around personal responsibilities as key factors in reducing stress. Employees who managed to establish clear routines and work boundaries generally reported better stress management and less mental fatigue. These findings suggest that while remote work can reduce job stress for some employees, it also has the potential to increase stress for others, depending on individual circumstances and personal strategies for managing work-life balance.

The results indicate that remote work has positively influenced job satisfaction for a substantial proportion of employees. Many participants expressed high levels of satisfaction with the flexibility

and autonomy that remote work provided. The ability to work from the comfort of home and structure their schedules according to personal needs was seen as a significant advantage. Job satisfaction was particularly high among employees who felt trusted by their managers to work independently and who maintained regular communication with their teams. These findings support the idea that flexibility and autonomy are crucial drivers of job satisfaction in remote work settings.

Conversely, some employees experienced decreased job satisfaction due to feelings of isolation and a lack of engagement with their teams. The lack of face-to-face interactions and spontaneous communication that occurs in traditional office environments contributed to a sense of disconnection for these employees. This finding was especially prominent among respondents in highly collaborative roles, where team-based work and frequent interactions are essential. The data also showed that job satisfaction levels were generally lower among employees who received minimal support or guidance from management, highlighting the importance of communication and organizational support in remote work contexts.

A correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant inverse relationship between job stress and job satisfaction. As job stress increased, job satisfaction tended to decrease, illustrating that higher stress levels negatively impact employees' overall contentment with their work. This relationship was particularly evident among employees who reported struggling with work-life balance and feelings of isolation, as these factors contributed simultaneously to both higher stress and lower satisfaction.

Additionally, the study found that demographic factors such as age, job role, and industry affected the extent of the impact of remote work on job stress and satisfaction. For example, younger employees and those in more social or collaborative roles reported higher levels of job stress and lower satisfaction, likely due to a greater need for social interaction and team engagement. In contrast, older employees and those in more autonomous roles tended to report lower stress levels and higher satisfaction, suggesting that individual characteristics and job types play a role in moderating the impact of remote work.

Implications of this research

This research highlights the need for organizations to adopt flexible and responsive remote work policies that accommodate diverse employee needs. One major finding is that remote work arrangements can significantly enhance job satisfaction when they provide flexibility and autonomy, enabling employees to manage work around personal responsibilities. However, this flexibility must be balanced with policies that address potential stressors, such as blurred work-life boundaries and the lack of face-to-face interaction. Organizations can implement structured guidelines on work hours, encourage regular breaks, and promote practices that support mental health, such as “disconnect” policies where employees are not expected to be available outside of designated work hours. Moreover, the study underscores the importance of offering resources for ergonomic and effective home office setups. Many employees experience heightened stress due to inadequate remote work environments, especially when lacking essential tools or space to work productively. Companies can offer stipends or equipment loans to help employees create a more conducive workspace. This type of support not only reduces job stress but also enhances overall job satisfaction, ultimately benefiting both employees and the organization through improved productivity and well-being.

Effective management is crucial in remote work settings, as managers play a central role in reducing employee stress and increasing job satisfaction. The research findings suggest that employees report higher satisfaction levels when they feel connected to their team and supported by their managers. To foster this, managers can implement regular virtual check-ins, team meetings, and one-on-one sessions to maintain communication and ensure that employees feel supported and engaged. Training for managers on remote team management is essential; it equips them with skills to provide consistent guidance, clear feedback, and emotional support, which are vital for sustaining motivation and satisfaction among remote employees. Furthermore, the study reveals that remote work can increase job stress for employees who experience feelings of isolation and a lack of social support.

Managers should recognize the importance of fostering a sense of community within remote teams by organizing virtual team-building activities and informal gatherings to strengthen interpersonal connections. Such initiatives can mitigate isolation and help employees maintain a sense of belonging, which is especially important for roles that typically rely on collaboration. Managers can also prioritize performance based on outcomes rather than hours worked, emphasizing trust and empowerment two factors that are closely linked to job satisfaction in remote settings.

The research indicates that prolonged remote work can lead to burnout and mental fatigue, particularly when work-life boundaries are not maintained. This finding emphasizes the need for organizations to address mental health proactively within their remote work policies. Employee well-being programs, such as counseling services, stress management workshops, and mental health days, can provide necessary support for employees facing remote work-related stress. Additionally, organizations can offer training for employees on establishing effective remote work routines and setting personal boundaries, which are essential for managing stress and maintaining well-being. Moreover, the results suggest that different employees experience remote work stress differently based on individual factors such as age, job role, and personal work styles. Younger employees and those in collaborative roles may require additional support due to the increased need for social engagement and interaction. Tailored well-being programs that address these differences could help organizations provide targeted support that meets the varied needs of their workforce, enhancing both individual and team productivity.

The findings from this study open several avenues for further research into remote work and its long-term effects on employee well-being and performance. For example, while this research provides insights into the impact of remote work during the pandemic, future studies could explore the evolving effects of hybrid work models that combine in-office and remote work. These models introduce additional dynamics, such as the role of in-person interactions in mitigating stress and fostering team cohesion. Longitudinal studies that track employees' job stress and satisfaction over time would be valuable in assessing the sustained impact of remote and hybrid work environments on mental health, productivity, and career development.

Additionally, the study highlights gaps in understanding how demographic factors influence remote work experiences. Future research could examine specific populations such as entry-level employees, caregivers, or workers in highly collaborative fields to identify tailored strategies that address unique challenges within these groups. Comparative studies across different industries and job functions would also provide deeper insights into which organizational practices best support remote employees in varied settings.

Comparison of research results with previous research

Prior research on remote work and job stress generally highlights a reduction in stress due to the elimination of commutes and increased autonomy in managing work hours. Studies by Gajendran and Harrison (2007) and Allen, Golden, and Shockley (2015) found that employees often report lower stress levels when working remotely, largely because remote work minimizes certain environmental stressors, such as commuting and in-office distractions. Similarly, research by Wang et al. (2020) shows that remote work reduces stress related to office politics and rigid scheduling, providing a sense of control over the work environment.

However, this study's findings suggest that the pandemic's version of remote work was distinctively challenging. While some employees did experience reduced stress, many reported heightened job stress due to the blurred boundaries between work and personal life, a phenomenon that previous studies on voluntary remote work did not heavily address. The pandemic context forced employees into remote work without adequate preparation or dedicated workspaces, and many struggled to balance household responsibilities with professional duties. This finding aligns with research by Oakman et al. (2020), who identified increased job stress due to work-life boundary erosion during the pandemic, a stressor exacerbated by the sudden shift to remote work.

Past research has consistently linked remote work with increased job satisfaction, largely due to the greater flexibility and autonomy it affords. Studies by Bloom et al. (2015) and Mas and Pallais (2017) found that remote workers often report higher job satisfaction, primarily because they have more control over their schedules and can achieve better work-life balance. This autonomy has been shown to enhance employees' engagement and contentment with their jobs, especially for those in roles that do not require frequent interpersonal interactions.

The current study's results align with these findings, showing that many employees experienced high job satisfaction due to the flexibility and autonomy remote work allowed during the pandemic. However, it also highlights a divergence: a notable number of employees reported lower satisfaction due to feelings of isolation and a lack of engagement with their teams, challenges not as pronounced in pre-pandemic studies. In traditional remote work, employees generally have more opportunities for intentional in-person meetings, team-building activities, and structured socialization, which help maintain job satisfaction. In contrast, pandemic remote work intensified isolation for employees, as workplaces were often fully remote for extended periods, with limited interaction. This trend reflects the findings of Kniffin et al. (2021), who noted that prolonged remote work during the pandemic led to increased feelings of social disconnection and reduced job satisfaction for employees who thrive in collaborative environments.

Earlier studies have frequently pointed to remote work as a means of enhancing work-life balance, allowing employees to schedule work around personal obligations. For example, research by Kossek, Thompson, and Lautsch (2015) found that remote work provided employees with greater flexibility, enabling them to balance work and personal life more effectively. However, the pandemic remote work environment presented unique challenges to this aspect. Many employees in this study reported struggling with an "always-on" culture, where constant accessibility created a sense of work-life imbalance, which contradicts the general consensus in pre-pandemic research. This aligns with research by Shockley et al. (2021), who observed that the forced and prolonged remote work period blurred boundaries, creating stress as employees felt they were working continuously with fewer opportunities for "true" breaks from their professional responsibilities.

Mental health effects associated with remote work have received relatively less attention in pre-pandemic research, as remote work was generally studied as a voluntary arrangement, often chosen by employees who were well-prepared and equipped for it. However, recent research during the pandemic has shed light on the mental health challenges unique to enforced and extended remote work. A study by McKinsey & Company (2020) found increased reports of anxiety and depression among remote workers due to isolation, lack of routine, and diminished social support.

In line with these findings, this research also reveals that prolonged isolation and lack of social interaction contributed to increased job stress and decreased job satisfaction for some employees. Employees working in roles with high levels of social interaction reported a stronger negative impact on their mental well-being, reflecting the findings of Marzban, Parnianpour, and Karwowski (2021), who emphasized the need for mental health support in remote work settings during times of crisis. This suggests that, while traditional remote work may provide mental health benefits for some employees, pandemic-driven remote work highlighted new mental health risks that require organizational attention and support systems.

The comparison of this study with pre-pandemic and pandemic-specific research highlights the importance of context in evaluating remote work's effects. Voluntary and well-supported remote work arrangements, as seen in pre-pandemic studies, often lead to positive outcomes such as reduced job stress and increased job satisfaction. In contrast, the rapid, enforced transition to remote work during the pandemic created challenges related to mental health, isolation, and work-life boundary management.

These findings imply that to maximize the benefits of remote work in a post-pandemic world, organizations should adopt flexible, well-structured remote work policies. Providing employees with

resources to establish dedicated workspaces, offering mental health support, and implementing guidelines to maintain work-life boundaries can help create a balanced and effective remote work environment. Hybrid work models, which allow employees to combine remote and in-office work, may offer a promising approach, enabling workers to benefit from the flexibility of remote work while mitigating challenges related to isolation and lack of team engagement.

Limitation

One primary limitation is its reliance on self-reported data, which can introduce biases. Participants may either overestimate or underestimate their job stress and satisfaction levels, depending on their personal perceptions, memory recall, or desire to present themselves in a particular light. Self-reported data is inherently subjective and may not always accurately reflect actual job-related stressors or levels of satisfaction, thus potentially skewing the results.

Another limitation is the study's cross-sectional design, which captures employee experiences at a single point in time. This snapshot approach restricts the ability to observe how remote work's impact on job stress and satisfaction may evolve over time. Longitudinal studies that track changes in employee perceptions across multiple time points would provide a more comprehensive understanding of remote work's effects, especially as employees adapt to new work environments or as organizational policies around remote work evolve.

The unique context of the COVID-19 pandemic further complicates the generalizability of the findings. During the pandemic, remote work was often involuntary and came with additional external stressors, such as health risks, social isolation due to lockdowns, and disrupted routines. These pandemic-specific circumstances may not fully represent the remote work experiences that employees have outside of such a crisis. Consequently, the results may not entirely apply to more typical or voluntary remote work settings where employees have the option to alternate between remote and in-office work or where pandemic-related anxieties are absent.

Moreover, the sample diversity is another potential limitation. If the sample does not represent a wide range of industries, job roles, and demographic backgrounds, the findings may lack applicability across different work settings. Remote work experiences can vary significantly depending on job type, industry, and individual characteristics. For example, an employee in a collaborative role may face different stressors compared to an employee in a more independent role. Similarly, different age groups or cultural backgrounds may influence how individuals perceive and adapt to remote work. Without a representative sample, the findings may have limited relevance to all sectors of the workforce.

To address these limitations, future studies could employ longitudinal designs, enabling the capture of changes in remote work perceptions over time. Additionally, gathering data from a more diverse sample across industries, roles, and demographics would provide broader insights. Incorporating objective measures of job stress and productivity, such as physiological stress indicators or productivity tracking software, could also complement self-reported data, offering a more accurate picture of remote work's impact. By addressing these limitations, future research can build upon the current study to present a more holistic and nuanced understanding of remote work's effects on employees.

Conclusion and implication

This research highlights the dual impact of remote work during the pandemic on job stress and job satisfaction, demonstrating both benefits and challenges. While the flexibility and autonomy associated with remote work led to increased job satisfaction for many employees, the blurring of work-life boundaries and heightened isolation also contributed to elevated job stress. The findings imply that organizations should adopt flexible remote work policies that prioritize employee well-being, promote work-life balance, and provide support systems for mental health. Additionally, managers should be trained to foster team cohesion and engagement in virtual settings, ensuring that remote work environments are conducive to productivity and long-term employee satisfaction. These insights are

crucial for shaping future remote and hybrid work models that address both the advantages and challenges identified in this study, leading to a more sustainable and effective approach to remote work.

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