INVESTIGATING THE POST-PANDEMIC REMOTE WORK EFFECT ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND WELL-BEING OF EMPLOYEES: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 has introduced and accelerated the new developing work culture around the world as remote working practices or working from home that is observable mostly in service-based organizations, especially in IT companies and organizations providing IT-enabled services like Edtech firms, Survey companies, Consultancy firms, etc. Telework, E-working, virtual working telecommuting smart working, and home-based working are a few terms used interchangeably. These Organisations are looking for such types of arrangements due to cost-cutting and the demands of the job market at present time. The study tries to elaborate on the role of remote working practices on work-life balance and employees' well-being to fulfil the objective of the study and conducting future-oriented research it includes the empirical papers on this issue between the time frame of 2002 to 2022 excluding the papers where the study was conducted on the covid 19 perspective. Focusing on PRISMA framework guidelines 2020. We qualitatively assessed 26 articles out of 517 papers found on Scopus. The findings of the study show that remote work is an independent variable in work-life balance and the well-being of employees but the direction of the relationship is not clear in past literature which means both positive effects as well as negative effects.

Keywords: Remote Work, Work from home, Work-life balance, Employee well-being, Job Satisfaction, Flexibility.

INTRODUCTION

Theoretical Background

The coronavirus pandemic disease has changed the work practices of many organizations all over the world. The first case of COVID 19 was found in Wuhan, China, and spread all over the world. Looking at its severe impact on different countries, the World Health Organization declared it a Global crisis on 30th January 2020. Most of the countries in the world experienced a severe effect on the economy and health and decided to be in partial or complete lockdown as a measure to prevent the consequences of the pandemic. The pandemic forced to enforce remote working resulting in increased use of information and communication technology, virtual workplaces, and internet, etc.

The enhancement of information and communication technology induced by the pandemic accelerated the pace of application and development of remote work practices forced by the pandemic or deliberated shift to the new mode at a mass level.

The concept of remote work is not recently originated even the literature shows that some organizations were using this model before the pandemic started for retaining talented employees and to improve the work-life balance of employees, reduce working hours, avoid workplace stress and politics even remote work date back to 1979 when IBM a dash company as an experiment allowed some of the workforces to remote work when some system was not working and by 1983 the number of staff working remotely became 2000.

Before this pandemic, there was a group of higher-paid and higher-skilled employees whose percentage was 3.2% all over the European Union especially in the northern side (Chafi MB et al., 2022; Sostero M, 2020).
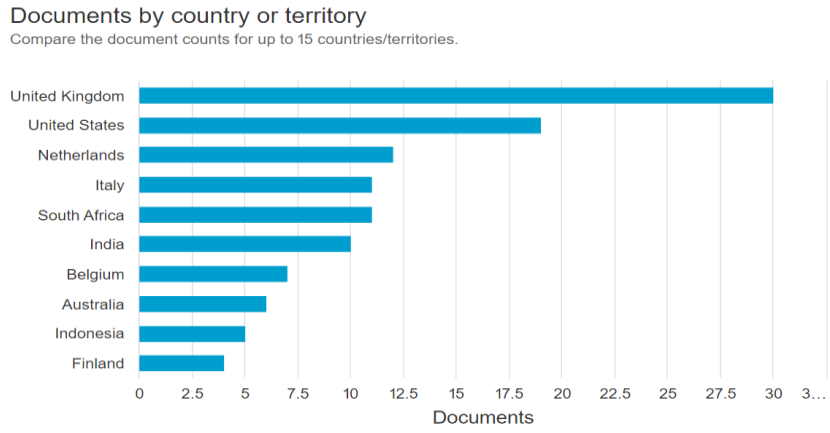
After the pandemic, remote work became a new trend in organizations using information and communication technology for providing their services including the IT sector and other related services using IT-enabled services such as consultancy services, digital marketing, EdTech organization, etc. The information and communication technology enhancement induced by the pandemic accelerated the pace of remote work practices either forced by the pandemic or a deliberate shift to the new mode (Jose Ramon Saura et al., 2022).

Current Understanding of the Problem

The term remote work has been defined with different names over the past few decades namely work from home, telecommuting, telework, and e-work, etc. Remote work can be defined as alternative work arrangements or practices that involve performing work by individuals from home or other than their primary office and interacting with other individuals inside or outside the organization through Information and communication technology. Remote work is not recently originated but developed that is a practice where employees accomplish their jobs from their homes or no compulsion of coming office instead of doing the same from anywhere known as the hybrid work model where individuals work a few days a week from their primary office and the remaining days from home or weeks from office and remaining from home.

Remote working is gaining a place in the work culture among employees and employers. Organizations are using this model due to various advantages to employers and the workforce. One of the important advantages to organizations is cost-cutting in premises maintenance expenses due to the virtual workplace and it seems to be remote work positively affects work-life balance that provides autonomy and flexibility in the sense of time and place (also known as schedule and temporal flexibility respectively) to individuals for performing their jobs.

Source: Data were taken from SCOPUS dated 5 February 2023

Documents by country or territory
Compare the document counts for up to 15 countries/territories.

Source: Data were taken from SCOPUS dated 5 February 2023
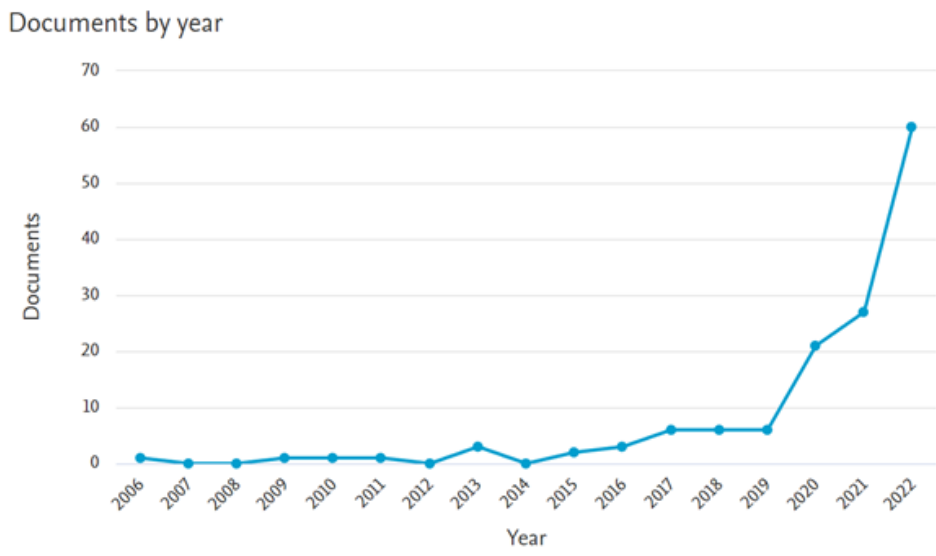
Documents by year

FIGURE 2
**PANDEMIC RESEARCH ON THIS ISSUE TREMENDOUSLY INCREASED TO 60
STUDIES IN 2022 WHICH WAS BELOW 10 IN THE PREVIOUS 17 YEARS
STARTING FROM 2006**

Limitations of the Existing Knowledge

The past studies on work-life balance on remote workers are not unanimous most of the literature shows that due to remote work employees find themselves able to manage efficiently

their work-life balance even after the pandemic has gone while others show that due to remote work employees cannot manage their work-life properly due to the overlapping of working time and personal works, interaction and communication barriers with the other employees of the organizations, and organizations are facing problem in management issues.

Research Problem of the Study

First, this study tries to figure out an analytical study with a tabular presentation on both work-life balance and the employees 'well-being who work remotely before the pandemic, post-pandemic, and including papers during the COVID 19 pandemic period which had future perspective as well as post-pandemic-studies-on-remote-work up to 2022 to study the relative and composite effect of working from home on both the variables and second what the various causes will be there behind the positive and negative aspects of remote working regarding its effect on the work-life balance and employees 'well-being in different organizations.

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

Information Sources and Search Strategy

In this paper, we used PRISMA Framework guidelines and searched for articles in the English language, published in the time frame from 2002 to 2022 Search strategy:

The following keywords are used to cover broadly the area of interest- *"remote work"* OR *"Remote working"* OR *"remote job"* OR *"work from home"* OR *"working from home"* OR *"work at home"* OR *"working at home"* OR *"work from anywhere"* OR *"working from anywhere"* OR *"home-based work"* OR *"flexible working arrangement"* OR *"mobile work"* OR *"mobile working"* OR *"distance work"* OR *"distance working"* OR *"virtual work"* OR *"virtual working"* OR *"telecommuting"* OR *"E-commuting"* OR *"e-work"* OR *"e-working"* AND *"work-life balance"* OR *"work life balance"* OR *"work and family life balance"* OR *"work life harmony"* OR *"work-life harmony"* OR *"work-life equilibrium"* OR *"work life equilibrium"* OR *"work-life wellbeing"* OR *"employee well-being"* OR *"technostress"*.

The study has the following inclusion criteria

• The study includes a post-pandemic perspective.
• Remote workers, work-life balance, and employees' well-being are the central theme.

The study has the following exclusion criteria

• The study excludes documents merely from COVID 19 perspective.
• Papers in which full articles are not found are excluded
• Papers other than the English language are also not included in the study.

Process of Data Collection

The data is collected through the Scopus database after we have applied the inclusion and exclusion criteria 27 papers were found to be suitable for review for the same Figure 1 shows the criteria of inclusion and exclusion and shows the reports of each of these selected papers.
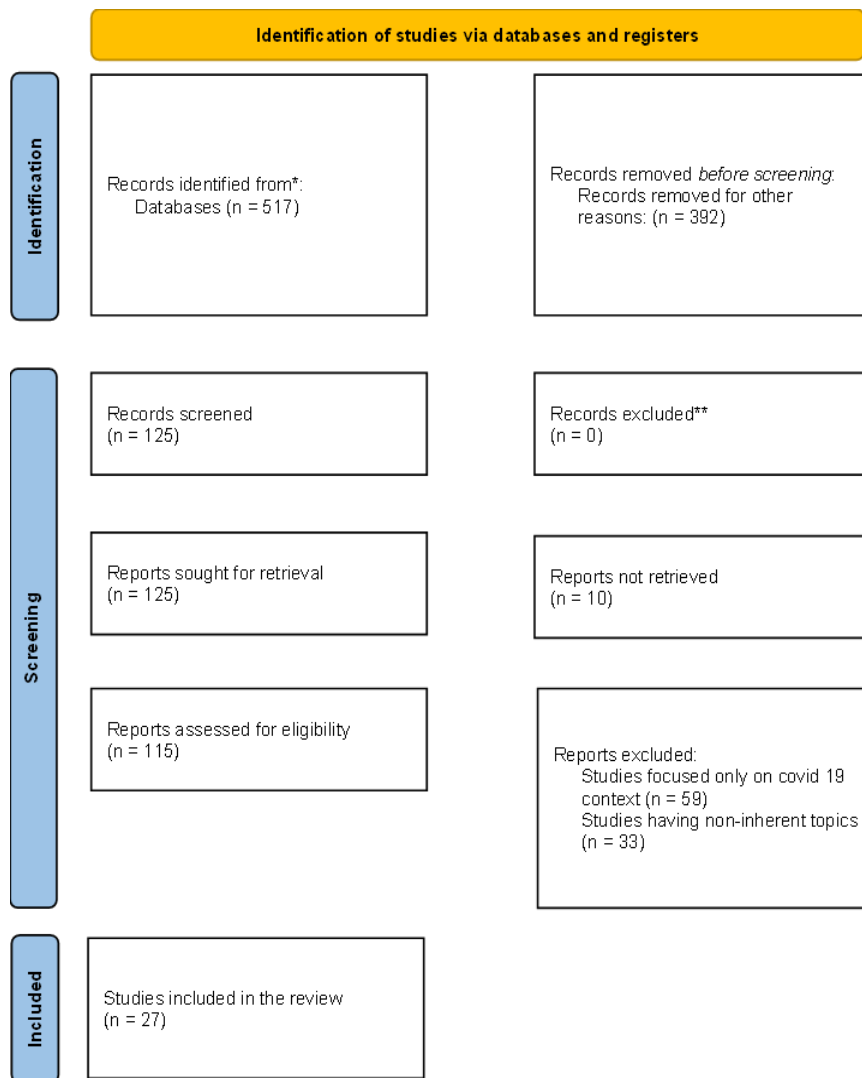

Identification of studies via databases and registers

| Identification | Records identified from*: Databases (n = 517) | Records removed *before screening*: Records removed for other reasons: (n = 392) |

Records screened (n = 125) — Records excluded** (n = 0)

Reports sought for retrieval (n = 125) — Reports not retrieved (n = 10)

Reports assessed for eligibility (n = 115) — Reports excluded: Studies focused only on covid 19 context (n = 59) Studies having non-inherent topics (n = 33)

Studies included in the review (n = 27)

FIGURE 1
SHOWS PRISMA FRAMEWORK 2020 FLOW DIAGRAM FOR NEW SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEWS THAT CONSISTS OF SEARCHES OF DATABASES AND REGISTERS.

RESULTS

Remote Work and Job Autonomy

Several studies show that remote working puts a positive effect on the job autonomy of employees due to flexibility in the sense of time to start and end the work as well as in the sense of workplace flexibility due to virtual workplace provided by organizations where the employee has the freedom to work from anywhere (Michal Beňo & Kateřina Křížová 2022; Shihang Zhang, 2020).

Remote Work and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is an important indicator of better work-life balance. When employees get more time to fulfill their family responsibility Michal Beňo & Kateřina Křížová (2022) and (Saxena Kokila et al., 2022).

Remote Work and Work-life Balance

Most of the research after screening the data shows that there is a positive relation between remote working and work-life balance due to the different intermediating variables acting between them such as temporal and time-related flexibility, and job autonomy, Babapour Chafi M et al., (2021) and fulfilling better family responsibilities. Saxena Kokila et al., (2022) and less time spend on chatting or conversing with other employees or workers.

Remote Work and Techno-stress

The research conducted on techno-stress while working from home has a mostly negative relationship with remote work because employees use smartphones for both the purpose of personal as well as for work-related activities (Singh Pallavi et al., 2022).

Remote Work and Social Isolation

While researchers across the world show the pros of working from home but few researchers show that remote working workers feel socially isolated to them because of the closed environment within the four-wall and the absence of face-to-face social interaction with fellow workers (Babapour Chafi et al., 2021).

Remote Work and Employees' Well-being

Using smartphones for job-related work in remote work is common because most of the activities are performed digitally in remote work set-up but workers can't prevent them to use up to the extent of work-related activities but use it for personal purposes that's why it becomes the cause of technostress and eventually makes a negative impact on the subjective well-being of different employees. While some of the research shows that HRD has an important role in

remote work to teach, train and educate employees with new practices that may result in better well-being of employees (Melika Shirmohammadi et al., 2022).

Remote Work and Job Performance

Regardless of most of the positive effects on remote workers, job performance is one of the important factor factors to decide whether remote work is effective or not in this regard there are mixed outcomes to how job performance is affected by working remotely. Flexibility and autonomy within a job and some other causes are there those contribute towards better job performance (Katharina Friedrich, 2022).

DISCUSSION

While several selected papers in this study show that remote working practices have positively affected the employees in managing their work-life balance as they enjoy a number of advantages there are few studies showing its negative side such as always availability of employees and blurred boundaries of work-life and family-life of employees (Jonny Gifford, 2022).

Flexibility in work is one of the important factors that affect and attracts employees to work remotely. This flexibility includes flexitime and spatial flexibility Chafi MB, (2022) and the second thing is fulfilling family responsibilities and reducing the level of work-family conflict because employees get more time to spend with family and adjust their work and family-related responsibilities (Maral Darouei et al., 2021).

Social and professional isolation in the sense of fewer opportunities to interact with face-to-face peers & supervisors, collaboration, and personal and professional development Maral Darouei et al., (2021) at the cost of its positive side that employees are able to save time in chatting with other employees and focused environment at home.

The well-being of remote workers is also not unanimous and it is found in the study that employees accomplish their work and life responsibilities and they are able to handle work-life conflict (Maral Darouei et al., 2022).

The importance of HRD is also an important factor in managing work-life equilibrium as employees face problems in adopting this new practice as there is a lack of proper policy and system to arrange and implement these work practices (Melika Shirmohammadi et al., 2022).

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