



Investigating the Impact of Remote Working on Employee Productivity and Work-life Balance: A Study on the Business Consultancy Industry in Dubai, UAE

Melvin S. Rañeses

Bath Spa University, Academic Center Rak,
Ras al-Khaimah, UAE

Edgar Suliva Bacason

Bath Spa University, Academic Center Rak,
Ras al-Khaimah, UAE

Noor un Nisa*

Bath Spa University, Academic Center Rak,
Ras al-Khaimah, UAE

Salvacion Martir

Bath Spa University, Academic Center Rak,
Ras al-Khaimah, UAE

Abstract: The advancements in digitalization have sparked the way traditional work takes place. COVID-19 pandemic has also prompted a drastic change for modification of the usual work setting. These give rise to remote working, also known as telework, hot desking, work from home, hoteling, and a flexible work plan through which a worker achieves his/her tasks in a place remote from the customary office. Studies have found that remote working brings several challenges and benefits to workers. People who practiced remote working have shown an increase in their job performance and job satisfaction. However, other workers have expressed concerns on other aspects such as pressures in time management, loneliness due to less or absence of interaction among workers, and the feeling of being left out. This study aims to examine remote working and its impact on the productivity and work-life balance of the employees in the business consultancy industry in Dubai, UAE. This is quantitative research wherein descriptive and correlation research designs employing regression analysis were utilized. 96 employees working in the administration and office from different organizations in the business setup division were sampled using purposive sampling. Analysis of the responses demonstrated that remote working has a strong positive relation to employees' productivity. However, results also showed that remote working has no significant impact on the employees' work-life balance. On these bases, employers should take responsibility for the health and safety of the workers under their care whether or not the work is being done remotely. Similarly, employees should also take responsibility for themselves by carefully following the guidelines and procedures enforced by their employers. Further research is needed to identify other factors or variables that could bring fresh perspectives to elucidate the impact of remote working further.

Keywords: *Remote working, productivity, work-life balance, business setup, business consultancy, Dubai, quantitative research*

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*Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Noor un Nisa, Bath Spa University, Academic Center Rak, Ras al-Khaimah, UAE. E-mail: noorbaloch60@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The rise of globalization and the increasing trend in the digitalization revolution has contributed to the radical change in how people work and live (Elshaiekh, Hassan, & Abdallah, 2018). According to the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(2011\)](#), the widespread availability and increase in the usage of work applications along with cloud services that can be accessed remotely allowed employees to accomplish their tasks even outside of their offices. With this fast-moving lifestyle and a growing dependence on high-level IT frameworks, this arrangement brings about what the vast majority call "remote working," "telecommuting," or "work from home."

Remote working has several definitions to describe it. [International Labour Organization \(2016\)](#) termed remote working as "a form of work in which (a) work is performed in a location remote from a central office or production facilities, thus separating the worker from personal contact with co-workers there; and (b) new technology enables this separation by facilitating communication." [Elshaiekh et al. \(2018\)](#) further supported this description of remote working as a "flexible work plan through which a worker is achieved his/her tasks, responsibilities and other official duties from a worksite besides the company premise from which an employee is bound to report for work." Further, they also considered that the thriving use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) directly impacts the increase of alternative means in the traditional workplace.

Central Issue of Concern

The dramatic shift of resorting to remote working has also been brought about by the Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic. When the COVID-19 cases rose alarmingly in the first quarter of 2020, countries worldwide were greatly affected by the startling death tolls. Hence, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic. Additionally, [World Health Organization \(2020\)](#) said that "COVID-19 caused a tremendous global impact on people's livelihood and the communities as a whole". Ninety countries closed their borders, and half of the world's population was under lockdown, with people forced to stay in their respective homes ([Sandford, 2020](#)). The pandemic has caused operational disruptions among numerous organizations and even shut down many businesses. Hence, [Umoh et al. \(2020\)](#) stated that "remote work has become more prevalent." In 2021, a Gallup survey ([Saad & Jones, 2021](#)) shows that 52% of the US workforce already worked from home. In comparison, an average of 12.3% of workers in the European Union are now working remotely ([Sava, 2022](#)). Various organizations implemented health and safety procedures to ensure the stability of business operations while adhering to social distancing prescribed by the governing bodies to curb the proliferation of the disease ([Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020](#); [Bellmann & Hübler, 2020](#)).

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has also carefully planned and adapted this transformation from a typical office to a digital environment to safeguard its residents' health and well-being. The remote work structure included the government and private sectors and placed a 30% physical presence of workers in establishments while observing meticulous physical hygiene and social distancing ([United Arab Emirates Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation, 2020](#)).

Remote working produced many repercussions for both employers and employees alike. In the business industries, telework is said to save from expenditures such as real estate rental fees associated with having wider space to accommodate a large number of employees; lessen carbon footprint linked to energy consumption; lessen staff absenteeism and turnover rate; boost employee morale; maintain an operational plan of businesses and continuity strategy; enable businesses to adhere with the legislative and social responsibility compliance by employing persons with disabilities and people belonging to the vulnerable groups; uphold business capabilities in handling operations with diverse time zones; and enables businesses to expand cultural adaptability ([International Labour Organization, 2016](#)). In [Kłopotek \(2017\)](#) study, advantages such as time saved from commuting to work were considered one of the poignant factors for younger remote workers apart from the flexibility in the working hours. Remote work also encourages job satisfaction. [Schall \(2019\)](#) findings suggested that the increase in the intensity of remote work has a direct link to the level of job satisfaction among employees.

Numerous studies for remote working carried out in the UAE also revealed different findings. Research by the Dubai Future Foundation in 2020 concluded that this work setup satisfies workers. Another study by Smart Dubai, 2020 found that "90% of the workers suggested continuing to work remotely in the duration of their career. Remote working had also shown a specific advantage to working mothers while at home". Furthermore, working distantly also subjected workforces to various IT tools, keeping them engaged. In contrast, Kaspersky's survey in 2020 has revealed that 82% of employees holding managerial positions stated apprehensions about productivity caused by the rapid shift from

conventional office to telework. Additionally, 69% of personnel asserted that remote work had affected their emotional well-being. Moreover, a Khaleej Times article in 2020 claimed that a percentage of employees who felt "uncomfortable for having less interaction with their co-workers remained significant with 50% experiencing exhaustion, and 30% showed more anxiety while working remotely".

Research Question

This study will seek to answer the question: What is the role of remote working and its effects on employee productivity and work-life balance in the business consultancy industry in Dubai, UAE?

Research Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Examine the impact of remote working and its effects on employee productivity and work-life balance in the business consultancy industry in Dubai, UAE.
2. Explore literature reviews on remote working and its impact on employee productivity and work-life balance in the business consultancy industry in Dubai, UAE.

Hypotheses

Concerning the stated problem, below are the following hypotheses that will be tested in the study:

H1: *There is a significant relationship between remote working and employee productivity.*

H2: *There is a significant relationship between remote working and employee work-life balance.*

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Remote Working

The emergence of digitalization and the growing advancements of ICT contribute to the impact on the quality of people's work and community life (Elshaiekh et al., 2018; Shahbaz, Jam, Bibi, & Loganathan, 2016). In early 1980, the accessibility of Wi-fi and internet-based tools paved the way for workers to connect over different locations, thus, minimizing the cost and time (AlMarar et al., 2021). Moreover, the prevalent use of cloud services and access to work applications facilitates workers to perform work responsibilities outside the usual work premises (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2011). This gives rise to alternative ways of establishing work known to many as "remote work," "telework," or "WFH" (Ali et al., 2010; Monteiro, Straume, & Valente, 2019).

The idea of remote work can be traced back to the oil crisis of the 1970s. Elshaiekh et al. (2018) cited in their study that people in these times conveyed that due to the fuel price hike, there was an increase in the cost of their daily commute. This prompted Jack Nilles, a former NASA engineer, to introduce the concept of remote working in his book, "The Telecommunications-Transformation Tradeoff," in 1972. He further proposed "remote work as an alternative to traffic congestion and conservation." A resurgence of this need was triggered in 2020 when the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the world under a COVID-19 pandemic caused by a novel strain of the coronavirus. The virus, believed to have originated in the city of Wuhan, a province of Hubei in China, brought an unprecedented number of deaths among humans (World Health Organization, 2020). The pandemic triggered a massive migration away from the traditional workplace. Due to the drastic changes made by the COVID pandemic, organizations had to alter their business operations. Governments have put into effect solutions to protect the people's health and help stop the virus from spreading. Stringent regulations and community lock downs across countries prompted employees to work remotely (Hanaysha, 2016; Kurter, 2020; Waheed & Jam, 2010).

Researchers have accepted several definitions to describe remote working. The International Labour Organization (2016) termed remote working as "a form of work in which (a) work is performed in a location remote from a central office or production facilities, thus separating the worker from personal contact with co-workers there; and (b) new technology enables this separation by facilitating communication." Elshaiekh et al. (2018) designated remote working "as a flexible work plan through which a worker achieves his/her tasks, responsibilities, and other official duties from a worksite besides the company premise from which an employee is bound to report for work." Remote work is most desirable for jobs requiring output-based monitoring, independent work, and less face-to-face contact. Physical location on a global economy scale is now becoming less required than the efficiency of the business operations (SHRM, 2021).

Cambridge English referred to Teleworking as "a situation in which someone works for an organization from their home and communicates with the main office and customers, by phone or email."

Classifications of Remote Working

The Australian Telework Advisory Committee, as cited by the ([International Labour Organization, 2016](#)), proposed different types of remote working as follows:

- Hot desking, where an employee spends partly or most of his/her time working from a distant location. When an employee is present in the main office, they utilize a "non-dedicated, non-permanent workspace," which is only for use on a need basis compared to having a "reserved office" but will go unutilized should the employee opt for remote working.
- Hoteling is the same as hot-desking; however, the employee should have an already reserved space before working.
- Telework centers are places other organizations can use by providing workstations and other office facilities. This type of remote work is now declining due to the increasing accessibility of internet-based tools and smart technologies.
- Collaborative offices are described as a "virtual environment" through which employees work from different locations with the help of computer networks.
- Mobile remote workers are employees who utilize at least 10 hours of their work away from the main office location, carrying and using their mobile phones for work.

Factors of Remote Working

[Ghanbari and Bakhtjoo \(2017\)](#) cited three important factors for achieving the full benefits of remote working:

- People

The people play the main role in the remote work process. This includes stakeholders who are directly affected by the work. Team members are expected to deal with different work-related involvements and technology assignments.

- Process

This answers the question: "what work will be proposed?"; "what is the best way to do the work?"; and "how will the remote workers be evaluated?". Policies and procedures should aim to manage or control remote working processes, including "time management, information management, and virtual organization structure."

- Infrastructure

This includes the technological and physical aspects crucial in facilitating remote working. In particular, this centers on tools used for communication such as the internet, messaging platforms, email, and other communication channels.

Effects of Remote Working

Several research and findings revealed the advantages and disadvantages of remote working.

In the business industries, telework is said to increase the need for a pool of experienced workers; curb the number of illnesses (by allowing sick employees to continue working away from the main office locations); save from expenditures such as real estate rental fees associated with having wider space to accommodate a large number of employees; lessen carbon footprint linked to energy consumption; lessen staff absenteeism and turnover rate; boost employee morale; maintain the operational plan of businesses and continuity strategy; enable businesses to adhere with the legislative and social responsibility compliance by employing persons with disabilities and people belonging to the vulnerable groups; uphold business capabilities in handling operations with diverse time zones; and enables businesses to expand cultural adaptability ([International Labour Organization, 2016](#)). [Belzunegui-Eraso and Erro-Garcés \(2020\)](#) also posited that remote work not only allows flexibility but also has a positive impact on environmental and economic aspects. Companies will no longer need bigger and centralized spaces to hold many workers, reducing expenses intended for space, maintenance, rent, parking, etc. Remote work could also curb traffic congestion and air pollution, making it more sustainable than working on the company premises. In a study conducted by [Licite-Kurbe, Leonovica, et al. \(2021\)](#) on the "Economic Benefits of Remote Work from Employer Perspective," it was found that bigger financial savings in practicing telework for companies varied. This was based on the business sector and the specific jobs they catered to, besides the huge amount of funds the company invested in their employees. Their results further stated that the biggest portion of economic savings from applying telework originated from the company's maintenance of its

premises, internet, and energy expenses (Bharathi & Mala, 2016; Shahbaz, Tiwari, Jam, & Ozturk, 2014).

Meanwhile, the least percentage of initial savings was from technology/equipment provided to the employees. However, employers also face disadvantages in practicing remote work. Employers confronted hard times in the communication aspect in ensuring successful collaborative working; the challenge of controlling employees added to this. Parker, Knight, and Keller (2020) argued that managers encountered difficulty in their role in managing remote workers. Their research revealed that employers unable to "see" direct reports started to build up distrust among their employees and doubted if their staff was truly working well. Furthermore, it was also found that 40 percent of the managers and direct supervisors showed lesser self-confidence in their capability to monitor staff remotely. The study further concluded a lack of "self-efficacy (confidence in one's ability to supervise difficult situations) in managing remote work.

Remote Working and Employee Productivity: A shared key concern challenging most businesses today is employee productivity. Hanaysha (2016), defined "employee productivity as an assessment of efficiency of a worker or group of workers." Kristina (2019) explained that "productivity can be measured by the level of output, tasks, or goals assigned to a particular worker in a defined time frame. Companies inspiring workers' productivity drives profitability in their business". Beatson and Zheltoukhova (2015) regarded productivity as the effectivity of an organization and workers in producing value from a given input. Barjan (2021) believed that higher productivity in the work environment indicates a good work culture in the business. When workers are happy, supported, and provided with the right tools to accomplish their tasks or assigned responsibilities, productivity increases. An increase in profitability, lesser production costs, and improved business relations and customer service are byproducts of a productive company. Barjan (2021) further stated that the more productive a firm is, ease to establish organizational growth and create a healthy workplace is perceptible.

Many company studies showed a positive link between remote working and employee productivity. Bloom, Liang, Roberts, and Ying (2015) conducted a field experiment on employees from a NASDAQ-listed Chinese travel agency using productivity measures. Workers were given the option to work remotely for 9 months. After the given period, the result showed a significant positive impact. Those workers who chose to work remotely display a 13% increase in their performance. Workers also reported improved job satisfaction. The company benefited from increased productivity from employees (according to calls made on a work shift basis). The silence experienced at home compared to the usual workplace can be attributed to the heightened performance of the workers. This was supported by a study conducted by Courtney (2021), which yielded a positive response of about 75% of employees who desire to work remotely due to a lack of distractions. Sandoval-Reyes, Idrovo-Carlier, and Duque-Oliva (2021), revealed increased productivity as the main reason for most organizations to implement remote working as a work arrangement. Their research revealed that working from home enables workers to start work at their "most productive time" of the day, and the absence of any disruptions or interruptions from their colleagues resulted in workers' increase in productivity (Fauzia, Farooq, & Farooq, 2012; T. I. Khan, Akbar, Jam, & Saeed, 2016; Waheed, Khan, Khan, & Khalil, 2012).

Remote Working and Employee Work-Life Balance: Greenhaus, Collins, and Shaw (2003) termed work-life balance "the allocation of time and psychological energy in a balanced way in work and non-work life deriving much satisfaction from both work and non-work life." This refers to "balanced involvement and satisfaction across life domains. Work-life balance also means lesser conflict between work and non-work aspects". Baral et al. (2016) referred to "work-life balance as the ability to experience a sense of control and stay productive and competitive at work while maintaining a happy, healthy home life with sufficient leisure." Kelliher, Richardson, and Boiarintseva (2019) also associate work-life balance as "the relation between work and non-work aspects of individuals' lives, where achieving a satisfactory work-life balance is normally understood as restricting one side (usually work), to have more time for the other." Achieving satisfaction with work-life balance results from the extent of which an individual does well in meeting both work demands and family aspects. According to Lu, Wang, Lin, and Guo (2019), time is an inadequate resource that a worker must devote between family and work to attain a purposeful goal.

The concept of remote work generates varied results. Remote working earned praises from employers and employees alike for better work-life balance. As a flexible work arrangement, remote working enables workers to accomplish tasks and other duties outside their offices. This, therefore, gives them "greater autonomy and control" over their decisions regarding where to work and how to integrate work and personal life. Remote working improves work-life balance and labor inclusion (Bjærntoft, Hallman, Mathiassen, Larsson, & Jahncke, 2020; Farooq et al., 2011; Jam, Donia, Raja, & Ling, 2017; A. Z. Khan, Bokhari, Hussain, & Waheed, 2012). A study by Dima, uclea, Vrãnceanu, and igu (2019) on 1,180 Romanian employees showed that remote working enables better work-life balance. This is because an employee

can have greater freedom and availability to look after the family and even tend to personal matters, thereby reducing stress. Remote working significantly impacted women's work-life balance (Baral et al., 2016; Haq, Ramay, Rehman, & Jam, 2010; Waheed & Kaur, 2016). Preference for remote working was instigated not only by family responsibility matters but also by employees who wanted to go out for recreations such as playing sports (Hopkins & McKay, 2019; Farooq, Akhtar, Hijazi, & Khan, 2010). Furthermore, Sirgy and Lee (2018) indicated that "workers who dynamically participated in social roles in both aspects achieve work-life balance."

Remote Working in the Business Industry in the UAE

The pandemic substantially affected UAE's economic sector and the labor market. In July 2020, the transition from the traditional workplace to a digital one was done to help combat the infection rates and consider the people's health and safety. This adaptation of a new work setup covers the government and private sectors, with only 30% of the skeletal workforce operating physically as they strictly observe strict physical hygiene and social distancing (United Arab Emirates Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation, 2020). Remote working has been the trend since the beginning of the pandemic, which resulted in the massive closure of most businesses to curb the threat of infections.

Research conducted by Poly (2021), a video and audio solutions company, to 7,261 workers from Poland, Spain, Spain, France, Germany, the UK, and the UAE revealed that most of the UAE respondents were planning to work at the comfort of their respective homes for a minimum of one day per week in the future after the current pandemic crisis, this accounted for 82% of the total respondents, while 54% of the responses intended to balance their time working from the office and home. Commutes, work-life balance, and stress are the factors that topped the responses when participants were asked about the benefits of remote working. However, research from Poly also revealed that 37% of the UAE employees expressed concerns that working from home may greatly impact their professional growth or career progression. The study also showed important reasons employees were planning to come to the office. It found that 44% of the respondents are most likely to come to the office because of the ease of technology or better equipment access. 34% attributed to attending important meetings, while 31% expressed collaborations and brainstorming. "Almost two-thirds of hybrid workers (64 percent) believe that office culture has changed forever," "The uptick in hybrid working is a signal that our professional life is set to transform further. Work equity and equality of employee experiences are now at the forefront of all discussions as both organizations and workers are embracing the new ways of working," said Dave Shull, Poly's president & CEO.

A 2021 survey released by Robert Walters, an international recruitment firm, revealed that 40% of the UAE workers intend to resign from their jobs if the remote working option is abolished. Another 78% of business professionals also reported doubts about venturing into a new job if the flexibility to work from home will not be agreed upon by prospective employers. "While the switch to remote working was almost instant, we must appreciate that it was out of necessity. The return to work should be gradual – employers and employees alike should use this year to test various working styles from hybrid-working to potentially removing the 9-5 in favor of hours based on project load." "Businesses and professionals alike have a unique opportunity to form a new way of working – which, if done right and carefully thought through, could bring about greater efficiencies, higher productivity, more creativity, lower costs, and overall improvement in well-being, morale and subsequently employee turnovers," shared Jason Grundy, managing director at Robert Walter. The report also showed the division among generations as 75% of workers belonging to Gen Z expressed that the workplace is a must for social interaction and a source of meaning. Meanwhile, 54% reported a higher possibility of leaving the company in a year should the conventional work setup be abolished (Business, 2021).

Underpinning Theory

This study was anchored on Self-Efficacy developed by Bandura (2010), a Canadian-American psychologist and Stanford University professor. The theory relates to "a person's particular beliefs that determine how well one can execute a plan of action in prospective situations (Bandura, 2010). In simpler terms, self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to succeed in a particular situation". This credence comprises the main root for emotional well-being, performance accomplishments, and personal motivation.

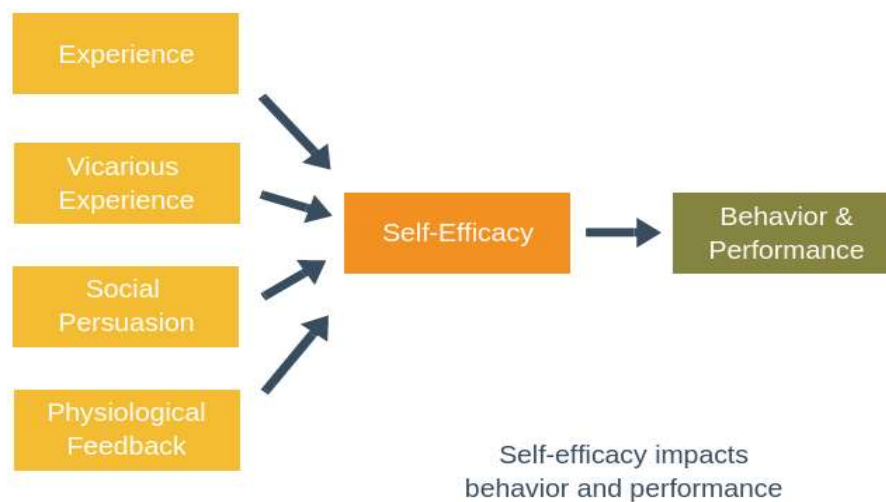


Figure 1 *Self-Efficacy Theory of Motivation*

Self-efficacy theory is directly associated with various research examining career-decision making, task performance, adjusting to new technology, and managing career-related challenges. It also applies to a virtual organization setup wherein workers possess greater autonomy. Although remote workers have considerable autonomy in a virtual organization, they must also rely on their abilities or skill sets to perform and accomplish various assigned tasks.

This theory suits the research aims to analyze remote workers and their ability to perform their tasks. Thus, employees on remote work experience possess substantial autonomy with their self-efficacy judgments (e.g., "motivations and beliefs in their abilities") to be expectantly higher than workers under controlled supervision.

Conceptual Framework

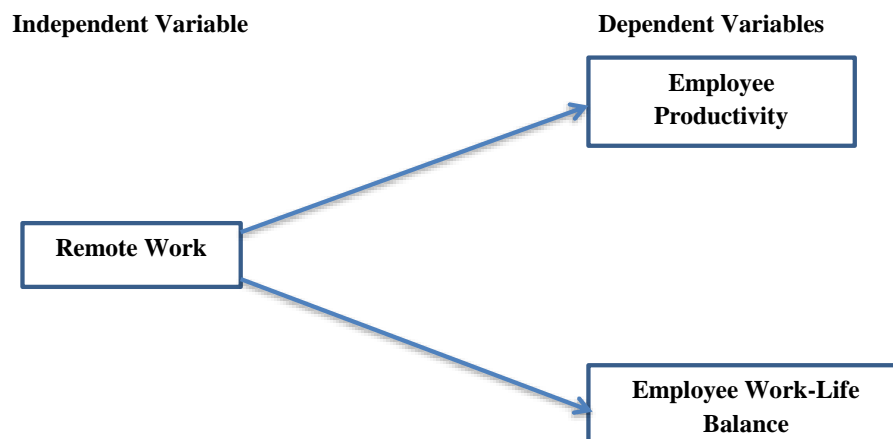


Figure 2 *Conceptual Framework of the Study*

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Philosophy

Positivism has been applied in this study as its philosophical approach. This philosophy depends on the study's "factual knowledge," which can only be gained by careful observation and measurement. The social facts can be measured and quantified objectively, allowing the researcher to investigate cause-and-effect relationships. Creswell and Creswell (2003) stated that "by using a scientific approach, a researcher will be able to test theories through repeating research and check in the findings to ensure its consistency with sociological theories."

Research Approach

According to Creswell and Creswell (2003), the study utilized a deductive approach, "deductive type of research starts with a prevailing theory, after that, a researcher generates hypotheses and questions about the study." In this

approach, the investigator can concentrate on testing objectives by reviewing variables' relationships. The researcher then can review results from other academic authors and examine current theories of a specific phenomenon related to the study. After that, the hypotheses and research questions are tested. This approach enabled the researcher to describe the relationships between variables suited for the study.

Research Choice

The study applied a quantitative research design. As [Creswell and Creswell \(2003\)](#) described, quantitative research "is an example of a research strategy which centers on quantifying data collection and analysis." This design is intended to explore how many individuals act, think, or feel in a particular manner from large sample sizes while focused on the response quantity. This further uses "a rigorous and controlled design to examine phenomena using precise measurement" ([Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018](#)).

Research Strategy

There are different types of collecting the research data from the participants. In quantitative studies, the researcher relies on the structured data collection tool, which suits varied experiences into predetermined response categories ([Kabir, 2016](#)). In this study, the researcher administered a survey questionnaire through an online platform called "Google Forms" for convenience and ease of use. Compared to other data collection tools, a survey questionnaire is straightforward and flexible. [Akinci and Saunders \(2015\)](#) described the method as "one of the most popular and widely used methods in research." The research questionnaire was made on Google Forms and was distributed to the identified research participants. The receiver can access and answer the survey through a link sent via email or social media messaging applications such as Messenger.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire consisted of short, relevant information highlighting the purpose of the study.

It was conducted online and divided into two (2) sets; the first was set to collect the respondents' demographic data, which are their age, gender, marital status, and years of experience. The second part contained questions corresponding to remote working, the independent variable and a section that described the study's two dependent variables: employee productivity and work-life balance. The questions were adopted from various literature and studies which were previously tested, validated, and administered. To build the measurement scale of work from home, eight items were adopted from [Neufeld and Fang \(2005\)](#) with a Cronbach's Alpha reliability value of 0.880; to construct the measurement items for employee productivity, five items were taken from [Lee and Brand \(2010\)](#) with a Cronbach's Alpha reliability value of 0.920; eight items with a Cronbach's Alpha reliability value of 0.755 were of adopted from [Fisher, Bulger, and Smith \(2009\)](#) for work-life balance. Every indicator was measured using a seven-point Likert Scale ranging from "1-strongly disagree" to "7-strongly agree." A Likert scale is an example of a measuring scale used to gather people's opinions and attitudes. On this scale, respondents will be asked to rate each item on a level of agreement.

Table 1 *QUESTIONNAIRE*

Variables	Question Statements
Remote Working	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I feel that the quality of the work I do during working from home is better. 2. Working from home is personally beneficial for me at work. 3. Working from home motivates me to work better. 4. I am very productive while working from home. 5. I have sufficient technical knowledge in completing work during working from home. 6. I have sufficient authority in carrying out work during working from home. 7. I have clear work targets when working from home. 8. My boss is concerned about my well-being during working from home.

TABLE 1 CONTINUE....

Variables	Question Statements
Productivity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I do a large amount of work each day 2. I accomplish tasks quickly and efficiently. 3. I have a high standard of task accomplishment. 4. My work outcomes are of high quality. 5. I always beat our team targets.
Work-life Balance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. My personal life suffers because of work 2. My job makes my personal life difficult. 3. I neglect personal needs because of work. 4. I put off enjoying my time just to work during working from home. 5. I put personal needs second because of work. 6. I struggle to separate work and non-work. 7. I often prefer to work from home rather than engage in personal interests. 8. I'm too tired to work from home.

The final questionnaire, which consisted of the questions and items about the participant profile, was then sent to the assigned dissertation professor for improvements and suggestions to ensure that the questions and items presented can be understood by the study's respondents, a process called "validation."

Sampling Technique

The study locale is Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the study population was employees in the administration and office positions working remotely in the business setup aspect under the business consultancy services. The respondents may be demographically very (age, gender, nationality, and years of experience). To ensure accuracy and sufficiency of sample size, the researcher used the G Power tool. Consequently, this study's sample size considered a minimum of ninety-six (100) respondents. A purposive sampling method was utilized in this research. "purposive sampling is also known as judgment sampling, since the researcher purposely selects his or her participants as they possess the qualities and characteristics that the researcher desires."

RESULTS & FINDINGS

This part of the research presents the analyses and interpretations of data in textual, graphical, and tabular discussions. To make a reasonable judgment of the main research questions and support the validity and reliability of the data collected from the employees in the business consultancy industry in the UAE, the researcher applied different statistical analyses as follows.

Response Rate

Table 2 *RESPONSE RATE*

Number of Distributed Questionnaires	100
Returned Questionnaires	96
Returned and Useable	96
Returned but excluded	0
Declined Questionnaires	4
Response Rate	96%

As shown in the table, 100 survey questionnaires were distributed online through google forms and emails to the employees in the Business Consultancy Industry in Dubai, UAE. To achieve a high response rate and ensure completion

of the survey questionnaire, several emails, follow-ups, calls, and online monitoring were undertaken. Survey responses were completed over the course of four weeks. Out of 100 distributed survey questionnaires, only 96 were returned. The 96 questionnaires were also found to be useable or completely filled. The researcher did not exclude any responses deemed incomplete or lacking several important data. A total of 4 respondents declined to answer the questionnaire. The researcher achieved a result of 96% response rate. [Sekaran and Bougie \(2003\)](#) also suggested that a 30% response rate already met the suitability for surveys. Thus, all 96 survey questionnaires were suitable and viable for the analysis of this study.

Demographic Frequency Tests

The following data were gathered from Google forms and emails with 96 valid responses:

Table 3 *DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE*

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	39	40.6
Female	57	59.4
Total	96	100
Age		
18-29	22	22.9
30-39	49	51
40-49	19	19.8
50 years or above	6	6.3
Total	96	100
Marital Status		
Single	62	64.6
Married	34	35.4
Total	96	100
Work Experience		
Less than a year	2	2
1-5 years	14	14.6
5-10 years	28	29.2
10-20 years	52	54.2
Total	96	100

Table 3 presents the frequency count and percentages of the respondents in terms of gender. The respondents consist 39 males (40.6%) and 57 females (59.4%). Majority of the responses were from the ages 30-39 with 49 respondents which account for 51%. A total of 22 responses were from the age bracket of 18-29 which accounts for 22.9%, this was followed by 19 responses from the age group of 40-49 which accounts for 19.8%. Only 6 responses were received from the age group of 50 years and above which accounts for only 6.3% of the total percentage weight.

In terms of marital status majority of the participants in this study are single individuals with a number of 62 which accounts for 64.6%. Participants who are only 34 which accounts for 35.4%. A total of 52 respondents which accounts for 54.%, have a work experience ranging from 10-20 years. This was followed by a number of 28 respondents which account for 29.2% and have a work experience which fall in the range of 5-10 years. 14 respondents with 1-5 years of work-experience accounts for 14.6%. Lastly, only 2 respondents fall below a year of work experience accounts for only 2% of the total percentage weight.

Reliability Test

Reliability refers to the degree to which data collection technique and analytic procedures produce consistent findings. If the same results are consistently attained through the use of the same instrument or methods under the same occasion, the test is regarded as reliable (Heale & Twycross, 2015). An estimate of the internal consistency reliability is being measured using "Cronbach's Alpha". Cronbach's Alpha is a statistical coefficient which ranges from .00 (which means no consistency on measurement) to 1.0 (perfect consistency measurement). Ursachi, Horodnic, and Zait (2015) argued that a 0.6-0.7 reliability score denotes an acceptable degree of dependability. On the other hand, a 0.8 and above reliability score shows a high degree of dependability.

Table 4 RELIABILITY TEST

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Remote Work	.932	8
Productivity	.945	5
Work-life Balance	.920	8

The above table present the alpha values for each variable. The value for Remote Work is .932, Productivity .945, and Work-life Balance .920. This means that the reliability of the survey instrument is highly reliable.

Descriptive Statistics Tests

Descriptive Statistics is utilized to describe the "fundamental characteristics of a given data set". The commonly used forms of descriptive statistics are the "mean, median, and mode" which signify the measures of center (Hayes, 2022). This section focuses on the descriptive statistics used for each variable. The means and standard deviations are utilized to describe the descriptive statistics for all the variables. The 7-point Likert Scale was also employed in measuring each question with 7 (strongly agree) and 1 (strongly disagree).

Table 5 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

		Mean	SD
Remote Work	I feel that the quality of the work I do during working from home is better.	4.62	1.662
	Working from home is personally beneficial for me at work.	4.82	1.596
	Working from home motivates me to work better.	4.39	1.761
	I am very productive while working from home.	4.42	1.845
	I have sufficient technical knowledge in completing work during working from home	5.03	1.726
	I have sufficient authority in carrying out work during working from home.	4.92	1.665
	I have clear work targets when working from home.	5.09	1.515
Productivity	My boss is concerned about my well-being during working from home.	4.58	1.757
	I do large amount of work each day	5.22	1.656
	I accomplish tasks quickly and efficiently.	5.45	1.443
	I have a high standard of task accomplishment.	5.61	1.309
	My work outcomes are of high quality.	5.51	1.515
	I always beat our team targets.	5.33	1.397

TABLE 5 CONTINUE...

		Mean	SD
Work-life Balance	My personal life suffers because of work.	4.03	1.525
	My job makes my personal life difficult.	3.48	1.602
	I neglect personal needs because of work.	3.57	1.608
	I put off enjoying my personal time just to work during working from home.	3.78	1.790
	I put personal needs second because of work.	4.05	1.719
	I struggle to separate work and non-work.	3.51	1.765
	Most of the time, I prefer work from home rather than engage in personal interests.	4.03	1.657
	I'm too tired to work from home.	3.66	1.728

Table 5 presents the mean for remote work with 4.39 as the minimum value, and 5.09 as the maximum value. Standard deviation shows 1.51 as the minimum value, and 1.84 as its maximum value. The mean for productivity with 5.22 as the minimum value, and 5.61 as the maximum value. Standard deviation shows 1.30 as the minimum value, and 1.65 as its maximum value.

For Work-life balance the mean with 3.48 as the minimum value, and 4.05 as the maximum value. Standard deviation also shows 1.52 as the minimum value, and 1.79 as its maximum value.

Correlation

Correlation describes how closely one variable is related to another variable. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient is one of the widely utilized tools in statistics. It measures the strength of the relationship between bivariate data. In the correlation test, "if the significance value is less than .005, this means that there is a strong link between the variables". However, if the value is greater than .005, this means that there is no correlation that exists. Correlation coefficient has the possible value range of "-1 (strong negative relationship) and +1 (strong positive relationship)". "Values that are 0 or close to 0 denote a weak or no relationship" (Fernando, 2021).

Table 6 SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

		RW	PROD	WB
RW	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N			
PROD	Pearson Correlation	.433**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	96		
WB	Pearson Correlation	.149		1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.147		
	N	96		

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 represents that there is a strong positive significant relationship between Remote Work and Productivity while the significant value for Remote work and Work-life balance is .147 means no significant relationship between Remote Work and Work-life Balance.

Regression

Regression is a statistical procedure which describes the relationship of the independent variable to a dependent variable. This analysis centers on the dependency of the changes of the dependent variable in relation to the changes in the independent variable (Lavrakas, 2008).

Table 7 REGRESSION OF REMOTE WORK AND EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.433a	.188	.179	4.23959		
a. Predictors: (Constant), RW						
ANOVA ^a						
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1 Regression	390.430	1	390.430	21.722	.000b	
	Residual	1689.570	94	17.974		
	Total	2080.000	95			
a. Dependent Variable: PROD						
b. Predictors: (Constant), RW						
Coefficients ^a						
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	21.362	1.540	.433	13.873	.000	
RW	.182	.039	.433	4.661	.000	
a. Dependent Variable: PROD						

Table 8 REMOTE WORK AND EMPLOYEE WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.149a	.022	.012	10.67808		
a. Predictors: (Constant), RW						
ANOVA ^a						
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1 Regression	243.738	1	243.738	2.138	.147b	
	Residual	10718.002	94	114.021		
	Total	10961.740	95			
a. Dependent Variable: WB						
b. Predictors: (Constant), RW						
Coefficients ^a						
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	24.673	3.878	.149	6.362	.000	
RW	.144	.098	.149	1.462	.147	
a. Dependent Variable: WB						

Table 7 shows that there is a positive relation between remote work and employee productivity. This signifies that an increase in remote work leads to a strong positive impact on employee productivity. Table 8 shows a positive coefficient; however, the significance value was .147. This means that Remote Working does not have any significant impact/influence towards Work-life Balance.

Hypotheses Results

Table 9 *SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS*

Hypotheses	Statements	Results
H1	There is a significant relationship between remote working and employee productivity.	Accepted
H2	There is a significant relationship between remote working and employee work-life balance.	Rejected

DISCUSSION

Remote Working

Remote working as pointed out in the literature review is "a flexible work plan through which a worker achieves his/her tasks, responsibilities, and other official duties from a worksite besides the company premise from which an employee is bound to report for work". Moreover, remote working is most desirable for jobs that necessitates output-based monitoring, independent work, and fewer face-to-face contact (Elshaiekh et al., 2018). The emergence of this type of work setup imposes both benefits and challenges to employers and employees alike. Belzunegui-Eraso and Erro-Garcés (2020) posited that remote work does not only allow flexibility companies will no longer need bigger and centralized space to hold a number of workers, thereby reducing the expenses intended for space, maintenance, rent, parking, etc. However, employers also faced disadvantages in practicing remote work. Employers confronted hard times in the communication aspect in ensuring successful collaborative working, added to this is the challenge with controlling employees (Parker et al., 2020).

In the workers' perspective, remote working entails varied repercussions. Schall (2019) findings suggested that the increase on the intensity of remote work has a direct link on the level of job satisfaction among employees. Workers who work from home also displayed more happiness, thus, their job satisfaction was higher. However, many of those employees who are working from home experienced difficulty separating work at the end of their day. Remote working sometimes lead workers to render additional hours compared to their usual office hours when working in the main office (Lucanus, 2021; Lu et al., 2019).

The results from the survey of 100 employees found out that remote working is also prevalent in the business setup organizations. The significant characteristics highlighted in the results demonstrated that remote working provides clear work targets and sufficient authority for employees working from home. The results imply that the employees somewhat agree with Bjärntoft et al. (2020) who reported that remote working provides employees with "greater autonomy and control" over their decisions in choosing where to work and how to integrate work and personal life. This was reinforced by Sandoval-Reyes et al. (2021) who stated that remote workers have considerable autonomy in a virtual organization. Remote workers with wider perceptions of autonomy displayed contentment on their respective fields (Nugroho, 2021).

Remote Working and Employee Productivity

Kristina (2019) explained that "productivity can be measured by the level of output, tasks, or goals assigned to a particular worker in a defined time frame". Barjan (2021) also stated that higher productivity in the work environment is an indicator of a sound work culture in the business. When workers are happy, supported, and provided with the right tools to accomplish their task or assigned responsibilities, productivity increases.

A report from a US-based labor analyst, ADP, suggested coming back to the office setup environment could be best not only for employers' but also for workers' productivity. Further to the ADP report, remote working caused

reduced valuable working relationships among employees and may even hamper professional development. The data from 9,000 American employees conclude that: "On the whole, employees working on site enjoy crucial advantages over their remote counterpart."

However, findings from this study illustrated that majority of the participants collectively agreed that they have high standards of task accomplishment and are able to accomplish tasks quickly and efficiently when working from home despite the large amount of work faced each day. In addition, the responses from the participants revealed there is a strong positive significant relationship between remote working and productivity.

Work productivity results from this study seemed consistent with the previous findings from a study of a group of 12,000 American employees of Boston Consulting Group (BCG) who presented a high percentage (75%) of workers working remotely. Employees were able to sustain and even improved their productivity based on individual tasks. A free-based organization with members coming from the world's most accomplished entrepreneurs, also stated improved productivity of employees as a result of working remotely compared to workers working in a traditional setup or office setting. That is because employees have the ability to work on a time where they are deemed more productive, instead of the usual 9 -5 office hours. Results from an investigation carried out by [Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University \(2020\)](#) for remote workers across diverse sectors (private, public, and business owner) also expressed strong agreement in work productivity from the majority of employees who practice remote working.

Remote Working and Employee Work-life Balance

Many scholars and numerous studies agreed that remote working was directly correlated to job satisfaction ([Kłopotek, 2017](#)), productivity, and performance. [Bjärntoft et al. \(2020\)](#) argued that remote working enables workers to accomplish tasks and other duties outside from their offices. This therefore provides them with "greater autonomy and control" over their decisions in choosing where to work and how to integrate work and personal life. By doing so, remote working improves work-life balance. This is because an employee can have greater freedom and availability to look after the family and even tend to personal matters, thereby reducing stress. Remote working contributed greater impact to women's work-life balance ([Bharathi & Mala, 2016](#)).

This was not the case when referring to the findings of this study in respect to work-life balance which also rejected the expected hypothesis which expresses significant relationship between remote working and work-life balance. In additions, majority of the respondents reported putting off personal needs second because of work.

This supported the statement from [Vittersø et al. \(2003\)](#) which stated that remote working entails unclear boundaries between work and private life. [Felstead and Henseke \(2017\)](#) also argued that remote working is negatively correlated with work-life balance. This is due to the fact that some employees experienced challenges in detaching from work-related matters. Other scholars have found out some negative impacts of remote working to employees' work-life balance most especially to remote workers who have greater family responsibilities: example, parents and other people with elderly relations living in the same house. [Van der Lippe and Lippényi \(2020\)](#) in their study on "the impact of remote working on family life," reported increasing conflict to inevitably occur when working from home, particular in family matter. [Sandoval-Reyes et al. \(2021\)](#) in their study carried out in several Latin American countries, related work stress as mediator in employee work-life balance, and thus, showed that the demands in remote work negatively impacted the employee perception on work-life balance. Many of those employees who are working from home experienced difficulty separating work at the end of their day. Worker's private life can lessen work-life balance but under particular circumstances, that is, if remote work occurs outside regular office hours and at the onset stage of remote work. This somehow shows that office extension may not be beneficial for some employees.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of digitalization and the prevalence of globalization contributed to the way traditional work takes place. COVID-19 pandemic has also prompted the call for modification of the usual work setting. This gives rise to the need for working away from the customary workplace. Remote work, telework, hot desking, hoteling, and work from home, are manners of work through which a certain employee is able performs his/her tasks away from the main office/business location. Remote working also brought within it benefits and challenges encountered by the employees. This study aimed to analyze the role of remote working and its effects on productivity and work-life balance of the employees in the business consultancy industry. Based on a quantitative analysis, it can be concluded that remote working has a vital role to play in the employees' productivity and work-life balance. Majority of the employees agreed

that remote working has increased their chances of accomplishing their respective tasks despite the amount of their work load each day compared their usual office environment. However, remote working was found to have no influence or impact on the work-life balance of the employees. Employees reported putting off their personal needs second to work making their personal life suffers. To sum up, numerous findings from the literature supported the positive impact of remote work on employee productivity. Meanwhile, majority of the studies also demonstrated no significant relationship between remote working and work-life balance.

Recommendations for Future Researchers

1. It is highly recommended that employers should take responsibility of the health and safety of the workers under their care whether or not the work is being done remotely. This includes the following:
 - Assure employees through proper consultation, laying out the specific risks associated with working remotely;
 - Provide the right equipment or tools to be used to accomplish any assigned tasks;
 - Provide point of contact for any expected/arising concerns; and
 - Enforce safe systems and other necessary measures when working remotely.
2. Employees working remotely should also take responsibility of the following:
 - Protecting themselves, caring for the equipment provided and reporting any defects;
 - Reporting any injuries occurred while working;
 - Carefully following the guidelines and procedures enforced by their employers.
3. Future researchers may continue to conduct a parallel study by taking into considerations of the following:
 - Including diverse employee demographics such as job designations, years of experience, etc. to further elucidate the impact of remote work to different respondents;
 - Involving other variables that may have direct link or impact to remote work such as work stress, remote work setting, technological aspect, etc.;
 - Exploring fresh perspectives such as mediating variables that could affect remote working;
 - Exploring other localities in the country (Abu Dhabi, Umm Al Quwain, Sharjah, Ras Al Khaimah, and Ajman);
 - Presenting comparative analysis of the different industries in the business consultancy sphere not only in the business-set up aspect.

Limitations of the Study

- It should be noted that the research instrument was only carried out in less than a month's time. If it were not for time constraint, more respondents could have been covered to further support this study.
- The study neglected the varied demographics such as employee designation, and the level of organization they were in. These could have contributed fresh perspectives/ideas to the impact of remote working.
- The current pandemic has restricted the researcher to better conduct the study to a wider group of respondents.

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