

A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF LEADING LITERATURE ON PRODUCTIVITY IN WORK-FROM-HOME SETTINGS

MHD SAMER SBAHI SHAHIN ¹ 

ABSTRACT

Topicality: The topic of working from home has gained more and more attention in recent years, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic. Many companies worldwide have announced that they would permanently enable people to work remotely, as they themselves believe that quality work can be done remotely. To this end, working-from-home arrangements should be closely analyzed and understood, and understanding the psychological implications of prolonged work-from-home is crucial.

Purpose: This paper aims to systematically review the literature to investigate the effects of work-from-home (WFH) arrangements on productivity. It aims to contribute to the academic discourse by identifying emerging trends, offering strategic recommendations for future research on remote work, and discussing their broader implications for business and management practices.

Design/methodology/approach: The review examines the leading publications with the search term “Work from home AND Productivity” in Scopus, Emerald Insight, and ScienceDirect databases with a Boolean search. In total 56 publications were used in over 47 sources from 1993 to 2023.

Findings: Research on the impact of working from home on employee productivity shows mixed results. Publications are primarily focused on the correlation between working from home and productivity, with findings varying widely. Approximately 34% of the reviewed studies report a positive relationship, highlighting increased productivity associated with remote work, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Conversely, some studies indicate a negative relationship, noting slight productivity declines among certain groups of remote workers. Additionally, there are publications that show no consistent relationship, highlighting variability and a lack of consensus on how working from home affects productivity.

Originality/value: This article contributes insights into the evolving landscape of remote work by identifying key trends and providing actionable recommendations for organizations. It emphasizes the importance of reevaluating work-from-home strategies to balance productivity with employee well-being. By advocating for sector-specific studies, the research highlights the unique challenges faced by different industries and suggests future exploration into issues like policy innovation, burnout, and attrition. This work serves as a valuable roadmap for both organizations and scholars, equipping them to navigate the complexities of remote work dynamics and promote sustainable productivity.

Keywords: Work from home, working from home, WFH, teleworking, home office, hybrid work, covid-19, employee productivity

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¹ Mhd Samer Sbahi Shahin, BA School of Business and Finance, Latvia. E-mail: Samershahin91@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the concept of remote work, characterised by flexibility and virtual arrangements, has fundamentally reshaped the traditional workforce landscape. Moving away from static physical locations and stringent time schedules, remote work has gained traction, driven by significant technological advancements and the exigencies imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This unprecedented global event mandated a swift and widespread transition to remote work practices (Stone and Deadrick, 2015; Marikyan et al., 2023).

While initially a health crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic served as a powerful catalyst for organisational change. It compelled companies worldwide to adopt remote work strategies almost overnight, resulting in what has been described as the largest natural experiment in the history of modern workplace practices. This seismic shift has opened new avenues for organisations to reimagine work structures, aiming to foster a more adaptable and resilient operational model for the future (O'Rourke, 2021).

As society gradually moves beyond the immediate exigencies of the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant discourse is emerging concerning the future of workplace arrangements. The interplay between remote work, commonly referred to as working from home (WFH), and productivity is intrinsically complex and remains a contentious topic within the extant literature. Despite an expanding corpus of research, a clear consensus on the impact of WFH on productivity levels has yet to be established (Hall et al., 2023). Furthermore, a subset of executives is advocating for a return to traditional in-office work environments (Gibson et al., 2023), thereby prompting critical inquiries regarding the sustainability and broader implications of prolonged remote work. Key questions include: Should organisations enforce a return to physical office settings? In what ways does remote work influence employee productivity, mental health, and work-life balance? Is a model of sustained remote work a feasible and enduring component of organisational design?

Recognising these developments, influential companies such as Facebook and Twitter have made strategic moves to integrate remote work as a lasting workplace option. By allowing employees to work from home indefinitely (Chakraborty, 2021), these companies are pioneering a path that underscores the need to deeply understand the nuances and dynamics of remote work environments. It is imperative to examine the psychological and productivity ramifications of prolonged WFH setups.

In light of these considerations, a systematic literature review (SLR) will serve as a valuable methodological approach to facilitate a comprehensive synthesis of the existing evidence pertaining to WFH and its effects on productivity. Through the systematic review and analysis of available studies, we can identify prevailing patterns, discrepancies, and areas of consensus, ultimately elucidating the current state of knowledge in this critical area of inquiry (Snyder, 2019).

This paper aims to address the current literature gap regarding WFH arrangements and their impact on productivity. To achieve this, the study provides a comprehensive theoretical

analysis of productivity in remote work settings, employs a robust methodological approach, and investigates significant publications within leading academic databases such as Scopus, Emerald Insight, and ScienceDirect. Through this exploration, the study seeks to contribute meaningfully to the academic discourse, identifying emerging trends, offering strategic recommendations for future remote work research, and articulating their broader implications for business and management practices.

Ultimately, this research seeks to enhance understanding of how remote work impacts various organisational dimensions and to provide actionable insights for developing sustainable work models in a post-pandemic world. In doing so, this study intends to guide future strategies and policies that align with the changing needs and expectations of the modern workforce.

Following this introduction, the second section details the theoretical frameworks relevant to productivity and WFH. The third section outlines the research methodology. In section four, I review prominent publications on productivity and remote work. Section five discusses current research on home office practices and employee productivity, identifying emerging research trends and providing suggestions for future studies. The article concludes with recommendations and insights gleaned from this analysis.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The notion of WFH has become increasingly prominent in recent years, corresponding with significant shifts in work dynamics and an emphasis on workplace flexibility. Yet, this concept is not novel; its roots can be traced back to the genesis of the information age. According to Yehuda and Nicholson (1997), the rapid technological advancements of that era broadened the scope for remote work, enabling more individuals to engage in their professional duties from home. They describe this arrangement as one where employees perform most or all of their tasks from a personal residence, distinct from their employer's physical site.

The COVID-19 pandemic serves as a notable turning point in the perception and execution of WFH practices. This global crisis, with its extensive reach, indiscriminately impacted individuals across diverse geographies, professions, genders, and races. In response, nations worldwide implemented lockdown measures, including stay-at-home orders, which drastically transformed living and working conditions. These transformations had significant effects on personal well-being and productivity. Research suggests that the hasty transition to a home-based work environment initially hindered productivity due to the overlapping demands of work and home life, compounded by the inherent stressors of isolation, which increased feelings of anxiety and stress (Kumar et al., 2020).

As individuals adapted to these new conditions, they faced substantial challenges, particularly in maintaining a balance between work and family responsibilities as professional and personal boundaries blurred. The absence of face-to-face interaction exacerbated communication hurdles among colleagues, managers, and clients, fostering a sense of disconnection that hampered effective collaboration. Moreover, the lack of a conventional office structure often

led to procrastination and loneliness, adversely impacting employees' mental health and their ability to perform optimally (Mihalca et al., 2021).

Interestingly, the array of research on the productivity impact of WFH presents divergent perspectives. Some studies posit that work-from-home structures can enhance productivity, citing advantages such as flexible work hours, the elimination of commuting-induced fatigue, and a customisable work environment conducive to comfort and concentration. Conversely, other research challenges these assertions, emphasising potential productivity setbacks stemming from home distractions, inadequate work infrastructure, and difficulties in compartmentalising work duties from personal life, which may result in burnout (Wolor et al., 2021).

This dichotomy highlights a critical gap, suggesting a need for a nuanced understanding of the impact of WFH on productivity and employee well-being. As remote work solidifies its position as a core element of the contemporary labour market, ongoing exploration by researchers and organisations is essential. Such insights are crucial for companies striving to optimise remote work policies, ensuring they cater to employee needs while maximally boosting productivity. Through a refined approach to remote work, organisations can cultivate an environment where employees thrive, securing a harmonious balance between professional efficacy and personal well-being, thus advancing sustainable employment models for the future.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) has become one of the most widely used methods for conducting comprehensive reviews in a scientifically sound and robust manner. This approach is favoured due to its structured and methodical nature, which allows researchers to systematically collect, evaluate, and synthesise existing literature on a specific topic. By adhering to predefined criteria and protocols, SLRs minimise bias and increase the credibility of the results (Snyder, 2019).

This article is grounded in a systematic literature review, encompassing leading publications on WFH and productivity. The databases utilised for this in-depth review include Scopus, Emerald Insight, and ScienceDirect. Each database offers unique insights across varied and pertinent fields: Management and Accounting, Psychology, Economics, Econometrics, and Finance (via Scopus and ScienceDirect), along with a broad business perspective from Emerald Insight. By integrating these diverse fields, the review ensures a comprehensive viewpoint on the topic at hand, with specific search criteria meticulously established to align with the research objectives.

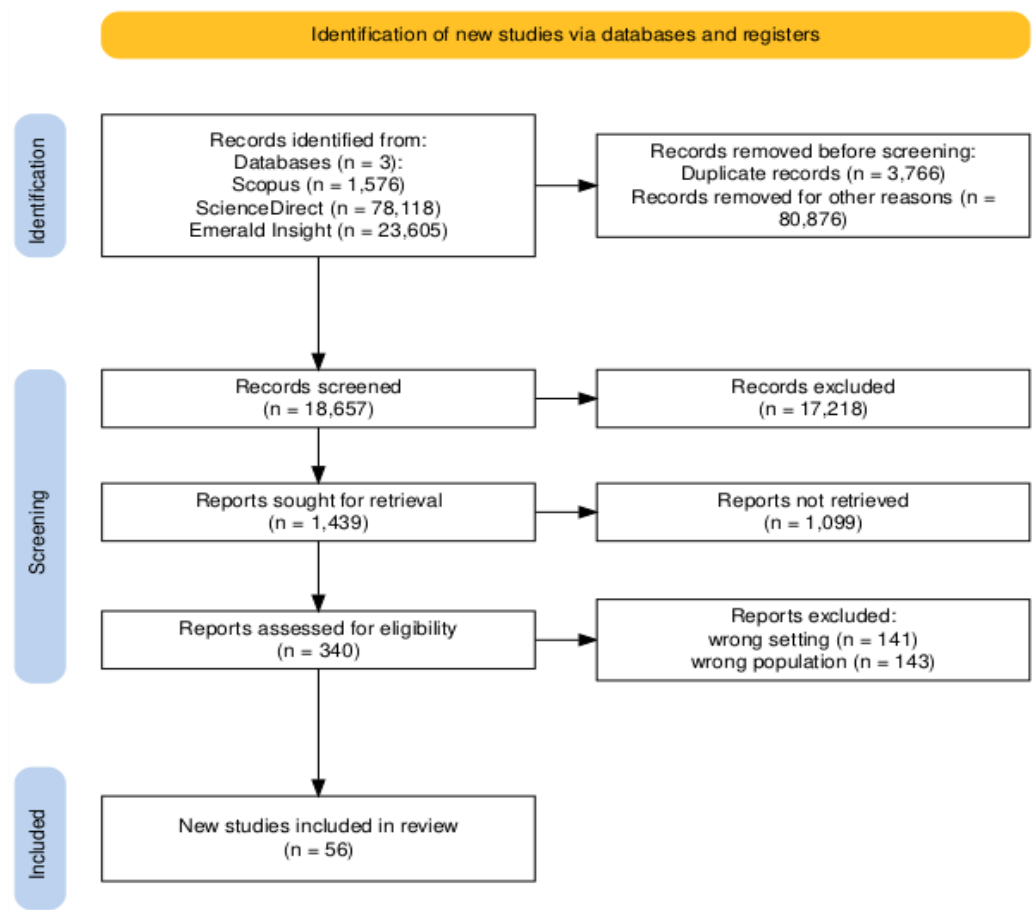
To identify the most relevant publications, a Boolean search was executed using the key terms "work from home" and "productivity" within article titles, abstracts, and keywords. The approach varied slightly by database: for Emerald Insight, the search string "work from home*"

was employed, with an asterisk symbol allowing the search to capture variants such as "work-from-home" and "working-from-home." In ScienceDirect and Scopus, the search string "Work from home AND Productivity" was targeted, focusing on articles that contain both terms. To enhance the precision of the search and improve the relevance of the results, alternative terms—including "home office," "WFH," "remote work," "teleworking," and "hybrid work"—were utilised in place of the primary term "work from home" across each database. The incorporation of these terms aims to cultivate a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of worker productivity within remote work environments.

Given the considerable volume of initial search results, a structured filtering process was implemented to manage and distil the data. The search terms "work from home AND productivity" were confined to subject areas such as Management and Accounting, Psychology, and Economics, Econometrics, and Finance. Furthermore, additional filters were applied concerning document type, publication stage, source type, and language—specifically restricting results to English-language journal articles to maintain consistency and quality. After a thorough process of identifying and removing duplicate entries, the databases yielded 159 unique articles from ScienceDirect, 52 from Emerald Insight, and 129 from Scopus. Abstracts from these articles underwent rigorous review to ensure their relevance and suitability for inclusion in the comprehensive analysis.

Subsequent to the selection process, the pool of chosen articles was subjected to detailed analysis to gain deeper insight into productivity within working-from-home contexts. While telework gained prominence in the 1970s in response to the oil crisis, significant empirical studies did not emerge until the 1990s. For instance, Baruch and Nicholson (1997) explored the key elements necessary for effective home working, laying the foundation for understanding the dynamics of WFH (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). This review spans a broad range of 56 publications from 47 sources over a 30-year period, from 1993 to 2023, with research up to date as of 10 August 2023. The resulting analysis offers an extensive perspective on employee productivity within home office environments, encompassing the evolution of work practices and their impact across decades.

To ensure transparency and clarity in the article selection process, a PRISMA diagram has been incorporated into the review. This diagram provides a clear visual representation of the methodology, highlighting each stage of study inclusion and exclusion. This inclusion is vital as it seeks to mitigate potential limitations arising from non-indexed articles within the selected databases, acknowledging and addressing the possibility of missing significant publications. Additionally, it is important to note that the search strings used in the literature review may also pose limitations. These search strings were carefully constructed to capture relevant studies. Through these systematic and thorough processes, this article contributes a valuable addition to the ongoing discourse on WFH and productivity, offering insights that can inform future research and practical applications.



Source: Created by the author with data from Scopus, Emerald Insight, and ScienceDirect

FINDINGS

The findings of this review indicate a notable research focus on remote work and productivity. The literature on working from home encompasses a diverse array of topics, findings, and theoretical frameworks across various disciplines. The publications examined in this paper span from 1993 to 2023. It is important to note that, due to the data cut-off date of 10 August, only the first eight months of 2023 are represented. As illustrated in Figure 1, there has been a steady increase in scholarly interest concerning productivity in the context of remote work.

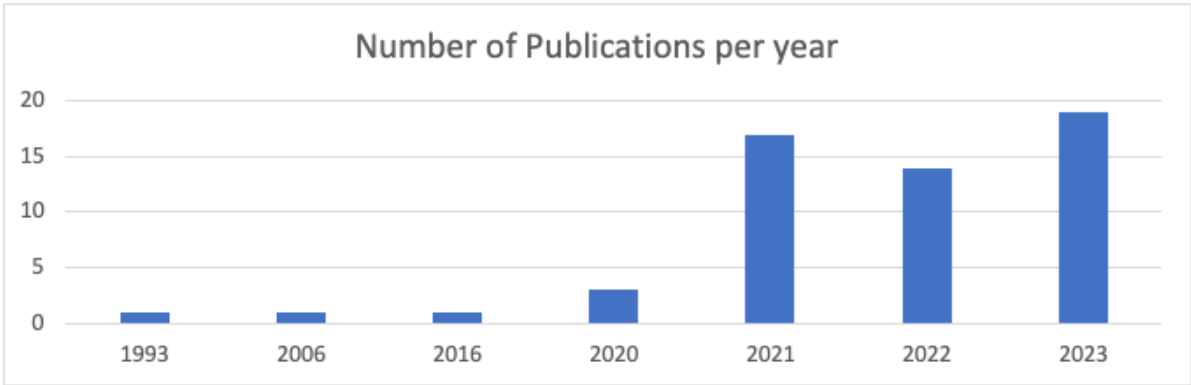


Figure 1 Publications per year

Source: Created by the author with data from Scopus, Emerald Insight, and ScienceDirect

Upon analysis, it was found that approximately one-third (19) of the articles were published in the current year. Given that 2023 is only eight months in, further growth in this area of research is anticipated. In 2022 and 2021, the number of publications was relatively similar, with 14 and 17 articles published, respectively. It is evident that since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdowns in 2020, the topic of remote work has gained significant research interest and has emerged as a prominent field of study. This is exemplified by several notable publications: Wolor et al. (2021), who examined the positive effects of remote work on work-life balance, stress, and productivity; De Vries et al. (2021), who investigated the impact of the pandemic on productivity dynamics across different industries; Morikawa (2022), who explored remote work productivity during the COVID-19 pandemic; and Marikyan et al. (2023), who studied productivity, well-being, and future intentions of working in smart home environments. These examples highlight the current relevance of home office productivity research.

The reviewed articles are sourced from over 47 different publications, with 27 of these publications ranked by the 2021 Academic Journal Guide. The journal featuring the highest number of articles (five) is **Frontiers in Psychology**, categorised as a one-star journal. This is followed by **Information Technology and People** and **Organizational Dynamics**, each contributing two articles. Table 1 provides a detailed distribution of the articles included in this review.

Number of articles in a journal		
Journal	Number of entries	AJG Rank 2021
Frontiers in Psychology	5	1
Information Technology and People	2	3
Organizational Dynamics	2	3
Journal of Corporate Real Estate	2	1
Asia Pacific Management Review	2	n/a
Building and Environment	2	n/a

Table 1: Number of articles in a journal

Source: Created by the author with data from Scopus, Emerald Insight, and ScienceDirect

It is evident that the topic of productivity under remote working conditions is published quite diversely across different journals. This variation may be attributed to the broad scope of the search terms used in this analysis. Notably, **Frontiers in Psychology** features five articles focusing on this topic. However, when considering journals besides **Frontiers in Psychology**, the focus areas range from psychology and general management to behavioural sciences,

human resources, and people management. Some of these journals also address broader business or organisational topics.

In addition, the topic of WFH spans the fields of business and psychology and is not limited to publications in professional journals. This widespread coverage is anticipated due to the frequent use of the term "work from home" across various scientific disciplines. However, this analysis indicates a particular concentration on journals within the realms of psychology and human resources management. It is important to note that, given the search terms and limitations, some relevant publications may have been overlooked. Consequently, a comprehensive summary of the scope of journals remains elusive.

This article conducts a detailed examination of the keywords present within the analysed publications. Across these publications, a total of 317 distinct keywords were identified, averaging 5.6 keywords per article. To facilitate a more cohesive and general overview, the author streamlined this extensive list of keywords. Furthermore, each keyword underwent a manual verification process to ensure accuracy and relevance.

All keywords appearing four or more times are presented in this analysis, totalling fifteen distinct terms. The most frequently occurring keyword is "productivity," followed by "Covid-19" and "work from home." The frequency of these fifteen keywords is illustrated in Figure 2. Specifically, "productivity" appears 34 times, while "Covid-19" and "work from home" are mentioned 28 and 12 times, respectively. Furthermore, terms related to the pandemic, with a cumulative occurrence of 39 for "Covid-19," are significant. Similarly, the concept of working from home, which includes variations such as WFH, work-from-home, remote work, working from home, telework, teleworking, and telecommuting, is mentioned 58 times within this dataset. All these terms uniformly refer to the practice of working from home on a national level, rather than an international one. This analysis suggests a strong correlation between WFH arrangements and employee productivity.

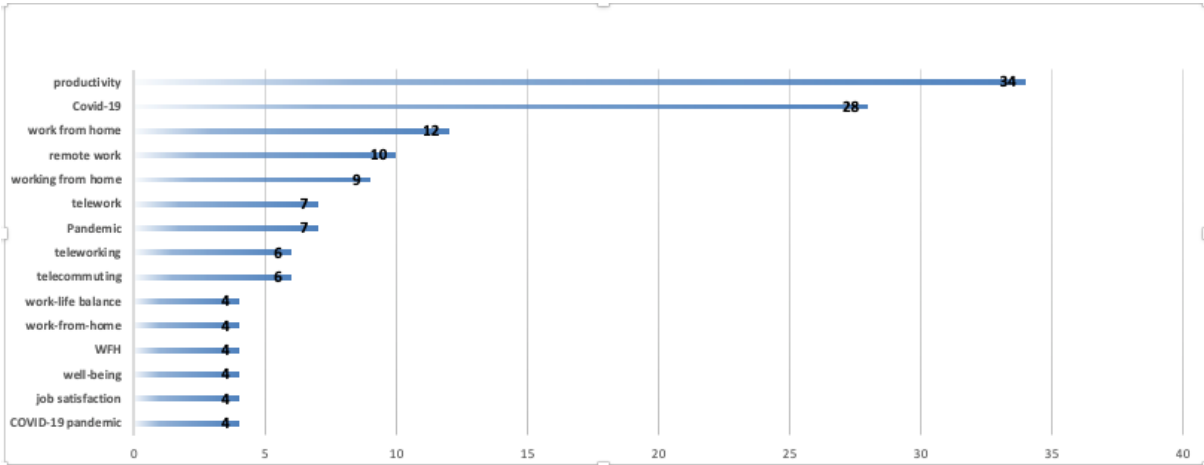


Figure 2 Distribution of keywords

Source: Created by the author with data from Scopus, Emerald Insight, and ScienceDirect

In addition to the primary keywords, the remaining terms can also be categorised. For instance, keywords like "Covid-19," "productivity," and "work from home" can be grouped under

concepts related to remote work challenges and the pandemic's impact on productivity. Alternatively, terms like "human resources," "psychology," and "management" can be categorised as fields where the WFH concept is applied. Lastly, "remote work" is often used interchangeably to discuss telecommuting or flexible work arrangements.

The findings from the reviewed publications indicate that approximately 34% (n=19) report a positive correlation between telecommuting and employee productivity. For instance, Kusoski et al. (2022) identify an overall enhancement in productivity associated with remote work arrangements. Similarly, Zürcher et al. (2021) observe that the escalation of remote working practices during the COVID-19 pandemic correlates with increased levels of productivity and job satisfaction. Furthermore, the study by Kagerl and Starzetz (2023) demonstrates that higher utilisation of remote work is positively linked with organisational success during the crisis, alongside enhancements in employee productivity.

Conversely, a minority of the reviewed publications report a negative relationship between telecommuting and productivity. For instance, Morikawa (2022) finds that highly skilled and high-income workers tend to exhibit a slight decrease in productivity while working from home. Sutarto et al. (2021) similarly identify a negative association between the psychological well-being and productivity of remote workers. Furthermore, Farooq and Sultana (2022) provide empirical evidence that telecommuting adversely affects employee productivity and also suggest that gender moderates this relationship. Additionally, some studies indicate either an absence of a relationship between telecommuting and productivity or variability and uncertainty regarding this relationship. For example, Hall et al. (2023) document a lack of consensus on the connection between working from home and both mental health and productivity, while Wolor et al. (2021) find that telecommuting has no discernible impact on work productivity.

Lastly, keywords appearing four or more times, such as "Covid-19" and "productivity," highlight significant focus areas in current research. Table 2 provides a comprehensive summary of the authors' keywords mentioned four or more times, illustrating the diverse research interest and trends in the field of remote work and productivity during the pandemic.

Keyword	Authors
productivity	Guo et al., 2022; Sutarto et al., 2021; Pillai and Prasad, 2023; Dubey and Pandey, 2023; Prodanova and Kocarev, 2022; Kumar and Banerjee, 2023; Farooq and Sultana, 2022; Kurdy et al., 2023; Marzban et al., 2021; Kawakubo and Arata, 2022; Sumit et al., 2023; George et al., 2022; Chiang Kao et al., 2023; Reuschke et al., 2021; Mohammadi et al., 2022; Hall et al., 2023; Morikawa, 2023; Abdel-Wahab, 2006; Utoft, 2020; Kumar et al., 2020; De Vries et al., 2021; Mihalca et al., 2021; O'Rourke, 2021; Rose and Brown, 2021; Zürcher et al., 2021; Bran et al., 2022; Catană et al., 2022; Morikawa, 2022; Stoker et al., 2022; Weber et al., 2022; Sciulli et al., 2023; Kusoski et al., 2022; Atiku et al., 2020
Covid-19	Anthony, 2023; Marikyan et al., 2023; Dubey and Pandey, 2023; Prodanova and Kocarev, 2022; Farooq and Sultana, 2022; Felstead and Reuschke, 2023; Loh et al., 2023; Enaifoghe and Zenzile, 2023; Kawakubo and Arata, 2022; Smitte et al., 2022; George et al., 2022; Afrianty et al., 2022; Chiang Kao et al., 2023; Mohammadi et al., 2022; Chang et al., 2021; Morikawa, 2023; Kumar et al., 2020; Wolor et al., 2021; Mihalca et al., 2021; Chakraborty and Altekar, 2021; Shimura et al., 2021; Rose and Brown, 2021; Morikawa, 2022; Stoker et al., 2022; Weber et al., 2022; Kagerl and Starzetz, 2023; Aggarwal et al., 2023; Atiku et al., 2020
Pandemic	Anthony, 2023; Marikyan et al., 2023; Dubey and Pandey, 2023; Prodanova and Kocarev, 2022; Farooq and Sultana, 2022; Felstead and Reuschke, 2023; Loh et al., 2023; Enaifoghe and Zenzile, 2023; Kawakubo and Arata, 2022; Smitte et al., 2022; George et al., 2022; Afrianty et al., 2022; Chiang Kao et al., 2023; Mohammadi et al., 2022; Chang et al., 2021; Morikawa, 2023; Kumar et al., 2020; Wolor et al., 2021; De Vries et al., 2021; Chakraborty and Altekar, 2021; O'Rourke, 2021
Remote work	Marikyan et al., 2023; Enaifoghe and Zenzile, 2023; George et al., 2022; Choudhury et al., 2021; Franken et al., 2021; Zürcher et al., 2021; Weber et al., 2022; Kagerl and Starzetz, 2023; Radović-Marković et al., 2021
Telecommuting	Prodanova and Kocarev, 2022; Kumar and Banerjee, 2023; Kawakubo and Arata, 2022; Yuhuan et al., 2021; Frolick et al., 1993; Abdel-Wahab, 2006; Choudhury et al., 2021; Aguilera et al., 2016
Telework	Sutarto et al., 2021; Gibson et al., 2023; Zürcher et al., 2021; Bran et al., 2022; Raišienė et al., 2022
Work from home	Sutarto et al., 2021; Pillai and Prasad, 2023; Anthony, 2023; Dubey and Pandey, 2023; Loh et al., 2023; Mohammadi et al., 2022; Hall et al., 2023; Al-Dmour et al., 2023; Gibson et al., 2023; Wolor et al., 2021; Rose and Brown, 2021; Zürcher et al., 2021; Radović-Marković et al., 2021
Teleworking	Enaifoghe and Zenzile, 2023; Aidana Tleuken et al., 2022; Mihalca et al., 2021; Catană et al., 2022; Weber et al., 2022; Aguilera et al., 2016; Atiku et al., 2020
Working from home	Yang et al., 2023; Guo et al., 2022; Kawakubo and Arata, 2022; Sumit et al., 2023; George et al., 2022; Afrianty et al., 2022; Morikawa, 2022; Kagerl and Starzetz, 2023

Source: Created by the author with data from Scopus, Emerald Insight, and ScienceDirect

In summary, insights can be drawn from this literature review. First, there has been a substantial rise in research on remote work in recent years, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, despite its scarcity before 2019. Second, these studies are largely found in journals focused on psychology and business. However, the variety of topics discussed suggests that remote work remains a broad theme, not limited to a single discipline. Lastly, an analysis of the associated keywords reveals that the majority of these publications aim to enhance scientific understanding of remote work and advise organizations on re-evaluating telecommuting strategies to boost employee productivity.

DISCUSSIONS

The advent of remote work, driven by technological advancements and accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has redefined workplace structures globally. This review identifies the burgeoning interest and research surrounding remote work, noting how it has shifted from a peripheral to a central concern in workplace discourse. Studies such as Marikyan et al. (2023) and Stone and Deadrick (2015) emphasise this seismic shift in work arrangements as organisations transitioned to remote operations out of necessity, creating a natural experiment that explores productivity, employee well-being, and the sustainability of remote work models. Upon conducting a thorough analysis of the aforementioned literature, the research identifies several factors that influence the discourse on productivity within the context of WFH.

Employee Productivity in Remote Work Contexts

The shift to remote work, largely propelled by the COVID-19 pandemic, has elicited varied discourse regarding its impact on employee productivity. This section synthesises the distinctive findings from the literature, exploring the multifaceted elements influencing productivity in remote work settings.

Positive Drivers of Productivity

Flexibility and Autonomy: Research, including that of Kusoski et al. (2022), underscores the benefits of flexible work schedules facilitated by remote work. Employees gain control over their workday distribution, allowing for optimal periods of productivity tailored to personal chronotypes—early risers or night owls alike. This flexibility also enables employees to eliminate commuting time and customise their work environments for comfort and concentration, potentially leading to increased output and job satisfaction.

Enhanced Focus: For many employees, home environments devoid of typical office distractions can enhance focus. The personalised work setting, free from the noise and interruptions typical in collaborative office spaces, allows employees to immerse themselves in tasks without unplanned disruptions (Zürcher et al., 2021).

Challenges to Productivity

Blurring Boundaries: While flexibility holds potential upsides, it also risks blurring the boundaries between personal and professional life. The literature, including work by Kumar et al. (2020), suggests this can lead to extended work hours, difficulties in disconnecting after work, and ultimately, stress and burnout. These challenges can manifest as reduced productivity over time due to cognitive load and mental fatigue.

Communication Barriers: Effective teamwork and communication are pivotal for sustained productivity. The transition to remote work, as documented by Mihalca et al. (2021), can introduce communication challenges, such as a lack of spontaneous dialogue and potential technical issues, which might hinder task coordination and team alignment—elements quintessential for productivity.

Social Isolation and Motivation: A comparative analysis reveals that social isolation, as highlighted in studies by Sutarto et al. (2021), can significantly affect some employees' motivation. The absence of face-to-face interaction can lead to feelings of detachment and decreased collaboration, which are vital components for maintaining a high-energy work environment.

Nuanced Perspectives and Sector-Specific Variability

Different job functions and industries exhibit varied responses to remote work's impact on productivity. For instance, creative or collaborative roles might face more considerable challenges compared to roles prioritising independent tasks and outputs. This poses questions for further sector-specific research on remote work's impact, particularly highlighted in the analyses of productivity dynamics by De Vries et al. (2021). Moreover, the literature, including work by Morikawa (2022), has identified that even within the remote framework, demographic factors such as income levels, access to technology, and domestic environments can have significant industry-specific implications for productivity.

Refining Productivity Measurement

The varied impacts on productivity identified in remote work settings call for improved, robust methods of assessment. Sutarto et al. (2021) suggest moving beyond self-reported surveys,

encouraging the development of comprehensive metrics that capture the complexity of subjective experiences, technological facilitation efficiency, and overall performance outcomes. This focus addresses current measurement limitations, striving for accuracy in depicting the remote work productivity landscape.

Integrative Approaches and Future Directions

Progress in understanding remote work productivity involves organisations implementing ambidextrous strategies that balance structured exploitation for short-term gains with exploratory flexibility for future adaptations. Further research explorations could delve into how leadership styles, influenced by remote strategies, impact productivity dynamics. Additionally, potential technological advances—such as integrating AI for improved workflow management—present rich areas for examination in terms of optimising remote productivity, pushing the theoretical and practical boundaries beyond existing frameworks.

Four critical avenues arise from this review:

Long-Term Productivity Assessments: There is a critical need for longitudinal studies to investigate whether the productivity gains observed during the transition to remote work are sustainable in the long term or whether they are tied to the exceptional circumstances of a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. These studies could also explore the long-lasting behavioural and cultural shifts resulting from prolonged remote work environments.

Sectoral Comparisons: Future studies should conduct detailed sector-specific comparisons to understand how remote work affects different industries. These analyses could provide insights into the unique challenges and advantages specific to each industry and allow for the development of tailored interventions that address industry-specific needs.

Measurement Frameworks: Current methodologies predominantly rely on self-reported data, which may not fully capture the nuances of remote work productivity. Developing robust quantitative metrics is essential to improve the accuracy and comprehensiveness of productivity assessments. These metrics should consider not only immediate output but also factors like employee retention, innovation rates, and well-being impacts.

Policy Innovation: There is a pressing need for research into organisational policies that can alleviate the downsides of remote work, such as burnout and attrition. Studies should focus on how structured supports—such as flexible working hours, comprehensive mentoring systems, and technology-facilitated team collaborations—can be implemented to enhance employee well-being and maintain productivity.

By exploring these avenues, future research can provide valuable insights that inform best practices and guide organisations in optimising their remote work policies, ultimately promoting sustainable productivity and employee satisfaction.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this article presents a comprehensive exploration of the relationship between remote work and employee productivity, integrating insights from a wide array of disciplines. As organisations increasingly embrace hybrid and fully remote work models, this analysis underscores the significant trend towards flexible work arrangements, driven by the numerous benefits they offer, such as enhanced employee well-being, heightened productivity, and greater autonomy in the workplace. Through a meticulous examination of 56 publications sourced from over 47 academic journals over the past three decades, the article provides a substantial overview of the diverse perspectives on how WFH impacts productivity.

Despite variations in terminology—encompassing "work from home," "remote work," "remote working," and "remote office"—a cohesive understanding of the relationship between remote work and productivity is evident across these studies. However, acknowledging the methodological constraints and the expansive nature of this topic, the article highlights the need for additional research to further enrich our understanding and address the complexities inherent in remote work settings.

Ultimately, this analysis provides a roadmap for organisations seeking to implement and optimise their remote work policies. By leveraging these insights, employers can better attract and retain top talent, improve employee satisfaction, and boost productivity, all while adapting to the evolving demands of the modern workforce. Additionally, this article encourages continued scholarly inquiry into remote work dynamics, ensuring that organisations remain agile and responsive to ongoing changes in work environments. This adaptability not only strengthens organisational strategies but also empowers employees to thrive in flexible, innovative work settings.

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Declarations.

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Declaration of the Use of (Generative) AI Tools in the Writing Process. During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used AI Chat Bot GPT-4 for formulating the academic language and enhancing the clarity of the text. Following the use of this tool, the author reviewed and edited the resulting content as necessary and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

About author:

Mhd Samer Sbahi Shahin is currently a PhD candidate at the BA School of Business and Finance in Riga, Latvia. He grew up in Damascus, Syria, and finished his master's studies in 2019 at Hochschule Kaiserslautern, University of Applied Sciences. Between his Bachelor's and master's studies, he worked as a compensation and benefits manager for a leading international bank in Syria. From 2019 onwards, he has worked as a Consultant/Manager at PwC Germany and Deloitte Germany. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2245-5113> ; E-Mail: samershahin91@gmail.com

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