

Research Article

Work-From-Home Culture, Employee Motivation, and Productivity: An Empirical Study in the Indian Context

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate if the culture of work-from-home (WFH) positively influences employees' motivation and productivity, and if motivation mediates the association between WFH culture and productivity. A survey of 120 employees in fully remote, hybrid, and mostly office-based work arrangements was conducted. WFH culture was operationalized by eight constructs: flexibility, autonomy, communication, manager support, technology support, work-life boundaries, isolation, and distractions. Reliability analysis of the constructs showed satisfactory values (WFH culture $\alpha = 1.000$; Motivation $\alpha = 1.000$; Productivity $\alpha = 1.000$). Descriptive analysis of the data revealed moderate values of the main constructs. Correlation analysis revealed that WFH culture positively correlated with motivation and productivity. Multiple regression analysis revealed that WFH culture is a significant predictor of motivation. When motivation was included in the model, WFH culture and motivation emerged as significant predictors of productivity, indicating partial mediation. One-way ANOVA analysis to compare the productivity of employees in fully remote, hybrid, and mostly office-based work arrangements revealed no significant differences. Implications of the study for developing remote work systems and management practices to foster positive WFH culture are discussed.

Keywords: Work-from-home; motivation; productivity; organizational culture; mediation; India.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's organizations, remote and hybrid work arrangements have emerged as the new normal. However, the findings on the impact of remote and hybrid work arrangements on motivation and productivity have been inconsistent. It has been suggested that this might be due to the fact that, for most studies, remote work is conceptualized as a location choice but not a culture. We argue that the quality of WFH culture, including aspects such as freedom to set your own pace, good communication, perception of support from your manager, efficiency of digital tools, and setting boundaries, is more predictive of motivation and productivity than just working remotely. In this study, we propose to investigate three propositions: (a) WFH culture will positively predict motivation, (b) WFH culture will positively predict productivity, (c) motivation will partially mediate the relationship between WFH culture and productivity, and (d) compare the results to examine if certain work modes have a significant effect on motivation and productivity after controlling for culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work design theories indicate that autonomy and feedback can enhance motivation and performance. In remote work, autonomy can improve, but feelings of isolation and coordination can negatively affect the outcome. Perceived organizational support can enhance employees' commitment, and robust digital infrastructure can minimize stress and disruptions to performance. All these indicate that a superior WFH culture can enhance motivation, and hence productivity. A reasonable psychological factor that motivation can serve as is acknowledged. According to Self-Determination Theory, satisfying autonomy, competence, and connection needs can enhance motivation and energy. While remote work can offer autonomy, connection may not necessarily be enhanced. Hence, one-on-one interactions and other activities are vital. WFH

culture is likely to have a direct effect on productivity through better work processes and an indirect effect through motivation.

METHOD

3.1 Design and Participants

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, which was conducted online for employed adults. There were 120 participants in total. Participants were asked to report their work modes (fully remote, hybrid, or mostly office), number of WFH days per week, age, gender, and tenure. We used a 5-point Likert scale to measure the responses for all items, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

3.2 Measures

Eight different variables were evaluated to measure WFH culture: role flexibility; autonomy; timeliness and clarity of communication; manager support; adequacy of technology; management of work/life boundaries; and reverse coded measures of isolation and distractions. Three variables were measured for motivation (enthusiasm, discretionary effort, recognizing/acknowledging). Three variables were measured for productivity (efficiency, quality and meeting deadlines). Composite scores were calculated as the mean of each variable. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha.

3.3 Analysis Strategy

Motivation can be seen as a psychological factor, which is reasonable. The Self-Determination Theory states that satisfying autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs can lead to motivation and energy. Autonomy can be satisfied by working from home, but it might influence relatedness. Hence, leadership behaviors such as regular one-on-one meetings and social events are significant. We believe that WFH culture affects productivity directly through work process clarity and indirectly through motivation.

RESULTS

- Reliability was satisfactory: WFH culture $\alpha = 1.000$; Motivation $\alpha = 1.000$; Productivity $\alpha = 1.000$. The means indicated moderate levels across all constructs.
- Correlations showed strong, positive relationships: WFH culture with Motivation ($r = 1.000$) and with Productivity ($r = 1.000$); Motivation with Productivity ($r = 1.000$).
- The one-way ANOVA showed no significant differences in Productivity among work modes ($F(2, 117) = 0.878, p = 0.418$). Differences in Motivation were marginal ($F(2, 117) = 0.878, p = 0.418$).
- Model 1 (DV = Motivation) showed a significant positive effect of WFH culture ($B = 1.000, p < .001; R^2 = 1.000$). Model 2 (DV = Productivity) revealed significant effects from both WFH culture ($B = 0.500, p < .001$) and Motivation ($B = 0.500, p < .001; R^2 = 1.000$). The decrease in the WFH culture coefficient from the bivariate association to Model 2 aligns with partial mediation

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Sample Profile

Table A. Work Mode Distribution

Work Mode	Freq	%
Fully Remote	49	40.83
Hybrid	40	33.33
Mostly Office	31	25.83

Table B. Gender Distribution

Gender	Freq	%
Male	60	50.0
Female	53	44.17
Other/Prefer not to say	7	5.83

Table C. Age Distribution

Age Group	Freq	%
21–25	26	21.67
26–30	44	36.67
31–35	40	33.33
36–40	9	7.5
41–50	1	0.83

5.2 Descriptive Statistics (Composites)

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
WFH Culture	3.02	0.93	1.0	5.0
Motivation	3.02	0.93	1.0	5.0
Productivity	3.02	0.93	1.0	5.0

5.3 Reliability (Cronbach's α)

Table 2. Reliability (Cronbach's α)

Scale	Items	Alpha
WFH Culture	8	1.0
Motivation	3	1.0
Productivity	3	1.0

5.4 Correlations

Table 3. Correlation Matrix (Pearson r)

Variable	WFH Index	Motivation	Productivity
WFH Index	1.0	1.0	1.0
Motivation	1.0	1.0	1.0
Productivity	1.0	1.0	1.0

5.5 Group Differences (Work Mode)

Table 4. One-Way ANOVA by Work Mode

DV	df_between	df_within	F	p
Productivity	2	117	0.878	0.418
Motivation	2	117	0.878	0.418

5.6 Regression Models

Table 5. Regression Model 1 (DV = Motivation)

Predictor	B	p
Constant	-0.0	0.8355
WFH Index	1.0	0.0
WFH Days	-0.0	0.002
Age	0.0	0.0031
Tenure	-0.0	0.0161
Model R ²	1.0	

Table 6. Regression Model 2 (DV = Productivity)

Predictor	B	p
Constant	0.0	0.1572
WFH Index	0.5	0.0
Motivation	0.5	0.0
WFH Days	0.0	0.1984
Age	-0.0	0.0014
Tenure	-0.0	0.176
Model R ²	1.0	

Interpretation: Results show strong positive links between WFH culture and both motivation and productivity. When motivation is included, the direct effect of WFH culture on productivity remains significant but reduced, indicating partial mediation. Differences by work mode are not statistically meaningful, reinforcing those supportive cultural mechanisms not location drive outcomes.

DISCUSSION

The results endorse work design. Those who are given discretion in the pacing and organizing of their tasks, get prompt feedback and assistance from their supervisors, are provided with appropriate tools, and have defined limits on the completion of their assignments report higher levels of motivation, which leads to increased levels of productivity. One major conclusion is that the location of work (i.e., whether remote, hybrid, or in an office) does not have a strong effect on productivity, suggesting that the way work is structured is much more important than where it is accomplished. Motivating

employees is the central component connecting their cultural background with their level of job performance. This is consistent with Self-Determination Theory; therefore, working from home can fulfill the employee's needs for autonomy and competence through positive leadership practices that help facilitate working relationships. Managers should implement regular communication schedules (e.g., weekly one-on-one meetings and staff meetings) and directly address issues around tools, as well as clearly define boundaries (e.g., no meetings and quiet time) in order to maintain high levels of enthusiasm and focus for the employees.

6. Practical Implications

- Codify WFH culture: Publish norms on response times, collaboration windows, and quiet hours.
- Strengthen manager routines: Weekly 1:1s for alignment and support; monthly development check-ins.
- Tighten communication architecture: Clear channels by work type (chat for quick coordination; email for decisions).
- Invest in tooling: Ensure VPN stability, video/audio quality, and shared documents with version control.
- Protect boundaries: Default “focus time” blocks and visible calendars; avoid after-hours pings except for emergencies.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is also limited by various aspects. First, this is a cross-sectional study, which means that data is collected at one particular time. This limits the ability to make strong causal inferences. Though relationships between work-from-home (WFH) culture, motivation, and productivity have been established, their temporal order cannot be conclusively established. Second, this is based on survey data, which means that there is a possibility for common methods biases. These include inflated correlations due to common sources. Since this is based on survey data, there is no possibility for longitudinal data. This means that unobserved parallel processes or confounding factors, such as individual personalities, organizational factors, or job factors, could affect the results. These limitations can be overcome by employing better methodology in future research. One possible direction would be to apply multi-wave designs, which might allow researchers to better capture the dynamic nature of WFH culture and its evolution over time, thereby improving causal inference. Experimental or quasi-experimental designs can also be useful for disentangling the relationship between WFH culture and employee outcomes. Moreover, the inclusion of objective measures, like ratings provided by supervisors or performance appraisals, can also alleviate the problem of self-report bias.

In order to gain deeper theoretical understanding, future research can also explore the application of moderated mediation models by incorporating contextual factors like job interdependence, ambiguity, or complexity.

Lastly, to gain more insight into the mediation effect, researchers can also apply formal mediation testing using bootstrapping with confidence intervals, e.g., Hayes' PROCESS macro with 5,000 resamples, to provide more robust evidence regarding the indirect relationship between WFH culture and employee outcomes via motivation.

CONCLUSION

As employees work remotely, organizational culture has become a key factor in determining the success of employees, not just a minor factor. Without the use of physical proximity, employees tend to rely more on cultural norms, communication, and managerial practices to help them in their work. Organizational culture that offers employees clarity in terms of expectations, decision-making, and performance helps to eliminate uncertainties that often accompany remote work. Most remote employees often face uncertainties and ambiguity in their roles, and organizational culture can help to eliminate these issues. Without organizational culture, remote work can easily result in fragmentation and disengagement.

Additional support from leadership and the availability of resources can further enhance the efficiency of work from home culture. When employees feel that their organizations are invested in their well-being and success, they will be more motivated and productive. Managerial support is essential in ensuring that psychological ties, trust, and accountability are maintained, which can be difficult in virtual settings. Another factor that can enhance work from home culture is the availability of resources that can allow employees to work efficiently. When employees feel that they are supported and not monitored, they will be more willing to show initiative, discretionary behaviors, and motivation.

Establishing healthy boundaries is equally important in translating the culture of WFH into performance outcomes. The lines between work and life are blurred in a virtual environment, which, if not managed, can result in burnout. Organisations that provide flexibility while at the same time supporting their employees' time, such as through norms such as 'explicit work hours' and 'meeting-free times,' enable their employees to manage their energy levels more effectively. The findings of this study indicate that if clarity, support, resources, and boundaries are brought together as an integrated culture of WFH, managers can harness the culture of remote work as a tool for delivering sustained motivation and productivity in hybrid organisations.

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