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Remote Working and its Impact on Employee Job Satisfaction During COVID-19

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Remote Working and its Impact on Employee Job Satisfaction During COVID-19

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty
of the Department of Leadership Education
College of Education
of Winona State University

by

Marissa J. Grant

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Science

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Chapter I: Introduction

Only 25% of Americans worked remotely before the pandemic. This statistic changed to one-third of Americans when the pandemic arrived (Coate, 2021). Prior to COVID-19, research indicates a positive correlation between job satisfaction and remote working (Smith et al., 2018). How the pandemic has impacted employee satisfaction and its relationship to working remotely is still unknown. This study will investigate the job satisfaction of remote workers during COVID-19.

Problem Statement

COVID-19 changed the work environment for individuals across the globe in early 2020 (Chang et al., 2021). Little is known about how COVID-19 has impacted the job satisfaction of those who left the traditional office space to work remotely. The specific problem is that research regarding employee job satisfaction is lacking among the population of individuals who were asked to work from home due to the global crisis. The results of this study may provide information for organizations considering a permanent remote work model for their employees.

Problem Background

Research indicates employers and employees benefit from remote work options (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). Employers benefit from a productive and cost-effective work force and lower costs in terms of building purchase, building, or maintenance (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). Employees benefit from increased job satisfaction, job-related wellbeing, and work-life balance (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). Smith et al. (2018) notes increased productivity, less distractions, higher employee morale, and greater autonomy for the employee as benefits to remote working.

Despite these benefits, it has been noted that the adoption of remote work has been slower than expected since its origination in the 1970s (Torten et al., 2016). This is due to

hinderances for both the employer and employee. Employers may not support a remote working model due to concerns over relinquished control of employees (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Torten et al., 2016). Employee's may be hindered by personal preference over their own flexibility in work schedule or work-life balance, feeling isolated, and declining relationships with colleagues (Smith et al., 2018; Torten et al., 2016). These aspects align a remote worker's job satisfaction.

Research indicates that there is a positive correlation between remote working and job satisfaction, although results varied between those who permanently work remotely and those who do so in smaller increments (Smith et al., 2018). The positive relationship between these two variables is linked with personality types and communication channels, as was the case of Smith et al. (2018), as well as in terms of satisfaction, performance, and productivity, as Torten et al. (2016) investigated. Studies have outlined variables such as organizational commitment and enthusiasm for the job contributing to job satisfaction in a remote work environment (Felstead & Henseke, 2017).

Several obstacles present themselves within existing research. These include separating remote workers that exclusively work outside of a traditional work environment from those that only do so part-time and separating those who voluntarily work remotely from those who do not. This study focuses on those who have been working remotely at least one day per week for at least six months since March 2020. Smith et al. (2018) indicates that restricting the criteria regarding exclusive remote working could significantly influence results. The study will analyze results based on voluntary versus involuntary remote working individuals.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study is to investigate the impact working remotely has on employee job satisfaction. The researcher will study public university graduate students who worked remotely at least one day per week for at least six months since March 2020.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a relationship between job satisfaction and remote working?

RQ2: Do individuals who were sent home to work remotely due to COVID-19 have lower job satisfaction than those who were not sent home to work remotely due to COVID-19 (individuals who worked remotely prior to COVID-19)?

Definition of Terms

The following terms have been determined relevant to this study and are defined below.

Job satisfaction: Refers to the level of contentment an individual is with their job (Smith et al., 2018). Individuals in this study will rate their level of contentment with their current job role in the survey they participate in based on the Likert scale.

Remote working/worker: Refers to individuals performing their regular job duties in a location outside of the traditional workspace (Smith et al., 2018). For this study, remote working involves spending at least one day performing job duties outside of the traditional workspace. An example of a location outside of the traditional workspace would be an employee's home.

Limitations

The population presents as a limitation due to participants belonging to the same public university. The amount of time participants have been remote working may also present as a limitation. Finding graduate students who worked remotely presented as a limitation as well.

Delimitations

Participants involved in this study will be restricted to students enrolled in a graduate program at a public university. These participants will be restricted to those who have worked remotely at least one day per week for at least six months since March 2020. Responses will be directly linked to the timeframe of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Summary

This chapter introduced the need for further research on the impact COVID-19 has had on job satisfaction on those individuals who are remote working. The problem statement, problem background, and purpose of the study were outlined. Key terms were defined and given context relevant to the study, and limitations and delimitations of the study were discussed. In chapter two, a literature review will be conducted. Chapter three will then provide detail on the research methodology used for the study and will include the research design, population, sample, and setting, as well as instrumentation, the data collection procedure, and data analysis. Chapter four will discuss the results of the data collected, and chapter five will contain discussion and conclusions.

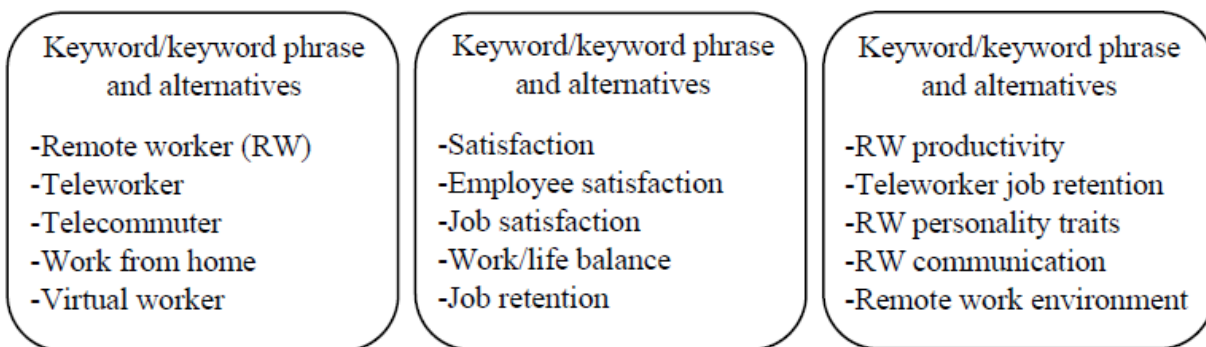
Chapter II: Literature Review

The purpose of this quantitative study is to investigate the impact working remotely has on employee job satisfaction. Chapter Two examines the literature on remote working and job satisfaction.

The literature review was conducted electronically using selected keywords and phrases. Initial keywords and phrases identified from the research question were working remotely and employee satisfaction. These two phrases were then further expanded. Figure 1 below lists the additional keywords and phrases used to capture literature for this study.

Figure 1

Keywords and Phrases



The Darrell W. Krueger Library – Winona State University was most frequently utilized to search for information. Literature was identified in several different databases, including Business Source Premier – EBSCO, PubMed, and Google Scholar. Each database proved sufficient in its ability to provide recent publications from the keywords and phrases noted in the above figure.

Historical Perspective

Remote Work

The term “remote working” itself has changed throughout its history. It has been referred to as teleworking (Bailey & Kurland, 2002), telecommuting (Torten et al., 2016), and remote working (Felsted & Henseke, 2017). It is unclear whether the change in terms has substantially changed its definition. Telework is defined by Bailey & Kurland (2002) as “working outside the conventional workplace and communicating with it by way of telecommunications or computer-based technology” (p. 384). It is further defined as “a work arrangement in which employees perform their regular work at a site other than the ordinary workplace, supported by technological connections” or a “flexible work arrangement that affords employees the ability to periodically, regularly, or exclusively perform work for their employers from home or another remote location that is equipped with the appropriate computer based technology” (Smith et al., 2018, p. 46).

The concept of remote working did not take off as quickly as expected when it originated in the 1970s (Torten et al., 2016). This changed with the recent COVID-19 pandemic, when employees across the globe were sent home to work (Chang et al., 2021). While remote working traditionally referred to a voluntary work arrangement, COVID-19 has made this work environment mandatory, even for professions considered essential (Chang et al., 2021).

Research highlights both deterrents and benefits to working remotely. Deterrents to remote working include variables such as a manager’s reluctance and difficulty in coordinating a remote working program, concerns regarding controlling employees who work outside of the office, and personal preferences regarding remote working (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Torton et

al., 2016). Benefits of remote working include the opportunity for employees to better balance work and family, cost advantages for both employee and employer, improvement to the environment, and working motivation (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Torten et al., 2016).

Scholars have multiple definitions of remote workers, and research indicates that different organizations allow remote working in different increments of time (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Felsted & Henseke, 2017; Smith et al., 2018). Bailey & Kurland (2002) found that employees who were remote working only did so a few days out of a given month. Research by Felsted & Henseke (2017) and Smith et al. (2018) involved participants that had worked at least one full day remotely per week.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction plays a key role in the relationship between employee and employer as it affects turnover rates (Torten et al., 2016). Research indicates that the level of satisfaction a participant feels within their job is largely influenced by individual perspectives (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). These factors include type of work, organizational environment, human resources components, personality type, personal characteristics, and psychological attributes (Smith et al., 2018).

The term “job satisfaction” has been loosely defined. It has been referred to as the level of contentment an individual is with their job (Smith et al., 2018). It has been defined as “an affective relationship to one’s job that is a function of situational factors” (Smith et al., 2018, p. 46). The fulfillment of work-life balance and adequate functioning of work and home in conjunction with minimal role conflict can be defined as satisfaction as well (Felstead &

Henseke, 2017). Job satisfaction has also been measured by using an adapted version of Pond and Geyer's global satisfaction scale (questions were answered using a 5-point scale with responses such as strongly agree/strongly disagree), in which a scale was created to determine teleworker satisfaction (Smith et al., 2018).

A greater need for remote working presented itself with the arrival of COVID-19. Research is lacking in terms of how this pandemic has impacted the job satisfaction in employees who have been sent away from the traditional office space to work. Historically, there is a positive relationship between remote working and job satisfaction. Additional research needs to be conducted to explore how COVID-19 has impacted this relationship. This study focused on taking the historical literature and building onto that to include the impact the pandemic has had.

Remote Work and Job Satisfaction

Bailey & Kurland (2002) indicated that remote working improved job satisfaction and productivity. Torten et al. (2016) found a statistically significant relationship between job satisfaction and the number of days an individual worked remotely per week. A positive correlation was found between job satisfaction in remote workers who scored high in openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion (Smith et al., 2018). Although there are known disadvantages to remote working, they are outweighed by the advantages when job satisfaction is concerned (Smith et al., 2018). Felsted & Henseke (2017) noted that remote workers reported "significantly higher levels of job satisfaction" (p. 207) in their own research. Job satisfaction was found to be statistically higher in remote workers despite downsides of work intensification and reduced chances of promotion (Felsted & Henseke, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

One theory tied to remote working is the social exchange theory. This theory involves exchanges between individuals in which costs are traded for rewards. Costs are defined as something of value while rewards are defined as something needed or valued (Redmond, 2015). Redmond (2015) explains that individuals are driven to accrue profit in these exchanges in which the rewards received are higher than the costs given and may feel troubled if there is perceived inequity within the exchange. Social exchange theory can be applied to the employee and employer relationship when remote working is involved. Using this theory, it can be implied that both parties profit when employees work remotely. The employee may profit in numerous ways, such as a greater work-life balance and schedule flexibility. The employer also profits in ways such as cost advantages. A profit between employer and employee can also be found with the pandemic influencing remote working. The employee benefits from continued employment while maintaining safety standards, and the employer benefits from their employees continuing to work and supporting the organization.

Another theory that has been tied to remote working and may potentially tie to the COVID-19 pandemic is the organizational adaptation theory. The organizational adaptation theory is based on an organization's need to adapt to its environment in order to survive. Ideally, an organization can adapt or change before the perceived need for change becomes evident (Boin et al., 2015). This theory can be tied to remote working and the Millennial generation. According to the 2016 Millennial Survey by Deloitte, this generation is seeking a better work-life balance, which includes flexibility and the opportunity to work remotely (Jenkins, 2018). Organizations

have had to adapt to this need in the workforce by allowing greater flexibility and remote work options for this influx of employees starting their careers. Organizational adaptation theory was also necessary as the COVID-19 pandemic began. Organizations were forced to adapt to the need to keep employees working while also following health and safety guidelines. An inability to do so resulted in organizational failure.

Summary

This chapter focused on the literature review and included the historical perspective and theoretical framework. The social exchange theory and organizational adaptation theory were discussed. Chapter three will provide further detail on the methodology used in this study. It will include the research design, sample and setting, instrumentation, data collection procedure, and data analysis.

Chapter III: Methodology

The purpose of this quantitative study is to investigate the impact working remotely has on employee job satisfaction.

Research Design

A quantitative approach was taken to utilize results derived from an online survey. The survey was conducted in a way that numerical characteristics could be used to explore a causal relationship between remote working and job satisfaction by asking participants to answer close-ended questions with answers based on the Likert scale (Kraska, M. & Kraska, 2010). The study utilized a nonexperimental design in a causal comparative manner as there would be no change in variables during the study (Kraska, M. & Kraska, 2010).

A quantitative approach was taken so that a statistical analysis could be performed. A statistical analysis provides concrete, factual, and straightforward numerical data. This type of analysis was also beneficial in that visual graphics of the data can be incorporated. By utilizing a quantitative approach, data was able to be collected and analyzed in a time-efficient manner. This approach also eliminated the need for direct observation and allowed for responses to be kept anonymous.

Sample & Setting

The population of this study involved graduate students enrolled at a public university. The sample of this study included 17 of these graduate students who agreed to participate in the survey. Participants were newly enrolled, had partially completed their degree, or were at the endpoint of degree completion. It was important that this sample included remote working

participants employed in various professions. This was a random sample in which anyone in the population may have chosen to participate.

The setting for this study was remote and utilized an online survey. The public university that participants were enrolled in has two campuses located in Minnesota and serves both undergraduate and graduate students with a current enrollment of 7,602 (Winona State University [WSU], 2021). The university offers over 80 majors and programs (WSU, 2021). The university has obtained the #1 Student Success Rate in the Minnesota State system of colleges and universities, has been named the second best public institution in Minnesota, and states that 98% of graduates are hired in a field that is related to the degree they have obtained (WSU, 2021). It is also described as affordable and having a notable impact on local, regional, and state economies (WSU, 2021).

Instrumentation

The study was comprised of 13 survey questions that were created by the researcher. The data for this study was derived from the survey questions answered by voluntary participants. The survey questions were the same for each participant. The survey questions were close-ended and based on a 4-point Likert scale. The first three survey questions generated consent from the participants, eligibility criteria, and demographic information. The remaining ten questions included when participants began working remotely, how often they work remotely, the voluntary or involuntary nature of their remote work, and perceived job satisfaction, productivity, and engagement. Participants were given several different response options. These options included yes/no, voluntarily/involuntarily, no impact/somewhat impacted/quite a bit of

impact/completely impacted, no change/some change/quite a bit of change/complete change, not satisfied at all/somewhat unsatisfied/mostly unsatisfied/completely unsatisfied, not satisfied at all/somewhat satisfied/mostly satisfied/completely satisfied, as well as options for job industry and number of days per week that the participant worked remotely.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection via an online survey was utilized to collect the data used for this study. All answers provided by participants remained anonymous. The researcher knew who the survey was sent to but did not know which participants out of the population chose to submit responses. Data collected via the survey was kept anonymous and secure by using Qualtrics as the survey distributor.

Data Analysis

This quantitative research study utilized a casual-comparative method to analyze results. This method was used to explore the cause-effect relationship between working remotely and job satisfaction (Kraska, M. & Kraska, 2010). A descriptive statistical approach was utilized to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics are considered relatively simple and easy to understand (Brown, B. L., & Brown, 2010). There is an opportunity to introduce inferential statistics for a more complex review of the data by starting with a descriptive statistics approach. Resulting the data via descriptive statistics allowed the researcher to take advantage of visualizing the findings via graphics as well.

Summary

The methodology utilized for this study is quantitative in nature. A casual-comparative method was chosen. Data and results were derived from an anonymous online survey voluntarily taken by graduate students. Descriptive statistics, along with visual graphics, were used to present the findings of the study.

Chapter IV: Results

The purpose of this quantitative study is to investigate the impact working remotely has on employee job satisfaction.

Demographics

Seventeen graduate students agreed to participate in the study and completed all survey questions. Eight out of seventeen (47%) of participants selected “education” as the industry they worked in. Five participants (29%) chose “healthcare”, and four participants (23%) selected “other”, and specified social services, mental health, athletics, and administration.

Analysis

The findings for research questions 1 and 2 were derived from a survey completed through Qualtrics. Findings were analyzed using descriptive statistics via the Winona State University Statistical Consulting Center.

To explore the impact working remotely has on employee job satisfaction, the following research question was proposed:

RQ1: Is there a relationship between job satisfaction and remote working?

Survey questions used to answer the hypothesis were:

Survey question 7 (SQ7): On average, how many days per week over the past year have you been remote working?

Survey question 8 (SQ8): How would you rate your job satisfaction since March 2020?

Survey question 9 (SQ9): How often have you felt unsatisfied at work over the past year?

Survey question 11 (SQ11): What impact has remote working had on your job satisfaction?

In response to SQ7, seven (41%) participants worked remotely 1-2 days per week, two (11%) participants worked remotely 3-4 days per week, and eight (47%) participants worked 5 days/every day of the week.

In response to SQ8, seven (41%) participants reported being somewhat satisfied, nine (52%) participants reported being mostly satisfied, and one (5%) participant reported being completely satisfied at their job since March 2020. No participants reported being not satisfied at all.

In response to SQ9, four (23%) participants reported being not unsatisfied at all, eleven (64%) participants reported being somewhat unsatisfied, and two (11%) participants reported being mostly unsatisfied at work. No participants reported being completely unsatisfied.

Of the seventeen participants, nine (52%) had agreement on SQ8 and SQ9. Eight (47%) of the participants were slightly off agreement. Table 1 below illustrates this agreement.

Table 1

Agreement Between Job Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction

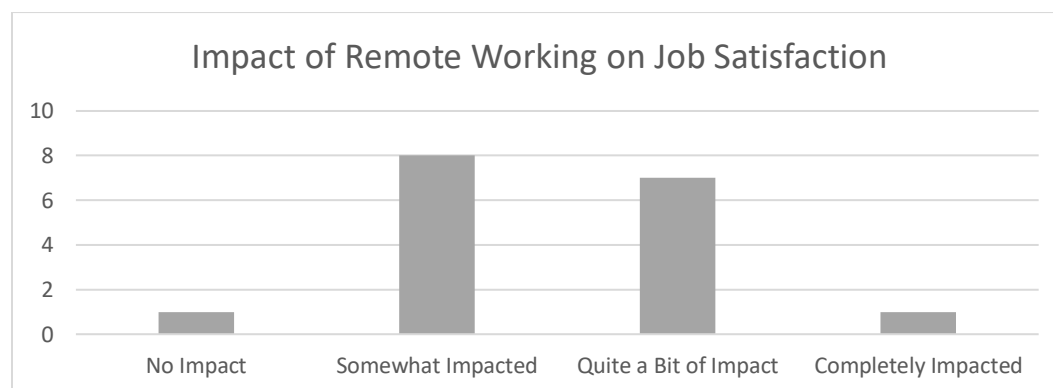
Level	Not Satisfied at All	Somewhat Satisfied	Mostly Satisfied	Completely Satisfied	Total
Not Unsatisfied at All	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (17%)	1 (5%)	4 (23%)
Somewhat Unsatisfied	0 (0%)	5 (29%)	6 (35%)	0 (0%)	11 (64%)

Mostly Unsatisfied	0 (0%)	2 (11%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (11%)
Completely Unsatisfied	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	0 (0%)	7 (41%)	9 (52%)	1 (5%)	17 (100%)

In response to SQ11, one (5%) participant reported remote working having no impact on job satisfaction, eight (47%) participants reported remote working had somewhat of an impact on job satisfaction, seven (41%) participants reported remote working having quite a bit of impact on job satisfaction, and one (5%) participant reported remote working having complete impact on job satisfaction. Results show that remote working had at least somewhat impacted job satisfaction for nearly all participants (sixteen or 94%). Figure 2 below illustrates these results.

Figure 2

Impact of Remote Working on Job Satisfaction



In response to SQ7 and SQ8, participants who worked remotely 1-2 days per week, four (23%) participants reported as being somewhat satisfied, and three (17%) participants reported being mostly satisfied with their job. In participants who worked remotely 3-4 days per week, one (5%) participant reported being somewhat satisfied, and one (5%) participant reported being

completely satisfied with their job. In participants who worked remotely 5 days/every day of the week, two (11%) participants reported being somewhat satisfied and six (35%) participants reported being mostly satisfied with their job. Results show that all participants, regardless of how many days are worked remotely per week, are at least somewhat satisfied with their jobs. Most participants (ten or 58%) report being mostly or completely satisfied with their jobs. Table 2 below illustrates these results.

Table 2

Job Satisfaction in Conjunction with Number of Days Spent Remote Working

Days Worked Remotely	Somewhat Satisfied	Mostly Satisfied	Completely Satisfied	Total
1-2	4 (23%)	3 (17%)	0 (0%)	7 (41%)
3-4	1 (5%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	2 (11%)
5/every	2 (11%)	6 (35%)	0 (0%)	8 (47%)
Total	7 (41%)	9 (52%)	1 (5%)	17 (100%)

In response to SQ7 and SQ11, in participants who worked remotely 1-2 days per week, four (23%) participants reported working remotely had somewhat impacted their job satisfaction and three (17%) participants reported working remotely had quite a bit of impact on their job satisfaction. In participants who worked 3-4 days per week, one (5%) participant reported working remotely had no impact on their job satisfaction and one (5%) participant reported working remotely had somewhat impacted their job satisfaction. In participants who worked 5 days/every day of the week, three (17%) participants reported working remotely had somewhat impacted their job satisfaction, four participants (23%) reported working remotely had quite a bit

of impact on their job satisfaction, and one (5%) participant reported working remotely had completely impacted their job satisfaction. No participants working 3-4 days per week reported that remote working had quite a bit of impact or complete impact on their job satisfaction. No participants who worked 1-2 days or 5/every day of the week reported that remote working had no impact on their job satisfaction. Results show that the number of days worked remotely influences the impact remote working has on job satisfaction. Participants working 1-2 days per week and 5/every day of the week (fifteen or 88%) all reported that remote working had at least somewhat impacted their job satisfaction, while only one (5%) participant working remotely 3-4 days per week reported that remote working had somewhat impacted their job satisfaction. Table 3 below illustrates these results.

Table 3

Impact of Working Remotely on Job Satisfaction in Conjunction with Number of Days Spent

Remote Working

Days Worked Remotely	No impact	Somewhat Impacted	Quite a Bit of Impact	Completely Impacted	Total
1-2	0 (0%)	4 (23%)	3 (17%)	0 (0%)	7 (41%)
3-4	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (11%)
5/every	0 (0%)	3 (17%)	4 (23%)	1 (5%)	8 (47%)
Total	1 (5%)	8 (47%)	7 (41%)	1 (5%)	17 (100%)

In response to SQ8 and SQ11, in participants who reported being somewhat satisfied with their job, four (23%) participants reported that remote working had somewhat impacted their job satisfaction and three (17%) reported that remote working had quite a bit of impact on their job

satisfaction. In participants who reported being mostly satisfied with their job, four (23%) reported that remote working had somewhat impacted their job satisfaction, four (23%) reported that remote working had quite a bit of impact on their job satisfaction, and one (5%) reported that remote working had completely impacted their job satisfaction. The one (5%) participant who reported being completely satisfied with their job reported that remote working had no impact on their job satisfaction. Results indicate that job satisfaction is impacted by remote working. Table 4 below illustrates these results.

Table 4

Job Satisfaction in Conjunction with the Impact Remote Working has on Job Satisfaction

Job Satisfaction	No impact	Somewhat Impacted	Quite a Bit of Impact	Completely Impacted	Total
Somewhat Satisfied	0 (0%)	4 (23%)	3 (17%)	0 (0%)	7 (41%)
Mostly Satisfied	0 (0%)	4 (23%)	4 (23%)	1 (5%)	9 (52%)
Completely Satisfied	1 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)
Total	1 (5%)	8 (47%)	7 (41%)	1 (5%)	17 (100%)

To explore the impact COVID-19 has had on job satisfaction, the following research question was proposed:

RQ2: Do individuals who were sent home to work remotely due to COVID-19 have lower job satisfaction than those who were not sent home to work remotely due to COVID-19 (individuals who worked remotely prior to COVID-19)?

Survey questions used to answer the hypothesis were:

Survey question 4 (SQ4): Did you work remotely previous to COVID-19?

Survey question 5 (SQ5): Have you been remote working over the past year due to COVID-19?

Survey question 6 (SQ6): Are you working remotely voluntarily or involuntarily (voluntary = job was chosen knowing remote working was an expectation, involuntary = job was made remote with no choice to the employee)?

Survey question 8 (SQ8): How would you rate your job satisfaction since March 2020?

Survey question 10 (SQ10): What impact has COVID-19 had on your job satisfaction?

In response to SQ4, fourteen (82%) participants did not work remotely prior to COVID-19, and three (17%) participants did work remotely prior to COVID-19.

In response to SQ5, one (5%) participant reported that they were not working remotely due to COVID-19, and sixteen (94%) participants reported that they were working remotely due to COVID-19.

In response to SQ6, six (35%) participants reported that they were voluntarily remote working, and eleven (64%) participants reported that they were involuntarily remote working.

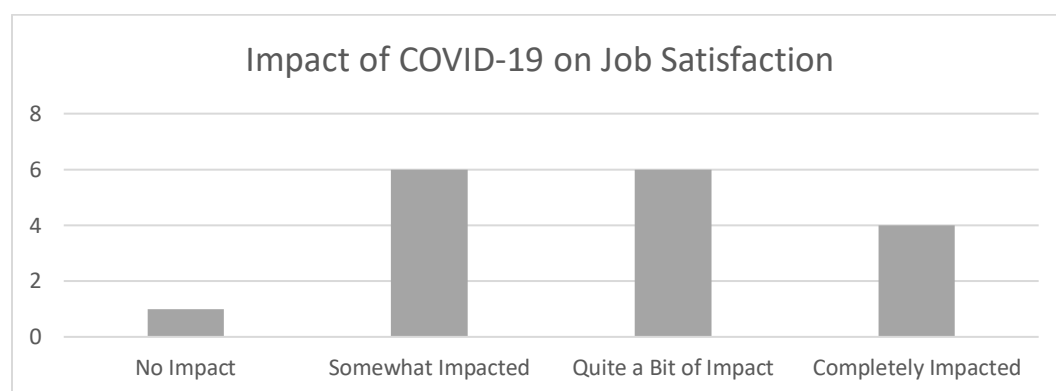
In response to SQ8, seven (41%) participants reported being somewhat satisfied, nine (52%) participants reported being mostly satisfied, and one (5%) participant reported being completely satisfied at their job since March 2020. No participants reported being not satisfied at all.

In response to SQ10, one (5%) participant reported that COVID-19 had no impact on their job satisfaction, six (35%) participants reported that COVID-19 had somewhat impacted

their job satisfaction, six (35%) participants reported that COVID-19 had quite a bit of impact on their job satisfaction, and four (23%) participants reported that COVID-19 had completely impacted their job satisfaction. Results show that nearly all participants (sixteen or 94%) reported that COVID-19 had some type of impact on their job satisfaction. Most participants (twelve or 70%) reported that COVID-19 had either somewhat impacted or had quite a bit of impact on their job satisfaction. Figure 3 illustrates this data.

Figure 3

Impact of COVID-19 on Job Satisfaction



In response to SQ8 and SQ10, in participants who were completely satisfied with their job, one (5%) reported that COVID-19 had no impact on their job satisfaction. In participants who were mostly satisfied with their job, four (23%) participants reported that COVID-19 had somewhat impacted their job satisfaction, four (23%) participants reported that COVID-19 had quite a bit of impact on their job satisfaction, and one (5%) participant reported that COVID-19 had completely impacted their job satisfaction. In participants who were somewhat satisfied with their job, two (11%) participants reported that COVID-19 had somewhat impacted their job

satisfaction, two (11%) participants reported that COVID-19 had quite a bit of impact on their job satisfaction, and three (17%) participants reported that COVID-19 completely impacted their job satisfaction. Table 5 illustrates these results.

Table 5

The Impact of COVID-19 on Job Satisfaction

Level of Satisfaction	No impact	Somewhat Impacted	Quite a Bit of Impact	Completely Impacted	Total
Somewhat Satisfied	0 (0%)	2 (11%)	2 (11%)	3 (17%)	7 (41%)
Mostly Satisfied	0 (0%)	4 (23%)	4 (23%)	1 (5%)	9 (52%)
Completely Satisfied	1 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)
Total	1 (5%)	6 (35%)	6 (35%)	4 (23%)	17 (100%)

In response to SQ5 and SQ8, seven (41%) participants remote working due to COVID-19 reported being somewhat satisfied with their job, eight (47%) participants reported being mostly satisfied with their job, and one (5%) participant reported being completely satisfied with their job. One (5%) participant had not been remote working due to COVID-19 and reported that they were mostly satisfied with their job. These results indicate that remote working due to COVID-19 has not resulted in participants being unsatisfied with their job.

In response to SQ6 and SQ8, five (29%) participants remote working voluntarily reported that they were mostly satisfied with their job and one (5%) participant reported that they were completely satisfied with their job. Seven (41%) participants remote working involuntarily reported that they were somewhat satisfied with their job, and four (23%) participants reported

that they were mostly satisfied with their job. These results show that most participants (ten or 58%) are at least mostly satisfied with their job regardless of whether they are voluntarily or involuntarily working remotely. Table 6 illustrates these results.

Table 6

Voluntary Nature of Remote Working in Conjunction with Job Satisfaction

Type	Somewhat Satisfied	Mostly Satisfied	Completely Satisfied	Total
Voluntary	0 (0%)	5 (29%)	1 (5%)	6 (35%)
Involuntarily	7 (41%)	4 (23%)	0 (0%)	11 (64%)
Total	7 (41%)	9 (52%)	1 (5%)	17 (100%)

Summary

The researcher used a survey to collect and document the data for this study. Seventeen participants agreed to take part in the survey. Seventeen participants provided responses.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze participant responses. Chapter 4 presented relevant demographical data and results of the survey. Chapter 5 will contain a discussion of the results.

Chapter V: Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this quantitative study is to investigate the impact working remotely has on employee job satisfaction.

Previous chapters included the research questions for the study, research regarding job satisfaction and individuals who work remotely, methodology, and findings. Chapter Five will discuss and summarize the findings and relate them back to the literature and theoretical framework. Leadership implications and recommendations for future research will be presented.

Discussion

A quantitative study design was utilized to explore the relationship between job satisfaction and remote working along with the potential impact of COVID-19. The research questions guiding this study were the following:

RQ1: Is there a relationship between job satisfaction and remote working?

RQ2: Do individuals who were sent home to work remotely due to COVID-19 have lower job satisfaction than those who were not sent home to work remotely due to COVID-19 (individuals who worked remotely prior to COVID-19)?

Data collection via an online survey was utilized to collect participant responses. The researcher used descriptive statistics to analyze the data. Three themes emerged for RQ1: (1) remote working has an impact on job satisfaction and (2) job satisfaction and the impact remote working has on job satisfaction is influenced by the number of days an individual works remotely per week. Two themes emerged for RQ2: (1) COVID-19 has impacted job satisfaction and (2) the voluntary nature of remote working impacts job satisfaction.

Research Question 1 Discussion

Research question one asked if there was a relationship between job satisfaction and remote working.

Theme 1: Remote Working Has an Impact on Job Satisfaction

Responses to the survey questions indicate that working remotely impacts job satisfaction. Sixteen (94%) participants reported that remote working had at least somewhat impacted their job satisfaction.

Remote workers were found to have “significantly higher levels of job satisfaction” (Felsted & Henseke, 2017, p.207). Bailey & Kurland (2002) found that remote working improved job satisfaction. Results gathered from this study support the literature. Both the literature and results of this study support that remote working impacts job satisfaction in that working remotely impacts job satisfaction in a positive way.

Theme 2: Job satisfaction and the impact remote working has on job satisfaction is influenced by the number of days an individual works remotely per week

Responses to the survey questions indicate that the number of days an individual remote works per week influences their job satisfaction and influences the impact remote working has on their job satisfaction. Participants who worked remotely 5/every day of the week reported higher levels of job satisfaction than individuals working 3-4 or 1-2 days remotely per week. Participants who worked remotely 5/every day of the week reported that remote working had a higher level of impact on their job satisfaction than individuals working 3-4 or 1-2 days remotely per week.

Research indicates that different organizations allow remote working in different increments of time (Baily & Kurland, 2002; Felsted & Henseke, 2017; Smith et al., 2018). A statistically significant relationship between job satisfaction and the number of days an individual worked remotely per week was found in the research (Torten et al., 2016). A positive correlation was found between remote working and job satisfaction with varied results between those who permanently worked remotely and those who do so in smaller increments (Smith et al., 2018). Results from this study support the literature. Participants in this study who worked remotely the most days of the week reported higher levels of job satisfaction than participants who worked remotely fewer days during the week. Job satisfaction varied among participants who worked remotely a different amount of time throughout the week. Participants who worked the most days remotely reported remote work having a higher impact on their job satisfaction.

Research Question 2 Discussion

Research question two asked if individuals who were sent home to work remotely due to COVID-19 had lower job satisfaction than those who were not sent home to work remotely due to COVID-19.

Theme 1: COVID-19 has impacted job satisfaction

Responses to the survey questions indicate that COVID-19 has impacted job satisfaction. Sixteen (94%) participants reported that COVID-19 had at least somewhat impacted their job satisfaction. Four (23%) participants reported that COVID-19 had completely impacted their job satisfaction. Due to only one (5%) participant working remotely prior to COVID-19, there was

not enough data to compare whether or not individuals working remotely due to COVID-19 had lower job satisfaction than those who were not sent home to work remotely due to COVID-19.

Research suggests that the work implications resulting from COVID-19 have a direct influence on employee performance (Narayanamurthy & Tortorella, 2021). The same research exploring the impact of COVID-19 on employee performance in individuals working remotely noted that when employees work remotely job satisfaction is likely to be higher (Narayanamurthy & Tortorella, 2021). The results of this study did not differentiate between positive or negative impact on job satisfaction due to COVID-19, only the degree of impact COVID-19 had on job satisfaction. Regardless, the results of this study support the literature in that COVID-19 has impacted job satisfaction in individuals who work remotely.

Theme 2: The Voluntary Nature of Remote Working Impacts Job Satisfaction

Responses to the survey questions indicate that participants voluntarily working remotely have higher job satisfaction than those involuntarily working remotely. All participants working remotely voluntarily (six or 35%) reported being at least mostly satisfied with their job. Most participants remote working involuntarily (seven or 63%) reported only being somewhat satisfied with their job.

Remote working was traditionally done on a voluntary basis (Chang et al., 2021). The arrival of COVID-19 changed the voluntary nature of remote working. Kaduk et al. (2019) found that voluntary remote work is associated with higher job satisfaction, but involuntary remote work is not clearly associated with lower job satisfaction. This slightly contradicts the results of this study. The literature is supported in that remote working on a voluntary basis results in a

higher job satisfaction, but the results of this study indicate that remote working on an involuntary basis result in lower job satisfaction.

Theoretical Connection

The social exchange theory was one theoretical framework tied to this study. This theory involves exchanges between individuals in which costs are traded for rewards, where costs are defined as something of value while rewards are defined as something needed or valued (Redmond, 2015). The rewards of greater work-life balance and job flexibility associated with working remotely may contribute to the levels of job satisfaction reported by participants. Continued employment during COVID-19 due to working remotely may also contribute to participants reported levels of job satisfaction.

A second theory tied to this study was the organizational adaptation theory. The organizational adaptation theory is based on an organization's need to adapt to its environment in order to survive, where an organization ideally adapts or changes before the need to adapt becomes evident (Boin et al., 2015). Many organizations had to rapidly adapt to the changing environment with the arrival COVID-19. This was supported in participant responses that applied to working remotely prior to COVID-19 and working remotely due to COVID-19. Almost all participants (fourteen or 82%) did not work remotely prior to COVID-19, but sixteen (94%) participants were working remotely due to COVID-19.

Conclusions and Leadership Implications

The results of this study reinforce research that claims there is a relationship between job satisfaction and working remotely. The results of this study are important, because they support

the benefits of remote working to both employee and employer. The results begin to explore the impact COVID-19 has had on remote workers' job satisfaction. Based on a review of the data, the researcher has made several leadership implications.

Conclusion 1: There is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and remote working. No participants indicated that they were not satisfied at all with their job. Only one (5%) participant indicated that remote working had no impact on their job satisfaction.

Implication: Leadership has a responsibility to provide a suitable work environment for their employees. A suitable work environment leads to satisfied employees and low turnover. Research indicates that allowing employees to work remotely may provide a suitable work environment in that it provides benefits such as job-related well-being and work-life balance (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). Personality types have been linked to remote working and job satisfaction, so this should also be considered by leadership where a remote working agreement may be considered (Smith et al., 2018). Understanding the variables involved with remote working and job satisfaction is crucial for leadership if it wants to maintain a satisfied employee base.

Conclusion 2: COVID-19 and its change to the working environment has impacted job satisfaction.

Implication: Leadership has the responsibility of determining whether or not employees who are working remotely should continue to do so once it is safe to return to previous work environments, such as the traditional office space. With the awareness of the relationship between job satisfaction and remote working, leadership may be inclined to continue with a

remote working environment for its employees. Leadership should also maintain awareness that other factors, such as personal preferences, will impact the degree to which an employee may be satisfied with their job remote working.

Recommendations for Future Research

Additional research is needed to explore the relationship between job satisfaction and remote working and the impact COVID-19 has had on job satisfaction in individuals who work remotely. Research could be expanded to include participants outside of a graduate program. Future research is necessary with a larger sample size to include additional participants who work remotely different increments of time throughout the week. A sample size that includes participants who worked remotely prior to COVID-19 is necessary for comparative purposes.

A qualitative study utilizing interviews is also recommended for future reference. Conducting a qualitative study would allow for a broader range of responses and may provide additional insight on the relationship between remote working and job satisfaction. Participants would be able to divulge further data, especially regarding the impact of COVID-19, if open-ended questions were involved.

Summary

The researcher utilized an online survey to collect data from participants to explore the relationship between job satisfaction and remote working along with the potential impact of COVID-19. Theoretical frameworks and literature were tied to the results. With the increase in individuals performing their jobs outside of the traditional office space, it is important for leadership to understand the connection between working remotely, job satisfaction, and the two

variables' implications for employees and employers in order to maintain a satisfactory professional environment.

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