

The Impact of Telework on the Employee Well-Being: A Case Study of Zain Iraq

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of telework on employee well-being in Zain Iraq Telecom Company. Using a convenience sampling technique, Data was collected through questioner from the study sample and analyzed using descriptive and analytical methods. The study found strong evidence that telework contributes to employee well-being in Zain Iraq Telecom. Telework significantly impacts well-being as a total and also in each dimension.

The results provide Zain Iraq Telecom Company insights into how telework enables Zain Iraq Telecom management to enhance the well-being of its employees. The study's primary value lies in its ability to provide evidence that telework plays a significant role in employee well-being in Iraq, particularly in Zain Iraq Telecom. Since there was a lack of such study in the Iraqi context, this study can provide a theoretical basis for future researchers as well as practical implications for managers.

Keywords: Telework, Employee Well-Being, Zain Iraq Telecom Company

1. Introduction

Employee well-being, both physical and mental, is crucial, and as stressed in studies, employee well-being impacts the success of an organization. For instance, it has been reported that employees who feel good and deal with less stress at work and at home are more likely to experience satisfaction towards their work, and this can significantly affect their well-being and also their organization (Koubova and Buchko, 2013). Even though the factors of engaging at work, career satisfaction, and subjective well-being are showing judicious relationships with each other while also demonstrating an inclination towards showing consistency among individuals over time, among scholars and practitioners, employee engagement is their major concern. This owes to the fact that engaged workers appear to have a greater level of motivation. A significant amount of their time working. Still, past studies on life satisfaction or well-being were focusing on non-work populations (e.g., patients, children, students, and/or adolescents) (Ferreira et al., 2021). (Felstead & Henseke, 2017) indicates that while we may not witness a full-bodied revolution, the detachment of work from a place is undoubtedly an important aspect of the changing nature of work in the twenty-first century. It is therefore a topic that deserves close and well-founded attention by those who read and write for journals such as new technology and work and employment. As such, this paper considers that in the field of management, lack of concern for employee well-being has become a critical gap that more research efforts are supposed to shed light on and determine which dimensions to focus on.

2. The Study Problem

Work-from-home arrangements will likely expand beyond the tech world — and beyond the pandemic. Executives at about 1,750 firms from a variety of industries across the country expect 10% of full-time employees to telework every workday after the pandemic ends, according to the May monthly panel survey by economists at the Atlanta Fed, Stanford University, and the University of Chicago. The executives expect 30% of their workforce to telework at least one day a week after the pandemic, triple the 10% rate before (Merrifield, 2020).

In a survey his team conducted, nearly all companies interviewed said they intend to continue offering teleworking or expand its use in the future (Adams et al., 2019). The possibility of teleworking has traditionally been seen as a way to enhance the quality of working life. Because teleworking provides an opportunity to take care of family members (Suppramaniam et al., 2010). In contrast, frequent interruptions from home, working longer hours, or more days per week negatively affect an individual's work-life balance (Bailey & Kurland, 2002).

Hence, combining work and family commitments has become one of the most important challenges facing teleworkers. This may have a negative impact on individual workers' satisfaction with telework and their overall productivity. Although previous studies have shown that teleworkers experience higher job satisfaction, the antecedents of satisfaction have been ambiguous and poorly researched (Giménez-Nadal et al., 2018). With the expansion of high-speed internet over recent decades, an increasing number of people are working from home. However, there is no consensus on how working from home affects workers' well-being in the literature (Song & Gao, 2018).

On the field side, and due to the implementation of the telework strategy for the first time in Zain Iraq Telecom Company, the researcher found an opportunity to conduct this study to see if there is an impact of adopting this strategy on the Employee well-being in Zain Iraq Telecom Company. From here, the problem of the study can be embodied; through the following main question:

Does the telework strategy impact Employee well-being in the Zain Iraq Telecom Company?

The following sub-questions are derived from it:

- 1- What are the perceptions of the respondents towards the variables of the study in Zain Iraq Telecom Company?
- 2- Are telework impact the Employee well-being in Zain Iraq Telecom Company?
- 3- Are there significant differences in the impact of telework on Employee well-being due to employee Gender and experience years in Zain Iraq Telecom Company?

3. Literature Review

Telework is a broad and complex phenomenon that lacks a commonly accepted definition. Researchers used many terms to express the content of The work done from places other than a traditional office space has been defined as telework, including, for example, Work from home (Arlinghaus & Nachreiner, 2014), Mobile work (Crawford et al.,2011), Telework (Messenger & Gschwind, 2016), Home-based telework (Harris, 2003), Remote working (Grant et al., 2013), Homeworking (Predeteanu-Dragne et al., 2020), Working anytime, anywhere (Messenger et al., 2017), New Ways of Work (Popma, 2013), flexible work arrangements (Thompson et al.,2015).

Therefore, the absence of a shared understanding of work performed outside of the conventional working place creates difficulties in studying this phenomenon. Despite the difference in terms of naming, there are some commonalities between them, especially with regard to the essence of this type of work, which is completely different from work in workplace offices.

Telework arrangements can vary greatly for different workers. They can be completely or partially distant; they may work from a home office, co-working space, or other location; they may be increasingly geographically distant from the organization or clients they serve (Adams et al., 2019). In our article, the focus was on telework, which is working from the home office, accordingly, telework is defined as work that is performed from different locations (such as a home) that enables workers to access their labor activities by the use of information and communication technologies (Perez et al., 2003). It has been considered an alternative way of organizing work. By offering the possibility to work anywhere and anytime,

Telework has attracted the attention of both academics and practitioners. It has been seen as a win-win scenario for employees and employers, making it possible to choose from different talents, reduce real estate costs, motivate employees, and maintain employee work–family balance (Madsen, 2003). Previous studies have revealed a number of multifaceted implications and advantages of teleworking for individuals, organizations, and society , these advantages include time planning freedom (Nätti, et al. 2011); increased autonomy (Harpaz, 2002); reduced informal communication (Khalifa & Davison, 2000); increased family and leisure time (Johnson et al., 2007); lower stress (Fonner & Roloff, 2010); improved productivity (Martinez-Sanchez et al., 2008); increased job satisfaction, reduced commute time (Tremblay & Thomsin, 2012); reduced

travel and other costs and increased employment opportunities for women with children, students, and disabled persons (Morgan, 2004); and reduced traffic congestion and air pollution (Handy and Mokhtarian, 1996).

Studies have demonstrated the importance of the extent to which work is carried out away from the conventional workplace for workers' well-being which increases rapidly initially and then starts to level off the greater the level of detachment (Golden and Veiga, 2005). Telework has been seen as a win-win scenario for the working individual and employers alike, making it possible to choose from different talents, reduce real estate costs, motivate the working individual, and maintain a balance between work and family (Abrams, 2019).

Many public organizations apply telework practices, as an organizational innovation that is expected to improve working conditions. The use of information and communication technologies to perform work in an alternative workplace enhances the flexibility of performance, also reducing recruitment and training costs, as flexible work enhances morale, reduces employee turnover, as well as a high retention rate, which reduces recruitment and training costs in the organization. Successful organizations look for the best workers and try to keep them. In turn, job seekers want more than just high pay, they want challenging, interesting, supportive, and flexible work environments. Which means having teleworkers with higher morale, work ethic, and greater loyalty to the organization. Organizations that adopt telework achieve a clear competitive advantage compared to those that do not adopt it (Meroño-Cerdán, 2017).

Lim & Teo (2000) believes that the application of telework practices abound in professions and businesses that do not require direct interaction with the public or the existence of a special place to deal with customers, such as marketing, linguistic and spelling revision of publications, translation work, accounting and financial work, designing web pages, And many other professions .For his part, (Hassabo, 2019) believes that telework practices ensure uninterrupted work, allow continuity of work without the need for movement, and thus avoid a large number of delays associated with traffic and severe weather, or the outbreak of a pandemic, or any other crisis that leads to Close the central office location for any period of time, allowing teleworkers to focus better on their work.

The survey data conducted revealed that shifting to remote work was also beneficial for both people's wallets and in reducing their carbon footprint. Among COVID-19 remote workers, 86% report that they previously commuted by car and are now saving, on average, 46.3 minutes per day. In all, we estimate that these post-COVID teleworkers save 32.9 million hours of car commuting per day, this saving in commute time means 890 million fewer miles traveled each day. Using an average operating cost for fuel, maintenance, and repairs of 20.54 cents per mile, this translates to \$183 million per day in direct commuting costs. In addition, these costs to the traveler do not include the cost to others of loss of life and property from accidents, or the environmental cost of pollution, or the costs of congestion. Economists estimate the externalities cost per mile to be 18.38 cents per mile, for external cost savings of \$164 million per day. The standard cost-benefit assumption is to evaluate the savings from less time spent driving at \$12.50 an hour, which totals \$411 million per day (Ozimek, 2020).

de Vries et al., (2019) highlight the importance of telework through the advantages it brings, which are embodied in allowing employees to be more efficient, enhancing management results, reducing

transportation costs, and reinforcing the employee's quality of life. From the point of view of (Jacob & Julia, 2021), organizations were able to manage the participation of their employees in work sites outside the official offices, as managing employees is one of the most important things for achieving the success of telework. Organizations must also manage the moral stimulation of employees cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally towards achieving organizational results, and enhancing the psychological well-being of workers; because this contributes to increasing the commitment of workers, improving work performance, and then increasing the organization's productivity and profitability.

On the other hand, literature on telework reveals that employees worry that their career prospects can be reduced when teleworking because of reduced visibility (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012) or social isolation (Golden & Veiga, 2005). Teleworking is perceived as a major advantage for those employees, both women, and men, who do not want to put their full careers on hold and who want to spend more time with family (Madsen, 2003).

Gallup scientists have been exploring the demands of a life well-lived since the mid-20th century. In partnership with leading economists, psychologists, and other acclaimed scholars, Rath & Jim (2010) set out to explore common elements of well-being that transcend countries and cultures. These items are the currency of life that matters. It does not include all the nuances of what is important in life, but it does represent five broad categories that are essential to most people. Conflicting views and contradicting evidence exist in the extant literature as well. One concern regarding telework is that lack of interactions with coworkers may result in social isolation and worsen individual and group performance (Sparrowe et al. 2001).

Being "out of sight, out of mind," teleworkers have less face time with managers, which can endanger their evaluations, limit their opportunities for promotion, and increase their role stress (Weinert, Maier, and Laumer 2015). (Basile & Beauregard, 2016) believes that when work and home activities take place in the same physical space, the physical, temporal, and psychological boundaries between work and home can become blurred. Teleworkers find it difficult to be aware of organizational values and goals, they are less visible and feel weaker management support (Cooper and Kurland, 2002). Consequently, this lower visibility reduces the career opportunities of teleworkers (Khalifa and Davison, 2000). Telework may increase SWB by giving employees more flexibility and autonomy, which could allow them to better manage and organize their time and work more productively (Kemerling 2002).

Basile & Beauregard (2016) study found that Teleworkers use physical, temporal, behavioral, and communicative strategies to re-establish boundaries similar to those in office environments. Although Teleworkers can generally develop strategies that align boundaries to their preferences for segmentation or integration, employees with greater autonomy and control over the work are better able to do so.

Bloom et al. (2014) compared the performance and satisfaction outcomes of employees who had volunteered to take part in a randomized control trial of 994 call center operators. The working-at-home group significantly outperformed their office-bound counterparts since they spent longer logged onto the system (extensive work effort) and answered more calls per minute (intensive work effort). Despite work intensification, levels of job satisfaction also rose, and job turnover fell. The only downside was that at teleworkers' chances of promotion were reduced.

Moore (2006) shows that working from home does not improve quality of life concerning subjective or objective well-being and reports that homeworkers with young children doing menial, low-paid work are more stressed. Previous research also suggests that the effect of flexible working differs by gender: the work–family conflict and stress are more pronounced for women and single parents because they are more likely to work at home for childcare reasons (Hoque and Kirkpatrick 2003). Information technologies weaken face-to-face communication with colleagues, which is an important source of social interaction (Offstein et al., 2010).

However, border theorists argue that the transition from home to work is not always easy. The outcome of interest here is the achievement of work-life balance which is defined as 'satisfaction and good functioning of work and home, with a minimum of role conflict' (Ollier-Malaterre & Foucreault, 2017). It is argued that this is more difficult where the borders between home and work are intentionally blurred as is the case for teleworkers. The effect is that work pressures spill over into non-work life as reflected in the inability to 'switch off and the difficulties encountered in unwinding at the end of the workday. The prediction of border theory, then, is that telework will heighten negative work-home spill-overs as suggested by several qualitative studies (Mirchandani, 2000).

Contradicting evidence, however, indicates that blending personal and professional life increases negotiation in families and leads to a higher level of stress. A few studies have shown that telework enhances employee well-being by allowing employees to take work–family dual roles simultaneously (Azarbouyeh & Naini 2014).

Another concern regarding telework is that it can intensify work–family conflicts and increase stress because it blurs the boundaries between home and workplace (Russell, O'Connell & McGinnity 2009). Organizational surveys have revealed the existence of a positive association between the intensity of telework and other benefits such as reducing the strain of working under time pressure and enhancing the ability to alter work arrangements to suit personal circumstances (Wheatley, 2012).

A study of 273 teleworkers from sales, marketing, accounting, engineering, and other departments in a company found that employees whose jobs were highly complex but did not require significant collaboration or social support performed better when teleworking than when working in the company's office (Golden & Gajendran, 2019).

Using data from 2010, 2012, and 2013 American Time Use Survey Well-Being Modules study examines how subjective well-being varies among wage/salary workers between working at home and working in the workplace using individual fixed-effects models. The study found that compared to working in the workplace, bringing work home on weekdays is associated with less happiness, and telework on weekdays or weekends/holidays is associated with more stress (Song & Gao, 2018). The impact of working at home on subjective well-being also varies by parental status and gender. Parents, especially fathers, report a lower level of subjective well-being when working at home on weekdays but a higher level of subjective well-being when working at home on weekends/holidays. Non-parents' subjective well-being does not vary much by where they work on weekdays, but on weekends/holidays, childless males feel less pain whereas childless females feel more stressed when teleworking instead of working in the workplace.

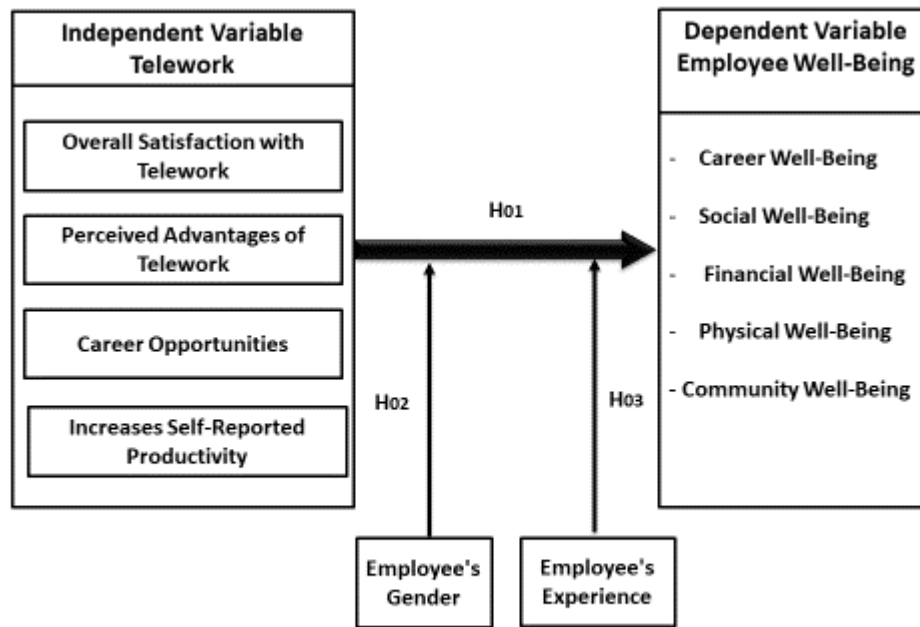
4. Research Methodology

This study presents a virtual model based upon the review of literature. The model includes two variables, the independent variable is Telework (Overall satisfaction with telework, perceived advantages of telework, career opportunities, and increases self-reported productivity), while the dependent variable is Employee Well-Being (Career Well-Being, Social Well-Being, Financial Well-Being, Physical Well-Being & Community Well-Being). The model reflects the expected impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable. After data collection and unloading, the data was analyzed and appropriate statistical treatments were performed to test the validity of the hypotheses, such as Pearson correlation coefficient, Cronbach alpha coefficient and One-way ANOVA.

3.1 The study Model and Hypotheses

3.1.1 The study Model.

Figure 1. The Study Model



3.1.2 The Study Sample. To determine the requested respondents from a population (N) size of 1233, a convenient sample technique applied, only 152 respondents was selected from the study population using Skaran tables (Skaran, 2018).

3.1.3 The Study Hypotheses

H0.1 There is no statistically significant impact for Telework on employee well-being in Zain Iraq Telecom Company.

In light of the results of the multiple regression analysis shown in Table (1), the value of (R²) is

0.453 and the independent variable (Telework) is represented by its four dimensions (Time planning skills, Supervisor's trust, and support, Workplace suitability, Access to organization documents) explains 45.3% of the dependent variable (employees' well-being). The estimated Sample Regression Equation (SRP) model can be written as:

$$Y = 0.922 + 0.290x_1 + 0.161x_2 + 0.153x_3 + 0.440x_4$$

Table 1

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	0.673 ^a	0.453	0.435	0.58528		
a. Predictors: (Constant), Time planning skills, Supervisor's trust and support, Workplace suitability, Access to organization documents						
ANOVA ^b						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	43.884	4	8.397	24.513	0.000 ^a
	Residual	51.797	147	0.343		
	Total	95.681	152			
a. Predictors: (Constant), Time planning skills, Supervisor's trust and support, Workplace suitability, Access to organization documents						
b. Dependent Variable: Employee Wellbeing						
Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.922	0.298		3.309	0.003
	Time planning skills	0.257	0.065	0.290	3.965	0.000
	Supervisor's trust and support	0.123	0.064	0.161	1.955	0.035
	Workplace suitability	0.115	0.057	0.153	2.086	0.014
	Access to organization documents	0.290	0.067	0.440	4.557	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: Employee Wellbeing						

It was inferred that the independent variable (Telework) represents the partial impact on the dependent variable, Employee Well-Being, The results show that the independent variable is statistically significantly predictive of the dependent variable (i.e.) $p < .0005$ (i.e., the regression model fit the data well). Based on the value of R & R² we can predict the independent variable.

H0.2 There is no statistically significant difference between the average responses of the employees of the study sample in both Telework and employee well-being due to gender and years of experience in Zain Iraq Telecom Company.

Hence, this model is suitable for testing the hypothesis of the study.T-Test was used to find the Significant differences in the Telework impact on the employee's well-being, due to the employee's gender.

Table 2

variable	class	Mean	Standard deviation	differences between Means	T Value	Significance
Time planning skills	Males	147.973	30.062	-14.581	2.474	0.031
	Females	133.288	33.393			
Supervisor's trust and support	Males	37.882	7.208	-0.048	-0.038	0.970
	Females	37.929	8.595			
Workplace suitability	Males	31.481	4.272	-1.167	1.639	0.103
	Females	32.649	4.538			
Access to organization documents	Males	44.982	9.286	1.683	1.062	0.290
	Females	43.298	10.493			
Telework as a whole	Males	37.900	7.521	0.415	- 0.320	0.749
	Females	38.316	8.728			
Employee Well-Being	Males	49.620	10.850	-4.955	2.238	0.026
	Females	44.351	12.778			

It is clear from the table that there are statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($p < .0005$) between the average responses of the study sample in time planning skills according to the gender variable in favor of males.

There are also statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($p < .0005$) between the average responses of the study sample in employee well-being according to the gender variable in favor of males as well. The researcher believes that there is more than one explanation for this result, foremost among which is the continued emphasis on the values of masculine society and the supremacy of men over women, even in light of these difficult conditions that resulted from the pandemic, which necessitate cooperation and solidarity in bearing family burdens together, and the matter did not stop there. Rather, the burdens on women increased in the kitchen to prepare meals due to the closure of restaurants and the burdens of cleaning and arranging the house due to the cessation of domestic maids, and the mother became the substitute for the teacher in kindergarten, school, and university in education due to the closure of all educational institutions and the declaration of a state of emergency in the whole country, as the contribution of the man in bearing these burdens in general weak and limited.

H0.3 There is no statistically significant difference between the average responses of the employees of the study sample in both Telework and employee well-being due to years of experience in Zain Iraq Telecom Company.

ANOVA Test was used to find the significant differences in the Telework impact on the employee's well-being, due to the employee's experience. The results shown in table 3.

Table 3

Telework impact on the employee's well-being
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	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.510	4	.653	.766	.549
Within Groups	134.775	147	.852		
Total	137.285	152			

Homogeneous Subsets

Telework impact on the employee's well-being			
			Subset for alpha = 0.05
	Work experience	N	1
Tukey HSD ^{a,b}	<1 year	7	3.6585
	2-5 years	36	3.9100
	6-10 years	50	3.7743
	10-15	31	3.6800
	Above 15 years	28	4.1722
	Sig.		

Hence the P value is not less than 0.05. Accept H03. There are no statistically significant differences in the impact of Telework on employee well-being due to years of experience, which means that experience does not have a significant role in determining the difference in this impact. This result can be explained by the fact that the method of Telework is applied for the first time in organizations operating in Iraq, including the Zain Telecom Company. Therefore, the effect of years of experience did not appear due to the similarity of all employees despite the different years of work in the company.

5. Conclusion

This study focused on determining the impact of Telework on employee well-being. A review of human resource management literature in this field provided a clear understanding that the trend towards Telework is growing at an accelerated pace, driven by the effects of the Covid-19 crisis and its subsequent repercussions, as well as with the support of Information and Communication Technology in addition to the desire of many decision-makers in organizations as well as employees around the world in deepening this experience and verifying its effects. In summary, this study represents an attempt to explore the impact of Telework on employee well-being.

Zain decision-makers must ensure that employees have a high level of awareness of Telework in order to have a high level of well-being. In the same way, employees feel that company decision-makers supports Telework opportunities, they tend to be more dedicated to their organization. Policies, procedures, and implementation must be effective and positive. On the basis of study findings, conclude that Telework greatly impacts the employees well-being in the company. Therefore, these findings contribute to enabling decision-makers in Zain Iraq Telecom Company to devote the benefits of Telework applications in employee well-being.

6. The Study Contributions

This study may be an important reference for academics and researchers on the subject of Telework and its impact on employees' well-being because studies in this field are few. It highlights the phenomenon of employee welfare as a new phenomenon that has not received full research attention in Arab organizations, which opens new research horizons for future research in this important humanitarian field by urging and motivating other researchers to conduct more research and studies related to the variables of the study.

This paper also presents new evidence on the impact of telework and highlights decision-makers and employers to re-evaluate the benefits of telework. As it is assumed that the decision-makers in this company will benefit from the results to determine the impact of Telework on employee well-being, the results of this study contribute to providing an important field database that serves as a guide on how to employ the dimensions of the Telework strategy in the quality of professional life for employees.

Finally, the trend of Telework is a recent phenomenon in the Iraqi work environment and there is not enough empirical practical data set from different companies. Some post-pandemic surveys indicate that companies that have adopted a Telework strategy have enjoyed profits to some extent, but these surveys lack rigorous empirical models, so these companies need to solve these problems to create a solid growth strategy that can drive growth in the Telework business model.

7. The study limitations

The originality of this study has made assumptions (Rath, & Harter, 2010) that there are five components to employee well-being. Since this study is the first - according to the researcher's knowledge - in the Arab administrative literature to explain the different perspectives on adopting the philosophy of Telework, there are some limitations that must be reserved when interpreting the results. The first limitation is the sample size used in this study. This study was limited to the sample size of employees only and was conducted in Zain Iraq Telecom Company, which limited the generalizability of the study findings. Future research should combine data from other similar companies to provide more generalizability to these findings. The second limitation is that the statistical differences in this study were limited to the variable of gender and years of experience only. Future research should seek to determine whether there is a difference in perceptions of the study sample depending on age, income level, and job title. The third limitation is that the study is based on a questionnaire and it is very likely that the respondents gave biased answers and it is not up to the researcher to avoid this bias. Finally, this study seeks to test the causal relationship rather than the links between Telework and well-being on the job. Therefore, the possibility that unobserved variables affected both the propensity to telework and the observed outcomes was excluded. In other words, the study is consistent with an attempt to estimate whether a change in the workplace leads to changes in job-related well-being.

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