



Analyzing Perceptions of Telecommuting: an Empirical Study in Nepal

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Abstract: Telecommuting, defined as the utilization of computers to execute work remotely or outside the conventional office setting, has become increasingly prevalent in contemporary work environments. This study focused on the feasibility of implementing telecommuting practices in Nepal within the context of a multinational Japanese IT company with branches in Japan, Thailand, and Nepal. In response to the challenges posed by time zone differences, the company had historically employed two to three shift rotations, necessitating early morning and late-night office hours. However, the cultural norms in Nepal, especially concerning late working hours, particularly for female employees, necessitated a reconsideration of the company's operational model. To address this, the organization was contemplating the implementation of telecommuting, a practice already established in IT companies in developed nations. A comprehensive questionnaire was distributed to 85 employees to gauge their attitudes toward telecommuting. The findings indicated a favorable disposition among the majority of employees toward telecommuting, with married, child bearing and female employees displaying a higher preference for this work arrangement. Detailed discussion has been done and conclusion of the findings has been presented based on which change program has been recommended for the organization.

Keywords: *Telecommuting, Telework, Work from Home.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Human behavior is inherently unpredictable, exhibiting variations not only among individuals but also within the same person across different temporal points. The pursuit of heightened productivity stands as a perennial goal for any organization (Jotaba, Fernandes, Gunkel, & Kraus, 2022). Contrary to the conventional notion that increased budget allocations lead to enhanced productivity, contemporary perspectives challenge this belief. Various non-monetary factors play pivotal roles in bolstering employee and organizational productivity. Among these, the provision of freedom emerges as a significant determinant (Weisberg & Dent, 2016). Organizational practices that afford employees a sense of autonomy foster feelings of trust,



happiness, encouragement, and motivation, ultimately contributing to heightened productivity. Contented employees willingly channel their knowledge towards organizational goals, and when unburdened by rigid rules, they exhibit greater accountability and responsibility, resulting in increased productivity (Aziz-Ur-Rehman & Siddiqui, 2019). Recognizing employees as valuable assets, organizations ought to transcend traditional beliefs and rules to cultivate motivation and extract optimal performance from their workforce. Empowering employees with the autonomy to determine when and how to work yields substantial benefits, allowing them to prioritize tasks and allocate time as per necessity. This approach aids employees in achieving a balance between personal, social, and professional spheres (Davidescu, Apostu, Paul, & Casuneanu, 2020).

Telecommuting emerges as a strategic means to provide employees with the sought-after freedom. Defined as the utilization of computers to perform work at a remote location, telecommuting is particularly suitable for tasks that rely extensively on computer use and entail minimal human interaction. The rapid advancements in Information Technology, computer software, hardware, and internet speed have substantially facilitated the adoption of telecommuting. However, the feasibility of telecommuting hinges on the nature of the job, as roles requiring extensive human interaction and physical presence remain unsuitable for remote work (Golden & Geisler, 2006).

An essential aspect of implementing telecommuting lies in ensuring mutual benefits for both employees and employers. While IT companies traditionally adhere to stringent rules and regulations to maintain competitiveness and extract optimal performance from their workforce, there is a growing recognition that fostering a sense of trust and flexibility can be equally advantageous. The conventional practice of dictating working hours and environments may inadvertently lead to unproductive and disengaged employees who may seek alternative employment opportunities more frequently. Embracing telecommuting can serve as a motivational factor, inspiring employees to contribute their best work in response to the trust placed in them (Weisberg & Dent, 2016).

However, concerns regarding the effectiveness of telecommuting persist, with skeptics arguing that employees working outside the office may become lax and exploit the freedom provided by the organization. The fear is that individuals may prioritize personal tasks over official responsibilities, potentially hindering productivity. Additionally, the absence of constant managerial monitoring poses a perceived drawback. Nonetheless, effective communication and regular progress updates from telecommuting employees can mitigate these concerns (Golden & Veiga, 2005).

As posited by Piskurich (1996) and Handy and Mokhtarian (1995), telecommuting yields tangible benefits such as reduced transportation costs associated with commuting to the workplace and diminished time and stress related to daily commutes. In the context of Nepal, where commuting to work is often encumbered by geographical, political, social, and economic factors, telecommuting stands as a viable solution. The perceived advantages of telecommuting in Nepal include flexible working hours, heightened job productivity and satisfaction, reduced



job-related stress, and increased personal time due to minimized commuting durations. Acknowledging and harnessing the potential of telecommuting can prove instrumental in optimizing employee well-being and organizational productivity within the unique socio-economic landscape of Nepal.

2. RELATED WORK

Telecommuting has become a standard practice within IT companies in developed nations, with a substantial body of research focused on this sector in those regions (Martínez-Sánchez, Pérez-Pérez, De-Luis-Carnicer, & Vela-Jiménez, 2007). However, the adoption and feasibility of telecommuting practices in IT companies in Nepal remain largely unexplored (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2020). This study seeks to fill this void by investigating the attitude of IT employees in Nepal towards telecommuting and assessing their views on whether it can enhance productivity, job satisfaction, and employee retention. The research exclusively targets employees within an IT company in Nepal, acknowledging the unique context of an underdeveloped country where telecommuting practices have yet to gain prominence.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research employed a pragmatic research methodology involving the direct collection of information from multinational Japanese IT Company in Nepal, focusing on the attitude of IT employees towards telecommuting. To initiate the data collection process, interviews were conducted with various employees within the organization, serving as a means to gather foundational information and insights. Subsequently, data collection was executed through a Google survey sheet, chosen for its alignment with the preferences of IT employees who typically favor digital platforms over traditional paper questionnaires. The collected data underwent analysis using SPSS to conduct relevant statistical tests.

The questionnaire commenced with a clear definition and explanation of the term "telecommuting" to ensure a shared understanding among respondents. The questionnaire comprised two distinct sections for information gathering. The first section focused on collecting demographic information, utilizing nominal scale categorizations to distinguish respondents into mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive sets. The second section incorporated questions derived from the operationalization of attitude towards telecommuting, employing a Likert scale to facilitate certain arithmetical operations on the collected data.

Face validity was employed to assess the validity of the questionnaire, wherein five IT employees were queried about their comprehension of the questions. The feedback indicated a clear understanding of the questions. The questionnaire was distributed to 85 employees within the company, and all participants responded, constituting a 100% response rate. Data analysis was conducted utilizing SPSS to perform the necessary statistical analyses for deriving meaningful insights from the collected information.

The reliability of the scale employed in this research was assessed through the calculation of Cronbach's Alpha value using SPSS. Typically, a value exceeding 0.70 is considered



acceptable for internal consistency (Taherdoost, 2016). In this study, the calculated Cronbach’s Alpha value was 0.783, as displayed in Table 1, indicating a high level of internal consistency within the scale.

Table 1. Cronbach’s Alpha

Construct	Cronbach’s Alpha	No. of Items
Attitude towards Telecommuting	0.783	13

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Out of the 85 respondents, approximately 73 percent identified as males, while 27 percent identified as females. Approximately 94 percent of respondents were single, whereas 6 percent were married. Regarding parental status, 96.5 percent did not have children, and only 3.5 percent had children. In terms of professional roles, the majority, constituting 80 percent, identified themselves as team members, around 10 percent as project leaders, approximately 8 percent as team leaders, and roughly 2 percent as managers. Table 2 provides a comprehensive look at the demographic makeup of the respondents.

Table 2. Demographic Cross Tabulation

Demographic Cross Tabulation					
	Male		Female		
	n	%	n	%	Total
Married	3	4.8	2	8.7	5
Not Married	59	95.2	21	91.3	80
Total	62	100	23	100	85
Have Child	3	4.8	0	0.0	3
Do not have child	59	95.2	23	100.0	82
Total	62	100	23	100	85
Team Member	50	80.6	18	78.3	68
Team Leader	3	4.8	4	17.4	7
Project Leader	7	11.3	1	4.3	8
Junior Manager	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Senior Manager	2	3.2	0	0.0	2
Total	62	100	23	100	85

Attitude towards Telecommuting

About 76.5 percent of respondents believed that their work could be effectively performed through telecommuting. Conversely, around 23.5 percent expressed the belief that their work cannot be adequately carried out while telecommuting. Nearly half of the respondents indicated they were not aware of anyone currently telecommuting, while the other half acknowledged knowing someone engaged in telecommuting practices. These demographic insights provide a comprehensive overview of the composition of the respondent pool, offering valuable context



for interpreting the subsequent findings related to attitudes and perceptions towards telecommuting within the organization.

Figure 1 depicts the respondents' attitudes towards telecommuting, revealing that over 75 percent agree or strongly agree with the concept. Approximately 22 percent express a neutral stance, while less than 3 percent manifest a negative attitude. This indicative data underscores a prevailing positive attitude towards telecommuting within the organizational context.

I am in favor of telecommuting as an alternative work arrangement.
(85 responses)

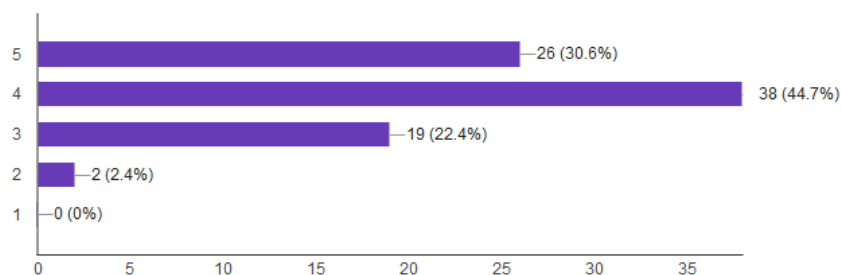


Figure 1: In Favor of Telecommuting

Table 3 further elucidates the gender-based distribution of attitudes, highlighting that a higher percentage of female employees (87%) favor telecommuting compared to their male counterparts (71%). This observation aligns with extant literature, which commonly reports that women tend to perceive the benefits of telecommuting more favorably than men.

Table 3. Favoring Telecommuting Based on Gender

In favor of telecommuting?					
	Male		Female		Total
	n	%	n	%	
Strongly Agree	20	32.3	6	26.1	26
Agree	24	38.7	14	60.9	38
Neutral	16	25.8	3	13.0	19
Disagree	2	3.2	0	0.0	2
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Total	62	100	23	100	85

Marital status, as delineated in Table 4, reveals that 80 percent of married employees exhibit a positive attitude towards telecommuting, while approximately 75 percent of unmarried employees share a similar perspective. This finding also aligns with extant literature, which commonly reports that married individuals are more inclined to support telecommuting.



Table 4. Favoring Telecommuting Based on Marital Status

In favor of telecommuting?					
	Married		Unmarried		Total
	n	%	n	%	
Strongly Agree	3	60.0	23	28.8	26
Agree	1	20.0	37	46.3	38
Neutral	0	0.0	19	23.8	19
Disagree	1	20.0	1	1.3	2
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Total	5	100	8	100	85

Table 5 underscores that all employees with children demonstrate a positive attitude towards telecommuting, while approximately 75 percent of employees without children share this positive outlook. This finding also aligns with prior research suggesting that individuals with childcare responsibilities seek flexible work schedules.

Table 5. Favoring Telecommuting Based on Having Child or Not

In favor of telecommuting?					
	Have child		Do not have child		Total
	n	%	n	%	
Strongly Agree	2	66.7	24	29.3	26
Agree	1	33.3	37	45.1	38
Neutral	0	0.0	19	23.2	19
Disagree	0	0.0	2	2.4	2
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Total	3	100	82	100	85

Likelihood of Participating in Telecommuting

Figure 2 delineates the respondents' likelihood of participating in telecommuting if offered. Around 46 percent express a strong likelihood, while approximately 31 percent indicate a moderate likelihood. A notable 20 percent adopt a neutral stance, with about 5 percent displaying reluctance to participate in telecommuting.

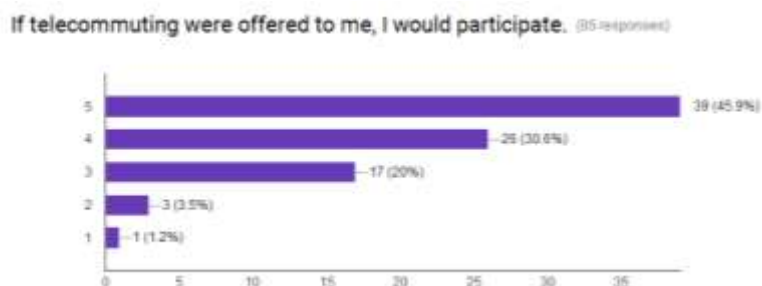


Figure 2: Likelihood of participating in telecommuting



Table 6 stratifies this likelihood based on gender, indicating that 74 percent of males and 83 percent of females express a willingness to participate in telecommuting. This once again underscores the heightened positive disposition of women towards telecommuting, aligning with prevalent findings in existing literature.

Table 6. Likelihood of Participating in Telecommuting Based on Gender

Likelihood of participating in telecommuting					
	Male		Female		
	n	%	n	%	Total
Strongly Agree	26	41.9	13	56.5	39
Agree	20	32.3	6	26.1	26
Neutral	12	19.4	4	17.4	16
Disagree	3	4.8	0	0.0	3
Strongly Disagree	1	1.6	0	0.0	1
Total	62	100	23	100	85

Tables 7 and 8 delve into marital and parental considerations. Married employees and those with children exhibit a higher likelihood of participating in telecommuting.

Table 7. Likelihood of Participating in Telecommuting Based on Marital Status

Likelihood of participating in telecommuting					
	Married		Unmarried		
	n	%	n	%	Total
Strongly Agree	4	80.0	35	43.8	39
Agree	0	0.0	26	32.5	26
Neutral	1	20.0	16	20.0	17
Disagree	0	0.0	2	2.5	2
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	1	1.3	1
Total	5	100	80	100	85

Table 8. Likelihood of Participating in Telecommuting Based on Having Child or Not

Likelihood of participating in telecommuting					
	Have child		Do not have child		
	n	%	n	%	Total
Strongly Agree	3	100	36	43.9	39
Agree	0	0.0	26	31.7	26
Neutral	0	0.0	16	19.5	16
Disagree	0	0.0	3	3.7	3
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	1	1.2	1
Total	3	0.0	82	100	85



Table 9 presents the item statistics derived from the analysis, offering insights into the mean values, standard deviations, and the number of responses for each item. The items measuring positive attitudes toward telecommuting, such as favoring telecommuting, desiring telecommuting opportunities, seeking flexibility in working hours, anticipating more time with family, expecting reduced job-related stress, perceiving positive employment benefits, anticipating increased productivity and satisfaction, improved customer service, decreased work-related expenses, and allowance for more personal time, all exhibit mean values greater than 3. Conversely, items assessing negative attitudes, such as concerns about sharing experiences with colleagues and potential disruptions from family members while telecommuting, show mean values less than 3. These results collectively indicate a prevalent positive attitude among employees toward telecommuting.

Table 9. Item Statistics

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
Deviation In favor telecommuting	4.04	0.794
Like to telecommute	4.16	0.937
Will provide flexibility	3.95	0.962
More time with family	3.67	1.084
Job stress will be reduced	3.36	1.033
Positive benefit of employment	4.07	0.799
Will be more productive	3.31	0.976
Will be more satisfied	3.38	1.012
Customer service will improve	3.38	0.873
Work-related expenses will decrease	3.52	1.13
Will allow more personal time	3.78	0.878
Family member will disturb	2.84	1.045
Unable to share experience	2.95	1.204

5. CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate a positive attitude toward telecommuting among employees in the organization. This signifies the importance of granting freedom to employees to enhance their creativity. Empowering them to make decisions about their working time and environment fosters a sense of trust, accountability, and motivation, ultimately boosting productivity. Recognizing the significance of telecommuting, the organization is urged to embrace this innovative concept in Nepal, aligning with the positive attitudes of its workforce.

However, acknowledging a portion (23.5%) of employees skeptical about telecommuting's feasibility for their tasks, the organization must conduct a comprehensive assessment. This initial step involves identifying tasks suitable for telecommuting, with a focus on the substantial female employee segment, given their favorable inclination. The prominent factors of Personal Attitude and Organizational Attitude, as revealed by the research, should guide the organization's innovative approach to telecommuting implementation.



Potential technological and other barriers, such as slow internet and power disruptions, should be addressed, and a trial phase of three months is recommended. During this period, eligible employees can engage in telecommuting, allowing for a comprehensive evaluation of productivity before and after implementation. Adequate communication channels and reporting systems should be established to address managerial concerns about effective monitoring.

Recommendation

Based on the research findings, a detailed implementation plan has been recommended. The appointment of a dedicated telecommuting coordinator, responsible for coordinating schedules, arranging equipment, and monitoring progress, has been recommended. Additionally, it was suggested to establish a committee comprising members from HR, legal, IT, and management teams to formulate policies, provide training, and evaluate the telecommuting program.

Conducting comprehensive training sessions for both employees and managers to familiarize them with telecommuting policies, procedures, and cultural nuances is essential. Given the varied nature of employees, it was advised to carefully differentiate those who are eligible for telecommuting opportunities. To overcome potential challenges, it was recommended to enhance trust levels among employees and develop effective communication channels. Leveraging technology for maintaining constant communication with telecommuting employees was also emphasized.

Identifying and confirming the necessary tools and technologies, including computers, internet connectivity, phones, and specific software, is crucial. The availability of web cameras and communication software should also be ensured. In terms of security, measures such as securing emails, protecting against viruses, and encrypting file storage were suggested. Special attention should be given to safeguarding highly confidential information and ensuring network and application security.

During the initial phase of implementation, constant communication, monitoring, and support were highlighted as crucial. This involves conducting training programs, closely monitoring employee adaptation, and ensuring equality between telecommuters and non-telecommuters. Finally, the proposed plan emphasized the importance of developing a comprehensive evaluation strategy with quantifiable goals and objectives. Continuous assessment of the program's success in terms of productivity, operating costs, employee morale, and recruitment and retention was recommended. Conducting pre and post evaluations to analyze the overall impact on both employees and the organization was also suggested.

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