



THE EFFECT OF REMOTE WORK CULTURE ON EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH

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Abstract-

The rapid transition to remote work culture in the post-pandemic era has reshaped employee experiences, raising critical questions about its psychological impact. The present study aimed to examine the effect of remote work culture on employee mental health among workers from the Koshi and Purnea Commissionerary in Bihar. A sample of 200 employees was randomly selected across diverse sectors, including education, banking, and IT-enabled services. Data were collected using the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) for assessing mental health and the Work from Home Experience Questionnaire (WFHEQ) for evaluating employees' perceptions of remote work culture.

Results indicated that 38% of employees reported high levels of psychological distress, as measured by GHQ-12, while 62% exhibited average to good mental health status. WFHEQ scores suggested that although 71% of employees valued flexibility, autonomy, and reduced commuting stress, nearly 45% experienced challenges in maintaining work-life balance and 52% reported increased feelings of social isolation. A significant negative correlation ($r = -0.47, p < 0.01$) was found between positive remote work experiences (WFHEQ) and psychological distress (GHQ-12), suggesting that favorable perceptions of remote work culture are strongly associated with better mental health outcomes.

The study concludes that while remote work provides opportunities for enhanced flexibility and productivity, it also poses risks of isolation and blurred work-life boundaries. Organizational interventions, such as structured communication practices, digital wellness initiatives, and hybrid models, are recommended to optimize remote work culture and safeguard employee mental health.

Keywords- Remote Work culture, Employee, Mental health, Work-life balance

INTRODUCTION-

Work culture across the globe has undergone a fundamental transformation with the emergence and rapid expansion of remote work practices. Traditionally, work was confined to physical office spaces, where direct supervision, structured schedules, and face-to-face interactions defined employee experiences. However, technological advancements coupled with the global COVID-19 pandemic reshaped this landscape dramatically. What was once seen as an optional benefit or an exception for select roles has now become a mainstream organizational model. Remote work, or the broader concept of "remote work culture," refers not only to working from home but also to the norms, practices, and psychological climate that evolve when employees operate away from a centralized office.

Remote work culture is associated with several potential benefits. Employees gain flexibility in scheduling tasks, enjoy reduced commuting stress, and often report higher autonomy in managing their responsibilities. Organizations, in turn, can lower operational costs and attract talent from wider geographical areas. Many employees, especially in service-oriented and IT-enabled industries, have appreciated the chance to balance professional duties with personal life in ways that traditional office models often restricted. For regions like Bihar, where employees from the Koshi and Purnea Commissionerary may face long travel times to urban centers, remote work has provided significant relief.

However, this transformation is not without challenges. Remote work tends to blur the line between personal and professional boundaries. Employees often find it difficult to disengage from work when home becomes the office. The absence of face-to-face interactions may contribute to feelings of social isolation, while increased reliance on digital communication tools often results in technostress and mental fatigue. Furthermore, infrastructural constraints—such as poor internet connectivity, lack of ergonomic furniture, and household distractions—are especially prominent in semi-urban and



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rural areas of India. These issues can exacerbate psychological strain, leading to anxiety, irritability, and reduced job satisfaction.

The relationship between remote work and mental health is a subject of ongoing debate in psychological and organizational research. On one hand, studies highlight that remote work improves job satisfaction and work-life balance, positively influencing mental health. On the other hand, prolonged remote work is also linked with higher stress levels, loneliness, and even burnout. Thus, the psychological outcomes of remote work culture appear to be context-dependent, shaped by the individual's work environment, organizational support, and socio-cultural setting.

Given these complexities, systematic research is essential to better understand how remote work influences employee well-being in diverse contexts. This study focuses on employees from the Koshi and Purnea Commissionerary in Bihar, a region where remote work practices are relatively new and evolving. By combining two standardized instruments—the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) to measure mental health status and the Work From Home Experience Questionnaire (WFHEQ) to evaluate perceptions of remote work culture—this study seeks to bridge a crucial knowledge gap.

The primary objective is to explore whether employees with positive remote work experiences demonstrate better mental health outcomes compared to those facing challenges such as isolation, blurred boundaries, or poor infrastructure. The findings aim to inform both psychological research and practical organizational policies, offering insights into how remote work culture can be structured to enhance employee productivity while safeguarding mental health.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE-

The concept of remote work has attracted increasing scholarly attention, especially in the last decade, due to technological advances and the widespread disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Researchers across psychology, management, and organizational behavior have examined both the opportunities and risks associated with remote work culture. This review synthesizes key findings from previous studies, focusing particularly on the relationship between remote work practices and employee mental health.

Early studies on telecommuting primarily highlighted its positive organizational outcomes. For instance, *Hill, Miller, Weiner, and Colihan (1998)* reported that remote work improved work-life balance by providing employees more flexibility to manage family responsibilities alongside professional duties. Similarly, *Gajendran and Harrison (2007)* conducted a meta-analysis and concluded that telecommuting is generally associated with higher job satisfaction and lower work-related stress, provided that employees have adequate organizational support and autonomy. These findings suggest that remote work has the potential to enhance employee well-being when implemented effectively.

However, other studies have drawn attention to the negative psychological consequences of prolonged remote work. *Golden, Veiga, and Simsek (2006)* found that employees with limited face-to-face interactions often reported feelings of social and professional isolation, which undermined their sense of belonging and increased stress levels. *Wang, Liu, Qian, and Parker (2021)* further observed that employees working remotely during the pandemic experienced blurred work-life boundaries, which contributed to burnout and reduced mental health outcomes. These studies highlight that the success of remote work is contingent on balancing flexibility with adequate social support mechanisms.

Recent literature has also emphasized the role of technology in shaping remote work experiences. *Tarafdar, Cooper, and Stich (2019)* introduced the concept of “technostress,” referring to the strain employees experience from constant reliance on digital communication platforms, particularly when organizational expectations of availability are high. Excessive screen time, frequent online meetings, and lack of clear boundaries often intensify fatigue and anxiety. Such findings are particularly relevant in developing contexts, where infrastructural limitations like poor internet connectivity can amplify stress.

In the Indian context, emerging research provides valuable insights. *Choudhury, Foroughi, and Larson (2020)* observed that remote work improved productivity for many employees in urban India but simultaneously increased social isolation in semi-urban and rural settings. *Mishra and Jha (2021)* found that Indian employees working from home during COVID-19 reported higher flexibility but also greater difficulties in separating personal and professional



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responsibilities, leading to disturbed family dynamics and mental fatigue. These findings suggest that cultural and infrastructural contexts play a significant role in shaping the mental health outcomes of remote work.

To assess mental health in organizational contexts, the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) developed by *Goldberg (1972)* has been widely employed. Studies consistently validate its reliability in identifying psychological distress, including symptoms of anxiety, depression, and social dysfunction. Similarly, newer tools such as the Work From Home Experience Questionnaire (WFHEQ), designed to capture employees' perceptions of remote work practices, have become important in examining remote work-specific issues such as autonomy, connectivity, and work-life balance. For example, *Rodríguez-Modroño and López-Igual (2021)* used remote work-specific instruments and confirmed that while employees appreciated flexibility, challenges related to isolation and boundary management often reduced mental well-being.

In summary, the literature reflects a dual nature of remote work culture: it can serve as a resource enhancing flexibility and job satisfaction, but it can also function as a stressor leading to isolation, technostress, and burnout. The psychological effects are highly dependent on contextual factors, including organizational policies, infrastructural support, and cultural expectations. Despite the growing body of work, there remains limited empirical research on how remote work influences employees in semi-urban and developing regions such as Bihar. The present study seeks to address this gap by using GHQ-12 and WFHEQ to examine the interplay between remote work experiences and mental health among employees in the Koshi and Purnea Commissionary.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY-

The present study was designed to examine the relationship between remote work culture and employee mental health among employees in the Koshi and Purnea Commissionary of Bihar. A quantitative, descriptive survey research design was adopted to provide systematic insights into the psychological impact of remote work practices.

Objectives of the Study- The main objectives of this research are:

1. To assess the mental health status of employees working remotely in the Koshi and Purnea Commissionary.
2. To examine employees' experiences of remote work culture, focusing on flexibility, autonomy, work-life balance, and social connectedness.
3. To analyze the relationship between remote work experiences and mental health outcomes among employees.
4. To identify the positive and negative psychological impacts of remote work culture in a semi-urban/regional context like Bihar.
5. To provide recommendations for organizations to improve remote work practices and safeguard employee well-being.

Hypotheses of the Study-

1. There will be no significant relationship between remote work culture (WFHEQ scores) and employee mental health (GHQ-12 scores).
2. There will be no significant difference in mental health outcomes among employees with positive vs. negative remote work experiences.
3. Remote work culture will not significantly predict employee well-being in the Koshi and Purnea Commissionary.

Sample- The study was conducted on a sample of 200 employees drawn randomly from diverse sectors such as education, banking, insurance, and IT-enabled services. Random sampling was chosen to minimize selection bias and ensure representativeness. The sample included both male and female employees, aged between 22 and 50 years, who had been working remotely for at least six months.

Tools Used-

1. General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12): Developed by *Goldberg (1972)*, this instrument was used to measure mental health. It consists of 12 items that assess psychological distress, including symptoms of anxiety, depression, and



social dysfunction. The GHQ-12 has been widely validated and is considered a reliable screening tool for mental well-being.

2. **Work From Home Experience Questionnaire (WFHEQ):** This instrument was employed to evaluate employees' experiences of remote work culture. It measures multiple dimensions, such as flexibility, autonomy, communication, work-life balance, and social connectedness. The tool is particularly suited for assessing challenges and benefits associated with remote work settings.

Procedure- After obtaining permission from organizations and informed consent from participants, questionnaires were administered in both online and offline formats, depending on employees' accessibility. The data collection process spanned four weeks. Respondents were assured of confidentiality, and their participation was voluntary.

Statistical Analysis- Collected data were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, percentage distribution) to examine overall trends. Further, correlation analysis (Pearson's r) was applied to study the relationship between remote work experiences (WFHEQ scores) and mental health outcomes (GHQ-12 scores). Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

This methodology provided a comprehensive framework to explore how employees' perceptions of remote work culture relate to their psychological well-being, thereby addressing the core objectives of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION-

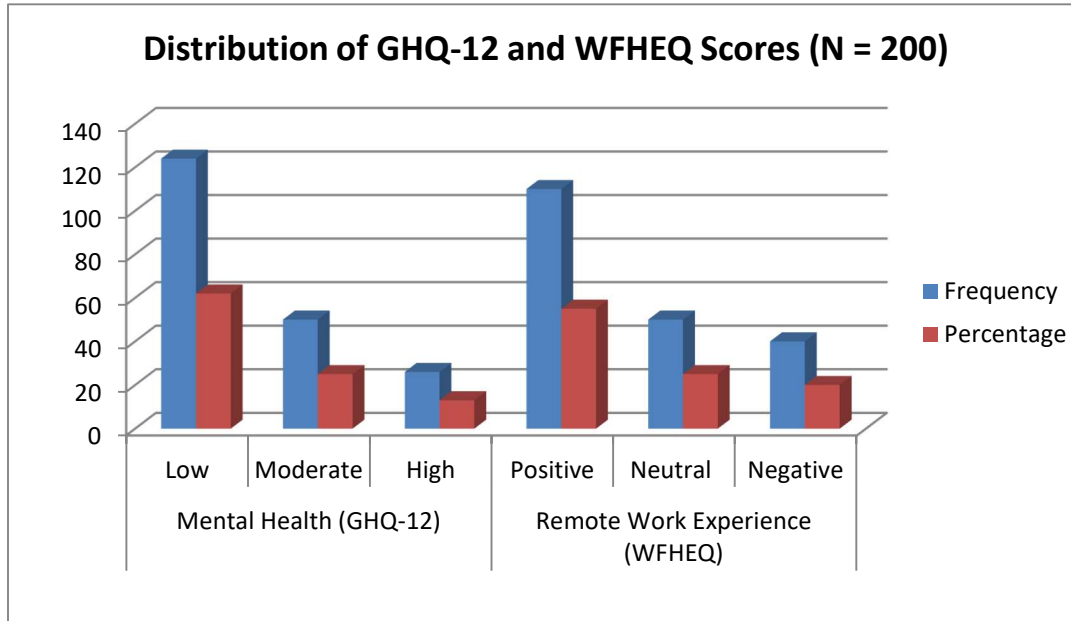
The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between remote work culture and employee mental health among 200 employees in the Koshi and Purnea Commissionerary. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. Table 1 presents the distribution of employees' mental health status (GHQ-12) and their work-from-home experiences (WFHEQ).

Table 1
Distribution of GHQ-12 and WFHEQ Scores (N = 200)

Tools	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Mental Health (GHQ-12)	Good Mental Health (Low Distress)	124	62%
	Moderate Psychological Distress	50	25%
	High Psychological Distress	26	13%
Remote Work Experience (WFHEQ)	Positive Experience (High Scores)	110	55%
	Neutral Experience (Moderate Scores)	50	25%
	Negative Experience (Low Scores)	40	20%



Chart-1



The descriptive results reveal that a majority of employees (62%) reported good mental health, while 38% experienced moderate to high levels of psychological distress. Regarding remote work culture, 55% had favorable experiences, while 20% reported unfavorable experiences marked by isolation, poor connectivity, and difficulty balancing work-life boundaries.

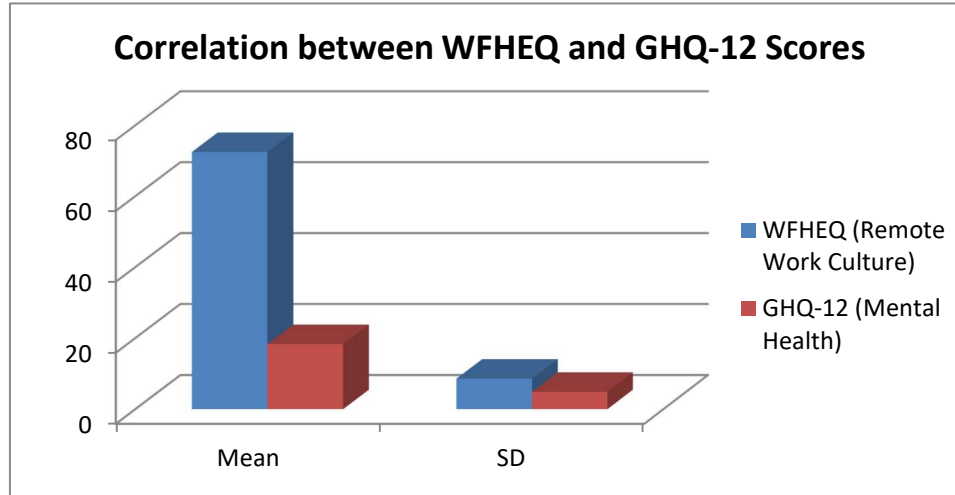
To test the hypotheses, Pearson's correlation was calculated between WFHEQ (remote work experiences) and GHQ-12 (mental health).

Table 2
Correlation between WFHEQ and GHQ-12 Scores

Variable	Mean	SD	r	p-value
WFHEQ (Remote Work Culture)	72.5	8.6	-0.47	<0.01
GHQ-12 (Mental Health)	18.3	4.9		



Chart-2



The analysis shows a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.47$, $p < 0.01$) between remote work experiences and psychological distress. This indicates that employees with more positive remote work experiences reported better mental health outcomes. Conversely, those with negative experiences (such as lack of communication, blurred boundaries, and poor infrastructure) showed higher levels of distress.

The findings align with earlier studies (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Wang et al., 2021), which suggest that remote work can positively influence mental health when employees experience flexibility, autonomy, and organizational support. However, consistent with Golden et al. (2006), the present study also found that employees reporting negative work-from-home experiences suffered greater psychological distress, highlighting the risks of isolation and boundary management.

The results emphasize that while remote work culture offers benefits like reduced commuting stress and greater flexibility, it can also create mental health challenges if not supported by adequate infrastructure and communication systems. Employees from semi-urban areas like the Koshi and Purnea Commissionerary particularly face unique challenges, including unstable internet connectivity and limited ergonomic setups, which intensify stress.

Thus, organizations must adopt hybrid work models, provide mental health resources, and establish clear work-life boundaries to ensure employees can benefit from remote work culture without compromising psychological well-being.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS-

The present study explored the impact of remote work culture on employee mental health among 200 employees from the Koshi and Purnea Commissionerary of Bihar, using the GHQ-12 and the WFHEQ. Results revealed that while a majority of employees reported positive experiences with remote work, a substantial proportion faced challenges that adversely affected their psychological well-being. Specifically, 62% of employees demonstrated good mental health, but nearly 38% experienced moderate to high psychological distress. Furthermore, a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.47$, $p < 0.01$) was found between remote work experiences and psychological distress, indicating that favorable remote work conditions enhance mental health, while negative conditions increase psychological strain.

These findings confirm that remote work culture has a dual effect: it can act as a facilitator of flexibility, autonomy, and satisfaction, but also as a stressor that induces isolation, technostress, and blurred work-life boundaries. In the context of semi-urban regions like Bihar, infrastructural issues and lack of organizational support further intensify these challenges. The study highlights the urgent need for balanced approaches that preserve the benefits of remote work while minimizing its negative psychological consequences.



Suggestions-

Based on the results, the following suggestions are offered for organizations, employees, and policymakers:

1. **Adopt Hybrid Models:** A combination of remote and office-based work may help balance flexibility with social interaction, reducing feelings of isolation.
2. **Enhance Communication Systems:** Organizations should implement structured and regular communication channels to maintain connectivity, team spirit, and employee engagement.
3. **Digital Wellness Programs:** Training sessions on managing screen time, preventing technostress, and practicing digital detox can support psychological health.
4. **Work-Life Boundary Guidelines:** Employers should clearly define work hours and discourage after-hours communication to prevent burnout and maintain balance.
5. **Infrastructure Support:** Providing employees with financial or logistical support for better internet connectivity, ergonomic furniture, and digital tools can significantly improve their remote work experiences.
6. **Mental Health Resources:** Access to counseling services, online therapy, and stress management workshops should be integrated into organizational policies.
7. **Inclusive Policies for Semi-Urban Contexts:** Since employees in regions like Koshi and Purnea face unique infrastructural challenges, localized support policies must be designed to ensure equitable access to resources.

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