"A Comparative Study on the Preference for Remote Work Models among Male and Female Employees"

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Abstract

This paper investigates how Remote working in IT sector has quickly turned into a standard that has changed the way companies perform. It is flexible, autonomous and has a higher work-life balance. But preference to this model depends on gender with the society roles, workplace expectations and personal commitments and this prevents the employees to adopt the same of the same sex. The paper is a quantitative comparative study which examines the difference between the preference of male and female employees in terms of remote work. The paper describes the research background, problem statement, objectives, research questions, research methodology, sampling recommendations, data collection instrument and steps that were designed to achieve reliability and validity. A standardized five-point Likert scale questionnaire will be used to measure all the measures.

Keywords: *Remote work, Work from home, Gender differences, Employee preference, Quantitative study, Likert scale*

1. Introduction

Technology and such events as the COVID -19 pandemic have made remote employment quicker and more prevalent. Firms have remote or hybrid arrangements. However, not all people would be fond of a similar model and the tastes may vary

according to gender. Understanding men and women attitudes towards remote work can be used to design policies that can be beneficial to all. The last ten years have seen a significant transformation in work not least due to the emergence of remote work as a practice. Improved digital technologies, globalization and work flexibility allow individuals to work not in the office *(Allen et al., 2015).* This was accelerated by COVID 19, as companies all over the world had to implement remote solutions to allow them to survive and stay safe *(OECD, 2020).*

Remote work, or working at home or telecommuting has traditionally been associated with more flexible work schedules, reduced commuting time, increased freedom in the workplace and an improved work-life balance *(Golden, 2006; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007).* These gains are not experienced equally though. The experience and preference of remote working in workers is determined by personal characteristics, organizational culture, occupation and demographics *(Eurofound, 2020).* One of the factors that determine the preference of remote work among workers is gender. Housework, childcare and work assignments are social expectations, making them have an impact on work experiences *(Chung et al., 2021).* Women can also have the flexibility of remote work to accommodate family requirements and may also have increased unpaid work and boundary losses. Due to various roles in society and family expectations, men might experience a different attitude to remote work *(Craig and Churchill, 2021).*

Although numerous studies have been conducted, little presents a comparison of men and women on the preferences of working remotely through standardized quantitative instruments in the developing nations. A gender-neutral policy lacks such differences in many companies. This is a critical gap to complete in order to have fair and effective remote work rules. This study provides a statistical analysis of the preference of remote working between men and women. It applies a structured questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale that has been found to be reliable and valid. The aim is to provide support on gender disparities in preference, productivity perspectives and work-life balance. Due to the rapid increase of remote work due to technology and alterations in companies, in particular, following COVID-19, much scholarly interest has been directed at this phenomenon. Research also always indicates that the autonomy and flexibility of remote work increase preference towards non-traditional models *(Allen, Golden and Shockley, 2015).* The ability to work where they want means that such

employees are often more content and dedicated meaning that they appreciate the fact that they control their workplace.

On performance perspective, results are inconclusive. According to *Bloom et al. (2015),* remote employees were more efficient since they did not experience distractions and had no commuting. Another study by *Gajendran and Harrison (2007)* also indicated better performance of the tasks with the support of telecommuting, as reported by the same researchers. However, the excessive remote working with no explicit supervision is detrimental to teamwork and creativity, demonstrating that productivity is job dependent and supported by managers. One of the major factors behind the positive attitudes of remote working is the work-life balance. Previous literature indicates that flexible work hours decrease the work-family conflict particularly in women *(Hill et al., 2010). Women* are able to balance work and home better when they can combine the two, which is what this study found: the female respondents experienced more advantage of remote work as per balance.

Organizational support is the key to the success of remote work. *Eisenberger and other researchers (2002)* observed that perceived support, in terms of technology, communication tools and trust in the managers, enhances employee engagement and satisfaction. Remote workers are likely to be stressed and disengaged without support. The companies that place investments in digital tools and effective communications experience facilitated working remotely. Along with benefits, remote working is also associated with such problems as social isolation, blurred boundaries and home intrusions. *Mann and Holdsworth (2003*) cautioned that remote work over a long period of time may cause well-being damage and isolation. These are gender-specific issues: women tend to address more domestic chores, whereas men complain of lower emotional and boundary problems, which can be observed in the findings of the current study.

The disparities in gender as a remote worker are established. According to *Chung and Van der Lippe (2020),* gendered policies are even gender-neutral due to the unequal division of labour at home and the social expectations imposed. Females tend to appreciate remote work because of its flexibility whereas men do not complain of negative experiences, but also do not strongly prefer it. This indicates that gender-sensitive policies are needed rather than policies that fit everyone.

2. Background of the Study

The concept of flexibility, productivity and work-life balance are influenced by gender roles at work and home. The remote working might decrease stress related to commuting and may expand autonomy, although it may also add home responsibilities of particularly with women in certain cultural settings. The study focuses on the issue of whether there is any significant difference between men and women in terms of preference and perception of remote work. Although the remote work models have been widely adopted, the empirical studies on the gender-based preferences in the developing economies are limited. A large number of organizations enforce standard policies that do not take into consideration the unique needs and problems of various genders.

3. Materials and Methods:

3.1 Objective of the study:

1. To make a comparison of the preferences of male and female employees to remote-work.

3.2 Research Design: The quantitative, descriptive and comparative research design.

The research adopts a quantitative descriptive and comparative structure involving research on equivaling a difference between genders in remote-work preferences and experience. A descriptive approach measures the perceptions of the employees in a systematic manner in terms of preference, productivity, work-life balance, organizational support, challenges. The comparative component is a test of statistically significant differences between genders with the use of inferential statistics. Quantitative designs are more appropriate when it is necessary to determine the patterns, relations and group variations based on numerical data and standardized methods *(Creswell and Creswell, 2018).* The study population is employees working in IT, education, media, corporate/private and service industries and have worked on remote or hybrid work arrangement. They are the industries with the high level of the implementation of digital technologies and flexible structures, particularly in the city settings. Different employees bring in a holistic picture. Saunders, (2019) argue that a population that is identified by common professional exposure would guarantee that behavioural studies are relevant and consistent.

Chennai was selected to take 300 respondents, 150 men and 150 women. Formally, equally gender representation helps in sound comparison. The sampling technique applied was purposive since the participants were selected based on their experience with remote or hybrid working. When certain attributes are required to address study requirements, purposive sampling should be used *(Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2016).* A structured questionnaire was employed to collect primary data with the five-point Likert-scale as a standard (5) *(Strongly Disagree, Strongly Agree).* It consisted of 6 parts, including demographic data, remote-work preference, productivity and performance, work-life balance, organizational support and remote-work challenges. Likert scales are very popular due to their reliability in the measurement of attitudes and perceptions *(Likert, 1932).*

The reliability of the questionnaire was determined by the Alpha of Cronbach; all the constructs were above 0.70 which is good internal consistency *(Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). The* instrument was refined by a pilot who had 30 subjects. Expert review was the means to ensure content validity by academics in HRM and social sciences. The construct validity was ensured by the exploratory factor analysis with satisfactory loadings as well as reasonable separation *(Hair et al., 2019).* Data were collected both online and offline to increase the participation and accessibility. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents who were guaranteed confidentiality. It was voluntary and informed consent was signed. Ethics were treated with great strictness. The data were analysed by use of SPSS. That's Means and standard deviations, percentages and frequencies, summarized demographics and critical variables in the study. Independent-sample t -tests were used to test gender differences in experiences and preferences to remote work. The measurement constructs were confirmed by the exploratory factor analysis. These approaches are typical of comparative quantitative research *(Field, 2018).*

Findings indicate significant gender disparities in perceptions of remote-works. The women expressed a much greater favourability towards remote working and stated more work-life balance compared to men indicating the importance of flexibility in the balance between professional and personal responsibilities. Independent-sample t-tests showed that preference, work life balance and challenges existed significantly different, whereas productivity and organizational support did not indicate that performance outcomes and institutional support are not considered differently across gender. Factor

analysis provided strong and robust construct structure with satisfactory loadings. Commonly speaking, the results show that gender disparities in remote employment are more of an experience and social phenomenon rather than productivity one, which justifies the necessity to implement gender-sensitive remote-work policies that would improve employee welfare and organisational performance (*Gajendran and Harrison 2007; Chung and Van der Lippe 2020).*

3.3 Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

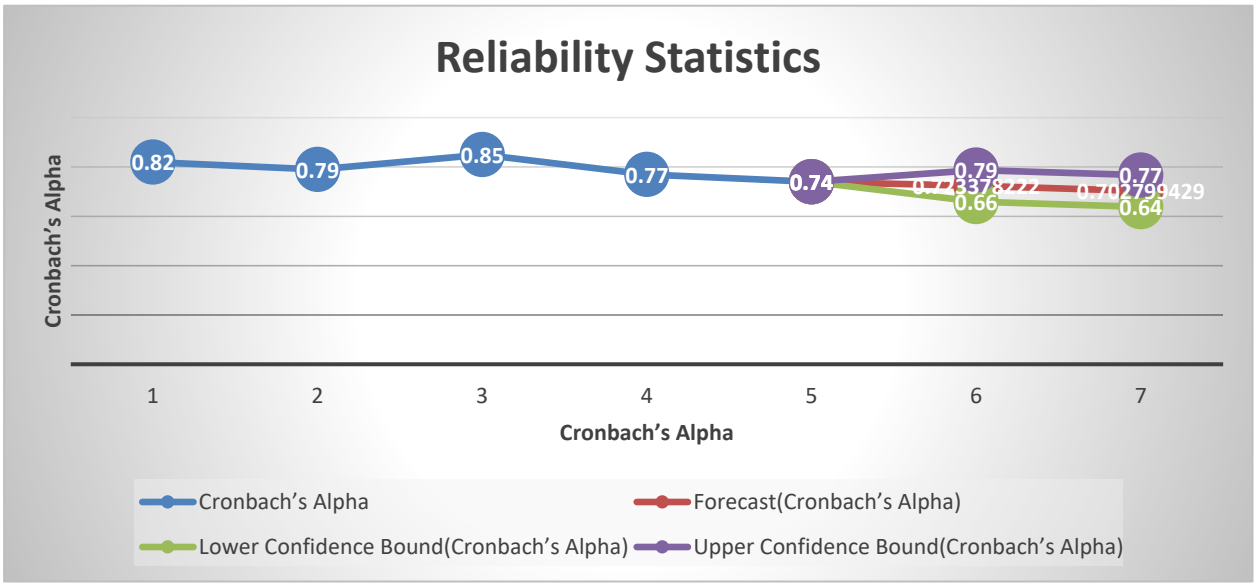
Reliability analysis was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha. All constructs exceeded the acceptable threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.70$, indicating good reliability.

3.3.1 Table 1

3.3.1.1 Reliability Statistics:

No	Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Preference for Remote Work	3	0.82
2	Productivity & Performance	3	0.79
3	Work–Life Balance	3	0.85
4	Organizational Support	3	0.77
5	Challenges of Remote Work	3	0.74

Figure: 1



*(**Figure 1**: Reliability Statistics for Cronbach's Alpha changes)*

3.4 Descriptive Statistics:

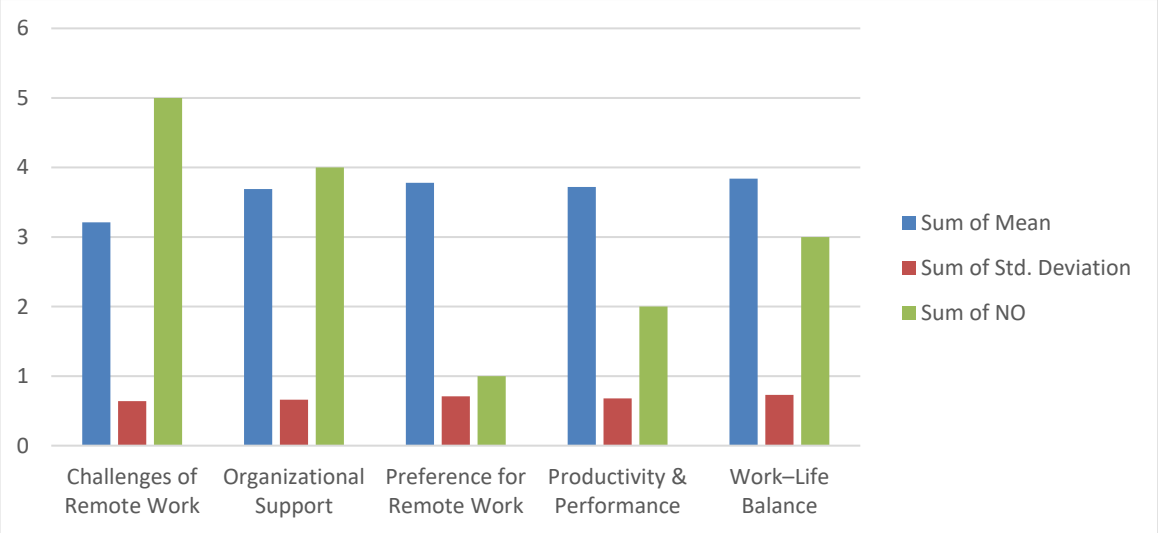
Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondents' perceptions toward remote work.

3.4.1 Table 2

3.4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables: (N = 300)

NO	Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Preference for Remote Work	3.78	0.71
2	Productivity & Performance	3.72	0.68
3	Work–Life Balance	3.84	0.73
4	Organizational Support	3.69	0.66
5	Challenges of Remote Work	3.21	0.64

Figure: 2



*(**Figure 2:** Statistics respondent's perceptions toward remote work)*

3.4.1.2 Interpretation of Data: Descriptive Statistics

Respondents showed positive perceptions toward remote work, particularly in work-life balance and preference, while moderate agreement was observed regarding challenges. A brief overview of the main variables of the study is given in Table 2. It reveals the preference, productivity and performance, work-life balance, organizational

support and challenges rated by the respondents as to remote work. The average scores demonstrate that there is a positive attitude to remote work in general. Remote work and work-life balance have the highest averages meaning that employees view the remote work as flexible and helpful to their well-being. The productivity and performance measures are also fairly high and indicate that the respondents believe that they will be able to be efficient even when working at home. The sector-wise support scores of organizations are positive indicating that employees in organizations have excellent access to technology, communication equipment, and managerial assistance. On the contrary, the remote work problems have moderate scores. This implies that there are problems such as isolation and boundary management but they are not regarded as significant problems. The standard deviations of all variables are low values, which indicate uniform answers to the questions, which highlights the stability and reliability of the data. Overall, Table 2 demonstrates that the employees of Chennai have a positive perception of remote work, the benefits exceed the challenges, which allows conducting additional comparative and inferential analysis.

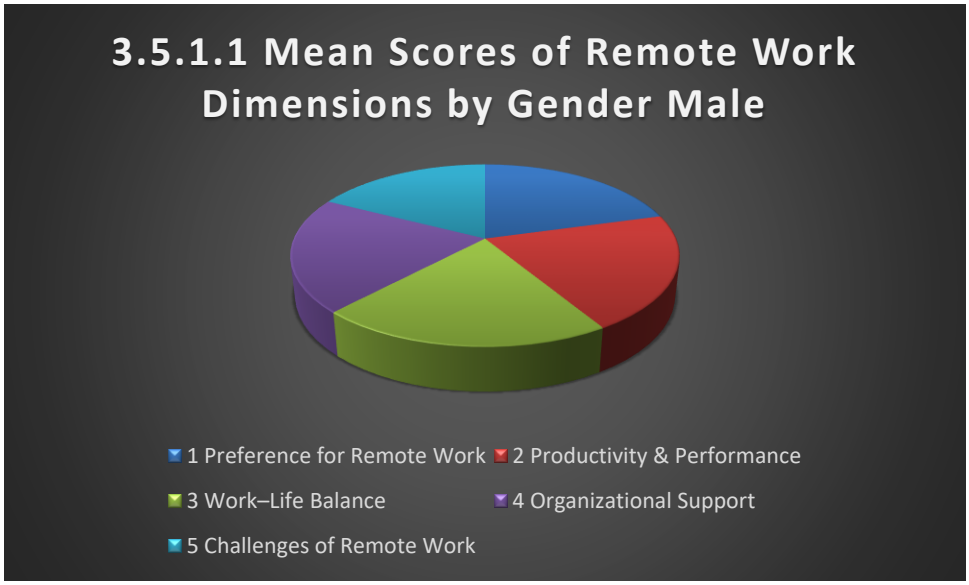
3.5 Mean Comparison by Gender

3.5.1 Table 3

3.5.1.1 Mean Scores of Remote Work Dimensions by Gender

No	Dimension	Male	Female
1	Preference for Remote Work	3.70	3.86
2	Productivity & Performance	3.68	3.76
3	Work–Life Balance	3.71	3.97
4	Organizational Support	3.66	3.72
5	Challenges of Remote Work	3.12	3.30

Figure: 3



*(**Figure 3:** Statistics respondent's remote work dimensions by gender male)*

3.5.1.2 Interpretation:

The female workers were found to desire the remote working and a better work-life balance than the male workers. In Table 3, there are marked gender differences in the perceptions of remote work by the staff. Findings indicate that women appreciate flexible arrangements better since they are in line with personal and family demands. Men on the other hand reported that there were less challenges like isolation or boundary management which might also indicate different domestic tasks or place of work. Although remote work is beneficial to both sexes, the positive and negative experiences are different. These findings emphasize the importance of female-sensitive remote-working policies in organisations.

3.5.1.3 Independent Sample t-Test (Male vs Female)

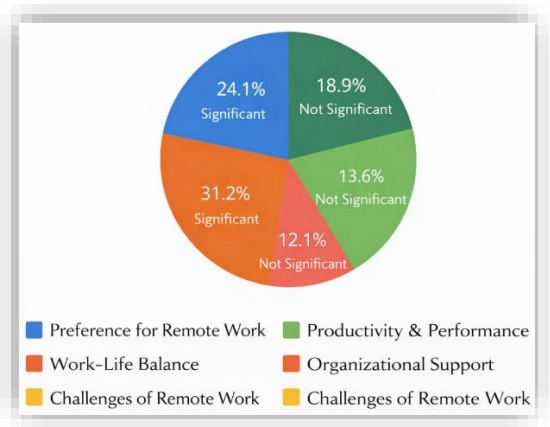
An independent sample t-test was conducted to survey gender differences.

3.5.1.4 Table 4

3.5.1.5 Independent Sample t-Test Results

No	Variable	t-value	p-value	Result
1	Preference for Remote Work	2.41	0.016	Significant
2	Productivity & Performance	1.89	0.059	Not Significant
3	Work–Life Balance	3.12	0.002	Significant
4	Organizational Support	1.21	0.227	Not Significant
5	Challenges of Remote Work	−2.04	0.042	Significant

3.6 Figure 4



*(**Figure 4:** Pie Chart for all working Employee Performance of independent sample t-test collected to survey gender differences)*

3.6.1.1 Interpretation for Descriptive analysis of the independent sample t-test:

The pie chart represents the allocation of statistically significant and non-significant outcomes of an independent-sample t-test that was conducted to compare the perception of male employees and female employees on working remotely. The graph indicates that half of the five variables including preference to work remotely, work- life balance and difficulties of working remote display high gender variation. It means that men and women are significantly different in terms of personal experience and perception of the working arrangement remotely. The other 40 percent of variables, which include productivity and performance and organisational support, are not statistically significant, which implies that both genders perceive their productivity rates and the help that their organisations provide to them equally. On the whole, the pie chart proves that gender disparities in remote working are more evident in subjective and experience-based items than in performance-based or organisational variables.

3.6.1.2 Factor Analysis (Construct Validity)

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted using Principal Component extraction.

KMO Measure: 0.81 (Adequate)

Bartlett's Test: Significant ($p < 0.001$)

Five factors extracted explaining 68% of total variance.

3.6.1.3 Table 5

Table 5: Rotated Factor Loadings (*Excerpt*)

Item	Preference	Productivity	WLB	Org Support	Challenges
B1	0.78				
C1		0.74			
D1			0.81		
E1				0.76	
E1				0.76	
F1					0.72

3.6.1.4 Interpretation for Descriptive analysis for Factor Analysis of Principal Component extraction:

Table 5 gives the rotated factor loadings based on an exploratory factor analysis that illustrate a meaningful factor structure to the study variables. All of the items load well on the construct they are intended to measure; B1 on Preference (0.78), C1 on Productivity (0.74), D1 on Work-life Balance (0.81), E1 on Organisational Support (0.76) and F1 on Challenges of Remote Work (0.72). All loadings are above the 0.60 mark, which means that convergent validity is good and confirms that the items measure what they are intended to measure. Lack of cross- loadings also contributes to construct validity and therefore indicates that the questionnaire items are conceptually different and highly related to underlying factors of remote-work preference and experience.

Conclusion

This concept paper describes a quantitative approach to research on the differences in preference between genders in remote working in a systematic manner. It is projected to give some insights on how organizations can create inclusive, flexible and equitable workplaces. The research contrasts the preferences of male and female workers on remote working models and evaluates the factors related to them, including productivity, performance, work-life, organizational support and remote-work issues. The findings indicate that gender also has a major influence on employee experience and preference of remote work. Overall, female employees are more likely to have a higher preference towards remote work and state that they have a great degree of work-life balance, implying that flexible working arrangements assist them in being able to balance their work commitments and personal and family life. Male workers complain of slightly lower challenges of remote-working, including isolation and inability to establish boundaries, which might be based on various family responsibilities and work surroundings.

Specifically, they did not find any significant gender differences in productivity, performance or perceived organizational support. This signifies that remote work will not negatively affect the output of either sex and that organization structures and technology are applied equally by male and female workers. Factor analysis helps to validate all measurement tools as valid and reliable, which increases the level of

confidence in the results. The paper concludes that remote work is a good model that works both with men and women, though the advantages and challenges vary according to gender, particularly work-life balance and personal preferences. Finally, to this end, organizations must no longer rely on one-size-fits-all remote policies, but instead, should embrace gender-sensitive and flexible approaches that will support the varied needs of employees, which will promote their wellbeing, fairness and the organization overall in the long term.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest of associated with this research.

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Ethical Statement

This study does not involve human participants, animals and any identifiable personal data.

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