
Guest editorial: Work from anywhere: implications for employees and organizations

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To date, practitioners and academic researchers in human resource management (HRM) have attended the human resource issues specific to the on-campus context. But, the recent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic outbreak is anticipated to alter the nature of work, suggesting a long-term shift to home working, necessitating a change in the organizational policies and strategies (Hern, 2020). Research to date indicates that working from home (WFH) is advantageous to the majority of employers and employees because it tends to increase employee work effort and well-being by giving them more independence. However, not all types of industries can accommodate working from different places (Bathini and Kandathil, 2019; Rupietta and Beckmann, 2018; Wood *et al.*, 2018). This transition to remote working may find the necessary impetus in the notable trend of businesses adopting agile systems for HRM and making their employees lean and fluid. Even so, there is a separate body of research that emphasizes the drawbacks of telecommuting and demands scholars' immediate attention.

Work from anywhere (WFA) is a new type of remote working that lets employees work and live anywhere in the world while also getting rid of several premises-based factors like proximity and office environment. Due to this, it is now necessary to provide a justification for explaining how HR practices are changing quickly in relation to organizational growth (De Clercq *et al.*, 2021). Researchers have recently expressed concern about the detrimental effects that HR practises may have on employees who WFH. WFA, but then again, has both advantages and disadvantages, which calls for revisiting the various existing HRM theories, as is argued below.

Challenging the status quo

HRM scholars have raised concerns over the applicability of the existing theories that explain a typical HR process in the workplace. For example, based on labor process theory which refers to commodification of work, Donnelly and Johns (2021) argued that remote working needs to be re-contextualized. On one side it is important to address this issue because of the digitization presenting fresh employee- and employer-level challenges, and on the other side, it is urgent as well because of the increased pace of digitization facilitated by macro-economic turbulence. As a result, scholars such as Hughes and Donnelly (2022) extended social exchange and boundary theories to accommodate homeworking as a consequence of the changed work-life boundaries. They observed that social exchange theory needs to be re-looked given the possibility of increased tensions between social exchange relationships and boundaries causing micro-level spillovers in case staff chooses to remain silent. They also gave a call for a single- or multi-case approach to find the impact of such turbulence on HRM occupations. Scholars including Petani and Mengis (2021) also advise on studying the individuals' affective development in light of the increased use of information technology-enabled spaces as has the potential to enhance our existing knowledge on emotionally engaging employees in a better way. In a bid to capture the quality of the rapidly changing work environment, Verma *et al.* (2022) suggested to establish a link between total quality management and strategic HRM. The aforementioned literature suggests that there is a difference between traditional working from office and WFA and it requires scholars to



re-examine the existing theories. Thus, this special issue is to answer: *To what extent the present HRM theories hold good in the WFA context?*

WFA has triggered new studies on examining the employee- and employer-level outcomes. One such outcome dear to the HRM professionals is employee productivity. For instance, Choudhury *et al.* (2021) found a 4.4% increase in the work output for the employees who were transitioned from WFH to WFA. This study raises a pertinent issue of the role that geographic flexibility has in an employee's work and life. According to Adisa *et al.* (2021), issues such as work intensification, employment, insecurity and poor adaptation do crop up in remote working. These deplete personal resources causing reduction in engagement levels of employees. On one hand, the mechanisms through which engagement is affected in this context need to be explored, on the other hand, benefits to the employer such as reduction in cost and wider reach cannot be ignored. It gives rise to a crucial debate of the negative and positive consequences of WFA that constitute work–life (im)balance. It comes to asking the question: *What are the extra-ordinary consequences of WFA?*

A recent article by Malhotra (2021) outlines how future work, taking virtual environment into cognizance, would look like and the important research questions to be answered such as what will be the work practices that will matter the most? And how should the future work be designed? In all, it says that there is a need to re-visit the factors affecting employee performance in the emerging contexts. Role of a leader and its relationship with the remote worker needs deeper examination as remote working has an impact on professional network of a worker (Varma *et al.*, 2022). Certain factors such as neurodiversity, which according to Szulc *et al.* (2021) is cognitive diversity in all humans, have also been studied in the context of remote working. However, like neurodiversity, neuroinclusion may also affect work–life balance of employees and which still needs to be explored. It amounts to the question: *What drives employee performance in the context of WFA?*

Based on the aforementioned research questions, the primary goal of this special issue is to evaluate the theories, models and effects of current HRM on working remotely.

Contributing articles

The first article, “AMO model for neuro-inclusive remote workplace”, by Joanna Szulc considers remote workplace to propose neurodivergence. The author did a comprehensive review of the constructs under investigation. They used a discussion-based approach, ability, motivation and opportunity (AMO) model for neuro-inclusive remote workplace. Among others, the model includes abilities such as challenges, motivation such as encouraging physical and psychological solutions, and opportunities such as flexible timings. Being a conceptual article, it provides rich insights into the WFA phenomenon. The main topic of the current manuscript is the difficulties which neurominorities employees face during WFH. It explains the importance of understanding the difference reaction of neurominorities employees. The author suggests that remote work arrangements are beneficial but also foster unhappiness and burnout thereby having a dual effect of WFH. The author insists that the constructs in the model are illustrative and more research is required to explore the adjustments that work for different remote workers to improve their performance and well-being.

The second article, “Work-from-home (WFH): the constraints–coping–effectiveness framework”, by Zauwiyah Ahmad, Arnifa Asmawi and Siti Zakiah Binti Samsi provides a WFH framework by analyzing qualitative data collected from employees. They term it “The constraints–coping–effectiveness WFH framework” and identify several key factors that relate to WFH effectiveness. The paper highlights orientation commitment as a moderator variable. The authors answered two questions: (1) How do employees characterize WFH effectiveness? And (2) How do employees cope with WFH arrangement? This variable is

postulated to explain the varying experiences reported by WFH employees. Orientation commitment explains why certain employees felt pressured when WFH and others reported strong satisfaction and motivation, under the same context. The authors find that research in the future should also test this framework for non-knowledge-based employees, those who interact more with others, and do different types of flexible working.

The third article, “Normative telecommuting: the effects of group composition and task interdependence on telecommuter and non-telecommuter performance”, by Mark Podolsky, Mary Jo Ducharme and Christa McIntyre used multi-level perspective to investigate the extent to which normative telecommuting influences individual performance. The authors surveyed call center employees in Canada and found that in the presence of low group task interdependence, the performance boundary between telecommuters and non-telecommuters diminishes. They also found that (1) groups with high task interdependence and co-located employees perform better than the telecommuters and (2) performance differences can be mitigated by increasing the proportion of telecommuters in the group. However, they contest that it is yet to be explored if supportive management practices or group norms reduce negative impacts of telecommuting. Thus, they call for a better understanding of the type of norms that help improve telecommuter integration.

The fourth article, “Who said there is no place like home? Extending the link between quantitative job demands and life satisfaction: a moderated mediation model”, by Kübra Şimşek Demirbağ and Orkun Demirbağ contributes to the job-demand resource (JD-R) and conservation of resource theories by examining the influence of employees’ changing job demands on work–family conflict and life satisfaction when organizations shift to new work arrangements in crisis. Analysis of the information technology employees’ responses in Turkey revealed that job-related demands, time pressure and remote working hours prevent employees from fulfilling their family obligations which increases work–family conflict which ultimately affects their life satisfaction. However, when they conducted this study, the organizations were unprepared for transiting to remote working. Thus, the authors insist that their model be re-tested with an assumption that organizations have now learned it.

The fifth article, “Does HPWS amplify employees’ change readiness for digital transformation? A study from “work-from-anywhere” prism”, by Sonali Narbariya, Mohammad Nayeem and Ritu Gupta collected responses from IT employees in India to study the mediating role of positive employee outcomes in the relationship between high performance work systems (HPWSs) and change readiness. They found that investment in designing bundles of change-oriented HR practices amplifies the chances of success of a change initiative by creating a favorable mindset and attitude among IT employees in India. The study is amongst the earliest to tie up two contemporary arenas of strategic human resource management (SHRM) and change management by establishing HPWSs as an essential antecedent of a change-related outcome, i.e. change readiness for digital transformations. Exploration of multiple mediators in a sequence provided a new insight for enhancing the probability of success for large scale organizational change directives. Further, reliable secondary reports (as highlighted in the revised manuscript) stressed upon the role of HRs to create fundamental changes in the way that organizations are functioning and will function in the scheme of “Working from anywhere” scenario pointing towards the context of digital transformations. Thus, their study strived to provide some empirical base in this area as well. The authors pointed out the difficulty that the employees may face in returning to office and the organizations need to have sufficient resources to facilitate that return. Therefore, availability of resources may make a difference, which is yet to be studied.

The sixth article, “Work from anywhere and employee psychological well-being: moderating role of HR leadership support”, by Ranjan Chaudhuri, Sheshadri Chatterjee, Demetris Vrontis and Ishizaka Alessio contributes to the HRM literature by examining the

influence of WFA flexibility on employee psychological well-being and psychological safety. The authors used flexible firm theory (FFT) and dynamic capability view (DCV) theory to hypothesize the said relationships and did structural analysis of multi-country responses. The authors have duly consulted the literature review and two theories, FFT and DCV theory to develop a conceptual model. This proposed model has been tested by partial least square structural equation modeling technique considering 471 respondents from different Asian and European firms. For understanding cross-country implications, this study has demonstrated that HR leadership support has an effective moderating role on WFA flexibility with its two predictors. Since the theory that the authors used is criticized for being context-insensitive, they call for further research that takes care of context and examines optimum conditions for deriving best firm performance.

The seventh article, “An empirical analysis of facilitators and barriers to hybrid work model: a cross-cultural and multi-theoretical approach”, by Brinda Sampat, Sahil Raj, Abhishek Behl and Sofia Schöbel is based on a multi-country study. The authors used stimulus–organism–response (SOR) and dual-factor theory (DFT) to explore the impact of multiple factors on employees’ preference to work in a hybrid model. Their findings revealed that pandemic and travel stressors inhibit employees’ preference for working in a hybrid model. The authors suggested that researchers in the future may also explore other variables such as social norms as stimuli.

The eighth article, “Work from anywhere: remote stakeholder management and engagement” by Nadia Tran, Lila Carden and Justin Zuopeng Zhang identifies problems, engages stakeholders and strategizes newer ways of functioning for organizations due to the COVID-19 pandemic disruption. They discovered that a WFA stakeholder framework could be useful for that. The authors analyzed total quality management as an example considering stakeholder engagement as a management task. The authors’ framework consisted of identifying, managing and sustaining stakeholder engagement. While their study integrated Quality 4.0 and COVID-19 characteristics and other relevant frameworks, the authors suggest that quality analytics systems and artificial intelligence (AI)-based employee management systems may also enrich the existing considerations to better manage the WFA workforce and engage stakeholders.

Discussion and future research directions

This special issue on WFA comprehends the existing literature, explores new avenues of theories and frameworks that benefit employees. At the same time, it also provides implications for the employers in terms of the frameworks such as neuro-inclusive workplace in the WFA and hybrid work contexts. It seeks to bridge the three research gaps critical in the WFA context. The contributing articles address the three main research gaps identified in this special issue as given below:

While all the articles in this special issue partially recognize the importance of re-contextualization as suggested by [Donnelly and Johns \(2021\)](#), one of the articles by Ahmad *et al.* and another by Sampat *et al.* proposed a framework specifically to address this gap by proposing fresh WFH frameworks. Another article by Tran *et al.* took on the challenge posed by [Verma *et al.* \(2022\)](#) of linking TQM with strategic HRM by integrating Quality 4.0 and COVID-19 characteristics and other relevant frameworks. In addition, this article also addressed the need to study affective engagement among WFA employees, a call given by [Petani and Mengis \(2021\)](#). Though these articles help us answer the “What are the extraordinary consequences of WFA?” question, future research is required to test the proposed frameworks for non-knowledge-based employees, those who interact more with others and do different types of flexible working. Researchers in the future may also explore other variables such as social norms as stimuli.

An article by Podolsky *et al.* in this special issue captures this aspect of the drivers of WFA by examining the extent to which normative telecommuting affect individual performance. Similarly, two articles, one by Chaudhuri *et al.* and another by Szulc encompass the concerns raised by Adisa *et al.* (2021) relating to work and life by providing physiological and psychological solutions to the negative impacts that remote working may have on employees. These articles collectively answer the question: “What drives employee performance in the context of WFA?” Yet, there are certain future research requirements such as is yet to be explored if supportive management practices or group norms reduce negative impacts of telecommuting. Thus, the type of norms that help improve telecommuter integration has to be explored. Also, more context-sensitive theories should be used for examining optimum conditions for deriving best firm performance.

The issue of work practices being relevant for the said context was raised by Malhotra (2021). Narbariya *et al.* proposed and examined a set of high performing work system to recommend that change-oriented HR practices is the key to success. Next, Varma *et al.* (2022) had urged the scholars to deeply investigate the role of a leader and its relationship with the remote workers because working remotely has an impact on professional network of a worker. One of the articles in this special issue by Chaudhuri *et al.* worked on this recommendation and explored the role of HR leadership in the relationship between WFA flexibility and employee psychological well-being. While scholars such as Szulc *et al.* (2021) worked on neurodiversity, Szulc in this special issue article proposed neuro-inclusive remote workplace. The aforesaid articles together answer the question: “What drives employee performance in the context of WFA?” However, more needs to be studied to know the possible antecedents of work performance in hybrid spaces and considering the resource-rich and resource-poor organization gap in facilitating transitions of the workplace type.

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