

Interior Preferences in Home Workspace Based on Changes in Behavior and Needs to Sustain Professional Work Productivity

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Remote working grows at its own moderate pace and has only been picked up by little numbers of selected professionals since 1979. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020, and a pandemic on 11 March 2020. Millions of people were furloughed or lost jobs, and others rapidly adjusted to working from home as offices closed. With this abrupt change (WFH) came the challenge of blurred lines between career and personal life. However, the changes in behavior and needs of the people in this remote working environment are uncertain and the interior preferences of home workspaces are less investigated. Therefore, this research will focus on investigating the interior preferences of home workspaces due to the professional workforces' changes in behaviors and needs in the remote working environment to sustain equal productivity as in the office.

Keywords: Remote working, Behavior and needs, Home workspace

1. INTRODUCTION

The involuntary adoption of work from home was not easy for any organization that had not yet considered remote working before the pandemic. It was a challenge, but some found it to work well enough to not return to the office, while others are struggling to make it work. For most workers, some activities during a typical day lend themselves to remote work, while the rest of their tasks require their on-site physical presence. With this abrupt change (WFH) came the challenge of blurred lines between career and personal life. Lacking designated home office spaces, countless individuals had to create improvised work setups wherever there was space.

This research will focus on investigating the interior preferences of home workspaces due to the professional workforces' changes in behaviors

and needs in the remote working environment to sustain professional work productivity. This allows the remote workers to have a prior insight on what is the interior preferences or standards in setting up a home workspace. At the same time, companies can assist and properly compensate their employees who are remote working in setting up the home workspaces.

2. LITERATURE

Telework has been promoted for decades as one of the traffic demand management policies to alleviate congestion during peak periods and reduce work-related trips. (Zhang, 2020). The increase of telework during the pandemic is predicted to impact working life, not only in terms of a larger number of employees working from

home but more importantly, it may transform the way we conceptualize work. (Bjursell, 2021).

Dingel (2020) find that 37 per cent of jobs in the United States can be performed entirely at home, with significant variation across cities and industries. Where Reuschke (2021) highlighted the need for freelance workers to learn how to be productive and maintain productivity. Bjursell (2021) concluded that research about telework and lifelong learning has the potential to contribute to a sustainable working life in terms of providing more flexible arrangements for employees and to support the lifelong learning that takes place in contexts such as the office, home, online meetings, and virtual reality. Employee productivity while teleworking remains relatively high despite home distractions. Interestingly, the survey results forecast a continuous shift to hybrid work mode after the pandemic. (Naor, 2021).

(Bosetti, 2021) Campo (2021) and Kitagawa (2021) agree that the drastic shift to telework has dramatically changed how people work. Bosetti (2021) further stated that the lockdown affected the population's behaviour, work, risk perception and contact patterns. This is then agreed by Bhattacharya (2020) who claimed due to changes in work structures, the boundaries of private life and office work are getting depleted. Various factors may impact the performance of an employee, and they need to be identified. Widar (2021) stated that on the one hand, telework is found to increase individual autonomy, work-life balance, work control and productivity and reduce work-related stress. On the other hand, telework is associated with increased stress, low boundary control (i.e., difficulty separating work and life domains), overtime work, lack of work motivation, and insufficient time for recovery.

Campo (2021) highlighted those positive relationships are found between job performance and both family-supportive supervisor behavior and work-life balance, and between family-supportive supervisor behavior and work-life balance. Delanoeije (2020) study showed that teleworkers reported lower stress, lower work-to-home conflict, higher work engagement and higher job performance on teleworking days compared to non-teleworking days. However, Niu (2021) study showed that the workers' residence, marital status, management positions, and employee status affected the choice of the work method. Some of them reported exercising less and experienced an increase in both working hours and meeting hours, and work-family conflict was more pronounced. Beno (2021)

determined that at the beginning of the lockdown drawing a clear boundary between the home, office and school environments caused some difficulties such as roles and expectations changed as all the family members stayed at home day in and day out.

All in all, Miron (2021) noticed that there is a positive relationship between professional development and competencies, job satisfaction, work-life balance, organizational climate and well-being, and a negative relationship between the emotional dimension, commitment, autonomy and well-being in the case of telework.

Alonso (2021) highlighted that rooms that otherwise had domestic use, living rooms or bedrooms, have become offices due to the lockdown. However, Rymaniak (2021) says that the forced situation seemed not to be a favourable factor for implementing changes in light of the insufficient technical and organizational preparation of employers as well as the employees' mental preparation. Looking into how the environment of the spaces affects people, Muñoz-González (2021) stated that sunlight affects people's circadian rhythm and that its reduction and even absence during this period of isolation has had a psychological impact on the population. Puglisi (2021) further added that noisiness in the working environment was largely proved to have effects on the working activity and performance.

Puglisi (2021) found out that people perform their activities in an isolated room of the home environment, in a shared room (e.g., kitchen, living room), and outdoor space, with the majority of workers performing activities without other people in the environment where Hijazi (2021) study showed that 42% of participants work in the living room, only 42% used an office desk and chair, 38% did not use any specific furniture, and 46% used mood enhancers (personalised elements) to help them adapt better to working from home. Pramono (2021) mentioned in his study to maximize the space remaining in the house and apartment by placing multifunction furniture to accommodate user activities.

Muñoz-González (2021) says that to generate healthy and comfortable spaces, one needs to quantify the circadian stimulus and lighting levels to identify the areas or work areas in homes to optimize consumption related to lighting. Alonso (2021) stated that converting existing home space to home office happened in many houses without improving the ventilation systems leading the rooms to overcrowd, where no attention was paid to ventilation thus risking the people exposed to high concentrations of CO₂ and other pollutants

sometimes higher than the health-based thresholds.

Furthermore, in Rymaniak (2021) study, the results of the survey indicate that employees felt more stressed and in conflict at their remote workstations when they had to telework during the lockdown and that this negative output was significantly related to the deterioration of some working dimensions like space, quality and design but not to the perception of professional hazards from home-based telework. Puglisi (2021) added that the negative consequences of noise annoyance during remote working hours are mainly related to a loss of concentration and to difficulty in relaxing. Furthermore, workers reported getting easily irritated by noise generated from the neighborhoods or the housemates as it tends to distract them from finishing a task. Jaimes Torres (2021) agreed and added that during the lockdown, all participants saw an increase in overall energy consumption; more than half reported not being in thermal comfort, and a third declared deficiencies in noise insulation.

The literature review gathered discuss the adaptation progression of the white-collar professionals, elaborate both their physical and mental progression as they put themselves in the remote working environment and discussed their behaviours and needs in the situation. Then, the influence of space to the white-collar professionals are mentioned and analyzed.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research approach for this paper is a phenomenology qualitative approach intended to realize the research aim. Qualitative approach: Qualitative approach is used in this study. By investigating through interviews, the nature of the job of the professionals in accommodating the changing work model, namely the remote model and the hybrid model. Then specifically, conducted in-depth interviews with the white-collar professionals in various industries field.

Phenomenology inquiry: The interviewees' selection is based on the phenomenological research approach that strives to understand and depict the universal essence of a phenomenon, which in this study is the change of working model after the mass involuntary adoption of remote working. All interviewees are chosen with similar experiences to contribute a comprehensive description to the research study.

The interview questions are derived from the literature review in chapter two, as well as the author's anecdotal experience. The questions are then categorized into various deductive variables aligned with the research questions and further develop the probing question from the underlying open-ended interview questions. The deductive variables of the interview questions are as below:

1. Nature of job
2. Company adaptation
3. Life stage
4. Sustainability of remote work or hybrid work
5. Experience of working from home
6. Work productivity
7. Time management
8. Interval movement
9. Work culture
10. Daily routine
11. Home space adaptation
12. Home workspace setup
13. Distraction
14. Home workspace environment

Thematic analysis started during the data collection period. All interview contents are transcribed for qualitative analysis and reporting. The data are then organized with computer-assisted qualitative data management and analysis software, ATLAS.ti 8. Coding was derived from the content of the transcripts for pattern finding. Then categorized the coding under their respective themes and recorded any emergent theme. Research question two will be analyzed using inductive reasoning to move from the specific observations about the participants' narration into a broad generalization of identifying the professional workforces change in behavior and needs in the remote working environment.

4. FINDING

Satisfaction in career progression

Based on the interviewees' responses, satisfaction in career progression is one of their focuses when they are adapting to the remote work model and hybrid work model. The nature of work and work culture changes are the factors that determine the satisfaction level of the white-collar professional in their career progression.

Nature of work

Shifting into the remote work model or hybrid work model impacted the nature of work for the white-collar professionals by their company adaptation level towards the work model. The implementation of these models from the traditional physical work model resulted in a change in the job scopes of white-collar professionals. Those who undergo the least changes in job scope will be able to be more sustainable with the remote work model while the others will be more suitable with the hybrid work model. This is because the ecosystem cycle of a particular industry is unable to change in a short period.

Work culture changes

Some work culture changes are felt when the white-collar professionals undergo the remote work model or hybrid work model. The work culture changes significantly reflected in their experience, the communication during work, and the cognitive proximity of career learning progression. They experience a drop in work efficiency, workflow collaboration, changes in communication methods, delays in getting responses, difficulties in guiding team members and challenging learning progression in their career, especially at the junior levels.

Life planning

Another focus is the life planning of the white-collar professionals when they are adapting to the remote work model and hybrid work model. The factors that are mostly considered by them are the dwelling location and their suitability for remote work or hybrid work.

Dwelling conditions

Most young white-collar professionals stay together with either friends or family. This also highlighted the limitation of this research as it was studied through the single white-collar professionals' perspective only. Excluded the factors of having children or partner, the remote work or hybrid work experience is still similar to most people as the age groups vary in the professional field. As the remote work model worked, white-collar professionals are still keen to return to the office on some days to interact with their colleagues. This provided more flexibility in the ways of working in the white-collar professionals' career life.

Adaptation process

At the beginning of the involuntary adoption of fully remote working, most white-collar professionals were struggling to adapt to it. They were affected by the unfamiliarity to work at home where it is supposed to be a shelter that is relaxing and cozy. Forced them to work in a setting that is very different compared to the office and at the same time, they are required to complete their work tasks like before. However, white-collar professionals can adapt to the remote work environment as time passed.

Benefits

After adapting to remote working, or working from home, the white-collar professionals discovered the benefits when working from home such as the flexibility of being able to work anywhere or moving around different places when working, having more connections to the nature, and being able to have some personal time in between the remote working hours to freshen up themselves such as taking a quick nap or bath.

Mental wellbeing

There were few occurrences affecting the participants' mental well-being. Participants are found more relaxed as they have additional time without needing to commute to the office. The additional time offset from the reduction in workload resulted in contributing more bonding time between the participants and their colleagues. One participant specifically stated that working from home allows him to have the opportunity to take a quick bath during the work break to freshen up himself and have a better psyche in handling his work tasks. However, the participants also mention that the work environment in the home plays a big part in letting the participants remain focused on their work and productivity.

Work Flow

Working from home impacted the white-collar professionals' workflow in both positive and negative ways. If the work tasks can be completed by themselves without the need for communication or collaboration, then the work tasks can be done more efficiently because there are fewer distractions or hindrances. However, if the work tasks require to have multiple inputs from different parties, and in the event of the relevant parties are not well collaborated, then there will be delays and dragging in the attempt of completing the tasks. This can result in piling up

workloads and hampering the productivity and well-being of white-collar professionals.

Productivity Decrease

The unfamiliarity of working from home is associated with the decrease in productivity of white-collar professionals. The distractions coming around the surroundings, phone calls from colleagues in the attempt to discuss work tasks, the lack of peer pressure in keeping one from slacking, disengaging from work and indulging in other activities, and sources of leisure are nearby are the other reasons that affecting the productivity in when working from home.

Productivity Optimum

There is a similarity in how the participants regain their productivity. Those whose nature of the job allows managed to regain productivity to the optimum level as before after a certain amount of time passed and they succeed to adapt. However, those whose jobs require physical presence are then either going back to the office or adopting the hybrid work model.

Workloads

During the lockdown period in curbing the pandemic, the workload decreases significantly as there are certain activities are being forced to stop. This lets the participants have the illusion of the workloads have decreased at the beginning of working from home. However, the ecosystem cycle of the industry will not change in a short amount of time. A similar amount of workload will return to the white-collar professionals in another form to maintain the sustainable progression of that industry. The workload in the remote work setting is often affected by the input and output speed of information. The difference is that the white-collar professionals who adopt the hybrid work model now get to plan what tasks to complete in the office and at home.

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