

Gender Dynamics and Work-Life Balance in the Era of Hybrid Work: The Social Impact of Remote Work on Families

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ABSTRACT

The transformation of work models due to technological advances and global conditions has prompted many companies to implement hybrid or remote work systems. This research aims to examine how these changes affect family dynamics, particularly in terms of gender role division and work-life balance. Using a literature review approach to international publications between 2000 and 2010, this research found that while remote work offers flexibility, it also reinforces gender inequality in family responsibilities and complicates the management of boundaries between work and personal life. Women consistently experience a double workload, while men tend to maintain traditional roles. Besides, factors such as cultural views, institutional support, and work structures play a crucial role in determining the impact of this work model on the quality of family relationships. This research emphasizes that structural changes in the work system must be accompanied by critical reflection on the social and cultural values that govern relationships within the family. The theoretical and practical implications of these findings open up space for the development of work policies that are more gender-equitable and emotionally balanced.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of “Work from Home” (WFH) is one of the major changes that has occurred in the global workplace, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic (Kaushik & Guleria, 2020). Before the pandemic, remote work was more commonly practiced by companies in the technology or professional sectors, however the global pandemic has forced almost all sectors to adapt to remote work schemes. This has changed traditional ways of working and triggered a shift in the relationship between work and personal life. Remote work brings benefits such as time flexibility and transportation cost savings, however it also poses significant challenges in terms of productivity, team collaboration, and work-life balance management. While most workers feel an increase in flexibility, the pressure to meet work expectations remains high, which impacts their mental and physical well-being (Boban et al., 2020).

In general, hybrid or remote work arrangements offer clear benefits for some workers who prefer flexible working arrangements (Dobbins, 2021). The long-term implications for organization social and cultural dynamics, however, remain a matter of debate. With more individuals working from home,

patterns of interaction in the workplace are changing significantly. Employees tend to face challenges in maintaining healthy professional relationships with colleagues and superiors, as well as managing the boundaries between work and their personal lives. Working from home also has an impact on the dynamics of social relationships within the family, which were previously clearly separated between the work space and the home space. The presence of work at home can blur these boundaries and cause tension in family life, as well as affect gender roles and the distribution of household tasks (Mustajab et al., 2020).

Within the family, the phenomenon of WFH has had a major impact on changes in family dynamics (Di Nicola & Ruspini, 2020). Workers who previously separated work time and families time now have to manage both in one space, which can change the way they interact with their partners and children (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). In traditional families, gender roles are often explicitly divided, with men responsible for work and women taking care of the family responsibility (Hochschild & Machung, 2012). With hybrid or remote work, however, there has been a shift

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in how these responsibilities are divided. Women, who may have previously been more dominant in family activities, now face the challenge of maintaining a balance between work and family roles. Men who work from home may experience changes in how they interact with their families, which can affect the quality of their relationships and their roles in the family (Durucu & Bayraktar, 2019).

This phenomenon is further complicated by its long-term impact on individual mental well-being. With the flexibility of working from home, many workers find it difficult to separate their professional and personal lives (Hochschild & Machung, 2012). As a result, they often feel burdened by high expectations from work and family, which can lead to stress and fatigue (Kossek et al., 2014).

The main issue that arises in the “Work from Home” phenomenon is the change in gender roles within the family (Yucel & Chung, 2021). Female workers often face greater pressure because they have to manage family responsibilities that cannot be separated from their work. This is especially true in families with traditional gender roles, where women are more involved in household chores (Bittman et al., 2004). When work is done at home, this dual role becomes more intense and can cause greater stress, especially when the job requires individuals to communicate with teams or clients at irregular hours. Women are therefore more prone to burnout due to difficulties in managing time and space between work and household responsibilities.

Shifts in the division of household roles, besides, cause tension in marital relationships. Husbands who work from home often do not change their habits in terms of sharing household responsibilities, while their spouses also work from home. This imbalance in the division of tasks often leads to feelings of being unappreciated or unfairly treated, which can ultimately worsen the relationship between spouses. This situation can cause frustration, stress, and a decline in the quality of family relationships (Dockery & Bawa, 2017).

It is important to research the phenomenon of “Work from Home” because of its far-reaching impact on social structures and family well-being (Soni & Jain, 2021). With more and more companies adopting remote working models, we need to understand how family dynamics and gender roles are affected by this working model (Shockley et al., 2021). Without proper understanding, we risk exacerbating existing gender inequalities and creating greater social burdens on more vulnerable groups, such as women and parents who must balance work and family (Arntz et al., 2020). Further

research is urgently needed to design fair and inclusive flexible work policies. In this way, the benefits of working from home can be maximized without compromising the well-being of individuals and families.

Working from home offers greater flexibility, but this does not always have a positive impact. Further research is therefore needed to explore the social and psychological effects of this phenomenon on family relationships. If not handled properly, these changes have the potential to negatively alter family dynamics, affect individual well-being, and exacerbate social inequality (Yucel & Chung, 2021). Companies and policymakers need to consider adequate support for workers, such as flexible working hours and access to family support services. Only with a comprehensive approach can remote work models truly benefit all parties without causing adverse effects.

This research aims to analyze the impact of the “Work from Home” phenomenon on gender roles within families, as well as the challenges faced in maintaining work-life balance in hybrid or remote work arrangements. By understanding shifts in gender roles and the distribution of household responsibilities, this study is expected to provide new insights into the social impact of remote work on family structures and individual well-being.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this research is a literature study with a descriptive-analytical approach. This approach is designed to explore and analyze various relevant literature on the impact of the “Work from Home” phenomenon on family dynamics, gender roles, and work-life balance. Literature research allows researchers to compile and organize existing information, identify knowledge gaps, and provide a solid basis for analysis (Booth et al., 2008). The literature used in this research comes from international scientific journals, academic books, industry research reports, and other credible sources to provide broad insights into this phenomenon.

In this literature research, the researcher will identify and analyze previous research that discusses the impact of remote work on gender roles in the family, the division of household responsibilities, and work-life balance. Researchers will also examine the contribution of various hybrid or remote working models to the social structure within families and their impact on personal relationships at home. One of the main objectives of this method is to map existing findings, identify patterns and trends

emerging from various relevant researches, and see how social, cultural, and economic factors influence the implementation of WFH in families.

This research will use literature sources that include case studies from various countries, taking into account cultural and social structure differences that may influence the research results. The selected literature includes studies that focus on changes in family structure due to WFH, including shifts in gender roles and the division of household responsibilities (Clark & Kearns, 2009). Research on work-life balance will also be examined to understand how the flexibility of working from home affects individuals' personal quality of life, both positively and negatively (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2011).

Data analysis in this literature research was conducted using a qualitative approach. Each piece of literature found was categorized based on main themes, such as the impact on gender roles, distribution of household responsibilities, and work-life balance. The analysis technique used is thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which allows researchers to identify central themes that emerge in the relevant literature and relate them to relevant social theories. The researchers will examine the relationship between the WFH phenomenon and changes in family structure and assess whether there has been a significant shift in the division of household tasks between men and women in relation to remote work.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Impact of the “Work from Home” Phenomenon on Gender Roles in the Family

The phenomenon of “Work from Home” (WFH) has not only affected the way people work, but has also changed the dynamics within families, particularly in terms of the division of family responsibilities (Wethal et al., 2022). Before the rise of remote work, gender roles within families were more clearly defined, with women typically focusing on domestic work while men were responsible for work outside the home and their careers (Farrell, 2020). WFH, however, forces many individuals to juggle two roles simultaneously: working to meet job demands while also performing household tasks. This can lead to a shift in the distribution of tasks between partners, potentially introducing inequality within the household (Craig & Mullan, 2011).

In many cases, while both partners work from home, women often still bear a greater burden of household tasks than men. Research by Bittman et al. (2004) shows that while many couples work

from home, women are still more involved in household chores such as cooking, caring for children, and cleaning the house. This phenomenon is caused by deep-rooted social norms regarding gender roles in the family, where women are often considered more responsible for household matters, even while they also work outside the home or work from home (Bott & Spillius, 2014). There is potential for a more equitable division of labor, but traditional patterns continue to dominate in many households (Wu & Chen, 2020). It is therefore important to promote cultural and policy changes that support equal roles for men and women in managing family responsibilities.

Remote work also poses challenges in terms of dividing time and space between work and home life. When couples work from home, the boundaries between work time and family time become blurred, causing the two aspects to overlap (Flood & Genadek, 2016). This can exacerbate gender inequality in the division of household tasks, as women may feel more pressured to carry out family tasks while meeting their work expectations (Kossek et al., 2014). Men who work from home, on the other hand, may not feel the same pressure, as their role in the family has not changed much, while they work from home (Chauhan, 2022). This situation highlights the need for mutual awareness and open communication between couples to create a balance of roles and a fairer division of responsibilities amid the dynamics of remote work.

While women and men work from home, traditional roles in the division of family work tend to be emphasized again (Barker & Chalus, 2014). For example, even though both partners are at home, women are still often more involved in family responsibilities. This change is linked to the social assumption that domestic work is primarily the responsibility of women, while men more often take on the role of breadwinner, even though both partners are working from home. This phenomenon shows that while WFH changes the way people work, gender roles in the family do not necessarily change quickly (Devi, 2022). Active efforts are therefore needed to challenge and change entrenched gender norms in order to create a more equitable division of roles in the modern work era.

Changes in the division of household responsibilities are also related to individual mental well-being. Several research studies indicate that women who work from home often feel burdened by the dual roles they perform. Research by De Menezes and Kelliher (2011)

found that women tend to experience higher levels of stress because they face greater demands at work, while at the same time they must also meet expectations as homemakers. This tension can lead to emotional and physical exhaustion, which in turn has a negative impact on their personal quality of life. Research during the pandemic by Stefanova et al. (2021) confirmed that women caregivers during lockdown spent more time on caregiving tasks than men, and this was associated with a negative impact on their professional outcomes.

The implementation of WFH also has the potential to change the power dynamics within households (Himawan et al., 2022). In some cases, working from home allows couples to interact more frequently and collaborate on household tasks. This, however, can also lead to power conflicts, especially when an unfair division of tasks creates tension between couples (Dockery & Bawa, 2018). For example, if women feel that they have to manage household chores alone even though they also work from home, they may feel unappreciated and begin to feel tension in their relationship with their partner (Spector et al., 2007). As a result, this inequality not only affects individual well-being, but can also have a negative impact on the quality of relationships and harmony within the family.

There are also cases where WFH can create a more flexible division of tasks between couples. With flexibility in time and space, some couples can arrange their time to divide household tasks more fairly (Sladká & Kreidl, 2022). For example, male partners who were previously not very involved in household chores can take on a greater role when they work from home. This can also help reduce stress for female partners who may feel overwhelmed by their domestic duties. A research study by Clark and Kearns (2009) shows that with time flexibility, the division of household tasks can be more balanced, although this depends heavily on how each partner responds to this change.

The application of technology also plays an important role in influencing the division of family responsibilities in WFH schemes (Sridhar & Bhattacharya, 2021). With digital tools such as task management and remote communication applications, some couples can coordinate more easily when it comes to household tasks. Technology enables a more transparent and structured division of tasks, which can reduce the mental burden on individuals (Waizenegger et al., 2020). Research by Felstead and Henseke (2017) shows that technology can help facilitate the division of tasks, although its influence on gender roles in the household still varies.

The long-term impact of WFH on the division of household responsibilities and gender roles in the family is still not fully known. There are indications, however, that although some changes may occur in the short term, traditional gender roles in the family remain difficult to change in a short period of time. Research by Hochschild and Machung (2012) shows that despite changes in employment policies, gender roles in the household often remain tied to social norms that are deeply embedded in the culture of society. This points to the possibility that even though WFH may introduce small changes, gender roles in the household will still adapt slowly.

Although the “Work from Home” phenomenon has opened up opportunities for a shift in the division of household responsibilities, this change is happening slowly. According to research by Sayer (2016), despite the potential for a more balanced division of tasks at home, many couples continue to maintain traditional gender roles, mainly due to deeply ingrained cultural factors and habits. This is why, even though WFH can create opportunities for the redistribution of household tasks, these changes are often hindered by existing social structures (Wethal et al., 2022).

The Impact of Hybrid or Remote Work on the Work-Life Balance within Families

The phenomenon of hybrid and remote work has had a significant impact on the balance between work and personal life within families. One of the most striking changes is the disappearance of physical boundaries between work spaces and family spaces (Adisa et al., 2022). Without clear separation, individuals often find it difficult to separate work time and personal time. This can lead to increased stress, fatigue, and a decline in the quality of family relationships (Shaari et al., 2022). This situation shows that although hybrid and remote work offer flexibility, without effective boundary management, it can actually exacerbate role imbalances and have a negative impact on the overall well-being of the family.

While working from home offers flexibility in terms of time, many individuals feel trapped in never-ending work. When work can be done anytime and anywhere, work demands often interfere with personal and family time. This phenomenon is known as the “always-on culture,” where individuals feel they must always be available for work, even outside of official working hours (Elshaiekh et al., 2018). Remote workers experience increased work-family conflict when the boundaries between work time and personal time become blurred, and feel pressure to remain responsive to work communications outside of working hours (Gillet et al., 2021).

In family life, gender roles also play an important role in how remote work affects work-life balance. Research shows that women, especially those with traditional views on gender roles, tend to experience greater conflict between work and family when working from home (Graham et al., 2021). They often feel pressured to meet work demands while still carrying out domestic tasks (Turhan & Demirbilek, 2022). This double pressure not only affects work productivity, but also has a negative impact on women's mental health and overall life satisfaction.

On the other hand, men who work from home may experience a reduction in conflicts between work and family, especially if they have egalitarian views on gender roles (Usdansky, 2011). Despite the potential for a more equitable division of tasks, many couples continue to maintain traditional roles within the family, which can exacerbate inequality in the division of responsibilities (Nikmah et al., 2021). This indicates that changes in work structures alone are insufficient to achieve equality without accompanying shifts in attitudes and social norms that support equal gender roles within the family.

The lack of social interaction in the workplace can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation, which negatively impact an individual's mental well-being (Wright & Silard, 2021). A lack of social support from coworkers and supervisors can make individuals feel less valued and more stressed (Graham et al., 2021). As a result, individuals who work from home for long periods of time are at risk of experiencing decreased motivation and work engagement. To address this, it is important for organizations to create effective communication and social support strategies in virtual work environments.

There are also positive aspects of remote work for families. Flexible working hours allow parents to spend more time with their children, assist with school activities, and become more involved in family life (Budhrani et al., 2021). This can strengthen family bonds and improve the quality of relationships between family members (Katsabian, 2022). This, in turn, can strengthen family bonds and improve the quality of relationships between family members (Katsabian, 2022). The consistent presence of parents at home can provide children with a greater sense of security and emotional support, which contributes positively to their psychological development.

Achieve a healthy work-life balance, it's important for individuals and families to set clear boundaries between work time and personal time (Volkova et al., 2022). Open communication between partners and other family members is essential to ensure that everyone feels valued and has enough

time for themselves (Pathak et al., 2021). Without boundaries and effective communication, remote work can actually exacerbate role conflicts within the family and disrupt the emotional well-being of all in a family (Wu et al., 2022).

Companies also play an important role in supporting employees' work-life balance (Downes & Koekemoer, 2011). Providing flexibility in working hours, supporting fair leave policies, and creating a work culture that values personal time can help employees more easily balance their work and personal lives. The impact of remote work on work-life balance is not universal. Factors such as job type, family structure, and organization culture can influence how individuals experience and respond to the challenges and opportunities offered by remote work.

Overall, while hybrid and remote work offer flexibility and convenience, they also bring new challenges in maintaining a balance between work and personal life. With the right approach, effective communication, and support from all parties, individuals and families can overcome these challenges and reap the benefits of this new work model.

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of hybrid and remote work has brought about structural changes in the relationship between work and personal life within the family. While this work model offers flexibility in terms of time and place that was previously unavailable in a conventional work setting, the reality is that its impact on household dynamics is not always positive or equal. Working from home has the potential to create space for a more equitable division of responsibilities between partners, particularly in terms of gender roles and childcare. The traditional norms that still prevail in many families, however, exacerbate domestic role inequalities, especially for women who experience the double burden of being both professional workers and homemakers.

This imbalance is further exacerbated by the blurring of boundaries between work and personal space, which can reduce the quality of interpersonal relationships within the family and increase the risk of stress and emotional exhaustion. Amidst all its potential and obstacles, hybrid and remote work require much more complex management of time, roles, and social expectations than before. A comprehensive understanding is therefore needed of how gender role structures, organization culture, and company policy support interact in mediating the impact of this work model on family and individual well-being.

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