

The Effect of Remote Working on Employees Wellbeing and Work-Life Integration during Pandemic in Egypt

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Abstract

The study aims to enrich employers' understanding of how employees perceive remote working Post COVID-19's quarantine period and its effect on employees' psychological wellbeing and work-life integration in Egypt. A structured questionnaire was distributed post-COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period on a sample of 318 employees who are supposed to be working remotely in different sectors from home. Correlation and regression analyses were conducted to test the research hypotheses. The results suggest a significant positive effect of employees' perception of remote working on psychological wellbeing and work-life integration. Simultaneously, there is a significant negative effect of employees' perception of remote working and emotional exhaustion. This study should help employers design the appropriate intervention plan to sustain operations and maintain effective communication with remote workers. It contributes to the literature by considering it as one of the growing empirical studies that will tackle remote working in relation to employee psychological wellbeing and work-life integration Post-COVID-19 quarantine period in Egypt. The majority of research nowadays tackling COVID-19 is from a biomedical perspective, focusing on physical and mental health, but this research will tackle COVID-19 from a psychological and managerial standpoint. The research results will assist researchers and practitioners in gaining insights into the future role of remote working.

Keywords: remote working, employee's wellbeing, emotional exhaustion, work-life integration

1. Introduction

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced the outbreak of a global disease called COVID-19, that has been discovered in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, and now it is spreading quickly to affect several countries and threatening the whole planet (Hamouche, 2020). According to the World Health Organization (2021), by January 15, 2021, the number of COVID-19 confirmed cases exceeded 93,194,922, which is in line with the report published in Worldometer (2021) confirming the cases up to 95,488,091. The Egyptian Health Ministry announced that Egypt is facing the second wave of Coronavirus, in which 1,022 new coronavirus cases were detected by January 2021, upping the total number of confirmed cases till now to 153,741 (Egypt today, 2021).

During the first wave of the pandemic, emergency measures have been implemented by many countries to mitigate the infection from spreading; consequently, public gatherings and events have been canceled, schools, universities, restaurants, and organizations have been closed, travels were restricted, people quarantined until August 2020 where life started to get back to normal in Egypt with great cautious but the lockdown period changed the working landscape dramatically were several organizations in almost all sectors decided to allow their employees to work remotely; mainly from home to reduce social contact which enforces many organizations all over the world to adjust quickly to the "new norm" of operating from home (Prasad, Rao, Vaidya, & Muralidhar, 2020). From this point, the concept of remote working got its popularity (Shareena & Shahid, 2020).

Now for organizations to maintain their competitiveness and secure employee's health, they are urged to develop new strategies to adjust to this new challenge by being more automated, digitalized, having the right technological support, and designing more flexible structures (Gómez, Mendoza, Ram íez & Olivas-Luj án, 2020). Although smart technologies facilitate workers' ability to work remotely (Prasad et al., 2020). But still, it

became a significant concern for workers, with or without families, on how to manage their work and family at the same time in an effective way (Grant, Wallace & Spurgeon, 2013). It is expected that some of the people would suffer from post-pandemic stress, and some of the people might realize their inner strengths and display a significant amount of gratitude for what they have (Prasad et al., 2020). This would mean that employees would go through many challenges that might affect their psychological wellbeing, which will be revealed and understood in this paper, given that it might last for some time in the future. There are several studies available in general on remote work, and still, the research interest related to this concept is now growing (Raišienė, Rapuano, Varkulevičiūtė, & Stachová, 2020). But the researcher considers working from home as the primary concern of this study because it is the most appropriate flexible strategy supported by organizations as an alternative workplace strategy. In addition to responding to the call of Raišienė et al. (2020), necessitating the importance of studying remote working and gathering evidence from a different cultural background to track specific changes in how different employees perceive remote working, which will help address the benefits and challenges associated with this new working norm.

Accordingly, the study is conducted in Egypt, a country with one of the lowest percentages of remote working, which suddenly had to switch to working from home during a pandemic. This is supported by data presented in the online platform wuzzuf.net, which connects job seekers with employers; it demonstrated a 124% increase in the number of remote working job posts in addition to a radical increase in the number of workers who are applying for remote working job vacancies (Aravanis, 2020). On the global side, 81% of the worldwide workforce experienced partial or full workplace closures; many of them experienced working from home for the first time without training on how to work effectively from home (Savic, 2020).

With these statistics in mind, it is necessary to investigate this new kind of online work culture during its highest peak of adoption (Molino et al. 2020) to be able to come up with possible solutions and improvement plans, particularly if it is going to last for some time in the future; because working from home is considered the most suitable working alternative during the pandemic. Besides, responding to the call of Molino et al. (2020) that additional research is necessary to understand the impact of using technology while working remotely on employees' wellbeing and the importance of studying remote working experience on the degree of emotional stress that is usually associated with emergencies.

Finally, this research will help set a road map or recommendations from the concluded results for employers to follow, highlighting the needs of remote workers to ensure healthy wellbeing and balanced work-life integration. To better deal with the pandemic and plan for a potential lockdown situation, these situations open the window to understanding the dynamics associated with less observable conditions under typical situations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Remote Work

Research to date has revealed that remote working is gaining attention worldwide, where the number of remote workers expected to increase more (Gómez et al., 2020; Raišienė et al., 2020). Remote work is a working practice that encourages professionals to work beyond the traditional office setting; anywhere they are productive in and that makes work-life balance perfect, and this is based on the idea that there is no need for work to be performed in a particular location (Prasad et al., 2020). Employees have reasonable control to plan their days to see that their professional and personal lives can be integrated into their fullest potential and satisfaction (Prasad et al., 2020). Several studies have described remote working using telecommunication devices as e-working (Grant et al., 2013). The term 'e-working provides more flexibility in terms of moving work to the workers instead of moving workers to work; this relates to work being accomplished anywhere and at any time regardless of location and thanks to the technology that aids in the implementation of this flexible working arrangement (Nilles, 2007).

Remote working can also be described as 'teleworking' and 'telecommuting,' which refers to the employee's ability to work remotely using technology to facilitate communication with the workplace (Raišienė et al., 2020). Latterly, 'agile working' has been added to the terminology referring to an organization's capability to be flexible to meet changing market demands and adjust working practices accordingly (Grant, Wallace, Spurgeon, Tramontano & Charalampous, 2019). Thus, the current study will focus on working from home as a remote work strategy to offset the pandemic situation using technology to access work like Team viewer, Zoom, and Microsoft teams.

It can be seen from previous studies that remote working is a weapon with two edges; first, it has various benefits such as a better work-life balance, providing more flexibility to work, increase in job satisfaction, and employee engagement (Grant et al., 2013), employees have time to pursue their hobbies, professional and

personal advancements that cannot be fulfilled due to lack of time and freedom at the workplace to pursue them; moreover, workers are less stressed than those working in-office, better protection for health, and wellness (Prasad et al., 2020). Higher productivity, along with being one of the ways to cut costs of office rent, electricity, property insurance, office supplies, maintenance costs, and infrastructure, in addition to saving time traveling to and from the workplace, besides; several studies highlighted that employees are willing to leave their current job for another job that offers remote working opportunity (Prasad et al., 2020; Molino et al., 2020; Raišienė et al., 2020).

Second, despite all the benefits mentioned above but other studies indicated that remote work could be challenging for many employees compared to working at the office, as stated by Grant et al. (2013) in addition to Barber and Santuzzi (2015), who claimed that remote working could lead to poor wellbeing, communication overload, work overload and workplace pressure (Charalampous, Grant, Tramontano & Michailidis, 2019; Molino et al., 2020), which is justified by exchanging emails during non-working hours, a practice that has been linked to stress (Chesley, 2014) and blurred home-work boundaries (Tietze & Musson, 2005), which could subsequently affect job effectiveness and performance (Grant et al., 2019). Consequently, remote working may become unfavorable in some cases when individuals intensify their work activity (Charalampous et al., 2019) adding the feelings of being isolated and not connected with coworkers and the need for new and different skills and mindset to succeed as a remote worker (Raišienė et al. 2020; Rysavy & Michalak 2020).

After reviewing previous studies, the main research topics tackling telework in organizations are the efficiency of virtual teams (Bhat, Pande & Ahuja, 2017), telework features (Raghuram, Hill, Gibbs & Maruping, 2019), virtual leadership (Hoch & Kozlowski, 2014), aspects of mutual trust, effective communication (Rysavy & Michalak, 2020), mental stress and anxiety (Gómez et al., 2020). In addition to the feasibility of remote work in relation to age, gender, and income inequality in Canada (Gallacher & Hossain, 2020). The relationship between telework and job-related factors, organization policies, job satisfaction on the wellbeing of the employees in the IT sector (Prasad et al., 2020), along with studying the use of telework in Lithuania (Raišienė et al., 2020), Italy (Molino et al., 2020), France (Aguilera, Lethiais, Rallet & Proulhac, 2016) during normal situations; but this study will focus on measuring employees' perception of remote working in relation to their psychological wellbeing, emotional exhaustion and work-life integration in Egypt during the pandemic situation.

2.2 Remote Working and Employee Wellbeing

Nowadays, during the COVID-19 pandemic, workers operate with a new working style that they are not used to; they are used to operate in a familiar office atmosphere, integrating with their team, attending meetings, and calling customers. But now, with the new working norm (working from home policy), lines between personal and work life will blur even for professionals that are used to working from home as an increasing number of schools close, meaning children will be at home and working parents might struggle to separate responsibilities, which might affect the worker's overall wellbeing (Staglin, 2020). Hence, Pradhan and Hati (2019) defined employee wellbeing as the quality of work-life; it is the employee's wellbeing that is affected by workplace interventions; it is all about the psychological, physical, and emotional health of employees (Juniper, Bellamy & White, 2011).

WHO (2020) provided a comprehensive definition for employee well-being and described it as a state of every individual employee to understand his capability, manage the normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to her/his community. Previous studies have examined the psychological and physiological aspects of remote working and found a mixed result (Golden, Veiga & Simsek, 2006; Maruyama, Hopkinson & James, 2009). Some results revealed the physiological aspects of remote working that are beneficial in reducing blood pressure compared to working in the office (Grant et al., 2013). However, these benefits can be disproved in the inability to psychologically disconnect from work (Palm, Bergman & Rosengren, 2020). The authors added that to recover from psychological detachment, it is crucial to differentiate between being psychologically or physically absent from work. Psychological detachment from work is much more difficult when being always available (Sonnentag, 2018). The experience of never being free from or mentally and digitally disconnected from work; may then lead to an increased amount of stress, and in the long run, affect wellbeing negatively (Prasad et al., 2020).

This is further supported by a study that found that low psychological detachment from work during the evening was related to insufficient sleep quality and fatigue in the morning (Sonntag, Binnewies & Mojza, 2008; Braukmann, Schmitt, Ďuranová & Ohly, 2018). However, Mann and Holdsworth (2003) found that working remotely increases loneliness and feelings of social isolation. But Prasad et al. (2020) explained that social exchange is necessary among workers to prevent the feeling of being isolated because this will affect

psychological wellbeing due to the absence of social exchange experienced by remote workers. Free communication and access to technology can avoid the risk of being isolated (Greer & Payne, 2014). As a result, workers' psychological well-being depends on the social aspect and human interaction that is considered a missing element in remote working (Pradhan & Hati, 2019). Therefore, the psychological wellbeing variable is the primary concern in this research.

Accordingly, from the literature review, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1: Employee perception of remote working has a significant negative effect on psychological wellbeing post-COVID 19-quarantine period.

H2: Employee perception of remote working has a significant negative effect on emotional exhaustion during the post-COVID 19-quarantine period.

2.3 Remote Working and Work-Life Integration

Usually, people don't have enough time to meet all work and life demands; thus, there is always a feeling of having too much to do and no enough time to do it (Pauleen, Campbell, Harmer & Intezari, 2015). Still, during the past few months where organizations decided to operate remotely, the boundaries between work and life became blurred thanks to the technology that enables flexibility in time and place where work can be done (Wepfer, Allen, Brauchli, Jenny & Bauer, 2018). According to Palm et al. (2020), many researches explained the relationship between work and life could be explained in term of work-life balance, family-to-work conflict, work-to-family conflict, work spillover, work-to-family interference; other studies stated that technology helped in facilitating the reach of family-related matters into work life, this helped in developing a bridging concept such as work-life integration or boundarylessness.

Work-life integration is defined as a reconciliation process of work, family, and individual self-demands and time (Heraty, Morley, Cleveland, Grady & McCarthy, 2008). It is argued that in the case of remote workers, the effect is that work-life spillover into non-work life as reflected in the inability to 'switch off' at the end of the workday (Marsh & Musson, 2008).

Two schools of thoughts have emerged regarding the integration of personal and work-life domains; one that explained the relationship between them to be conflict-oriented and the other that suggested the integration between both domains as a facilitative way to positive spillover in operations, starting by the first school of thought in which Heraty et al. (2008) argued that in today's pandemic home and work are two crashing forces that often lead to an imbalance when the demand from one domain (home, work, personal, family, etc.) interferes with the other. Many studies have proved that employees working remotely work more hours than they used to and that work has become more intense (Wepfer et al., 2018). It resulted in the need to be always available, work late, and check work during their time off (Park, Fritz & Jex, 2011). This could lead to burnout, being emotionally exhausted, which will negatively affect psychological well-being (Heraty et al., 2008; Pauleen et al., 2015; Derks, Van Duin, Tims & Bakker, 2015).

On the other hand, the second school of thought welcomes this flexibility because it gives them the freedom to integrate work and non-work life to suit employees' needs and let them craft the work-life balance they want (Wepfer et al., 2018). Accordingly, work-life integration takes telecommuting to a different level, where work and life are not separate entities that require equal weight; instead, employees incorporate their professional experiences into their personal lives (and vice versa) as a more holistic approach to working from home; this sheds light on work-life integration as performing the job while living a normal life (Pasini, 2019).

To conclude, Bedford (2019) stated that the desire for work-life integration had started a conversation around the need to integrate work and life to find the right balance, especially for those working from home. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H3: Employee perception of remote working has a significant positive effect on work-life integration during the post-COVID 19-quarantine period.

3. Methods

Participants from various sectors participated in this study by completing an online survey; they were recruited through social networking sites, such as LinkedIn and Facebook; the survey link was sent directly to the respondents. After completing the survey, they were requested to distribute the link to other respondents applying a snowballing technique to ensure that a sufficiently large and varied sample was obtained. The only criterion for inclusion was that the respondents were working remotely from home. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010), the research's target sample is roughly going to be 384 respondents as the population size exceeds million

Egyptian respondents. Of the 384 surveys distributed, only 318 valid questionnaires were used in the analysis, with a response rate of 83%.

The respondents were primarily females ($n = 200$, 63%), males ($n = 118$, 37%) with an average age of 33 years and ($n = 159$, 50%) of the respondents had children. The participants were primarily single ($n = 165$, 52%), while ($n = 134$, 42%) were married. The sample composed of employees working in the Education sector ($n = 181$, 57%), Information Technology ($n = 29$, 9%), Health Care ($n = 29$, 9%), Pharmaceutical ($n = 19$, 6%), Food & Beverage ($n = 16$, 5%), Retail ($n = 13$, 4%), Telecommunication ($n = 13$, 4%), Real Estate ($n = 9$, 3%) and Media ($n = 9$, 3%) respectively.

3.1 Measurements

For the research purpose, a questionnaire was designed to test the research variables in the Egyptian work environment. The four constructs were measured using five-point Likert-type scales all through the questionnaire, with 1 representing "Strongly disagree" to 5 representing "strongly agree."

Employees' perception of remote working was measured using the scale of Raišienė et al. (2020); First, this scale is used to evaluate the benefits of remote working, which consisted of 9 items (e.g., "I am more productive while working from home," "I have more time to learn new things, acquire a new hobby"). The reliability estimate for this scale was $\alpha = 0.791$. All items were positively worded, and higher scores indicated a positive perception of remote working. Second, the scale to evaluate the challenges of remote working consisted of 14 shortened and modified items to fit the research context (e.g., "Lack of social interaction," "Distractions when working remotely"). The reliability estimate for this scale was $\alpha = 0.946$. All items were negatively worded, and higher scores indicated the factors that employees negatively perceive of remote working. To come up with an overall measure of employee perception of remote working.

Emotional exhaustion was measured using Shuck and Reio (2014) three-item scale with a reliability estimate value of $\alpha = .85$. A sample item included, "I feel emotionally drained from my work" in addition to two items adapted from the study of Grant et al. (2013), "I feel used up at the end of the workday," "I feel that difficulties were piling up so high " all items were combined to form one measure of emotional exhaustion.

Psychological wellbeing, a ten-item scale, developed by Pradhan and Hati (2019), was used with a reliability value of $\alpha = .95$, but three items were dropped owing to overlap, redundancy, the least factor loading in the interest of scale length; sample items included, "I feel I am capable of decision-making" and "I feel depressed from the stress and demands of day-to-day life."

Work-Life Integration, a seven-item scale developed by Grant et al. (2019), was used to assess employees' work-life integration with a reliability value of $\alpha = .93$. Example of items included "I feel that work demands are much higher when I am working remotely," "Working from home takes up a lot of time that I would like to spend with my family," and "I can adjust my working hours to deal with family emergencies at the right time."

3.2 Data Analysis

The research analysis starts by presenting the frequency and length of working remotely from home, identifying the significant challenges and benefits experienced while working remotely. The reliability and validity of the scales used were measured then the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated; to end up by conducting simple regression analysis using SPSS software version 16.

4. Results

4.1 How Many Hours Do Respondents Spend in Remote Working Per Day?

The descriptive results revealed that (60%) of remote workers reported that they work from 7 to 9 hours and (40%) above 9 hours per day. For those who said working more than 9 hours per day, the researcher wanted to explore more about the reasons behind working longer hours; which can be summarized as follows: (23%) of respondents worked more than 9 hours per day to catch up on work, (20%) because it's required from them, (16%) to support their team, (13%) because they enjoy what they do, (13%) to meet their managers' expectations, (10%) to be able to secure their job and finally (5%) to be viewed favorably by top management.

4.2 How Often Do Respondents Work Remotely?

All the respondents work remotely at various frequencies in which (67%) are now working remotely on a full-time basis, (24%) work remotely at least three times a week, (7%) work remotely at least once a week.

4.3 Working Remotely in the Future

Respondents were asked if they plan to work remotely for the rest of their careers. Surprisingly (82%) of

respondents wanted to continue working remotely for some time in their careers, and they would recommend remote work policy to others. This is a notable result to discover. Simultaneously, remote work is sometimes portrayed as a trend, despite the challenges they face; these results seem to prove that this way of working is here to stay, as almost all remote workers want to continue working remotely. Out of all the data that was collected, no response was as powerful as this one.

4.4 Reliability and Validity

To measure the reliability and validity of the measurements used; Factor Analysis, Cronbach alpha, KMO, and Bartlett tests were conducted.

Table 1. Reliability, KMO, and Bartlett's test

Research Variables	Cronbach's alpha	KMO test	Bartlett's test	Significance (two-tailed) *
Employee perception of remote working	0.85	0.790	293.505	0.000
Psychological wellbeing	0.66	0.730	241.527	0.000
Emotional exhaustion	0.76	0.796	340.540	0.000
Work-life integration	0.83	0.801	486.630	0.000

Note. *Significant level at $p \leq 0.05$ (two-tailed)

The data's suitability was measured using Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test as presented in Table 1. Hadi, Abdullah, and Sentosa (2016) stated that the recommended minimum value of KMO should be 0.5. The results presented in Table 1 showed that the value of KMO is greater than 0.7 for all constructs, indicating that the data is fit for factor analysis. Further, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity suggested that the significance value for all the constructs is less than 0.05; this means that the multivariate is approximately normal and acceptable for further analysis (Pallant, 2005). An exploratory factor analysis was conducted using the pattern matrix for all of the values that are greater than 0.4 that were included in the analysis to ensure that all the items are converged on for their respective constructs, and the value for Cronbach alpha coefficient is greater than 0.60 in all constructs; then it lies within the acceptable range (Field, 2013); therefore, all the items used in the constructs are reliable and consistent.

Continuing with the descriptive analysis results, a correlation test was carried out to find the relationship between the research variables given the acceptable reliability and factor analysis results for the measurement scales used:

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Test

Research Variables	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Significance (two-tailed) *
Remote working - Psychological wellbeing	0.47	0.000
Remote working - Emotional exhaustion	-0.48	0.000
Remote working - Work-life integration	0.62	0.000

Note. *Significant level at $p \leq 0.05$ (two-tailed)

After conducting a correlation test, it was revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between remote working and psychological wellbeing with a correlation coefficient value of approximately 0.5, at $p \leq 0.05$. Second, there is a negative relationship between remote working and emotional exhaustion with a correlation coefficient value of approximately -0.5, at $p \leq 0.05$. Finally, there is a strong positive relationship between remote working and work-life integration, with a correlation coefficient value of 0.6, at $p \leq 0.05$.

Table 3. Simple Regression Model

Model	β	T-value	R ²	Significance *
Remote working Psychological wellbeing	0.497	9.578	0.225	0.000
Remote working Emotional exhaustion	-0.636	-9.673	0.228	0.000
Remote working – Work-life integration	0.716	11.774	0.305	0.000

Note. *Significant level at $p \leq 0.05$ (two-tailed), independent variable: perceived remote working

It can be concluded from Table 3 that employees' perception of remote working positively affects employees' psychological wellbeing ($\beta=0.497$, $p \leq 0.05$), which means that when employees' perception of remote working is enhanced by one unit, psychological wellbeing is enhanced by 0.497 units at $p \leq 0.05$. Employees' perception of remote working explains 23 % (R^2) of the variance in psychological wellbeing. Second, it was revealed that employees' perception of remote working negatively affects their emotional exhaustion ($\beta = -0.636$, $p \leq 0.05$). Employees' perception of remote working explains 23% (R^2) of the variance in emotional exhaustion. Finally, employees' perception of remote working positively affects work-life integration ($\beta=0.716$, $p \leq 0.05$), which means that when employees' perception of remote working is enhanced by one unit, work-life integration is enhanced by 0.716 units at $p \leq 0.05$. Employees' perception of remote working explains 31 % (R^2) of the variance in work-life integration.

5. Discussion

COVID-19 crisis is spreading quickly to different countries, impacting the world's economy. Employees are forced to carry out operations remotely, so human resource practitioners need to find solutions to maintain efficient operations while ensuring their employees' protection. A structured survey was carried out to measure remote workers' perception of remote working and the set of benefits and challenges associated with this working style.

The descriptive results indicated that respondents perceive remote working positively. Even when the items are taken singly, the respondents reported that remote working is a better alternative for health protection; they do not have to dress formally while working remotely; when there is no requirement to dress formally, this can lead to a more relaxed and comfortable work setting, they have the necessary resources (i.e., space, set-up, internet) to work remotely on a long-term basis, the majority of respondents enjoy flexibility in doing their own business, they finally added that working from home gives them the chance to learn new things, acquire/master a new hobby and being more productive to work, this is in line with the benefits stated by (Grant et al., 2013; Prasad et al., 2020; Raišienė et al., 2020). But these benefits come at the cost of some challenges revealed from the descriptive results, such as feeling lonely while working from home; this is supported by Charalampous et al. (2019), who stated that remote working could isolate workers professionally and socially, this could reduce the support employees receive from their organizations in terms of their professional and personal development, they feel job insecurity, can't focus because of the distractions at home. Finally, they cannot take vacation time or 'switch off' from work easily. Still, in reality, most remote workers operate more hours than onsite workers because it is challenging to switch off from work, as confirmed by Marsh and Musson (2008); Wepfer et al. (2018). All of these challenges could be reduced by adjusting organizational policies to offset their effect while working remotely.

Then a correlation and regression analysis were conducted to test the research hypotheses. It can be concluded that employees' perception of remote working positively affects employees' psychological wellbeing ($\beta=0.497$, $p \leq 0.05$), which means that respondents feel a high sense of accomplishment and good psychological health while working remotely, which contradicts the findings of Pradhan and Hati (2019); Prasad et al. (2020), who explained that psychological wellbeing is negatively affected due to the absence of social exchange and feeling of isolation that remote workers usually experience. Consequently, Hypothesis 1 is not supported.

Second, it was revealed that employees' perception of remote working negatively affects their emotional exhaustion ($\beta = -0.636$, $p \leq 0.05$), which means that respondents feel emotionally drained from higher work intensity. This confirms with Derks et al. (2015); Wepfer et al. (2018) claimed that remote working results in need to be always available, work late, and check work-related communications during their time off; this can

lead to burnout and being emotionally exhausted. This supports Hypothesis 2.

Finally, employees' perception of remote working positively affects work-life integration ($\beta=0.716$, $p\leq 0.05$). The results contradict the school of thought that integrating work and personal life domains can lead to conflict between both domains (Heraty et al., 2008; Wepfer et al., 2018). But in line with the other view, which stated that integrating personal and work-life can lead to deciding on the convenient way for achieving the right integration between they want (Pasini, 2019). Workers have full control over how they plan their days to integrate their personal and professional lives into their fullest potential and satisfaction as they enjoy a high degree of flexibility when working from home (Prasad et al., 2020). Thus Hypothesis 3 is supported.

6. Research Implications

This research aims to provide organizations with valuable information and insights on understanding the benefits and challenges that remote workers face during the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance remote working practices' effectiveness. Employers need to create a balance between sustaining normal operations as usual while ensuring high productivity and healthy psychological wellbeing. Human resource practitioners with line managers should play a significant role in providing advice, guidance, and sufficient support to the team members working remotely, through communicating regularly, not only on work matters but also on psychological issues that are related to how they manage work remotely, work over-load, their level of stress, home boundaries, and finally evaluating their ability and productivity while working from home in addition to providing the appropriate training that facilitates their work, so based on the research findings, a set of recommendations can be applied to offset the challenges of working remotely

Challenge 1: Social Isolation and Team Cooperation

Employers should find ways to maintain adequate social support levels for their employees who work from home by using technological applications such as Zoom, Microsoft teams, google hangout or JoinMe, for regular check-ins and connect face-to-face (live) with remote workers. To alleviate social isolation feelings during normal working hours, employers can set 'virtual coffee breaks' to create a more collaborative work environment. Using tools like Basecamp, LinkedIn, and Microsoft teams to outline tasks and deadlines so everyone on the team can see what is expected from each person. Line managers should encourage employees to sharpen their skills with new learning opportunities and online training as it is a great time to do so. Many online professional development webinars and pre-recorded training sessions like in Khan Academy, Udemy, and Coursera platforms.

Challenge 2: Employers don't care about employees' psychological health

It is recommended that employers use data analytics to drive an accurate wellbeing strategy to measure what matters for any organization during the pandemic and highlight different areas that employees need support in. This might occur through pulse survey data; it is a weekly pulse survey to check on employee's well-being and understand how each team, department, and organization are doing. This also keeps employees feeling cared for, sends signals to them that employers value their insights, and plans to take actions and shape strategies and work-life programs for employees to help improve their experiences during this time. In addition to providing them with different mindfulness techniques on how to meditate for better mental focus and psychological balance. Along with providing a recorded or live video from top management or leaders that show empathy and talk personally to workers about the challenges they are going through.

Challenge 3: Availability of Resources to work remotely

Employers should take steps to ensure that their workforce has the latest technology and software that encourages a more effective remote work lifestyle; they are trained on using such technology and have the needed technical support. Provide employees with laptops that are easy to carry and connected with the company's intranet, providing internet capacity or a special deal with the internet providers for the employees, or any other equipment needed (i.e., large screen, pointer screen, mobile allowance etc.). It's essential to keep communication lines open and highlight the available resources for employees to use.

Challenge 4: Can't switch off from work

During pandemic and within a home workspace, employees should take the initiative in maintaining their own wellbeing. This could be done by having a private and comfortable place at home dedicated to work only and incorporate exercise breaks into their daily routine. Finally, before and after working hours, it is essential to switch off an email, work calls, and maintain a normal sleep to feel normal during a pandemic.

Challenge 5: Feeling of Job insecurity

To maintain employees' morale during times of change, organizations should provide more transparent information to create more confidence and motivation among employees and share news in an honest manner among employees where challenges can be discussed openly. Most importantly is that organizations acknowledge all the concerns, uncertainty, and worries that employees are experiencing. Line managers should know that employees fear being fired or laid off or their salaries being deducted during this time, which will negatively affect their psychological safety, so employers should create an optional virtual meeting with employees just to share feelings or concerns.

Challenge 6: Remote working code of conduct

It is recommended that each employer creates a code of conduct on how business should be regulated during working from home with a clear guideline about what employees are expected to deliver, setting a protocol for running virtual meetings, giving emotional support, being empathetic, provide financial rewards if applicable, showing respect to the effort exerted, covering the remote working expenses, setting realistic working objectives, respecting normal working hours and adjust workload accordingly to reduce stress and adapt quickly to the new work settings.

7. Research Limitations

A set of limitations is presented in which the majority of the research sample is limited to those working in the education sector, in which they represent 57% of the total research sample and 63% of the respondents were females; this limits the research results' generalizability. Another limitation concerning the sampling technique used snowballing technique, in which the sample's representation is not guaranteed. Moreover, employee wellbeing has many perspectives, and this research is limited to using one view of wellbeing, which is the psychological and emotional wellbeing of employees.

8. Suggestions for Future Research

Further research is required to check whether there is a significant difference between males and females on how they perceive remote working. It could employ a different data collection tool like qualitative method "interviews" to help provide richness to the data collection and get more insights into the research area. Moreover, it is suggested to conduct exploratory research on exploring different ways to track and measure employees' productivity while working remotely. It would be beneficial to explore further the significant competencies required for e-workers to support operations efficiently during this critical time. Finally, it is suggested to conduct further research with longitudinal perspective post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery and compare the situation to test causal relationships among the research variables across time, considering that worker's competencies, coping strategies, productivity, and resilience will change through this long emotional and mental journey.

9. Conclusion

This research aims to explore how employees perceive remote working post-COVID-19's quarantine period and its effect on psychological well-being, emotional exhaustion, and work-life integration in Egypt. Through the analysis of previous literature reviews and research survey, themes have been developed to support the development of remote working perception scale in light of wellbeing and work-life integration.

The research results showed that remote working is associated with a set of benefits such as the flexibility offered while working remotely that can help in achieving the right integration between personal and work life to reach the right balance between both domains, better protection for individual health but these benefits arise at the expense of work intensification, longer working hours, feeling of job insecurity, inability to stay motivated, difficulty in connecting with team members. On the other side, the results revealed that employee's psychological wellbeing is enhanced while working from home, thanks to the availability of technology and more free communication tools that can mitigate the effect of feeling lonely and isolated from others. In conclusion, the key results that are raised from the analysis showed that the situation right now is confirming that employer's investment in technology won't be wasted because workers feel more productive while working from home, and it is believed that work settings will move towards this direction for plenty of time in the future.

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