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The Impact of Remote Work on Employee Productivity Addressing the Challenges in China

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ABSTRACT: Remote working has emerged as an indispensable work arrangement in China as a result of digitalisation and technological progress. Although remote working offers several advantages for organisations and workers, there are several disadvantages related to remote work that could have adverse effects on worker productivity and well-being. In this regard, the current research aimed to analyse challenges associated with remote working and the effect of mentorship at the workplace on lowering workplace anxiety of workers in China. Therefore, the researcher used a qualitative, cross-sectional design to gather in-depth views regarding the research subject. The study used a purposive sampling method to choose 11 company executives of insurance firms and conducted semi-structured interviews. The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns. The results showed that communication barriers, isolation, technology-related problems, and confusion about roles and responsibilities are still major issues among employees working remotely. Communication and collaboration are key elements that help employees engage in the work process while avoiding misunderstandings. Further, the introduction of mentoring programmes at the workplace became a significant means of offering emotional and professional support for handling workplace anxiety. The existence of supportive leadership and employee recognition was another factor identified to increase the morale of employees. It can be concluded that the use of technology combined with proper communication skills, mentoring, and supportive leadership will help companies achieve higher organisational performance. The study outcomes will also contribute to benefit employees' psychological well-being, organisational effectiveness, and successful sustainable remote work.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid digitalisation of company processes has changed working styles throughout the world and allowed employees to work outside traditional office setups. The integration of digital technology within organisational procedures has seen significant changes in employment trends within China. One of the effects of this digitisation process is the trend towards remote work, whereby the company guarantees continued operations while giving workers more flexibility to handle their workload (Staniec et al., 2023). While this innovative working method has proved to be an asset to many organisations due to its many advantages, such as economic benefits and organisational flexibility, there have been some hardships encountered by workers which impact their mental well-being. Employees in remote work settings encounter several changes in their regular working procedures, including significant modifications of the communication process. In addition, the lack of frequent interaction may make it difficult for people to share their understanding, engage in spontaneous communication and coordinate as a team. Further, they may experience issues such as access to technology, work-life balance management, and support from the manager. Moreover, employees could face low engagement levels, problems in tracking their performance, and difficulty retaining cooperation among themselves. Such factors could adversely affect teamwork, hamper decision-

making and productivity, especially for those organisations that traditionally depend on direct interaction and supervision (Bao et al., 2022).

Apart from these issues, remote working has also brought about an expanded focus on the psychological well-being of the workers. It is estimated that uncertainty, lack of communication, and performance anxiety can cause a severe level of workplace anxiety among the employees (Yasiroh, 2025). While many companies try to discover mechanisms that would help their employees work effectively remotely, there has been growing interest in mentoring as a possible means for providing both professional and psychological assistance. Apart from serving its conventional purpose of developing a career, mentoring offers emotional support, professional advice, and creates opportunities for effective interactions between employees and experienced members of the organisation. This support helps employees build confidence and overcome workplace anxieties (Wang, 2024). Therefore, investigating the issues related to remote working becomes necessary to recognise their impact on the productivity of employees, as well as developing effective strategies to improve workforce performance in China.

2.BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The current digital era has witnessed a major change in the function of organisations, especially because of digital advancements in technology that allowed people to work remotely. This trend has been especially visible in China, where organisations have started incorporating digital technology into their work practices. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly accelerated this process. The "52nd China Internet Development Statistics Report" demonstrates that as of June 2023, there are 507 million online office users in China, which accounts for 47.1% of the total number of Internet users (Liu et al., 2024). At the same time, an increasing number of associations have established departments and positions that specifically cater to remote work. Thus, flexible work arrangements gained significant prominence as a well-known form of employment in China. It has led to modifications within typical office environments and work practices. The emergence of the Internet and the sophistication of the digital tools marketplace created an external environment that must be adapted to by both organisations and workers. Therefore, the employees of the companies needed assistance in enhancing their digital competence in order to facilitate innovative competitiveness in their organisations. The trend of remote work continued even after most of the restrictions placed due to the pandemic were eased, as many organisations began incorporating these forms of working styles within their workforce policies (Zhang, 2024).

The swift digitisation of China has provided an opportunity for the country to adopt remote working. The widespread use of platforms has allowed workers to communicate and collaborate despite geographical barriers. Nevertheless, the transition from traditional office work to remote work has brought about many hardships that greatly influence employee productivity. Employee productivity is always of critical importance since organisational performance depends on how well employees are able to operate irrespective of where they are operating from (Chiguvi & Bakani, 2023). The major challenge that is often posed by remote work is the issue of communication and coordination within the team. The absence of physical proximity may restrict reflexive communication and lead to various misunderstandings, which will inevitably impact the process of task accomplishment and decision-making. This issue is highly relevant to the situation in China, as this country features a traditional office culture. Considering the importance of interpersonal relations and teamwork communication in Chinese business culture, it may become increasingly challenging to maintain team unity and employee participation under remote conditions (Xu & Pan, 2022). Moreover, the rising trend of remote working has additionally drawn attention to the variations between the experiences of employees within various industries and different geographical backgrounds. It has become increasingly challenging for organisations to design productive strategies for remote working. Simultaneously, several other problems, such as work-life boundary management, employee engagement, effective communication, technological accessibility, and confidence between managers and subordinates, have also become relevant problems in remote working environments. These can affect the employees' performance, motivation, and productivity (Haque, 2023). Despite the increasing trend towards remote working in China, there are still issues with the challenges of remote work and their impact on employees' productivity levels. Hence, this study attempted to gain insight into these issues to enhance organisational performance by uplifting the employee productivity levels.

3.PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this research was to explore difficulties that employees face during remote work and their influence on productivity in China. Specifically, this research was intended to examine hardships faced by employees due to remote work, such as problems with communication, collaboration and work-life balance that have an immense role in the productivity of the employees. With growing remote and hybrid work trends in China, it became necessary to analyse different elements impacting employee productivity when working in a virtual environment. This research focused on employees who worked

remotely from insurance sectors in China, where technology was increasingly used for work processes. The purpose of this study was to specify the major problems faced by remote workers and how these challenges affected them in performing the job effectively. In addition, this research attempted to define the workplace determinants responsible for the efficiency of remote working conditions. The study was developed to gain insight into the relationship between remote work issues and the productivity of employees by examining employees' experiences in the Chinese context. It also concentrated on workplace mentoring programmes that help to mitigate workplace anxiety among remote work employees. The results of the study may help organisations and managers develop measures that can minimise the negative impacts of remote work issues while improving the productivity of employees.

4.LITERATURE REVIEW

In the current times, the internet has developed into an important component in both personal and professional fields, owing to the increasing popularity of remote work among employees. According to Chin et al. (2023), the post-COVID situation offers opportunities and threats for organisations. On the one hand, there is an opportunity for savings due to lower operating costs. access to a worldwide talent pool and a more promising work-life balance. On the other hand, the hazard is associated with employees' involvement, data security, organisational commitment, and the destruction of organisational culture (Chin et al., 2023). The findings from the research conducted by Gifford (2022) revealed that remote workers indicated greater work-life balance compared to those who worked in offices. Nevertheless, social isolation was one problem that affected their well-being. In terms of productivity, the research revealed that remote workers had increased levels of output compared to other workers who worked in offices, and they rarely took leave due to being sick. However, they needed to work more hours at home than workers who worked in offices (Gifford, 2022).

Technology has been acknowledged as one of the major tools that can boost remote working productivity. It is apparent that technologies like communication, cloud and collaboration technologies make communication feasible and allow information sharing despite employees being located at diverse locations. Nevertheless, research by Botiş (2025) demonstrated contrasting views about the contribution of technology in expanding the productivity of remote workers. The study suggested that productivity gains in remote work environments can be limited due to inequality in access to digital infrastructure, poor internet connectivity, and inconsistent levels of technological skills among workers. These limitations can pose barriers to communication and task execution (Botiş, 2025). These results indicated that the use of technology alone is not enough to improve efficiency, since the effectiveness of technology depends on how accessible it is to the employees and whether they can make use of it effectively. Moreover, Ferrara et al. (2022) indicated that another significant challenge of remote work is work-life balance and the well-being of employees. The researcher argued that there is conflicting evidence from existing literature about the impact of remote working arrangements on work-life balance and the lives of employees in general (Ferrara et al., 2022). A previous study has indicated that remote working improves the employee's work-life balance as it offers more flexibility, less commuting time, and effective personal-professional control of responsibilities (Fan & Moen, 2023). On the contrary, another study showed that remote work blurs the lines between work and personal life. This phenomenon is responsible for causing more significant stress, fatigue, and burnout among employees (Costin et al., 2023).

While technology-related and work-life balance issues have been examined considerably in remote work, their impacts might go beyond productivity and influence the psychological well-being of employees. In many cases, the impact of remote work is encountered in the form of work-related psychological problems such as workplace anxiety. Workplace anxiety has become a typical concern that has increasingly emerged in the area of worker productivity in remote settings. Previous research has denoted that a lack of supervision and interaction regarding the method of evaluating worker performance can induce stress and anxiety among remote workers. Further, the demand for being readily available through online communication channels can hinder employee productivity in the form of decreased focus and poor decision-making ability (Nelson, 2022). In this context, workplace mentoring can help confirm that work becomes more rewarding for those who suffer from workplace anxiety. This method increases work positivity, performance, and promotions, as it provides mentees with both career and psychosocial support to overcome workplace anxiety (Barbosa & de Oliveira, 2025).

In this context, the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) offers an appropriate framework to support understanding how employees feel in remote working conditions. According to Deci and Ryan (2000), when freedom, competence, and relatedness requirements are fulfilled, individuals will experience improved psychological well-being and motivation. The problem with remote work is that these needs may be hindered due to less socialisation, less feedback, and unclear work expectations. SDT indicates that these issues may adversely impact the well-being and productivity of remote workers (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Empirical studies have also established the validity of using SDT to explain employee experiences in remote working conditions. From the perspective of SDT, Nwoko (2022) proposed that the motivation of employees engaged in

remote work is affected by the satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Remote working conditions may have the potential to reduce these psychological needs due to the lack of social interaction and support. This implies that the problems that may arise from remote work could affect the motivation of employees without organisational support measures (Nwoko, 2022). From an overview of the literature, it can be stated that there are many aspects that can hinder employee productivity while working remotely. Hence, there is a significant requirement to address this gap to understand the challenges of Chinese remote work employees.

5.RESEARCH QUESTION

- How does workplace mentoring influence the reduction of workplace anxiety among employees in the insurance sector in Guangdong?

6.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research Design

The study implemented a qualitative, cross-sectional research design to investigate the difficulties that influence employee productivity in remote work environments and to assess the efficacy of workplace mentoring in alleviating workplace anxiety among employees in China. An in-depth understanding of employees' perceptions and experiences regarding remote work practices was deemed appropriate by using a qualitative approach. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with participants who had experience working remotely in the insurance sector at a single point to gather data. Purposive sampling was used to determine participants who possessed relevant knowledge and experience regarding remote work arrangements. The study focused on the examination of barriers associated with remote work. Thematic analysis was used to investigate the collected data, using an inductive coding approach to recognise key themes from the responses of the participants.

The study used data saturation to maintain the credibility of the results, where data gathering would continue until the emergence of no new themes or insights. Triangulation was another measure that involved comparing information collected from different respondents to increase the credibility of the results. In addition, peer debriefing was accomplished in the form of discussions between the researcher and academic supervisors to decrease the biases of the researcher and increase accuracy in interpretation. Member-checking was also carried out, where preliminary outcomes were presented to specific members to ensure their accuracy and validity.

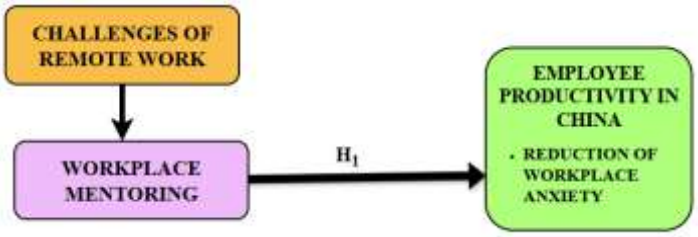
6.2 Sampling

A purposive sampling method was adopted during the research process to confirm that the selected respondents had satisfactory knowledge and experience in handling the management of remote working practices in insurance firms in China. Initially, the researcher intended to target a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 15 business executives whose roles were to introduce and handle remote working policies in their organisations. In total, 13 qualified respondents participated in the study. Out of the total participants, 11 participants successfully participated in semi-structured interviews. This resulted in a total sample size of 11 participants for the study.

6.3 Data and Measurement

The research involved gathering primary qualitative data from Guangdong Province in China. The data were acquired through the use of semi-structured interviews. Workplace anxiety was assessed based on the descriptions provided by the participants regarding work-related stress and psychological struggles associated with work. Workplace mentoring was analysed through factors like emotional support and mentor-mentee relations. The interview questions allowed the participants to talk about the effects that mentoring had on managing workplace anxiety and psychological well-being. The responses were recorded and coded to facilitate thematic analysis to achieve the research goal.

7.CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



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8.RESULT

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative research method involves performing investigations that seek to examine the experiences, perceptions and behaviours of individuals. In this regard, the method does not focus on the measurement of numbers and instead concentrates on the interpretation of how individuals perceive specific situations. The research data is acquired using interview methods and open-ended questions. This allows the researcher to collect comprehensive information regarding the experience and perceptions of respondents. This research design is particularly appropriate when addressing complex workplace issues involving emotions and human interaction.

In studying the effect of workplace mentoring on decreasing the occurrence of workplace anxiety experienced by employees in the insurance industry of Guangdong province, the qualitative research approach offered a more in-depth analysis of the employees' experiences and perceptions concerning the mentoring process. Specifically, it allowed the investigation of how workplace mentoring provides professional direction and emotional and psychological assistance and boosts confidence, which can address workplace anxiety among employees.

8.1 Thematic Coding

Theme 1: Effective Strategies Employed by Business Leaders to Manage Remote Work

Leadership plays a key role in guiding employees and helping accomplish organisational goals through effective leadership practices. It was found that the leaders from China employed certain strategies to help their employees overcome the problems of working remotely. The techniques were related to enhancing communication and collaboration among the team members. They also offered guidance and mentorship with the use of technology and created a supportive environment for the employees.

Collaboration and Communication Among Remote Teams

Communication was recognised as one of the key techniques to be utilised in helping employees work remotely. Communication strategies were selected that facilitated communication among employees within teams and involvement of both employees working remotely and those who were present in the offices. Meetings and the use of video conferencing were also common practices of collaboration that assisted in keeping people engaged and reduced the feeling of isolation. The other important aspect highlighted by participants was the knowledge of people's communication styles, which helped avoid misunderstandings.

Project Management Application

Chinese business managers made use of project management software applications for handling remote workers and securing communication. This included applications that allowed monitoring tasks, coordinating actions, and providing better information exchange. The participants of the study observed that the usage of these tools assisted in clarifying roles and responsibilities. With clear processes and availability of information, it reduced the possibility of confusion and allowed individuals to work more confidently.

Incentives and Responsibility of Remote Employees

It was evident from the responses of participants that remote workers had played a major part in ensuring that their motivation, accountability, and performance at work were maintained. The participants emphasised that self-discipline and personal accountability were crucial in accomplishing their organisational objectives when working remotely. Setting up work-related goals and scheduling daily tasks enabled the maintenance of high productivity among the remote workers. It was also evident that appreciation of achievements motivated them to stay committed to their organisational goals. The participants also reported that active participation in team interaction and open communication with their colleagues enhanced their work relationships within the organisation.

Infrastructure and Technology for Remote Work

The availability of sufficient technology was vital for facilitating the work of employees. Employees could collaborate and communicate using the right software and internet connectivity. There were cloud services for providing adequate support for data exchange and data security. The availability of these facilities ensured that employees could avoid frustration while communicating with other people. Employees would feel connected with their peers and superiors.

9.DISCUSSION

The results indicated that efficient communication and collaboration play an important role in helping workers and minimising the sense of isolation experienced in remote working conditions. This was consistent with the findings of a study which asserted that structured communication tools foster collaboration and encourage relationships between remote workers. Proper communication skills allow workers to communicate effectively and prevent misunderstandings in the course of remote work (Barbosa & de Oliveira, 2025). The study supported this claim by asserting that it also fosters better relationships within the workplace. Furthermore, the results showed that the use of project management software helps in providing role clarity and decreasing tensions among employees. This aligned with the results from Li et al. (2024), since both stated that technology leads to improved coordination, visibility of processes, and task management. Their study also stressed that such technology improves transparency by permitting people to track the progress of tasks (Li et al., 2024). However, in addition to this, the findings of the current study demonstrated that technology is not enough, since it is only effective when it can promote communication and work together with employees. Therefore, the effectiveness of technological systems depends on how much they interact with human beings. Moreover, motivating employees using effective leadership has been found to be significant for overcoming work-related anxiety. Nevertheless, this conflicts with the view held by a recent study which stated that the well-being of employees relies mostly on organisational policies and job attributes rather than on interpersonal intervention measures (Adebisi & Balogun, 2026). In contrast to this, the current research findings revealed that mentoring, recognition, and leadership have a direct influence on eliminating work-related anxiety through offering psychological support to employees.

10.CONCLUSION

This study examined the challenges associated with remote work and their impact on employee productivity in China, as well as the role of workplace mentoring in reducing workplace anxiety among employees. The results demonstrated that remote work environments continue to face significant problems, including technological challenges, isolation and communication difficulties. The identification of adequate communication and collaboration practices as essential mechanisms for the prevention of misunderstandings, the support of workplace relationships, and the protection of employee engagement. Moreover, the advent of project management technologies help in improving the visibility of workflows, the clarity of roles, and the coordination of tasks. Nevertheless, the intricacies of remote work were not satisfactorily determined by technology alone, as its effectiveness was contingent upon supportive communication and interpersonal interaction. Moreover, the results underscored the significance of workplace mentoring as an asset for both emotional and professional support. Mentoring was helpful for managing workplace anxiety and increasing employee confidence. Effective leadership practices and employee recognition were factors that made workers feel motivated and psychologically healthy. In conclusion, employee productivity in remote working environments cannot only be gained through investing in technology. Organisations should use technology along with reasonable communication, mentoring, and good leadership to make workers productive and free from workplace anxiety.

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