SAIM Journal of Social Science and Technology
Volume 02, Issue 01, 2025. pp. 103–122
Research Article
DOI: https://doi.org/10.70320/sacm.2025.v02i01.008

Productivity, Stress, and Work-life Balance in the Remote Work Era: A study of Kathmandu Valley

Anish Jha
MBA Graduate, SAIM College

Article Info.

Email
anish.fin03@gmail.com

Article History
Received: 28 February 2025
First Revised: 22 May 2025
Second Revised: 14 June 2025
Accepted: 26 June 2025

Cite
Jha, A. (2025). Productivity, stress, and work-life balance in the remote work era: A study of Kathmandu valley. *SAIM Journal of Social Science and Technology*, *2*(1), 103–122. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16886358

Abstract

Purpose: This study examines how working from home (WFH) affects employee productivity, stress, and work-life balance among employees in Kathmandu Valley, focusing on psychosocial and organizational factors that shape remote work experiences.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Using an explanatory research design, data were collected from 409 remote employees via a structured Google Forms questionnaire through convenience sampling. Quantitative analysis employed Microsoft Excel for descriptive statistics and SmartPLS 4.0 to explore relationships between WFH, productivity, stress, and work-life balance.

Findings: WFH improves work-life balance and lowers stress, which together boost productivity. However, employees face challenges including domestic distractions, lack of supervision, and communication issues. A strong preference for hybrid work models indicates the importance of flexible work arrangements.

Conclusion: WFH can enhance productivity mainly by improving work-life balance and reducing stress, but addressing distractions and communication barriers is critical. Organizational support and effective digital infrastructure are necessary to maximize WFH benefits.

Originality/value: This research provides unique empirical insights into WFH's impact within Kathmandu Valley's socio-cultural context, deepening understanding of remote work in developing economies.

Keywords: work-from-home, employee productivity, work-related stress, work-life balance, remote work

Introduction

Work-From-Home (WFH) refers to performing job duties outside traditional office environments by leveraging internet and communication technologies (Lakshmi et al., 2017). Although popularized globally during the COVID-19 pandemic, WFH originated in the 1970s when NASA engineer Jack Nilles coined the term "telecommuting" as a strategy to reduce physical travel during the oil crisis (Niles, 1976). Early adoption was hampered by technological constraints and organizational resistance. However, with the advent of widespread internet connectivity and digital tools in the 1990s, WFH gained traction, particularly in sectors such as information technology, consulting, and media (Graffin, 2023). The primary drivers behind remote

work adoption have consistently been to enhance employee satisfaction, reduce commuting-related stress, and improve work-life integration (Dockery & Bawa, 2014).

Post-pandemic, WFH has transitioned from an emergency workaround to a sustained workforce model. Organizations worldwide institutionalize flexible remote work arrangements to bolster employee well-being and operational resilience. The proliferation of virtual collaboration platforms, cloud-based project management software, and secure data-sharing systems has extended remote work capabilities beyond IT to education, healthcare, finance, and research sectors (Dayaram & Burgess, 2024). Nonetheless, this shift has also surfaced challenges such as digital fatigue, social isolation, and blurred boundaries between personal and professional domains. Investigating the multifaceted implications of WFH on employee outcomes is particularly vital in diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts.

In Nepal, WFH remained relatively uncommon before the COVID-19 pandemic, with remote operations limited to select IT and multimedia companies. The pandemic, however, catalyzed widespread adoption of platforms like Zoom, Google Meet, and Viber to maintain business continuity (HRM Nepal, 2021). WFH has since grown especially prominent in IT, business process outsourcing (BPO), and media industries, whereas traditional sectors such as banking, hydropower, and manufacturing have lagged due to technological shortcomings and entrenched cultural norms. Empirical research conducted in Kathmandu Valley (Rajbanshi, 2021) indicates that remote work positively influences employee productivity, flexibility, and mental well-being, though benefits are unevenly distributed across demographic groups.

Despite promising developments, Nepal continues to confront systemic obstacles in mainstreaming WFH. Notably, internet connectivity remains inconsistent, especially beyond urban centers, with Nepal ranking 93rd globally in digital infrastructure as of 2023 (Prasain, 2023). Additional challenges include cybersecurity vulnerabilities, inadequate ergonomic work setups, rigid management styles, and limited awareness of remote work policies (Mandel, 2023). Furthermore, Nepali collectivist cultural norms often conflict with the independence and self-management required in remote work, affecting communication, employee engagement, and social cohesion. Nonetheless, positive indicators of digital progress exist: Nepal improved its ranking in the UN E-Government Development Index from 125th in 2022 to 119th in 2024, and policy initiatives like the proposed Digital Nomad Visa under the Digital Nepal Initiative demonstrate growing institutional support for remote work models (Khatapana, 2025).

While global scholarship extensively examines WFH's advantages and challenges, research on its long-term sustainability and socio-cultural impacts in developing nations such as Nepal remains limited. Most studies focus on short-term pandemic responses or specific sectors like IT (Kowalski et al., 2022; Hutuzulu et al., 2024). There is a notable gap concerning how gender, marital status, and organizational support shape remote work experiences within Nepal's unique socio-cultural milieu. Additionally, ergonomic and cybersecurity issues contributing to techno-stress and related health outcomes are underexplored (Bispham, 2021). This study seeks to address these gaps by empirically analyzing the interplay of productivity, stress, and work-life balance among remote workers in the Kathmandu Valley.

The significance of this study is multifaceted: it provides practical guidance for employees to optimize remote work and manage mental health, offers organizations evidence-based recommendations on policy formulation, leadership engagement, and infrastructure investment, and informs policymakers in shaping inclusive, flexible labor frameworks. Academicians gain a foundation for further investigation into remote

work dynamics within South Asia and analogous emerging economies. Furthermore, global employers can derive insights to refine recruitment and collaboration strategies involving Nepalese remote workers.

This research is grounded in several theoretical frameworks to holistically assess WFH outcomes. Boundary Theory (Clark, 2000) examines how individuals negotiate the intersection of work and family roles. Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) highlights autonomy, competence, and relatedness as motivational drivers in remote settings. Person-Environment Fit Theory (Lewin, 1951) evaluates the congruence between individual traits and work environments. Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989) addresses the maintenance of psychological resources under stress. Complementary models such as the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Demerouti et al., 2001), Work-Home Resources Model, Effort-Recovery Model, and Job Demand-Control Model further contextualize job stress, recovery, and control dynamics specific to Nepal's evolving technological and cultural landscape.

In summary, WFH has evolved into a strategic, sustainable employment approach with distinct benefits and constraints. Its effective implementation in Nepal hinges upon addressing infrastructural deficits, socio-cultural nuances, and digital capacity building. Kathmandu Valley, as the nation's economic and technological hub, represents a critical context for assessing remote work's influence on employee productivity, stress, and work-life balance. This study aspires to contribute empirical insights to foster inclusive and resilient remote work policies tailored to Nepal's socio-economic realities and aligned with global best practices.

Research Objective

To examine the impact of working from home (WFH) on employee productivity, stress levels, and work-life balance among professionals in Kathmandu Valley, with a particular focus on the psychosocial, organizational, and socio-cultural factors that influence remote work experiences in Nepal's evolving digital and labor environment.

Literature Review

Empirical Review

Extensive empirical research globally and locally indicates that Work-From-Home (WFH) arrangements can positively influence job satisfaction, work-life balance (WLB), productivity, and overall employee well-being, but these benefits are contingent upon effective management, adequate resources, and organizational support.

Kowalski et al. (2022) demonstrated that productivity gains from WFH are mediated by improvements in work-life balance, while elevated stress and emotional exhaustion negatively moderate this relationship. Complementing this, Aspita and Edastama (2023) emphasized that employee motivation and a supportive work environment are critical determinants of productivity enhancement during WFH. Nugraha et al. (2022) reinforced the importance of WLB and job satisfaction as key facilitators of productivity, echoing Susilo's (2020) argument that outcome-based evaluation—prioritizing results over physical presence—better captures WFH effectiveness.

The indirect effects of WFH on productivity through psychosocial factors are further supported by Wolor et al. (2021), who identified stress and WLB as significant mediators. Choukir et al. (2022) added that employee attitudes and perceptions greatly influence productivity outcomes, reinforcing that WFH is evolving into a normative work modality rather than a temporary solution.

Demographic variables also play a significant role. A Swedish longitudinal study by Uppsala University found that age, preference for remote work, and familial responsibilities significantly impact WFH productivity (Gegerfelt & Sandstrom, 2023). Similarly, Ahmed and Jafir (2022) reported favorable impacts on the work-life balance and job

satisfaction of Bangladeshi women under well-managed WFH conditions.

In more recent investigations, Infantri et al. (2024) evidenced that while WFH boosts job satisfaction and productivity, motivation alone does not exert a direct effect on productivity, underscoring the complex interplay of factors involved. Amri et al. (2022) stressed the combined influence of motivation, job satisfaction, and managerial support but cautioned that failing to control for demographic confounds such as age and work experience might limit result generalizability.

In the Nepalese context, empirical findings align with global trends but highlight context-specific nuances. Kandel (2023) identified collaboration, communication, and technology access as pivotal in shaping job satisfaction among Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) employees working remotely. Orešković et al. (2023) documented a strong employee preference for remote and hybrid working models in Kathmandu Valley, which correlated positively with improved work-life balance and job satisfaction.

Collectively, these studies suggest that WFH can enhance employee personal and professional lives, provided that organizations establish clear boundaries between work and family roles, maintain effective communication channels, foster strong managerial support, equip employees with adequate technological infrastructure, and promote individual adaptability. Conversely, poorly managed WFH environments risk elevating stress, distraction, family conflicts, and subsequent declines in job satisfaction and productivity.

Conceptual Framework

This study addresses critical empirical and theoretical gaps by examining the impact of WFH on employee productivity through an integrated theoretical lens grounded primarily in the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory. It synthesizes four complementary organizational behavior models that collectively elucidate the direct and indirect mechanisms through which WFH influences productivity:

Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Demerouti et al., 2001)

This model articulates how job demands and available resources interact to affect employee well-being, burnout, job satisfaction, and productivity. It provides a foundation for understanding how varying pressures and supports in WFH contexts modulate outcomes.

Work-Home Resources (W-HR) Model (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012)

This framework emphasizes the bidirectional relationship between work and home domains, detailing how positive experiences (work-home enrichment) and negative interferences (work-to-home conflict) shape employee functioning.

Effort-Recovery Model (Meijman & Mulder, 1998)

This model focuses on the dynamic balance between work effort expenditure and recovery processes vital for restoring physical and psychological resources. It underscores the necessity of sufficient recovery to sustain job satisfaction and maintain productivity, particularly relevant in remote settings where boundaries are blurred.

Job Demand-Control (JDC) Model (Karasek, 1979)

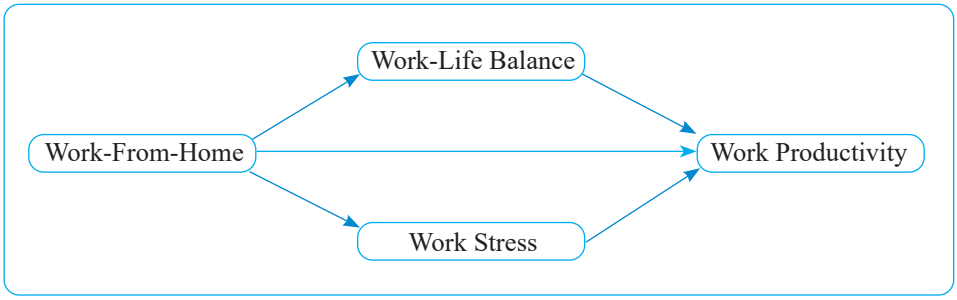
This paradigm highlights the interaction between job demands and employee autonomy or control, positing that high demands coupled with low control precipitate job strain, emotional exhaustion, and adverse health consequences.

Together, these frameworks enable a multidimensional investigation of how WFH affects productivity, both directly and indirectly through mediators such as work-life balance and perceived job stress. The integrative approach reflects the complex, evolving nature of remote work practices in the post-pandemic era, especially within developing countries like Nepal where infrastructural and socio-cultural factors distinctly

shape employee experiences. This integrated approach offers a holistic perspective to better understand and optimize remote work policies aimed at enhancing employee well-being and performance.Based on these theories, a conceptual framework can be developed as:

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



Note: Wolor et al. (2021)

Work-from-home (WFH) & Work Productivity (WP)

WFH refers to doing office jobs from home, being an employee or self-employed. It is also called as telecommuting. WFH is highly supported by the internet and communication technologies, that helps connect remote employees together and with the office as well in real-time (Lakshmi et al., 2017; Meenakshi et al., 2013).

WFH offers several advantages like less commuting, higher autonomy, flexibility, work-life balance, low stress, etc. which in overall improves employees productivity (Bataineh, 2019).

H1: Working from home has significant positive relationship with work productivity.

Work-from-home & Work life balance (WLB)

WLB is maintaining a balance between family and work lives (Jyothi & Jyothi, 2012). WLB is achieved when individual allocate a balanced time for both family and work to complete the responsibilities such as family commitments, personal care and refreshment, meeting work deadlines, etc. (Delecta, 2011).

Work from home helps to balance the personal and professional life by allowing more space for family, flexible working hours, no travel stress, spare time for personal care and development (Kossek et al., 2012).

H2: There is significant positive relationship between work-from-home and work-life balance.

Work-Life Balance (WLB) & Work Productivity (WP)

WP refers to the effectiveness and efficiency with which employees perform their tasks to achieve organizational goals. Productivity is the indicator of organization's long-term viability and profitability (Fakhri et al., 2021). Work-life balance can affect employee productivity or productivity. When employees make proper balance between personal and professional life, it leads to achievements of happiness, lower distractions, job satisfaction and supports overall well-being of the employees (Darcy et al., 2012; Neupane, & Mishra, 2020).

H3: There is negative relationship between work from home and work stress.

Work Stress and Work Productivity

Work stress derived from the WFH settings may affect the level of productivity. Higher job demand may create mental, physical and emotional strain which can impact the quantity and quality of work output, missing of deadlines, etc. which can

impact the work productivity (Ganster& Rosen, 2013).

H4: There is significant positive relationship between work-life balance and work productivity.

Work-From-Home (WFH) & Work Stress (WS)

Work stress is the feeling of being overwhelmed and tired in your mind, emotions, and body when your job demands become too difficult to manage (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978; Perry et al., 2000). WFH may create work stress due to continuously use of technology, lack of ergonomic work settings and family support, communication issue with supervisor & the colleagues, work overload, etc. (Kim & Park, 2022). When employee tries to balance both family and job responsibilities at the same time, work stress occurs (Feng &Savani et al., 2020). From other perspective, WFH allows greater flexibility and autonomy which can help to manage work load, allocate sufficient family time, less travelling, etc. and lead to reduction in work stress (Bloom et al., 2015).

H5: There is significant negative relationship between work stress and work productivity.

Mediating Role of Work-Life Balance

Proper balance between personal and professional life while working from home helps to increase the work productivity. Setting the clear WFH guidelines, prioritizing tasks, setting boundary line, support form family can help to maximize the work productivity and time for exercise and personal growth, no travelling stress, etc. (Felstead&Henseke, 2017).

H6: There is positive mediating role of work-life balance in relationship between work-from-home and work-productivity.

Mediating Role of Work Stress

Work stress plays an important role in how working from home affects employee productivity. When employees face unclear expectations, lack necessary resources, or work long hours without breaks, stress can build up and reduce their ability to focus, stay motivated, and perform well (Cooper & Marshall, 1976; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Working remotely can cause work stress due to isolation, unclear communication, family conflicts, imbalance between work and personal life (Kossek et al., 2012; Richardson & Rothstein, 2008). This stress directly impacts employee productivity, leading to issues such as missed deadlines, reduced work quality, decreased creativity, and overall lower efficiency. Thus, work stress can significantly and negatively affect the productivity of remote workers.

H7: There is negative mediating role of work stress in relationship between work-from-home and work-productivity.

Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative, explanatory research design aimed at examining the causal relationships among key constructs including Work-From-Home (WFH), work-life balance, work stress, and work productivity, with work-life balance and work stress serving as mediating variables. The research was conducted in Kathmandu Valley, comprising the districts of Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur. This area was selected due to its economic significance, demographic diversity, and high concentration of formal employment sectors impacted by remote work.

A non-probability convenience sampling technique was employed, targeting employees, freelancers, government workers, and entrepreneurs with experience of working from home. This sampling method was chosen due to resource constraints and accessibility considerations within the study population.

A total of 409 valid responses were collected, exceeding the minimum sample size calculated using Cochran's formula for unknown populations, thereby ensuring adequate statistical power and reliability of results.

Primary data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire developed based on validated items from prior

empirical studies. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire consisted of demographic information, work-from-home experiences, and research constructs including WFH, work-life balance, work stress, and productivity.

The questionnaire was deployed using Google Forms, with approximately 80% of responses collected online via email and social media platforms, and 20% through offline, in-person distribution using printed forms.

All study variables were adapted from established literature:

Work-From-Home (WFH) (5 items)

Adapted from Kowalski et al. (2022) and Hutuzulu et al. (2024), capturing autonomy, managerial trust, technical support, time efficiency, and access to digital tools.

Work-Life Balance (WLB) (5 items)

Based on Ahmed and Jafir (2022), measuring family time, boundary management, travel time use, emotional stability, and task scheduling.

Work Stress (WS) (5 items)

Adapted from Wolor et al. (2021) and Susilo (2020), assessing isolation, overworking tendencies, travel stress relief, micromanagement absence, and conflict reduction.

Work Productivity (WP) (5 items)

Based on Nugraha et al. (2022) and Aspita and Edastama (2023), evaluating meeting deadlines, focus, self-development, physical refreshment, and rest opportunities.

Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4.0. This method was selected for its suitability in analyzing complex models with mediating variables and its effectiveness with small to medium sample sizes (Hair et al., 2022). The analysis was conducted in two stages: (1) evaluation of the measurement model for reliability and validity, and (2) testing the structural model including mediation effects.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile

A total of 409 respondents from Kathmandu Valley participated in the survey, with males comprising 54.52% and females 45.48%. The largest age group was 21-30 years (64.55%), followed by 31-40 years (24.21%). Most respondents held a bachelor's (43.28%) or master's degree (50.86%). Professionally, 68.22% worked in the private sector, with entrepreneurs (13.45%), freelancers (10.02%), and government employees (8.31%) making up the remainder. Nearly half (49.14%) were single and 56.72% lived in nuclear family and monthly income for 69.92% ranged between NPR 25,001 and 100,000, including 28.85% earning NPR 50,001-75,000. Work experience was mostly between 1 to 6 years (59.66%). These results indicate the workforce in Kathmandu Valley is predominantly young, educated, and engaged in private sector jobs, with modern social structures and adequate income and experience that support adaptability to remote and hybrid work models.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Title	Category	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	223	54.52%
	Female	186	45.48%
	Others	0	

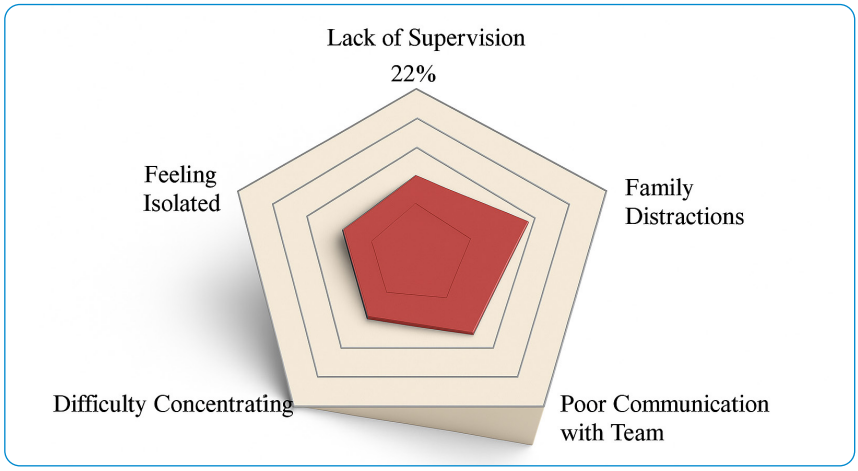
Title	Category	Number	Percentage
Age	Below 20	3	0.73%
	21-30	264	64.55%
	31-40	99	24.21%
	40 and above	43	10.51%
Education Level	Intermediate	9	2.20%
	Bachelor level	177	43.28%
	Master level	208	50.86%
	Above Master	15	3.67%
Current Employment Status	Private Job	279	68.22%
	Government Job	34	8.31%
	Entrepreneur	55	13.45%
	Freelancer	41	10.02%
Marital Status	Single	201	49.14%
	Married	190	46.45%
	Divorced	18	4.40%
Family Type	Joint Family	165	40.34%
	Nuclear Family	232	56.72%
	Extended Family	12	2.93%
Monthly Income	Below 25,000	42	10.27%
	25,001-50,000	101	24.69%
	50,001-75,000	118	28.85%
	75,001-100,000	67	16.38%
	Above 100,000	81	19.80%
Total Work Experience	Less than 1 year	48	11.74%
	1-3 years	135	33.01%
	4-6 years	109	26.65%
	7-10 years	71	17.36%
	Over 10 years	46	11.25%

General Understanding on Work-from-home

Among 409 respondents, 71.8% said their organizations have WFH policies, while 28.2% do not, indicating many still follow strict in-office rules. About 90.3% have worked from home, mostly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. WFH experience varies: 39.2% under 3 months, 27.1% over a year. Longer experience is common in flexible sectors like IT and BPO, while shorter experience is typical in government and client-facing jobs. Regarding policy flexibility, 37.1% reported moderate flexibility, 30.9% high flexibility, with the rest facing restrictive or no flexibility. While 52.3% faced no major WFH problems, 47.7% did, mainly citing distractions, lack of supervision, poor communication, and focus issues. Although 79.5% experienced productivity challenges, many still prefer WFH or hybrid models for better work-life balance and reduced stress.

Figure 2

Impact of WFH on Employee's Productivity

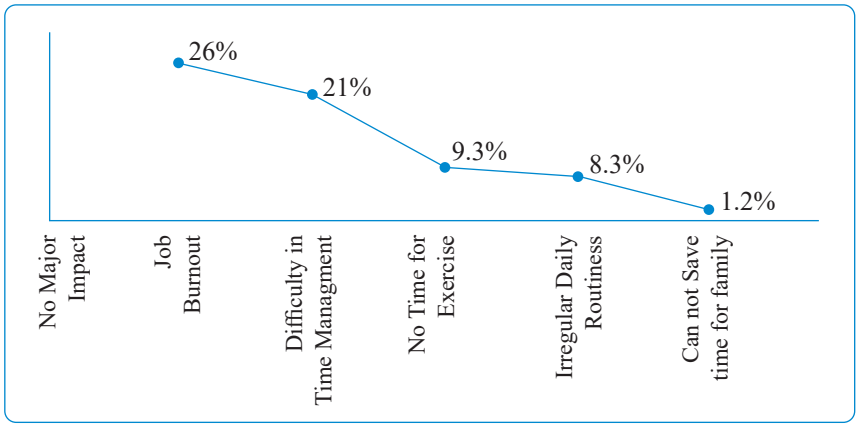


Among the 195 respondents reporting productivity challenges while working from home, the primary issues identified were family distractions (36.5%), lack of supervision (22.3%), poor communication (19.4%), difficulty concentrating (18%), and feelings of isolation (4.1%). Family distractions and inadequate supervision were significant factors contributing to reduced focus and accountability.

Organizations primarily enhance productivity through regular meetings, reported by 22.3 percent of respondents, and clear communication, noted by 20.3 percent. Fewer respondents mentioned the availability of resources, training, or recognition programs. Notably, 7.1 percent reported receiving no support, and comprehensive assistance is uncommon. Regarding work-life balance, 46.3 percent manage it by prioritizing tasks, 31.9 percent rely on family support, and 16 percent follow fixed schedules. While 86.4 percent acknowledged receiving some organizational support, mainly through flexible working hours, encouragement to take breaks, and reasonable workloads, comprehensive support remains limited.

Figure 3

Impact of WFH on Personal Life of Remote Employees



Among 53 respondents without work-life balance support, 34.2% reported major personal impacts, 26% burnout, and 21% time management issues. Poor support increases stress and burnout (Kossek et al., 2012).

WFH affects productivity and well-being, with key challenges including distractions, lack of supervision, and poor communication. Prioritizing tasks and family support help manage balance. Regular meetings, flexibility, and clear communication improve WFH outcomes. Greater organizational support is needed for effective WFH in Kathmandu Valley (Toscano & Zappalà, 2020).

Measurement Model Assessment

To assess internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR) values were examined. Convergent validity was evaluated using factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). According to Henseler et al. (2015), factor loadings should be ≥ 0.50, AVE values should be ≥ 0.50, and both CR and CA should exceed the threshold of 0.70 to establish acceptable reliability and validity. The findings revealed that all factor loadings met or exceeded the minimum requirement, AVE values ranged from 0.605 to 0.722, and both CA (ranging from 0.837 to 0.899) and CR (ranging from 0.883 to 0.925) were well above the threshold. These results confirm satisfactory levels of internal consistency, reliability, and convergent validity in the measurement model.

Table 2

Measurement Model Analysis

Construct	Observed Items	Factor Loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach Alpha
Work-from-home	WFH 1	0.845	0.605	0.883	0.837
	WFH 2	0.606			
	WFH 3	0.786			
	WFH 4	0.783			
	WFH 5	0.843			
Work-life Balance	WLB 1	0.879	0.722	0.912	0.871
	WLB 2	0.827			
	WLB 3	0.835			
	WLB 5	0.857			
Work Productivity	WP 1	0.858	0.713	0.925	0.899
	WP 2	0.84			
	WP 3	0.82			
	WP 4	0.891			
	WP 5	0.81			
Work Stress	WS 1	0.803			
	WS 2	0.774			
	WS 3	0.851			
	WS 4	0.871			
	WS 5	0.806			

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker (FNL) (1981) criterion and the HTMT ratio. The FNL criterion was satisfied, as the square root of each construct's AVE exceeded its inter-construct correlations. Additionally, all HTMT values were below the 1 threshold (Chen & Chang, 2020), confirming discriminant validity, further supporting the model's discriminant

Table 3

Discriminant Validity-Fornell-Larker Criteria

	WFH	WLB	WP	WS
WFH	0.778			
WLB	0.72	0.85		
WP	0.695	0.72	0.844	
WS	0.65	0.711	0.81	0.822

In the table, each diagonal value exceeds its correlations with other constructs. For example, the square root of AVE for WFH is 0.778, higher than its correlations with WLB (0.720), WP (0.695), and WS (0.650). Similarly, WLB (0.850), WP (0.844), and WS (0.822) have diagonal values greater than their inter-construct correlations. This confirms strong discriminant validity, indicating that all constructs are distinct within the measurement model.

The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio is used to confirm that different constructs in a study are distinct from one another. As shown in the table, each diagonal value is greater than the correlations with other constructs, indicating clear separation between the concepts (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 4

Discriminant Validity-HTMT Value

	WFH	WLB	WP	WS
WFH				
WLB	0.961			
WP	0.905	0.977		
WS	0.872	0.956	0.985	

The table shows HTMT values for WFH, WLB, WP, and WS, ranging from 0.872 to 0.985, mostly below 1. This indicates adequate discriminant validity, confirming that the constructs are conceptually distinct and the measurement model is reliable.

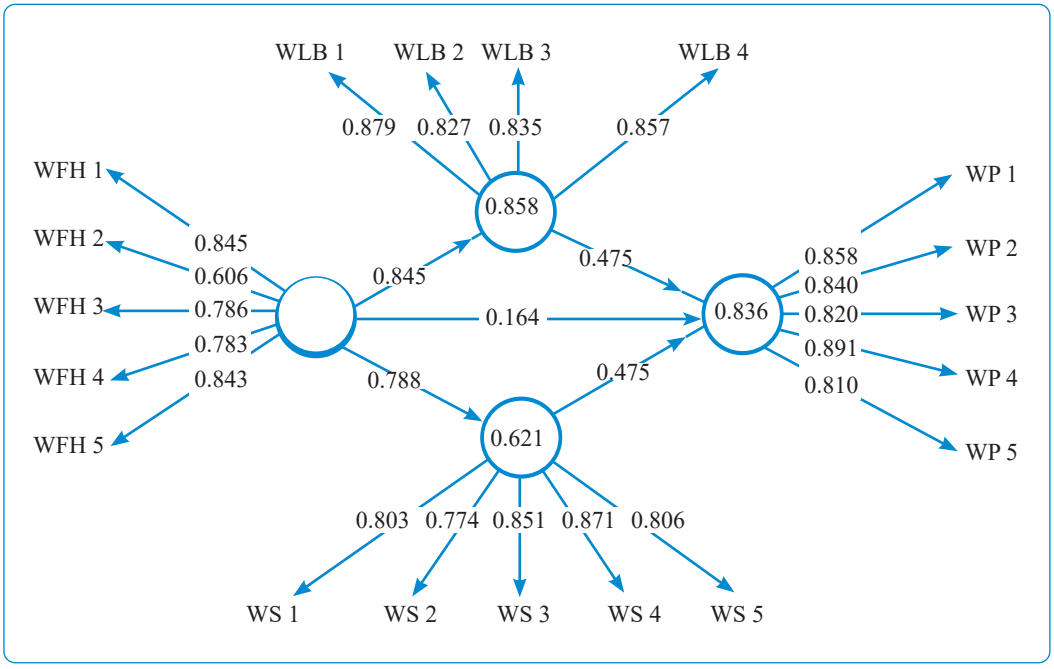
Structural Model Assessment

The structural model was analyzed to test the research hypotheses and assess the explanatory power of the model (Alzoubi et al., 2020). Developed using SmartPLS 4, the model included one exogenous construct (Work-From-Home), two mediating constructs (Work-Life Balance and Work Stress), and one endogenous construct (Work Productivity). A bootstrapping procedure with 10,000 subsamples was applied to evaluate the significance of the path coefficients. Path analysis, as an extension of multiple regression, facilitates causal interpretation through structural equation modeling (Kim & Park, 2022). SmartPLS 4 enabled this process by generating statistical outputs alongside a visual diagram illustrating relationships among observed and latent variables (Ringle & Sinkovics, 2009). The model's predictive power

was assessed using the coefficient of determination (R^2), with findings indicating 71.3% variance explained in Work-Life Balance, 62.1% in Work Stress, and 83.6% in Work Productivity, reflecting strong explanatory capability. Furthermore, all constructs showed Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values below the critical threshold of 5, confirming the absence of multicollinearity issues and affirming the robustness of the structural model (Hair et al., 2017). These results confirm that the dataset is free from significant common method bias, and therefore, the study's structural relationships and conclusions can be considered valid and trustworthy.

Figure 4

Structural Model



Hypothesis Testing

There are seven hypotheses studied in this study, and to test them, bootstrapping with at least 10,000 sub-samples was conducted using SmartPLS 4, as recommended by Streukens and Leroi-Werelds (2016). The significance of each hypothesis was assessed by examining t-values, p-values, and confidence intervals, where a t-value > 1.96 (Purwanto et al., 2021), p-value < 0.050 (Purwanto et al., 2020), and the exclusion of zero from the 95% confidence interval (Aguirre-Urreta & Rönkkö, 2018) indicate statistical significance. SmartPLS 4 computed these t-values, using the percentile method to generate confidence intervals, reflecting the importance of the path coefficients (Chin, 2010).

The results of the hypothesis testing using SmartPLS 4 show that all proposed relationships are statistically significant. For H1, the path from WFH to WLB has a strong positive effect (β = 0.845, p = 0.001), with the confidence interval (0.812-0.873) not containing zero, indicating high significance. H2 shows that WFH also positively affects WP (β = 0.164, p = 0.001), though the effect size is smaller, but still significant. H3 reveals a strong impact of WFH on WS (β = 0.788, p = 0.001), again supported by a narrow and non-

zero confidence interval. H4 confirms a positive relationship between WLB and WP (β = 0.327, p = 0.001), while H5 shows that WS significantly contributes to WP as well (β = 0.475, p = 0.001). In conclusion, all five hypotheses are supported, demonstrating that WFH positively influences work outcomes through its effects on stress and balance.

Table 5

Hypothesis Testing- Direct Structural Paths

	Hypothesis	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	P Values	CI		Decision
						2.50%	97.50%	
H1	WFH ➔WLB	0.845	0.845	0.015	0.001	0.812	0.873	Significant
H2	WFH ➔WP	0.164	0.162	0.047	0.001	0.069	0.253	Significant
H2	WFH ➔WS	0.788	0.790	0.023	0.001	0.741	0.830	Significant
H4	WLB ➔WP	0.327	0.327	0.067	0.001	0.194	0.456	Significant
H5	WS ➔WP	0.475	0.478	0.054	0.001	0.379	0.589	Significant

Mediation Analysis

The results show that both mediation paths are statistically significant. For H6, WFH has a positive indirect effect on WP through WLB, with a path coefficient of 0.277, a p-value of 0.001, and a confidence interval (0.163-0.389) that excludes zero, confirming the mediation effect. Similarly, H7 reveals that WS significantly mediates the relationship between WFH and WP, with a coefficient of 0.375, a p-value of 0.001, and a confidence interval (0.292-0.475), also excluding zero. These findings confirm that both WLB and WS partial mediating roles in explaining how WFH impacts work productivity. In conclusion, H6 and H7 are supported, showing that better balance and lower stress under WFH conditions help improve employee productivity.

Table 6

Hypothesis Testing- Indirect Structural Paths

	Hypothesis	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	P Values	CI		Decision
						2.50%	97.50%	
H6	WFH ➔WLB ➔WP	0.277	0.276	0.058	0.001	0.163	0.389	Significant
H7	WFH ➔WS ➔WP	0.375	0.378	0.047	0.001	0.292	0.475	Significant

Discussion

This study explored the impacts of non-traditional work arrangements, specifically Work-From-Home (WFH) and hybrid models, on key employee outcomes—Work-Life Balance (WLB), Work Stress (WS), and Work Productivity (WP)—among employees in Kathmandu Valley. Using SmartPLS 4 and grounded in Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, Boundary Theory, and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, the findings offer strong empirical support for the beneficial role of flexible work arrangements in enhancing employee well-being and performance.

The strong positive effect of WFH on WLB (β = 0.845, p = 0.001) suggests remote work promotes greater autonomy and flexibility, enabling employees to effectively juggle professional and personal demands. This aligns with COR Theory, which posits that safeguarding psychological and temporal resources fosters well-being (Hobfoll, 1989). Prior studies have similarly documented that greater schedule control and reduced

commuting enhance work-life integration (Mann & Holdsworth, 2003). The model's explanation of 71.3% variance in WLB underscores flexible work's substantial role in cultivating balance.

WFH also demonstrated a significant negative association with WS ($\beta = 0.788$, $p = 0.001$), reflecting reduced stress levels. This corroborates findings by Biron and van Veldhoven (2016) and Allen et al. (2015), who emphasized the stress-relieving impact of eliminating commuting hassles and decreasing workplace distractions. The Effort-Recovery Model and Boundary Theory offer theoretical backing, highlighting how psychological detachment and resource replenishment curb strain and support health (Clark, 2000). The model's explanation of over 60% variance in stress underlines WFH's effectiveness in alleviating work-related strain.

While the direct effect of WFH on WP was relatively modest ($\beta = 0.164$, $p = 0.001$), mediation analyses revealed that WLB ($\beta = 0.327$, $p = 0.001$) and WS ($\beta = 0.475$, $p = 0.001$) significantly explain how productivity improves under flexible work. This highlights that a healthy work-life interface and reduced stress underpin enhanced focus and motivation, consistent with the JD-R Model's assertion that diminishing job strain boosts performance (Demerouti et al., 2001). These results align with prior research affirming that emotional and psychological well-being critically influence productivity (Fonner & Roloff, 2012; Chong et al., 2020).

The finding that stress reduction serves as the most potent productivity predictor emphasizes mental health's centrality in organizational outcomes. Employees who experience less stress due to remote arrangements tend to perform better due to enhanced concentration and motivation (Chong et al., 2020). Consequently, organizations need to integrate psychological health initiatives alongside flexible work policies to maximize employee efficacy and sustain performance (Wang et al., 2021).

Despite these benefits, persistent challenges emerged, including workload increases, family conflicts, mental health issues, and communication difficulties within WFH contexts—findings consistent with prior studies highlighting the 'dark side' of remote work (Tavares, 2017). These underscore the necessity for clear guidelines, flexible scheduling, reliable technology, adequate ergonomic support, and a management culture founded on trust and effective communication (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Kossek & Lautsch, 2018). Many employees utilized boundary-setting strategies and developed routines to optimize performance—strategies advocated by current literature.

The preference for hybrid work models, which balance autonomy with in-person collaboration, reflects a growing consensus that purely remote arrangements may not fulfill all employee needs, especially regarding social connectivity and teamwork (Tremblay & Thomsin, 2021). This echoes findings that hybrid arrangements can mitigate isolation and sustain engagement while leveraging flexibility benefits (Maskey & Mishra, 2018).

Within Nepal's socio-cultural context, the study affirms the importance of tailoring WFH policies to accommodate collectivist values, caregiving responsibilities, and infrastructural limitations (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010) Many Western models of remote work overlook these factors which are critical in Nepal, where family ties and digital access differ markedly. Organizations must therefore implement culturally sensitive, inclusive policies that promote well-being and foster retention (Mazmanian, 2014).

Further, the analysis underscores the urgency of improving Nepal's digital infrastructure and providing training in digital skills, self-management, and cyber security to support remote work effectively (Bartsch et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021). Supporting caregivers and women with flexible arrangements is vital to reducing workplace inequalities (Mazmanian, 2014).

Engaging employees in policy formation enhances trust and broadens acceptability, which is essential for sustainable implementation (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2020). Lastly, investing in resilience training and promoting responsible technology use serve to safeguard productivity and employee well-being in increasingly digital work environments (Atena et al., 2020).

Conclusion

This study reinforces that WFH and hybrid work models offer sustainable, effective strategies for enhancing employee productivity, reducing stress, and improving work-life balance. Integrating flexible scheduling with mental health support and culturally tailored policies is imperative, particularly in Nepal's unique socio-economic and infrastructural landscape. Remote work offers employees greater autonomy to manage personal and professional responsibilities, enabling better mental well-being and increased productivity through improved work-life integration. Many employees benefit from reduced commute times and fewer workplace distractions, which contribute to less stress and higher job satisfaction.

However, challenges persist, including increased workload, family conflicts, mental health struggles, and communication barriers. These issues emphasize the need for organizations to establish clear remote work guidelines, flexible scheduling, reliable technology infrastructure, ergonomic support, and management practices that foster trust and accountability. Employees also benefit from strategies such as creating routines and establishing boundaries between work and home life.

The preference for hybrid models suggests that employees value a balance between the flexibility of remote work and the social and collaborative benefits of office environments. Despite these supports, ongoing pressures related to mental health and workload require organizations to implement fair workload distribution, encourage regular breaks, and offer well-being programs tailored to remote workers' needs.

For organizations in developing countries like Nepal, it is crucial to design flexible, culturally sensitive WFH policies that account for local familial and social dynamics as well as infrastructural limitations. Policies should aim to enhance employee well-being and productivity simultaneously by providing digital infrastructure, investing in training for remote work skills and leadership, and promoting inclusive work environments that address gender and caregiving roles.

Moreover, clear labor regulations are needed to safeguard employee rights, data security, and health standards in remote work contexts. Organizations must empower employees with self-management tools and digital literacy to support task planning, professionalism, and online safety. Attention to the collective cultural context is essential, requiring sector-specific adaptations and involving employees in policy development to foster trust and effectiveness.

Ultimately, investing in resilience training, responsible technology use, and hybrid work models can sustain productivity while protecting employee mental health in evolving work landscapes. This study contributes practical insights for employers, policymakers, and employees seeking to optimize remote work arrangements for long-term success in Nepal's post-pandemic economy.

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