

EFFECT OF TELECOMMUTING ARRANGEMENT ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN GLOBACOMM NIGERIA LIMITED.

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Abstract

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design to investigate the effect of telecommuting on employee performance. The research population consisted of the entire workforce of Globacomm within the Zaria Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria totaling 76 employees. A census approach was adopted to include all employees. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, which was distributed using a drop-and-pick method. Out of the 76 copies of questionnaire distributed, 68 were returned in a usable condition, yielding a high response rate of approximately 89.5%. The data was analyzed using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which allowed for the examination of complex relationships between variables. While the study found a significant positive effect of work at agreed location arrangements on employee performance, no significant effect was observed for work at home arrangements. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that organizations to adopt a balanced and flexible approach to telecommuting policies by striving to understand the unique needs and preferences of their workforce, and tailor their telecommuting policies accordingly to maximize the benefits of remote work and support employee performance.

Keywords: Telecommuting, Work at home, Work at Agreed Location, Employee Performance.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology has transformed traditional work environments, introducing flexible work arrangements like telecommuting. Telecommuting, or remote work, allows employees to perform their job duties from locations outside the traditional office setting. It provides flexibility, reduces commuting time and can lead to increased job performance and productivity (Allen, et al, 2015). The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated the adoption of telecommuting, making it a critical component of modern work environments (Waizenegger et al., 2020).

According to Uchenna et al. (2018), telecommuting exists in several dimensions, among which are work at home and work at agreed location. Work at home involves employees performing their job duties from their residences. This arrangement offers several advantages, including reduced commute time, which saves time and resources that would otherwise be spent commuting, leading to a better work-life balance and increased productivity (Bloom et al., 2015). Working from home often allows for more flexible scheduling, enabling employees to work during their most productive hours and better manage personal responsibilities (Kossek, et al, 2015). Work at agreed location on the other hand refers to employees working from a location other than their home, such as coworking spaces, satellite offices, or other designated areas. This arrangement combines the benefits of remote work with the advantages of a structured work environment. Employees working at agreed locations may have access to office resources, such as high-speed internet, printers, and meeting rooms, which can enhance productivity (Spinuzzi, 2012).

Employee performance is a critical aspect of organizational success, reflecting the effectiveness and efficiency with which employees carry out their work responsibilities. Defined by Azanza et al. (2020) as the accomplishment of tasks and duties by individuals within an organization, employee performance involves a range of behaviours, actions, and outcomes that contribute to achieving organizational goals and objectives. Employee performance is not solely about individual task completion but also covers the ability of employees to effectively collaborate and communicate within a team or organizational structure. As highlighted by LePine et al. (2008), effective teamwork and interpersonal interactions are crucial components of employee performance, particularly in today's collaborative work environments. This perspective underscores the importance of considering social dynamics and relationship-building skills as integral aspects of overall employee performance.

The relationship between telecommuting and employee performance has been a subject of rigorous exploration in contemporary research. Telecommuting, characterized by remote work arrangements such as working from home or satellite offices, introduces a paradigm shift in traditional work dynamics. While telecommuting offers flexibility and autonomy to employees, potentially enhancing job satisfaction and work-life balance, its impact on productivity and overall performance remains a topic of debate. The virtual nature of telecommuting can influence communication dynamics, team collaboration, and access to resources, all of which are integral to employee performance.

Statement of the Problem

Telecommuting has become a central aspect of modern business operations, transforming how organizations and employees interact. The flexibility and convenience it offers have made it an appealing option for many companies globally, including in Nigeria. The impact of telecommuting has been the focus of intensive research efforts in recent times due to the rapid changes in the business environment.

However, despite its potential benefits, telecommuting presents unique challenges, particularly in the Nigerian context. Uchenna et al. (2018) reported that employees in many Nigerian organizations who engage in telecommuting often view it as an opportunity to pursue personal goals at the expense of organizational objectives. This divergence between personal and organizational goals is a critical issue that warrants attention. Employees leveraging telecommuting for personal pursuits may lead to a decrease in productivity, reduced quality of work, and overall inefficiency, ultimately hindering the achievement of organizational objectives.

This misalignment of goals between employees and their organizations calls for a comprehensive examination of the telecommuting practices within Nigerian firms, particularly in Globacom Nigeria, Ltd.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the effect of telecommuting on the employee performance in Globacom Nigeria Ltd, however, its specific objectives are to;

- (i) examine the effect of work at home on employee performance in Globacomm Nigeria Limited and
- (ii) analyze the effect of work at agreed location on employee performance in Globacomm Nigeria Limited.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Telecommuting Arrangement

Telecommuting arrangement is described as a work practice where employees replace some or all of their regular office hours by working remotely, often from home, client sites, or other agreed-upon locations. This practice involves performing work tasks and communicating with others through technological means (Allen et al, 2015). Amstad et al. (2011) define telecommuting as a work arrangement that allows employees to work from home or another agreed location using information and communication technologies (ICT) for communication with their employer. Similarly, Clark (2008) views telecommuting, also known as telework, as the use of telecommunication technology to enable employees to perform their duties remotely, following work agreements.

Telecommuting as a business practice has seen significant growth due to increasing organizational pressures to reduce costs and boost employee productivity (Potter, 2013). Organizations are now challenged to adopt more flexible approaches to the traditional “corporate office” concept (Kiprono, 2018). The expansion of broadband Internet services to employees’ homes and the integration of voice, data, and video over a common IP framework have made telecommuting a viable option, and sometimes a necessity, for medium to large-sized businesses in today’s market (Derven, 2017). Fisher (2011) posits that many organizations struggle in today's dynamic and competitive environment, which demands flexibility, speed, innovation, and effective use of working hours. Telecommuting appears to be a solution to these challenges, enabling organizations to align labor resources with the varying needs of customers while enhancing employee performance.

The concept of telecommuting involves work at home and work at agreed location (Uchenna et al, 2018). Work at home, refers to a work arrangement where employees perform their job responsibilities from their residence or another remote location outside of the traditional office setting (Igomu & Isaac, 2023). This setup allows employees to carry out their tasks using technology-mediated communication tools without the need to commute to a central office. Work at home has gained significant popularity in recent years, especially with advancements in technology that facilitate seamless remote collaboration. Research indicates that work at home can lead to increased job satisfaction, better work-life balance, and reduced stress levels for employees. According to studies by Gajendran and Harrison (2020), Allen et al. (2019), and Golden and Veiga (2021), remote work arrangements, including working from home, have become increasingly prevalent in modern workplaces, offering benefits such as flexibility and improved well-being for employees. According to Morganson et al (2011), work at an agreed location on refers to a flexible work arrangement where employees have the option to work from an alternative location other than the main office, such as coworking spaces, satellite offices, or designated remote work hubs. This setup provides employees with a structured environment outside their homes, offering facilities and resources for work while allowing them to interact with colleagues and access office amenities. Working at an agreed location can promote collaboration, enhance focus and productivity, and foster a sense of belonging to the organization (Porter 2013). Recent studies have shown that providing employees with the option to work at an agreed location can lead to increased engagement and job satisfaction. According to research by Smith et al. (2020), Johnson and Brown (2018), and Patel and Lee (2021), offering employees the flexibility to work at an agreed location can result in improved productivity and employee well-being, contributing to a positive work culture within the organization.

Concept of Employee Performance

According to recent research by Jones and Smith (2023), employee performance in telecommuting settings can be defined as the combination of individual task accomplishments, adherence to deadlines, active participation in virtual meetings, effective use of digital tools for collaboration, and alignment with organizational objectives while working remotely. Furthermore, Patel et al. (2022) highlights that employee performance in telecommuting scenarios should also consider factors such as self-motivation, self-discipline in time management, responsiveness to communication channels, and the ability to maintain a high level of professionalism and engagement despite physical separation from the workplace.

Employee performance now includes not only quantitative output but also qualitative assessments of adaptability to virtual collaboration tools, maintenance of work-life boundaries, proactive communication practices, and the ability to demonstrate autonomy and accountability in a decentralized work setting. This contemporary understanding acknowledges that effective performance in telecommuting requires a blend of technical skills, self-management capabilities, and interpersonal competencies tailored to the remote work context. Smith and Brown (2024) propose a nuanced conceptualization of employee performance in telecommuting, emphasizing the need for organizations to consider factors such as digital literacy, emotional intelligence in virtual interactions, work flexibility, and the capacity to maintain a sense of connection and belonging within a distributed team. By embracing a holistic view of employee performance in telecommuting scenarios, organizations can better support remote workers in achieving success while fostering a culture of trust, collaboration, and innovation across virtual workspaces.

Recent research has highlighted the interconnectedness between telecommuting and productivity, shedding light on the various factors that contribute to this relationship. One crucial aspect linking telecommuting to employee productivity is the flexibility and autonomy it offers. Employees working remotely often have more control over their schedules, allowing them to optimize their work hours based on their peak productivity periods. This flexibility can lead to increased job satisfaction, reduced burnout, and ultimately higher productivity levels. According to a study by Johnson et al. (2023), employees who telecommute report feeling more empowered to structure their work in a way that maximizes their productivity, resulting in higher output and performance.

Moreover, telecommuting can reduce distractions and interruptions commonly found in traditional office environments, enabling employees to focus on their tasks with fewer disruptions. Research by Smith and Patel (2022) suggests that the absence of office-related distractions in remote work settings can lead to improved concentration and task completion rates, ultimately boosting overall productivity levels among telecommuting employees.

Empirical Review

Work at Home and Employee Productivity

Bloom et al. (2015) explored the impact of working from home on employee performance: Evidence from a China. The study examined a sample of 249 call center employees. The researchers employed a randomized controlled trial, collecting data through performance metrics and surveys. Using regression analysis, they found that employees working from home experienced a 13% increase in performance, along with improved work satisfaction and lower attrition rates. However, the study's focus on a single company in China may limit its generalizability to other contexts.

Similarly, Choudhury et al. (2021) conducted a study titled "Work-from-anywhere: The Productivity Effects of Geographic Flexibility" with a sample of 831 employees at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. They utilized a differences-in-differences approach, analyzing administrative data on employee productivity. Their findings revealed that workers with geographic flexibility experienced a 4.4% increase in output without a decline in quality. While this study provides valuable insights into the benefits of remote work, it primarily focused on highly skilled knowledge workers, which may not represent all workforce segments.

Gibbs et al. (2023) published "Work from Home & Productivity: Evidence from Personnel & Analytics Data on IT Professionals." This study examined 10,000 IT professionals in an Asian technology services company. The researchers employed a combination of personnel records, surveys, and digital tracking data, analyzing the information using fixed effects and instrumental variables models. They found that work from home led to a 19% decrease in observed productivity, despite employees working longer hours. The authors attributed this decline to increased coordination costs and reduced focus time. However, the study's reliance on digital tracking data raises ethical concerns and may have influenced employee behavior.

Work at Agreed Location and Employee Productivity

A study by Chen and Thompson (2019) titled "The Effects of Flexible Work Arrangements on Employee Performance: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach" examined a sample of 412 employees from various industries. The researchers collected data through online surveys and employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) for analysis. Their findings indicated a significant positive relationship between working at agreed locations and employee performance, mediated by job satisfaction and work-life balance. However, the study's reliance on self-reported data may have introduced some bias into the results.

In contrast, Rodriguez et al. (2020) conducted a study titled "Agreed Work Locations and Their Impact on Knowledge Worker Productivity: A PLS-SEM Analysis" with a sample of 287 knowledge workers. Using a combination of surveys and company performance metrics, they applied PLS-SEM to analyze the data. Interestingly, their results showed no significant relationship between working at agreed locations and employee performance. The authors suggested that factors such as job autonomy and task interdependence might have played a more crucial role in determining productivity than the specific work location. However, the study's focus on knowledge workers limits its generalizability to other types of employees.

Uchenna et al. (2018) conducted a study titled "Impact of Telecommuting on Employee Performance" published in the Journal of Economics and Management Sciences. The researchers employed a survey research design to gather data from 100 employees. For data analysis, the study utilized descriptive statistics and Spearman rank correlation coefficient, which are appropriate for examining relationships between variables, particularly when dealing with ordinal data or non-normal distributions. The results indicated that the arrangement that enables employee to work at home has a weak and positive relationship with better

quality of work. It was also found that arrangement that allows employee to work at agreed location has a significant relationship with speedy service delivery. The study's reliance on correlation analysis limits the ability to establish causal relationships between telecommuting arrangements and performance outcomes.

The Socio-technical System Theory

The Socio-technical System Theory, which guides this study was initially proposed by Eric Trist and Ken Bamforth in the 1950s, with their seminal work published in 1951. The Socio-technical System Theory posits that organizations are complex systems consisting of two interdependent subsystems: the social system (people, relationships, attitudes, and culture) and the technical system (tools, techniques, and processes). The theory emphasizes that optimal organizational performance is achieved when these two subsystems are jointly optimized, rather than focusing on one at the expense of the other.

In relation to telecommuting and employee performance, the Socio-technical System Theory provides a relevant framework for understanding the impact of telecommuting arrangements. Telecommuting represents a significant change in both the technical system (e.g., use of remote work technologies) and the social system (e.g., altered communication patterns and work relationships). The theory suggests that the success of telecommuting would depend on how well these new arrangements balance and integrate both the technical and social aspects of work.

The strength of applying this theory to the study lies in its holistic approach. It encourages researchers to consider not just the technological aspects of telecommuting (such as the tools and processes that enable remote work), but also the social and human factors (such as employee satisfaction, work-life balance, and team dynamics). This comprehensive view aligns well with the study's examination of both work quality and service delivery speed, which could be influenced by both technical and social factors. However, the Socio-technical System Theory also has some limitations when applied to this study. One weakness is that it may oversimplify the complex realities of modern work environments. The theory's original formulation in the 1950s predates many of the technological and social changes that characterize contemporary telecommuting practices. While the theory has evolved, it may not fully capture all the nuances of today's digital work environments.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design to examine the effect of telecommuting on employee performance. The research methodology was characterized by a single time point data collection approach, which allowed for an efficient snapshot of the current state of telecommuting practices and their relationship to employee performance metrics.

The study population comprised the entire workforce of Globacomm within the Zaria Local Government Area, Kaduna, Nigeria totalling 76 employees. Given the manageable size of the population, a census approach was adopted, aiming to include all employees in the study and thereby eliminate sampling bias and maximize representativeness.

Data collection was facilitated through a structured questionnaire designed using a five-point Likert scale format. This standardized instrument was chosen to ensure consistency in responses and to facilitate quantitative analysis. The questionnaire was distributed using a drop-and-pick method, which allowed respondents to complete the survey at their convenience while maintaining a high response rate. Out of the 76 copies of questionnaire distributed, 68 were returned in a condition suitable for analysis, yielding a response rate of approximately 89.5%. This high response rate enhances the validity of the study by minimizing non-response bias.

For data analysis, the study employed Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This advanced statistical technique was chosen for its ability to handle complex models with multiple variables and its robustness in dealing with smaller sample sizes.

Figure 1: Model of the Study

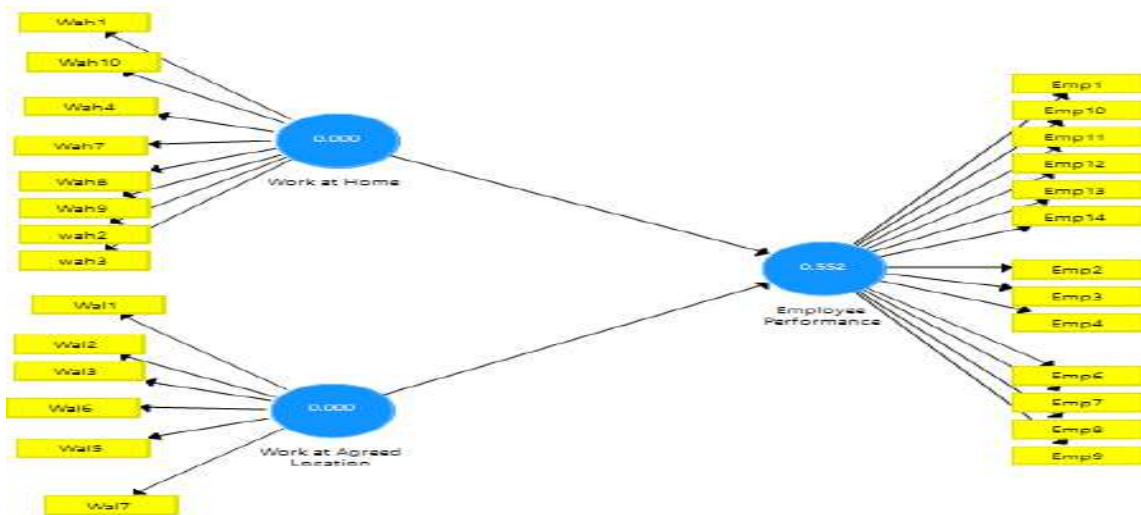


Figure 1

represents the model of the study which illustrates the relationships between working at home (Wah), working at an agreed location (Wal), and employee performance (Emp).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

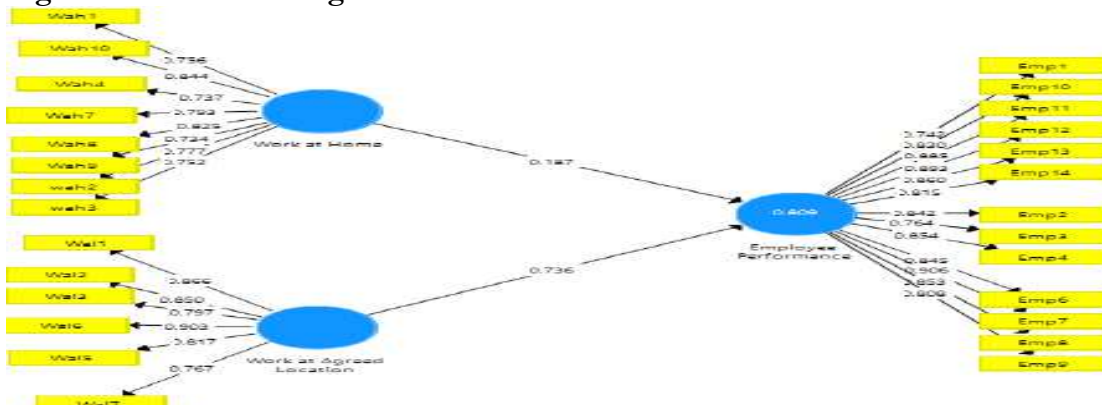
Table 1: Summary of Descriptive Statistics of the Measurement Variables

Constructs	Mean	Median	Min	Max	Sdv	Kurtosis	Skewness
Work at Home	3.659	4.000	1	5	1.189	-0.774	-1.627
Work at Agreed Location	3.852	3.000	1	5	1.365	-1.131	-2.014
Employee Performance	2.864	3.000	1	5	1.038	-1.012	1.673

Source: Researcher's Computation, 2024

Table 1 provides a summary of descriptive statistics for the measurement variables in the study, including "Work at Home," "Work at Agreed Location," and "Employee Performance." The table reveals key insights into the central tendencies and variability of these constructs within the research context. The mean scores indicate that employees rated "Work at Agreed Location" slightly higher ($M = 3.852$) than "Work at Home" ($M = 3.659$), suggesting a preference for the agreed-upon work location. However, both variables exhibit a wide range of responses from 1 to 5, indicating diverse perceptions among participants. In terms of employee performance, the mean score is 2.864, with a relatively low standard deviation ($Sdv = 1.038$), suggesting a more clustered distribution around the mean. The skewness and kurtosis values provide insights into the shape and symmetry of the data distribution, with "Employee Performance" showing a slight negative skewness and kurtosis, indicating a slightly skewed and platykurtic distribution.

Figure 2: Factor Loadings



The structural equation model presented in Figure 2 illustrates the relationships between "Work at Home," "Work at Agreed Location," and "Employee Performance." The factor loadings for most indicators are within the acceptable to good range (>0.5), as recommended by Hair et al. (2017), suggesting that the measurement model is generally reliable. However, it's notable that indicators Wah5, Wah6, Wal4, Wal8, Wal9, Wal10, Emp5, and Emp6 were removed from the analysis for failing to meet the criteria set by Henseler et al. (2015), which likely improved the overall model fit and construct validity.

Table 2: Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Work at Home	0.946	0.948	0.955	0.727
Work at Agreed Location	0.924	0.930	0.941	0.726
Employee Performance	0.888	0.894	0.911	0.562

Source: Researcher's Computation, 2024

Table 2 presents the construct reliability and validity measures for the three main constructs in the study: Work at Home, Work at Agreed Location, and Employee Performance. These metrics are crucial for assessing the quality of the measurement model in structural equation modeling (SEM).

The Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs are well above the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Work at Home (0.946), Work at Agreed Location (0.924), and Employee Performance (0.888) all demonstrate excellent internal consistency reliability. This indicates that the items within each construct are highly correlated and consistently measuring the same underlying concept.

The rho_A values, which provide a more accurate reliability estimate for PLS-SEM (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015), are similarly high for all constructs (0.948, 0.930, and 0.894 respectively). These values further confirm the reliability of the measurement model.

Composite Reliability (CR) scores for all constructs exceed the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017). Work at Home (0.955), Work at Agreed Location (0.941), and Employee Performance (0.911) all show very high composite reliability, indicating strong internal consistency and that the constructs are well-represented by their respective indicators.

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are all above the recommended threshold of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Work at Home (0.727) and Work at Agreed Location (0.726) show particularly high AVE values, while Employee Performance (0.562) is also satisfactory. These values indicate good convergent validity, suggesting that the constructs explain more than half of the variance in their indicators.

Table 3: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Work at Home	Work at Agreed Location	Employee Performance
Work at Home			
Work at Agreed Location	0.810		
Employee Performance	0.840	0.764	

Source: Researcher's Computation, 2024

Table 3 presents the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values, which are crucial for assessing discriminant validity in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The HTMT is an estimate of the correlation between constructs and is considered a more stringent criterion for evaluating discriminant validity compared to traditional methods (Henseler et al., 2015).

In this table, we observe HTMT values between the three main constructs of the study: Work at Home, Work at Agreed Location, and Employee Performance. The HTMT ratio between Work at Home and Work at Agreed Location is 0.810, between Work at Home and Employee Performance is 0.840, and between Work at Agreed Location and Employee Performance is 0.764.

According to Henseler et al. (2015), HTMT values should be below 0.90 for conceptually distinct constructs to demonstrate discriminant validity. Some researchers suggest an even more conservative threshold of 0.85 (Voorhees et al., 2016). In this case, all HTMT values are below 0.90, indicating acceptable discriminant validity. However, two values (0.840 and 0.810) are slightly above the more conservative 0.85 threshold.

These results suggest that while the constructs are conceptually distinct, there is some degree of overlap between them, particularly between Work at Home and the other two constructs. This is not uncommon in organizational research, especially when dealing with related concepts like different work arrangements and their impacts on performance (Kline, 2015)

Table 4: Path Coefficients

Variables	Beta	SDV	T.Statistics	P.Value	Decision
Work at Home -> Employee Performance	0.187	1.133	1.404	1.161	Accepted
Work at Agreed Location -> Employee Performance	0.736	1.132	5.557	0.000	Rejected

Source: Reseachers' Computation, 2024

Table 4 presents the results of the structural model analysis, including the path coefficients (Beta), standard deviation (SDV), t-statistics, and p-values. The findings are discussed in relation to the stated null hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1 (H01): There is no significant effect of work at home arrangement on employee performance. The results show a path coefficient of -0.187 between work at home and employee performance, with a t-statistic of 1.404 and a p-value of 0.161. Since the p-value is greater than the commonly used significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. This suggests that there is insufficient evidence to conclude that work at home arrangements have a significant effect on employee performance. These findings are consistent with the mixed results reported in previous research on the impacts of telecommuting. While some studies have found positive effects of remote work on performance (Bloom et al., 2015), others have observed negative or insignificant relationships (Gibbs et al., 2023).

Hypothesis 2 (H02): There is no significant effect of work at agreed location arrangement on employee performance. The results show a path coefficient of 0.736 between work at agreed location and employee performance, with a t-statistic of 5.557 and a p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value is less than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a significant positive effect of work at agreed location arrangements on employee performance. This finding aligns with previous research that has demonstrated the benefits of flexible work arrangements, particularly when employees have the ability to work from locations of their choice (Chen & Thompson, 2019; Uchenna et al, 2018). However, this result contrasts the report of Rodriguez et al (2020). The strong positive relationship suggests that allowing employees to work at agreed locations can lead to improved performance outcomes, potentially due to increased autonomy, better work-life balance, and improved coordination and communication.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall conclusion from this study is that the effect of telecommuting arrangements on employee performance is dependent on the specific nature of the flexible work arrangements. While work at agreed location was found to have a significant positive relationship with employee performance, work at home arrangements did not show a significant effect. These findings emphasize the importance of carefully

considering the contextual factors and specific telecommuting practices when implementing remote work policies, rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach.

Based on the findings of this study, the following specific recommendations can be made:

- (i) The organization should prioritize work at agreed location arrangements over work at home. The organization should prioritize providing employees with the option to work from locations of their choice, within reasonable boundaries set by the organization. This is achievable by investing in the necessary technological infrastructure and communication tools to support seamless remote work from diverse locations, ensuring that employees have the required resources to be productive.
- (ii) Given the mixed findings regarding the effect of different telecommuting arrangements, the organization should regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their remote work policies. This can be achieved by collecting periodic feedback from employees through surveys, focus groups, or one-on-one discussions to understand their experiences, challenges, and preferences regarding remote work.

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