

The Research on the Impact of Employees' Telework Experience on Job Happiness during the Covid-19 Period

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Abstract

In the context of the normal development of the new crown epidemic, a large number of Chinese enterprises still retain the mode of teleworking. By analyzing the influence of teleworking experience on work happiness, we can bring some reference to the decision making of the future work mode of enterprises. In this paper, we use questionnaires to collect data and regression analysis to illustrate the effect of teleworking experience on employees' happiness at work during the epidemic. This paper firstly elaborates the research hypothesis and proposes a research model through two parts: the relationship between telework experience and work happiness, and the role of telework attitude in telework experience and work happiness. Then the empirical analysis of the effect of telework experience on work happiness is elaborated through six parts: basic content of the questionnaire, data collection, sample description, questionnaire reliability analysis, descriptive statistical analysis, and regression analysis. The results of the empirical analysis are: telework experience has a positive contribution to job happiness, while telework attitude has a moderating effect between telework experience and job happiness. The paper concludes with some policy recommendations based on the results of the empirical analysis.

Keywords

Covid-19 Period, Telework Experience, Sense of Job Hardship, Telework Attitude

1. Introduction

The global outbreak of the New Crown epidemic in 2020 has had a significant impact on the global economy. The highly contagious virus has caused a large

number of workers to turn to online work, which can reduce the transmission of the virus and also protect the health of workers. Online offices are becoming more common in the context of the normal development of the new coronavirus epidemic, while many Internet companies will promote permanent online offices, which will have a greater impact on the global business development model.

At the same time, the new coronavirus pneumonia outbreak in early 2020 in the world, its highly contagious, long incubation period, with a great threat, in order to interrupt the spread of the virus, to protect the health of the people, many countries have implemented a closed policy in some districts and cities, advocating not to go out of home isolation; in the most serious period of the epidemic, and even take such as closing all public places, school closure, enterprise shutdown. In the most severe period, a series of policies such as closing all public places, closing schools, shutting down enterprises, and blocking off neighborhoods were adopted. Based on this special background, many students can only choose to take classes online at home, and companies choose to work remotely online to deal with work matters.

With the high development of modern network communication, teleworking has actually already had the technical conditions and hardware foundation for implementation. Organizations or individual employees either choose teleworking as a working mode based on the advantages of teleworking or are forced to choose teleworking due to the specific background of the times. These are enough to prove that in the modern highly interconnected social environment, teleworking is an emerging work mode that cannot be ignored and has its own inevitability and rationality, and will be more widely used and promoted in the future. As a flexible and efficient way to organize work, telework has been widely used in Europe and the United States and other developed countries. Because of its greater flexibility and autonomy, telework is considered to be an important means to improve employees' job satisfaction and performance. Other studies have shown that not all teleworking leads to improved performance. A study by Bloom et al. with a sample of Chinese Ctrip companies found that employees' willingness to accept teleworking arrangements was the reason for their differences in job satisfaction and job performance, rather than depending on whether they worked remotely or not. Meanwhile, with the development of information technology and changes in management philosophy, more and more Chinese companies have expressed a strong interest in implementing telework after multinational companies introduced telework as a way of working in China; however, research on telework in the Chinese context is still in its infancy, making it difficult to provide a corresponding theoretical basis for management practice. Therefore, it is important to explore the formation and influence mechanisms of employees' willingness to telework in the Chinese context, and to develop corresponding interventions to improve the willingness of teleworking employees for the effective implementation of teleworking in Chinese companies. Why are employees willing to work remotely? Most of the existing studies believe that employees' willingness to work remotely comes from their perceived advantages

and disadvantages of the work style and the result of comparing and weighing them against each other. Other scholars, by analyzing demographic data, have tried to answer the question of how different types of employees' willingness to work remotely differ. However, the formation mechanism of employees' willingness to work remotely cannot be comprehensively portrayed only from the benefit motive, and even many contradictory conclusions have emerged.

Among the many theoretical studies exploring behavioral intention, the theory of planned behavior has better explanatory and predictive power, and has some applicability in the Chinese context. The theory of planned behavior argues that the integration of an individual's attitude toward a behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control leads to the formation of behavioral intentions; at the same time, the theory of planned behavior states that individual beliefs are the basis of behavioral cognition and emotion, and that by exploring the salient beliefs that drive the formation of individual behavioral attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, and by influencing and intervening in them, behavioral improvement or even change can be achieved intentions. Therefore, based on the theory of planned behavior, this study intends to explore the influence of individual innovative attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on employees' willingness to work remotely, to construct a model of the influence of employees' willingness to work remotely from a social psychological perspective, to empirically analyze the formation and influence mechanisms of employees' willingness to work remotely in China, and to propose corresponding intervention measures, in order to provide a theoretical basis for the practice of employee telework management in Chinese enterprises. This study aims to provide a theoretical basis for the practice of employee telework management in Chinese enterprises.

2. Literature Review

Ferrara et al. (2022) pointed out in her study that work and family are two important areas that are independent and interrelated, and employees need to take responsibilities and obligations in both areas at the same time. Due to the rapid development of mobile Internet and the common application of instant messengers, employees can communicate with their colleagues and family members without any time and space constraints, and employees can handle work messages at home and the workplace can also realize the necessary communication and exchange with family members, thus making the boundary between work and family increasingly blurred. Work-family boundary theory is widely used in various scenarios where work and family are cross-fertilized. The boundary refers to the definition of the scope of work and family, and the degree of boundary integration refers to the degree of blurring between these two areas. Flexibility refers to the degree of autonomy of employees to switch between the two domains of work and family, while permeability refers to the extent to which the two domains cross and overlap with each other.

Singh et al. (2022) pointed out in his study that different employees have different tendencies and final results in dealing with work-family boundary based on different traits; at the same time, different organizations have different attitudes toward the definition of work-family boundary and thus affect the definition of employees' personal boundary, that is, both personal preference and organizational provision affect the final work-family boundary definition. In other words, both personal preferences and organizational supply affect the final work-family boundary definition. According to boundary theory, there are two types of tendencies when employees are faced with the definition of work-family boundary, i.e., boundary separation and boundary integration.

Kortsch et al. (2022) pointed out in his study that some employees want to achieve independence between work and family, dealing with work matters only during specific working hours and not dealing with work-related news during non-working hours, focusing only on meeting family needs; while some employees want to achieve work-family balance and integration at all times, according to the actual situation at the moment. Flexible arrangement and handling of work or family tasks. According to the work-family boundary theory, the ideal state for boundary separators is to achieve complete separation between work and family, regardless of the work mode, they only deal with work matters during their specific time, during which they hope not to be disturbed by family matters, and during non-working time, they hope to enjoy family life and take up family responsibilities without being disturbed by work matters. For employees who are boundary separators, the traditional work pattern of having fixed working hours and workplace, dealing with work matters in the office and during the specified working hours, and not caring about work matters once they leave the office, is a work state that can well satisfy their preference for family-work boundary.

Kaltainen and Hakanen (2022) point out that in a telecommuting model, office hours may be defined by employees to divide work and non-work hours, but teleworking requires employees to work from home, so other members of the family will inevitably have family needs to be met, for example, for employees who are married and have a family, their partners or parents and children will have family needs to be met. For example, for employees who are married and have a family, their partners or parents and children will have the possibility to generate family needs for help and support, and family members, whether actively or passively, will affect the teleworker's work status, causing him/her to switch between work and family status. According to the resource conservation theory, switching between the two states will consume employees' energy, time and attention, thus bringing work stress. Stress can easily make employees anxious and distracted, which has a negative impact on their job satisfaction. For this part of the employees, to ensure their job satisfaction in remote work, we need to consider three main aspects: time definition, cooperation with family members, and division of fixed office space. First, time definition, that is, according to the normal commuting time to divide the fixed working time, and in

this period of working time to maintain the working state to deal with work affairs, in time to ensure that the work and family boundary degree; Second, family members with the family, you can communicate with family members to persuade them to do not disturb during the remote workers' office time, to ensure their concentration during the office, to reduce or even Eliminate the frequency of remote workers switching between work and home to ensure the degree of separation between the two; Third, the division of fixed places, you can limit a relatively closed and undisturbed closed environment at home for teleworking places, simulating the working state of the office, spatially isolated from the active or passive disturbance from other family members, and thus enhance the job satisfaction of remote workers.

In his study, [Sjöblom et al. \(2022\)](#) stated that the theory of planned behavior takes the expected value theory as a starting point to explain and predict the formation of individual behaviors and their intentions from the perspective of information processing through the measurement of three constructs: individual attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. Behavioral attitudes refer to an individual's overall evaluation of a particular behavior, i.e., how much he or she likes or dislikes the behavior. Behavioral attitudes are influenced by behavioral beliefs, which consist of two main components: an assessment of the likelihood of the outcome produced by the behavior, i.e., the strength of behavioral beliefs, and an assessment of the positivity and negativity of the outcome produced by the behavior. Behavioral belief strength and outcome assessment together determine the individual's behavioral attitude. Subjective norms refer to the social influence that individuals perceive when deciding whether to perform a particular behavior. Subjective norms are influenced by normative beliefs, which also include two components, namely, normative belief strength and motivation to comply. The strength of normative beliefs refers to the size of an individual's expectation of whether a particular behavior should be performed by a significant other or group; compliance motivation refers to the extent to which an individual is willing to comply with the expectations of a significant other or group. The magnitude of control is determined by both the strength of control beliefs and the effectiveness of control factors. The strength of control beliefs refers to the individual's evaluation of the likelihood of facilitating and hindering the performance of a particular behavior, and the effectiveness of control factors refers to the degree to which the individual perceives that these factors influence the performance of a particular behavior.

3. Research Hypothesis on the Effect of Telework Experience on Work Happiness

3.1. Research Hypothesis

3.1.1. The Relationship between the Role of Telework Experience on Work Happiness

In their study, [Beckel and Fisher \(2022\)](#) pointed out that teleworking is a work

pattern based on a specific period of time, by which teleworking can reduce the stress of interpersonal interactions and also save commuting time for work. Working from home allows the freedom to enjoy all the space and also the dress code is more relaxed, which can have a positive effect on work happiness. Secondly, the time flexibility of teleworking is higher, and as long as the tasks can be completed on time, you can arrange the time freely, which can also bring a positive effect on the improvement of work happiness. Based on this, the hypothesis between teleworking experience and work happiness is proposed in this paper as:

H1: Telework experience has a positive contribution to work happiness.

3.1.2. The Relationship between the Role of Teleworking Attitude in Teleworking Experience and Job Happiness

Blahopoulou et al. (2022) in their study pointed out that the attitude of teleworking is more important and that teleworking will have higher quality requirements for tasks because there is no offline meeting. Workers need to improve their colleagues' satisfaction with themselves through good work output, which requires more effort from the workers. The work attitude of remote workers affects work happiness due to the fact that a poor work attitude can lead to criticism and also lead to poor quality of tasks, resulting in subsequent negative effects on performance and bonuses. The role of telework attitude on the relationship between work experience and work happiness may bring some influence, based on this paper, the following research hypothesis is proposed.

H2: Telework attitude has a moderating role between telework experience and job happiness.

3.2. Research Model

In this paper, we will construct a research model through three parts: telework experience, telework attitude and work happiness, by analyzing the role of telework experience on work happiness. It also analyzes the telework attitude as a moderating factor between telework experience and work happiness. The specific research model is shown in **Figure 1** below.

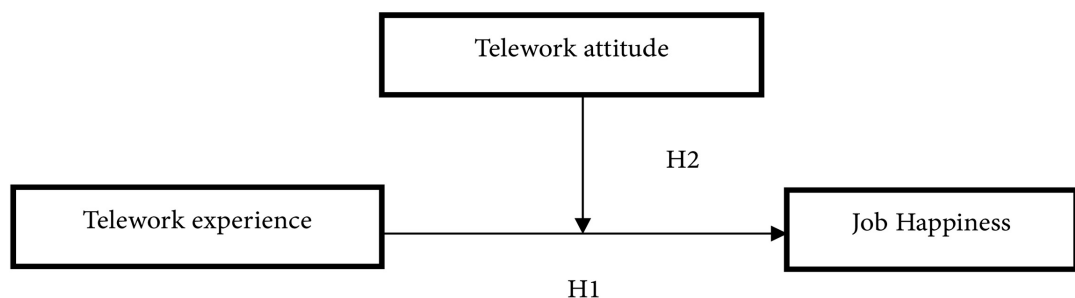


Figure 1. Research model. Source of figure: Becker et al. (2022)¹.

¹Becker, W. J., Belkin, L. Y., Tuskey, S. E., & Conroy, S. A. (2022). Surviving Remotely: How Job Control and Loneliness during a Forced Shift to Remote Work Impacted Employee Work Behaviors and Well-Being. *Human Resource Management*, 61, 449-464.

4. Empirical Analysis of the Effect of Telework Experience on Work Happiness

4.1. Basic Content of the Questionnaire

In this paper, we will use the existing questionnaire items to set up the questionnaire, and we will also investigate the personal information of the respondents, so that we can better understand the basic personal characteristics of the respondents. Secondly, this paper will investigate three aspects of telework experience, telework attitude, and work happiness, and the questionnaire will be measured by Likert 7 scale, “1” means very unconformity, “7” means very conform. The measurement items of related concepts are shown in **Table 1**.

4.2. Data Collection

A total of 270 questionnaires were distributed in this survey, 258 questionnaires were collected, and 247 questionnaires were valid, with a valid recovery rate of 91.4%. The questionnaires were mainly distributed online, firstly through online work exchange groups, there are a large number of online work exchange groups on the Internet, and through these resources more questionnaire data can be obtained. Secondly, it is distributed to remote working workers through my friends and relatives' contacts, so that more data can be obtained for analysis.

4.3. Sample Description

The sample description can be used to understand the distribution of the sample, so that we can better understand the basic information situation of the respondents, and the specific descriptive situation of the sample is shown in the following **Table 2**.

From the table, we can understand that the ratio of male to female respondents is relatively balanced, which may play a role in improving the validity

Table 1. Related concepts measurement items.

Variables	Reference Sources	Scale
Telework experience (RWE)	Emerson et al.(2018); McRoy et al. (2020); Haghighi et al. (2021)	I have telework experience
		I am in remote working mode
		I will be working remotely for a long time
Telework attitude (RWA)	James et al. (2022), Kuzior et al. (2021); Mital et al. (2021)	I am more productive
		I have a high level of motivation to work
		I can concentrate on my work
Job happiness (JH)	Venville et al. (2021)	I can improve my work tasks on time
		My current job has a higher degree of hardship
		I have a high level of job satisfaction
		I feel happy in my current job

Table 2. Sample description (N = 247).

Items	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative percentage (%)
Gender	Male	123	49.80	49.80
	Female	124	50.20	100.00
Age	Under 25 years old	100	40.49	40.49
	25 - 35 years old	104	42.11	82.59
	35 - 45 years old	21	8.50	91.09
	Over 45 years old	22	8.91	100.00
Education level	three-year college diploma or below	23	9.31	9.31
	Undergraduate	136	55.06	64.37
	Master's Degree	73	29.55	93.93
	Doctoral degree	15	6.07	100.00
Monthly income	3000-	46	18.62	18.62
	3000 - 5000	108	43.72	62.35
	5000 - 8000	42	17.00	79.35
	8000 - 15,000	39	15.79	95.14
	15,000 or more	12	4.86	100.00
Number of years of work	Less than 2 years	38	15.38	15.38
	2 - 4 years	98	39.68	55.06
	4 - 7 years	78	31.58	86.64
	7 - 10 years	20	8.10	94.74
	10 years and above	13	5.26	100.00
Total		247	100.0	100.0

of the questionnaire in this paper. Secondly, it can be understood that most of the respondents are under 35 years old, which indicates that the respondents are relatively young. Secondly, most of the respondents have a bachelor's degree, which indicates that most of the telecommuters are workers with a bachelor's degree. Finally, most of the respondents' income is between RMB 3000 - 5000, which is in line with the current income status of ordinary white collar workers in China. The majority of the post-group respondents have 2 - 4 years of work experience. Overall, the main group of this questionnaire is the middle-aged and young people, which can reflect the actual situation of telecommuting at present.

4.4. Questionnaire Reliability Analysis

The reliability of the data collected by the questionnaire can be understood through the reliability analysis, and the reliability is analyzed by the Cronbach coefficient, which is greater than 0.7, and the validity is analyzed by the factor

loadings, which is greater than 0.6.

From the reliability test in **Table 3**, we can understand that the reliability situation of the questionnaire data is relatively good, and the subsequent empirical analysis can be conducted.

4.5. Descriptive Statistical Analysis

On the basis of ensuring the validity and authenticity of the data, this study conducted preliminary descriptive statistical analysis on the items corresponding to telework experience, telework attitude and work happiness, and their means and standard deviations are shown in **Table 4**.

4.6. Regression Analysis

The regression analysis can be used to analyze the influence of telework experience and telework attitude on work happiness, and the specific regression analysis results are shown in the following **Table 5**.

As can be seen from the table, the moderating effect is divided into three models, with model 1 including the independent variable (telework experience). Model 2 includes the moderating variable (telework attitude) based on model 1, and model 3 includes the interaction term (the product term of the independent variable and the moderating variable) based on model 2.

For model 1, the purpose is to investigate the effect of the independent variable (telework experience) on the dependent variable (work happiness) when the

Table 3. Reliability and validity test results.

	Factor load			Cronbach's Coefficient
	1	2	3	
Telework experience				
RWE1	0.739			0.729
RWE2	0.725			
RWE3	0.862			
Telework attitude				
RWA1		0.774		0.673
RWA2		0.892		
RWA3		0.805		
RWA4		0.773		
Job Happiness				
JH1			0.683	0.651
JH2			0.909	
JH3			0.735	

Note: The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the total table reached 0.955, the KMO value was $0.955 > 0.85$, and the Bartlett's sphere test probability of significance was $0.000 < 0.001$ for all.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics results.

Variables	Item No.	Mean value	Standard deviation
Telework experience	RWE1	5.020	1.084
	RWE2	4.903	1.122
	RWE3	4.960	1.077
Telework attitude	RWA1	4.968	1.051
	RWA2	5.016	1.059
	RWA3	4.903	1.055
	RWA4	4.951	1.077
Job Happiness	CPS1	4.947	1.111
	CPS2	5.008	1.082
	CPS3	4.895	1.107

Table 5. Regression analysis results.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constants	4.927** (124.872)	4.927** (142.583)	4.867** (121.895)
Telework experience	0.651** (16.700)	0.170** (2.607)	0.180** (2.802)
Telework attitude		0.675** (8.685)	0.660** (8.594)
Telework experience* Telework attitude			0.082** (2.877)
Sample size	247	247	247
R^2	0.532	0.643	0.655
Adjusted R^2	0.530	0.640	0.650
F Value	$F(1,245) = 278.878,$ $p = 0.000$	$F(2,244) = 219.511,$ $p = 0.000$	$F(3,243) = 153.462,$ $p = 0.000$

Dependent variable: job happiness; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$ Inside the parentheses are t-values.

interference of the moderating variable (telework attitude) is not considered. As can be seen from the above table, the independent variable (telework experience) showed significance ($\beta = 16.700$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Meaning that telework experience can have a significant effect relationship on work happiness and research hypothesis 1 holds.

The moderating effect can be viewed in two ways, the first is to view the significance of the change in F-value from model 2 to model 3; the second is to view the significance of the interaction term in model 3, and this time the moderating effect is analyzed in the second way.

From the above table, it can be seen that the interaction term between telework experience and telework attitude showed significance ($\beta = 2.877$, $p = 0.004 < 0.05$). It means that the magnitude of the moderating variable (telework attitude) has significant difference at different levels when telework experience has an impact on work happiness, and research hypothesis 2 holds.

In summary, the findings of the empirical analysis of this paper are: telework experience has a positive contribution to job happiness, while telework attitude has a moderating effect between telework experience and job happiness.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

This thesis mainly used questionnaires to collect data and used regression analysis to elaborate the influence of employees' telework experience on work happiness during the epidemic period. This paper firstly elaborated the research hypothesis and proposed the research model through two parts: the role relationship of telework experience on work happiness and the role relationship of telework attitude between telework experience and work happiness. Then the empirical analysis of the effect of telework experience on work happiness is elaborated through six parts: basic content of the questionnaire, data collection, sample description, questionnaire reliability analysis, descriptive statistical analysis, and regression analysis. The results of the empirical analysis are: telework experience has a positive contribution to job happiness, while telework attitude has a moderating effect between telework experience and job happiness. The paper concludes with some policy suggestions based on the results of the empirical analysis.

5.2. Policy Suggestions to Enhance the Sense of Work Happiness

Based on the theoretical and empirical analysis, the study concludes that companies can design interventions for employees' willingness to work remotely in the following ways:

One is to develop relevant promotion policies to change employees' behavioral beliefs about teleworking at the levels of behavioral belief strength and outcome evaluation, in order to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes and the degree of positive outcomes on the one hand, and to reduce the likelihood of negative outcomes and the degree of negative outcomes on the other. For example, this study found that interventions for positive outcome: improving work efficiency and negative outcome: role ambiguity may be more effective in improving employees' attitudes toward telework; therefore, companies should consider the job suitability of telework, select and arrange reasonable remote tasks according to different job characteristics, and improve employees' remote work efficiency; at the same time, companies should develop a series of management policies for teleworking employees. A series of management policies, such as designating direct contacts, strengthening information communication, refining

remote work procedures and requirements, and reducing uncertainty in the process of remote work.

Secondly, from two levels of control belief strength and control factor effectiveness, relevant safeguards should be formulated to change employees' control beliefs about remote work. On the one hand, we improve employees' remote working conditions through facilities, technical support and financial support to increase facilitation factors and reduce hindrance factors; on the other hand, we enhance employees' remote working self-efficacy through relevant training and communication to reduce the degree of influence of hindrance factors on employees. Especially for young employees, improving their perception of competence in remote work can better increase their willingness to work remotely.

Third, although employees' normative beliefs do not directly affect employees' willingness to work remotely, they also have an indirect influence on the latter. Therefore, companies should also enhance employees' directive norms and exemplary norms through institutional arrangements, managerial behavior demonstration and organizational culture shaping, both at the level of formal and informal relationships. Telecommuting may become one of the work mode options for different companies around the world, which may also have a positive effect on releasing workers' productivity.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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