

## Remote Working and Employee Engagement: A Case in Kathmandu Valley

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### Abstract

This study examines the remote working and employee engagement: A case in Kathmandu Valley. Employee engagement is the dependent variable. The selected independent variables are flexible working arrangements, internet connection, electric supply, working schedule and training. The primary source of data is used to assess the opinion of respondents regarding flexible working arrangements, internet connection, electric supply, working schedule, training and employee engagement. The study is based on primary data of 143 respondents. To achieve the purpose of the study, structured questionnaire is prepared. The correlation and multiple regression models are estimated to test the significance and importance of the remote working and employee engagement: A case in Kathmandu Valley.

The study showed a positive impact of working schedule on employee engagement. It indicates that flexible working schedule leads to better employee engagement. Similarly, the study showed a positive impact of training on employee engagement. It indicates that effective training motivates remote workers to enhance the employee engagement. Likewise, the study showed a positive impact of flexible working arrangements on employee engagement. It indicates that higher the flexible working arrangements, higher would be the employee engagement. Further, the study showed a positive impact of electric supply on employee engagement. It indicates that stable electric supply leads to increase in employee engagement. In addition, the study showed a positive impact of internet connection on employee engagement. It indicates that stable internet connection encourages remote workers to get engaged.

*Keywords:* flexible working arrangements, internet connection, electric supply, working schedule, training, employee engagement

### 1. Introduction

Remote working, also referred to as telecommuting or teleworking, involves working from a location other than the conventional office setting. This could entail working from home, a co-working space, or any other location that is not the employer's main workplace. According to Hatch (2006), remote working is a process where the employees work in a location other than the traditional go from house to office and vice versa. Remote working may enhance work-life balance without reducing productivity under certain circumstances, but doing so can reinforce patterns that reduce gender equity. Likewise, Delany (2021) stated that earliest measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 was enforced homeworking which has since become part of the new normal, in many cases benefiting organizations and workers by workers reporting greater satisfaction. Thus, the enforcement of homeworking was a new experience to which many organizations and workers were forced to adjust. It reported the pandemic allowed organizations to reconsider the cost of office space and the benefits in savings that could be made by embracing alternative forms of working. The pandemic emphasized the need for organizational transparency, especially around strategies to manage home working. This transparency is critical as employees working from home rely on their line manager for consistent treatment in workload allocation, reward, and career development opportunities. According to Hern (2020), the attraction of homeworking has increased due

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to the pandemic as employees have adapted and adjusted their lives. Employee engagement increased when employees had the opportunity to work some time from home and some time from the office.

Emanuel and Harrington (2024) investigated the working remotely and the selection, treatment, and market for remote work. The study found that firms are in a prisoner's dilemma: all firms would have gained from offering comparable remote and on-site jobs, but any individual firm was loathe to attract less productive workers. Similarly, Malecki (2020) examined the security risks of remote working. The study revealed that to minimize the risks of remote working and safeguard against the threat of ransomware organizations need to put the software, policies, and tools in place. Likewise, Mehta (2021) investigated the work from home Work engagement amid COVID-19 lockdown and employee happiness. The study indicated that work engagement is able to predict a 23.9% variance in perceived happiness, while exogenous constructs. Further, Makumbe (2023) assessed the working from home and employee engagement in the COVID-19 context. The results indicated that autonomy, convenience and psychosocial safety climate have significant positive impact on employee engagement. In addition, Goyal (2024) examined the exquisite tactics for fostering employee engagement in remote workspaces. The study found a holistic approach that integrates effective communication tools, engaging virtual teambuilding activities, and flexible work arrangements is essential for optimizing employee engagement, morale, and productivity in remote work environments. Further, Sunayana and Pooja (2022) investigated the employee engagement in a virtual workspace. The study revealed that employee engagement measures with the help of technology are critical for the growth of organizations. Moreover, Osoian and Petre (2022) examined the employee engagement and job burnout in the context of teleworking. The study conclude a positive relationship between engagement and telework and a negative correlation between burnout and telework. Shokrollahi (2023) analyzed the employee engagement in the era of remote work: Strategies for innovation and productivity. The study found that effective remote work strategies require robust communication practices, a strong support system, and a dedicated focus on maintaining work-life balance. Similarly, Felstead and Henseke (2017) assessed the growth of remote working and its consequences for effort, well-being, and work-life balance. The study revealed that carrying out work away from a central workplace is beneficial to employers and workers alike.

Muralidhar *et al.* (2020) examined the association among remote working concerns and challenges on employee work-life balance. The study revealed that independent remote working factors, personal habits and work schedules are significantly influencing the employee work-life balance. Similarly, Mostafa (2021) assessed the effect of remote working on employee well-being and work-life integration during the pandemic in Egypt. The study found that employees' perception of remote working positively affects work-life integration. Likewise, Pura (2022) investigated the linking motivation and employee engagement through gratification in remote working. The study showed employees' relationship with their workmates is a strong driving force of motivation and employee engagement. Further, Chatterjee *et al.* (2022) investigated does remote work flexibility enhance organization performance? The moderating role of organization policy and top management support. The study concluded that workplace, work time, and infrastructural flexibility could impact the remote work system to maintain the organization's operations even in a turbulent situation. In addition, Susanto *et al.* (2022) observed the employee performance analysis while working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study revealed that work motivation is

a very important mediating variable in improving the performance of employees during the COVID-19 pandemic by working at home. Moreover, Adisa *et al.* (2023) analyzed the remote working and employee engagement: A qualitative study of British workers during the pandemic. The study stated that remote working in the COVID-19 context inhibited employee engagement due to a wide variety of factors such as work intensification, online presenters, employment insecurity, and difficulty adapting to new ways of working from home.

The effect of agile workspace and remote working on experiences of privacy, crowding, and satisfaction was investigated by Keeling *et al.* (2015). The study concluded agile workspace is a distinct typology; the experience of which is different from both traditional open plan and cellular offices. Similarly, Maher and Bedawy (2015) examined the core practices for managing virtual employees in public organizations. The study stated that the effectiveness of virtual work depends to a large extent on an experienced human resource staff to be able to recruit the right candidate with specific qualifications like self-discipline, responsibility, dedication, self-motivation, and organization. Likewise, Vilhelmson and Thulin (2016) assessed who and where flexible workers are and explored the current diffusion of telework in Sweden. The study concluded that teleworking helps maintain the underlying traditional and dominant pattern of workplaces at fixed locations spatially separate from homes. Further, Klopotek (2017) analyzed the advantages and disadvantages of remote working from the perspective of young employees. The study showed remote working should be seen as one of the many mechanisms developed to meet the demands of a modern working environment. In addition, Flores (2019) analyzed understanding the challenges of remote working and its impact on workers. The study revealed the need for interaction, separation of work and home life, and developing relationships with work colleagues are the considered factors making working remotely difficult for remote workers.

In the context of Nepal, Shilpakar *et al.* (2024) analyzed the effect of flexible work environment on employee job satisfaction of Nepalese commercial banks. The study found that flexible working arrangements has a significant and positive impact on employee engagement. Similarly, Kandel (2023) investigated the impact of remote work environment on employees' job satisfaction: A study of BPO companies in Nepal. The study revealed that collaboration and relationship building, communication, and monitoring and trust significantly impact job satisfaction. Likewise, Mainali *et al.* (2023) examined the flexible employment arrangements and perceived employee productivity at a media organization: An empirical case study from Nepal. The study concluded that types of flexible employment arrangements namely job-sharing, telecommuting, compressed workweek, flextime and part-time work influence a great deal on employee productivity. Further, Lamsal (2022) assessed the exploring challenges and opportunities of remote teaching at Nepalese community secondary schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study stated that community secondary school teachers have faced challenges in conducting virtual classes due to low participation of the students. In addition, Rajbanshi (2022) analyzed the Nepali IT employees' perception of telecommuting: A qualitative study. The study revealed that flexibility, freedom in doing work, increases in productivity, work-life balance and cost-effectiveness are perceived advantages of telecommuting in the context of Nepal. Moreover, KC (2024) revealed that many teachers created new teaching platforms through sufficient training in distance and digital teaching and learning even in a crisis which is one of the examples of a new lesson learned

The above discussion shows that empirical evidences vary greatly across the studies on the remote working and employee engagement. Though there are above mentioned

empirical evidences in the context of other countries and in Nepal, no such findings using more recent data exist in the context of Nepal. Therefore, in order to support one view or the other, this study has been conducted.

The major objective of the study is to examine the remote working and employee engagement: A case in Kathmandu Valley. Specifically, it examines the relationship of flexible working arrangements, internet connection, electric supply, working schedule, and training with employee engagement: A case in Kathmandu Valley.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows: section two describes the sample, data, and methodology. Section three presents the empirical results and final section draws the conclusion.

## 2. Methodological aspects

The study is based on the primary data which were collected from 143 respondents through questionnaire. The study employed convenience sampling method. The respondents' views were collected on working schedule, internet connection, electric supply, training, flexible working arrangements and employee engagement. This study is based on descriptive as well as causal comparative research designs.

### *The model*

The model used in this study assumes that employee engagement depends upon remote working settings. The dependent variable selected for the study is employee engagement. Similarly, the selected independent variables are working schedule, internet connection, electric supply, training and flexible working arrangements. Therefore, the model takes the following form:

Employee engagement =  $f$  (working schedule, internet connection, electric supply, training and flexible working arrangements)

More specifically,

$$EE = \beta_0 + \beta_1 WS + \beta_2 IC + \beta_3 ES + \beta_4 T + \beta_5 FWA + e$$

Where,

EE = Employee engagement

WS = Working Schedule

IC = Internet Connection

ES = Electric Supply

T = Training

FWA = Flexible Working Arrangements

Employee engagement was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the remote workers were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include "I believe the company culture supports remote work and values employee well-being", "I feel connected to my colleagues and

the company, even though we work remotely” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha = 0.991$ ).

Internet connection was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the students were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “The quality of the internet connection impacts my motivation to perform at my best”, “Having reliable internet access makes me feel more connected to my team and job responsibilities” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha = 0.976$ ).

Training was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “Training opportunities make my work feel more meaningful and fulfilling”, “The training I receive helps me feel more confident in my role” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha = 0.993$ ).

Electric supply was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “Frequent interruptions in electricity make it difficult to complete my tasks on time”, “A dependable electricity supply makes me feel more committed to my tasks” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha = 0.982$ ).

Flexible working arrangements were measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “I feel more engaged in my work when I have the option to work remotely”, “Flexible working arrangements improve my work-life balance” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha = 0.988$ ).

Working schedule was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “My work schedule allows me to work during the times when I am most productive”, “I have enough control over my work hours to meet both my personal and professional needs” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha = 0.992$ ).

The following section describes the independent variables used in this study along with the hypothesis formulation.

### *Internet connection*

Internet service amounts to access at various speeds and through different modes. The Internet is at once a world-wide broadcasting capability, a mechanism for information dissemination, and a medium for collaboration and interaction between individuals and their computers without regard for geographic location (Leiner *et al.*, 2009). Ford *et al.* (2021) found that slow connection speeds and unreliable connections are among the most frequently mentioned challenges reported by home workers. Similarly, Kaushik and Guleria (2020) stated that a reliable and fast internet connection is essential for effective home working. Likewise, Cotterill *et al.* (2020) noted that during the pandemic employees

experienced difficulties with slow internet connections. Further, Corbera *et al.* (2020) concluded that inadequate connections also caused problems for the academic sector as it moved many of its activities online during the pandemic. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is negative relationship between internet connection and employee engagement.

#### *Electric supply*

According to Rojas-Zerpa and Yusta (2015), the selection of the best electrical supply under multiple criteria requires that different groups of experts or decision-makers be involved in the process. Electricity is a basic necessity for human activity, socioeconomic and technological development of every nation (Agba *et al.*, 2010). Considering the importance of electric power supply as a component of the work environment, its provision has become essential. Thus, government investment in the power sector to boost the electric power supply. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a positive relationship between electric supply and employee engagement.

#### *Training*

Training is an aspect of capacity building in any organization that is carried out to improve staff performance and to enable an organization meet the objectives (Tahir *et al.*, 2014). Training has gained more popularity in human resources due to its positive association with employee performance (Kiweewa and Asimwe 2014). Training is a type of activity which is planned, systematic and its results enhance the level of skills and knowledge that are necessary to perform work effectively (Sultana *et al.*, 2012). Training is mainly concerned with the improvement and upgrade of the skills and knowledge of the employees, which ultimately adds into the job performance (Azeem *et al.*, 2013). Hameed and Waheed (2011) revealed that a well-trained and highly motivated employee may work with less supervision because of the skills and confidence they possess and thereby reduce cost of supervision. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H<sub>3</sub>: There is positive relationship between training and employee engagement

#### *Flexible working arrangements*

The terms flexible working hours, flexibility, and flexible working arrangements have been quite often used interchangeably. Flexibility at workplace can reduce stress and also improve the performance (Parris *et al.*, 2008). Ely and Meyerson, (2000) stated that absence of flexible working hours may inhibit the development of a diverse workforce. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H<sub>4</sub>: There is a positive relationship between flexible working arrangements and employee engagement.

#### *Working schedule*

Work schedule characteristics have important impacts on physical and mental health and well-being (Cavallari *et al.*, 2023). Similarly, Barnay (2016) stated a significant proportion of employees would like to work less than they do. Likewise, Tan and Le (2019) argued that increased freedom at work enhances innovation by employees, as reduced control

by employers over the work results encourages employees to innovate over a longer time because the outcomes are shared more fairly within the company than when the employer takes control of the innovation immediately. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H<sub>5</sub>: There is a positive relationship between working schedule and employee engagement.

### 3. Results and discussion

#### *Correlation analysis*

On analysis of data, correlation analysis has been undertaken first and for this purpose, Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients along with mean and standard deviation has been computed and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients matrix

This table presents Kendall's Tau coefficients between dependent variable and independent variables. The correlation coefficients are based on 143 observations. The dependent variable is EE (Employee engagement). The independent variables are WS (Working schedule), T (Training), FWA (Flexible working arrangements), ES (Electric supply) and IC (Internet connection).

Variables	Mean	S.D.	EE	WS	T	FWA	ES	IC
EE	3.383	0.793	1					
WS	3.561	0.809	0.460**	1				
T	3.761	0.904	0.284**	0.410**	1			
FWA	3.804	0.879	0.302**	0.376**	0.537**	1		
ES	3.706	0.821	0.224**	0.263**	0.378**	0.440**	1	
IC	3.705	0.955	0.216**	0.297**	0.355**	0.420**	0.553**	1

Notes: The asterisk signs (\*\*) and (\*) indicate that the result are significant at one percent and five percent levels respectively.

Table 1 shows the Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients of dependent and independent variables. The study shows that working schedule is positively correlated to employee engagement. It indicates that flexible working schedule leads to better employee engagement. Similarly, training is positively correlated to employee engagement. It indicates that effective training motivates remote workers to enhance the employee engagement. Likewise, flexible working arrangements are positively correlated to employee engagement. It indicates that higher the flexible working arrangements, higher would be the employee engagement. Further, electric supply is positively correlated to employee engagement. It indicates that stable electric supply leads to increase in employee engagement. In addition, internet connection is positively correlated to employee engagement. It indicates that stable internet connection encourages remote workers to get engaged.

#### *Regression analysis*

Having indicated the Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients, the regression analysis has been carried out and the results are presented in Table 2. More specifically, it shows the regression results of flexible working arrangements, internet connection, electric supply, working schedule, and training on employee engagement in Kathmandu Valley.

Table 2

Estimated regression results of internet connection, electric supply, flexible working arrangements, working schedule, training on employee engagement

The results are based on 143 observations using linear regression model. The model is  $EE = \beta_0 + \beta_1 IC + \beta_2 ES + \beta_3 FWA + \beta_4 WS + \beta_5 TG + e$  where the dependent variable is EE (Employee engagement). The independent variables are IC (Internet connection), ES (Electric supply), FWA (Flexible working arrangements), WS (Working schedule) and T (Training).

Model	Intercept	Regression coefficients of					Adj. R <sub>bar</sub> <sup>2</sup>	SEE	F-value
		WS	TG	FWA	ES	IC			
1	1.031 (4.628)**	0.674 (10.822)**					0.450	0.588	117.105
2	1.993 (7.686)**		0.421 (5.511)**				0.171	0.722	30.367
3	1.937 (7.199)**			0.421 (5.515)**			0.172	0.722	30.420
4	2.184 (7.503)**				0.335 (4.221)**		0.106	0.750	17.187
5	2.398 (9.458)**					0.320 (4.014)**	0.096	0.754	16.109
6	0.979 (4.019)**	0.633 (8.064)**	0.042 (0.540)				0.447	0.590	58.40
7	0.909 (3.582)**	0.633 (8.064)**	0.042 (0.540)	0.092 (0.992)			0.447	0.590	39.259
8	0.891 (3.297)**	0.632 (8.008)**	0.020 (0.199)	0.084 (0.837)	0.016 (0.193)		0.443	0.592	29.250
9	0.894 (3.298)**	0.636 (7.977)**	0.020 (0.199)	0.020 (0.199)	0.037 (0.375)	0.039 (0.417)	0.440	0.594	23.294

Notes:

- i. Figures in parenthesis are t-values.
- ii. The asterisk signs (\*\*) and (\*) indicate that the results are significant at one percent and five percent level respectively.
- iii. Employee engagement is the dependent variable.

Table 2 shows that the beta coefficients for working schedule are positive with employee engagement. It indicates that working schedule has a positive impact on employee engagement. This finding is consistent with the findings of Cavallari *et al.* (2023). Similarly, the beta coefficients for training are positive with employee engagement. It indicates that training has a positive impact on employee engagement. This finding is consistent with the findings of Kiweewa and Asiimwe (2014). Likewise, the beta coefficients for flexible working arrangement are positive with employee engagement. It indicates that flexible working arrangements have positive impact on employee engagement. This finding is consistent with the findings of Parris *et al.* (2008). Further, the beta coefficients for electric supply are positive with employee engagement. It indicates that electric supply has a positive impact on employee engagement. This finding is consistent with the findings of Rojas-Zerpa and Yusta (2015). In addition, the beta coefficients for internet connection are positive with employee engagement. It indicates that internet connection has positive impact on employee engagement. This finding is consistent with the findings of Leiner *et al.* (2009).

#### 4. Summary and conclusion

Remote working, also referred to as telecommuting or teleworking, involves working from a location other than the conventional office setting. This could entail working

from home, a co-working space, or any other location that is not the employer's main workplace. Remote working is a process where the employees work in a location other than the traditional go from house to office and vice versa. Remote working may enhance work-life balance without reducing productivity under certain circumstances, but doing so can reinforce patterns that reduce gender equity. The enforcement of homeworking is a new experience to which many organizations and workers were forced to adjust. It reported the pandemic allowed organizations to reconsider the cost of office space and the benefits in savings that could be made by embracing alternative forms of working. The pandemic emphasized the need for organizational transparency, especially around strategies to manage home working. This transparency is critical as employees working from home rely on their line manager for consistent treatment in workload allocation, reward, and career development opportunities. The attraction of homeworking has increased due to the pandemic as employees have adapted and adjusted their lives. Employee engagement increased when employees had the opportunity to work some time from home and some time from the office.

This study attempts to examine the remote working and employee engagement: A case in Kathmandu Valley. The study is based on primary data of 143 respondents.

The major conclusion of the study is that internet connection, electric supply, flexible working arrangements, working schedule and training have positive impact on employee engagement. The study also concludes that working schedule is the most significant factor followed by flexible working arrangements that influence the employee engagement in Kathmandu Valley.

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