

Remote Work Efficacy: A Quantitative Analysis of Administrative Staff Performance in Ciudad Juárez's Industrial Sector Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic



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ABSTRACT

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In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations globally have adopted novel strategies for survival, among which the abrupt transition to remote work stands out. This study aims to elucidate the benefits and implications of remote work on the performance of administrative employees within Ciudad Juárez's maquiladoras. A correlational, non-experimental, cross-sectional, and descriptive research design was employed from August 2021 to May 2022. A non-probabilistic sample of 273 administrative staff members, who had engaged in remote work at least once, was utilized and a questionnaire was administered. The subsequent statistical analysis involved frequency and percentage computations. Further, two distinct groups, each comprising 50 administrative staff members—one working remotely and the other onsite—were established. Cross-tabulation descriptive analysis was performed to discern potential associations. Preliminary results revealed a marked prevalence of remote work (81.3%) over onsite work (18.7%). A significant association ($p < 0.05$) between remote work and job performance was evident in most items, thereby indicating that remote work positively contributes to organizational objectives and enhances employee performance.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the current landscape, the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated a sudden shift towards remote work practices, influencing up to 30% of Latin America's populace [1]. As delineated by Guzman [2], the concept of a home office transitions work activities to a domicile or alternate location beyond the traditional workplace, leveraging information and communication technologies (ICT) as a conduit for achieving corporate objectives.

In Ciudad Juárez, the maquiladora industry serves as a pivotal employment generator. As reported by the Panel of Economic and Competitiveness Indicators, the city hosts 326 such establishments, collectively offering approximately 335,030 employment opportunities [3].

The advent of the COVID-19 health crisis towards the end of 2019 imposed a considerable challenge on companies to devise effective strategies enabling their administrative workforce to maintain productivity. With limited alternatives, the adoption of home office practices emerged as a primary solution, offering potential mitigation of contagion risk while sustaining productivity.

Coenen and Kok [4] posits that the implementation of home office practices yields beneficial ramifications for an organization's structure, influencing diverse aspects such as environmental impact, workforce training, and proactive schedule flexibility. Nonetheless, alternative perspectives highlight potential drawbacks to this work modality.

Performance appraisal, as defined, is a process that gauges the distinct characteristics and behaviors associated with work activities to ascertain the extent of employee productivity [5].

The analysis of this variable forms a crucial underpinning for measuring corporate productivity.

The objective of this research is to discern the benefits and associations that arise from implementing remote work practices among administrative employees. Specifically, it aims to determine if the adoption of a home office setup enhances work performance among administrative employees in maquiladoras in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Job performance is frequently evaluated using Campbell's theoretical model, which provides a detailed assessment of job competencies through the measurement of task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive behaviors. These elements collectively contribute to or detract from an employee's contributions to organizational goals. Campbell's theory thereby offers a robust foundation for formulating strategies directed at goal attainment, with its components delineating the latent structure of performance across all job types [6].

Furthermore, Alarcón-Ortiz [7] defines job performance as "the observable actions or behaviors of employees that are pertinent to the organization's objectives". Performance evaluations are tasked with ensuring that the activities delegated to each individual within the organization are being completed. These activities require ongoing monitoring and feedback to ensure alignment with corporate objectives. Economic entities employing performance management systems and measuring financial and productivity indicators

typically demonstrate more favorable employee performance results compared to organizations that do not utilize job performance measurements [5].

Teleworking, alternatively referred to as home office or work-at-home practices, has been in existence for over four decades. Despite its relatively low adoption rate initially, the evolution of this work modality can be conceptualized in three waves. The first wave emerged in the 1980s with the advent of computers, giving rise to the term 'freelancer' [8]. The second iteration appeared in 2003 due to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic, necessitating multiple organizations to resort to telework [9]. This period marked the beginning of a comprehensive examination of the advantages and disadvantages of this novel professional activity approach. The most recent and widespread adoption of the home office modality was triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, as organizations sought to ensure their survival without jeopardizing their staff's health.

Although no universally accepted definition of teleworking exists in the literature, consensus among various authors suggests that teleworking constitutes a mutually agreed work activity between the employee and the organization. This activity is remunerated and characterized by its location, which is distinct from the organization's premises, and facilitated by the use of information technologies [10-13].

3. METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out in Ciudad Juárez Chihuahua, with the population of interest being administrative workers of maquiladora companies in Ciudad Juárez. Through a correlational investigation, with a quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional and descriptive research approach in the independent variable home office and dependent work performance, in a period from August 2021 to May 2022. The piloting of the questionnaire applied to fifteen people obtained a reliability in Cronbach's Alpha of 0.821, which according to Hernandez et al. [14] is adequate for calibrating the measuring instrument.

After that, the formal application of the survey was carried out through Google forms, applying a questionnaire to 273 administrators selected by the type of non-probabilistic sample, where 2 sociodemographic questions, 5 questions referring to the home office, 10 to job performance were included. Within the inclusion criteria, the people had to be maquiladora administrators who, at least on some occasion during the COVID-19 pandemic, had been working at home or in a place other than the office.

The statistical analyzes that were executed were frequencies, percentages. After that, two groups were made, 50 administrative staff who were working at home and 50 in the workplace, applying cross tables with a Person's chi-square statistical analysis to determine if there is an association between working at home or in the office with better performance. labor, the statistics were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS) version 26 program.

4. RESULTS

A total of 273 subjects with different administrative positions participated by answering the evaluation instrument. The female sex was shown more frequently (54.9%) than the

male subjects (45.1%). In general, the respondents had a mean age of 29.26 ± 7.6 years, identifying minimum ages of 19 years and maximum ages of 29 years, respectively. This indicates that the subjects surveyed who work in the different administrative positions are workers classified as young adults. Table 1 shows the distribution of questions related to working from home and various associated job characteristics. The work activity found most frequently was at home (81.3%) compared to the workplace (18.7%). In addition, most of the subjects expressed having adequate work spaces, generally feeling a good level of satisfaction (41.8-39.9%). Regarding the use of electronic communication instruments such as computers or laptops and cell phones as a means of communication, a distribution focused on the very frequent use of this work instrument was found (50.5 and 35.9%, respectively). Most of the respondents (31.9%) indicated that they very frequently use direct communication to interact with the work team.

In the evolution of work productivity from home, questions were asked (Table 2). Which gave the most frequent response that the use of email, chat and social networks is more efficient to stabilize contact with their work team (37%), in the use of voice calls and conferences the high scale predominated (34, 4%); however, he continues to consider that the face-to-face meetings turned out to be very efficient, being the most answered (29.7%). The 46.2% of the administrators responded that they easily adapt to changes. Respondents were asked where they best managed their time and activities. Respondents answered agreeing that at home (43.2%) and in the workplace answering that they totally agree (47.6%). 41.4% revealed that they take few breaks during their workday, likewise, 33.7% rarely do physical activity, the majority (78.0%) commented that they have a fixed schedule to carry out their activities and that 85.3% say they comply with their assigned activities in weather.

To determine differences, associations or dependencies between the questions that were asked for the variable work at home (home office) and the questions referring to productivity, two groups were made, one of people who were currently working from the office but who were on occasion in home office and people who were still working in their homes. Table 3 shows a significant association of $p 0.045$ between gender and workplace, indicating that men work mostly from the office (62%) and a large number of women carry out administrative activities from home (58%). The work space is more appropriate from the company, commented 52% of the participants, with a significance of $p 0.005$. People who work from home use a laptop or computer very frequently (30%) with a very significant association ($p 0.003$). People who are in offices occasionally use direct communication (40.0%), however, those who are in their homes use it very frequently (38.8), with a notorious dependency between the workplace and communication ($p 0.016$).

Table 4 shows in which questions there is dependence on the workplace and productivity; adapting easily ($p 0.057$), is not associated with the place where one is working, but the people who are in the office (44%) and those who are at home (44%) agree that working outside the organization manage their time better ($p 0.017$). Working from the office to better manage time ($p 0.082$, taking breaks within the day ($p 0.154$), taking time to exercise ($p 0.721$) do not present an association with the workplace. Being in being in home (84.0%) if it is related to having a fixed schedule for the development of activities ($p 0.001$).

Table 1. Frequencies and percentages of home office

Variables	Frequency	%	Variables	Frequency	%
n=273 subjects					
Place of work activities					
Workplace	51	18.7			
Home	222	81.3			
Adequate workspace for tasks			You use a telephone/cell phone to communicate with the work team		
Strongly disagree	5	1.8	Infrequent	31	11.4
In disagreement	45	16.5	Occasionally	64	23.4
Agree	114	41.8	Frequently	80	29.3
Totally agree	109	39.9	Very frequent	98	35.9
You use a laptop/computer to communicate with the work team			Direct Personal Communication with your work team		
Infrequent	56	20.5	Infrequent	47	17.2
Occasionally	12	4.4	Occasionally	66	24.2
Frequently	67	24.5	Frequently	73	26.7
Very frequent	138	50.5	Very frequent	87	31.9

Note: The table represents the questions asked to administrative employees who carried out home office. Source: Own elaboration through the SPSS software.

Table 2. Distribution and percentages of the labor performance variable

Variable	n=273	(%)	Variable	n=273	(%)
Scale that is more efficient for you to use "E-mail/Chat/Social Networks" for communication with the work team			Working from the office you better manage your time and your activities		
Very low	36	13.2	Strongly disagree	3	1.1
Short	64	23.4	In disagreement	21	7.7
High	101	37	Agree	119	43.6
Very high	72	26.4	Totally agree	130	47.6
Scale finds it more efficient to use "Voice call / Videoconference" communication with your work team			Breaks within your working day		
Very low	24	8.8	Never	30	11
Short	74	27.1	Rarely	113	41.4
High	94	34.4	Frequently	94	34.4
Very high	81	29.7	Always	36	13.2
Scale finds it more efficient to use "In-person Meetings/Meetings" for communication with the work team			Time to have physical activation, before, between or after your workday		
Very low	60	22	Never	73	26.7
Short	68	24.9	Rarely	92	33.7
High	64	23.4	Frequently	69	25.3
Very high	81	29.7	Always	39	14.3
Adapt to changes easily			Fixed hours for the development of your work activities		
Strongly disagree	3	1.1	Not	34	12.5
In disagreement	38	13.9	Sometimes	26	9.5
Agree	106	38.8	Yes	213	78
Totally agree	126	46.2	You complete the assigned activities on time		
Working from home manages your time and activities better			Not	12	4.4
Strongly disagree	19	7	Sometimes	28	10.3
In disagreement	71	26	Yes	233	85.3
Agree	118	43.2			
Totally agree	65	23.8			

Note: The table represents the characteristics analyzed to measure job performance. Source: Own elaboration through the SPSS software.

Table 3. Cross table of groups: workplace and home with home office

Variable	Workplace n=50 Subjects (%)	Home n=50 Subject (%)	p-Value	Variable	Workplace n=50 Subjects (%)	Home n=50 Subject (%)	p-Value
Gender							
Male	31 (62)	21 (42)	0.045				
Feminine	19 (38)	29 (58)					
Workspace at home suitable for the development of work activities				Frequency of use "Telephone/Cellular" for communication with work team			
Strongly disagree	0 (0)	1 (2)	0.005	Infrequent	12 (24)	4 (8.0)	0.051
In disagreement	0 (0)	10 (20)		Occasionally	6 (12.0)	14 (28.8)	
Agree	24 (48)	21 (42)		Frequently	18 (36.0)	15 (30.0)	
Totally agree	26 (52)	18 (36)		Very frequent	14 (28.0)	17 (34.0)	
Frequency of use of "Computer/Lap Top" for communication with the work team				Frequency of use of "Direct Personal Communication"			
Infrequent	21 (42)	6 (12)	0.003	Infrequent	14 (28.0)	7 (14.0)	0.016
Occasionally	1 (8.0)	4 (8.0)		Occasionally	20 (40.0)	12 (24.0)	
Frequently	11 (22)	10 (20)		Frequently	9 (18.9)	12 (24.0)	
Very frequent	17 (34)	30 (60)		Very frequent	7 (14)	19 (38.8)	

*Agreement is significant at the 0.05 level (bilateral); Note: The table shows the correlations between the questions and the place where the administrative tasks are performed. Source: Own elaboration through the SPSS software.

Table 4. Cross table of groups: Workplace and home with work performance

Variable	Workplace n=50 Subjects (%)	Home n=50 Subject (%)	P- Value	Variable	Workplace n=50 Subjects (%)	Home n=50 Subject (%)	P- Value
Scale that is more efficient for you to use "E-mail/Chat/Social Networks" for communication with the work team				Working from the office you better manage your time and your activities			
Very low	10 (20)	5 (10)	0.23	Strongly disagree	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0.082
Short	15 (30.0)	14 (28.0)		In disagreement	4 (8.0)	2 (4.0)	
High	19 (38.0)	18 (36.0)		Agree	29 (58.0)	20 (40.0)	
Very high	6 (12.0)	13 (26.0)		Totally agree	17 (34.0)	28 (56.0)	
Scale finds it more efficient to use "Voice call / Videoconference" communication with your work team				Breaks within your working day			
Very low	0 (0.0)	3 (6.0)	0.052	Never	6 (12.0)	3 (6.0)	0.154
Short	17 (34.0)	17 (34.0)		Rarely	25 (50.0)	17 (34.0)	
High	26 (52.0)	16 (32.0)		Frequently	14 (28.0)	20 (40.0)	
Very high	7 (14.0)	14 (28.0)		Always	5 (10.0)	10 (20.0)	
Scale finds it more efficient to use "In-person Meetings/Meetings" for communication with the work team				Time to have physical activation, before, between or after your workday			
Very low	11 (22.0)	8 (16.0)	0.002	Never	9 (18.0)	13 (26.0)	0.054
Short	12 (24.0)	20 (40.0)		Rarely	28 (56.0)	15 (30.0)	
High	21 (42.0)	6 (12.0)		Frequently	9 (18.0)	12 (24.0)	
Very high	6 (12.0)	16 (32.0)		Always	4 (8.0)	10 (20.0)	
Adapt to changes easily				Fixed hours for the development of your work activities			
Strongly disagree	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0.057	Not	24 (48.8)	42 (84.0)	0.001
In disagreement	13 (26.0)	4 (8.0)		Sometimes	5 (10.0)	2 (4.0)	
Agree	18 (36.0)	22 (44.0)		Yes	21 (42.0)	6 (12.0)	
Totally agree	19 (38.0)	24 (48.0)					
Working from home manages your time and activities better				You complete the assigned activities on time			
Totalmente en desacuerdo	0 (0.0)	4 (8.0)	0.017	Not	42 (84.0)	43 (86.0)	0.721
En desacuerdo	6 (12.0)	13 (26.0)		Sometimes	3 (6.0)	4 (8.0)	
De acuerdo	22 (44.0)	22 (44.0)		Yes	5 (10.0)	3 (6.0)	
Totalmente de acuerdo	22 (44.0)	11 (22.0)					

*Agreement is significant at the 0.05 level (bilateral)

Note: The table shows the correlations between the questions and the place where the administrative tasks are performed. Source: Own elaboration through the SPSS software.

5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This study shows that the home office has benefits in work performance because administrative employees better manage their time in carrying out activities, which benefits organizations in reaching their established goals. Likewise, a significant association was found between gender and the workplace, that is, whether being a man or a woman influences the performance of working from home. Significance was shown that being at home increases the use of electronic devices.

The research carried out shows that the majority of the subjects surveyed (81.3%) are still working from home. Almost two years after the pandemic, people have improvised to adapt and carry out their work in the most efficient way possible. According to data from the National Occupation and Employment Survey (ENOE), remote work increased by 45% in large organizations, however, at the national level it only represents 12% of companies [15].

According to the international labour organization, one of the most important concerns of administrators who lead work teams in teleworking mode is team performance, meeting commitments with customers and suppliers [10]. Likewise, organizations have found a reduction in costs and workers comfort in not moving to a place to carry out their activities. When analysing the percentage of administrative staff by

gender and place of work, a significant association ($p < 0.045$) is shown, where women perform more work in the home office (58%) than men (42%), showing that males prefer or send the company to work, 62% well above the female (31%). This is possibly due to the fact that women preferred to work at home to take care of their children, since at the time of the pandemic schools and day care centres remained closed. Which is supported by various studies where they mention that females (70.3%) have a greater burden of domestic work and childcare than males (21.9%) [16, 17].

The respondents agreed that the workspace was adequate (41.8%) to carry out their work activities from home. In another investigation, it coincides with what Montaudon et al. [18] argues, 74.4% of the participants claimed to have a designated space for work in their homes. However, when segmenting the two home office (36%) and work centre (52%) groups, a significance of $p < 0.005$ was identified, which means that in the offices there is better space, more suitable for carrying out activities. Mosier and Robertson [19], indicate that the abrupt changes have affected workers because they do not have an ergonomic office, which can trigger health problems.

Information technologies are a fundamental part for the development of remote activities, the participating administrators mention that the frequency of using a computer (50.5%) or cell phone (35.9%) is very frequent to

communicate with the work team. Montaudon et al. [18] affirmed in his study that, in Mexico, 91.5% of households have at least one computer of their own. The same coincided in the cross tables where an association is demonstrated ($p < 0.003$) which indicates greater use of technological devices at home (60%) than in the workplace (34%), while for the use of cell phones it is indistinct to be in the office or at home ($p > 0.051$).

Direct communication is very important for individuals; in this study, 31.9% commented that they prefer to interact with their peers. Showing a significant relationship of $p > 0.016$, which means people who are remote (38.85%), if they would like to interact with their colleagues physically, they may like to work remotely, but as other research indicates, virtual meetings can be unproductive and inefficient when ramped up for no specific purpose [20]. Therefore, it is important to consider that any action taken must have an objective purpose in the worker's job performance and the objectives of the organization.

The questions asked for the evaluation of work performance show that people are committed to being productive, using the necessary technology to be as efficient as possible, they mentioned using email, chat and social networks with a high frequency (37%) as well as videoconferences (34%) to keep in touch with the work team. When analyzed by group, those who work in the company and remotely do not show a significant trend in the use of chat ($p > 0.230$) or videoconferences ($p > 0.052$), that is, they can be just as efficient using these tools to communicate regardless of workplace. Gao and Hitt [21], affirms and supports what was mentioned before, since it expresses that the workers who are committed to the organization are the best for teleworking.

The workers said that they adapted easily (46.2%), regardless of being at work or at home ($p > 0.057$), this speaks of flexibility and adaptation, a situation that developed with the phenomenon of the pandemic, where the many inhabitants they had to strategize, innovate, and be resilient to change so unexpected that they left no other choice.

Continuing with the performance evaluation, the workers were asked if they managed their time better from home or in the office, where (44%) said they totally agreed that, in the workplace, marking an association of $p < 0.017$. This is possibly due to the fact that in homes there is distraction from living with other people, noise, childcare, lack of technological skills, excessive supervision by bosses, unstable network connection, etc. [22].

Physical activation (0.054%) and complying with activities on time (0.721%) similarly, no significant difference was found in however, it is argued that they exercise rarely (56%-30) and comply with the assigned activities agree that if 84% office and 86% home. And finally, the respondents who work from home said they have a fixed schedule to do their work (84%), unlike those who are in the organization (48.8%) with an association of $p < 0.001$. Other studies affirm that being at home generates excess work, estimating that per day they add three more hours of work; Davis and Green [23] and others agree with this study, arguing that home workers manage the organization of their work time and tend to do their work at the times that are feasible for them [24]. Likewise, it can be argued that the results found contribute and coincide with Campbell's theory, since integrating the home office in organizations contributes to job performance and at the same time achieving the goals set by the organization.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In the development of this research, it can be observed that the organizations within their structure did not consider the abrupt change of a remote work modality, however, the contingency of the COVID 19 pandemic did not leave many gaps to choose from, companies had to take care of the health of its employees and subsequently develop functional strategies to survive said epidemiological problem, this entailed applying the home office in a radical way, challenging the work performance of the workers, which would impact productivity and at the same time the finances of the company organization.

Within the items that were used to evaluate the home office and work performance in administrative employees, it can be concluded that in the majority there is a significant association between working at home with a positive performance, which can help to achieve the objectives of the organization to the same level as if the employees were in the workplace. It is important to point out that subordinates in remote modality must develop technical, personal, professional and communication skills for a continuous improvement of work performance, which is homogeneous with organizational goals, since said modality has set a precedent that came to remain and develop activities outside the organization and which has greatly benefited people who find greater flexibility in working remotely, as well as favored organizations in cost reduction and environmental impact.

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