WORK-FAMILY MANAGEMENT AND REMOTE WORK IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

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THESE ARE ‘UNPRECEDENTED’ TIMES

In mid-March 2020, many daycare centers closed

Many organizations transitioned to full remote work
WHAT STRATEGIES ARE WORKING PARENTS USING DURING COVID-19 WHEN KIDS ARE HOME?

Explored this question in a sample of 274 heterosexual dual-earner couples with kid(s) under age 6

Focus on gender

“What is you and your spouse’s plan for dealing with both of your work commitments during the upcoming period when your normal childcare is disrupted? Please be as detailed as possible.”
“How will you have to adjust your work role during this time?”
“How will your spouse have to adjust his/her work role during this time?

How are these different strategies linked to wives’ and husbands’ family functioning, health, and job performance?
EXAMPLE OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES
Who is working remote? Husband? Wife? Both?

Do they have outside help for childcare?

Is each person adjusting their work shifts (e.g., working night or different days)?

Is each person adjusting their total number of hours worked?

How are they dividing childcare during normal work hours?

- One person doing all childcare during work
- One person doing most of the childcare except occasional relief
- Having mini-shifts throughout day while both are remote
- Both remote alternating watching child with spouse based on meetings
- Alternating working days with spouse
- Full outsourcing
- Partial outsourcing
- Staggering shiftwork
HOW CAN WE DISTILL DOWN ALL OF THESE CATEGORIES?

Latent class analysis

Wife remote
Husband not remote
No outside help
No shift adjustment for H or W
Wife reducing hrs
Husband not changing hrs
Wife doing all labor

Wife remote
Husband remote
No outside help
No shift adjustment for H or W
No hour adjustment for H or W
Mini-shifts throughout day
THE 7 STRATEGIES

- Wife remote and does it all (22.2%)
- Wife remote and husband pitches in on occasion (9.6%)
- Egalitarian remote workers with planned mini-shifts (16.6%)
- Egalitarian remote workers with daily need-based alternation without reducing work hours (14.4%)
- Alternating working days while not remote and reducing hours (13.5%)
- Outsourcing fully OR partially outsourcing with wife filling in gap (13.3%)
- Staggering shiftwork OR husband does childcare (10.4%)
HOW DO STRATEGIES RELATE TO FAMILY FUNCTIONING?

Worst for Wife
Does All and
Egal + Planned
Mini-shift

- Wife Family Cohesion
- Husband Family Cohesion
- Wife Relationship Tension
- Husband Relationship Tension

Wife Remote and Does it All
Wife Remote and Does Most
Alternating Working Days
Egal + Planned Mini-Shift
Egal + Need-based Alternation
HOW DO STRATEGIES RELATE TO HEALTH?

- Some favorable effects for Alternating Days
- Some negative effects for Wife Does All & Mini Shifts
- Mixed for Wife Does Most

Wife Sleep
Husband Sleep
Wife Psych Distress
Husband Psych Distress

Graph showing:
- Wife Remote and Does it All
- Wife Remote and Does Most
- Alternating Working Days
- Egal + Planned Mini-Shift
- Egal + Need-based Alternation
OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

A substantial proportion of couples (44.5%) were engaging in some egalitarian strategies, but a lot were still gendered in traditional ways (36.6%).

- Long-term effects?

Generally, **Wife Does it All had the poorest outcomes** for wives, but also not great for husbands.

- But outcomes pretty good for the **Wife Does Most**!

Of the egalitarian strategies, **Alternating Days** seems to be the most advantageous.

Of the remote egalitarian strategies, **Need-based Alternation better than Mini-shifts**.

Limitations – can not assert causality; inherent differences based on nature of jobs vs strategy?
Twitter Could End the Office as We Know It

This is the company's most disruptive move yet.

Post COVID-19, Coinbase will be a remote-first company

Facebook Starts Planning for Permanent Remote Workers

Shopify Is Joining Twitter in Permanent Work-From-Home Shift
Big picture question:
What matters most in predicting people’s wellbeing (adjustment, stress, and job performance) during remote work?
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• 498 full-time employees who were fully remote due to COVID-19, but were not working remotely previously
• Data collection took place between 4/27/20 and 6/13/20

Participants represented 82% of the 50 U.S. states, with the largest number from Georgia and Pennsylvania.
Overall, how well have you adjusted to working remotely?

- **M = 3.94**
- **SD = .90**

Stress levels during remote work

- **M = 2.75**
- **SD = .74**

Assume your performance level before the COVID 19 outbreak was 100%. Since you have been working remotely post-COVID-19 outbreak, what would you say your average performance level has been out of 100%?

- **M = 80.82%**
- **SD = 19.90%**
SIGNIFICANT PREDICTORS OF OVERALL ADJUSTMENT

Aspects of the Person

- Self-discipline
- General comfort with technology

Demographics

- Married
- Older

Non-Work Life

- Quantity and Quality of Sleep

Pre-COVID

Post-COVID

Personality
SIGNIFICANT PREDICTORS OF OVERALL ADJUSTMENT

- Feelings of social isolation
- Job-related information exchange
- Feelings that supervisor trusts you
  - Task variety increase
- Home workspace conducive to productivity
  - Comfort of home workspace

Aspects of the Job

Job Attitudes
- Pre-COVID
- Post-COVID

Job Characteristics
- Pre-COVID
- Post-COVID
SIGNIFICANT PREDICTORS OF OVERALL ADJUSTMENT

Aspects of the Transition

Technology

- Overall difficulty using technology during transition

Org’s Handling

- How smoothly org handled transition
  - Org’s remote work mentality
- How smoothly org handled transition
- Org's remote work mentality
- Feelings of social isolation
- Overall difficulty using technology during transition
- Married
- Older
- Self-Discipline
- General comfort with technology
- Quantity and Quality of Sleep
- Job-related information exchange
- Feelings that supervisor trusts you
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OVERALL ADJUSTMENT TO REMOTE WORK

- Feelings of social isolation
- Workspace at home conducive to productivity
- Sleeping well during remote work
- Organization's handling of the transition
- Comfort of the home workspace
**Job Performance Relative to Pre-Pandemic**

- Workspace at home conducive to productivity
- Increase in the variety of tasks involved in job
- Organization's handling of the transition
- Sleeping well during remote work
- Feelings of social isolation

**Stress Level During Remote Work**

- Stress levels before the pandemic
- General proneness to anxiety
- Feelings of social isolation
- Sleeping well before pandemic
- Workspace at home conducive to productivity
KEY TAKEAWAYS

• Overall, people are faring pretty well during remote work due to COVID-19 (or at least early stages)

• The main factors that seem to matter are related to:
  • Social connection
  • Nature of workspace
  • Sleeping well

• Little about job itself, demographics, supervisor
PRACTICAL ADVICE

Social isolation

- Use a shared social calendar to schedule remote social activities that anyone can attend.
- Schedule remote coffee breaks, lunches, and happy hours.
- Video game hour (or some other game that can be done together virtually) on Fridays.
- Increase serendipitous meetings (can be done through Slack app Donut, which randomly pairs people together for meetings).

Sleep Quality

- Advocate for effective sleep hygiene practices such as unplugging from electronics 30-60 minutes before bed.
- Reduce expectations for being “on” after hours.

Organizational culture

- Have a crisis plan in place.
- Offer adequate technology and equipment to employees AND training on how to use it.
- Promote goal-setting to help with motivation.
- Communication quality is key — establish norms surrounding this.
PANDEMIC “SILVER LININGS”

Due to remote work brought on by COVID-19...

1. I have a new appreciation for working parents
2. I have a new appreciation for my relationships with people at work
3. I believe that there will be sustained change in the way my org thinks about flexibility
4. I have better communication with people at home
5. I expect to see a real shift in my org’s norms regarding physical presence at work
6. I believe that people at work will be more understanding of my family obligations
7. I feel like I have seen a new "side" of my coworkers
8. I found that I worked more efficiently
9. I have better communication with people at work
THANK YOU! QUESTIONS?

More information on studies can be found:

Remote Work Grant --
https://iwillugaresearch.wixsite.com/website/publications

Couples Study –

"I really don’t mind coming into the office to work."