Factors Related to Remote Working Affecting Knowledge Sharing: Case Study of an Industrial Printing Ink Distributor in Samut Sakhon Province

Paksiri Taensaengthong* and Sutep Tongngam**

Received: May 26, 2023 Revised: June 11, 2023 Accepted: November 7, 2023

Abstract

In this paper, the research aims to study factors related to remote working affecting knowledge sharing, which is one of the most important factors to develop an organization's competitiveness. To find out what factors might influence employees to share knowledge with their colleagues during remote working, their behavior of knowledge sharing was observed. The selected factors, in addition to remote working itself, consisted of four aspects namely job satisfaction, trust in colleagues, interpersonal bond, and perceived organization support. The census was collected from a selected industrial printing ink distributor in Samut Sakhon province using both online and document questionnaires and testing the hypotheses with paired-sample t-test.

The research results revealed that remote working itself had positive effects on the factors of job satisfaction, perceived organization support, and behavior of knowledge sharing significantly. On the contrary, however, it had negative effects on the factor of interpersonal bond. The remote working, paired with the trust in colleagues, had no statistical significance therefore did not affect the trust in colleagues.

Keywords: Remote Working, Knowledge Sharing, Influencing Factors, Behavior

^{*} Graduate School of Applied Statistics, National Institute of Development Administration 148 Serithai Road, Khlong-Chan, Bangkapi, Bangkok 10240, THAILAND. E-mail: pt.bay87@gmail.com

^{**} Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Applied Statistics,
National Institute of Development Administration
148 Serithai Road, Khlong-Chan, Bangkapi, Bangkok 10240, THAILAND.
E-mail: Sutep.t@nida.ac.th

ปัจจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการทำงานระยะไกลที่ส่งผล ต่อการแลกเปลี่ยนเรียนรู้ : กรณีศึกษา บริษัทผู้จำหน่าย หมึกพิมพ์อุตสาหกรรมแห่งหนึ่งในจังหวัดสมุทรสาคร

พักตร์ศิริ แทนแสงทอง* และ สุเทพ ทองงาม**

รับวันที่ 26 พฤษภาคม 2566 ส่งแก้ไขวันที่ 11 มิถุนายน 2566 ตอบรับตีพิมพ์วันที่ 7 พฤศจิกายน 2566

าเทคัดย่อ

เป็นที่ทราบกันดีว่า การแลกเปลี่ยนเรียนรู้นั้น มีความสำคัญต่อการเพิ่มขีดความสามารถ ในการแข่งขันขององค์กร งานวิจัยนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์ที่จะศึกษาปัจจัยที่ส่งผลต่อการแลกเปลี่ยน เรียนรู้ภายใต้การทำงานจากระยะไกล โดยการสังเกตพฤติกรรมของการแลกเปลี่ยนเรียนรู้ของบุคลากร ของบริษัทผู้จำหน่ายหมึกพิมพ์อุตสาหกรรมแห่งหนึ่งในจังหวัดสมุทรสาคร พร้อมด้วยการกำหนดปัจจัย ที่น่าสนใจอีกสี่ปัจจัย คือ ความพึงพอใจในงาน ความไว้ใจต่อเพื่อนร่วมงาน ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างบุคคล และการรับรู้การสนับสนุนขององค์กร การเก็บข้อมูลใช้ทั้งแบบสอบถามออนไลน์และแบบเอกสาร ชุดแบบสอบถาม ทั้งนี้ ทดสอบสมมติฐานด้วย การทดสอบสมมติฐานของกลุ่มตัวอย่างสองกลุ่มที่ สัมพันธ์กัน (Paired Samples T-Test)

ผลการวิจัย พบว่า การทำงานระยะไกลส่งผลเชิงบวกต่อความพึงพอใจในงาน การรับรู้ การสนับสนุนขององค์กร และพฤติกรรมการแลกเปลี่ยนเรียนรู้ ในทางตรงกันข้าม การทำงานระยะไกล ส่งผลเชิงลบต่อสายสัมพันธ์ระหว่างบุคคล ในขณะที่ปัจจัยด้านความไว้วางใจต่อเพื่อนร่วมงานนั้น ไม่มีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ กล่าวคือ ไม่ส่งผลทั้งเชิงลบและเชิงบวก

คำสำคัญ: การทำงานจากระยะไกล การแลกเปลี่ยนเรียนรู้ ปัจจัยที่มีอิทธิพล พฤติกรรม

^{*} คณะสถิติประยุกต์ สถาบันบัณฑิตพัฒนบริหารศาสตร์ เลขที่ 148 ถนนเสรีไทย แขวงคลองจั่น เขตบางกะปี กรุงเทพฯ 10240 อีเมล: pt.bay87@gmail.com

^{**} ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์ คณะสถิติประยุกต์ สถาบันบัณฑิตพัฒนบริหารศาสตร์ เลขที่ 148 ถนนเสรีไทย แขวงคลองจั่น เขตบางกะปี กรุงเทพฯ 10240 อีเมล: Sutep.t@nida.ac.th

Introduction and Objectives

Today, the advancement of technology has changed the way of working. Office-based working has gradually become off-site work such as coffee shops, co-working space, and work from home. In terms of off-site work, it is necessary and very important to have the technology and equipment that can support work such as computers, internet connection, various computer programs, as well as well-allocated working environment which will reduce stress, increase concentration during work, and enhance job satisfaction for employees (Fonner & Roloff, 2010). On the other hand, office-based working is full of distractions, which causes stress and leads to lower job satisfaction (Makin, Rout, & Cooper, 1988).

Knowledge sharing, the wish of each employee to share valuable knowledge with others (King, 2006, cited in Trivellas, Akrivouli, Tsifora, & Tsoutsa, 2015), is an important factor to develop the potential of an organization to compete internationally, both in providing knowledge and acquiring new knowledge (Ardichvili, Page, & Wentling, 2003, cited in De Vries, Van den Hooff, & de Ridder, 2006), and has direct impact on employees' competency development. According to De Vries (De Vries et al., 2006), the factors affecting the behavior of knowledge sharing are significantly related to attitude. Recognition from team members and job satisfaction have positive impact on the wish to share knowledge with others. During the COVID-19 epidemic, there was the need to curb contact and personal interaction. Various measures were issued to effectively reduce the rate of infectious transmission. Work from home was one of the social distancing measures. Many companies started to adapt by allowing staff members to work from home. But some was hesitant or not ready to cope with a sudden change in the work model, and feared that the productivity of employees would decrease, resulting in slow adaptation, and not keeping up with the situations.

From a case study of Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) by Saowaruj Rattanakhamfu and Methavee Rachatavijin (2020), it was found that work from home had positive effect on both the organization and its employees. Employees were able to reduce direct expenses from travel, accommodation, cosmetics, clothes, social activities, and indirect expenses in the form of reducing travel time to and from work, which accorded employees more time to do desired activities, enjoy better quality of life, and increase

their work productivity. On the other hand, the organization could reduce utility costs such as water, electricity and petrol, but there were additional costs from the supply of alcohol gel, face masks, online meeting programs, and improvement of the internet system. The increase of work productivity was a result of employees' positive feeling from being allowed to work from home, and the reduction of unnecessary meetings or appointments. Although at first some employees might feel good about working from home, but after a long period of time, they started to feel lonely, which could affect their mental health and productivity. Therefore, organizations should regularly ask employees, and should not force the employees to work from home.

According to the satisfaction survey conducted by the National Innovation Agency (NIA) of new generation of employees in organizations on the work model in both the public and private sectors (NIA, 2020), it could be expected that, after the COVID-19 pandemic, work from home may became the New Normal in Thailand. It was also found in (NIA, 2020) that the majority were satisfied with the said model. The model met their lifestyle expectation, and the employees were able to work efficiently and to use digital technology as a management tool. Hence, the organization should be prepared to cope with the changes that may occur, starting with improvement of necessary infrastructure, procurement of equipment such as computers, external storages. Work processes that post major obstacles preventing some employees to work from home should also be detected and modified. In addition, work system that is conducive to work from home such as use of electronic documents instead of paper, promotion of voluntary work from home, for instances. Nevertheless, activities in the organization that allow employees to meet face-to-face, which will foster employees' organizational attachment, generate knowledge sharing, as well as strengthen teamwork, should be organized.

Many organizations still question the effectiveness of remote working and how it will affect the organization during the social distancing and work from home measures. The researchers observed the behavior of knowledge sharing during remote working and factors that might influence employees to share useful knowledge with their colleagues during remote working.

Research Problem

What are the factors related to remote working that influence knowledge sharing?

Objective

To study the factors affecting knowledge sharing under remote working environment.

Scope of Research

The research was viewed that remote working model was different for each organization both in terms of business process and organizational culture, and therefore the census method was chosen to collect data from the employees in an industrial printing ink distributor in Samut Sakhon province with experience in remote working in 2020.

Expected Benefits

Information obtained from the research and results of the analysis can be used for businesses to make decisions relating to appropriate length of time for remote working, to promote positive factors, and to find ways and means to prevent the potential negative impact of having employees work remotely or work from home.

Literature Review

Remote working is a type of work that is not a form of work in the office as usual but outside of the location or working from home (WFH) while still being able to do the same work as in the office. It relies on technological support and Internet connectivity (Fitzer, 1997, p. 65, cited in Fonner et al., 2010).

Fonner (Fonner et al., 2010) commented that remote working might help employees get away from the hustle and bustle, distractions and politics in the workplace, and that remote working changed the atmosphere, reduced stress, and had positive effect on job satisfaction.

Trust was also a critical point in remote working (Kowalski & Swanson, 2005, p. 243, cited in Golden & Raghuram, 2010) since, for remote working, there were fewer contact and it would be formal with the supervisor and co-workers, if any. Building trust could be difficult without getting to know each other. Trust was often characterized by openness, honesty, and mutual respect. Knowledge sharing was often a result of open communication (Golden et al., 2010). Hence, remote working from different location might post an obstacle in building trust among one another.

An Interpersonal bond was created by intimacy with colleagues, including knowing or having admiration for similar things. So, the closer the interpersonal bond, the greater the sense of responsibility and the desire of knowledge sharing (Blau, 2004, cited in Golden et al., 2010).

Remote working or work from home required organizational support for devices, and availability of appropriate work system. If employees received good support, they tended to collaborate and work closely together (Daft & Lengel, 1986, cited in Golden et al., 2010), which would forge confidence and correctness in communication, and improve work efficiency.

Knowledge sharing was a process in which individuals exchanged knowledge with one another, leading to the integration of new knowledge (De Vries et al., 2006). The desire of individual employees to share valuable knowledge with others (King, 2006, cited in Trivellas, Akrivouli, Tsifora & Tsoutsa, 2015) constituted an important factor in the development of the organization's potential to compete internationally, both in providing knowledge and acquiring new knowledge (Ardichvili, Page, & Wentling, 2003, cited in De Vries, Van den Hooff & de Ridder, 2006), with direct impact on the employees' skill and competency development (De Vries et al., 2006).

Methodology

Based on the literature review previously shown, conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1 and hypotheses are as follows:

Hypothesis H1: Remote working had positive effect on job satisfaction.

Hypothesis H2: Remote working had positive effect on trust among individuals.

Hypothesis H3: Remote working had negative effect on interpersonal bond.

Hypothesis H4: Remote working had positive effect on perceived organizational support.

Hypothesis H5: Remote working had positive effect on knowledge sharing.

This research used a quantitative research method in data collection by the census method from the population to be studied, by comparing only the time working in the office with the time working remotely or working from home. The population used in the study included 55 employees of an industrial printing ink distributor in Samut Sakhon Province

who worked remotely or worked from home in 2020. A questionnaire was constructed in accordance with the objectives, the scope of research, and the variables to be studied. The questions were both closed and open ended. It was a 5-point Likert Scale. Before distributing to informants, the questionnaire was verified by experts and received an Index of Concordance (IOC) more than 0.5. Also, its Cronbach alpha coefficient value was greater than 0.7, meaning that it was reliable. For the data collection, the tools were used including Google Form and survey documents. The applications used to analyze the data were SPSS and Microsoft Excel.

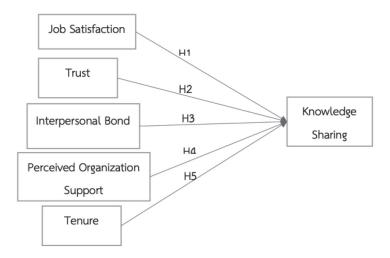


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Results

The data collection and aggregation were summarized as shown in Table 1-7.

Table 1: Percentage of the questionnaire respondents

Variables		Number	Percentage
Gender			
	Male	16	29.1
	Female	39	70.9
	Total	55	100
Age Range			
	Under 26 years old	5	9.1
	Between 27-35 years old	20	36.4
	Between 36-45 years old	15	27.3
	Between 46-55 years old	9	16.4
	56 years or older	6	10.9
	Total	55	100
Education			
	Vocational Certificate/High Vocational Certificate/ Diploma	6	10.9
	B.A. degree	39	70.9
	Post-graduate	10	18.2
	Total	55	100
Work experience			
	Not more than 3 years	13	23.6
	4-7 years	15	27.3
	8-11 year s	9	16.4
	12-15 year s	7	12.7
	16 years or more	11	20
	Total	55	100

Table 1 shows that most of the respondents were female with 39 persons (70.9%), aged between 27-35 years old or 20 persons (36.4%), with B.A. degree or 39 persons (70.9%), and work experience in the range of 4-7 years or 15 persons (27.3%).

Table 2: Average, Standard Deviation, Opinion Level of People Who Have Experience Working Both in the Office and at Home, in Terms of Job Satisfaction, Classified by Questions

Job Satisfaction When Working from Home	X	N	S.D.	Opinion Level
When working from home, you feel a sense of balance between your personal life and work.	4.05	55	0.97	High
When working from home, you feel comfortable working without being disturbed while working.	4.13	55	0.92	High
When working from home, you do not feel stressed by communication, receiving - sending emails, and messages about work in large quantity.	3.00	55	0.88	Moderate
When working from home, you still receive complete information related to work.	3.56	55	0.60	High
Overall	3.69	55	0.84	High
Job Satisfaction When Working in the Office	X	N	S.D.	Opinion Level
You feel a sense of balance between your personal life and work.	3.67	55	1.00	High
You feel comfortable working without being disturbed while working.	3.55	55	1.15	High
You do not feel stressed by communication, receiving – sending emails, and messages about work in large quantity.	2.69	55	0.81	Moderate
You receive complete information related to work.	3.22	55	0.99	Moderate
Overall	3.28	55	0.99	Moderate

In Table 2, the level of opinion in job satisfaction was high for remote working. When working in office, its opinion level was moderate.

Table 3: Average, Standard Deviation, Opinion Level of People Who Have Experience Working Both in the Office and at Home, In Terms of Trust in Colleagues, Classified by Questions

Trust in Colleagues When Working from Home	X	N	S.D.	Opinion Level
When working from home, you have trust in your colleagues, and you are able to share concepts and ideas, and express opinions to one another.	3.85	55	0.80	High
When working from home, you feel that your colleagues are ready to listen to your problems and always ready to help you.	4.05	55	0.78	High
When working from home, you have trust and confidence that your colleagues are competent and can perform their duties professionally.	4.36	55	0.65	Highest
When working from home, you feel trusted by your superiors to perform tasks.	4.04	55	0.84	High
Trust in Colleagues When Working in the Office	4.08	55	0.77	High
You have trust in your colleagues, and you are able to share concepts and ideas, and express opinions to one another.	3.84	55	0.90	High
You feel that your colleagues are ready to listen to your problems, and always ready to help you.	3.91	55	0.70	High
You have trust and confidence that your colleagues are competent and can perform their duties professionally.	4.24	55	0.94	Highest
You feel trusted by your superiors in performing tasks.	3.87	55	1.04	High
Overall	3.96	55	0.89	High

Table 3 shows the high level of opinion in trust in colleagues for remote working as much as when working in the office.

Table 4: Averages, Standard Deviation, Opinion Level of People Who Have Experience Working Both in the Office and at Home, In Terms of Interpersonal Bond, Classified by Questions

Interpersonal Bond When Working from Home	X	N	S.D.	Opinion Level
When working from home, you feel a sense of closeness and intimacy with your colleagues.	2.96	55	0.84	Moderate
When working from home, you can discuss personal matters that are not related to work with your colleagues.	2.73	55	0.87	Moderate
When working from home, your colleagues influence your ideas and decisions.	2.6	55	0.97	Moderate
Overall	2.76	55	0.89	Moderate
Interpersonal Bond When Working in the Office	X	N	S.D.	Opinion Level
You feel a sense of closeness and intimacy with your colleagues.	3.42	55	0.96	High
You can discuss personal matters that are not related to work with your colleagues.	3.09	55	1.09	Moderate
Your colleagues influence your ideas and decisions.	2.93	55	0.77	Moderate
Overall	3.15	55	0.94	Moderate

In Table 4, the level of opinion in interpersonal bond for remote working was moderate, as well as when working in the office.

Table 5: Average, Standard Deviation, Opinion Level of People Who Have Experience Working Both in the Office and at Home, In Terms of Perceived Organization Support, Classified by Ouestions

Perceived Organization Support When Working from Home	X	N	S.D.	Opinion Level
When working from home, you receive support from your organization regarding computers and equipment needed for	4.00	55	0.75	High
work. When working from home, you can use equipment and programs for teleconference provided by IT department.	4.13	55	0.77	High
When working from home, you get assistance and technical support from IT department.	4.51	55	0.57	Highest
Overall	4.21	55	0.70	Highest
Perceived Organization Support When Working in the Office	X	N	S.D.	Opinion Level
You receive support from your organization regarding computers and equipment needed for work.	3.55	55	1.10	High
You can use equipment and programs for teleconference provided by IT department.	3.82	55	1.14	High
You receive assistance and technical support from IT department.	4.27	55	0.85	Highest
Overall	3.88	55	1.03	High

Table 5 shows the highest level of opinion in perceived organization support for remote working. For working in the office, with a little lower, the level of opinion is high.

Table 6: Average, Standard Deviation of Behavior of Knowledge Sharing, Based on the Opinions of Those Who Have Experience Working Both in the Office and at Home, Classified by Questions

Behavior of Knowledge Sharing When Working from Home	\overline{X}	N	S.D.	Opinion Level
When working from home, you can find work information you want from your organization's server.	4.51	55	0.505	Highest
When working from home, you receive complete and correct work information.	3.87	55	0.771	High
When working from home, you feel the exchange of information is useful for your work.	4.60	55	0.494	Highest
Overall	4.41	55	0.56	Highest
Behavior of Knowledge Sharing When Working in the Office	X	N	S.D.	Opinion Level
You can find work information you want from your organization's server.	4.36	55	0.485	High
You receive complete and correct work information.	3.56	55	0.501	High
You feel the exchange of information is useful for your work.	4.38	55	0.490	Highest
Overall	4.13	55	0.55	High

In Table 6, the level of opinion in knowledge sharing behavior was in the highest level for remote working while it was high for working in the office.

Table 7: Average, Standard Deviation, Overall Factors, Based on the Opinions of Those Who Have Experience Working Both in the Office and at Home, Classified by Factor Topics

All Factors Affecting Knowledge Sharing When Working from Home	X	N	S.D.	Opinion Level
Job satisfaction	3.69	55	0.84	High
Trust in colleagues	4.08	55	0.77	High
Interpersonal bond in the workplace	2.76	55	0.89	Moderate
Perceived organization support	4.21	55	0.70	Highest
All Factors Affecting Knowledge Sharing When Working in the Office	X	N	S.D.	Opinion Level
Job satisfaction	3.28	55	0.99	Moderate
Trust in colleagues	3.96	55	0.89	High
Interpersonal bond in the workplace	3.15	55	0.94	Moderate
Perceived organization support	3.88	55	1.03	High

In Table 7, the levels of opinion towards all factors related to remote working were high in job satisfaction and trust in colleagues, moderate in interpersonal bond, and highest in perceived organization supports. For working in the office, the levels of those opinions were high in trust in colleagues and perceived organization supports and moderate in job satisfaction and interpersonal bond.

Hypothesis Test Results

The researchers collected data from the questionnaire, divided into working from home, and working in the office, and tested the obtained value for the average of the repeated measurement of the sample (Paired-Sample t-test). The hypothesis test results, which were used to study the effects of remote working on knowledge sharing and related factors, are shown in Table 8 and concluded as follows:

Hypothesis H1: Remote working had positive effect on job satisfaction, with the statistical significance at the level of 0.05 for all pairs shown in Table 8.

Hypothesis H2: Remote working did not affect trust among individuals. The statistical significance for all pairs divided by 2 shown in Table 9 were more than 0.05.

Hypothesis H3: Remote working had negative effect on interpersonal bond, with the statistical significance divided by 2 at the level of 0.05 for all pairs shown in Table 10.

Hypothesis H4: Remote working had positive effect on perceived organization support, with the statistical significance divided by 2 at the level of 0.05 shown in Table 11.

Hypothesis H5: Remote working had positive effect on the behavior of knowledge sharing, with the statistical significance divided by 2 at the level of 0.05 shown in Table 12.

Table 8: Paired Samples Test (Paired Differences) for Hypothesis 1

Compared Pair Description	Sig. (2-tailed)
- When working from home, you feel a sense of balance between your	.037
personal life and work.	
- You feel a sense of balance between your personal and work.	
- When working from home, you feel comfortable working without being	.003
disturbed while working.	
- You feel comfortable working without being disturbed while working.	
- When working from home, you do not feel stressed by communication,	.031
receiving -sending emails, and messages about work in large quantity.	
- You do not feel stressed by communication, receiving – sending emails, and	
messages about work in large quantity.	
- When working from home, you still receive complete information related to	.029
work.	
- You receive complete information related to work.	

Table 9: Paired Samples Test (Paired Differences) for Hypothesis 2

Compared Pair Description	Sig. (2-tailed)
- When working from home, you have trust in your colleagues, and you can	.907
share concepts and ideas, and express opinions to one another.	
- You have trust in your colleagues, and you are able to share concepts and	
ideas, and express opinions to one another.	
- When working from home, you feel that your colleagues are ready to listen	.322
to your problems and always ready to help you.	
- You feel that your colleagues are ready to listen to your problems, and	
always ready to help you.	
- When working from home, you have trust and confidence that your	.397
colleagues are competent and can perform their duties professionally.	
- You have trust and confidence that your colleagues are competent and	
can perform their duties professionally.	
- When working from home, you feel trusted by your superiors to perform	.245
tasks.	
- You feel trusted by your superiors in performing tasks.	

Table 10: Paired Samples Test (Paired Differences) for Hypothesis 3

Compared Pair Description	Sig. (2-tailed)
- When working from home, you feel a sense of closeness and intimacy with	.011
your colleagues.	
- You feel a sense of closeness and intimacy with your colleagues.	
- When working from home, you can discuss personal matters that are not	.058
related to work with your colleagues.	
- You can discuss personal matters that are not related to work with your	
colleagues.	
- When working from home, your colleagues influence your ideas and	.038
decisions.	
- Your colleagues influence your ideas and decisions.	

Table 11: Paired Samples Test (Paired Differences) for Hypothesis 4

Compared Pair Description	Sig. (2-tailed)
- When working from home, you receive support from your organization	.022
regarding computers and equipment needed for work.	
- You receive support from your organization regarding computers and	
equipment needed for work.	
- When working from home, you can use equipment and programs for	.016
teleconference provided by IT department.	
- You can use equipment and programs for teleconference provided by	
IT department.	
- When working from home, you get assistance and technical support from	.074
IT department.	
- You receive assistance and technical support from IT department.	

Table 12: Paired Samples Test (Paired Differences) for Hypothesis 5

Compared Pair Description	Sig. (2-tailed)
- When working from home, you can find work information you want from	.063
your organization's server.	
- You can find work information you want from your organization's server.	
- When working from home, you receive complete and correct work	.000
information.	
- You receive complete and correct work information.	
- When working from home, you feel the exchange of information is useful for	.038
your work.	
- You feel the exchange of information is useful for your work.	

Conclusions and Discussions

From the research results, it was found that remote working positively affected on knowledge sharing and related factors included job satisfaction and perceived organization support, which were consistent with the research hypothesis. These results were the bright side of remote working that should be preserved if the organization thought of starting

to use the model of work from home in its workplace. The main obstacles of working from home were loneliness, less participation with colleagues, and several inconveniences due to unreadiness of equipment as in the office. Also, some executive remained concerning that remote workers were irresponsible and unable to complete their tasks. If one looked at increasing job satisfaction for employees, it would help the company to be productive. It would reduce stress, create new working atmosphere, and it might also reduce employee turnover rate (Baernholdt, M., & Mark, BA. (2009)). According to the research results, remote working was one of success factors to increase job satisfaction. In addition, supports from organization perceived by employees could help remote working work appropriately. Organizations who try to promote remote working should prepare their remote working related equipment, such as infrastructure, computers, etc., to be ready for the purpose.

In term of negative effect i.e., interpersonal bond, organizations should periodically arrange events or meetings to get remote working and in-office employees together. Doing so would reduce the problem of interpersonal bond cause by remote working for long time.

Scheduling work from home was another important factor in making work from home a success. Given the data in this research, it was surprising that there were people who did not want to work from home at all. Most of them were concerned about rising electricity bills, and some tasks that could not be executed through a computer. Some of them felt lonely when they did not get to see their colleagues for a long time. Being able to choose to work from home on a voluntary basis was a good solution. If the employees could have a slightly more flexible schedule of going into the office, it might help to balance their work and personal life better. According to some questionnaire respondents, work from home helped them get enough exercise and sleep, allowed them more concentration since there was no need to leave home in the morning and encounter daily traffic congestion, pollution, and the risk of contracting the COVID-19. But some commented that the environment at home made them lose their concentration, since there were too many distractions. This problem might be addressed by providing advice on proper preparation of the working area to make it feel more like a workplace.

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