

Remote Work and Employee Commitment: Evidence from a High-Technology Company

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Abstract

Remote work is a flexible work arrangement that allows employees to perform their duties outside the company's premises. It gained momentum during the COVID-19 pandemic and is still a popular work design that improves work-life balance. It brings important benefits to employees, for example, reduced transportation time and cost, as well as to employers, in terms of reduced office and maintenance costs and access to a worldwide talent-hiring pool. Employee commitment is related to trust and acceptance of organizational values and goals. It is employees' willingness to work hard and remain in the organization, which is also based on their perceived relationships with managers and other employees. The goal of this manuscript is to deepen the knowledge of the constructs of remote work and employee commitment and study their relationship in the selected company. The combined method is used to conduct the study; to collect primary data, a survey and an interview are conducted. The study showed a positive direct relationship between remote work and employee commitment: the more work is performed remotely, the higher the employee commitment in the studied organization.

Keywords: remote work, employee commitment, combined method, high technology company, Pearson correlation coefficient

JEL classification: M12, M14, M15

Paper type: Research article

Received: 17 February 2025

Accepted: 9 June 2025

DOI: 10.54820/entrenova-2025-0007

Citation: Schrott, Z., Penger, S. & Grah, B. (2025). Remote Work and Employee Commitment: Evidence from a High-Technology Company. ENTRENOVA - ENTERprise REsearch InNOVation, 11(1), <https://doi.org/10.54820/entrenova-2025-0007>.

Acknowledgments: *¹The authors acknowledge that the paper was financially supported by the Slovenian Research Agency, Program P5-0364 – The Impact of Corporate Governance, Organizational Learning, and Knowledge Management on Organizations in Ageing Societies.

Introduction

Remote Work

Advances in information and communication technology enabled remote work, a flexible work design that allows employees to perform their work outside the company's premises. It gained momentum during the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to temporary movement restrictions and closures, and remote work was seen as a solution. Remote work remains a popular work design, especially in hybrid form, which combines on-site and remote work to improve work-life balance (Lund et al., 2021). The concept of remote work is not new; its origins date back to 1973, when Jack Niles introduced telework in response to the oil crisis (Chen, 2024).

Different types of remote work exist (Valenduc, 2018), for example, internet virtual work (work anytime from anywhere), on-demand work as work on demand through digital platforms, crowd work as outsourcing tasks to a group of competing individuals with auction-based payments external, or coworking where different workers share the same office, share experience, and collaborate on joint projects.

Remote work offers important benefits to employees and employers alike. One of its main advantages for employees is increased flexibility, as they can work from different locations. It also reduces the time and money spent on commuting to and from work, ultimately increasing sustainability. On the other hand, employers can benefit from an expanded talent pool, as they can hire employees who can work remotely from anywhere in the world, which usually leads to improved productivity. In addition, it also enables organizations to decrease office space and maintenance costs (Konovalova et al., 2022; Błaszczuk et al., 2023).

According to the Global Survey of Working Arrangements (hereinafter: G-SWA) performed between April and May 2023 in 34 countries worldwide, the key advantages of remote work (and therefore disadvantages of office work) are saved commuting time, saving on fuel and lunch expenses, flexibility at work, less time needed to prepare for work (e.g. getting dressed, etc), personal peace, as well as more time for friends and family (Aksoy et al., 2023). In addition, employees who do not need to commute daily to work can rent or buy more distant, and usually cheaper, real estate (Tahlyan et al., 2024) and equip their working environment as they desire. It also enables them to organize their workday according to their needs, perform quick private tasks on certain days of the week, devote more time to friends and family, and adopt healthier lifestyles through eating habits, exercise, and quick relaxation practices (Ingusci et al., 2023).

On the other hand, according to the G-SWA, key disadvantages of remote work (and therefore advantages of office work) for employees are socializing with colleagues and in-person collaboration. Among the important advantages of office work are a clear separation between work and leisure time, better equipment, and direct contact with a superior (Aksoy et al., 2023). In an unfit environment, remote work can also lower productivity and decrease socialization, ultimately making collaboration more difficult and eroding corporate culture. Psychological pressures on the individual are increased by blurred work/life boundaries, a persistent sense of constant business, a feeling of social isolation, and increasing conflicts between family and work obligations (Błaszczuk et al., 2023). Nevertheless, data security may be even more questionable when work is performed remotely, and a different approach to leading remote teams is needed (Ahuja et al., 2023).

Recently, more and more emphasis has been placed on the right to disconnect, the right of an employee to disconnect from work and refrain from work-related electronic communications during non-working hours, enabling better work-life

balance. This legislative framework is designed to mitigate the adverse effects of digital connectivity, such as burnout, decreased morale, and increased work-family conflict (Magnavita et al., 2021). Additionally, the right to disconnect is not just about employee rights; it also impacts organizational productivity and competitiveness. Research indicates that allowing employees to disconnect can boost creativity and productivity while promoting overall well-being (Varela-Castro et al., 2022).

According to the OECD, remote work can either boost or hinder business performance, and its overall impact largely depends on two primary factors. The direct factor influences firm performance by enhancing employee motivation and facilitating their knowledge creation. The indirect factor concerns remote work's ability to lower costs, which, in turn, allows organizations to reallocate resources to improve productivity, foster innovation, and reorganize operations (Marcus, 2022). Reunamäki and Fey (2023) identify five issues with remote work: (1) fewer opportunities for informal interactions during online business meetings; (2) lower engagement during online meetings; (3) an overwhelming number of meetings with too many participants; (4) managers' inaccessibility and formal communication, and (5) difficulty in knowledge sharing and information flow.

Employee Commitment

Employee commitment is understood as an individual's sense of belonging to an organization, arising when the organization, through its actions and communication, offers what employees perceive as a fair return for their contributions. This emphasizes that commitment is based on a reciprocal exchange of actions and words between the employer and the employee, each party viewing it as fair, appropriate, and desirable. Because fairness is unique to each employee, it is challenging for an organization to address commitment through general approaches that apply to all employees (Ford et al., 2023). Employee commitment is related to trust and acceptance of organizational values and goals. It is employees' willingness to work hard and remain in the organization (Meyer et al., 1998).

According to Rahimi (2020), several factors influence organizational commitment, including job satisfaction, career development, co-worker support, leadership style, organizational culture, organizational fairness, work environment, salary, rewards programs, training, performance appraisals, and seniority.

Employee reward programs play a crucial role in boosting organizational productivity and retaining talented personnel. According to Bussin (2018), both financial and non-financial incentives significantly influence employee motivation, job satisfaction, and overall performance. To effectively meet their objectives, reward programs must be crafted with clarity, equity, and adaptability in mind. Although many employees favor monetary rewards—such as cash bonuses and comprehensive insurance packages—non-monetary incentives, including flexible work arrangements, opportunities for professional growth, and family support initiatives, are equally vital for fostering motivation and engagement among the workforce. Moreover, reward systems must align with the organization's fundamental values, as this alignment is key to enhancing job satisfaction and promoting employee loyalty. Coetzee and Stoltz (2015) emphasize that when reward strategies resonate with a positive organizational culture, they not only boost individual performance but also contribute to the organization's overall productivity. In addition, research by Khan et al. (2024) supports the notion that a well-structured reward program can increase employee engagement, which, in turn, drives higher levels of organizational commitment and performance.

Johnson (2023) emphasizes the strong relationship between employee engagement and human resources management (hereinafter HRM). Key HRM practices, including recruitment, retention, and career advancement opportunities, play a critical role in fostering engagement. Engaged employees are generally more committed to work, exhibit higher levels of motivation, and perceive themselves as valued by both their managers and co-workers. These employees are also more likely to remain with the organization for extended periods. In contrast, disengaged employees tend to have higher turnover rates, with the higher cost of employee turnover for organizations, in terms of loss of valuable knowledge and expertise possessed by departing employees, as well as lower morale of existing employees.

Organizational culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, and practices that define the way an organization operates, and also influence the level of employee commitment, as a strong organizational culture fosters solidarity, belonging, and integration among employees, leading to greater motivation and performance within the organization (dos Ramalho, 2018).

In virtual teams, it is crucial for leaders to effectively communicate their expectations, define tasks, and motivate team members. Just as task-oriented language enhances engagement, effective communication and leadership play a key role in driving employee motivation. Given the absence of visual cues in remote interactions, verbal and written communication must be apparent and intentional (Truitt, 2023).

Relationship Between Remote Work and Employee Commitment

The relationship between remote work and employee commitment is multifaceted, encompassing both positive and negative dimensions. Byrd (2022) posits that remote work can engender feelings of exclusion and detachment from colleagues, particularly among individuals transitioning from full-time office environments. This sentiment is supported by Bareket-Bojmel et al. (2023), who observed that limited socialization in remote work settings can exacerbate feelings of isolation. Additionally, Robeva-Stoyanova (2023) highlights that remote work can offer employees increased opportunities to change employers, potentially diminishing their commitment to their current organization.

While these studies underscore the potential drawbacks of remote work, other research indicates that remote work can enhance organizational commitment by enabling employees to manage their resources better and avoid depletion, thereby reducing turnover intentions (Das et al., 2021; Charalampous et al., 2018; Amir et al., 2021). The flexibility and improved work-life balance associated with remote work may exert a countervailing positive effect on employee commitment, as suggested by the literature (Charalampous et al., 2018; Das et al., 2021).

Methodology

The goal of this manuscript is to deepen the knowledge of the constructs of remote work and employee commitment and study their relationship in the selected company.

To perform the analysis, the combined method is used. The selected international hi-tech company has more than 11,000 employees worldwide. Meanwhile, the office in Slovenia, where the study took place, employs approximately 220 employees. To collect primary quantitative data, a survey is conducted using a five-point Likert scale. The data are analyzed using descriptive statistics and the Pearson correlation coefficient. The first part of the questionnaire on remote work consists of 12 items

based on the work of Ingusci et al. (2023), Karki (2023), and Pianese et al. (2023). The second part of the questionnaire consists of 13 items and is related to employee commitment and is designed based on the works of Harris (2023), Johnson (2023), Rahimi (2020), Robeva-Stoyanova (2023), and Wang & Haggerty (2011). In addition, two items were developed based on the work of Aksoy et al. (2023), related to the motivation for performing work and for remote and office work. Those items had 8 (9, respectively) possible options, and respondents were asked to collect three key options. The last part of the questionnaire consists of socio-demographic questions about gender, age, work experience, and position. The survey was performed online using the 1ka tool. The survey was open between May and June 2024, and the link was sent to 220 employees. Sixty valid responses were collected (75% male, 25% female).

The qualitative part of the study is based on the two semi-structured interviews with two HR professionals (a manager and an employee). The first part of the interviews focused on remote work (arrangements for employees, the organization's perspective, possible restrictions on employees, and whether employees follow the company's instructions). The next eight questions related to employee commitment, the perception of an organization, the commitment to the organization, care for the well-being of employees, and policies in place. The data are analysed and summarized using the content analysis.

Results

Results of the quantitative part

Sixty valid responses were collected (75% male, 25% female). The exact age structure is: 36.7% aged 46+, 31.7% aged 35-45, 26.7% aged 28-34, and 5% aged up to 27, which reflects the company's age and gender structure. Regarding tenure in the selected organization, 1.7% are employed for less than a year, 33.3% for 1 to 3 years, 30% for 3 to 6 years, 11.7% for 6 to 10 years, and 23.3% for 10+ years. The majority of respondents, 76.7% are professional staff, 13.3% team or department managers, and 10.0% trainees or young employees.

Regarding the remote work, more than half (51,75) do so three or more times a week, and 18.3% perform only remote work. 11.7% work remotely twice a week and 13.3% only once a week. 5% do not work remotely. Table 1 presents the 12 items related to remote work on a Likert 5-point scale, 1- strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - neither agree nor disagree, 4 - agree, and 5-strongly agree. The highest positive mean score of 4.0 was given to the statement I receive adequate support and guidance from my manager while working remotely, and the lowest score of 2.5 was given to the statement I like to participate in virtual team-building activities.

Table 1
Average Grade Related to Remote Work Items

I receive adequate support and guidance from my manager while working remotely	4
I feel that the company values me and my work while I work remotely	3,9
Communication with managers is good and sufficient during remote work	3,8
Despite the fact that I do not have a time limit for remote work, I like to come to the office	3,8
I feel motivated and involved in my work while I work remotely	3,6
I am well informed about what is happening in the company while working remotely	3,3
I am encouraged by my managers to work more at the office (and less remotely)	3,1
I can collaborate effectively with colleagues when working remotely, and I don't miss "face-to-face" collaboration	3,1
If I were restricted in the time I could work remotely, I would change jobs	3
I feel connected to my colleagues even when working remotely	3
I have and use better tools when working remotely than I do when working in the office	2,9
I like to participate in virtual team-building activities	2,5

Source: Schrott (2024)

Table 2 presents the average grades for 12 items related to employee commitment. The highest average of 4.2 was given to the item ' Relationships between colleagues and with supervisors are appropriate, and the lowest to the item ' I feel involved in the company's communications and decisions' (2.4) on the 5-point Likert scale.

Table 2
Average Grade Related to Employee Commitment Items

Item	Average grade
Relationships between colleagues and with supervisors are appropriate	4,2
I have the possibility of promotion	3,8
Achieving organisational goals is important to me	3,8
I have a good understanding of the vision and strategy of the company I work for	3,7
I feel a sense of belonging to the company, even though I work a lot remotely	3,6
There are colleagues in the company whom I consider friends	3,6
Working for the company is fulfilling, and I am proud to work here	3,6
I would like to have more social events with my colleagues	3,5
I would recommend a friend or family member to work for this company	3,4
I feel that the climate in the company is good	3,3
Well-being at work, colleagues, and loyalty to the company mean more to me than promotion, salary, and bonuses	3,2
I feel involved in the company's communications and decisions	2,4

Source: Schrott (2024)

Related to the question on motivation for office work, respondents were presented with possible answers, and had to choose the three most important to them. The highest scores were obtained by Relaxed socialising with colleagues (78.3%), followed

by Better, faster and more transparent communication with their team (58.3%), and Working in an office provides a clear separation between work and family life (43.3%). Other options were: More genuine contact with superiors and management (38.3%), Organised teambuilding, activities, and social gatherings in the office (33.3%), Free snacks and drinks (25.0%), I am required to attend workshops and training sessions (18.3%). The very nature of my work does not allow me to work remotely, which was chosen by 5% of respondents (Schrott, 2024).

Similarly, the next question on the motivation for remote work required respondents to choose the three most important options from seven provided. The items were chosen as follows: I do not want to waste time and money commuting to the office and home (78.3%), I feel I have more flexibility and autonomy at home to organise my working day (75.0%), I have personal peace at home to work (73.3%), I have more time at home for family and friends (43.3%), I am more successful when working remotely and meetings are shorter (25.0%), followed by I have no one to socialise with in the office (5.0%), meanwhile none of the respondents have chosen that they feel that their manager controls their every move in the office (Schrott, 2024). The findings are in line with those of the Aksoy et al. (2023) survey, in which the first three reasons for working from home were also highly rated.

Results of the qualitative part

The interviews with the HR manager and HR specialist took place online on May 21, 2024. Interviews were transcribed, and content analysis was performed. After the initial questions about the position and experience in the company, the first part of the interview is dedicated to remote work, and the second to employee commitment.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the company offered remote work opportunities but restricted them to employees with legitimate reasons, reflecting the company's general reluctance to endorse remote work. With the advent of hybrid working models, employees are now encouraged to attend the office at least once a week. However, these recommendations are not stringently enforced, as there are no penalties for non-compliance. Based on observations and interviews, remote work has become a critical criterion for employment in the high-tech sector.

The company employs two distinct approaches to onboarding new employees: 'project onboarding,' where new hires are immediately integrated into ongoing projects, and a 'bench' system, where employees await project assignments while familiarizing themselves with the company and their colleagues.

The management of remote teams is not explicitly covered in the company's training programs; however, managers do address the specific challenges of remote work in their training sessions. The company actively encourages employees to increase their office attendance, particularly through informal events. Despite these initiatives, regular office attendance remains limited, with only approximately 30% of employees visiting the office at least once a month. The company aims to increase this figure to at least 60%. Nevertheless, the international nature of project work means that some employees do not need to visit the office. New employees, who are more accustomed to hybrid working models, tend to adjust their office presence from the outset, which the company views as a positive development.

The second part of the interviews focused on employee commitment. The company acknowledges that the primary factors influencing employee commitment include the attractiveness of the work, the development of new technologies, and competitive salaries. Employees frequently leave the company in pursuit of more engaging work that offers opportunities for learning and the utilization of advanced

technologies. To mitigate this issue, the company implements a rotation strategy for employees across projects; however, this approach is sometimes limited.

Another significant factor is work-life balance, which is very relaxed in the studied company. Despite this, salaries and bonuses are not always sufficient to retain employees. Younger employees often prioritize higher salaries, whereas older employees place greater value on flexible working hours. The company endeavors to enhance employee loyalty through various initiatives, such as the 'Engagers' program, which promotes social interaction among employees and facilitates knowledge transfer.

The company has implemented several methods to keep employees informed, including monthly internal newsletters, informal face-to-face meetings, and an anonymous online channel for questions. Despite these efforts, the overall employee climate remains unclear, as only a small proportion regularly attend events or visit the office. The average employee turnover rate is 11%, which is comparable to other companies in the sector. Employee turnover is often attributed to issues with projects, clients, or working conditions that are beyond the company's control.

Discussion and Conclusion

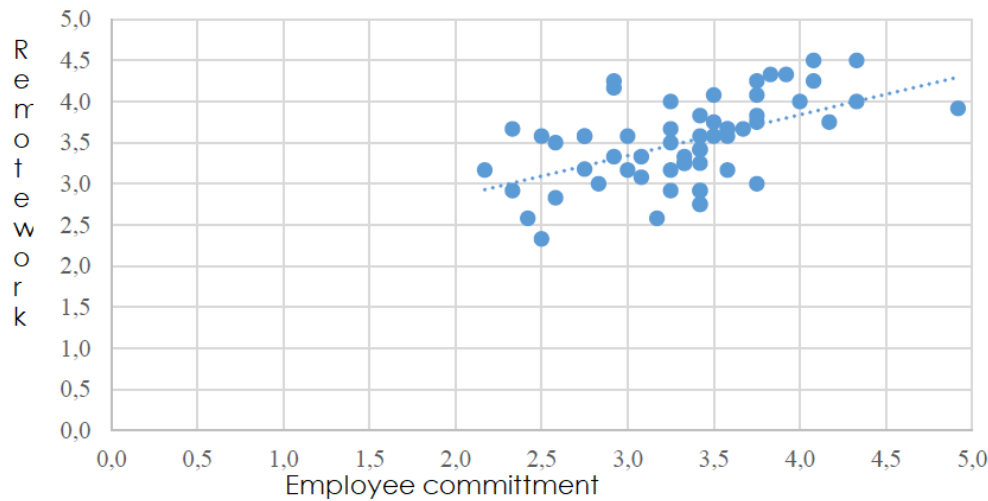
Based on the empirical evidence, the interview respondents do not feel their managers want them to perform more work from the office, and that their remote work does not hinder their understanding or performance of tasks. However, the interviews claimed they placed much emphasis on attracting employees to the company premises through various activities, as well as on managers.

It is evident that the interviewees are familiar with the company's vision and strategies and can relate to them. They feel their work is fulfilling, and they are proud to work in the company they studied, which offers them the possibility of promotions. On the other hand, interviewees cannot assess employees' commitment due to a lack of data, as they only have contact with those who come to the company premises.

The items related to the organizational climate received relatively neutral responses. In contrast, the relationships between colleagues and supervisors are appropriate, and some of their colleagues consider others their friends. However, they would like some more social events with colleagues (but not virtual team-buildings). The interviewees believe the majority of employees are interested in project work and acquiring new knowledge, and are less interested in informal socializing.

After comparing the respondents' average scores for the remote work and employee commitment constructs, the difference between each respondent's averages was calculated. It shows that the studied constructs are positively linearly related. The existence of a relationship is also confirmed with the scatter plot (Figure 1). There is a positive relationship, as the line increases and the values are clustered around it, indicating a medium-strong positive linear relationship.

Figure 1
Relationship between the studied constructs



Source: Schrott (2024)

Similar results are obtained when calculating the Pearson correlation coefficient (Table 3). The Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.523, indicating a statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) moderate positive linear relationship. This positive correlation suggests that as the amount of remote work increases, employee commitment in the studied company rises too.

Table 3
Pearson's coefficient of correlation

	Remote work	Employee commitment
Remote work	r	1
	p	0,000
	N	60
Employee commitment	r	0,523**
	p	0,000
	N	60

Note: Pearson correlation coefficient (r); statistical significance (p); number of units (N); Correlation is statistically significant at the 1% significance level (**)

Source: Schrott (2024)

The findings therefore show that the employees want to perform work remotely, which is one of the reasons for their commitment to the studied high-tech company. Remote work allows employees to be more flexible, relaxed, and have more freedom in organizing their working day and balancing work and private life. Based on the survey, we find that hybrid working design contributes to employee commitment, as the majority of respondents come to the office at least once a week. Employees who feel connected to their colleagues attend meetings and social events and also feel a higher sense of belonging to the company. The survey results showed a positive response to commitment, but one key limitation of this study is that most employees did not complete the survey, with a response rate of only 27,27%. This might also be the reason our findings contradict the findings of Byrd (2022), who studied the relationship between remote work and employee commitment, and found that remote work causes employees to feel excluded and not related to other employees, as the respondents who participated in the study were not socially isolated (Bareket-

Bojmel et al., 2023). The low survey participation was not a surprise, as the company representatives had already pointed it out, stressing that it was due to the non-responsiveness and non-participation of the majority of employees, and that it was always the same people. The high level of non-response to surveys or to the company's initiatives to socialize is also information for company representatives that employees show indifference toward the company itself and do not feel connected to the organization or their colleagues.

Our suggestion to the company is to begin a more detailed analysis of employee arrivals at its premises. They already have electronic arrival recording enabled in the office, and employees are encouraged to register at the premises entrance at least once a day while in the office. Detailed data on remote vs. office work and on individuals who do not come to the office at all is available, but the company does not analyze or act on it. Based on such analyses, the company could develop concrete personal approaches for these employees and ask them why they do not come to the office, so the company can determine what it can do to attract them. Another option is to increase the number of relevant courses and seminars on the company premises to share knowledge, expertise, and experiences related to their work that are highly relevant to remote workers.

In addition, the company could also implement the quarterly face-to-face performance reviews between employees and their supervisors, to make future plans for work, promotions, knowledge acquisition, as well as assess their commitment to the company. The studied high-tech company should also try to build a community of employees by recognizing the best ideas, workers, projects, and so on.

As a future research opportunity, we suggest additional qualitative studies on the studied constructs, namely, remote work and employee commitment, also in different settings, with higher response rates. We also suggest qualitative studies targeting remote workers through individual interviews or focus groups to uncover the deeper reasons for preferring remote work.

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