

## Telecommuting and Normative Commitment of Employees in a Technology Firm: After Effects of Covid-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract:** The recent trend in the world of work has made it expedient for organizations to adopt various flexible work practices such as telecommuting and this is affecting the normative commitment of employees. The study examined telecommuting and the normative commitment of employees in a technology firm. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study is (160) one hundred and sixty and using the Krecjie and Morgan sample size determination formula the sample size of (113) one hundred and thirteen was arrived at. One hundred and thirteen copies of the questionnaire were distributed, purposive sampling techniques were used and three hypotheses were tested using person-product moment correlation and multiple regression using S.P.S.S 27.0 version. The findings revealed that there is a 39.1% weak relationship between remote work and normative commitment and a 97.8% strong relationship between telework and normative commitment. The study further revealed that remote work and telework account for 95.6% of normative commitment. The study concluded that telework is the most significant variable driving normative commitment. However the study recommended among others that management should make it expedient for their telecommuter employees to report to their agency worksite frequently to prevent physical and psychological isolation and there should be constant engagement between the telecommuter employees by putting in place effective online tracking mechanisms to monitor them, also management should give them a sense of belonging, this will help discourage moonlighting.

**Keywords:** *Telecommuting, Normative Commitment, Remote Work, Telework.*

### 1. Introduction

The global pandemic that ravaged the world recently has made it imperative for organizations and businesses to face some realities by adopting flexible working practices in their work environment. In recent times several technologies have been developed to make remote work more efficient than the routine office arrangement and traditional work life. Tracy and Lara (2020) posit that telework is one of the most precious tools that makes work propinquity fortified and more effective by allowing remote employees to stay productive. Businesses that have adopted telecommuting has a mode for operating since the era of the pandemic, having been able to cut down their running cost. However, this is also affecting the normative commitment of their employees as their feeling of obligation and responsibility is gradually eroding. Telecommuting offers the prospect to employees to stay wherever they wish and operate from there. The statistics indicators benchmarking the information society SIBIS (2013) posits that the teleworkers employed in European Union member states are 13% on average with the same index in the United States of America showing 25% (Twenty-five percent). Porter (1974) opined that the concept of telecommuting has revealed a tremendous development in the enterprise as it assists in reducing costs and enhancing the productivity of workers. Numerous issues sway telecommuting agreements. The organization's staff are free to engage in it on a full or part-time basis and formally or informally. It is evident that when telecommuting is done on a full-time basis, workers operate in secluded places different from the office and this often helps realize the goals of regional economic and employment objectives. It is on this note that this study seeks to examine the link between telecommuting and normative commitment.

**Statement of the Problem:** Current events in the world of work have made telecommuting inevitable for the seamless and efficient operation of businesses globally. However, despite its continuous development, it is perceived to be having a negative effect on the normative commitment of employees thereby eroding their feelings of obligation to their organization, employees are no longer loyal to their organizations as they should. Previous studies Fay and Kline 2012; Giant, Wallace and Spurgoon, 2013) revealed that the development of

telecommuting is perceived from different perspectives. It offers potential advantages to employees over traditional employment arrangements, including better work-life balance, schedule flexibility, job satisfaction, autonomy, and shorter travel times. However, telecommuting is also linked with negative effects such as psychological and physical isolation which often disconnect an employee from others, and lacks anticipated social and influential association that is expedient for understanding and ensuring all forms of interaction are fulfilled. According to a number of studies (Golden and Veiga 2005; McCloskey and Igbariq 2003), psychological isolation can be bad for workers, leading to outcomes like low morale at work, high turnover rates, and even poor health, whereas physically isolated workers tend to feel underappreciated and have fewer opportunities for advancement. Also, because they are socially and physically isolated, telecommuters frequently feel untrustworthy, lonely, and have a weaker sense of identity with the company. They also find it difficult to build meaningful relationships with coworkers. Based on the above-mentioned this study seeks to examine telecommuting and normative commitment in a technology firm.

**Objective of the Study:** The main objective of the study is to examine telecommuting and normative commitment. Other specific objectives include

- To examine the relationship between remote work and normative commitment.
- To investigate the relationship between telework and normative commitment.
- To ascertain the joint effect of remote work and telework on normative commitment.

### Research Questions

- To what extent is the relationship between remote work and normative commitment
- What is the relationship between telework and normative commitment
- What is the joint effect of remote work and telework on normative commitment?

### Research Hypotheses

- There is no significant relationship between remote work and normative commitment.
- There is no significant relationship between telework and normative commitment.
- There is no significant joint effect of remote work and telework on normative commitment.

## 2. Literature Review

**Conceptual Review:** When using the right technologies, telecommunicating is a flexible work arrangement that enables employees to switch their usual working hours from the office to home or client sites. Potters (2003) posits that telecommuting has contributed immensely to the development of business. As it aids in reducing costs and also improves workers' productivity. It is a situation whereby employees work remotely using the right technology. Numerous factors affect telecommuting it can be done in a part-time or full-time formal or informal method. It is perceived as an innovation that is targeted at improving employee efficiency and also providing them with some reasonable comfort. Thus when is practiced fully employees work in a remote location different from their offices with no two-way communication with their colleagues or superiors. However, those who work part-time will perform a particular part of their work remotely.

**Normative Commitment:** Commitment has been visualized in various ways by diverse researchers. The concept of commitment has been viewed from different perspectives such as dedication put to work, loyalty to the organization and employees' state of engrossment and involvement with the organization. According to Lamber, Hogan and Griffen (2001), commitment is the situation in which a worker's sense of loyalty to their particular organization is in line with its objectives and ideals. According to Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Bovlian (1974), commitment is the inverse of a person's identification with and participation in a specific organization. They outlined the three components of commitment as follows: an employee's acceptance of and belief in the company's values and goals; an employee's readiness to work towards achieving those goals; and an employee's strong desire to stay on as a member of the organization. The three elements of organizational commitment that Meyer and Allen (1991) identified are affective, continuance, and normative. Employees who perceive their devotion to their employer as normative do so because they believe it to be morally right. However, Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993) posit that the three types of commitment are a psychological state that makes up employees' relationship with the organization.

**Pandemic and Telecommuting:** Because of the epidemic COVID 19 across the globe, many organizations mandated that employees work from home. When the WHO declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic, most businesses found it more practical to allow employees to work from home. To ensure social isolation and stop the infection from spreading, this became vital. Working from home might balance employee health and well-being because it would lessen the likelihood that they would have symptoms associated with a pandemic, according to reports from a paper published in a national law review (2020). Steward and Menon (2020) posit that going digital is beyond applying the rough technology because it also involves ensuring that employees possess the capacity and apply the technology. It is also important to foster a culture of inclusion, the fact that it is virtual to ensure that employees and managers are focused and avoid distractions.

**Theoretical Review:** The following are some of the theories examined:

- Social exchange theory(1961) By George Homans
- Herzberg two factor theory (1959)By Fredrick Herzberg

**Social Exchange Theory:** The social psychological and sociological approach known as social exchange theory explains social development and stability as a process of negotiated trade between parties. The social exchange theory holds that subjective cost-benefit analysis and the appraisal of options are the foundations of human relationships. The theory is based on sociology, psychology, and economic theory. Social exchange theory is frequently used in the business world to indicate a two-sided, reciprocally contingent, and rewarding process including transactions or simply exchange. It also shares many of the fundamental principles of structuralism and rational choice theory. Self-interest and interdependence are two key components of social interaction, according to Homans, who thought that the theory was founded on reinforcement principles. When two or more actors have anything of value to one another, they must decide whether and how much to exchange. Three basic sorts of interaction take place. Homans uses the idea of individualism to define individual self-interest as a combination of psychological and economic needs.

Pursuing one's interests is typically the rule in the economic realm of the social exchange theory, where competition and greed can be widespread. Self-interest is not a bad thing in social trade; rather, when it is acknowledged, it will serve as the driving force behind interpersonal connections for the benefit of both parties. Models of social exchange also assume that interactions and decisions are influenced by costs and rewards and that both parties in a social trade are reliant on and responsible for one another. A partner's shortcomings and the time and effort needed to maintain a relationship are examples of relationship life's low perceived value elements that are referred to as "the cost of relationship life" (costs can be time, money, effort, etc.). Rewards are the facets of a relationship that have positive value. (Among other things, rewards include feelings of approval, aid, and camaraderie. To help structure individual behavior based on benefits and costs, Homans (1961) proposed five basic premises.

The fundamental principles of social exchange theory as applied to humans are embodied in this group of theoretical concepts.

- The initial premise According to the success proposition, people will frequently repeat actions that have positive results.
- The stimulus hypothesis, which is the second claim, holds that if a person's behavior has been rewarded in the past, they will likely continue to act in that way.
- The third claim: The value statement contends that behavior is more likely to take place if the outcome is deemed desirable to the individual.
- The fourth claim is in clause IV. According to the deprivation satiation hypothesis, a reward's value will decrease if a person receives it multiple times.
- The fifth premise explores how emotions are triggered by various reward scenarios. Those who are pleased and behave favorably are those who either obtain more than they expected or do not incur the anticipated consequence.

Herzberg developed a theory of labor motivation during his 1950s Pittsburgh research. He thought it was critical to comprehend what motivates people and what they want from their professions. He invited workers to tell him about times when they thought their occupations were especially enjoyable or unpleasant. Herzberg

says that although extrinsic elements are hygienic considerations that prevent an employee from being dissatisfied and are satisfiers, inner factors tend to stimulate. Herzberg claimed that extrinsic and internal influences could be further separated into two groups, which he gave code names for. i. Motivations ii, Health-Related Factors: Motivators are the innate factors that influence or enhance job satisfaction and motivate employees. i. Appreciation, ii. Accomplishment, iii. The work itself, IV. Responsibility, and v. Personal development. The hygiene factors are outside variables; they are elements of a job whose absence or inadequacy causes unhappiness. They relate to the milieu of the workplace (work setting). They relate more to the environment in which people work than to the nature of labor itself. The improvement of the hygiene component won't inspire the workers; rather, it will merely protect them from being dissatisfied. They consist of: I. Corporate policies, ii. The caliber of supervision, iii. The physical environment at work, iv. The wage, v. The relationship with peers, and the study reviewed two theories that are pertinent to this research work; however, the social exchange theory was chosen to provide an explanatory framework because it assumes that reward and cost drive relationship decisions and that both parties in social exchange take responsibility for one another and rely on one another. Costs can take the shape of time, effort, etc.; rewards might take the form of approval and support. The stimulus proposition and the social exchange hypothesis both contend that when people are rewarded for their activities, they tend to repeat them. If someone has been rewarded for their behavior in the past, they will likely continue to do so. The social exchange theory typically implies the idea of a two-sided, mutually contingent, and rewarding process encompassing transactions or simply exchange.

**Empirical Review:** For example, in a study on telecommuting conducted by Abilash and Siju (2021), several empirical investigations have been conducted to explore telecommuting and employee commitment. A convenience sample approach was used, and a total of 112 responses were collected for this empirical research on work performance, work satisfaction, and employees' commitment amid pandemic situations. According to the study, telecommuting increases employee dedication to work and can also have an impact on some personal events because it allows people to work from home. Further investigation found a tepid association between staff engagement and productivity. Wang, Albert, and Sun (2019) investigated employee isolation and telecommuter organizational commitment. The descriptive survey research method was utilized in the study, 446 people took part in it, and the structural equation model was used to analyze the data. According to the findings of the study, psychological isolation is adversely linked to emotional commitment and positively linked to continuation commitment, however, psychological association is not linked to normative commitment.

Wang, Albert and Sun (2019) conducted research on the organizational commitment of telecommuters and employee isolation. 446 participants took part in the study, which used the descriptive survey research methodology. Data were analyzed using a structural equation model. According to the study, psychological association is unrelated to normative commitment, psychological isolation is positively connected with continuous commitment and inversely associated with emotional commitment. In a study by Forgacs (2010), management experiences and attitudes related to telework were examined. The population of the study is (500) five hundred, and a straightforward random sample procedure was utilized. The study used a survey research methodology. The research showed that the majority of businesses that had turned down telework were unable to provide a good enough justification for doing so; these misgivings were caused by a lack of interest in telework as well as a dearth of reliable information about it. The study concluded that while setting plans for regional economic development and developing employment strategies, it is worthwhile to take into account the creation of an economic climate favorable to the spread of telework.

### 3. Method

This research is limited to Fintrak Software Limited in Lagos State, Nigeria due to the nature and scope of the study. The study used a survey research methodology, with questionnaires used to gather the data and a 4-point Likert scale used to formulate the results. The adoption of the purposeful sampling technique was made possible by the human resource officer's assistance in survey distribution. Grant, Wallace, Spurgeon, Tramoniano, and Charalampous (2018) as well as Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993) were used as the basis for the electronic work-life scale's normative commitment component. A reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained after the instrument underwent pilot testing utilizing the test-retest procedure. A sample size of one hundred and thirteen (113) was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination algorithm for the study's population, which consisted of 160 permanent employees. One hundred and thirteen (113)

copies of the survey were given out; 102 of those copies were duly filled out and returned, but 11 of them were unusable. In the analysis of data using SPSS 27.0, multiple regression and Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used in the study.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

**Table 1: Correlations**

		Remote work	Normative commitment
Remote work	Pearson Correlation	1	.391**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	102	102
Normative commitment	Pearson Correlation	.391**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	102	102

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The first hypothesis describes how normative commitment and remote employment interact. The findings indicate that there is a poor association between normative commitment and remote employment, with a relationship between the two being just 39.1% of the time. The outcome supports that of a prior study by Wendy, Leslie, and Qin (2019), which discovered a substantial link between employee isolation and organizational commitment to telecommuting.

**Table 2: Correlations**

		Normative commitment	Telework
Normative commitment	Pearson Correlation	1	.978**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	102	102
Telework	Pearson Correlation	.978**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	102	102

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The second hypothesis describes the connection between normative commitment and telework. The findings showed that there is a 97.8% correlation between normative commitment and telework. The outcome also demonstrates that normative commitment and telework are closely related. The outcome supports Forgacs' (2010) research, which showed a significant correlation between commitment and telework.

**Table 3: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.978 <sup>a</sup>	.956	.955	.23354

a. Predictors: (Constant), Telework, Remote work

**Table 4: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	117.747	2	58.874	1079.411	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	5.400	99	.055		
	Total	123.147	101			

a. Dependent Variable: normative commitment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Telework, Remote work

**Table 5: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.258	.229		1.124	.264
	Remote work	.033	.031	.024	1.069	.288
	Telework	.937	.022	.968	42.328	.000

a. Dependent Variable: normative commitment

Hypothesis three shows the combined effect of the indicators of telecommuting on the normative commitment of employees. The findings revealed that there is a direct and positive relationship between telecommuting and the normative commitment of employees. The result further revealed that telecommuting accounts for 95.6% of normative commitment. This signifies that telecommuting has a significant joint effect on employees' normative commitment to Fintrak Software Limited. The result further establishes that the composite effect of telecommuting did not occur by chance as it gave the f-ratio value of 1079.4 which signifies the strength of the two indicators as potent predictors of normative commitment in Fintrak Software Limited Company. Table five reveals at a glance the relative effect of the two independent variables (remote work and telework) on normative commitment. The result in the table shows that telework is the most significant variable driving employees normative commitment,  $B = 937$ ,  $+ = 42.32$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). The result corroborates the findings of the previous study. Abilash & Meiju (2021), found out that telecommuting influences employee commitment.

**Discussion of Findings:** Hypothesis one reveals the interaction between remote work and the normative commitment of employees. The result shows that there is a weak relationship between remote work and the normative commitment of workers. This implies that employees who work remotely from their homes permanently that is (100%) of the time and their official duty station is their home have lesser feelings of obligation and responsibility to their organization. This is so because they hardly have any form of contact with their colleagues and the management staff. Interpersonal relationship, social grouping and team spirit is lacking as well as physical and psychological isolation, all these could make them engage in other jobs, which will ultimately affect the normative commitment of employees. The result corroborates with the findings of the previous study by Wendy, Leslie, & Guin (2019) which found a substantial connection between employee isolation and telecommuter organizational commitment.

Hypothesis two shows the relationship between telework and normative commitment. The result reveals that telework has a strong relationship with normative commitment. The implication of this is that the opportunity given to teleworkers to report to their agency work site at least two times per pay period, makes them have a feeling of obligation which makes them more responsible to their organization. The little contact they have with, their colleagues and management staff increases their level of normative commitment to the organization. The findings collaborate with a previous study by Forgacs (2010) who found a strong relationship between telework and commitment. Hypothesis three shows the combined effect of the indicators of telecommuting on normative commitment. The finding revealed that there is a direct and positive connection between telecommuting and the normative commitment of employees in Fintrak Software Limited. The result collaborates with a previous study by Abilash & Siju (2021) which found that telecommuting has a positive influence on workers' normative commitment.

**Implications for Management:** The findings from this study justify why the management of organizations must prioritize the normative commitment of their telecommuter employees to make them more responsible for their organization and avoid moonlighting. To achieve this there is a need for the management of organizations to make it mandatory for their telecommuter employees to report to their work station often to prevent physical and psychological isolation which could eventually affect their normative commitment to the organization.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

According to the results of this investigation. The study's two indicators for telecommuting were found to be effective indicators of the independent variable, it was determined. The study concluded that remote workers

are less normatively committed to their organization, because of the nature of their jobs having to work (100%) hundred percent from home which makes them physically and psychologically isolated, which could also lead to moonlighting of employees.

**Recommendations:** The study's conclusions led to the following suggestions.

- Management of organizations should make it expedient for their telecommuter workers to report to their agency worksite often to prevent physical and psychological isolation of employees.
- There, should be regular and constructive communication and engagement between the telecommuting employees and management to give them a sense of responsibility and belonging and discourage moonlighting.
- Organizations should encourage teamwork, and social grouping to foster group Cohesion among the telecommuter employees.
- Finally, organizations should put in place effective online tracking mechanisms to monitor the activities of their telecommuter employees.

**Suggestion for Further Study:** Further studies should be conducted to find out the effect of telecommuting on the physical and psychological isolation of employees using other indicators of commitment for example (continuance and affective commitment).

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