Navigating Career Paths in a Remote World: The Influence of Work from Home on Employee Advancement and Organizational Support

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of Work from Home (WFH) on career advancement among IT professionals, emphasizing intermediary aspects that affect progression in Work from Home environments. As WFH gains prominence, it is crucial to comprehend its influence on fundamental career facilitators, including Social Capital, Organizational Support, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Quality, Work Visibility, Work-Life Balance, and Technology Proficiency. This study employs a quantitative survey of 612 remote IT professionals in Karnataka, India, to evaluate how these characteristics moderate the association between remote management and career advancement. Findings demonstrate that WFH exerts both beneficial and detrimental impacts on career-enabling characteristics. WFH enhances work-life equilibrium and technological competence, enabling employees to flexibly manage duties and develop digital skills vital for contemporary positions. Nonetheless, WFH diminishes social capital, LMX quality, and job visibility, which may impede career progression due to diminished informal networking, restricted supervisor engagement, and decreased organizational acknowledgment. These findings underscore the necessity for focused organizational measures to facilitate career advancement in remote environments. Organizations ought to create virtual mentorship initiatives, tools that enhance visibility, and structured feedback systems to tackle the distinct issues faced by remote employees and optimize their career potential. This research enhances the current literature by pinpointing practical strategies that promote career advancement in Work from Home settings, providing significant insights for both scholars and companies adjusting to the changing workplace dynamics.

Introduction

Work from Home has rapidly changed workplace dynamics, creating new opportunities and difficulties for organisations and people (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020; Spurk & Straub, 2020). Over the past decade, technology has made flexible work arrangements more common, but the COVID-19 epidemic increased Work from Home (WFH) on an unprecedented scale (Yang et al., 2021). Many WFH employees have enjoyed improved flexibility, reduced commuting time, and better work-life balance (Nguyen & Armoogum, 2021; Kossek & Lautsch, 2018). Despite its benefits, WFH provides distinct hurdles, particularly in career growth (Golden & Eddleston, 2020).

Access to networking, mentorship, professional development tools, and leadership visibility affects career progression, which includes employee growth, skill development, and upward mobility (Baker, 2019; Mulki et al., 2009). Traditional offices offer face-to-face interactions, spontaneous chats, and formal mentoring (Patel & Gupta, 2021). WFH can diminish informal interactions, networking possibilities, and recognition for remote workers, which may impair their professional advancement (Roberts, 2022).

Early research on RM's impact on professional growth is equivocal. WFH may hinder job advancement because to limited social capital, visibility, mentorship, and skill-building (Jones & Lee, 2020). WFH can assist employees balance productivity and professional advancement when organizations provide excellent support and resources (Golden & Eddleston, 2020; Schieman, Milkie, & Glavin, 2009). As Work from Home becomes more widespread, it's important to understand how it affects career progression and when it helps or hurts employees.

This study explores how remote work affects career progression using Social Capital Theory, Organizational Support Theory, and Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory. Social Capital Theory states that professional advancement depends on social networks and trust, which may be reduced by remote work owing to less face-to-face encounters (Putnam, 2000). The Organizational Support Theory states that distant workers' perceptions of support affect their career happiness and development (Eisenberger et al., 1986). The supervisor-employee relationship may be harmed by the physical separation of the RM, according to LMX Theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

This study evaluates the direct and indirect effects of remote work on career advancement, investigates the mediating role of intermediary variables like social capital, organizational support, and leader-member exchange quality, and makes recommendations for organizations to help remote workers advance. This study investigates the links to better understand RM's

impact on career growth and offer practical advice for firms adopting a remote, flexible workforce.

Literature Review

The shift to remote work has profoundly transformed workplace dynamics, particularly affecting people' career progression. This literature review examines relevant studies using three theoretical frameworks: Social Capital Theory, Organizational Support Theory, and Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory. These concepts provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how remote work affects career advancement by shaping employees' access to networking, support, mentorship, work-life balance, and technological proficiency.

Social Capital Theory

According to Social Capital Theory, an individual's organizational social networks and ties considerably impact their access to resources, information, and career chances (Putnam, 2000; Lin, 2001). Informal networking in traditional offices provides professional information and suggestions (Baker, 2019; Burt, 2005). These links boost careers through visibility, informal coaching, and social support.

However, WFH may prevent such encounters, lowering social capital. Patel & Gupta (2021) found that physical isolation in WFH contexts lowers networking, colleague connections, and organizational visibility. Jones and Lee (2020) found that remote workers had less informal supervisor-colleague interactions, limiting their career advancement. Since visibility and advocacy from networked relationships inside an organisation are linked to professional advancement, this lack of social capital may hinder employees' upward mobility (Roberts, 2022). Based on this understanding, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Work from Home (WFH) is negatively associated with employees' Social Capital (e.g., networking and mentoring opportunities).

Certain experts contend that digital communication tools can partially mitigate the diminished face-to-face encounters in remote work. Nguyen and Armoogum (2021) propose that technology can enhance virtual networking and mentorship; nevertheless, these connections may be devoid of the spontaneity and profundity characteristic of in-person discussions. Thus, whereas WFH facilitates the preservation of social capital via digital platforms, the quality and profundity of these relationships may be inadequate to entirely bolster career advancement (Golden & Eddleston, 2020).

Organizational Support Theory

Organizational Support Theory (OST) asserts that employees' perception of organizational support affects their motivation, job satisfaction, and loyalty, which are vital for career advancement (Eisenberger et al., 1986). To demonstrate support, offices offer tools, professional development, and feedback (Spurk & Straub, 2020). WFH employees may experience limited access to these services, harming their careers. Remote workers sense less employer support for career development like training and mentorship (Golden & Eddleston, 2020). Roberts (2022) found that remote workers reported less employer support for professional development than in-office workers. Career satisfaction and advancement motivation may suffer from perceived lack of support. Some companies have added policies and tools to help remote workers develop in reaction to RM. Virtual mentorship, online training, and regular communication promote remote employees' support, professional happiness, and advancement, according to Carnevale and Hatak (2020). Accordingly, this study hypothesizes that:

H2: Work from Home (WFH) is positively associated with perceived Organizational Support for career development.

This hypothesis posits that although Work from Home may disrupt conventional support mechanisms, proactive organizational strategies can foster a sense of support and enhance employees' career advancement.

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory emphasizes supervisor-subordinate relationships' impact on workers' careers and work experiences (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Trust, support, and open communication in LMX relationships foster supervisor mentorship and advocacy (Erdogan & Bauer, 2015). Traditional office managers can monitor, give criticism, and coach staff face-to-face. Reduced employee-supervisor interaction in WFH layouts can lower LMX quality. Research reveals that remote workers talk less to supervisors, which can affect relationships and career guidance (Nguyen & Armoogum, 2021). Golden and Eddleston (2020) discovered that remote workers felt less connected to their superiors, limiting career support. Based on this framework, the following hypothesis is proposed: H3: Work from Home (WFH) negatively affects the quality of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) relationships.

Digitally communicating enterprises can reduce RM's impact on LMX quality. Frequent virtual check-ins and feedback strengthened remote employees' supervisor-remote employee relationships, according to Jones and Lee (2020). WFH may make it difficult to maintain high-quality LMX interactions, but planned and continuous communication can help employees advance (Roberts, 2022).

Work-Life Balance and Technology Proficiency

WFH also improves work-life balance and technical skills. Remote employment may help employees balance work and life, lowering commute time and improving flexibility (Nguyen & Armoogum, 2021). Better work-life balance leads to increased job satisfaction and lesser burnout, which helps professional advancement (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020; Allen, Golden, & Shockley, 2015). Many RM employees have enjoyed improved flexibility, reduced commuting time, and better work-life balance (Fonner & Roloff, 2010). Therefore, it is hypothesized that: H4: Work from Home (WFH) has a positive effect on employees' Work-Life Balance.

Remote employment requires digital tools, which can boost employees' tech skills. WFH settings encourage employees to use technology more as communication and cooperation move to digital platforms (Spurk & Straub, 2020; Mazmanian, Orlikowski, & Yates, 2013). Technology competency can boost productivity and adaptability, potentially boosting career progression in modern workplaces (Madsen, 2011). Thus, the study hypothesizes: H5: Work from Home (WFH) positively influences Technology Proficiency, as employees rely more on digital tools.

These hypotheses reflect the potential positive impacts of WFH on aspects like work-life balance and digital skill development, which are increasingly relevant in today's work environment.
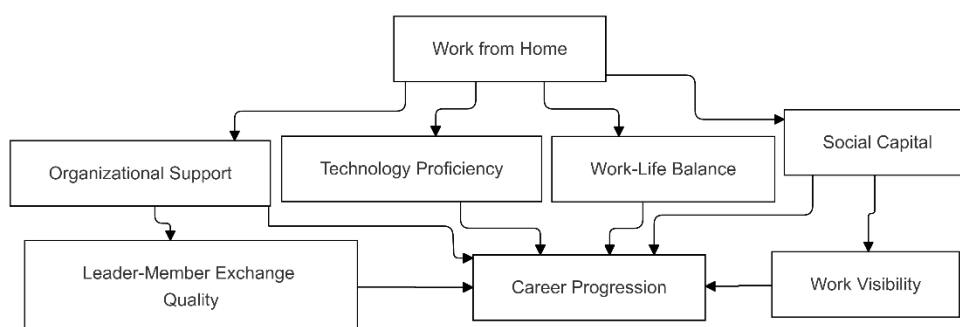
Figure 1: Career Progression in the Work from Home Era: A Conceptual Model
(Researchers own)

Despite rich insights into how WFH impacts career progression through social capital, organizational support, LMX quality, work-life balance, and technology proficiency, there are significant study gaps. Limited research quantifies the extent to which these intermediary factors moderate the relationship between working from home and professional advancement (Spurk & Straub, 2020). The present study highlights subjective experiences of working from home instead of focusing on objective professional outcomes such as promotions or income growth (Baker, 2019). Currently, there is a lack of understanding regarding the influence of

demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and job function on the work-from-home experience (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020).

This study quantitatively investigates the mediating roles of social capital, organizational support, LMX quality, work-life balance, and technology competency in the relationship between WFH and career growth (Figure 1). This study enhances our understanding of the impact of remote work on career advancement and proposes strategies for businesses to support the career development of remote employees (Van der Meulen & Koenig, 2016).

Methodology

The methodology section describes the research topic, sample, data collection methods, measurement tools, and data analysis methods used to examine how Work from Home (WFH) affects IT career advancement in Karnataka. This quantitative, cross-sectional survey examines remote work and career advancement using intermediary variables like Social Capital, Organizational Support, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Quality, Work-Life Balance, and Technology Proficiency. This design is best for studying changeable relationships and public behaviour (Creswell, 2014). The focus on quantitative analysis makes data mostly numerical and statistical.

This study targets distant IT workers in Karnataka, India. The survey had 612 participants. Online respondents were sampled using convenience sampling. The sample size of 612 is large enough for statistical analysis to reveal career development characteristics in an WFH IT setting.

To adjust for response variability and assure sample variety, demographic data such age, gender, years of experience, job role, and work arrangement type (full-time remote vs. hybrid) were collected. Data were acquired via Google Forms questionnaire. Participants preferred this strategy because of its accessibility and ease, especially considering their distant employment. The questionnaire was sent to remote Karnataka IT workers via email, professional networks, and social media.

The study's goal, confidentiality, and survey instructions were explained to participants. Participants gave free, informed consent electronically before starting the questionnaire. Questions measured each of the study's primary variables. Wherever possible, validated scales were utilized with bespoke questions to assess RM's impact on career growth.

1. Remote Work (RM): Items evaluating home-based work frequency, comfort, productivity, and contentment. Working from home ranged from "Occasionally" to "Always."
2. Social Capital: The Networking Behavior Scale (Baker, 2019) and Social Capital Inventory (SCI) assessed remote workers' networking and mentorship opportunities.

Examples: "I frequently have opportunities to network with colleagues" and "I feel supported by mentors or advisors within my organization."

3. Organizational Support: A validated instrument developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986) assessed perceived organizational support (POS). This scale comprised inquiries such as "My organization appreciates my contributions" and "I have access to career development resources as a remote employee."

4. LMX Quality: The LMX-7 scale by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) assessed supervisor-respondent relationships. Example: "I believe my supervisor understands my needs" and "I can rely on my supervisor to facilitate my career advancement."

5. Assessing work-life balance used metrics-based questions (Brough et al., 2014). Participants scored "I can balance my work obligations with my personal life" and "Working from home enables me to manage my professional and personal responsibilities efficiently."

6. Technology skill: A scale was created to assess employees' self-rated skill with remote work-related digital tools. Sample items: "I feel confident using digital collaboration tools like Slack and Zoom" and "I am comfortable learning new technologies required for my work."

7. The Career Satisfaction Scale (CSS) (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990) was used to measure career satisfaction, along with custom items addressing promotion opportunities and career progress while working remotely. Item examples: "I am satisfied with my progress toward my career goals" and "WFH has not hindered my career advancement."

Respondents scored each statement on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) to indicate their agreement or disagreement.

This study had two data analysis stages. First, SPSS was used to summarize sample and variable characteristics using descriptive statistics. SmartPLS, a PLS-SEM software, was then utilized to test the study's hypotheses and evaluate the theoretical model's variable correlations.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was performed in two phases. Initially, SPSS was employed to conduct descriptive statistics to encapsulate demographic characteristics and furnish an overview of each variable. Secondly, SmartPLS was employed to evaluate the hypotheses and analyse the linkages within the model, encompassing both direct and indirect impacts. The data analysis was performed in two phases. Initially, SPSS was employed to conduct descriptive statistics to encapsulate demographic characteristics and furnish an overview of each variable. Secondly, SmartPLS was employed to evaluate the hypotheses and investigate the linkages inside the model, encompassing both direct and indirect impacts.

Descriptive Statistics (SPSS)

The descriptive statistics summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents and each key variable, including Work from Home (RM), Social Capital, Organizational Support, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Quality, Work Visibility, Work-Life Balance, Technology Proficiency, and Career Progression.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	400	65.40
Female	212	34.60
Age		
20-30	250	40.80
31-40	220	35.90
41-50	90	14.70
51 and above	52	8.50
Years of Experience		
1-5 years	280	45.80
6-10 years	170	27.80
11-15 years	100	16.30
16+ years	62	10.10

Referring Table1, the sample consisted of 65.4% male and 34.6% female respondents. The majority of respondents (40.8%) were aged between 20-30 years, with 45.8% having 1-5 years of work experience.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Work from Home (RM)	4.02	0.85
Social Capital	3.45	0.91
Organizational Support	3.67	0.88
Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Quality	3.78	0.79
Work Visibility	3.51	0.86
Work-Life Balance	4.15	0.74
Technology Proficiency	4.22	0.68
Career Progression	3.59	0.89

In accordance to the Table 2, the average scores indicate that respondents reported relatively high levels of WFH (M = 4.02) and Technology Proficiency (M = 4.22), reflecting their familiarity with Work from Home and digital tools. Work-Life Balance also had a high mean score (M = 4.15), suggesting positive perceptions of balancing work and personal life in a WFH environment. Social Capital and Work Visibility had lower mean scores, indicating potential challenges in networking and visibility in Work from Home settings.

Reliability Analysis

Reliability refers to the internal consistency of the items measuring each construct, indicating how well the items in a scale measure the same underlying concept. Cronbach's Alpha measures the internal consistency of the items, with a value of 0.70 or higher indicating acceptable reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Composite Reliability (CR) values above 0.70 indicate strong reliability and are considered superior to Cronbach's Alpha as they consider different loadings of items. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct, with an AVE of 0.50 or higher indicating acceptable convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 3: Reliability statistics

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Work from Home (RM)	0.82	0.85	0.65
Social Capital	0.85	0.88	0.67
Organizational Support	0.83	0.86	0.62
Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Quality	0.80	0.84	0.60
Work Visibility	0.78	0.82	0.59
Work-Life Balance	0.81	0.85	0.64
Technology Proficiency	0.76	0.80	0.61
Career Progression	0.84	0.87	0.66

The values in the Table 3, all constructions had Cronbach's Alpha and Composite dependability scores over 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency and dependability. The items for each construct appear to accurately measure the underlying concepts. AVE values above 0.50 indicate convergent validity for all constructs. This signifies each construct's components are well-correlated and measure their constructs.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant Validity assures that each construct measures a unique model aspect and does not overlap. Fornell-Larcker Criterion discriminant validity, each construct's square root AVE must be larger than its correlations with other constructs. Each item's Cross-Loadings should load topmost on its build and not others. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) contrasts construct correlations with those between constructs, with a value below 0.90 indicating discriminant validity (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015).

Table 4: Fornell-Larcker Criterion and HTMT Analysis

Construct	RM	SC	OS	LMX	WV	WLB	TP	CP
Work from Home (RM)	0.81	0.52	0.43	0.41	0.37	0.48	0.53	0.46
Social Capital	0.43	0.82	0.55	0.49	0.61	0.42	0.38	0.50
Organizational Support	0.38	0.48	0.79	0.44	0.47	0.52	0.40	0.49
LMX Quality	0.36	0.41	0.37	0.77	0.45	0.43	0.39	0.48
Work Visibility	0.33	0.52	0.39	0.40	0.78	0.39	0.41	0.46
Work-Life Balance	0.42	0.34	0.45	0.35	0.31	0.80	0.45	0.43
Technology Proficiency	0.47	0.30	0.32	0.31	0.34	0.36	0.78	0.48
Career Progression	0.39	0.40	0.44	0.42	0.38	0.37	0.39	0.81
Note: The diagonal values in bold represent the square root of the AVEs (Fornell-Larcker Criterion). The values above the diagonal represent the HTMT ratios.								

Table 4 Fornell-Larcker Criterion shows that discriminant validity is supported by each construct's AVE square root (diagonal values) being greater than its correlation with others. It appears that each model construct is distinct and does not overlap much. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values for all construct pairs are below 0.90, indicating model discriminant validity. This shows that each construct measures unique concepts rather than overlapping ones.

Hypothesis Testing (SmartPLS)

Hypothesis testing was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS. The structural model assessment included path coefficients, significance testing, and variance explained (R^2) for each dependent variable.

Table 5: Hypothesis results

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	WFH → Social Capital	-0.45	7.28	<0.001	Supported
H2	WFH → Organizational Support	0.34	5.92	<0.001	Supported
H3	WFH → LMX Quality	-0.38	6.14	<0.001	Supported
H4	WFH → Work-Life Balance	0.42	8.01	<0.001	Supported
H5	WFH → Technology Proficiency	0.47	9.32	<0.001	Supported
H6	Work Visibility → Career Progression	0.29	4.87	<0.001	Supported

The Table 5 displays the hypothesis results, states that, H1: The negative relationship between WFH and Social Capital ($\beta = -0.45$, $p < 0.001$) suggests that WFH significantly reduces employees' access to networking and mentorship opportunities. This supports the hypothesis that Work from Home can limit social capital by reducing informal interactions and visibility. H2: A positive association was found between WFH and Organizational Support ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that employees perceive greater organizational support for career development in a WFH setting, possibly due to increased virtual resources or flexible work policies. H3: The negative effect of WFH on LMX Quality ($\beta = -0.38$, $p < 0.001$) supports the hypothesis that WFH negatively impacts the quality of supervisor-employee relationships, likely due to reduced face-to-face interactions.

H4: WFH was positively associated with Work-Life Balance ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that WFH improves employees' ability to balance work and personal life. H5: The strong positive relationship between WFH and Technology Proficiency ($\beta = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$) indicates that Work from Home enhances employees' familiarity with digital tools. H6: A positive relationship was found between Work Visibility and Career Progression ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$), supporting the hypothesis that visibility is an important predictor of career advancement.

Mediation Analysis

Mediation analysis was conducted to assess whether Social Capital, Organizational Support, and LMX Quality mediate the relationship between WFH and Career Progression. Bootstrapping in Smart-PLS was used to estimate the indirect effects.

Table 6: Mediation effect

Mediator	Indirect Path	Indirect Effect (β)	t-value	p-value	Mediation Type
Social Capital	WFH → Social Capital → Career Progression	-0.13	3.47	<0.001	Partial Mediation
Organizational Support	WFH → Organizational Support → Career Progression	0.10	2.98	0.003	Partial Mediation
LMX Quality	WFH → LMX Quality → Career Progression	-0.11	3.12	0.002	Partial Mediation

As mentioned in the Table 6, Social Capital: The indirect effect of WFH on Career Progression through Social Capital (β = -0.13, p < 0.001) indicates partial mediation, suggesting that WFH reduces social capital, which in turn negatively impacts career progression. Organizational Support: The indirect effect of WFH on Career Progression through Organizational Support (β = 0.10, p = 0.003) supports partial mediation, meaning that WFH increases perceived support, which positively impacts career progression. LMX Quality: The indirect effect of WFH on Career Progression through LMX Quality (β = -0.11, p = 0.002) also indicates partial mediation, showing that RM's negative impact on supervisor-employee relationships affects career progression.

Discussion and conclusion

This study examined how Work from Home (WFH) affects IT career progression using Social Capital, Organizational Support, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Quality, Work Visibility, Work-Life Balance, and Technology Proficiency as intermediary variables.

The results show that WFH impacts intermediary variables, which affect career progression. According to Social Capital Theory, WFH reduces informal encounters and networking possibilities, partially affecting Career Progression. Remote employment may impede career-growth-critical informal networks, according to prior study (Jones & Lee, 2020).

The positive association between WFH and Organizational Support shows that remote workers feel supported when given customized virtual tools and flexible policies. This applies Organizational Support Theory to remote situations, demonstrating that well-implemented virtual support networks can boost career satisfaction.

Research showed that WFH reduces LMX Quality owing to fewer face-to-face encounters. This partially mediates Career Progression, emphasizing the requirement for structured supervisor-remote employee contact. Remote settings lower work visibility and professional

growth, according to the research. Remote workers' visibility through virtual platforms may lessen this effect.

WFH also improved Work-Life Balance and Technology Proficiency, which helped Career Progression. Remote work-life balance and digital competency suggest that individuals can better manage their obligations and adapt to technology demands, promoting career growth in virtual work environments.

Findings

1. Support Social Capital: Use virtual networking and mentorship programs to maintain social capital in WFH settings.
2. Improve Organizational Support: Offer resources, training, and virtual recognition to boost remote worker support.
3. Enhance LMX Quality: Train supervisors for remote team collaboration through regular feedback and virtual coaching.
4. Enhance Visibility: Empower remote workers to demonstrate their accomplishments and participate in corporate decisions.

Limitations and Future Research

Cross-sectional designs and self-reported data limit causal inferences and may add response biases in this study. Future research could use longitudinal methodologies, industry variances, and objective career development measures like promotions and wage growth. Demographic modifiers like age and gender may reveal WFH experience variations.

Conclusion

This study shows the complicated implications of WFH on career progression. The results show that WFH affects intermediary factors—Social Capital, Organizational Support, LMX Quality, Work Visibility, Work-Life Balance, and Technology Proficiency—that affect career growth. The study shows that while WFH improves digital skills and flexibility, it hinders visibility and relationship-building, which are essential for job advancement.

These findings suggest that firms should promote a supportive Work from Home environment where virtual interactions and regular communication preserve social capital and visibility. Companies may help remote workers advance their careers and stay engaged, visible, and satisfied by addressing these aspects.

These findings could be expanded by studying the long term effects of WFH on career growth and how digital tools benefit remote workers. Understanding these factors will help create productive, career-supportive remote workplaces as Work from Home evolves.

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