

## Work from Home (WfH): Challenges, Monitoring, and Shared Responsibility

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### 1. Executive Summary

The Government of Pakistan (GoP) implemented austerity measures in early March this year in the wake of current global conflict. The measures outlined fuel conserving practices as a part of which public and private sector offices were required to adopt Work from Home (WfH) policies for up to 50% of the office staff. The purpose of this knowledge brief is to detail what the current austerity measures entailed with respect to WfH policies at the organizational level, what the existing empirical evidence suggest with respect to effectiveness of these policies, and worker productivity and output, and how can WfH policies be made effective in Pakistan. The efficacy of WfH in Pakistan's public sector and the related concerns have also been highlighted based on the interviews conducted with the public sector personnel in Islamabad. A short commentary on the Islamabad's public sector workplace and WfH policies is also included to highlight the issues of mistrust, professional dishonesty, disproportionate burden on a few employees, hierarchical nature of work in the public sector, heterogeneity of public sector offices, multiple-burden on women due to debilitating work life balance, and data security threats. Lastly, a few recommendations have also been outlined about effective communication systems, work ethics, professionalization of WfH, and clear organizational rules for WfH in Islamabad.

### 2. Global Context

Anakpo, Nqwayibana and Mishi, (2023) document that WfH is essentially an employment arrangement in which employees are not required to be physically present at the central place of work (office building, warehouse, retail shop, industrial unit, etc.), rather continue work from homes or any offsite location while continuing duties and performing official tasks through emails, online meetings, and telephone calls. The concept of telework emerged in 1970s when as a response to energy crises, researchers proposed telecommuting as the effective alternative to physical commute and onsite work (Haddon and Brynin, 2005). In 1980s and 1990s, the managerial and business schools propelled teleworking as an effective employment arrangement in-line with changing labor-market dynamics of contemporary societies. And since 2000, with the advent of internet and technological revolution, more flexible employment policies and dynamized work configuration plans are encouraged, among which WfH is also included (Haddon and Brynin, 2005).

The impact of GoP's decision of WfH policy for up to 50% staff to save fuel is yet to be seen but global literature highlights that teleworking, telecommuting, WfH, and remote working help save

energy for commuting and energy for office equipment (O'Brien and Aliabadi, 2020). Nakanishi (2015) highlights that if telework policy is implemented on a large scale by an organization and the office's operations are mostly closed down, energy consumption on lighting, air conditioning, and running generators will considerably reduce. But the results will not be realized if policy is implemented on a small scale. Similarly, if policy is implemented on a larger scale to scale down fuel consumption used in office transport, the fuel costs will significantly decrease, otherwise cost cuts may not be materialized.

The actualization of these intended goals is yet to be seen. What is critical and for which this write-up is important is to document the effectiveness of WfH policy through highlighting contemporary scholarship on worker productivity and outcome, how can the efficacy of this policy be guaranteed with respect to task completion, challenges in the public sector, and organizational communication systems.

### 3. Local Context

Under the directive of the Prime Minister Office, WfH has been institutionalized across all the Federal Offices and establishments, following the austerity and fuel conservation measures. Some critical directives issued by the PM Office to ensure fuel conservation, through ensuring WfH, are stated in the following text.<sup>1</sup>

- Teleconferencing instead of physical meetings will be ensured and practiced for two months (the notification was issued on March 9, 2026). Physical meetings are banned and meetings will be conducted through virtual/online formats in all the federal and provincial establishments and offices with the intention of reducing fuel, travelling and lodging expenditures.
- The judiciary is required to ensure that lesser number of people appear in court hearings.
- All schools, colleges, and universities will be required to conduct 100% online classes for two months.
- Federal and government entities and establishments are instructed to shift to online meetings and operationalize work from home for up to 50% of the official staff.
  - The Heads of the concerned departments and secretaries of the concerned offices, entities and establishments will determine whose services are essential to the organization and hence be required to attend 4 days a week, and whose services can be efficaciously managed and monitored from home.
  - Within an organizational organogram, those with essential services (the Heads, Directors, Deans, Secretaries, and immediate limited personnel related to HRD and finance sections/departments) will be physically present and those in non-essential official roles, will work according to the alternative rotational on-site presence as per the WfH policy.
  - These measures are not applicable to the essential service sectors such as banking, industrial, and agricultural sectors.
  - Adjusting daily working hours in compliance with 4 days a week and WfH for up to 50% of staff will be maintained by the private sector organizations as well.

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1.The points have been summarized from the Cabinet Division, GoP's website. Complete notification can be found at: <https://cabinet.gov.pk/SiteImage/Misc/files/Latest%20News/Notifications%20Fuel%20Conservation%20and%20Austerity-24-3-26.pdf>

#### 4. What is Scholarship Saying on the Effectiveness of WfH Policy?

During COVID-19, governments encouraged and enforced institutional systems and arrangements in place for effective implementation of WfH policies to control the spread of the pandemic. Complete and/or smart lockdowns were also imposed to control coronavirus spread. In addition, employers also prefer WfH because of lower office rents, improvements in work life balance, travel time saving, and fuel saving. During COVID-19, the physical separation strategy proved to be effective, especially, during the quarantine phase to reduce the susceptibility of acquiring and transmitting the virus. However, with respect to effectiveness of WfH policy, the scholarship identifies the loss of outstanding production in families with more children than families with fewer children, disproportionate burden of household responsibilities on women, significant increase in cases of domestic violence, worker's productivity and efficiency, and the burden of time-bound official tasks on few workers working from home and most of them free-riding.

While building WfH and productivity nexus, proponents claim that teleworking is an effective employment arrangement because of its human-centric strategic vision which supports employees' mental and physical health. The antagonists argue that there are disadvantages of WfH such as lack of supervision, uninspiring and demotivating environment, monotonous timetable, lack of tiers in 'what is official work time' and 'what is leisure time', consistency and coherence issues in communicating official tasks, lack of coordination, discriminate digital access, data privacy concerns, inaccessibility to internet, anxiety, depression, and low employee productivity. A systematic literature review by Anakpo, Nqwayibana and Mishi (2023) assessing the impact of WfH policies on the worker's productivity and outcome, details following results.



Table 1: Impacts of WfH Policies

The green colored cells show improvement (in productivity and/or output).
  The yellow colored cells show deterioration (stress, work-life-balance, increase in working hours, decrease in output and productivity).
  The gray colored cells show insignificant results

Unit of Data Collection	Impacts of WfH Policy
A research with 704 university researchers in Hungary (Aczel, Kovacs, Van Der Lippe, and Szaszi, 2021).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Productivity increased.</li> </ul>
396 employees from three business-process-outsourc companies of Philippines (Alfanza, 2021).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No significant impact on productivity.</li> </ul>
University students and teachers' experiences of online learning in Slovenia (Drašler et al. 2021).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher stress levels.</li> <li>• Less efficiency in learning.</li> <li>• Ineffective online pedagogy.</li> <li>• Stringent working environment at home.</li> </ul>
314 Indonesian bank workers (Prasetyaningtyas et al. 2021).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Productivity Increased due to:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Higher job contentment</li> <li>▪ Improved mental health</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Negative relationship between work life balance and WfH.</li> </ul>
438 respondents from the service sectors of Luxembourg (Martin, Hauret, and Fuhrer 2022).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worker satisfaction improved.</li> <li>• Job productivity increased.</li> <li>• Mental stress reduced.</li> </ul>
50 Indonesia public sector personnel (Mon, 2021).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No increase in output.</li> <li>• No increase in productivity.</li> <li>• Certain nature of work which can only be completed within offices.</li> </ul>
24 middle and senior managers in India (Jasiwal and Arun, 2022).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly working hours increased.</li> <li>• Mental stress increased.</li> </ul>
Online survey in India (Farooq and Sultana, 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative relationship between WfH and employee productivity for the female respondents.</li> </ul>
526 IT professionals in India (Patanjali and Bhatta, 2025).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two-thirds of the respondents reported greater productivity because of the allocation of more time on official tasks due to reduction in commute time.</li> </ul>
11,011 respondents from healthcare, manufacturing, higher education, transport, telecommunication and financial services located in Europe (Van Der Lippe and Lippényi, 2020).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative relationship between worker productivity and team dynamics as team coordination and cooperation cannot always be ensured in remote or home-based settings</li> </ul>
<p>In the context of Pakistan, Hasan, Rehman, and Zhang (2021) identify that switching from physical to WfH arrangement is easier for primary and secondary school teachers and clerical staff but difficult for agricultural producers, dairy producers, and mixed-crop growers. Regional divides with urban areas relatively better equipped for online working than rural areas were also highlighted in the study. Urbanized provinces like Sindh and Punjab were found out to have more jobs which can be done online as compared to Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.</p>	

Key Takeaways from empirical research is tabulated in the table below.

Table 2: Key Takeaways from Empirical Research

<p><b>Team-centric versus Individualized Work</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publication rates during coronavirus increased, people had more time to read, synthesize and analyze data, and hence they could publish more. Contrarily, the work that required more collaborative efforts and teamwork needed physical presence (Anakpo, Nqwayibana and Mishi, 2023).</li> <li>• The nature of work (individualized or collective) has an important role in detailing a worker's performance and productivity. Worker productivity and hence effectiveness of WfH policies are contingent on workplace culture, domestic responsibilities, nature of work, access to economic and informational resources, and the social ecosystem.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Disproportionate Burden of Work</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women, who have disproportionate burden of domestic responsibilities than men at households, or women who have children at home to take care of or elderly to look after, find it difficult to manage work life balance. The productivity as well as job satisfaction of these women is documented to be low while WfH.</li> <li>• During coronavirus more women were laid off from work, and their working hours were shortened by the employers because they were not readily available for virtual meetings due to additional domestic responsibilities. Bifurcating a female's identity as a professional worker who can WfH from her domesticated identity saddled by the constraints of domestic care economy could not be outlined in the predominantly larger number of organizations across the globe.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Digital Literacy and Technological Adaptability</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quick adaptation to evolving work configuration is also positively linked to worker productivity. Those who were quick to adapt, learn telecommuting, and adjust to effective operations from home were able to complete their intended tasks efficiently than those who were reticent to adapt.</li> <li>• Lack of IT training, internet inaccessibility, technological incapacitation, and problems in the indiscriminate provision of technological facilities across all the cadres, divisions, establishments, and tiers of organizational organograms have also been alluded as instrumental reasons for lower worker outcome, productivity, and efficiency.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nature of Work Matters</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WfH can be an effective arrangement for some types of work, not for all.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For instance, work requiring onsite visitation to industries, manufacturing plants, and client meetings for real estate purchase-sale, cannot be relegated within the walls of domesticity. So, identifying for which sector and nature of work in different sectors, WfH can be developed, implemented and monitored is crucial.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## 5. Public Sector and WfH in Pakistan

In order to understand the WfH dynamics in Pakistan, especially in the public sector, twelve interviews with the public sector officials (ministries, regulatory authorities, universities, and personnel who have transitioned from the public to private sector) were conducted. Two respon-

dents from the development sector were also interviewed. 7 interviews were conducted face-to-face and the remaining (5) were conducted online on WhatsApp and Zoom. The locale of the current research was Islamabad; therefore, results cannot be generalized to other geographical locales of Pakistan. The themes (detailed below), however, may be reflective of the issues prevalent across all provinces.

### Staffing Distribution

The staff working immediately under the Heads (such as Federal Ministers) cannot avail WfH because of the official engagements and meetings which require face-to-face communication. It was also narrated that, in addition to, onsite meetings, WhatsApp has turned into a new office in the public sector where formal communication about official approvals, file updates, and online meetings are communicated in the online format.

### E-Office

In its initial days of operability, E-Office was functional within the premises of public sector offices. With the announcement of WfH in March 2026, the staff of grade 17 and above have been issued official devices with in-built security features which can easily be connected with the gadgets used for online official tasks. In this way, WfH policy for 17 and 17+ staff is being conveniently maintained to save fuel consumption. For support staff (including under 17 grade), a clear demarcation of essential and non-essential work needs to be ascertained so that the latter's work can be considered under WfH policy and clear SoPs for the same can be developed.

### Fuel Saving

About fuel saving, varied views were reported. Some respondents stated that WfH was declared right before Eid-ul-Fitr and during Spring holidays, making increased fuel consumption inevitable. It was also reported that ensuring that people who are working from home are not consuming fuel, at least during the committed official hours and are available for any official task is also critical. When asked if their fuel consumption has reduced, one respondent stated that it has because of the change in the routine, and a conscious effort taken to both be available online during WfH days and to reduce driving. Another respondent stated that fuel is less consumed but other costs such as those incurred on internet, electricity, educational devices, and food have gone up.

More granular and focused responses and themes from interviews are tabulated as follows:

## Themes Emerged from Interview Data

### Nature of Work in the Public Sector

“There are two types of public sector organizations. One is Secretariat-based such as my organization, Economic Affairs Division. The second are field-based organizations; the commissioner's office, for instance. So, the work from home for Secretariat is very effective since the operability of E-Office in 2025. Due to E-Office, regular daak is no more accepted and allowed. So, it has made life easier for me as I can work even at night by checking any correspondence on E-Office. but for field offices like the commissioner's office or CDA, WfH is actually not possible because site-visitation for upgradation or maintenance is needed.”

(Respondent from Secretariat, Economic Affairs Division)

“Public sector has more public dealing than the private sector and if WfH is functional in the former, people may have to visit public offices more and the fuel saving which we were anticipating earlier may not be realized. So, I am not in favor of going into WfH mode.”

**(Development Sector Respondent 1)**

“For certain assignments this can work. But given work behaviors and ethics in public sector it has not proven to be a good measure altogether. We should have tried alternate models rather than slashing linearly. I think making sure all staff of a particular unit attend office for 4 days at least.”

**(Ministry of Finance Respondent)**

### **Has Fuel Cost Reduced?**

“It has led to reduction in cost of commutation for staff at personal level but for offices almost all utilities remain the same, fuel cost has also not gone down.”

**(Ministry of Finance Respondent)**

“The fuel cost has definitely reduced. Now if I visit office 4 days a week instead of 5 days, my per week fuel cost has reduced by 2500 rupees and per month cost has reduced to 10,000 rupees. As to what extent this cost has reduced on a city level, a survey-based study can be designed and questionnaires can be disseminated to all federal offices and establishments. One data point for such information doesn't exist as of now.”

**(University Respondent)**

“Fuel cost reduces under WfH. I as a manager keep annual estimate of per employee cost of commute to and from office, which helps in gauging fuel cost. Since in my organization we WfH four days a week and one day from office. So, before fuel price inflated, our quarterly surveys revealed that for each employee the saving was 8000 rupees per month. I am sure this number would increase in the next quarterly survey. If a small organization like mine is saving, consider how much government which is the biggest recruiter of human resource in the country can save!”

**(Development Sector Respondent 2)**

### **Ineffectiveness due to Hierarchical Power in the Public Sector**

“In public sector, a senior officer will not be able to exercise power over his subordinates if WfH is institutionalized. Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners, Secretaries, Deputy and Joint Secretaries, or even Registrars or Controller of Examination Officers are so used to yes-man mentality which cannot be practiced in the WfH settings. Their idea of work is to command and their subordinates to comply. So, this question is not economic, it is an anthropological question. Our society is neither prepared to work in silos, nor do we respect each other enough to work collaboratively in teams.”

**(University Respondent)**

“Familiarization of the entire team with 2-3 basic equipment and technology is all what it takes to run efficient WfH model. By team, I mean, from the clerk to decision maker, either a minister, parliamentary secretary, or a DG, must have knowledge of using WhatsApp on the desktop, sending and receiving documents on emails, and operating virtual meeting interfaces such as Google Meet, MS Teams, or Zoom. What I have observed in senior government officials is the reticence. A senior legislator who visited my office a few weeks ago asked, ‘Do you use your computer or have you hired someone to operate it for you?’ WfH cannot work if one cannot use MS Word, cannot send or receive an email, cannot operate desktop or virtual meeting interfaces. And file rotation in government offices (signing a file, marking to another officer, maneuvering to another office for further action) ... is very reductant. I often send an email to concerned governmental official. In response, I receive a message on WhatsApp

from secretary to send a hard file to rotate to concerned section. I don't understand this obsession with file rotation in government offices, when extremely confidential information is communicated through emails on a global level. Email's digital and temporal stamp is so strong that it cannot be challenged in any court. The inherent reluctance is not just an incapacitation issue; it is also behavioral."

(Development Sector Respondent 2)

"Office-related tasks can be performed from home but it cannot be effective in organizations where performance evaluation and monitoring policies are not in place. During COVID-19, our organization out-performed as compared to other public sector offices but for many of us the 'Work' vanished and 'from Home' remained. Many a times, I used to call staff during official hours and the reply I received was, 'I am in the bazaar, I will get back to you.' So, they didn't consider it as an office time. Even their families were not respecting it as their work time. The ones who performed well during COVID-19 carried the same spirit post-pandemic too; their efficiency and productivity improved. Those who don't perform, are financial liabilities (salaries, institutional cost incurred on transport routes and the office resources they exploit). At the end, it comes down to work ethics, professionalism, and nature of job."

(Former Public Sector Official)

### 5.1. Monitoring of WfH in Public Sector of Pakistan

There is no uniform and standardized WfH policy in Pakistan. The directives are issued by the government given unprecedented situations and global events, such as COVID-19 in 2020 and US-Israel-Iran war and resultant fuel crisis in 2026. Providing concrete policy guidelines can help adapt organizational policies according to contextual and cultural realities but can also lead to subjectivity, loopholes, coherence and consistency issues, ambiguity in articulating designated responsibilities and in realizing desired goals. Informed by the existing scholarship and interviews conducted with officials grappling with developing and implementing WfH policies in their organizations, the following table details challenges and how they can be addressed through monitoring.



Table 3: Challenges Faced and Monitoring Proposed by Governmental Officials

Challenges	Monitoring
<p><b>Where is the Policy Document?</b></p> <p>One theme that emerged from interviews is the absence of standardized organizational policy that clearly sets out the scope and applicability of WfH policy, clearly specified eligibility criteria and procedural details, work schedules, communication policies, assigned tasks and related deliverables, and technological requirements (if it comes under the organization's ambit).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Standardization of Policy:</b> Based on the standardized organizational policy that lays out the professionally heterogeneous roles and responsibilities of the staff working from home, monitoring can be made both easy and quick.</li> <li>● <b>Communication System:</b> For transparent monitoring of the WfH staff, effective communication policy should be in place (detailed in the next challenge).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Is there Effective Communication Policy in Place?</b></p> <p>Mostly, organizations in Pakistan, do not have communication policies, therefore ad-hoc communication mechanisms, contemporaneous use of multiple communication systems, informal communications taking precedence over formal communicational setups for formal/official matters, and informational lapses for professional communications are readily reported.</p>	<p><b>Synchronous and Asynchronous Communications:</b> Synchronous communications with onsite and online staff, must be held through physical and/or online meetings so that all should know that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Which modes of communication will be needed for assigned tasks and timeslot these modes will be operational in?</li> <li>● What timelines the staff should be available, for communication?</li> <li>● Which asynchronous communicational modes will be used for task-based official assignments.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Are Workers Actually Working from Home?</b></p> <p>Another reported challenge is the mistrust on workers which is exemplified by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continued absence from online meetings during official working hours.</li> <li>● Delayed deliverables.</li> <li>● Behavioral issues with compliance for official task.</li> <li>● The issue of mere online presence with no participation or online engagement in Zoom meetings further substantiate the feelings of mistrust.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Trust:</b> Firm compliance to open webcam during official online meetings, task-based questions and progress about assigned tasks to individuals during online meetings, clear articulation of organizational Code of Conduct for online meetings so that someone's privacy is not invaded can help establish trust on each other.</li> <li>● <b>Honesty:</b> Honesty on the part of the workers to designate their allocated time to official tasks only.</li> <li>● <b>Hours of Operability:</b> The issue of persistence absence or partial presence in online meetings (synchronous communication) can be addressed by ascertaining hours of official operability. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If there are 8 hours of WfH, are those hours strictly from 9 am to 5 pm or is there flexibility in covering these hours from 24-hours full day or a combination of both?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Where are the Deliverables?</b></p> <p>Another identified issue is of missing the deadlines and since workers from home cannot be physically reached out to for instant communication, the deliverables get delayed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Accountability:</b> This challenge can be addressed by keeping the worker accountable for assigned tasks and tracking the record by keeping weekly, fortnightly or monthly record of progress and communicating the same to the worker and the HR Offices of the organizations.</li> <li>● <b>Reminders:</b> Communicating asynchronously on regular basis through formal emails and sending official reminders can also be an effective HR practice.</li> </ul>

## 6. How Can WfH Policy Be Made Effective in Pakistan's Public Sector?

The text below identifies operable issues while designing and implementing WfH policies and practices in general and what can generally be done in the context of Pakistan. The section ends with a few questions for the federal offices (Islamabad) which may provide a guideline for devising

a result-oriented, and evidence-based, and contextually-laden WfH policy.

### 6.1. Asking and Responding to Right Questions

Liam Martin (Co-founder of Staff.com) illustrates that before designing and implementing WfH policy, some crucial questions must be asked and addressed. These questions entail:

- What are the worker's and employer's requirements?
- Will the worker be allowed flexible work schedules and working hours?
- Are the effective communication policies in place?
- What are the KPIs for employee engagement?
- How many times a day, week or month meetings be held with workers? What will be the agenda? Will meetings be one-one or in a group? Will decisions be recorded, responsibilities divided, and deliverables decided?
- How much time is spent on the assigned tasks and how efficiently that time is spent?
- Is data security in place?
- Will the intended objectives for opting in for WfH be met?



#### Recommendation 1

These questions should be addressed, clearly articulated and performance evaluation tied to the KPIs must be vividly communicated in the WfH policies before implementation in the Pakistan's public sector.

### 6.2. Identification of Workers and Clear Line of Action

- Identification of which employees are eligible for WfH policy is critical considering that there are jobs which can easily be done at home and others which require onsite presence where people can talk to each other in-person, get responded for their questions quickly, and establish physical connections with the co-workers.
- Factors while determining which employees can WfH are their position, seniority, whether they are paid through monthly salary or hourly wage, how much time they spend at the office, performance metric, personal situation, and the nature/type of official work required of them.
- Process to apply to WfH should also be in place and communicated to all the workers with one designated staff to monitor and streamline the requests. Overseeing and approving requests from the concerned heads/managers/directors is also needed.



#### Recommendation 2

Considering the hierarchical nature of jobs and work in the public sector of Pakistan, staffing distribution must be clearly listed and job descriptions and ToRs revisited to critically evaluate whose presence is mandatory onsite and who can diligently WfH.

### 6.3. Setting Up Ground Rules

- Ground rules must encapsulate availability, performance, and communication.
- Tracking performance of employees working from homes can be tricky, therefore setting and communicating benchmarks, goals and deliverables is crucial.
- On the part of employers, setting realistic expectations is also important, which requires coming to terms with the fact that workers from home may not be able to respond to the

official requests and queries at the speed as the onsite workers can and do. Therefore, establishing asynchronous communications with workers functioning from home is needed.

- Systems to ensure what is required of the workers in terms of type of work (research, consultative meeting, teaching, publication, etc.), which goals to achieve, what are timelines to achieve the intended goals, and what time-bound deliverables are expected



### Recommendation 3

Ad-hoc, ambiguous, and incomprehensible notifications poorly communicating goals and intended outcomes of onsite and virtual work needs critical assessment in the public sector in Pakistan.

## 6.4. Professionalization of Work from Home

- Maintaining professional conduct and attire for workers functioning through homes or in remote settings should be mandatory, especially for workers who are holding virtual meetings with professionals outside their organizations.
- Functional webcams, noiseless backgrounds, and neutral backgrounds should be maintained during meetings in virtual settings.
- Use of appropriate language, attentiveness, note-taking, record-keeping, keeping webcams on, timeliness in muting and unmuting mics, and avoiding vocal overlap and cross-talks are basic professional etiquettes to adhere to.



### Recommendation 4

Training and mentoring on the professional conduct of WfH of public sector workers is necessary.

## 6.5. Synchronous and Asynchronous Communication

- The examples of synchronous communications are live telephonic and/or WhatsApp calls, Zoom, Google Meet and/or MS Teams calls, and live online messages and calls, which require instant communication from the workers functioning from homes.
- Asynchronous communication will involve emails and messages which do not necessarily require instant communication and can be responded later on.
- The contemporaneous operability of both communication plans should be in place and be used depending upon the tasks assigned, work allocated, and personal situation of the worker.
- Recording presentations and sharing with work teams for feedback is an effective asynchronous communication plan instead of sitting through hours of online Zoom meetings (synchronous communication). The feedback on contents shared through asynchronous communications is usually more thought out, detailed, and granular than one obtained through hours of online meetings' fatigue.



### Recommendation 5

Effective and streamlined communication lines with no informational asymmetries must be adopted for successful WfH organizational policies in Pakistan's public sector.

## 6.6. Necessary Software and Hardware

- Both the employer and worker should ensure that they have all the necessary technological equipment in place at home that help workers complete their designated official tasks within timelines and attend meetings in the virtual settings without any technical hindrance.
- Some technology tools for effective working from home and hence should be available to all the workers are collaboration software, video conferencing software, and project management software.
- Some companies provide laptops and necessary hardware accessories to their employees working from home, especially those in the media and communication offices and IT establishments. Updating security standards while using official email and social media accounts is also critical.



### Recommendation 6

Provision, knowledge and application of both software and hardware technology for all employees across all grades is necessary in Pakistan's public sector.

## 6.7. Understanding Heterogeneity of Experiences

Expert of hybrid work, Professor Mark Mortensen while explaining three distinct approaches to WfH, describe that data shows that feelings of isolation, loneliness, reduction in trust and psychological safety and shifting power dynamics are experienced by workers who continuously work remotely from one another.

- In this context, it is crucial to keep workers visiting on-site office and contemporaneously working from home on rotational basis. For this, a hybrid workplace configuration is necessary to adopt.
- If work from home policy proved to be effective during coronavirus, it doesn't guarantee worker productivity, performance, and satisfaction in the future because of shifting social contours, evolving human experiences, and changing social fabric.



### Recommendation 7

Listening to people, collecting their experiences, and being open to critical assessments is an important factor while designing and implementing WfH policies in Pakistan's public sector.

## 6.8. Learning by Doing

- There is no standardized rubric for framing WfH policies. The empirics, anecdotes, and recommendations suggested here can be of use if contextual realities defined by organizational cultures, work ethics, values systems, and social heterogeneities are taken care of while designing and implementing these policies.
- The most suitable referential point in contemporary times for designing a solid WfH policy can be picking the best and leaving out the worst practices during COVID-19, when the world shifted towards online work.
- In Pakistan, there are a few cases where, in addition to during COVID-19, WfH policies are developed in post-coronavirus period based on global and local debates of gendered, inclusive, and strategist nature of economic work.

- Pakistan Banks' Association gives detailed outlines of how to make work from home effective by ensuring cyber security, keeping a check on online security threats, and developing hybrid communication policies.
- Pakistan Telecommunication Authority's two-phased WfH policy is aligned to facilitate working women with small children in which in the first phase one batch of working mothers will be allowed work from home once a week followed by second phase in which more women will be availing one day of working from home in a week. The guidelines also detail mandatory arrangement of software and hardware at home to complete assigned tasks.
- Telenor's evidence-based approach can also be used to develop a flexible or hybrid work model. The telecommunication group conducted survey in 2020 in the Nordic and Asian operational regions on hybrid work model and the results revealed that workers reported greater productivity with significant reduction in organizational layering, hierarchical structures and tiers.



### Recommendation 8

The liner or hybrid models adopted by think tanks, corporate sector, and universities, during complete and smart lockdowns in Pakistan in 2020, can also be used as a useful guide about divisibility of official work, tiers responsible for ensuring deliverables, time-sheet recorders to be filled and delivered as per deadlines, and provision of digital equipment at homes.

## 6.9. Questions for the Public Sector: Islamabad as the Locus

- How effective has the experiment of WfH been for fuel saving from March till June 2026?
- What challenges were faced across all cadres and grades in the public sector organizations after implementing WfH and were those challenges listed and solutions devised?
- Which monitoring and evaluative standards were adopted to ensure worker productivity and efficiency?
- How was essential and non-essential work across cadres and grades delineated?
- Given general hierarchical power, procedural file and record-keeping, and bureaucratic order generally maintained in Islamabad's public sector offices, did organizational outcomes delay after implementing WfH policy?
- Were employees' ToRs tied with their KPIs and performance evaluation from March till June 2026?
- Given heterogeneity of work and nature of public sector organization, were different WfH policies devised for the ministries, regulatory authorities, public dealing organizations, educational organizations, and State-Owned Enterprises?

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