

THE USE OF TELEWORKING IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION DURING AND AFTER THE COVID-19: THE CASE OF KAZAKHSTAN

Anna Alshanskaya

L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University,
Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies Astana, Kazakhstan

Mira Zhanabergenova

Export Promotion Department JSC QazTrade, Astana, Kazakhstan

Tolkyn Azatbek

L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan

Yerkin Nessipbekov

Eurasian Technological University, Astana, Kazakhstan

David Špaček

Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the teleworking experiences of public servants amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on insights from surveys conducted during the early stages of the pandemic, we explore the advantages, challenges, and variations in telework policies across government organizations. Our findings underscore the significance of telework satisfaction in influencing employee performance and reveal gender differences in telework preferences, particularly concerning family responsibilities. The study emphasizes the need to evaluate pandemic telework experiences to inform policy adjustments in public administration and businesses. Flexibility in work arrangements can enhance talent retention, employee satisfaction, productivity, and organizational resilience, crucial aspects for businesses navigating a post-pandemic world. Effective telework implementation requires not only technological upgrades but also shifts in corporate culture to create conducive conditions.

Keywords: teleworking; public administration; COVID-19; experiences; advantages; disadvantages

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic, which erupted in 2020, has profoundly impacted health, society, and the global economy. While countries were looking for measures such as vaccines and effective treatment to contain the further spread of the pandemic, changes in working models and methods that were applied in private and public sector organizations were being implemented. For example, teleworking became a standard and helped organizations maintain their functionality during lockdowns and overcome the coronavirus crisis (Raghavan et al., 2021).

Research on teleworking started before the pandemic, and over the ten years prior to the coronavirus outbreak, the number of teleworkers had grown slowly. According to the European Commission, though, the application of teleworking has always had an accidental, impartial and episodic character. As of 2019, only 5.4% of workers in the EU-27 worked from home. At the same time, telework was more often used by the self-employed (European Union, 2020). While private sector organizations have experimented with teleworkers (Hermin, 2013), it was rare for the public sector (Choi, 2018; Raghavan et al., 2021; Giauque et al., 2022). However, because the public sector made use of teleworking during the pandemic, research on the experiences the public sector had with it is warranted, especially because, as suggested by Buchanan et al. (2005), any changes made in public administration may decay rapidly. Yet, after over three years since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is little literature on teleworking in public administration during and after it. While the impact of the pandemic and telework on public administration employees remains controversial, the amount of research devoted to teleworking in public administration caused by it and its longevity remains small.

In this paper, we concentrate on experiences with teleworking in Kazakhstan. Government organizations in Kazakhstan quickly developed mechanisms to enable telework. At the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, on average, up to 70% of workers switched to new ways of working. According to official statistics, in 2021, the number of employees working from home amounted to 53.8 thousand people, equal to only 0.6% of the total employed population; most were women (WDC, 2021). The paper, then, addresses the following research question: What

was the experience of teleworkers in the public sector in Kazakhstan during the pandemic?

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: First, we summarize the teleworking literature and include literature on teleworking before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic in private and public sector organizations. Then, we outline our methodology and data. This is followed by a discussion of our key findings and final concluding remarks and points for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pre-COVID-19 literature on teleworking

The concept of teleworking is familiar in the literature. Telework, also known as working from home, telecommuting, remote working, e-work, or home-based working, has become popular due to the development of information technology, virtual platforms, and personal computers (Martino et al., 1990). However, there is no clear consensus in the literature on the definition of "telework." Two aspects of this form of employment can be distinguished. First, employees perform their work tasks while away from the usual workplace. Second, employees use high-tech equipment (Baruch, 2000; Pérez et al., 2002; Carillo et al., 2020).

Pre-pandemic scholars, notably Baruch and Nicholson (1997), extensively explored factors influencing telework adoption, including individual alignment, organizational support, home/work interface, and job suitability.

Previous research has revealed many advantages, disadvantages, and barriers to teleworking for organizations, employees, and society. Telework reduces operating costs, increases labor productivity due to fewer work breaks, increases workplace attendance, and is better for attracting and retaining employees. At the same time, employees benefit from cash savings, less commuting time, greater flexibility and control of work schedules, improved work-life balance, and higher job satisfaction. Meanwhile, for society as a whole, there should be less energy consumption, fewer traffic jams, and reduced air pollution. (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020; Kurland & Bailey, 1999; Allen et al., 2015; Fonner et al., 2010). In addition, research findings have highlighted some crucial disadvantages of teleworking, such as psychological isolation, reduced interpersonal

contact, and role ambiguity (Hertel et al., 2005). Other studies have shown that work-life balance can be disruptive, as boundaries become blurred and employees work longer hours than their work schedules had allowed (Shepherd-Banigan et al., 2016; Bellmann et al.; O., 2020). In addition, some scholars have found that when working remotely, promotion and career opportunities are reduced due to less visibility (Davidson & Khalifa, 2000; Maruyama & Tietze, 2012).

Some studies have claimed that the productivity of remote workers increases due to fewer work breaks and higher levels of concentration, while other studies have reported that remote workers are less productive due to the lack of managerial support (Charalampous et al., 2019).

Telework during the COVID-19 crisis

The literature suggests that COVID-19 has triggered an unforeseen acceleration in telework practices worldwide (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020). This circumstance has also influenced the conceptual framework. For instance, Carillo et al. (2020) introduced two forms of telework: conventional (or traditional) telework and crisis-induced telework. "Conventional telework" is viewed as enhancing work-life balance by increasing work flexibility, allowing individuals to blend office work with remote work. "Crisis-induced telework," on the other hand, is implemented in response to a crisis and is characterized by its sudden, mandatory, and unprepared nature. Therefore, pandemic-driven telework shares some characteristics with traditional telework but also possesses unique aspects that define its context within distinct conceptual boundaries.

As noted in the introduction, the research devoted to teleworking caused by the COVID-19 pandemic still needs to grow. At the same time, though, the impact of the pandemic and telework on employees remains controversial.

Ipsen et al. (2021) found advantages in remote work during the pandemic, including reduced infection risk, saved commuting time, and flexible hours. Drawbacks, however, included limited social interaction, job insecurity, and inadequate tools. Tavares et al. (2021) noted rapid adaptation to telework in Portugal but cited challenges like insufficient professional interaction and difficulty balancing work and family responsibilities. Moens et al. (2021)

emphasized positive impacts such as enhanced efficiency and work-life balance but expressed concerns about career progression and weakened social connections. Conversely, Kitagawa et al. (2021) reported reduced productivity among teleworkers due to sudden remote work adoption, citing ineffective preparation, poor organization, and poor communication. Job-specific challenges, particularly in corporate, sales, and R&D roles, affected workplace communication and tool access. Maghlaperidze et al. (2021) highlighted the importance of material support, technical assistance, and training in self-organization and work-life balance.

In this evolving landscape, these studies collectively have underscored the need for a nuanced understanding of the varied impacts of telework during the pandemic. Advantages such as infection risk reduction and increased flexibility coexist with challenges, including social isolation, job insecurity, and the need for adequate tools and support. The differing perspectives from various studies have emphasized the complexity of the telework experience, urging further research to capture this phenomenon's multifaceted nature comprehensively.

In the realm of telework research, a broad spectrum of economic sectors has been explored, yet only a limited focus has been dedicated to public administration. Teleworking is often has been approached as part of digitalization that has been accelerated in public administration by the COVID-19 crisis, and the literature frequently has emphasized the crucial role of ICT in overcoming the pandemic and maintaining the availability and functionality of public services (e.g., Jiang and Tang, 2022; Hu & Liu, 2022). According to Lim et al. (2021), with the onset of COVID-19, the existing face-to-face public service delivery system has shown limitations in meeting citizens' needs for public services (fastness, transparency, and safety) during the pandemic and, as a result, a shift to non-face-to-face public services required together with adaptations of management. Concerning the first wave of the pandemic, Aristovnik et al. (2021) suggested that the pandemic may accelerate digitalization in delivering public services. They concluded that public administration has applied various digital-based strategies, techniques, and communication channels to continue fulfilling its

tasks vis-à-vis citizens and efficiently organize its work.

Giauque et al. (2022) found that forced telework improved work autonomy and work-life balance but decreased collaboration and increased perceived job strain without affecting engagement levels. They highlighted the importance of work organization freedom and collaboration with colleagues in enhancing engagement and performance while reducing exhaustion. Di Tecco et al. (2021) noted that high demands, low control, and low social support can reduce well-being and work satisfaction, affecting work engagement and work-life balance. Palumbo (2020) suggested that flexible working arrangements should consider the interplay between work and life, advocating for tailored human resource management practices for remote workers to address unique challenges.

In summary, the teleworking landscape in public administration during the COVID-19 pandemic reflected a dynamic interplay between digitalization, administrative adjustments, and the proactive efforts of employees to adapt to the evolving work environment. The studies have collectively underscored the importance of considering both technological and human factors in shaping effective telework strategies within public administration.

The synthesis of the literature review underscores a significant transformation in the conceptualization of teleworking dynamics, particularly in the transition from the pre-pandemic to the pandemic eras. Before the global health crisis, a lack of consensus on the definition of telecommuting resulted in diverse conceptual frameworks across studies. The pandemic was pivotal in reshaping this conceptual apparatus, triggering a paradigm shift in how telework was perceived. Studies such as Ipsen et al. (2021) and Tavares et al. (2021) explored the unique challenges and opportunities arising from the pandemic's impact on telework, contributing to this conceptual evolution. This shift prompted the formulation of a research question explicitly tailored to the altered landscape: What was the experience of teleworkers in the public sector in Kazakhstan during the pandemic? This research question, refined in response to the changing conceptual frameworks, seeks to provide a focused exploration of the experiences of teleworkers in a specific regional and sectoral

context amidst the transformative global event of the COVID-19 pandemic.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, we analyzed people's teleworking experiences in the first months of lockdown. The key factors that could be distinguished based on these experiences were identified, and individuals' attitudes and perceptions towards teleworking, including their satisfaction with the arrangement and their preferences for future work arrangements, were explored.

We conducted an online survey to gather insights, drawing inspiration from previous studies (Ipsen et al., 2021; Tavares et al., 2021; Moens et al., 2021). The survey was structured to explore various aspects:

1. Work experience before and during the pandemic;
2. Current work conditions;
3. Perceived satisfaction with and benefits and disadvantages of teleworking;
4. Job preferences (telework/office).

The questionnaire was created using Google Forms. A non-probabilistic snowball sampling method was used to recruit participants from different regions and country locations, as has been used in many other studies (e.g., Blahopoulou et al., 2022; Ipsen et al., 2021). We shared the link via social media (such as Facebook) as well as through personal and professional contacts who were asked to share the link. The survey was open from 1 December 2022 to 31 January 2023. Information about the study, the anonymity of the collected data, and the right of respondents to have their responses deleted were included.

The study included 164 public sector employees who were filtered based on whether they actively worked in public administration during Kazakhstan's state of emergency amid the COVID-19 pandemic from 16 March to 11 May 2020. After filtering, the final sample comprised responses from 108 employees aged between 25 and 60 years who confirmed their engagement in public sector work activities.

The survey encompassed employees from central and local government bodies and quasi-public agencies financed by the state budget. Kazakhstan's administrative structure involves a three-level division: 20 administrative-

territorial units at the first level (including 17 regions and three cities of national significance), 170 districts in regions and 38 cities of republican significance at the second level, and 224 administrative-territorial units at the third level.

It is imperative to clarify that the survey specifically targeted individuals with teleworking experience during the specified period. Therefore, the sample is not representative, but it does provide sufficient information about the situation in the country. The exact number of individuals with telecommuting experience may be unknown due to special permits allowing some to work on-site despite the declared lockdown. This period coincided with a state of emergency declared across the entire country, during which restrictions were imposed on the movement of people and private vehicles within cities, with exceptions granted for essential purposes, including commuting from place of residence to place of work. These exceptions were contingent on individuals having a certificate from their workplace (or official identification). They applied to a limited number of organizations, such as government agencies and their subordinate entities, ensuring the uninterrupted functioning of state administration as directed by management.

The analysis of the survey responses revealed that most public sector professionals who participated in the study are female, comprising 60.2% of the sample. Furthermore, the data showed that the age range of 30-45 years accounts for a significant proportion of the sample, precisely 78.7%. Notably, many respondents reported being married, constituting 59.2% of the sample, while 73.1% indicated that they have children (see Table S1).

The analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 29. Descriptive statistics of quantitative variables were reported as frequencies and percentages. Exploratory factor analyses (EFAs) were performed using principal component analysis to extract factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, following the methodology described by Fabrigar et al. (2011). Varimax rotation was employed to explore how survey items could be grouped into sets of advantages and disadvantages of teleworking.

Additionally, t-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were utilized to test for significant

differences between different respondent groups regarding the advantages and disadvantages of teleworking, telework satisfaction, and future preferences.

RESULTS

Telework experience, satisfaction, and future preference

The study found that during the initial lockdown period, 66.6% of respondents shifted to remote or hybrid work setups, with 47.2% engaging in hybrid work and 19.4% teleworking. Regarding future working preferences, 54.6% expressed a preference for continuing in a hybrid format, while 11.1% favored telework, as detailed in Supplemental Table S2. Additionally, 50% of participants reported satisfaction with their telework experience, while 25.9% expressed dissatisfaction (see Table S3).

One-factor ANOVA analysis revealed a significant difference in telework preference scores between men and women ($F = 5.447$, $p = 0.021$). Women had a higher mean telework preference score (mean = 2.37) compared to men (mean = 1.95), with women's scores showing relatively less variability (standard deviation = 0.87) compared to men (standard deviation = 0.95). This suggests that women tended to prefer hybrid or fully remote work arrangements, potentially influenced by parental responsibilities.

Furthermore, the analysis uncovered notable disparities in satisfaction levels based on telework preference. Participants reporting higher satisfaction levels tended to choose to telework more frequently. The ANOVA results underscored significant differences ($F = 5.998$, $p = 0.001$), indicating variability in telework satisfaction across different levels. Further examination through posthoc Bonferroni tests revealed significant mean differences between the "Completely dissatisfied" and "Rather satisfied" groups (mean difference = -1.31, $p = 0.002$), as well as between "Completely dissatisfied" and "Completely satisfied" groups (mean difference = -1.05, $p = 0.024$). Additionally, a significant difference was found between the "Rather dissatisfied" and "Rather satisfied" groups (mean difference = -0.65, $p = 0.043$). These findings affirm that individuals with higher satisfaction levels are more inclined to choose to telework.

Overview of advantages and disadvantages of teleworking

In our study, participants assessed the advantages and disadvantages of teleworking by providing ratings on a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), for 10 variables in each category (see Table S4, Table S5). The resulting mean values and standard deviations (SDs) are presented in Table 1.

Notably, the findings underscore the importance of time and cost savings, along with the opportunity to spend more time with family, as key advantages of teleworking. Increased workload and irregular hours, challenges in achieving work-life balance, and difficulties in concentration without distractions emerge as the most prominent concerns based on the mean values provided.

Table 1: Mean Values and Standard Deviations of Telework Advantages and Disadvantages

Variables	Mean Value	SD
Advantages		
I work more efficiently and productively; I get more done in a day	3.50	1.35
I manage to organize the workflow better, and nothing distracts	3.21	1.33
I can choose my work schedule	3.35	1.49
I can independently choose the actual place of work	3.72	1.39
I have more time for family	3.73	1.36
It is easier to combine work and housework (cleaning, cooking, laundry, etc.)	3.59	1.44
I save on the standard commute time to my workplace	4.19	1.21
I save money	4.23	1.19
It helps me avoid robust employer control	3.51	1.36
I can have an extra job/earn extra money	3.02	1.54
Disadvantages		
Increased workload. irregular working hours	3.50	1.33
Hard to find a work-life balance	3.31	1.31
Difficulties concentrating on work and performing duties without distraction (housework, childcare, etc.)	3.21	1.33
Lack of professional interaction/communication with coworkers	2.93	1.43
The physical conditions in my home do not afford a good working environment (adjustable table and chair, enough light, quietness, good monitor, etc.)	2.84	1.40
I need equipment I cannot access at home to do my work (computer, Internet).	2.79	1.52
I need data or documents I can access at home to do my work.	2.91	1.54
I do not feel involved in the work of the organization	2.86	1.43
Working remotely, I lost some of my financial resources	2.05	1.24
I am afraid that the likelihood of promotion is reduced	2.87	1.48

Source: author’s work.

We conducted an exploratory factor analysis using principal component analysis with varimax rotation to identify specific factors among the advantages and disadvantages items. For the 10 advantage items, two factors with eigenvalues >1 were identified, explaining 73% of the variance. Similarly, for the 10 disadvantage items, two factors with eigenvalues >1 were found, explaining 70% of the variance. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin values were consistently above 0.80, indicating the suitability of the factor

analysis in capturing the underlying structure of both the advantage and disadvantage datasets.

Based on the factor analysis results, we derived two advantageous factors (AFs) and two disadvantageous factors (DFs). AF1 (Work Productivity) and AF2 (Work-Life Balance) highlight telework’s efficiency and flexibility benefits. DF1 (Home Office Constraints) and DF2 (Efficiency Challenges) reveal equipment, workspace, and workload issues. These factors’ strong internal consistency (Cronbach’s Alpha > 0.80-0.90) suggests reliable measurement and



underscores their significance in assessing telework experiences.

Table 2: Results of the exploratory factor analysis (varimax rotation).

Factor Description	Factor/Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha
AF 1: Work productivity	1. I work more efficiently and productively; I get more done in a day	0.861	0.923
	2. I manage to organize the workflow better, and nothing distracts	0.837	
	3. I can independently choose the actual place of work	0.749	
	4. I can choose my work schedule	0.687	
	5. It is easier to combine work and housework (cleaning, cooking, laundry, etc.)	0.625	
	6. I save on the standard commute time to my workplace	0.565	
	7. I save money	0.566	
AF 2: Work-life balance	1. It is easier to combine work and housework (cleaning, cooking, laundry, etc.)	0.582	0.907
	2. It helps me avoid robust employer control	0.825	
	3. I can have an extra job/earn extra money	0.809	
	4. I have more time for family	0.717	
	5. I save on the standard commute time to my workplace	0.661	
	6. I save money	0.660	
DF 1: Home office constraints	1. I need equipment I cannot access at home to do my work (computer, Internet).	0.905	0.920
	2. I do not feel involved in the work of the organization	0.864	
	3. Lack of professional interaction/communication with coworkers	0.825	
	4. I need data or documents I can access at home to do my work.	0.803	
	5. The physical conditions in my home do not afford a good working environment (adjustable table and chair, enough light, quietness, good monitor, etc.)	0.760	
	6. I am afraid that the likelihood of promotion is reduced	0.628	
	7. Working remotely, I lost some of my financial resources	0.602	
	8. Difficulties concentrating on work and performing duties without distraction (housework, childcare, etc.)	0.554	
DF 2: Efficiency challenges	1. Increased workload, irregular working hours	0.907	0.826
	2. Hard to find a work-life balance	0.824	
	3. Difficulties concentrating on work and performing duties without distraction (housework, childcare, etc.)	0.633	

Source: author's work.

The analysis conducted using one-factor ANOVA and t-tests revealed no statistically significant differences among gender and age regarding the four factors of the teleworking experience.

Regarding parental status, ANOVA results indicated no significant differences based on perceptions of "Work productivity" ($F = 0.344$, $p = 0.847$), "Home office constraints" ($F = 0.786$, $p =$

0.537), or "Work uncertainties" ($F = 1.111$, $p = 0.355$). However, a marginally significant F-value for "Work-life balance" ($F = 2.438$, $p = 0.055$) suggests a potential influence on telework preference. The Bonferroni correction method also revealed a statistically significant mean difference in "Work-life balance" between single and married individuals, with single individuals displaying a lower score ($p = 0.036$).

Moreover, significant differences in perceptions of home office constraints emerged ($F = 4.907$, $p = 0.009$). Post-hoc tests identified disparities between central government bodies and local government (mean difference = -0.732 , $p = 0.013$) and central government bodies and quasi-public agencies (mean difference = -0.688 , $p = 0.020$). This suggests potential variations in

telework policies among these organizations, with central government bodies possibly enforcing stricter regulations.

Significant insights were revealed when examining the relationship between telework preference, telework satisfaction, and the four factors (see Table 3).

Table 3: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Telework Preference, Telework Satisfaction, and Four Factors

Factor	F-Value	p-Value
Telework preference		
AF 1: Work productivity	14.595	0.000
AF 2: Work-life balance	2.983	0.055
DF 1: Home office constraints	17.494	0.000
DF 2: Efficiency challenges	0.326	0.723
Telework satisfaction		
AF 1: Work productivity	10.107	0.000
AF 2: Work-life balance	2.198	0.095
DF 1: Home office constraints	6.637	0.000
DF 2: Efficiency challenges	1.207	0.313

Source: author's work.

Regarding telework preference, a significant F-value of 14.595 suggests that differences in perceptions of work productivity are linked to variations in telework preference. This indicates that individuals may prefer to telework differently based on how they perceive its impact on productivity. Additionally, a marginally significant F-value of 2.983 suggests a potential influence of work-life balance on telework preference, albeit not reaching conventional significance levels, implying a less pronounced effect compared to work productivity. Furthermore, a significant F-value of 17.494 indicates that telework preference is associated with perceptions of home office constraints, with fewer constraints leading to a stronger preference for teleworking. Conversely, a non-significant F-value of 0.326 suggests that perceived efficiency challenges may not significantly influence telework preference in this context.

A similar pattern is observed regarding telework satisfaction, with work productivity and home office constraints significantly impacting satisfaction levels. However, work-life balance exhibits a potential influence without reaching conventional significance levels, while efficiency challenges do not significantly affect satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

The COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges for public servants, particularly with mandated telework during national lockdowns. Our study aimed to shed light on public servants' teleworking experiences during the early stages of the lockdown.

Our primary focus was to examine individuals' attitudes and perceptions toward teleworking, including their satisfaction with the arrangement and preferences for future work setups. We found that in our sample, individuals reporting higher satisfaction levels tended to prefer telework, indicating a positive correlation between satisfaction and telework preference. These findings resonate with the research conducted by Blahopoulou et al. (2022), which also highlighted the significance of telework satisfaction in influencing employee performance. Specifically, their study revealed that telework satisfaction directly impacts self-reported performance and enhances overall performance through its positive effect on general well-being. Furthermore, the results from Fonner et al. (2010) corroborate our findings, indicating that high-intensity teleworkers exhibit higher satisfaction levels than office-based employees.

Additionally, we identified significant gender differences, with women showing a stronger inclination towards hybrid or fully remote work arrangements than men. This trend suggests that women may continue to bear a prominent role in family responsibilities, and such obligations could influence the work preferences of public authorities' employees. Similarly, Madureira et al. (2022) observed that women with one or two dependents are more inclined to view teleworking as enhancing work-life balance, whereas those without dependents or with more than two dependents are less likely to perceive such benefits.

Second, studies such as Ipsen et al. (2021) and Tavares et al. (2021) delved into the unique challenges and opportunities arising from the pandemic's impact on telework, contributing significantly to the conceptual evolution in this area. Our study, focusing specifically on public servants, adds to this body of knowledge by analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of teleworking within this context.

The findings of our study underscore the significant importance attributed to several advantages of teleworking among public servants, such as time and cost savings, along with increased family time. However, participants also raised concerns regarding increased workload, irregular hours, challenges in achieving work-life balance, and difficulties in concentration without distractions.

Significant differences in perceptions of home office constraints emerged among various government organizations. This suggests potential differences in teleworking policies and practices, with some entities more open to embracing telework than others. These observations are consistent with Špaček's (2023) findings, which noted varying degrees of telework integration across different government entities, reflecting differences in organizational culture and management approaches.

Indeed, the finding that individuals who perceive fewer home constraints and higher work productivity in a teleworking environment express stronger preferences for telework and higher satisfaction levels aligns with expectations. It is essential, however, to acknowledge that the transition to teleworking during the pandemic was challenging, as Kitagawa et al. highlighted (2021). Their findings

underscore the importance of adequate preparation, organization, and communication to overcome job-specific challenges and ensure productivity in a remote work setting.

The contrasting findings between studies, such as Erro-Garcés et al. (2022) and Anderson et al. (2015), which reported positive relationships between teleworking preferences and well-being, and Kitagawa et al. (2021), which highlighted reduced productivity and challenges, highlight the complexity of teleworking dynamics. The success of telework initiatives depends heavily on the context, including organizational support, job roles, and individual experiences.

Organizations therefore must prioritize creating supportive teleworking environments that address home office constraints, provide necessary resources, and foster effective communication. By doing so, they can mitigate challenges, enhance productivity, and ultimately foster positive teleworking experiences among employees. This underscores the importance of a nuanced approach to telework implementation, tailored to employees' and organizations' specific needs and circumstances.

Our findings indicate that the potential influence of work-life balance on telework preference and satisfaction, while not reaching conventional significance levels, remains noteworthy. Palumbo's (2020) research shed light on the negative impact of home-based telecommuting on the work-life balance of public servants. Employees working remotely from home experienced increased work-to-life, life-to-work conflicts, and more significant work-related fatigue, worsening the perceived work-life balance. It is crucial to consider these factors when designing telework policies and support mechanisms to ensure the well-being of employees in teleworking arrangements.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study provides valuable insights into the teleworking experiences of public servants amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Analyzing attitudes, perceptions, and preferences, we uncovered significant insights into the advantages, challenges, and potential variations in teleworking policies across government organizations.

The findings highlight the importance of telework satisfaction in influencing employee performance and the role of gender in shaping preferences for teleworking arrangements, particularly in balancing family responsibilities. Moreover, our study contributes to the evolving discourse on teleworking by emphasizing the significance of organizational culture, management approaches, and individual experiences in telework integration.

We recommend future research to explore cross-country comparative studies considering cultural differences in evaluating epidemic-induced teleworking. Understanding how traditional gender norms and cultural contexts influence teleworking experiences can further inform telework policies and support mechanisms.

Organizations should consider these insights when planning for the future of work post-pandemic. Adopting flexible work arrangements can attract and retain talent, enhance employee satisfaction and productivity, and build a more resilient workforce. However, this requires technological adaptations and organizational culture changes to create supportive conditions for teleworking.

The paper has its limitations. For commenting on some of the findings, having data on respondents' positions would be good because perceptions of regular employees and their superiors (direct or indirect) regarding teleworking may vary in organizations (Špaček, 2023). Also, it would be good to supplement the questionnaire survey with interviews to explain some of the findings better. Still, we believe that the paper offers relevant findings for future, more systematic work with teleworking in (HR and other) managerial practices in public authorities in Kazakhstan.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Anna Alshanskaya, email: ann.alshanska@gmail.com (Corresponding Author)

Anna Alshanskaya, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Economics and Entrepreneurship, Faculty of Economics, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies, Astana, Kazakhstan.

Mira Zhanabergenova, Ph.D., Export Promotion Department JSC QazTrade, Astana, Kazakhstan.

Tolkyn Azatbek, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Economics and Entrepreneurship, Faculty of Economics, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan.

Yerkin Nessipbekov, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Eurasian Technological University, Astana, Kazakhstan.

David Špaček, Ph.D, Associate professor, Department of Public Economics, Faculty of Economics and Administration, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic.