

## Working from Home, Employee Trust and Organizational Performance at Safaricom Plc in Kenya

<sup>1</sup>Pauline Antonina Kageni & <sup>2</sup>James Mark Ngari

<sup>1</sup>People Solutions Consulting Limited; <sup>2</sup>United States International University –Africa,  
Nairobi, Kenya

<sup>2</sup>[jkarimi@usiu.ac.ke](mailto:jkarimi@usiu.ac.ke)

Correspondence Email: [paulinekageni@hotmail.com](mailto:paulinekageni@hotmail.com)

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### Abstract

The specific objective of the research was to establish whether Working from Home has affected trust between employees and organization performance at Safaricom PLC in Kenya. The study adopted the explanatory research design to get primary data from the respondents that were working in the Human Resource Department on the effects of working from home on organizational performance. The target population was 99 respondents. The sample size conveniently targeted all the Ninety-nine employees who were working in the HR department at the time. Data collection was done through online questionnaire and analysis was done through used to test the effect of the variables at 95% confidence level. The findings revealed a positive effect between trust and organizational performance at ( $\beta=0.616, P=0.00$ ). The study concluded that trust was a significant determinant variable of the organizational performance at Safaricom PLC in relation to employees working from home. Based on this conclusion, the study recommended that employers would need to provide data, logistical support, and training for workers to effectively use teleworking to enhance working conditions and workers' productivity. One approach that may help employees go through the challenges associated with working from home is mindfulness. Employers also need to provide data and logistical support and training for workers to effectively use virtual/ teleworking to enhance working conditions and eventually workers' productivity.

**Keywords:** *Working from Home, Organizational Performance, Trust.*

## **Background Information**

The success of organizational performance in relation to working from home depends on various factors which include but are not limited to trust, perception, attitudes, employment conditions, working conditions among other factors. Organizational performance is achieved only by rethinking strategies and systems of values that must represent the bedrock of the decision-making process. The achievement of organizational objectives considers both the efficiency of the entire work team's activity and the leader's abilities (Anakpo, G., Nqwayibana, Z., & Mishi, S., 2023).

Therefore, in working from home, the success of organizational performance would require emotional engagement and empathy from the parties in terms of activities performed within a team to provide solutions to issues that need to be resolved as professionally as possible (Eleonora, 2020). Wiedow, Konradt, Ellwart and Steenfatt (2018) indicate that trust is important to the functioning of organizations because of its indirect effects. That is, when trust is in place people will act in certain ways and it is those behaviors that will eventually lead to outcomes that drive performance. Trust has many benefits for organizations. These include promoting cooperation within and loyalty to the group employees belong to, sharing information, and increasing individual and in turn organizational performance.

Grant, Wallace, Tramontano and Charalampous (2019) found that a culture of trust in an organization trust by colleagues and managers is needed for teleworking and e-working. Trust is built by spending time together, not necessarily around work-related tasks. Individuals form and sustain social bonds this way, expressing verbal and nonverbal communication in ways that convey understanding, empathy and shared concern. There's no way endless Zoom calls can replace the depth and quality of in-person human interaction. The consequences of a culture of distrust are significant – including diminished productivity, innovation and motivation Giacosa, E., Alam, G. M., Culasso, F., & Crocco, E. (2023).

From the onset of Covid-19 in 2020, Safaricom decided to have its employees work from home where majority of employees were working from home, including most of the call centre employees were supporting customers from home. The organization provided to its employees, internet connectivity, zero rating of calls between employees to enhance collaboration experience. Safaricom also provided ergonomic seats for employees who were working from home. For customer facing employees such as those working in the Safaricom shops, PPE's were provided and regular fumigation of office premises was carried out; especially in areas with high customer traffic Safaricom Sustainability Report, (2020).

Voluntary COVID-19 testing was also made available to employees and their family members. Regular pulse surveys were introduced to monitor the ongoing well-being of their employees. (Safaricom Sustainability Report, 2020).

## **Statement of the Problem**

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote work, transforming traditional workplace structures globally. While working from home (WFH) has provided employees with flexibility, it has also led to significant trade-offs. Employees who transitioned to remote work forfeited some employment benefits, encountered challenges in accessing financing, and experienced increased social issues such as gender-based violence and mental health concerns (Charalampous, Grant, Tramontano & Michailidis, 2019).

Employers, on the other hand, benefited from reduced operational costs, including office space, cleaning services, utility bills, and transportation allowances. However, they also struggled with ensuring employee engagement, real-time supervision, and loyalty (Sander, 2020). These trends highlight gaps in workplace policies regarding remote work, particularly in balancing cost savings with employee well-being and productivity.

Despite the increasing adoption of remote work, there remains a lack of universally accepted policies on managing its impact on employees' financial stability and mental health. Global studies indicate that only 23% of companies have formalized remote work policies, while 77% rely on ad-hoc arrangements (PwC, 2021). Furthermore, 60% of employees report feeling less connected to their organizations, and 40% struggle with work-life balance, raising concerns about long-term productivity and job satisfaction (Microsoft Work Trend Index, 2022). These statistics emphasize the need for structured policies to mitigate the negative effects of remote work while maintaining organizational performance.

Empirical research on remote work has explored various dimensions, including productivity and job performance. Thorstensson (2020) examined the impact of remote work on employee productivity in Sweden, but the study did not address trust as a factor influencing productivity, creating an empirical gap. Similarly, Nakrosiene, Buciuniene, and Gostautait (2019) investigated the relationship between telework factors and organizational outcomes, yet their study was theoretically grounded, limiting its applicability to real-world corporate settings (conceptual gap). Additionally, Choukir et al. (2022) focused on the effects of WFH on job performance in Saudi Arabia, which differs in economic and cultural contexts from Kenya (contextual gap).

While previous studies have examined WFH in different contexts and from various perspectives, there is limited research on the role of employee trust in organizational performance within Kenyan corporations. Given that trust is a crucial element in ensuring employee commitment, motivation, and efficiency, this study seeks to bridge this gap by investigating the effects of employee trust on organizational performance at Safaricom PLC in Kenya.

### **Objective of the study**

To Establish whether Working from Home affected trust between employees and organization performance at Safaricom PLC in Kenya.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Theoretical Review**

The management of employees working from home has been a subject of interest in organizational behavior and management theories. This study was supported by three theories that is Foucault's Theory of Surveillance, Self-Determination Theory and Trust theory. Foucault's Theory of Surveillance (Foucault, 1975), which suggests that visibility is a key aspect of workplace discipline. When employees are physically present in an office, they are under constant supervision, which ensures compliance and productivity. However, remote work challenges this dynamic, requiring new forms of managerial control such as digital surveillance tools and performance monitoring.

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which posits that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fundamental to motivation. While working from home offers greater autonomy, it may reduce the relatedness factor due to decreased interaction with colleagues, thereby affecting motivation and performance. Additionally, Trust Theory (Mayer, Davis, &

Schoorman, 1995) highlights the importance of trust in remote work relationships. The lack of direct supervision necessitates higher levels of trust between managers and employees. However, trust must be balanced with performance monitoring to ensure accountability without creating an environment of suspicion.

### **Empirical Literature**

Traditional workplaces have long relied on physical presence to facilitate managerial control by ensuring that employees are visible to supervisors and actively participate in workplace interactions (Felstead, Jewson, & Walters, 2003). However, the transition to working from home has disrupted these conventional methods of oversight. Felstead, Jewson, and Walters (2003) conducted in-depth interviews with 202 managers and employees across 13 organizations and found that remote work erodes both visibility and presence. Managers struggled with monitoring performance effectively, while employees often engaged in “display behaviors such as sending emails outside regular working hours to compensate for the reduced oversight. Although this study offers rich insights into the nuances of managing remote work, its case-study approach limits the generalizability of the findings.

Complementary evidence from Taylor (2002) reveals that the modest growth in home-based employment between 1999 and 2002 may reflect inherent challenges in supervising remote workers. Taylor’s large-scale telephone survey provides a broad overview of the issue, yet it lacks a detailed exploration of the specific strategies that managers might use to address these challenges. Similarly, Huws et al. (2000) noted the scarcity of robust empirical research on the management of home-based workers, underscoring the reliance on anecdotal evidence rather than systematic investigation.

Historical analyses by Baldry (1999) and Baldry, Bain, and Taylor (1998) further emphasize the critical role of physical presence in maintaining team cohesion and organizational culture. They argue that the absence of on-site visibility can lead to weakened interpersonal bonds and even conflicts between remote and on-site employees. However, these studies were conducted before the advent of modern digital communication technologies and may not fully capture the complexities of today’s virtual work environment. In contrast, Dwelly (2000) advocates for a management approach that prioritizes achievement, autonomy, and trust over traditional surveillance. While this perspective is appealing, there remains a significant gap in empirical research exploring how trust can effectively substitute for the lost benefits of physical visibility in remote work settings.

The existing literature, therefore, reveals several important gaps. First, traditional research has focused on the erosion of physical visibility without sufficiently addressing how modern information and communication technologies might recreate aspects of visibility and presence in virtual environments. Second, while trust is acknowledged as a key factor in managing remote employees, its integration into contemporary managerial practices is not fully understood; there is a need for empirical studies that examine how trust-based approaches can balance the absence of direct supervision with effective performance management. Finally, much of the research originates from Western contexts, particularly the United Kingdom, leaving a significant gap in understanding how these dynamics play out in different cultural and organizational settings, especially in emerging markets with varied technological infrastructures. While current studies provide valuable insights into the challenges of managing remote workers, they often rely on traditional concepts of visibility and presence that may not fully apply to today’s digital work environment. Addressing these gaps by exploring the role of digital tools in replicating oversight, examining the nuanced role of trust, and considering

contextual differences is essential for developing managerial strategies that are responsive to the evolving nature of work.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study investigates how working from home affects trust between employees and management, and in turn, how these changes in trust influence organizational performance at Safaricom PLC in Kenya. Trust, as conceptualized in this framework, refers to the confidence employees have in their organization's managerial practices, communication, and overall support. Drawing on Trust Theory (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995), trust is viewed as fundamental to effective organizational functioning, particularly in environments where traditional face-to-face oversight is reduced.

Organizational performance in this context is understood as a composite of various factors including productivity, quality of work, employee engagement, and innovation. Traditionally, physical presence in the workplace has enabled managers to directly observe and interact with employees, thereby reinforcing trust through immediate feedback and spontaneous communication (Felstead, Jewson, & Walters, 2003). However, the shift to remote work disrupts these conventional trust-building processes. Felstead et al. (2003) provide evidence that the lack of physical presence in home-based work environments can lead to diminished visibility, which complicates managers' ability to assess employee performance and maintain confidence in their work ethics.

Taylor (2002) supports this notion by suggesting that the limited growth in home-based employment during the early 2000s may be attributed, in part, to managerial difficulties in supervising remote worker's challenges that are inherently tied to the erosion of trust. Further complicating the picture, Huws et al. (2000) note that while digital communication tools offer alternative means of maintaining connections, they do not fully replicate the nuances of in-person interactions that are vital for building and sustaining trust. In parallel, Dwelly (2000) argues for a management approach that emphasizes autonomy and self-discipline, contending that trust-based practices are critical in a remote work environment where conventional supervisory mechanisms are absent.

As employees become more isolated from their supervisors and peers, there is a risk that the erosion of trust could lead to a decline in organizational performance. Conversely, if Safaricom PLC can implement effective digital communication channels and trust-enhancing managerial practices, the negative impact on organizational performance might be mitigated or even reversed. Thus, this framework provides the basis for empirically examining whether the disruptions to trust brought about by remote work arrangements have measurable implications for organizational performance at Safaricom PLC.

### **Research Methodology**

The study adopted explanatory research design in order to get primary data from the HR department on the effects of working from home, Trust and organizational performance. The design was deemed appropriate since it addressed to portray the phenomenon through describing practices, events and conditions. It also provided a high level of accuracy. The target population is the population from where the desired information is to be gotten from (Kothari & Garg, 2014). The study targeted employees working in HR department. This was done by critically examining the opinions and perceptions of the employees working in the human resources department in regard to the variable. The total number of employees working in HR by that time was 99 and this was deemed convenient since they understood the practice of working from home. The sample frame was created conveniently chosen. Therefore, a census of whole 99 employees working in HR department were earmarked for this study. The sample size is shown in Table 1.



**Table 1**

*Sample size*

HR Department	Target Population	Percentage
Males	51	52
Females	48	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100%</b>

Online questionnaires were administered to HR department employees to collect targeted information about a specific subject. The researcher distributed these surveys to obtain essential data from a sample of 99 employees, ensuring focused insights into HR practices. The questionnaire had two sections, demographic areas and the actual sections where variables were tested. Data analysis was done by use of descriptive and inferential techniques. This targeted approach enhanced the reliability and overall relevance of the collected data. The Reliability Results are shown in Table 2

**Table 2**

*Reliability Results*

Variable	Items	Alpha	Conclusion
Trust	8	0.850	Reliable
Organizational Performance	9	0.816	Reliable

## Results and Findings

The study targeted 99 respondents and received 57 completed questionnaires, yielding a response rate of 57.6%. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), a response rate above 50% is satisfactory, while Taherdoost (2016) maintains that a minimum of 50% is needed for credibility. Thus, the achieved response rate is acceptable for further analysis.

In terms of gender, the sample was balanced, with 51% female and 49% male respondents, indicating a fairly even distribution within Safaricom PLC's workforce in Nairobi County. Participants also reported their age groups: 31% were between 30 and 44 years, 25% between 35 and 39 years, 16% between 25 and 29 years, 14% between 40 and 44 years, 7% between 45 and 49 years, 5% between 50 and 54 years, and 2% between 20 and 24 years. These figures suggest that most employees are over 25 years old, which aligns with national trends.

Regarding tenure at Safaricom PLC, 56% of employees had been with the company for 1–5 years, 25% for 6–10 years, 8% for 11–15 years, 7% for less than one year, and 2% each for 16–20 years and over 21 years. This distribution indicates that the majority of the workforce has been with the company for less than six years.

### *Descriptive Analysis between Trust and Organizational Performance*

Table 3 shows that working from home was not problematic for conventional strategies of managerial control as shown by 54.4% of the study respondents who disagreed, 26.3% agreed, and 19.3% were neutral (mean=2.56; standard deviation=1.323). Working from home weakened the overall social integration of an organization as shown by 45.6% of the study respondents who agreed, 36.9% disagreed, and 15.8% were neutral (mean=3.11; standard

deviation=1.175). The most serious problem that managers faced in regulating employees who were working from home was visibility as shown by 49.2% of the study respondents who agreed, 31.5% disagreed, and 19.3% were neutral (mean=3.25; standard deviation=1.353). The most serious problem that managers faced in regulating employees who were working from home was presence as shown by 52.6% of the study respondents who agreed, 33.4% disagreed, and 14% were neutral (mean=3.25; standard deviation=1.313).

Table 3 also shows that, induction into organizational culture can play a critical role in addressing challenges of supervising employees who were working from home as shown by 66.7% of the study respondents who agreed, 19.3% were neutral, and 14% disagreed (mean=3.81; standard deviation=1.109). Goal or target setting can help managers in addressing challenges of supervising employees who were working from home as shown by 71.9% of the study respondents who agreed, 21.1% were neutral, and 7% disagreed (mean=4.04; standard deviation=1.149). Managers should create opportunities and new venues for informal team gatherings in a bid to address the challenges of supervising employees who were working from home as shown by 73.6% of the study respondents who agreed, 14% were neutral, and 12.3% disagreed (mean=3.91; standard deviation=1.169). Managers did not trust that their employees were 100% dedicated to their job and to their employer when they worked from home as shown by 42.2% of the study respondents who agreed, 31.5% disagreed, and 26.3% were neutral (mean=3.18; standard deviation=1.338).

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Analysis between Trust and Organizational Performance*

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev
	%	%	%	%	%		
Goal or target setting can help managers in addressing challenges of supervising employees who are working from home.	7	0	21.1	26.3	45.6	4.04	1.149
Managers should create opportunities and new venues for informal team gatherings in a bid to address the challenges of supervising employees who are working from home.	7	5.3	14	36.8	36.8	3.91	1.169
Induction into organizational culture can play a critical role in addressing challenges of supervising employees who are working from home	3.5	10.5	19.3	35.1	31.6	3.81	1.109
The most serious problem that managers face in regulating employees who are working from home is visibility	14	17.5	19.3	28.1	21.1	3.25	1.353
The most serious problem that managers face in regulating employees who are working from home is presence	12.3	21.1	14	35.1	17.5	3.25	1.313
Managers do not trust that their employees are 100% dedicated to their job and to their employer when they work from home	14	17.5	26.3	21.1	21.1	3.18	1.338
Working from home weakens the overall social integration of an organization	8.8	28.1	15.8	38.6	8.8	3.11	1.175
Working from home is problematic for conventional strategies of managerial control.	26.3	28.1	19.3	15.8	10.5	2.56	1.323

### Correlations Analysis between Trust and Organizational Performance

Using correlation analysis, trust was measured against the organizational performance of Safaricom PLC Kenya in relation to employees working from home. Table 4 presents the outcome which shows that, trust had a statistically significant relationship with organizational performance of Safaricom PLC Kenya in relation to employees working from home ( $r=0.623$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

**Table 4**

*Correlations Analysis between Trust and Organizational Performance*

	Organizational Performance	Trust
Organizational Performance	1	
Trust	.623*	1
	.000	
N	57	

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

The organizational performance of Safaricom PLC Kenya in relation to employees working from home and trust was examined using regression analysis. The study outcome is presented in Table 5 as the linear regression model summary. It shows that trust accounts for 37.7% of the variance in organizational performance of Safaricom PLC Kenya in relation to employees working from home. 62.3% difference is represented by other factors that were not considered in this study.

**Table 5**

*Model Summary between Trust and Organizational Performance*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.623 <sup>a</sup>	.388	.377	.61012

a. Predictors: (Constant), Trust

Table 6 is the outcome of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) between trust and organizational performance of Safaricom PLC Kenya in relation to employees working from home. It indicates that there was a statistically significant association between trust and organizational performance in relation to employees working from home ( $F(1, 56) = 34.885$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Because the calculated F value of 12.986 was less than the actual critical F value of 34.885. It was concluded that trust was a significant determinant variable of the organizational performance at Safaricom PLC in relation to employees working from home.

**Table 6**

*ANOVA between Trust and Organizational Performance*

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12.986	1	12.986	34.885	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	20.474	55	.372		
	Total	33.459	56			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Trust

b. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance



Table 7 presents the regression coefficients results between trust and organizational performance of Safaricom PLC Kenya in relation to employees working from home. It indicates that the intercept of organizational performance in relation to employees working from home at Safaricom PLC Kenya becomes better by  $\beta=0.616$ ,  $p<0.01$ , meaning that a unit increase in trust could significantly increase the organizational performance of Safaricom PLC Kenya in relation to employees working from home by an index mean of 0.616 (61.6%). These findings also demonstrate that organizational performance in relation to employees working from home was positively and significantly affected by trust at ( $p=0.000$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). This indicates that trust was a significant factor on how the organization performed in relation to employees working from home ( $t(57) = 5.906$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), making it a relevant and significant variable.

**Table 7**

*Regression Coefficients between Trust and Organizational Performance*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.317	.362		3.634	.001
Trust	.616	.104	.623	5.906	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

## Discussion of Results

The results obtained showed that working from home showed that working from home was not problematic for conventional strategies of managerial control. However, working from home weakened the overall social integration of the organization. The most serious problems that managers faced in regulating employees who were working from home were visibility and presence. Induction into organizational culture did play a critical role in addressing challenges of supervising employees who were working from home. Goal or target setting can help managers in addressing challenges of supervising employees who were working from home. Managers should create opportunities and new venues for informal team gatherings in a bid to address the challenges of supervising employees who were working from home. Managers did not trust that their employees were 100% dedicated to their job and to their employer when they worked from home. The findings deferred with those of Felstead et al., 2003 who identified that working at home creates problems for both visibility and presence as aspects of managerial control and that the loss of workers' visibility was identified as a serious problem.

The findings of this study show that induction into organizational culture did play a critical role in addressing challenges of supervising employees who were working from home. The findings deferred with those of Baldry (1999), Marcus (1993) who stated that techniques and methods such as induction into organizational culture were of limited effectiveness. The findings of this study also showed that goal or target setting can help managers in addressing challenges of supervising employees who were working from home. The findings deferred with those of Sander, (2020) who stated that managers are unable to offer real time supervision to ensure that deliverables are achieved and achieved on time. The findings of this study found that managers should create opportunities and new venues for informal team gatherings in a bid to address the challenges of supervising employees who were working from home. The findings deferred with those of Baldry (1999), Marcus (1993) who stated that techniques and methods such as creation of new venues for informal team gatherings were of limited effectiveness.

## **Conclusion**

The study concludes that trust was a significant determinant variable of the organizational performance at Safaricom PLC in relation to employees working from home. An increase in trust could significantly increase the organizational performance. Working from home was not problematic to the conventional strategies of managerial control but it did weaken the overall social integration of the organization.

## **Recommendations**

Learning and Organizational culture should be embedded into the induction process when the employees join the organization as it plays a critical role in addressing issues of employee trust as well as supervising employees who are working from home. Target setting can help managers in addressing challenges of supervising employees who were working from home. Managers should create opportunities and new venues for informal team gatherings in a bid to address the challenges of supervising employees who were working from home.

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