

**Unveiling Remote Technological Applications: The Effect of the Microsoft 365 Package on
Program Management**

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On my honor as a University Student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this
assignment as defined by the Honor Guidelines for Thesis-Related Assignments

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Introduction

People in the past would have dreamed about a workday without a commute, strict office hours, and the inconveniences of working in person. However, this is now a reality for many in the sphere of remote work, a paradigm shift that has redefined the professional landscape and become a staple in modern work culture. Pre-pandemic, working from home emerged from being a tool to a necessity. The purpose of remote technological applications was to allow companies to expand the physical limitations of the business world through software. Yet, when the Coronavirus Pandemic stormed through society, a new direction for remote applications was established. Instead, applications used for global interactions between companies switched from remote options to remote necessities.

Businesses, specifically program management, needed a way to communicate with their employees while forced to live in the pandemic. To thrive and secure success in an unprecedented declining world, they needed to assess the contribution of their employees to optimize productivity and ensure company survival. The remote switch during the pandemic "enabled technology companies to play an important role in increasing the ability of employers to surveil their employees... a part of Microsoft's widely used Office 365 package, allowed—by default—managers to look at who participated in chats and how many emails different workers were sending" (Gould et al., 2023, pg. 5). The adoption of remote working as the new business "normal" happened so quickly that it was not always used in best practices.

Despite the innovative uses of remote technological applications, it also allowed for an increase in the abuse of workers and a way to cut corners. Remote work can be used as a way to exploit labor by hiring from regions with lower wage standards, thus bypassing local labor and protection laws. Tools meant to facilitate communication can be areas where office politics play

out, inclusion and exclusion can manifest more subtly, and the line between personal and professional gets blurry. The rise of digital communication tools and cloud-based software represents a shift in work and collaboration, and it is crucial to critically analyze both their inherent and use-driven politics (Winner, 1980, pg. 122). Businesses now had the control of everyone at their fingertips, courtesy of remote technological applications. Since the shift was so fast and sudden, there was no proper time to implement boundaries or limitations on what was necessary for business efficiency and blatant overstepping of individual privacy in the digital workplace.

The abrupt influence of COVID-19 accelerated the adoption of remote work and digital communication tools, which led to the implementation of an already popular package for online communication, the Microsoft 365 package. Offered in the Microsoft 365 package, Microsoft Teams has "over 320 million users," and "91% of Fortune 100 companies use Microsoft Teams for communication" (Shewale, 2023). Microsoft has dominated the collaboration between companies and employees for years, especially during the pandemic. This paper will focus on examining the general overview of the effects of remote technological applications in the professional landscape, with specific emphasis on the Microsoft 365 package.

In this paper, I argue that this new business technology is detrimental to the success of a project by exploring the effect of digital communication tools, cloud-based project management software, and the widespread adoption of remote work on how teams collaborate and manage projects. The adoption of remote work intensified during COVID-19. However, post-pandemic, remote jobs are not going away. For many employees, remote technological applications offer a better work-life balance and global job opportunities despite geographical location. Nonetheless, it also means increased surveillance from program management through tracking software and an

invasion of the work-life boundary as homes become offices. The line of remote applications hindering project success has not yet been explored. My technical project will take a framework and apply it to my research to diagnose the effect of remote applications. This will provide a proper outline of how to make the technology beneficial to the relevant social groups.

Methods

The Microsoft 365 package has become culturally dominant over other alternatives because it is user-friendly and easily understandable. Ronaldo Jimenez argues that "Microsoft 365 is a powerful productivity suite that can help businesses and individuals work more efficiently and effectively. Whether you need access to the core productivity applications, cloud-based services, or both, Microsoft 365 has you covered" (Jimenez, 2023). The familiarity of the application, in addition to its new benefits, attracted people. Some may argue that the prevalent design has succeeded because it is the finest in terms of its functional practicality and productivity (Jimenez, 2023). However, that belief discredits the relevant social groups, which include employees, employers, and program management, affected by the application. The thesis adopts the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) framework to analyze the relationship between the Microsoft Office 365 package and relevant social groups.

SCOT is best described as the social construction and ethical factors that shape the development of a technology. SCOT focuses on the priorities and values of society that make technical designs successful or possibly harmful to its impacted social groups. This framework focuses on the analysis of the relevant stakeholders that have influenced the technology of remote technological applications. To frame my research, I engage SCOT to examine the interaction between relationships and technology. To fully understand the acceptance of the technology,

actively acknowledging the social constructs of project management is essential. Examining the human influence of technology involves emphasizing how the different social groups influence the use of remote project management tools, such as the Microsoft 365 package. This framework benefits the topic of remote technological applications in program management because the tools represent relatively new software. The flexibility of all parties could shape the future of program management and remote applications negatively. This will allow for focused research on the effectiveness of the Microsoft 365 packages in all aspects, rather than only statistical data.

In conjunction with the SCOT framework, the research aims to explore how the Microsoft 365 package influences program management. When gathering information, I adopted documentary research methods by collecting scholarly articles and journals to establish a foundation of knowledge about the general consensus of remote technology. Compiling papers that compare in-person work with working from home created a basis for understanding the advantages and disadvantages of the technology. While exploring the impact of remote working on project management practices and the technological solutions that can enhance them, strategies, numbers, mathematics, and algorithms played a crucial role in assessing performance and productivity. The articles included experiments with valuable data, as well as statistics for credible claims of the effect of the Microsoft 365 package. Active use of Science and Technology Studies addressed the history of societal influences to avoid possible setbacks in digital communication tools related to the relevant stakeholders (Sismondo, 2009, pg. 204). Following this, I gathered papers that presented individual cases of how remote working has affected program management, regardless of whether it was good or bad.

A downfall of SCOT is that it solely addresses societal concerns. However, technology can be influenced by more than that. Political forces, educational values, accessibility concerns, and even environmental factors can influence the development of a technology.

That is why my thesis addresses the effect of COVID-19. Since remote applications intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, I will explore their impact on workplace effectiveness by highlighting the project success rates of the Microsoft 365 package. This will enable me to understand how remote work has impacted program management, and how it has adapted to the changing circumstances brought by the pandemic that may have heightened the use of Microsoft 365 package.

I employed a multi-step approach to documentary research, ranging from collecting background information to analyzing individual case studies. This provided an extensive blueprint for comprehensive exploration. SCOT involves the effective stabilization of a design depicted by its stakeholders. This paper actively investigates this stabilization by outlining the next steps of remote applications based on the priorities of the relevant social groups. Through my research, the analysis of the evidence presents my findings in an order that best examines the effect of remote technological applications, specifically Microsoft 365, on program management.

Research

Remote technological applications, like the Microsoft 365 package, have become the forefront of the business world. Microsoft offers multiple business packages with varying benefits; Apps for Business, Standard, and Premium. Businesses can choose what they want their subscription plan to include. The business subscriptions may include: "the latest versions of Office apps," "email and calendars using Outlook and Exchange," and "group chat, online

meetings, and calling in Microsoft Teams" (Microsoft Support, 2024). Microsoft benefitted from COVID-19 as the need for distance communication became more relevant in 2020 and beyond. The best measurement of this effect is visible within program management. The digital transformation has impacted projects and how they are managed. Piecing together the role of remote applications allows for the successful determination of their impact. Before specifically addressing the influence of the Microsoft 365 package, evaluating the impact of remote working is necessary. With society increasingly becoming a digital workplace, the pandemic accelerated the trend from gradual to sudden. The population transitioned from a limited number of individuals working from home to a large portion of society adopting remote work.

Before the pandemic, "remote work was something that the majority of workers in all classes of occupation had not experienced" (Gould et al., 2023, pg. 2). Remote work introduced a new world of flexibility to employees. Increased accessibility and flexibility have the "potential to enable some types of work to be done anywhere and/or anytime" (Harrison & Moseley, 2019, pg. 247). Workers now have the freedom of choice. Working from home has led to an increase in job opportunities in comparison with previous years. The ability for individuals to work from home can be more accommodating for people with disabilities (Gonzales, 2022). The opportunities for working from home have been beneficial in some regards.

However, remote working has also introduced some challenges to employees. People often assume a linear relationship between working from home and job satisfaction. A study that analyzed the impact of telecommuting on job satisfaction found a curvilinear relationship where "the curve initially slopes upward, then turns back, and then becomes slightly negative at more extensive levels of telecommuting" (Golden & Veiga, 2005, pg. 309). This highlights that employee job satisfaction and remote working do not have as strong of a correlation. However, a

correlation between the economic and financial effects of working from home exists. A cost-benefit analysis of 1,000 people examined the economic consequences of working from home and how socioeconomic status can influence job ability (Batista, Algiero, & Leonidou, 2022). The employees experienced a negative impact from out-of-pocket expenses, like utilities and technological enhancements, that were more expensive than commuting to and from work.

Not only were employees experiencing additional costs, but also an increase in harassment. Geographical boundaries have been lifted with remote technological applications. However, they can still perpetuate disparities in the online environment. Harassment is not limited to face-to-face interactions but has been intensified by remote work. Remote applications have created a platform where people can say whatever they want and have the option to hide behind a computer screen. Gender discrimination increases "were highest among women, transgender and nonbinary people, and Asian, Black, Latinx, and Indigenous people" (Bond, 2021). Gender bias is only one example of barriers that exist in the online environment, and many more are also affected by working from home. Remote working presents unique challenges for the relevant social groups.

Working from home encompasses a broad topic. Exploring the Microsoft 365 package specifies the search to understand the general effects of remote technological applications. Remote applications positively influenced the pandemic. Employers sought out a way to measure the effectiveness of their employees. Task management software allows program managers to establish seamless connections between workers, motivate the team, and connect dispersed employees (Strant, 2021). Thus allowing employers to watch over employees. However, the line between watching over and overstepping is very faint. Microsoft Teams is one of the key tracking applications employers use to monitor progress. However, the access is limitless. Employers have

access to private messages between employees, deleted chats, and logs of when employees log in and out (Collins, 2023). This creates concerns about privacy in the workplace, as employers can monitor employee activity. Additionally, employers can view content added to channels, the apps employees use in the application, and meetings created or joined by employees (including time, attendees, etc.) (Collins, 2023). Extensive access enables employers to track employee interactions at all times. Furthermore, employers can access recorded meetings, created files, and the device IP address used to log in to Teams (Collins, 2023). This information allows employers to spy on employee behavior within the platform. Employers also have access to the Microsoft 'productivity' score, which tracks which Microsoft tools an employee uses (Collins, 2023). The line between spying and tracking becomes very faint with the use of the Microsoft 365 package.

Remote working directly affects how effective program management is in business. COVID-19 has accelerated the adoption of remote work and digital communication tools, fundamentally changing how businesses strategically manage projects. However, the goal of projects has not evolved. To succeed, "companies must deliver projects on time and within budget, and meet specifications while managing project risk" (Raymond & Bergeron, 2008, pg. 213). Technological applications, like the Microsoft 365 package, offer ways for companies to manage threats for the timely execution of projects. Managers and team members experience enhanced transparency when using remote technological applications. Applications like Microsoft Teams offer methods for constant communication. Channels can be specifically tailored to projects or tasks, allowing for focused and streamlined discussions between managers and employees. Remote software tools enable managers to see the progress of various tasks and projects in real-time, leading to better accountability and understanding of performance (Conforto et al., 2014, pg. 27).

However, the opportunities are not all beneficial. The increase in employees working from home causes managers “to change their strategies for monitoring employees from behavior-based to output-based controls” (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007, pg. 1527). Any successful project is directly influenced by the employees or task-related teams given instructions by program management. If the employees are not motivated or feel supported, the project is more likely to be delayed and not succeed. Noralhuda Azize explains, "It is difficult to create a project without employees, and for the project to succeed, the project manager should pay attention to the employees as the key to the success of any project" (Azize, 2021, pg. 1).

Analysis

To further understand whether remote applications negatively influence program management, the social impact on the stakeholders needs to be addressed through SCOT. The relevant social groups affected by remote technological applications related to program management are employees and program managers. SCOT examines the relationship between technology and the stakeholders, where employees benefit from increased flexibility through the remote application. Remote working introduced the guarantee of no commute and a schedule not bounded by work hours. There is also the benefit of enhanced communication and a boundless limit of global communication with the use of the Microsoft 365 package. Employers benefit from monitoring their employees to assess whether they are actively contributing or flying under the radar. This allows program management to actively ensure project success based on employee performance to not fall behind. However, employers who monitor employees can be identified as spying in some situations, like one-on-one messages in Microsoft Teams.

The SCOT framework critically examines all the influences of the social group's relationship to technology, revealing that negative components exist. With the blur between personal and workspaces, employees potentially experience overwork from increased surveillance through remote tracking software. There is also an invasion of the work-life boundary as homes become offices for employees. This is not the only downfall of remote technological applications. Employees may experience increased socioeconomic disparities from the additional costs of remote working. There is also the possibility of high levels of discrimination based on race, gender, and more. These issues can create gaps in job satisfaction and professional relationships between employees and their managers.

Despite the perceived advantages of remote working applications, like the Microsoft 365 package, the provided research reveals more negative impacts than positive. SCOT addresses the nuances of remote working through the effect of program management by revealing the outstanding problems between remote technological applications and the relevant social groups. Privacy concerns, heightened surveillance, increased risk of harassment, and disparities can emerge. This thesis highlights that while remote working offers flexibility and convenience to employees, the effects of overworking, job satisfaction, and well-being can directly affect how successful program management is. However, that does not mean the benefits are unnecessary to remote applications. The problem with remote technical applications like the Microsoft 365 package is the lack of control over what program management can access with little to no constraints. Providing access for employers to watch over their employees whenever they want or deem necessary leaves plenty of gray areas for the negative consequences to flourish. With proper guidance on how much access employers can have, the benefits of remote working may continue to grow and outweigh the negative connotations.

SCOT reveals that the lack of policy, rather than the ethical factors of remote technological applications, restrains the efficiency of program management. One way to address these applications is by establishing clear guidelines through access controls and privacy measures (Raymond & Bergeron, 2008, pg. 213). For instance, whenever a business wants to buy the Microsoft 365 package, Microsoft could implement privacy protocols within its remote application that companies must adhere to. This would outline what circumstances managers get access to from their employees. Microsoft would grant managers access to the employee's specifics on that distinct circumstance. However, drawing on SCOT, the effects of remote applications are not solely the fault of the technology but the managers, a part of the relevant social groups. One way to combat discrimination and online harassment that may occur in online applications is through training (Harrison & Moseley, 2019, page 221). Managers could implement modules or training to create a respectful atmosphere in the remote work environment. Project management should include assessments and feedback from their teams. This can help to incorporate the human elements of collaboration, such as the impact of virtual communication on team performance and understanding.

There should be an awareness of potential biases in algorithms and metrics used in remote program management tools. Project management should consider the potential for burnout and exhaustion of remote workers. This is due to the lack of physical separation between work and home life and the need for increased flexibility in workload distribution. Technological solutions and strategies should be designed with flexibility to address the diverse challenges and needs of remote teams. A new basis is needed. This may involve developing adaptive algorithms that adjust based on the specific role or a simple check-in with the program manager. There is

also the option for managers to outline criteria for performance evaluations that implement out-put-based factors instead of invasive surveillance. Creating specific policies regarding how remote technological applications, like the Microsoft 365 package, will invite a domino effect of altering the negative consequences.

Conclusion

The shift of remote technological applications, like the Microsoft 365 package, has altered program management. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated remote work from a tool to a necessity. Despite the applications offering increased flexibility and communication, their impact on the effectiveness of program management is essential. Through the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) framework, the interpretive flexibility of the benefits and negative consequences of the technology were examined. Specific research portrayed that remote technological applications do not exclusively rely on the technology but on the relevant social groups, specifically employees and employers. Remote work has introduced increased flexibility and communication. Employees can reach people from all over the world, no matter where they are. Managers can monitor the productivity of their employees with more access to these applications. However, the negative consequences outweigh the positive. Employees can experience economic hardships, increased harassment, overwork, decreased job satisfaction, and surveillance from employers. The increased adoption of remote work has amplified the issues regarding how remote applications are used in program management. The effectiveness of program management relies on a fragile balance between the benefits of remote technological applications, like the Microsoft 365 package, and the negative impacts.

As remote work and digital communication tools continue to be a part of the new normal, it is valuable to consider their impact on the global workforce. Therefore, it is essential to approach these issues with a critical and thoughtful lens to ensure that the work environment is both efficient and equitable. Establishing clear guidelines and business policies regarding manager access controls and privacy measures is crucial to supporting employees and the effectiveness of program management. Standards like training modules, performance-based evaluations, and more can help to create a more inclusive and supportive remote work environment. There is substantial potential for remote work to transform and be beneficial to all the relevant social groups with little to no consequences. Remote technological applications, like the Microsoft 365 package, can be altered by implementing policies, whether the application or business, to ensure proper privacy and employee happiness in the new digital era.

It is essential to take the insights from this thesis and implement it. Businesses of technological applications and organizations should prioritize the development of policies that will govern the use of the technology. Ongoing monitoring and case studies should examine the impact of remote applications and continuously make adjustments. However, the Microsoft 365 package is only one specific example of remote technological applications. To conduct a complete synopsis of the effect of remote working, more applications, like Zoom and Slack, need to be evaluated. By proactively addressing the challenges and possibilities associated with remote working, businesses can maximize the effectiveness of program management, and ensure the welfare of their employees.

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