
Tele-working in the context of Covid-19 pandemic - Lessons Learned.

Thato Malesa, Ergonomics Consultant at
Gijima Holdings - Certified Professional
Ergonomist in training (21-03)

thatokmalesa@gmail.com

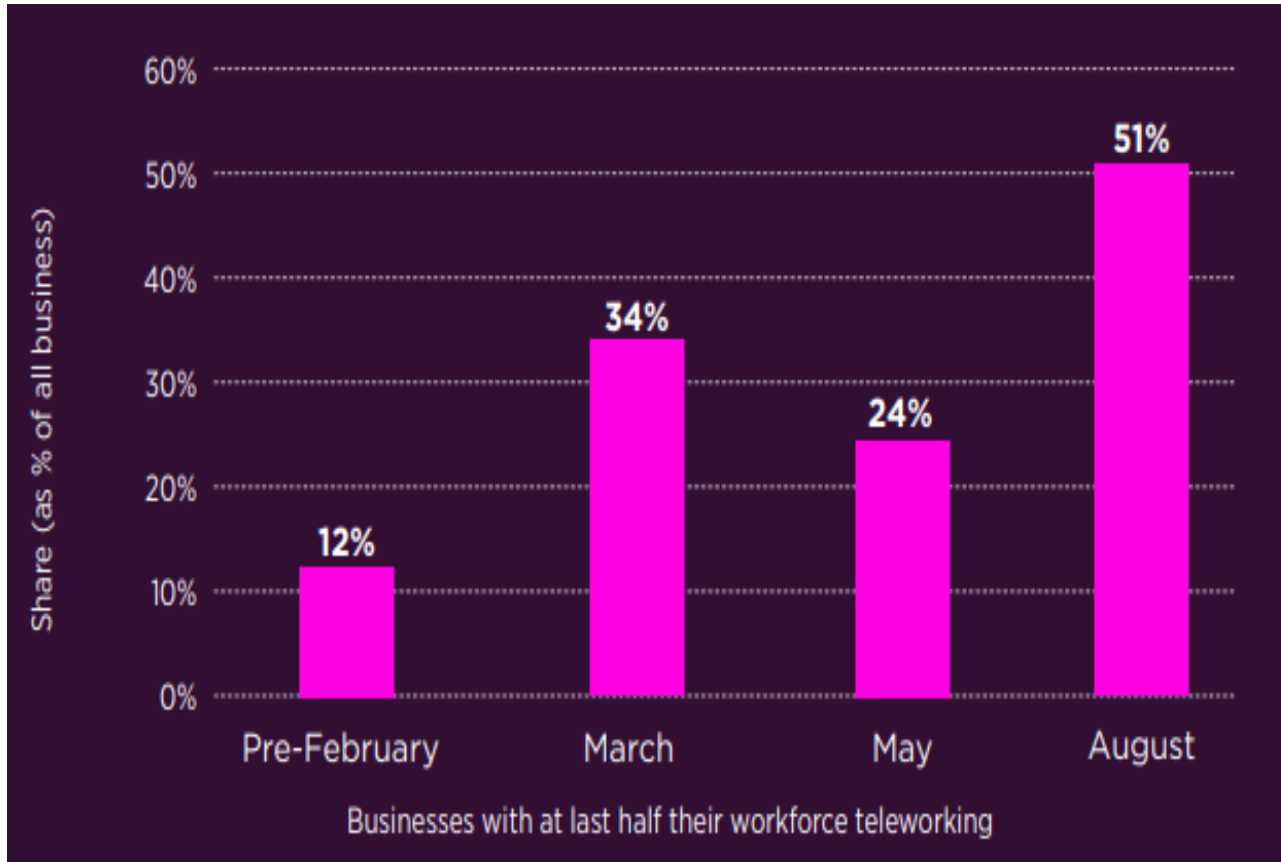


Tele-working

- » Also called **remote working** or **working from home**.
- » Work done in other places than the corporate office (i.e., homes, coffee shops, airplanes, cars).
- » According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), telework is defined as the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, and or desktop computers for work that is performed outside the employer's premises.
- » Telework was originally developed in the United States of America (USA) during the **1970's** to reduce the country's fuel consumption.



Trends in tele-working



- » Prior the pandemic **78%** of businesses in Canada had less than 12% of their workforce working remotely.
- » **44%** of employees polled by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOS) (2020) were working from home before the pandemic.
- » Survey conducted by Statistics South Africa revealed that only (i.e., **1.4%** of the respondents) worked from home before the national lockdown.
- » **This shows that for some employees in developing countries; the concept or teleworking was relatively new.**

Examples of home offices



Spillover theory

The Spill-over theory is defined as “the conditions under which the spill-over between the work microsystem and the family microsystem is positive or negative”.



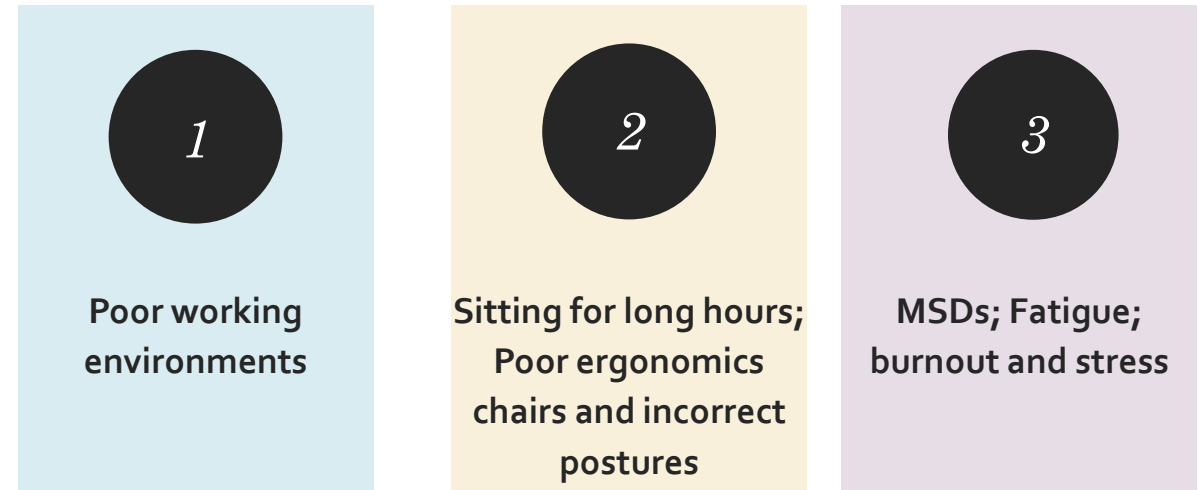
According to the (IEA) Ergonomics is **the scientific discipline concerned with the understanding of interactions among humans and other elements of the system.**

i.e., A way of designing workstations, work practices to accommodate the capabilities of workers. Ergonomic design aims to reduce risk factors known to contribute to occupational ergonomic injuries

Ergonomics and tele-working

- » Teleworking exposes employees to a variety of occupational ergonomics injuries.
- » In accordance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) 1993, the public service has the responsibility to provide a safe and healthy work environment to its employees.
- » To comply with OHSA regulations; organisations are required to find ways to monitor musculoskeletal disorders for employees working from home.

Characteristics of telework workstations



Important to track the impact of teleworking on safety and ergonomics impacts

Advantages and disadvantages of teleworking

Advantages

- » Flexibility
- » Less distractions from co-workers
- » Less commuting time
- » Financial savings
- » Reduced absenteeism

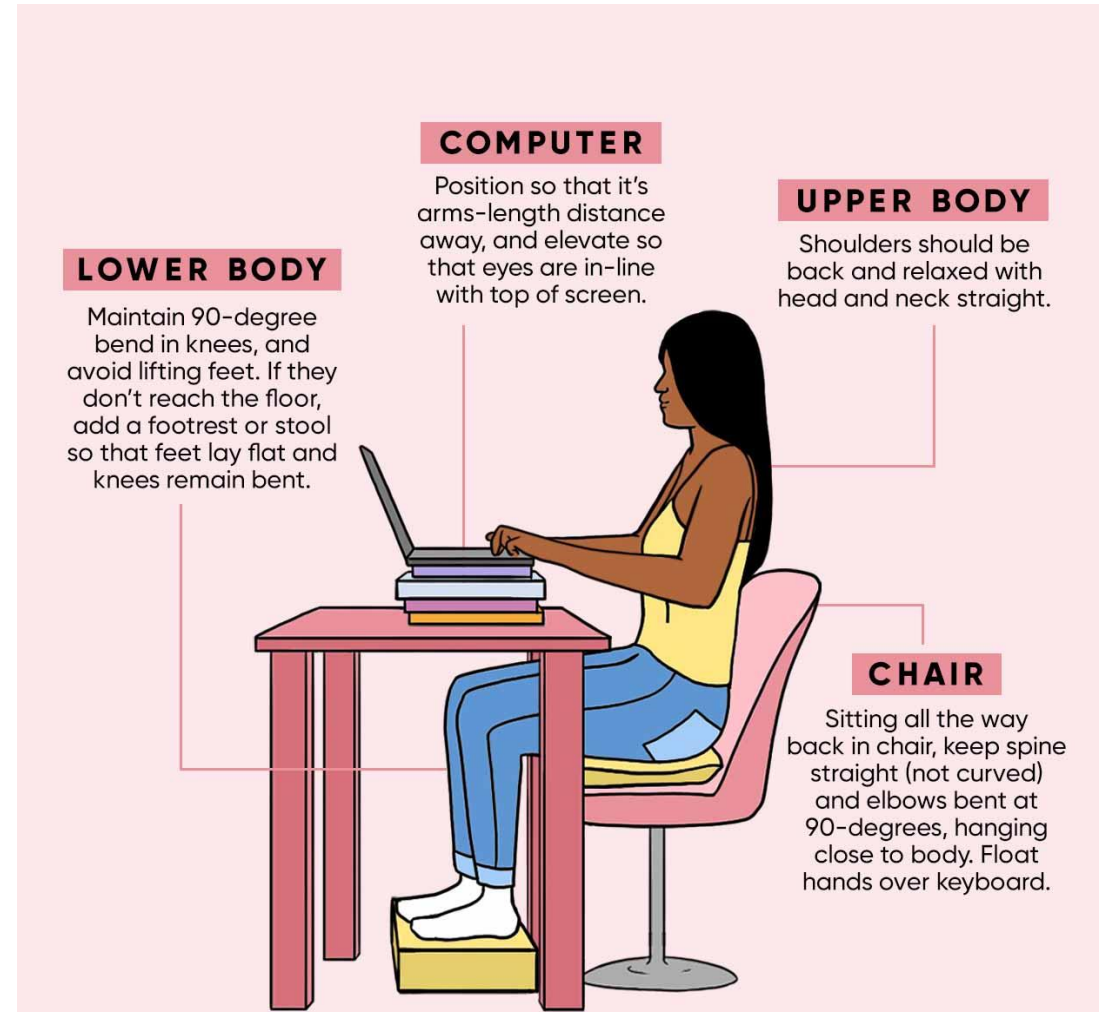
Disadvantages

- » Improper workstations
- » Loss of organizational structures – concerns around productivity
- » Loss of organizational cultures (isolations)
- » Prolonged meetings on teams or zoom
- » Increased distractions from children
- » No guidelines on how to manage workers
- » Changes in sleeping patterns

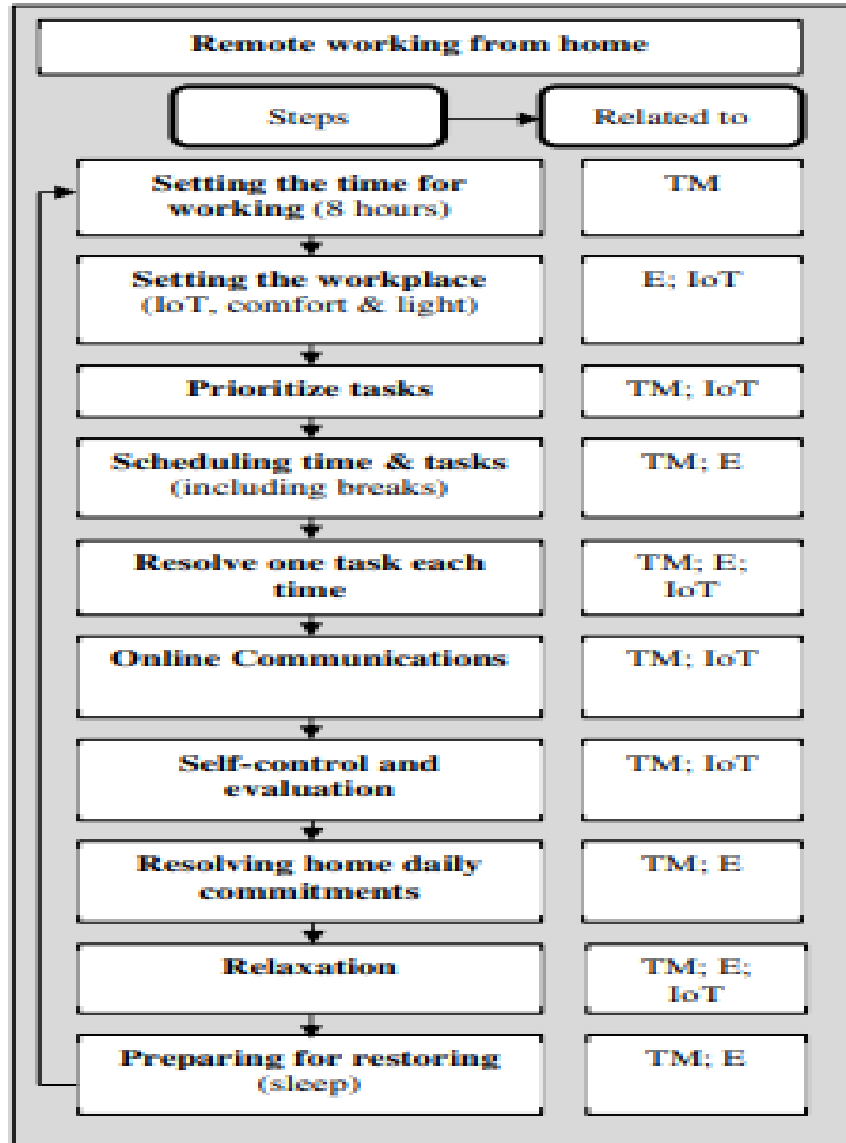
Lessons Learned - Ergonomics controls

Administrative controls:

- » Provide employees with regular ergonomics check list to identify ergonomics risk factors to monitor the standards of their home workstations.
- » Provide employees with online ergonomics training.
- » Establish long-term solutions to enable employees to work from home with ergonomics equipment and guidelines/policies.
- » Ongoing risk assessments
- » Encourage employees to take frequent rest-breaks.



Lessons Learned - Ergonomics controls



- » Proposed structural framework for teleworking/working from home.
- » The framework incorporates three factors: ergonomics (E); time management (TM), and internet of things (IoT) in the attempt to mitigate ergonomics risks.

Questions?

Thank You

 Thato Malesa

 +27 73 962 3748

 thatokmalesa@gmail.com



References

- Belzunegui-Eraso, A., & Erro-Garcés, A. (2020). Teleworking in the Context of the Covid-19 Crisis. *Sustainability*, 12(9), 3662.
- Milasi, S., González-Vázquez, I., & Fernández-Macías, E. (2021). Telework before the COVID-19 pandemic: Trends and drivers of differences across the EU.
- Nkate, J. (2020). The effect of Covid-19 on the work arrangements in the South African public service. *Africa Journal of Public Sector Development and Governance*, 3(1), 144-157.
- NEGULESCU, O. H., & DOVAL, E. (2021). Ergonomics and time management in remote working from home. *ACTA TECHNICA NAPOCENSIS-Series: Applied Mathematics, Mechanics, and Engineering*, 64(1-S1).
- Saba, T., Bezu, S., & Hauder, M. (2021). New working arrangements. Public Policy Forum.
- Yeow, J. A., Ng, P. K., & Lim, W. Y. (2021). Workplace ergonomics problems and solutions: Working from home. *F1000Research*, 10(1025), 1025.