

Digital Nomad Workstyle and Its Effect on Task Completion and Time Management

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Abstract:

The digital nomad workstyle, characterized by location-independent work enabled by digital technologies, has emerged as a significant phenomenon in the contemporary labor market. This article examines the effects of digital nomadism on task completion and time management, synthesizing findings from recent empirical research. The analysis reveals that productivity among digital nomads depends less on workload volume and more on how work is structured and controlled. Digital nomads who actively shape their tasks and schedules perceive themselves as more productive, consistent with job crafting theory. However, the flexibility inherent in the digital nomad lifestyle presents dual edged implications: while autonomy can enhance task engagement and satisfaction, the absence of traditional organizational structures creates significant time management challenges, including increased susceptibility to procrastination, difficulty establishing work life boundaries, and complications arising from multiple time zones. Effective time management strategies—including structured routines, time blocking, the Pomodoro Technique, and digital accountability tools—emerge as critical mediators between the nomadic workstyle and successful task completion. The findings suggest that the digital nomad workstyle's effect on productivity is contingent upon individuals' self regulatory capacities and their deliberate implementation of structuring practices.

Keywords: digital nomad, task completion, time management, remote work, productivity, work life balance

Abstrak:

Gaya kerja nomad digital, yang dicirikan oleh pekerjaan yang tidak bergantung pada lokasi dan dimungkinkan oleh teknologi digital, telah muncul sebagai fenomena penting di pasar tenaga kerja kontemporer. Artikel ini mengkaji pengaruh nomad digital terhadap penyelesaian tugas dan manajemen waktu, dengan mensintesis temuan dari penelitian empiris terbaru. Analisis menunjukkan bahwa produktivitas di kalangan nomad digital kurang bergantung pada volume beban kerja dan lebih bergantung pada bagaimana pekerjaan distrukturkan dan dikendalikan. Nomad digital yang secara aktif membentuk tugas dan jadwal mereka menganggap diri mereka lebih produktif, sesuai dengan teori job crafting. Namun, fleksibilitas yang melekat pada gaya hidup nomad digital menghadirkan implikasi ganda: sementara otonomi dapat meningkatkan keterlibatan dan kepuasan tugas, ketiadaan struktur organisasi tradisional menciptakan tantangan manajemen waktu yang signifikan, termasuk peningkatan kerentanan terhadap penundaan, kesulitan menetapkan batasan kehidupan kerja, dan komplikasi yang timbul dari beberapa zona waktu. Strategi manajemen waktu yang efektif—termasuk rutinitas terstruktur, pemblokiran waktu, Teknik Pomodoro, dan alat akuntabilitas digital—muncul sebagai

mediator penting antara gaya kerja nomad dan penyelesaian tugas yang sukses. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pengaruh gaya kerja digital nomad terhadap produktivitas bergantung pada kapasitas pengaturan diri individu dan penerapan praktik penataan yang disengaja.

Kata kunci: pengembara digital, penyelesaian tugas, manajemen waktu, kerja jarak jauh, produktivitas, keseimbangan kehidupan kerja

INTRODUCTION

The COVID 19 pandemic fundamentally transformed global work arrangements, accelerating the adoption of remote work across knowledge industries. In April 2020, 46.6% of workers switched to remote work, and over two thirds of employers indicated intentions to permanently shift employees to remote work post pandemic. This unprecedented experiment in distributed work catalysed the growth of digital nomadism—a workstyle that combines location independence with professional employment, enabled by digital technologies.

Digital nomads are defined as highly mobile professionals who use digital technologies to perform work remotely from anywhere while travelling, characterising a location independent lifestyle (Thompson, 2019). They possess locational autonomy and typically visit multiple locations annually. The phenomenon has evolved beyond a niche lifestyle choice to become a significant force reshaping global labour markets, urban planning, tourism industries, and real estate markets (Triandafyllidou, 2026).

Despite the growing prevalence of digital nomadism, scholarly understanding of its implications for fundamental work outcomes—particularly task completion and time management—remains limited. Existing research has examined digital nomad productivity in various contexts, including coworkation spaces (de Vries, 2023), the role of task management tools (Beale & Williams, 2025), and the psychological dimensions of nomadic work (Rus, 2025). However, a comprehensive synthesis of how the digital nomad workstyle specifically affects task completion and time management is lacking.

This article addresses this gap by examining the following research questions: (1) How does the digital nomad workstyle influence task completion? (2) What time management challenges and strategies characterise the digital nomad experience? (3) What factors mediate the relationship between digital nomadism and productivity outcomes?

The significance of this inquiry extends beyond academic interest. As organisations increasingly embrace flexible work arrangements and individuals pursue location independent careers, understanding the conditions under which digital nomads thrive—or struggle—has practical implications for workforce management, policy development, and individual career planning.

METHOD

This article employs a systematic literature review methodology to synthesise existing research on digital nomadism, task completion, and time management. The review process followed established guidelines for integrative literature reviews, emphasising the identification, evaluation, and synthesis of relevant empirical and theoretical work.

1. Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted across multiple academic databases, including Google Scholar, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, and institutional repositories. Search terms included combinations of the following keywords: "digital nomad," "remote work," "productivity," "task completion," "time management," "work life balance," "self regulation," and "work performance." The search was supplemented by manual scanning of reference lists from identified articles and examination of relevant conference proceedings.

2. Inclusion Criteria

Studies were included if they met the following criteria: (1) published in English; (2) focused on digital nomads, remote workers, or location independent professionals; (3) addressed productivity, task completion, time management, or related constructs; (4) employed empirical research methods (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods); and (5) published between 2018 and 2026 to capture contemporary developments in the field.

3. Data Extraction and Synthesis

Key information was extracted from each included study, including research objectives, methodological approaches, sample characteristics, key findings, and theoretical frameworks. The synthesis employed thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, challenges, and strategies across studies. Given the heterogeneity of research designs and outcome measures, a narrative synthesis approach was adopted to integrate findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Digital Nomad Workstyle: Definition and Characteristics

Digital nomadism represents a fundamental departure from traditional work arrangements. Unlike conventional remote workers who maintain a fixed home base, digital nomads combine work with sustained travel, leveraging digital technologies to maintain professional engagement while exploring new locations. The workstyle is characterised by three core dimensions: mobility, digital technology dependence, and identity construction (Thompson, 2019).

Recent scholarship has argued that digital nomadism should be understood not merely as a lifestyle choice but as a "form of life"—a more fundamental mode of conduct rooted in historical context, shaped by informal norms, and capable of adapting over time (Luise & Schwarz, 2026). This reconceptualisation acknowledges that digital nomads maintain their identities and work practices through adaptation, persistence, and reconfiguration, even under disruptive conditions.

The autonomy inherent in digital nomadism is a significant draw. Digital nomads enjoy the freedom to set their own schedules and choose their work environments. According to industry research, a substantial proportion of digital nomads work 40 hours or less per week, with many reporting high satisfaction with their income and lifestyle. However, this autonomy presents both opportunities and challenges for task completion and time management, as discussed in the following sections.

Effects on Task Completion

1. Structured Work and Perceived Productivity

Research consistently indicates that productivity among digital nomads depends less on the volume of workload and more on how work is structured and controlled. Digital nomads who actively shape their tasks and schedules—a practice aligned with Wrzesniewski et al.'s (2013) concept of job crafting—perceive themselves as more productive. This finding suggests that the relationship between digital nomadism and task completion is mediated by individuals' proactive engagement with work design.

A study assessing digital nomad productivity in coworkation spaces found that, despite their desire for freedom, digital nomads work in highly structured ways and demonstrate significant self discipline and time management capabilities (de Vries, 2023). This paradox—seeking flexibility while imposing structure—highlights the importance of intentional work design in the nomadic context. Jobs with high levels of structure and task orientation are better suited to digital nomad work than roles requiring high levels of effectiveness or deep collaborative engagement (de Vries, 2023).

2 The Role of Task Management Tools

The effectiveness of digital task management tools in improving task completion among remote workers has been subject to empirical investigation. A diary study of remote knowledge workers found that using digital task management applications made no significant difference compared to using pen and paper for improving perceived productivity (Beale & Williams, 2025). This finding underscores the need for better personalisation of task

management applications and suggests that the tool itself is less important than how it is integrated into individual work practices.

Nevertheless, digital nomads employ various technological tools to support task completion. Time tracking applications such as Toggl and RescueTime are commonly used to monitor time allocation across different tasks and projects. AI powered task management tools, including Todoist AI and Notion AI, offer predictive task completion times and automated project templates. These tools can potentially reduce task completion time—some studies report significant reductions among high frequency travellers using AI assistants—though the generalisability of such findings requires further investigation.

3 Challenges to Task Completion

Despite the potential advantages of location independence, digital nomads face significant challenges to effective task completion. Social and professional isolation are core psychological challenges affecting productivity and well being (Rus, 2025). The absence of co located colleagues and organisational structures can undermine accountability and motivation. Procrastination emerges as a particular concern. The flexibility of remote work can lead to increased procrastination, given the lack of traditional office structures and the presence of more distractions in non conventional workspaces (Kesküla, 2023). The liberty to craft one's own schedule and work environment is a double edged sword—it can enhance productivity and job satisfaction but also brings the risk of procrastination. Without the external structure of a traditional office, remote workers may find themselves putting off tasks, leading to stress and decreased productivity.

Time Management in the Digital Nomad Context

1. The Critical Role of Time Management

Time management is an essential prerequisite for a productive and fulfilling digital nomad life. Contrary to popular perceptions that digital nomads work "whenever" while spending most of their time in vacation mode, effective time management requires deliberate effort and systematic practices (Thompson, 2019).

Digital nomads employ various time management strategies, including:

Structured routines: Establishing regular schedules that mimic aspects of traditional office environments, such as set work hours and dedicated workspaces, can foster discipline and reduce procrastination. Finding routine is described by experienced digital nomads as "the biggest game changer" (de Vries, 2023).

Time blocking: Scheduling specific times for deep work, meetings, and breaks provides structure while maintaining flexibility. This technique helps digital nomads manage their daily schedules effectively and carve out time for what truly matters.

The Pomodoro Technique: Working in focused bursts—typically 25 minutes of work followed by a 5 minute break—has proven particularly effective for digital nomads and remote workers.

Clear boundaries: Setting work hours and sticking to them while protecting downtime is essential for maintaining work life separation. Clear boundaries help digital nomads navigate the blurring of work and personal life that characterises the nomadic experience (Thompson, 2019).

Digital accountability tools: Time tracking software, project management applications, and communication tools help digital nomads stay organised and maintain momentum.

2. Time Zone Management

Managing multiple time zones presents a unique challenge for digital nomads. Coordinating across different time zones can lead to communication delays and scheduling conflicts, impacting productivity. Effective time zone management involves communicating clear core work hours and quiet periods, defining response times for different communication channels, and using tools like World Time Buddy or Calendly to coordinate schedules.

Some digital nomads leverage time zones strategically, working in a time zone ahead of their peers to gain organised time before others are awake. This approach can create productive windows for focused work without interruption.

3. Work Life Boundary Management

Work life boundary management is particularly challenging for digital nomads, who lack the physical separation between work and home that traditional office workers enjoy. Research indicates that well being among digital nomads depends primarily on personal strategies like boundary management and mindfulness rather than external factors (Rus, 2025). Establishing clear work life boundaries—such as defined working hours or "digital shutdown rituals"—can help reduce stress and maintain productivity.

A study of digital nomads' work leisure management practices identified a wide array of practices used to balance work and leisure, highlighting the complexity and intentionality of boundary management in the nomadic context (Thompson, 2019). These practices determine how digital nomads manage the boundaries between work and leisure using their material environment.

4. Mediating Factors and Contingencies

The effect of the digital nomad workstyle on task completion and time management is not uniform but depends on several mediating factors:

Individual self regulation: Digital nomadism requires greater discipline and self awareness than traditional work arrangements (Kesküla, 2023). Individuals with stronger self regulatory capacities are better equipped to manage the demands of nomadic work.

Work characteristics: Jobs with high structure and clear task orientation are better suited to digital nomad work than roles requiring deep collaboration or high effectiveness (de Vries, 2023).

Infrastructure and environment: Reliable infrastructure—including high speed internet, quiet workspaces, and ergonomic furniture—is essential for maintaining productivity (Triandafyllidou, 2026). Structured work environments reduce feelings of isolation and support task completion.

Community and social connection: The community feeling that digital nomads seek in coworkation spaces is often leisure oriented rather than work oriented (de Vries, 2023). However, social connection remains important for well being and, indirectly, for sustained productivity.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined the effects of the digital nomad workstyle on task completion and time management, synthesising findings from recent empirical research. The analysis reveals a complex picture in which the nomadic workstyle presents both opportunities and challenges for work outcomes.

The primary opportunity lies in autonomy and flexibility. Digital nomads who actively craft their jobs and schedules perceive themselves as more productive (Wrzesniewski et al., 2013), suggesting that the freedom inherent in the workstyle can enhance task engagement and satisfaction when channeled effectively. The ability to design one's work environment and schedule according to personal preferences and peak productivity periods represents a significant advantage over traditional work arrangements.

However, these benefits are contingent upon deliberate structuring practices. Digital nomads who fail to establish routines, set boundaries, and implement effective time management strategies are vulnerable to procrastination, work life conflict, and reduced productivity (Rus, 2025; Thompson, 2019). The absence of traditional organisational structures

requires digital nomads to develop robust self regulatory capacities and implement systematic approaches to task and time management (Kesküla, 2023).

The findings have several implications for practice and policy. For individuals considering or already engaged in digital nomadism, developing time management skills and establishing structured work routines should be priorities. For organisations employing digital nomads, providing support for boundary management and recognising the unique challenges of location independent work may enhance employee performance and well being. For policymakers, understanding the conditions that support digital nomad productivity can inform the development of infrastructure and policies that attract and retain this growing workforce.

Future research should address several limitations of the existing literature. Longitudinal studies tracking digital nomads over extended periods would illuminate how time management practices and task completion patterns evolve with experience. Comparative studies examining digital nomads alongside traditional remote workers and office based workers would clarify the unique effects of the nomadic workstyle. Finally, research examining the role of emerging technologies—particularly AI powered productivity tools—in supporting digital nomad task completion would provide valuable insights for practice.

In conclusion, the digital nomad workstyle's effect on task completion and time management is neither inherently positive nor negative but depends critically on individuals' ability to harness the benefits of flexibility while mitigating its challenges through intentional structuring and self regulation.

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