



Research Paper

Popularity of Work from Home among Indian Employees: A New Normal Style of Functioning

Dr. Madhu Bala

Associate professor

Bhagini Nivedita College, University of Delhi

Abstract: This paper intends to seek the popularity of the work from home (WFH) model of working among Indian employees. WFH as an option to work for organizations has been well realized by business world much earlier, especially in IT industry. But, the unexpected world wide spread of Covid-19 has forced the corporate entities and employees to resort to online working from home; and has posed a challenge before organizations in post pandemic time to continue with this option or withdraw the same; where employees have already adapted and accustomed to new way of remote working. They are threatening to leave the current jobs, and accept alternate one even at lower pay scales, if WFH facility is withdrawn completely; on the other hand organizations are more concerned about the issues of productivity and employee's satisfaction. Therefore, even after the pandemic, many organizations and staff continued to work on the basis of newly emerged model of working; and a complete shift is noticed in work dynamics. It is believed that telework will be default mode of working in near future across sectors in organizations wherever it is feasible like IT and Data science sector. But, WFH is associated with both merits and demerits to employers and employees. Hence, findings are indicating that corporates may not resume to hundred percent off-line working as was witnessed in pre-Covid era; rather the need of the hour is to offer some degree of workplace flexibility to employees to achieve higher level of productivity and satisfaction to stakeholders. It is suggesting to organizations to opt for the hybrid mode of working as a smart way of working to be more successful.

Keywords: Popularity, Hybrid, Remote Work, Smart working, Mobile working

Received 12 Sep, 2022; Revised 25 Sep., 2022; Accepted 28 Sep., 2022 © The author(s) 2022.

Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. Introduction

The health emergency imposed by the Covid-19 has overwhelmingly altered the working style of corporates; and gave rise to new work-hub or hybrid model of working. Companies allowed its workforce to work from home (WFH) to curtail physical contact among staff to avoid fresh infections. It is a form of working with the use of modern technology without specific place of work boundaries. This mode was further substantiated by the orders of government.

The widespread pandemic mandated government to issue stay-at-home orders which resulted in either rendering the workforce to leave jobs or WFH wherever it was possible; and altered the work-model dramatically overnight. A large segment of employees with lower level of education, and employed in occupations where WFH could not be continued; were most affected as they could not embrace the option of remote working. Therefore, the nature of work involved is the prime factor to consider the option of this newly recognized form of working. There are certain business activities requiring more collaboration among staff like assembling the parts or manufacturing the product which can be performed better in the office environment; but there are certain tasks which may be carried out from home very efficiently, such as, preparing the customized software, filling the bills, and delivering a talk. Therefore, WFH is gaining popularity as it is associated with various types of benefits accruing to both staff and organization.

The effective recruitment and retention practice favors flexible work hours. The employees prefer to work in firms which allow WFH facility. They feel more comfortable while working remotely; save money on commuting; not required to get their clothes dry cleaned or ironed, and are able to add relatively higher volume to productivity with online working. Home is a place where everyone recovers from used energies and renews for next piece of work; and is one of the contributing factors to physical and mental health, and well-being. Moreover, modern homes are laced with new technology and having internet connections which are the pre-requisite to accomplish WFH. The millennial workforce is also more comfortable with on-line working

appliances, and enjoy to be engaged virtually in official tasks rather than attending office regularly; and promote a working model which provides them freedom to WFH or office.

The remote working model has been seen as an instrument to extend various facilities to employees to cheer in terms of reduced travelling time, avoidance to bear long traffic jams and negotiating with unruly traffic, increased motivation and satisfaction, and better control over time schedule. The reduction in stress is also felt by staff due to time saving, time flexibility, and higher time spent with family. For many employees, WFH option makes routine life easier. It allows better work-life balance, specially, the workforce who has to take care of ailing family members and young children. Moreover, the young women with kids under the age of five are joining the workforce at an increasing pace, which has also attracted the attention on flexible working from home. Additionally, the enhanced participation of woman at work has necessitated the consideration on the relationship between home and work performance. Similarly, the business also gets opportunity to reap extra benefits instigated by WFH.

The WFH or hybrid model of work also requires corporates to invest less in infrastructure, real estate, and its maintenance. The amount of office politics and involvement of managers tend to reduce which enables them to utilize more time and effort on core business activities; which further enhances productivity.

The new work model is also environmentally friendly and advocates green practices in organization, such as, the emergence of paperless office, meeting through video-conferencing, and reduced carbon emission due to less vehicles on road to commute. It helps business to improve on environmental score, and reduce carbon footprints on the earth which is the only place to lead life for the mankind. Furthermore, following and promoting sustainable and green practices have become although more important where entire living beings are sharing the common planet.

For most employees, the teleworking has been seen as the first experience. But, it is not free from disadvantages too. The home setting may not be a suitable place in many aspects as compare to office. The absence of appropriate office furniture at home may result in adoption of faulty posture, which may contribute to muscular disorders. Moreover, working in inactive position for a long period tends to increase the threat of neck pain or lower back pain. The remote working sometimes may also attribute to anxiety and isolation to employee; which hampers job productivity, and physical and mental well-being; and bound to blur work-home periphery. The reduction in output may be caused by the presence of distractions and diversions in home environment. Further, the social isolation, and inability to share problems of work or personal life with colleagues to find out possible solutions while working online; may enhance the irritability and negativity among staff.

The employer faces difficulties in monitoring, controlling, and appraising the performance of employees working remotely. The possibility of losing data has emerged another big challenge of online working. Moreover, WFH option is not suitable for all types of work, like manufacturing, assembling, and distribution of goods. Besides, the home space of every employee is not equipped with the infrastructure required to enable WFH; rather it is comparatively found more often in the homes of highly educated working class. Hence, the associated costs to organization in the form of providing infrastructure and training to staff to use the same are also witnessed, and need to be borne by business.

The employers must take suitable steps to make WFH model successful, like enabling employees to claim electricity and Internet bills or facilities used in remote working; making IT infrastructure at office conducive to teleworking, employee engagement, collaboration and communication through reliable Wi-Fi connection. Making available comfortable furniture at home helps in preventing physical health disorders, like height-adjustable table and chair or the use of footrest. It has been well established that the sophisticated modern digital workplace technologies have emerged as the basic requirement to secure the benefits of remote working; and is vital for organizations embracing WFH for better outcomes.

The aim of this paper is to examine the popularity of home-working among Indian employees, and is spread over five sections. The present section is focused on introduction of the subject under consideration. The section 2 is summarizing the existing literature, and section 3 is devoted to research methodology of the current study. A detailed discussion has been made in section 4, and section 5 concludes the entire paper.

II. Existing Literature Review

A number of studies have been conducted to investigate the various aspects of work from home (WFH) model of working. Brownson (2004) emphasized that teleworking is beneficial to employees and employer both. The workforce enjoys the flexibility of working, and related convenience. The entity saves the financial resources on account of office work space and expenses, and relishes the benefits of boosted morale and loyalty of staff.

Peters, Den Dulk & de Ruijter (2010) revealed that WFH practice may be supported by organizations by incorporating it as an integral part of human resource management to reduce stress among employees, and enhancing the outcome.

Timsal & Awais (2016) explained that WFH policy is supported by many companies across the globe for women employees, but WFH being a universal policy is not favored. Further, this policy is differing across countries and cultures.

Gerneys & De Gieter (2017) suggested that the modern homes are generally found equipped with new technology; and the employer must allow flexible work arrangements to recruit and retain qualified employees. The hybrid mode of working contributes to better health and well-being of staff. But, the success of WFH is dependent on the nature of work to be performed.

Gadeyne et al., (2018) indicated that the work-related PC or laptop use after prescribed working hours is positively correlated with WFH conflict. However, such a conflicting situation is not detected with employees who have priority to integrate personal life needs with office work.

Nakrošienė, Bučiūnienė, & Goštautaitė (2019) found that the outcome of remote working is influenced by the reduced interaction with fellow colleagues, and trust and support of supervisor; easiness of work place at home, and possibility of spending more time with family.

White (2019) suggested that the compensation package for employees working from home have exceeded to those of office-workers; and depends upon the ability of organizations to communicate and monitor the workforce working online.

Purwanto et al., (2020) highlighted that WFH option is relatively flexible to do the work for staff, and saves time and money for transportation to the office; besides minimizing the level of stress of bearing the traffic nuisance in commuting. The employer also gets benefited on account of decreasing office maintenance expenses.

Gibbs, Mengel, & Siemroth (2021) investigated that working hours of IT professionals enhanced by 18% than normal business hours. The communication costs and time spent on meeting increased considerably for entire workforce, and the productivity of employees declined from 8% to 19%.

Galanti et al., (2021) highlighted that the productivity was adversely affected by family-work conflict and social isolation during WFH, the new style of organizational working. However, autonomy and self-regulation contributed positively to the amount and quality of work.

Delventhal, Kwon, & Parkhomenko (2022) investigated that implementation of WFH policy by business will alter the shape of cities. It will result in concentration of jobs in metropolitan areas, and shift of population to periphery; which would lead to decline in real estate prices, and travel time in cities.

Pradoto, Haryono, & Wahyuningsih (2022) determined that the performance of employees in the context of remote work has been found negative and statistically significant due to job stress in micro, small and medium enterprises during the period of wide spread Covid-19; where work stress is directly associated with organizational climate. It inferred that performance of staff is dependent on the favorable climate of entity.

Danilova et al., (2022) found that the work performance through large scale mandatory WFH arrangements was relatively better in firms which possessed latest technology, and were well equipped information communication and technology platforms. However, the feeling of professional isolation was noticed among employees; and had negative impact on performance.

Mandal et al., (2022) revealed that the safety concerns of employees and families associated with WFH culture has played an important role in enhancing the commitment, motivation, and satisfaction of employees; and has been witnessed as the main reason to empower WFH culture.

Prabowo et al., (2022) concluded the negative impact of compulsory WFH during pandemic on the mental health of women.

Kumar, Alok, & Banerjee (2022) analyzed that the degree of work experience, need for autonomy, and supervisory support have been the prime determinants of the quantum of work done from home in Indian white-collar employees.

In the light of above literature review, it may be argued that different aspects of WFH option have attracted the attention of researchers; but its popularity among employees needs to be discussed in detail. This paper seeks to address this issue at length.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Objectives of the Study

The prime objective of this paper is to examine the popularity of WFH style of corporate working in India, a new model of work emerged especially after the widespread Covid-19 pandemic. The organizations are facing a challenge to either switch over to WFH option or hybrid mode of working because the workforce of many organizations have already accepted and adjusted to this new work model. An effort has been made to assess the attractiveness of WFH option of working among employees in India, and the elements which are responsible for the same.

3.2 Hypothesis of the Study

H₀: Work from home is not a popular mode of working among employees in Indian organizations.

H_A: Work from home is a popular mode of working among employees in Indian organizations.

3.3 Sources of Data

The study is entirely based on secondary sources of data which are available on-line. It has been taken from reports or websites of different organizations. The data relates to the year 2020 and 2021.

3.4 Research Design

The descriptive research design has been identified for the study because the discussion or analysis has been supported by the results drawn by others.

IV. Discussion

A number of studies have been carried out by different organizations to assess the attitude of employees towards work from home (WFH) model of working. This model of work has come to public eye after the forced lockdown of population to control the spread of Covid-19 virus; and imposition of WFH way of working, the only solution of work at that time in industries where it was feasible. It has been found that the adoption of WFH manner of working seemed to be difficult in initial phase, but later it has been well acknowledged and enjoyed by employees due to the various positive aspects attached to it. This model is also beneficial to corporates to get done the entire work or the performance of selected functions in on-line mode. Now, employees are assuming to continue with this new normal mode of working completely or partially i.e. hybrid mode.

The Lenovo (2020) conducted a research on employees working remotely, and found that 74% respondents agreed to continue with WFH in post pandemic era. They feel that wherever there is availability of technology, the office work may be performed in better way than going to office on regular basis. They found that enhanced inclination towards remote working has increased reliance on technology along with trustworthy services. The employees believe that usage of laptops have risen multifold during pandemic, and organizations may focus more on upgrading their technology-based skills in future to empower them while working remotely. This research has provided valuable insights on the fact that advanced technology needed for WFH and family life of employees are inter-related with increasing popularity of this style of working. The evolving confidence for teleworking has increased the requirement of employees for more flexible and high performing laptops or PCs lashed with extra features to address issues related to data security and privacy. To be more productive, the staff has also recognized the need of uninterrupted internet connectivity, software set-up and efficient maintenance services, and separate devices for office work and personal use. Employees suggested the installation of new and emerging technology like 5G wireless networks, and artificial intelligence to take care routine work responsibilities. Leaders also feel the need of employees to work differently than before. But, they also feel concerns about the fear of probability of declined number of jobs with the implementation of new techniques. It has been observed that most employees upgraded new technology to enable WFH style of working during pandemic, and funded it fully or partially themselves.

SAP Concur Study (2020) investigated that 88% workforce preferred to have the WFH facility, and 69% employees feel that it has enhanced their productivity considerably. The 76% employees get reimbursement for their mobile plan, internet and IT devices. But, only 11% Indian firms have initiated digital platforms for financial and administrative processes. These developments are indicating inclination of employees towards new normal mode of working in the country, when the organizations were forced to implement WFH option almost overnight during pandemic. Now, it has been realized that manual processing takes up a lot of time, which may be utilized for core productive activities.

Analytics India Magazine (2020) conducted a research to assess the impact of WFH on analytics functions; and found that analytics employees were comfortably performing WFH and had access to required facilities. The personnel experienced neutral or positive impact on their work due to enhanced productivity.

Gartner Survey (2021) revealed that 50% of employees felt to be more productive when they are working from home. The survey assigns maximum weightage to the option of exercising choice of location of work, and flexible working hours for the staff as the top enablers to enhance productivity. It has also been viewed that there are many other factors which have uplifted the overall efficiency of organization, such as, relatively higher willingness to work online, the improved digital skills, saving three to four hours in negotiating with traffic every day to reach office, and modern offices equipped with online technologies. Moreover, Indian workers experienced the benefits of flexibility attached to virtual meeting during pandemic which further inclined their preference towards the WFH style of working or hybrid mode.

On the basis of foregoing discussion, it may be inferred that the WFH model of working is gaining popularity and it leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis of study. It is believed that in upcoming times, it will be the prime work-model in industries wherever it can be implemented completely like IT industry; and

would be the applicable partially in others to execute selected processes and functions. The Indian industries are expected to be relying on hybrid mode of working.

V. Conclusion

The spread of Covid-19 around the world has triggered many undesirable effects on human health. Consequently, the organizations, business processes, and results are affected to a large extent. It forced the employees to resort to remote work or work from home (WFH) model of working. But, it is not suitable to accomplish all types of work, like production of goods. Therefore, the implementation of this new form of working depends entirely on the nature of the jobs. That is why the organizational and commercial activities reduced significantly, immediately after the pandemic. But, now, the adoption of telework fully or partially has emerged as mainstream work model, and several organizations intend to extend WFH to the extent of making it permanent style of doing work. The research conducted by different organizations have established that remote working has enhanced the overall productivity of entities, and is associated with better work-life balance and job satisfaction for employees as well. The staff working from home is perceived to be more productive and leading better quality of life. They breathed a sigh of relief by getting rid of traffic-jam clinched travelling to office; but not happy and contended to be isolated from colleagues. Remote working has also contributed to the mental or physical health issues of employees which is further multiplied by the technical glitches faced due to lack of robust required infrastructure. Therefore, it may be argued that WFH may be made optional or hybrid mode of working may be followed to reap maximum benefits for organization, staff, and making the environment of earth cleaner and greener which is one of the prime needs of the hour. At the same time organizations must focus on improving remote working culture to minimize the side effects of teleworking model by implementing appropriate WFH policies i.e., providing height adjustable chairs, tables, and monitors to facilitate comfortable working postures to prevent spine related health issues, and improve overall work performance.

The results of this study are helpful to management to understand the impact of expectations of workforce to perform work for corporates to earn livelihood while being at home-comfort, and indulge itself in strategic planning to accomplish the same successfully. The government may also mandate the hybrid mode of working.

However, the main concern of the study is that it is entirely based on the research findings of others which may suffer from inherent limitations. Therefore, future researchers may examine the issue under consideration in more detail on the basis of panel data on WFH model of working gathered from primary sources.

References

- [1]. Brownson, K. (2004). The benefits of a work-at-home program. *The health care manager*, 23(2), 141-144.
- [2]. Danilova, K. B., Ulfsten, A., Eikebrokk, T. R., Iden, J., Johannessen, T. V., & Johanson, D. (2022). Explaining individual job performance in work from home (WFH) arrangements. *Information Technology & People*, (ahead-of-print).
- [3]. Delventhal, M. J., Kwon, E., & Parkhomenko, A. (2022). JUE Insight: How do cities change when we work from home? *Journal of Urban Economics*, 127, 103331.
- [4]. Fan, L. B., Blumenthal, J. A., Watkins, L. L., & Sherwood, A. (2015). Work and home stress: associations with anxiety and depression symptoms. *Occupational medicine*, 65(2), 110-116.
- [5]. Ferguson, M., Carlson, D., Zivnuska, S., & Whitten, D. (2012). Support at work and home: The path to satisfaction through balance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 80(2), 299-307.
- [6]. Gadeyne, N., Verbruggen, M., Delanoëje, J., & De Cooman, R. (2018). All wired, all tired? Work-related ICT-use outside work hours and work-to-home conflict: The role of integration preference, integration norms and work demands. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 107, 86-99.
- [7]. Galanti, T., Guidetti, G., Mazzei, E., Zappalà, S., & Toscano, F. (2021). Work from home during the COVID-19 outbreak: The impact on employees' remote work productivity, engagement, and stress. *Journal of occupational and environmental medicine*, 63(7), e426.
- [8]. Germeys, L., & De Gieter, S. (2017). Clarifying the dynamic interrelation of conflicts between the work and home domain and counterproductive work behavior. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 26(3), 457-467.
- [9]. Gibbs, M., Mengel, F., & Siemroth, C. (2021). Work from home & productivity: Evidence from personnel & analytics data on IT professionals. *University of Chicago, Becker Friedman Institute for Economics Working Paper*, (2021-56).
- [10]. Kakar, S., Kakar, S., KetsdeVries, M. F., & Vriणाud, P. (2002). Leadership in Indian organizations from a comparative perspective. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 2(2), 239-250.
- [11]. Kumar, N., Alok, S., & Banerjee, S. (2022). Personal attributes and job resources as determinants of amount of work done under work-from-home: empirical study of Indian white-collar employees. *International Journal of Manpower*, (ahead-of-print).
- [12]. Mandal, S., Das, P., Menon, G. V., & Amritha, R. (2022). Enablers of work from home culture: an integrated empirical framework. *Benchmarking: An International Journal*, (ahead-of-print).
- [13]. Nakrošienė, A., Bučiūnienė, I., & Goštautaitė, B. (2019). Working from home: characteristics and outcomes of telework. *International Journal of Manpower*. Vol. 40 No. 1, pp. 87-101.
- [14]. Peters, P., Den Dulk, L., & de Ruijter, J. (2010). May I work from home? Views of the employment relationship reflected in line managers' telework attitudes in six financial-sector organizations. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*. Vol. 29 No. 5, pp. 517-531.
- [15]. Prabowo, K. A., Ellenzy, G., Wijaya, M. C., & Kloping, Y. P. (2022). Impact of work from home policy during the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health and reproductive health of women in Indonesia. *International Journal of Sexual Health*, 34(1), 17-26.

- [16]. Pradoto, H., Haryono, S., & Wahyuningsih, S. H. (2022). The role of work stress, organizational climate, and improving employee performance in implementation of work from home. *Work*, (Preprint), 1-11.
- [17]. Purwanto, A., Asbari, M., Fahlevi, M., Mufid, A., Agistiawati, E., Cahyono, Y., & Suryani, P. (2020). Impact of work from home (WFH) on Indonesian teacher's performance during the Covid-19 pandemic: An exploratory study. *International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology*, 29(5), 6235-6244.
- [18]. Sok, J., Blomme, R., & Tromp, D. (2014). Positive and negative spillover from work to home: The role of organizational culture and supportive arrangements. *British Journal of Management*, 25(3), 456-472.
- [19]. Timsal, A., & Awais, M. (2016). Flexibility or ethical dilemma: an overview of the work from home policies in modern organizations around the world. *Human Resource Management International Digest*. Vol. 24 No. 7, pp. 12-15.
- [20]. White, D. R. (2019). Agency theory and work from home. *Labour*, 33(1), 1-25.